

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Political Culture and Urban Space in
Early Tudor London

A thesis submitted for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Faculty of Modern History

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Trinity Term 2013

ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines political culture in London, 1500–1550, by looking at different forms of political communication between the civic government and the city’s inhabitants, and at how these acts were situated within the urban environment. Based on the records of the civic government, the body of the work is divided into two halves addressing those acts conducted by the authorities – proclamations, processions, public punishments – and those directed towards the civic government by others, such as petitions, libels, and seditious talk. The study of these acts reveals two important things: first, that they were not only pragmatic attempts to communicate information, but also performances designed either to construct or contest particular images of authority; secondly, that these performances were spatially structured and that the urban environment was an integral aspect of the city’s political culture. It is then demonstrated that, just as political communication was inherently performative and spatial, so the urban environment was itself a medium of political communication.

These observations highlight the importance of political communication to an understanding of the city’s political culture as depicted in the historiography of early modern London. At the same time, recent scholarship on the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries has identified an increasingly distinctive culture in towns typified by attitudes to political authority as communal and contingent, and to social identity as performative and self-fashioned. In London in particular, historians have pointed to a radical transformation in the city’s political culture in reaction to dramatic urban growth after 1550. The spatial aspect of this, however, has been neglected. It is argued here that the inherently political nature of urban space and its communicative potential, already in existence, was integral to changing urban values and part of what made rapid change in London after 1550 a politically traumatic and transformative process.

LONG ABSTRACT

Political Culture and Urban Space in Early Tudor London

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This thesis examines the political culture of London, 1500–1550, by looking at different forms of political communication between the civic government and the city’s inhabitants, as well as the way that these acts were situated within the urban environment. Based on the records of the civic government, the body of the work is divided into two halves, addressing those acts conducted or coordinated by the authorities – proclamations, processions, public punishments – and those submitted to or directed towards the civic government by others, such as petitions, libels, and seditious talk. In each case, a study of these acts of communication reveals two important things: first, that they were not only pragmatic attempts to communicate information, but also performances designed either to construct or contest particular images of authority; secondly, that these performances were spatially structured and that the urban environment was an integral aspect of the city’s political culture. On the basis of this, it is then demonstrated that, just as political communication was inherently performative and spatial, so the urban environment was itself a medium of political communication and a site for constructing and contesting authority.

As set out in the Introduction, there are two historiographical contexts for these observations. First, they are intended as direct contributions to an understanding of political culture in early Tudor London, where existing work has illustrated the importance of a culture of reciprocity between governors and governed, but not yet addressed the way in which these identities and the legitimacy of their unequal relationships were constructed, projected and sustained. By focusing on the acts of communication between governors and governed, their nature as a set of performances for constructing and contesting authority is revealed. Secondly, in demonstrating that these acts of communication had an important spatial structure and that the urban environment was itself a medium of communication, the study is also relevant to the wider literature on the changing nature of London and other English towns in the century after 1550. Recent scholarship has identified an increasingly distinctive culture in early modern towns typified by attitudes to political authority as communal and contingent, and to social identity as performative and self-fashioned. In London in particular, historians have pointed to a radical transformation in the city’s political

culture, towards government as more pervasive and comprehensive, in reaction to rapid and dramatic urban growth after 1550. It is suggested here that the inherently political nature of urban space and its existing communicative potential made the environment an integral aspect of changing urban values and part of why rapid change in London after 1550 was such a politically traumatic and transformative process.

After the introductory and methodological chapters in Part One, the role of official performances in constructing an image of authority is illustrated in Part Two through a series of case studies on different kinds of political communication. First of all, in Chapter 3, it is observed that the making of proclamations and the posting of their written equivalents was attended by carefully scripted ritual elements which distinguished the nature of the text and the authority on whose behalf the proclamation was being made, and this shows the importance of non-verbal signs in the communication of political messages. An analysis of the content of civic proclamations, in the context of statutory and city law, shows furthermore the care which the mayor and aldermen took to remain within the bounds of legal legitimacy when using this mode of political action. Thus the act of proclamation was not only a practical means to disseminate information but a claim to authority and the legitimacy of its exercise by the civic government.

In Chapter 4, processions are shown to have likewise operated as political communication despite lacking an explicitly verbal element. Major processions took place in early modern London to celebrate important dates in the calendar of city life, not just religious but also political and social. While these ritual performances have little to do with the course of daily civic politics, they reveal much about wider political assumptions. Detailed study of the city's many processions suggests that the civic government was at pains to play a leading role in major events which celebrated the city as a spiritual, political and urban community. The careful orchestration of these performances highlights the importance which the urban elite attached to processions as a way of promoting a vision of the city as a community united by civic authority.

In Chapter 5, the public punishment of offenders by the civic government is explored as another kind of performance. In addition to its functions as a demonstrative, preventative and reintegrative performance before the community, public punishment was also an authoritative act, which laid claim to authority within the city and gave substance to the force at its command. In pursuit of these ends, the civic government made use of an elaborate symbolic language when designing how offenders ought to be punished. Moreover, as a performance, public punishment advertised the nature and scope of the civic government's concerns and this was adapted to meet changing circumstances in the early sixteenth century.

It was an important means by which the civic government could stamp its authority upon the city and represent itself as active and effective, both before the royal court at Westminster and the wider urban population.

However, acts of political communication were not only a way for the civic government to construct and project an image of its own authority; they were also sites for contesting authority and its particular representations. Indeed, as Part Three of this thesis demonstrates, when contesting the status quo in early modern London, the weapons of popular politics were directly focused upon the acts of official political communication. Three case studies explore this fact in Chapters 6-8. In the ritualized performance of submitting petitions to the authorities, the rhetoric of official acts and proclamations was appropriated and redeployed to achieve the ends of individual petitioners. In the posting of anonymous libels and seditious bills, the act of pinning up official proclamations and written notices was appropriated and inverted as a means to communicate resistance. And in face-to-face confrontations with superiors, the discourse and authority of the council chamber could be appropriated and subverted by the language of the street and the threat of collective action, in direct challenge to the institutions of civic government. Taken together, these things show the importance of political communication to an understanding of political culture in the city.

At the same time, this thesis sets out to show that political communication had an important spatial dimension. Each mode of communication was spatially structured and it can be seen that the authorities paid great attention to the spatial aspect of these performances. Indeed, this spatial dimension was crucial to the communication of the political message itself, not only in the case of processions but also in the making of proclamations and the conduct of public punishment. Likewise, popular acts of appropriation, inversion and direct confrontation were sensitive to the spatial dimension of official political communication and made use of the urban environment in contests with the civic government. However, more than just that, the form of the urban environment was itself an ongoing statement of the authority and control which the civic government claimed to exercise over the city. In the regulation of building encroachment, cart traffic, street cleaning, nightwalking and countless other aspects of urban administration, the civic government asserted the presence of its authority and the nature of the community over which it professed to govern. In this sense, control of the urban environment was itself a form of official political communication which projected a particular image of civic authority, just as popular action which threatened the authorized map of the city – physical or mental – was a means of resisting and contesting that authority. Political communication, its spatial dimension, and the urban environment itself were therefore important aspects of the political culture of early modern London.

In sum, this study of different acts of political communication shows that such performances were part of how the urban elite presented civic authority as legitimate and established an image of clear division between governors and governed. To the extent that people questioned the legitimacy of that authority or the image of such division, they did so by attacking these official modes of communication. This further illuminates the processes of political culture in early Tudor London as so far set out in the existing historiography. Moreover, as itself a medium of official communication, the urban environment had long given expression to the presence of civic authority, and the image of this presence had been spreading more widely for some time. Combined with new developments in the early sixteenth century, it increasingly expressed a vision of city government as totalizing and holistic. This adds to our understanding of how and why cities and towns in early modern England were developing a distinctive political and social culture. The ability of urban space to communicate new visions of government and authority was one aspect of evolving urban attitudes, and its existing implication in how authority was constructed and contested was part of why the challenges of urban growth in London after 1550 had such an effect on the strategies of, and attitudes to, governance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis begins and ends with my mother. Not only did she inspire me with the love of learning and encourage the pursuit of the humanities at university, she has continuously supported the project and ultimately made it worth doing. It is to her that the work is dedicated. It also could not have been done without the generosity of my grandfather, Jim, and my grandmother Joan, and I hope that my father would have been proud of it.

I have always been conscious that I owe a great deal to certain inspirational teachers at Melbourne Grammar School, that is, to Darlene Fisher, Nick Konstantatos, and Geoff Smith. Darlene helped me to understand not only the writing of history but of historiography; to whatever extent critical and textual analysis is employed in this study, it is due to Nick; and Dr Smith will note, I hope, that the thesis is a direct product of the courses he designed and taught, which have provided me with food for thought for more than a decade.

For the value of my years at the University of Melbourne, I have Grantley McDonald, Barry Collet and Peter Sherlock to thank. Although I had long been interested in urban space, it was Nick Vlahogiannis who helped me to engage the concept more critically. My interest in English history and the period of the Reformation was inspired by Lucy Kostyanovsky during my time at King's College, London, which was made possible by a studentship from the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies. It was also she who first pointed the path to postgraduate study at Oxford.

I owe a great deal, both personally and intellectually, to my supervisor, Ian Archer. I cannot imagine the thesis without the effort which he has invested in myself and the project. His own works inspired my interest in the subject; his guidance shaped the lines of inquiry; his supervision continuously improved the formulation and presentation of ideas; and his patience and encouragement made it possible to complete the work at all.

I gained a lot from the Seminar on Early Modern Britain at Oxford, both from the university professors whose regular attendance made it a forum of serious scholarship, as well as from my fellow graduate students whose own research and academic collegiality was of great help. I see the Breakfast Room at Merton College as the epitome of a scholarly research environment. Thanks are due to the Clarendon Fund for my scholarship to Oxford, and to the Crewe, Polonsky and Sloane Robinson Funds for bursaries at Lincoln College. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the staff of the London Metropolitan Archives, particular those who have been there since I made my very first visit. Likewise, Beresford and Glen at the Institute of Historical Research have been a comforting presence over the years.

My work has also greatly benefited from, if been a little slowed down by, the group of lifelong friends I have made at Lincoln College, Pembroke, Exeter and Keble. At the same time, I am grateful for the patience and enduring friendship of those in Melbourne, whose continuing faith in the value of the work has given strength on cold English nights.

For discussing ideas with me, keeping the conceptual framework sound, and helping to bring the text to term, Jennifer has my love and thanks.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Archives

BL	British Library
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
TNA	The National Archives

Archival material

Jour. 1-19	Journals of the Court of Common Council LMA COL/CC/01/01/001-019
LB. A-S	Letter Books LMA COL/AD/001-018
Rep.	Repertories of the Court of Aldermen
1-11	LMA COL/CA/01/01/001-011
12, ff. 1-287, 288-560	LMA COL/CA/01/01/012-013
13, ff. 1-289, 290-585	LMA COL/CA/01/01/014-015
14-22	LMA COL/CA/01/01/016-024

Printed works

CEMCR	<i>Calendar of Early Mayor's Court Rolls, 1298–1307</i> , ed. A.H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1924)
CLB, A-L	<i>Calendar of the Letter Books of the City of London, A-L</i> , ed. R.R. Sharpe, 11 vols (London, 1899–1912)
CPMR	<i>Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls</i> , ed. A.H. Thomas, vols 1-4; ed. P.E. Jones, vols 5-6 (Cambridge, 1924–61)
CSPV	<i>Calendar of State Papers ... in the Archives and Collections of Venice</i> , ed. R. Brown, 38 vols (London, 1864–1947) [refs to item nos.]
Greyfriars	<i>Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London</i> , ed. J.G. Nichols (Camden Society, 53, 1852)
Liber Albus	<i>Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London</i> , ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1861)
L&P	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , ed. J.S. Brewer, 22 vols (London, 1862–1932) [refs to item nos.]
Machyn	<i>The Diary of Henry Machyn</i> , ed. J.G. Nichols (Camden Society, 42, 1848)
MGL	<i>Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis</i> , ed. H.T. Riley, 3 vols (London, 1859–62)
Survey	John Stow, <i>A Survey of London, reprinted from the text of 1603</i> , ed. C.L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908)
TRP	<i>Tudor Royal Proclamations</i> , ed. P. Hughes & J. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven, CT, 1964–69) [refs to proclamation nos.]
Wriothesley	Charles Wriothesley, <i>A Chronicle of England during the reigns of the Tudors</i> , ed. W. Hamilton, 2 vols (1875–77)

EDITORIAL NOTE

Abbreviations have been silently expanded and superscripts have been lowered, but ampersand has been retained; thorn has been replaced with ‘th’; original use of i/j and u/v have been retained, except initial capital i/j has been modernized; punctuation and capitalization have been modernized; the spelling of first names has been standardized where appropriate; shillings and pence have been distinguished by period marks; redundant abbreviation marks and flourishes have not been reproduced. Corrections and editorial interventions have been placed in square brackets []; lost or illegible words in angle brackets < >. References to manuscript folios follow original foliations.

In this thesis, London is treated simultaneously as an urban entity, a political corporation and a legal jurisdiction, even though as physical areas they did not precisely coincide. However, these overlapping and conflicting boundaries were part of its nature as a city. The lowercase ‘city’ is therefore used to refer to all of these together, while ‘City’ refers specifically to London as an incorporated entity.

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PART ONE – CONTEXTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the political culture of London, 1500–1550, by looking at different forms of political communication between the civic government and the city’s inhabitants, as well as the way that these acts were situated within the urban environment. The body of the work is divided into two halves, addressing those acts conducted or coordinated by the authorities – proclamations, processions, public punishments – and those submitted to or directed towards the civic government by others, such as petitions, libels, and seditious talk. In each case, a study of these acts of communication reveals two important things: first, that they were not only pragmatic attempts to communicate information, but also performances designed either to construct or contest particular images of authority; secondly, that these performances were spatially structured and that the urban environment was an integral aspect of the city’s political culture. On the basis of this, it is then demonstrated that, just as political communication was inherently performative and spatial, so the urban environment was itself a medium of political communication and a site for constructing and contesting authority.

These observations are intended as direct contributions to an understanding of political culture in early Tudor London, but they are also relevant to the wider literature on the changing nature of London and other English towns in the century after 1550. Recent scholarship has identified an increasingly distinctive culture in early modern towns typified by attitudes to political authority as communal and contingent, and to social identity as performative and self-fashioned. In London in particular, historians have pointed to a radical transformation in the city’s political culture, towards government as more pervasive and comprehensive, in reaction to rapid and dramatic urban growth after 1550. It is suggested here that the fundamental relationship between political communication and urban space is a neglected aspect of these shifts. The inherently political nature of urban space and its communicative potential made the environment an integral aspect of changing urban values. Moreover, in examining the period prior to the dramatic growth of London, it can be seen that the urban environment was already a political battlefield and that this was what made rapid change after 1550 a politically traumatic and transformative process.

The source base and methodological approaches underlying the study can be briefly summarized. The central organs of the civic government in sixteenth-century London consisted of an executive, the Mayor; a deliberative council, the Court of Aldermen; and a legislative assembly, the Common Council. The actions of these institutions were recorded

in two series of detailed records.¹ The 'Repertories' of the Court of Aldermen record the sitting and minutes of each meeting, usually twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The 'Journals' of Common Council likewise record the sessions of the city's legislative assembly, the items of business under discussion, and the text of its enactments. Interspersed between the records of each session can also be found the precepts issued on the sole authority of the mayor, and the proclamations drawn up by the mayor and aldermen. Together, volumes 1-12 of the Repertories and volumes 10-15 of the Journals provide a detailed picture of city politics across the period 1500–1550.² In reading this material, the modern notion of political culture has dictated a very different approach from older political histories, by moving the focus from the personalities and policies of elite individuals and factions to wider assumptions about who should exercise authority, the basis of its legitimacy, the responsibilities of government, and the relationship between those with and without formal political roles. Moreover, gaps in the existing literature have encouraged a more sustained study of the processes of political communication and the role of the urban environment as part of this political culture, by drawing on new methodological approaches emphasizing the performative and spatial dimensions of politics. This has led to a specific focus upon the acts of political communication, both official and unofficial, preserved in the governmental records, and greater attention to how their performance was structured by or distributed throughout the spaces and places of the city.

The historiographical context of this work is twofold – on the one hand, a specific question about the nature of political culture in sixteenth-century London; on the other, a larger question about changing attitudes to political authority and social identity in English towns across the early modern period. Since the 1960s, major works on early modern London have concentrated on the important questions of who exercised authority in the city, what the terms were in which it was justified, and how successfully this was done. Taken together they present a detailed picture of a fluid but hierarchical and co-opting merchant elite which had close ties to the royal court and landed society while remaining dedicated to life in the city.³ Insofar as vast inequalities of wealth and power were to be found together at close quarters, the elite relied on a strong rhetoric of reciprocity between governors and governed

¹ P.E. Jones, *A Guide to the Records in the Corporation of London Records Office and the Guildhall Library Muniment Room* (London, 1951); V. Harding, 'From compact city to complex metropolis: records for the history of London, 1500–1720,' in M.V. Roberts (ed.), *Archives and the Metropolis* (London, 1998), pp. 3-92.

² LMA COL/CA/01/01/01-12, COL/CC/01/01/010-15.

³ V. Harding, 'Early modern London, 1550–1700,' *London Journal* 20:2 (1995), pp. 34-45; I.W. Archer, 'The government of London, 1500–1650,' *London Journal* 26:1 (2001), pp. 19-28; V. Harding, 'Recent perspectives on early modern London,' *Historical Journal* 47:2 (2004), pp. 435-50.

to justify the status quo.⁴ The structures of neighbourhood and guild focused disparate groups upon common interests and provided effective channels of communication. At the same time, the larger institutions of the civic government underlined the exercise of authority as theoretically consensual, and the policies which the merchant elite chose to pursue were paternalistic, civic-minded, and generally responsive to popular grievances. Rioting and episodes of public disorder – while certainly reflecting the strain caused by religious division, economic crisis and demographic pressure – were not so much evidence of an impending breakdown in the system as simply more radical ways for people to remind the city’s governors of their paternalistic duties.⁵

Central to this picture of political culture in early modern London was the need for civic authority to be legitimated, and it is with this that the present thesis is primarily concerned. There were a number of reasons why civic authority should need specific legitimation. The dominant notion of authority was grounded in the personal feudal bond between paternal lord and obedient subject, where by virtue of holding a hereditary manor the lord was understood not only as owner of the means of subsistence, but also military commander, administrator of daily life, and judge in the application of customary law.⁶ Civic authority, on the other hand, was a hybrid of the communal sovereignty vested in the Husting, the former lordship of the aldermen over their wards as hereditary sokeholders, and the discretion of the elected mayor, selected from amongst the aldermen, as representative of royal authority.⁷ The control of the franchise by the guilds, the means of election to the Common Council, and the extent of participation at Congregation were all hotly contested issues until the late fourteenth century and their settlement was still being consolidated in the fifteenth century.⁸ Moreover, the mayor, aldermen and common councillors exercised authority by virtue of offices to which they were nominated and selected, rather than personal heredity. The mayoralty rotated annually and common councillors had to be re-confirmed each year; only the aldermen sat for life once selected. Although they were leaders of their guilds and controlled the large stock of city-owned real estate, only a minority of inhabitants would have personally depended for their employment or housing upon the particular individuals sitting as aldermen at any given time. And unlike the manorial lord, whose wealth and power was vested in land, the shops and merchandise of the urban elite were much more vulnerable to the depredations of angry subordinates. In this respect, great importance was attached to

⁴ F.F. Foster, *The Politics of Stability: A portrait of the rulers in Elizabethan London* (London, 1977); V. Pearl, ‘Social policy in early modern London,’ in H. Lloyd-Jones (ed.), *History and Imagination: Essays in honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper* (London, 1981), pp. 115-31.

⁵ S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 1989); I.W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991).

⁶ R.R. Davies, *Lords and Lordship in the British Isles in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2009).

⁷ G.L. Gomme, *The Governance of London* (London, 1907).

⁸ C. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and people, 1200-1500* (Oxford, 2004).

a culture of civic-mindedness and reciprocity between governors and governed, as recent historians of early modern London have shown in great detail.

However, this picture of the city's political culture as developed in the current historiography is incomplete in two important ways. First, little effort has so far been directed to understanding how this picture of legitimate civic authority was actually presented and communicated. For authority is not a given, enshrined in institutions and constitutions, but must be constantly constructed, reiterated and maintained.⁹ While much is now known about the structures of daily life and the policies pursued by the merchant elite at particular times, insufficient attention has been paid to the means by which the larger image of reciprocity between governors and governed was projected and sustained. Secondly, the inherent difficulty of establishing such a picture in sixteenth-century London has been largely overlooked. For instance, historians are now well accustomed to point to various structural factors in the city's political life as mitigating the starkness of political inequality. Emphasis has rightly been laid upon the broad extent of the freedom (as much as 75% of the adult male population), the wide participation in local officeholding (as many as 10% of householders at any one time), the reasonable expectation of upward mobility through the guild hierarchy, and the high rate of turnover among the civic elite.¹⁰ But at the same time this also had the effect of blurring and confusing the line between governors and governed. There were, moreover, a great multiplicity of hierarchies to which one could belong. The economic ladder of the guild, from apprentice through to master, was mirrored by the *cursus honorum* of civic politics, from raker in the ward to Lord Mayor, as much as by the ecclesiastical career from minor orders to bishop. And equally, these parallel hierarchies of rank were complicated by levels of wealth, acts of social display, patronage connections and professional standings which did not always match up conveniently with institutional status. As a result, it is not always easy to draw a line between those to be counted as governors, and those subject to being governed – particularly as many individuals fell into both categories simultaneously – nor could it have been readily apparent to contemporaries. Crucial, therefore, to the city's culture of reciprocity was the construction and projection of a categorical divide between governors and governed. Indeed, this greater image was all the more important given that, from the perspective of the Crown, the sole purpose of the mayoralty was to maintain order in the city. It was important that an image of robust civic authority be seen by audiences both within and without the walls.

⁹ M.J. Braddick & J. Walter (eds), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001).

¹⁰ Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 49-53, 338-40, 348; V. Pearl, 'Change and stability in seventeenth-century London,' *London Journal* 5:1 (1979), p. 16.

As noted above, modern work on the structures of everyday life and the culture of reciprocity in early modern London have made it possible to move beyond political institutions as the basis for the city's political history, looking instead to understand the wider political culture within which these institutions operated. It was important to the nature of political and social relations that the civic elite chose to finance the stockpiling of grain, fund almshouses, and uphold the interests of company members. But as this thesis emphasizes, it was an equally important fact that they *be seen* to be doing so. Political and social facts only exist insofar as they are given expression, assert themselves against rival perspectives, and maintain themselves over time. As a result, history as the study of political and social structures is necessarily a history of performances.¹¹ Attention must be paid not just to the content of political decisions, but also the manner in which those decisions were enacted, communicated and put in practice. For instance, the social order itself is constituted not by an externally imposed set of criteria, but by the actual interactions between individuals in practice. Legal codes, wealth, institutional roles and the possession of status symbols are all factors in the negotiation of social relations but do not of themselves constitute the social order. Instead, it is at the interface of interaction that identities are negotiated and constituted.¹² In this sense, understanding the nature of political *communication* is fundamental to understanding political *relations*. It was through such acts of political communication between the civic government and the city's inhabitants that civic authority was constructed and contested, that a distinction between governors and governed was asserted or denied.

With the intention of adding this extra dimension to current understandings of political culture in early modern London, this thesis is a study of the principal acts of political communication between the civic government and the urban population. Taking these acts as performances – i.e. acts carried out by people adopting certain roles before an audience – the study is concerned not with what was said so much as with how and where such communication took place. These things were significant because structural relationships were asserted through the form and place of their performance, and they contributed to the maintenance of political inequality. Just as gender difference was not a pre-existing fact but was created, maintained, and given meaning through its expression and repetition in daily life, so civic authority had to be asserted and maintained against rival concepts of authority.¹³ The act of communicating political information was therefore not only a practical action but also a symbolic performance. It was one of the acts, amongst others, which helped to create, maintain and give meaning to the difference between governors and governed. It was an

¹¹ P. Burke, 'Performing history: the importance of occasions,' *Rethinking History* 9:1 (2005), pp. 35-52.

¹² Braddick & Walter, *Negotiating Power*, p. 13.

¹³ A. Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2007).

opportunity to construct a particular image of civic authority and reiterate its presence and importance.

After the introductory chapters in Part One, these facts are demonstrated in Part Two through a series of case studies on different kinds of political communication. First of all, it is observed that the making of proclamations and the posting of their written equivalents was attended by carefully scripted ritual elements. These ritual elements provided a means to distinguish the authority on whose behalf the proclamation was being made, and this shows the importance of non-verbal signs in the communication of political messages. Moreover, the minute detail of these rituals reveals the importance which the government attached to the performative aspect of political communication as a statement of authority. An analysis of the content of civic proclamations, in the context of statutory and city law, shows furthermore the care which the mayor and aldermen took to remain within the bounds of legal legitimacy when using this mode of political action. Thus the act of proclamation was not only a practical means to disseminate information but a claim to authority and the legitimacy of its exercise by the civic government.

Political communication was not limited to the explicitly verbal media of proclamations and posted bills. Just as acts of verbal communication could be attended by non-verbal elements which contributed to the political message, so other more obviously symbolic acts – like processions – could be a powerful medium of political communication. Indeed, processions are explicitly intended as symbolic acts, undertaken by particular groups to commemorate or celebrate particular things. Therefore the nature of the group on procession, the choice of thing being celebrated and the conduct of the performance are necessarily statements designed to present or communicate a particular picture. Major processions took place in early modern London to celebrate important dates in the calendar of city life, not just religious but also political and social. They were occasions for particular communities to come together, express their solidarity and reaffirm their sense of identity. They also gave symbolic expression to political relationships, like that between the City and the Crown, the mayor and his fellow aldermen, or the civic government and the liverymen of the trade companies. While these ritual performances have little to do with the course of daily civic politics, they reveal much about wider political assumptions. Detailed study of the city's many processions suggests that the civic government was at pains to play a leading role in major events which celebrated the city as a spiritual, political and urban community. The careful orchestration of these performances highlights the importance which the urban elite attached to processions as a way of promoting a vision of the city as a community united by civic authority.

The public punishment of offenders by the civic government was another opportunity for a particular image of civic authority to be constructed and projected. In general, public punishment was intended to fulfil a range of different functions. It was demonstrative, highlighting the rule or norm that had been violated; it was punitive and preventative, hoping to dissuade others from committing the same offence; and it was reintegrative, demonstrating the repentance of the offender before his neighbours and his desire to be reaccepted into the community. However, public punishment was also an authoritative act, which laid claim to authority within the community and gave substance to the force at its command. In pursuit of these ends, the authorities made use of an elaborate symbolic language when designing how offenders ought to be punished. Non-verbal ritual elements played an important role in communicating the messages about norms, community, and individual action. Moreover, as a performance, public punishment advertised the nature and scope of the civic government's concerns. It was an important means by which the civic government could stamp its authority upon the city and represent itself as active and effective, both before the royal court at Westminster and the wider urban population.

However, acts of political communication were not only a way for the civic government to construct and project an image of its own authority; they were also sites for contesting authority and its particular representations. Modern historians have highlighted that those formally excluded from power were not apolitical but were involved in an ongoing negotiation with those in authority. Popular politics was not simply reactive and episodic but active and continuous, even if the means of popular political expression were restricted to such weapons of the weak as obstruction, disruption, anonymous threats and collective action. But as Part Three of this thesis attempts to show, when contesting the status quo in early modern London, the weapons of popular politics were directly focused upon the acts of official political communication. People took the performances of the authorities and put them to their own uses, copied their style for seditious purposes, or sought to turn them on their head. Three case studies explore this fact. In the ritualized performance of submitting petitions to the authorities, the rhetoric of official acts and proclamations was appropriated and redeployed to achieve the ends of individual petitioners. In the posting of anonymous libels and seditious bills, the act of pinning up official proclamations and written notices was appropriated and inverted as a means to communicate resistance. And in face-to-face confrontations with superiors, the discourse and authority of the council chamber could be appropriated and subverted by the language of the street and the threat of collective action, in direct challenge to the institutions of civic government. Taken together, these things show the importance of political communication to an understanding of political culture in the city. Both the urban elite and the wider population were aware that the status quo rested

to some extent in the picture of governors and governed put forward in and through official acts of communication. It was here that authority was constructed and contested.

At the same time, this thesis sets out to show that political communication had an important spatial dimension. Recent theoretical works have shown that spatial relationships are also political and social, and thus that the spatial organization of communities constitutes a battlefield for competing interests. From this perspective, rather than being an empty container in which meaningful things exist and actions take place, space is itself a meaningful dimension of political and social relations. While theoretical understandings of space as inherently meaningful can be traced in the fields of philosophy, sociology and anthropology from the early twentieth century onwards, the dominance of an empirical and cartesian methodology in history discouraged for a long time the adoption of these ideas outside the specialist sub-disciplines of historical geography and architectural history. A growing group of historians now take a more sophisticated approach to the spatial dimension of early modern society, but current conceptual models continue to treat space in a limited way.¹⁴ Instead, as the case studies in this thesis suggest, space was an important and active dimension of all political communication in early modern London. Each mode of communication was spatially structured and it can be seen that the authorities paid great attention to the spatial aspect of these performances. Indeed, this spatial dimension was crucial to the communication of any political message itself, not only in the case of processions but also in the making of proclamations and the conduct of public punishment. Likewise, popular acts of appropriation, inversion and direct confrontation were sensitive to the spatial dimension of official political communication and made use of the urban environment in contests with the civic government.

However, more than just that, the form of the urban environment was itself an ongoing statement of the authority and control which the civic government claimed to exercise over the city. In the regulation of building encroachment, cart traffic, street cleaning, nightwalking and countless other aspects of urban administration, the civic government asserted the presence of its authority and the nature of the community over which it professed to govern. In this sense, control of the urban environment was itself a form of official political communication which projected a particular image of civic authority, just as popular action which threatened the authorized map of the city – physical or mental – was a means of resisting and contesting that authority. In this sense, the spatial dimension of political communication played an active role in the historical processes of continuity and change, and constituted an important aspect of political culture in early Tudor London.

¹⁴ M. Fantoni, G. Gorse & R. Malcolm Smuts (eds), *The Politics of Space: European courts, 1500–1750* (Rome, 2009); B. Kumin (ed.), *Political Space in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Farnham, 2009).

These reflections on the nature of the city's political culture, 1500–1550, are also intended as a contribution to the broader question of changing political and social attitudes in London and English towns in the century after 1550. The works of Jonathan Barry, Robert Tittler and Phil Withington have established that the towns of early modern England were developing a distinctive political and social culture in this period. Barry has highlighted the distinctive social institutions which developed in towns and described the particular social values and behavioural norms – later associated with the middling sort – which they encouraged.¹⁵ Tittler was the first to show that English towns were not actually in decline in the sixteenth century, but rather that the century after 1540 was a period of growth in the corporate urban network. Moreover, he has pointed to the elaboration of a specifically civic political culture and identified factors particular to towns themselves to account for this.¹⁶ Phil Withington has extended both of these pictures by demonstrating that the citizens of corporate boroughs were developing a specific conceptual framework in this period and creating a political and social culture that was distinct to early modern towns. Citizens, he has shown, saw civic authority as communal in nature and locally autonomous, even if the dominant discourse of landed society saw urban magistrates as mere functionaries of royal government. Moreover, citizens developed an attitude to social identity that emphasized the agency which individuals could exercise in shaping their own place in the social order.¹⁷

In addition to these works on England's provincial towns, attention has also been turned to describing and explaining the changes which took place in the political culture of the capital across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In *Lost Londons: change, crime and control in the capital city, 1550–1660* (2008), Paul Griffiths sets out to describe a transformation in political culture, towards governance as a more proactive, pervasive and constant presence in city life. In the face of a constant threat of crisis, urban governors abandoned the early humanist optimism of perfectible human institutions and instead developed an attitude to governance as the ongoing identification and mitigation of problems, which would otherwise lead to the collapse of the social and political fabric. As Griffiths says, 'magistrates came to accept that London would always "swarm",' and 'a tacit fatalism spread through the corridors of power,' 'but this did not stop them from trying to keep their teeming city under control.' In fact, 'the dawning change was a gradual, grudging acceptance of this' as being normal.¹⁸ In a sense, the governors of early modern London came to see the maintenance of the social and

¹⁵ J. Barry, 'Bourgeois collectivism? Urban association and the middling sort,' in J. Barry & C.W. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, society and politics in England, 1550–1800* (London, 1994), pp. 84–112.

¹⁶ R. Tittler, 'The incorporation of boroughs, 1540–1558,' *History* 62 (1977), pp. 24–42; idem, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and political culture, 1540–1640* (Oxford, 1998).

¹⁷ P. Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and freemen in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁸ P. Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, crime and control in the capital city, 1550–1660* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 435.

political order, and hence their own interests, as predicated upon responsible and responsive government. As part of this transformation in political culture, there developed a new sense of the accountability of government, at least with respect to the independent middling householders with whom the merchant elite now saw themselves in partnership together as part of the 'better sort'.

However, in accounting for these developments in both towns and cities, one important aspect of life in early modern urban communities has been mostly overlooked – the spatial dimension of the urban environment. According to Barry, the institutions of mutual association which were typical of such towns, and which came to emphasize the values of prudence and self-government among an emerging middling sort, had been necessitated by the vagaries of urban economies in an agricultural society. For Tittler, it was the growing resources of corporate boroughs, the loss of pre-Reformation rituals of community, and a tightening of oligarchic rule in the face of economic and demographic pressure that enabled and demanded a new kind of political culture for the legitimation of civic authority. In Withington's analysis, the practices required of individuals by the institutions of late medieval corporate self-government had encouraged a humanist attitude to political authority and social identity, which was then greatly animated by the reception of a Ciceronian culture of active citizenship in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. While the narrative which Griffiths tells is intimately bound up with the demographic and physical growth of London, he sees the transformation of political culture mainly as a reaction to the governmental challenges which it created. Moreover, he identifies a crisis of confidence over the worth of London citizenship in the 1620s as the fundamental crux of change. Each of these pictures constitutes an important aspect in the development of a political and social culture specific to early modern cities and towns, yet each is richer in its explanatory power when the spatial dimension of the urban environment is also taken into account.

For instance, while the demands of company officeholding and guild commensality were important arenas of socialization, the kind of sociability which Barry describes was not limited to guilds. It is seen more generally in the moderation of personal behaviour required for associating in groups of one's peers as opposed to vertical hierarchies, which was made possible by the proximity of elite households in the urban landscape and which first became typical of urban social life in the fifteenth century, before its wider appropriation as a courtly culture of civility.¹⁹ Likewise, the management of communal resources to which Tittler has pointed was not limited to incorporated boroughs; the legal fiction of incorporation gave special focus to this administration, but mutual dependence and the need to manage it was

¹⁹ A. Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing codes of conduct in early modern England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 113-18.

fundamental to all urban communities, which relied on cooperation to maintain markets and walls as well as mitigate the risks of fire and disease. Moreover, the substitution of secular for religious rituals was not essential to the new civic political culture, because traditional processions continued to satisfy the needs of merchant oligarchies in sixteenth-century Italian city-states very successfully.²⁰ It was simply the representation of the civic community through performance in urban space that was considered important. Withington is right to look to the institutions of late medieval corporate government as cultivating humanist attitudes to authority and identity, but life in the urban environment itself contributed to this as well. If man's confidence in his ability to shape the world and himself was encouraged by the experience of corporate citizenship, his ability to do so was already suggested by the urban environment he had fashioned and the security it gave him. In the late sixteenth century, humanist texts remained limited to elite circles, but life in the city was common to all, and gave these attitudes a much broader relevance.

Finally, Griffiths has evoked the changing attitudes to government which characterized London in the early modern period, and rightly identifies these with the experience of urban growth. It became normal, even expected, that government existed to actively predict, prevent and solve a series of problems which seemed to threaten the imminent collapse of the social fabric. As a matter of ongoing urgency, it was expected to secure the safe supply of food and water, provide poor relief and employment, take care for public health and sanitation, maintain roads and infrastructure, and uphold law and order. In doing so it was also now accustomed to comprehensively count the resident population, license retailers, monitor behaviour, and control the flow of people and goods, in a way that made the presence of government more constant and pervasive. It took a holistic view of society and was increasingly regarded not only as omni-competent, but as omni-responsible. In this sense, the civic government was also legitimating itself in a new way. By extending the sphere of its responsibility and emphasizing the importance of doing so, civic authority sought to justify its own existence.

Griffiths is right to relate this transformation to the experience of urbanization, but the existing traditions and spatial dimension of the city's political culture must also be understood as an important part of this process. On the one hand, developments in the urban environment were already presenting and communicating a more holistic and totalizing image of civic government. On the other, changing political culture was not just a reaction to new physical developments. As this thesis demonstrates, the spatial dimension of the urban environment was already a politically-charged field of contest before the period of

²⁰ E. Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ, 1981); R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980).

dramatic growth. Indeed, it was this fact that made urban change such a powerful political challenge and demanded new strategies of governance as a means to legitimate civic authority and the power of the urban elite. In all these ways, therefore, the spatial dimension of the urban environment emerges as a crucial context for understanding the changing political culture of cities and towns in early modern England.

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

In approaching the political world of early Tudor London through acts of communication and their place within the urban environment, this thesis draws upon two existing methodological concepts – ‘political culture’ and ‘urban space’. With regard to the first, my case studies take several things for granted – that politics is not limited to political institutions, but takes place through a wider political language; that authority is not a given, but must be continuously asserted and maintained; and that those formally excluded from power are not apolitical but engaged in ongoing negotiation with those in authority. However, within this paradigm, it also seeks to place new focus on the way that the conduct of politics, the construction of authority, and the negotiation of power relations specifically took place through acts of communication. While existing studies have discussed at least some of these practices individually, political communication has not been treated as a whole nor has its role in the city’s wider political culture been addressed. Likewise, with respect to ‘urban space’, this thesis treats the urban environment as a battlefield for competing political interests. It assumes that space is not an empty, geometric area but a field which is both shaped by, and itself capable of shaping, people and society. While an increasing number of works are now addressing themselves to the city’s urban landscape, historians have remained more focused on space as a reflection of society rather than as an active agent, and the spatial dimension of the city’s political culture in the early modern period is yet to receive substantial treatment. This chapter outlines the two concepts by reviewing how and when each developed into established methodological approaches.

It is now generally agreed among historians that formal constitutional structures of government do not of themselves constitute the framework within which politics is conducted, but are one aspect of a wider political ‘culture’ which provides the language and values for negotiating political interests. Historical writing on early modern England did not begin using ‘political culture’ as an explicit historiographical concept until the 1980s, but within a decade it had become an established feature of contemporary historical approaches. The culminating moment in this process came in the mid nineties, when four separate volumes appeared, all dedicated to defining and advancing the term.¹ However, this development of political culture into a coherent historiographical concept was the product of seven separate strands of historical work each of which had been developing over a much

¹ K. Sharpe & P. Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, 1994); S. Amussen & M. Kishlansky (eds), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1995); D. Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge, 1995); R. Malcolm Smuts (ed.), *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in politics and political culture* (Cambridge, 1996).

longer period of time. First, historians in the mid-twentieth century had begun studying how political institutions operated in practice, not just theory, leading to greater awareness of their implication in social and cultural networks, while secondly the revisionist movement looked beyond central politics to investigate relationships between centre and locality. Thirdly, history from below re-evaluated popular protest, political participation, and the nature of power, while fourthly new ideas about the state now emphasized the role of local administration in forming larger political and social attitudes. Three further strands were developed in conjunction with neighbouring disciplines like anthropology and critical studies, which encouraged historians to see things differently. The nature of kingship and lordship came to be seen, not as simple facts, but as practices to be cultivated and contested; abstract political ideas in treatises were increasingly thought of as dependent on other texts and contexts for their meaning; while images, objects and performances were reinterpreted as also constituting 'texts', and hence as implicated in the circulation and negotiation of political ideas, attitudes, and positions.

To begin with, older ideas about English history as a clash between abstract constitutional principles were increasingly challenged and revised by those who looked more closely at how political individuals and institutions operated in practice. Although later historians have often caricatured his idea of politics, it was Geoffrey Elton who first turned attention towards the process by which central policies were implemented throughout the country, re-thinking institutions as 'points of contact' between centre and locality.² This was further elaborated by others like Penry Williams, who appreciated that the existence of the state had to be actively maintained and that the practices of institutions were an important element in this.³ But Elton underestimated the importance of social institutions, like the Court and the Household, in the formation of policy, the distribution of patronage, and the operation of government. By emphasizing the extent to which court culture, social networks, and entertainments were implicated in the affairs of government, his critics greatly broadened the notion of politics.⁴ One of the earliest pictures of what historians of Tudor government meant by this broader 'political culture' was brought together by John Guy in a chapter of that title in his influential work, *Tudor England*, in 1988. Although it did not take a critical approach to the concept, the chapter provided a survey of the much wider range of texts

² G.R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The enforcement of the Reformation in the age of Thomas Cromwell* (London, 1972); 'Tudor government: the points of contact,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, 24-26 (1974-76), pp. 183-200, 195-211, 211-28.

³ P. Williams, *The Tudor Regime* (Oxford, 1979).

⁴ D. Starkey, 'Representation through intimacy: a study of the symbolism of monarchy and court office in early modern England,' in I. Lewis (ed.), *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-cultural studies in symbolism* (London, 1977), pp. 187-224; C. Coleman & D. Starkey (ed.), *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the history of Tudor government and administration* (Oxford, 1986); G.R. Elton, 'Tudor Government,' *Historical Journal* 31:2 (1988), pp. 425-34; D. Starkey, 'A reply – Tudor Government: the facts?' *Historical Journal* 31:4 (1988), pp. 921-31.

which political historians were now turning to for an understanding of the ideas and assumptions underlying the conduct of national politics.⁵

This new method is best exemplified by work on the reign of Elizabeth, and it is here that it has had its greatest impact. For example, Stephen Alford explicitly took this approach in his study of William Cecil, where his aim was not to tell the narrative of political decisions and actions, but to delineate the structures of the Elizabethan 'polity' – a broader set of values and assumptions, as well as institutions and social networks, which provided the framework for the conduct of politics. As he himself described it, his work was concerned for 'the political creed of William Cecil', 'the preoccupations of Elizabethan governors', their 'political world and mentality'. It was 'Cecil's understanding of his own position in the polity and the relationship between the Queen, her Council, and the Lords and Commons in Parliament,' that needed to be understood before his political actions could be assessed.⁶ This approach built on the programmatic works of Patrick Collinson and John Guy, who had set about describing the larger cultural assumptions about politics, authority and the state underlying people's attitudes at the time.⁷

In a separate strand of thought, revisionist historians were also reorienting the interpretation of politics away from abstract ideological conflicts towards a more localised, contingent, and context-driven narrative of events. On the one hand, seventeenth-century historians were beginning to stress the general consensus on the nature of authority which prevailed throughout society at the time, while describing the conflict of the Civil War as beginning in specific disagreements among the elite over finance, war, and religion.⁸ Moreover, the political allegiance of those at the centre of national politics seemed to be determined not so much by ideological commitment to the royal or parliamentary cause as by the local rivalries for status and influence in the individual counties where magnates had their seats.⁹ The local political landscape of each county community was therefore an inseparable part of the larger

⁵ J. Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988).

⁶ S. Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 9; see also S.L. Adams, 'Favourites and factions at the Elizabethan court,' in R.G. Asch & A.M. Birke (eds), *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The court at the beginning of the modern age c.1450-1650* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 265-87.

⁷ P. Collinson, 'The monarchical republic of Queen Elizabeth I,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 69:2 (1987), pp. 394-424; 'The exclusion crisis and the Elizabethan polity,' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 84 (1994), pp. 51-92; J. Guy, '1590s: the second reign of Elizabeth,' in idem (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and culture in the last decade* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 1-19.

⁸ C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973); one notes again that it was Geoffrey Elton who first pointed the way – G. Elton, 'A high road to civil war?' in C.H. Carter (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation* (London, 1965), pp. 325-47.

⁹ D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1971); K. Sharpe (ed.), *Faction and Parliaments: Essays on early Stuart history* (Oxford, 1978); C. Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621-9* (Oxford, 1979).

political narrative.¹⁰ On the other hand, in the sixteenth century, a similar approach was being taken to the history of the Reformation. Studies from the perspective of individual counties revealed that religious change at the local level was slower and more dependent on the specific circumstances of each county than otherwise appeared from events at the centre.¹¹ This also revealed that traditional rituals, places, objects and texts were bound up with social and political relationships in local communities, and that these were much more important in dictating the acceptance or rejection of religious change than the arguments taking place at Westminster.¹² Therefore, in both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, historians had concluded that local values and relationships were just as important to an understanding of central politics as were national events to an understanding of local communities. Indeed, centre and locality were bound up together as complementary parts of a larger political culture.

Social history and 'history from below' also made major contributions to this concept. Whereas it had long been assumed that peasants and townsmen were too poor and uneducated to engage with real politics, and that the occasional riot and rebellion was a mere act of desperation, historians began to reassess the traditional attitude which saw popular agitation as something chaotic and uncontrolled. George Rudé, for instance, showed that most crowds were actually structured groups, carrying out violence against specific targets for particular reasons, which dispersed when their aim had been achieved. In the same vein, E.P. Thompson articulated the popular value system by which the actions of governors were judged, and which quite rationally determined the nature of popular grievances, the manner of expressing dissent, and the means of achieving redress.¹³ In the context of early modern England, scholars further demonstrated that popular uprisings were in fact usually conservative. People at all social levels were to some extent in agreement about the nature

¹⁰ Early studies of the county community emphasized its insularity from or opposition to the centre – A. Everitt, *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion* (London, 1969), P. Zagorin, *The Court and the Country: The beginning of the English Revolution* (London, 1969), J. Morrill, *Cheshire, 1630-1660: County government and society during the English Revolution* (London, 1974), A. Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex, 1600-1660* (London, 1975); but further studies quickly revealed the divisions within counties, and their dialectical relationship with politics at the centre – D. Underdown, *Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum* (Newton Abbot, 1973); C. Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (London, 1974).

¹¹ R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex: A study of the enforcement of the religious settlement, 1558-1603* (Leicester, 1969); C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London, 1975); D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and religion in an English county, 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986).

¹² C. Haigh, 'The continuity of catholicism in the English Reformation,' *Past & Present* 93 (1981), pp. 37-69; M.E. James, 'Ritual, drama and social body in the late medieval English town,' *Past & Present* 98 (1983), pp. 3-29; J. Bossy, 'The mass as a social institution, 1200-1700,' *Past & Present* 100 (1983), pp. 29-61; S. Brigden, 'Religion and social obligation in early sixteenth-century London,' *Past & Present* 103 (1984), pp. 67-112; E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

¹³ G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A study of popular disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York, 1964); E.P. Thompson, 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century,' *Past & Present* 50 (1971), pp. 76-136.

of society as hierarchical and paternalistic – a necessary partnership between governors and governed, for the sake of law and order, in which the former owed a duty of care to the latter in exchange for their work and obedience.¹⁴ Uprisings were a way of reminding governors to fulfil their half of the partnership, rather than desperate attempts to destroy its inequalities. In the vast majority of cases, people rose in defence of long-established rights, which they believed would be upheld by those in authority, and not in demand for fundamental change.¹⁵ In fact, most ‘popular’ uprisings first looked for a member of the elite to champion their cause, and sought only to bring grievances against local officials to the attention of a higher authority.¹⁶ Riot and rebellion could therefore be seen as a controlled and rational means of political expression available to those who were otherwise excluded from formal politics.

These works made ‘popular politics’ a field of study in its own right, but in doing so they also produced further research which questioned the picture of fundamental conservatism. People, it was discovered, were not totally excluded from a political system which they periodically sought to tear down, but were (subordinate) partners in a system in which they actively participated.¹⁷ Historians therefore began to see popular engagement with politics as something ongoing, and not just a series of episodic, isolated incidents provoked by desperate circumstances.¹⁸ Instead, riot and rebellion simply became the more extreme acts on a spectrum of political participation ranging through armed resistance, targeted violence, vandalism, anonymous threats, petitions for help, and shows of support for popular leaders.¹⁹ In this sense, even if an unequal hierarchy was accepted as natural and necessary, its configuration and operation involved constant ‘negotiation’ between superiors and subordinates, over whether each was properly fulfilling its agreed role.²⁰ The power of the elite was not unfettered, but instead limited in its means of coercion, bound by ideals of paternal care, and subject to resistance which it would rather avoid. However, this also

¹⁴ P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London, 1965), pp. 173-8; A. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion* (Leicester, 1966), pp. 48-53; idem, *Change in the Provinces: The seventeenth century* (Leicester, 1969), pp. 30-32; W.R.D. Jones, *The Tudor Commonwealth, 1529-1559* (London, 1970), pp. 18-23, 43-64.

¹⁵ R.B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social protest and popular disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford, 1988).

¹⁶ M.E. James, ‘Obedience and dissent in Henrician England: the Lincolnshire rebellion, 1536,’ *Past & Present* 48 (1970), pp. 3-78; A. Fletcher, *Tudor Rebellions*, 2nd edn (London, 1973); M.E. James, *English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485-1642* (Past & Present Society, Supplement 3, 1978), Ch. ii.3, ‘Tudor revolt’; the first extended statement of this approach was given in the introduction to P. Slack (ed.), *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984), which reprinted a series of groundbreaking articles.

¹⁷ J. Walter & K. Wrightson, ‘Dearth and the social order in early modern England,’ *Past & Present* 71 (1976), pp. 22-42; P. Clark, ‘Popular protest and disturbance in Kent, 1558-1640,’ *Economic History Review* 29:4 (1976), pp. 365-82.

¹⁸ T. Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and politics* (Cambridge, 1987).

¹⁹ J. Walter, ‘A “Rising of the People”? The Oxfordshire rising of 1596,’ *Past & Present* 107 (1985), pp. 90-143; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*.

²⁰ Braddick & Walter, *Negotiating Power*.

highlighted the fact that conformity by subordinates – whether in obedience or controlled dissent – need not imply acceptance of the system but only a calculated act of self-interest in the realities of the situation, for the playing field was never equal.²¹

Together these insights contributed to the concept of political culture because they highlighted that the wider population was implicated to some extent in the political process, and that power was exercised with reference to a set of shared values which the political elite itself did not fully control. The implications of this were increasingly demonstrated by works which studied the political dimensions of popular culture, while stressing that elite and popular cultures were closely intertwined.²² Indeed, although excluded from formal political roles, the social rituals and cultural activities of non-elites were saturated with ideas about community, order, and justice, which made them a ready means of expressing dissent and gave them a constant political dimension.²³ But political engagement, of course, relies on news of events, an understanding of their implications for one's interests, and a notion that they can be changed. Such studies therefore were only made possible by a new sensitivity to the ways that information about local, and even national, politics could circulate.²⁴ Engaging with the legal system, listening to proclamations, watching royal pageantry, observing market regulation, and participating in local administration could all communicate the principles of the political system, the contemporary conflicts, and their local implications.²⁵ Likewise, rumour, ballads, seditious libel, and prophecies not only gave voice to the variety of political positions on a particular issue, but also provided individuals with the opportunity to safely give their own opinion by modifying them anonymously as they passed them along.²⁶ Moreover, governors took these popular forces seriously – they negotiated with rebels, appeased rioters, collected prophecies, and valued their own public image. Therefore, it was

²¹ A. Wood, "Poore men woll speke one daye": plebeian languages of deference and defiance in England,' in T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 67-98.

²² B. Sharp, 'Popular protest in seventeenth-century England,' in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1985), pp. 271-308; T. Harris, 'Problematising popular culture,' in idem (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c.1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 1-27.

²³ D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular politics and culture in England* (Oxford, 1985); D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National memory and the Protestant calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989); R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The ritual year* (Oxford, 1994).

²⁴ C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen: the problem of popular political consciousness in the seventeenth century,' in A. Fletcher & J. Stevenson (eds), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 166-95; R. Cust, 'News and politics in early seventeenth-century England,' *Past & Present* 112 (1986), pp. 60-90; T. Harris, 'The problem of "popular political culture" in seventeenth-century London,' *History of European Ideas* 10:1 (1989), pp. 43-58.

²⁵ T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001).

²⁶ A. Fox, 'Prophecies and politics in the reign of Henry VIII,' in A. Fox & J. Guy (eds), *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, politics, and reform, 1500-1550* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 77-94; A. Bellany, 'Raylinge rymes and vaunting verse: libellous politics in early Stuart England, 1603-1628,' in Sharpe & Lake, *Culture and Politics* (1994), pp. 285-310; T. Cogswell, 'Underground verse and the transformation of early Stuart political culture,' in Kishlansky & Amussen (eds), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics* (1995), pp. 277-300; P. Croft, 'Libels, popular literacy and public opinion in early modern England,' *Historical Research* 167 (1995), pp. 266-85.

concluded, an understanding of central politics and institutions must also involve a study of the values and perceptions of those excluded from formal politics.

With post-revisionists of the Civil War and Reformation treating national politics as a dialectic between centre and locality, and the new history of popular politics uncovering the extent of popular participation, historians of social change and state formation were also radically extending the notion of the political. Although the study of popular politics had demonstrated that ordinary people were engaged in a continuous negotiation with those in authority, it was still possible to view these struggles as simply the 'micro politics' of local communities. However, new concepts of the state, drawn from modern sociology, were increasingly coming to see it as being present in its personnel and processes, not just its institutions, from the heights of the Crown-in-Parliament down to the humblest village constable. From this perspective, leading historians were calling for 'a new and extended political history,' along 'the bottom line of early modern government,' because the roles of local parish officials were 'as much political as administrative in nature'. Such an approach, it was suggested, would reveal 'how nine thousand parishes composed, at a higher level, a single political society'.²⁷ This move had begun with a re-evaluation of the work of local officials – the county gentry, of course, who acted as magistrates, but also the much lower officials like constables, churchwardens and parish overseers.²⁸ Centralization and the growth of the state came to be seen as a process of cultural change, an aggregate of the day-to-day mechanisms of fiscal and military administration taking place at the local level.²⁹ The result was a new field of investigation into 'the politics of the parish' which appreciated the 'social depth' of politics, and was concerned for 'the political dimensions of everyday life,' whereby each parish was a unique variant in the wider mosaic of local communities which constituted the state as a whole.³⁰

Neighbouring disciplines like anthropology and critical studies further influenced the concept of political culture as used by historians of early modern England in three ways. First, the anthropological study of power structures in non-western societies had been highlighting, since the early twentieth century, the importance of rituals and performances to the maintenance of forms of authority such as kingship. Within history, this was first taken

²⁷ P. Collinson, *De Republica Anglorum: or, history with the politics put back* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 15, 30-5.

²⁸ K. Wrightson, 'Two concepts of order: justices, constables and jurymen in seventeenth-century England,' in J. Brewer & J. Styles (eds), *An Ungovernable People: The English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1980), pp. 21-46; A. Fletcher, *Reform in the Provinces: The government of Stuart England* (New Haven, CT, 1986).

²⁹ Corrigan & Sayer, *English state formation*; J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, money and the English state* (London, 1989); M.J. Braddick, 'State formation and social change in early modern England: a problem stated and approaches suggested,' *Social History* 16 (1991), pp. 1-17.

³⁰ K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England,' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 11.

up by scholars of medieval Europe, who re-examined the function and importance of the rites attached to kingship during the middle ages.³¹ In doing so, they drew attention to the authority of kingship as contingent upon the symbolic functions which kings performed in society, and not just a fact to be accepted independently of the way they conducted themselves. This new approach to kingship as a ‘practice’, whose successful performance before the relevant audience was necessary for the maintenance of authority, revolutionized the study of medieval and early modern England. Studies of late medieval kingship now became concerned for ‘the ways and means of gaining and keeping power’, the strategies behind ‘the exercise of royal authority’, and ‘the practice of kingship’.³² Works on the gentry in their county communities – although sometimes obscuring their role in national politics – now highlighted the nature of ‘lordship’ as a similar kind of practice.³³ The actions of those in authority – high or low – were constrained by the expectations of their subjects and the need to play their part accordingly, which therefore constituted one part of a wider political culture.³⁴

From a different direction, a new generation of scholars were turning at that time to literary studies for a new way of reading political texts. Rather than taking political treatises in isolation from the worlds in which they were written, historians of political thought were coming to appreciate that the meaning of an idea in a given text was dependent on how related ideas were being used in other texts which were circulating throughout society at that time.³⁵ For instance, although a word such as ‘king’, ‘counsel’, or ‘constitution’ might equally appear in texts of the fourteenth, sixteenth or eighteenth centuries, the same word could denote greatly different things in different periods as attitudes to nobility, law, parliament, and other things changed. A single word or idea, therefore, did not denote some independent thing or concept, but a set of relationships between a series of related words and ideas.³⁶ This interconnectedness between words, and their reliance for meaning on the

³¹ M. Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges* (Strasbourg, 1922); E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A study in mediaeval political theology* (Princeton, NJ, 1957).

³² C.D. Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), p. xi (quote); B.P. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981); R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: The exercise of royal authority, 1422-1461* (London, 1981); C.D. Ross, *Richard III* (London, 1981); G.L. Harriss (ed.), *Henry V: The practice of kingship* (Oxford, 1985).

³³ N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire gentry in the fourteenth century* (Oxford, 1981); S. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Chesterfield, 1983); S.J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The greater gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991); C. Moreton, *The Townsends and their World: Gentry, law and land in Norfolk, 1450-1551* (Oxford, 1992); C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A study of Warwickshire landed society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992).

³⁴ J.R. Lander, *The Limitations of English Monarchy in the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1989); R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of society in late medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994).

³⁵ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1957); idem, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 1975).

³⁶ Q. Skinner, ‘Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas,’ *History and Theory* 8 (1969), pp. 3-53; ‘Motives, intentions and the interpretation of texts,’ *New Literary History* 3:2 (1972), pp. 393-408; ‘Some problems in the analysis of political thought and action,’ *Political Theory* 2:3 (1974), pp. 277-303.

structure of a wider web, encouraged historians to think not of politics but of ‘political discourse’, a system of language and ideas with a dominant structure, yet one that was capable of being challenged and changed.³⁷ This opened up new avenues for historians, because it suggested that a much wider range of texts than just treatises and statutes could have a political dimension. If political ideas were not independent but rather interlinked with other ideas about society, then court masques, love poetry, and civic pageantry could all be vehicles for contemporary political comment, even where their subject matter was not explicitly political.³⁸ In fact, literary and critical studies were also extending the notion of a ‘text’ to include any representation, object, or performance whose depictions, symbols, associations or even structure made them capable of bearing meaning. From this perspective, not only were the verbal media of books, pamphlets, songs and plays capable of having a political dimension, but also paintings, dress, buildings, and household objects.³⁹

The concept of ‘political culture’ as developed in the mid-nineties for application in early modern English history drew on all these separate but interrelated historiographical trajectories and the present thesis is firmly positioned within this tradition. It proceeds on the assumption that the authority of the civic government was not something that could simply be taken for granted – it had to be constructed as legitimate within the matrix of values broadly shared by the city’s wider population. To do so, its authority had to be performed and put on show, and this is explored through chapters on the civic government’s use of proclamations, processions, and public punishments. At the same time, those excluded from formal politics were capable of putting the shared language and ideas of legitimacy to their own uses. This is explored through chapters on the appropriation, inversion, and subversion of elite representations of the city’s social and political order. In doing so, it is suggested that acts of political communication, and the way they took place, are central to an understanding of the city’s political history.

Early Tudor London was not only a political community, but also a city of streets and neighbourhoods, and this thesis is further based on a particular understanding of the space which that community occupied. In practical terms, this means that when the political

³⁷ P. Fidler & T. Mayer (eds), *Political Thought and the Tudor Commonwealth: Deep structure, discourse and disguise* (London, 1992); N. Phillipson & Q. Skinner (eds), *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1993).

³⁸ K. Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The politics of literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge, 1987); K. Sharpe, *Politics and Ideas in Early Stuart England* (London, 1989).

³⁹ R. Strong, *Splendour at Court: Renaissance spectacle and the theatre of power* (London, 1973); R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia, PA, 1987); L. Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991); S. Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London, 1992).

culture of the city is considered, this will also involve a consideration of the spatial organization of urban life. On the one hand, this refers to its material setting – the natural topography of the city, especially its rivers, hills, and springs; the urban plan, with its network of streets, markets, and encircling wall; the shape given to the streetscape by the architecture of large buildings, arrangement of houses, and design of facades; as well as the internal layout of the rooms in those buildings. On the other hand, it means thinking about how people were arranged throughout these spaces, how they lived their lives there, and why – where the rich and poor lived, how occupations were distributed throughout the city, which places were the most important to people, what they did there, and what they associated those places with. Doing so, it is suggested, will open up a new dimension to the city's political culture which has been largely neglected.

In this respect, the thesis is founded on a second methodological approach which treats space as a battlefield for competing interests. This perspective was not pioneered by historians, but evolved throughout the twentieth century in other disciplines like geography, sociology, and anthropology. On the one hand, it was shown that people shape space, such that the environment comes to reflect the social and political structures of a given society. On the other, it was argued that space also shapes people, because the assumptions implicit in a particular spatial organization become imprinted upon those who live within it. Moreover, in the 1980s, a synthesis of these two approaches revealed the relationship between society and space as a dynamic, ongoing, two-way process. In this sense, urban space came to be seen as a battlefield where competing groups seek to impose their own assumptions on spatial organization in order to reinforce particular social and political structures. This concept has recently been taken up by historians, but only to a partial extent. Each of these ideas will be addressed in turn.

First, modern thinking about space and society began with the observational fieldwork of social reformers on the stark patterns of socio-economic segregation appearing in nineteenth-century European cities. Such works first appeared in Britain, which already had a long tradition of public health reporting and social surveys, from the seventeenth-century Bills of Mortality to the study of infectious diseases during sanitary reform in the 1840s, and it was also the first country to industrialize. Beginning with the descriptive work of Engels on Manchester, there soon followed Booth's quantitative surveys of London and Rowntree's mappings of York, giving rise to wider statistical studies like that of Adna Weber. They were the first to appreciate the geographical patterns of socio-economic attributes, and

acknowledge that aspects of industrial society had produced them.⁴⁰ On the basis of such work, theorists like Max Weber began to consider how forces in society had produced cities of different types at different times. While in antiquity cities had been the residence of social and political elites, living off the income of farmland and patronizing city life, the transformation of the ancient world produced towns sustained by craftsmen supplying goods to nobles in the countryside. In this sense, Weber was concerned for how political forces shaped levels of urbanization, the distribution of social power, and relative investment in the urban environment.⁴¹ This kind of thinking exerted an increasing force on the intellectual thought of the time, and it made the identification of patterns and their explanation in terms of political, social and religious forces a central aspect of understanding society.

Such work greatly emphasized the need for studies of the layout of cities in different periods and cultures. Armin von Gerkan produced the first comprehensive survey of ancient town planning, arguing that the form of the ancient Greek city was a direct product of its democratic, republican character – an interpretation soon followed by others like Glotz. About the same time, Pierre Lavedan was beginning a much larger project, a total history of European urban form, which suggested that urban planning always reflected the spirit of its age.⁴² However, it was also being recognized that man's tendency to shape the environment was by no means limited to cities. In the 1920s, geographers like Carl Sauer argued that landscapes were not natural but shaped by people, being imbued with the values and assumptions of a particular culture. This perspective rose to dominance in the American geographical tradition and added great strength to the idea that people shape their environment, whether urban or rural.⁴³ The same was also found to be true of individual buildings. In the 1940s, architectural historians like Sigfried Giedion were beginning to consider the 'spatial' aspect of buildings and not just the design of columns and facades. He showed that buildings structured the perception of space itself through their treatment of 'volume', and that different societies over time had conceived of space in different ways. In a similar vein, though with much smaller scope, Erwin Panofsky was able to show the depth to which the processes of design, engineering and construction of buildings, not just the

⁴⁰ F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (New York, 1887); C. Booth, *Labour and Life of the People*, 2 vols (London, 1889-91); B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A study of town life* (London, 1901); A. Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY, 1899).

⁴¹ M. Weber, *Die Stadt: Eine soziolog Untersuchung* (1921), revised as *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen, 1922), pp. 513-600, later in English as *The City*, trans. D. Martindale & G. Neuwirth (Glencoe, IL, 1958).

⁴² A. von Gerkan, *Griechische städteanlagen: untersuchungen zur entwicklung des städtebaues im altertum* (Berlin, 1924); G. Glotz, *The Greek City and its Institutions* (1928), trans. N. Mallinson (London, 1929); P. Lavedan, *L'histoire de l'urbanisme*, 3 vols (Paris, 1926-52).

⁴³ C. Sauer, 'The morphology of landscape,' *University of California Publications in Geography* 2:2 (1925), pp. 19-54.

artistic conception, were imbued with the cultural dispositions of a particular period and place.⁴⁴

Important to this was the realization that a shared human tendency to impose structure and communicate symbolically turned the environment and its space into a mosaic of man-made meanings relevant to our psychological and social lives. This idea was powerfully expressed at an early stage by Gaston Bachelard, who saw spatial structure as a deep part of the human mind. In one particular work he painted an evocative picture of the psychological structure of the western home, revealing it as a series of spaces reflecting the make-up of the modern psyche.⁴⁵ As a result, traditional geographers were starting to see that neighbourhoods, cities, countries and regions were ‘cultural constructs’ – things in the mind rather than independent, objective entities.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, in 1962, the school of thought inspired by Carl Sauer was finally receiving formal definition as the field of ‘cultural geography’, but this task of self-reflection had led some of its leading exponents, like Lowenthal and Wright, to begin reformulating the whole project.⁴⁷ A new cultural geography began to criticize the ‘intense preoccupation with the visible material landscape, with form rather than process,’ which had ‘led to an unfortunate neglect of the less obvious, invisible forces which in some cases form cornerstones in the explanation of spatial patterns of human behaviour’.⁴⁸ Man’s environment, it now appeared, existed as much in the mind as it did in the topography of the land. Moreover, writers like J.B. Jackson also stressed that ‘ordinary’, everyday environments – a barn, a corner store – were just as much cultural products as large-scale phenomena like farming patterns or city street networks.⁴⁹

At this time the true importance of the spatial dimension of these cultural landscapes was coming to be recognized as space and spatial organization came forward in cultural anthropology. It was now increasingly clear that attitudes to the spatial organization of the physical environment could be radically different among different cultures. The groundbreaking work of the psychologist James J. Gibson had revealed the role which the mind played in filtering the information received by the senses in order to produce a meaningful perception of the world. This explained how cultural assumptions could

⁴⁴ S. Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The growth of a new tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1941); E. Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Latrobe, PA, 1951).

⁴⁵ G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1957), trans. M. Jolas (New York, 1964).

⁴⁶ K. Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA, 1960).

⁴⁷ M.W. Mikesell & P.L. Wagner (eds), *Readings in Cultural Geography* (Chicago, 1962); D. Lowenthal, ‘Geography, experience, and imagination: toward a geographical epistemology,’ *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51 (1961), pp. 241-60; J.K. Wright, ‘Notes on early American geopiety,’ in idem, *Human Nature in Geography* (Cambridge, MA, 1966), pp. 250-85.

⁴⁸ P.W. English & R.C. Mayfield (eds), *Man, Space and Environment: Concepts in contemporary human geography* (New York, 1972), p. 6.

⁴⁹ *Landscapes: Selected writings of J.B. Jackson*, ed. E.H. Zube (Amherst, 1970); D. Meinig (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York, 1979).

produce different perceptual worlds, and allowed Irving Hallowell, on the basis of his research with the Ojibwa peoples of northern Mexico, to state in 1955: 'We [now] know that variations occur, between one culture and another, with respect to the selective emphasis given to the spatial relations and attributes of things ...and the reference points that are selected for spatial orientation'.⁵⁰ By the 1960s, anthropologists were increasingly investigating the different schemes of symbolic meaning attached to orientations, relative positions, and ritually-defined spaces in different cultures.⁵¹ This was greatly reinforced by Edward Hall, who revealed the extent to which humans were unconsciously sensitive to space, and other works of this time, like those of Mary Douglas and Victor Turner, have since become key texts representative of an entire conceptual revolution.⁵²

This was particularly true for cultural geography. Indeed, although geography was supposed to be the discipline most concerned with spaces and places, it had done very little to reflect critically on spatial relation as an analytical concept. As a field self-conscious of its status as an empirical science, geography was particularly reliant on the cartesian notion of space as an abstract, mathematical arena for independent physical entities. In fact, in the 1950s, geographers had increasingly emphasized the mathematical aspect of the discipline and the formulation of universal laws, to the point that 'spatial science' was emerging as an independent field of inquiry.⁵³ The turn towards anthropology by other members of the discipline was in part a reaction against this kind of spatial science and an attempt to retain space as their own concept. To cultural geographers, the symbolic, cultural meanings of spatial relation became more important than mere distances and densities of networks when trying to explain how people shaped the world. This highlighted the religious, political and social aspects of man's interaction with the environment, leading to new and important works on the nature of urban development and a human-centred or 'humanistic' approach to the experience of environment.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ J.J. Gibson, *Perception of the Visual World* (Boston, MA, 1950); A.I. Hallowell, 'Cultural factors in spatial orientation,' in idem, *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia, PA, 1955), p. 184.

⁵¹ S. Diamond (ed.), *Primitive Views of the World* (New York, 1964).

⁵² M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (London, 1966); V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and anti-structure* (London, 1969); M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in cosmology* (London, 1970); V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic action in human society* (Ithaca, NY, 1974).

⁵³ F. Schaefer, 'Exceptionalism in geography: a methodological examination,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 43 (1953), pp. 226-49; E. Ullman, 'Geography as spatial interaction,' in D. Revzan & E. Engelbert (eds), *Interregional Linkages* (Berkeley, CA, 1954), pp. 63-71.

⁵⁴ P. Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A preliminary enquiry into the origins and character of the ancient Chinese city* (Edinburgh, 1971); Y-F. Tuan, *Topophilia: A study of environmental perception, attitudes and values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1974); J. Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The anthropology of urban form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (London, 1976); D. Seamon, *A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, rest and encounter* (London, 1979); A. Buttner & D. Seamon (eds), *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (London, 1980); E. Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (London, 1981).

One further element remained to be added to this understanding of how people shaped space. It was in the 1970s that the beginnings of ‘critical’ geography took root, mirrored by similar developments in the other humanities and social sciences. While it was now clear that the values and assumptions of people gave shape to the physical environment and influenced mental maps, it was increasingly appreciated that these shapes only reflected the values of the dominant groups in society, not the population as a whole. Two figures in particular stood out at this early stage – David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre. Harvey’s work originally grew out of quantitative geography, but he pointed out that the identification of statistical patterns and the description of fundamental laws governing spatial distribution and interaction were not ends in themselves. Rather, it was the very existence of these particular relationships that actually needed to be explained.⁵⁵ To Harvey, the particular patterns of urbanization, industrialization, residential differentiation, decay, and renewal which characterized the modern world were observable and measurable, but they were not universal; they were contingencies reflecting the structure of power in modern society. It was this process, the translation of political and social inequality into physical and mental topographies, that geography should seek to describe and understand.⁵⁶ At almost the same time, Lefebvre was pointing out that the abstract, geometric idea of space was but one amongst many aspects of spatial relation. To Lefebvre, this underlined the fact that space, as it exists to humans, is not a pre-existing thing but something we create.⁵⁷ Through action, language, and representation, he suggested, we ‘produce’ spaces of particular kinds. Moreover, by thinking of local action, interaction, and representation as ‘spaces’ of ‘relationality’, which were all similar in nature, Lefebvre suggested that the physical, mental, social, political, and cultural aspects of society could be integrated into a single analytical framework. He concluded that it was precisely through producing physical and mental space that people were able to produce social, political, and cultural structures, and hence that shaping space was a fundamental aspect of human society.

Alongside these developments during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, other geographers, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers were arguing, in the opposite direction, that space shapes people. This was in fact the dominant idea in geography at the beginning of the century. The conceptual revolution engendered by nineteenth-century biology suggested to the social sciences that if the pressures of the environment had driven biological evolution then perhaps they were also responsible for cultural evolution – a thesis epitomized by the environmental determinism of Ellen Semple and Ellsworth Huntington.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ D. Harvey, *Explanation in Geography* (London, 1973).

⁵⁶ D. Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (London, 1973).

⁵⁷ H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1991).

⁵⁸ E. Semple, *American History and its Geographic Conditions* (Cambridge, MA, 1903); E. Huntington, *The Pulse of Asia: A Journey in Central Asia illustrating the geographic basis of history* (Boston, MA, 1907);

Although this deterministic approach was soon superseded, the active role of the environment made a lasting impression in other young fields like sociology. Around the same time, the German sociologist Georg Simmel was starting to think about the effect that life in modern cities was having on individuals. He had a very sophisticated concept of the relationship between space and society, and in a series of influential essays he set about describing modernity as characterized by a particular organization of space and time, typified by the environment of the modern metropolis.⁵⁹ However, Simmel's aim in doing so was not to show that modern society had produced a particular environment, but to examine the effect of that environment on people and their conception of the world. For Simmel, it was the environment in which people grew up that shaped their values and basic assumptions.⁶⁰

Indeed, the influence of the environment rose to dominance in sociology thereafter. The principles of environmental determinism and a new sociological emphasis on the urban environment as the habitat of modern man led to the emergence of a new field, human ecology, which saw the city as a biosphere subject to laws of competition and evolution producing regularized patterns. Pioneered at the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920s, this thinking achieved widespread influence, and took as its object of study 'the spatial and temporal relations of human beings as affected by the selective, distributive and accommodative forces of the environment,' and 'the effect of position, in both time and space, upon human institutions and human behaviour'.⁶¹ From this basis there grew a range of ideas, from concentric zone theory and sector theory to the multiple nuclei model, each trying to capture the patterns of urban growth in terms of forces inherent in the urban environment itself.⁶² Moreover, the study of patterns of neighbourhood formation led to a concern for how patterns of residential differentiation were maintained over time. The character of a neighbourhood, it was suggested, could become imprinted upon its inhabitants and thus reinforce the process of differentiation. To the urban ecologists, this was an irresistible force – 'each city and each part of the city furnishes a distinct social world to its inhabitants, which they incorporate in their personality whether they will or no'.⁶³ Thereafter

E. Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment, on the basis of Ratzel's system of anthropogeography* (New York, 1911); E. Huntington, *Civilization and Climate* (New Haven, CT, 1915).

⁵⁹ G. Simmel, 'On the spatial projection of social forms,' and 'The sociology of space,' originally published in 1903 and combined together as a chapter in his *Soziologie* (1908), first appearing in English in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. K.H. Wolff (Glencoe, IL, 1950).

⁶⁰ G. Simmel, 'Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben,' in K. Bücher et al., *Die Grossstädte: Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Städteausstellung* (1903), first appearing in English as 'The metropolis and mental life,' in L. Wirth et al. (eds), *Second Year Course in the Study of Contemporary Society: Syllabus and selected readings*, 5th edn (1936).

⁶¹ R. McKenzie, 'The ecological approach to the study of the human community,' in R. Park, E. Burgess et al., *The City* (Chicago, 1925), pp. 63-4.

⁶² H. Hoyt, *The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighbourhoods in American Cities* (Washington D.C., 1939); C. Harris & E. Ullmann, 'The nature of cities,' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 242:1 (1945), pp. 7-17.

⁶³ L. Wirth, 'A bibliography of the urban community,' in Park, Burgess et al., *The City*, p. 219.

the influence of the environment on people received constant attention, especially from sociologists who mapped patterns of social pathologies and described them as products of life in particular neighbourhoods.⁶⁴ This generated a vast field of research on both the role of the local environment in creating behavioural patterns, and on the pathology of urban life in general.⁶⁵

However, much of this work on the pathology of urbanism and bad neighbourhoods failed to engage with the actual spatial dimension of the environment, even though these aspects were increasingly important in the fields of human and cultural geography. Despite the emphasis placed by urban ecologists upon the active role of the physical environment, in practice their focus remained upon the *social* environment. As William Michelson observed, 'space has been utilized as a medium in most of human ecology rather than as a variable with a potential effect of its own'.⁶⁶ In the 1960s, three factors began to work against this. First, the emergence of spatial science provided empirical data and scientific theories which claimed that spatial relation was an independent variable producing measurable and predictable effects on human behaviour.⁶⁷ Second, from this time onwards, considerable work was being done on the impact of the physical environment upon individual cognitive development, psychological states and social relationships, especially in the new field of environmental psychology.⁶⁸ And third, the French school of *géographie humaine*, which had always taken a more spatial view of the neighbourhood, was finding wider currency abroad.⁶⁹ As a result, sociologists, urban planners and architects became increasingly interested in the effect of space, and not just the environment, upon people. Urban sociologists had long taken for granted that individuals and the social relations of a community were affected by the physical organization of the environment, but they now began to examine how the actual arrangement of room interiors, house plans, residential blocks and communal spaces

⁶⁴ N. Anderson, *The Hobo: The sociology of the homeless man* (Chicago, 1923); F. Thrasher, *The Gang: A study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago* (Chicago, 1927); L. Wirth, *The Ghetto* (Chicago, 1928); C. Shaw, *Delinquency Areas: A study of the geographic distribution of school truants, juvenile delinquents, and adult offenders in Chicago* (Chicago, 1929).

⁶⁵ L. Wirth, 'Urbanism as a way of life,' *American Journal of Sociology* 44 (1938), pp. 1-24.

⁶⁶ W. Michelson, *Man and his Urban Environment: A sociological approach* (Reading, MA, 1970), p. 17.

⁶⁷ fn. 53 above.

⁶⁸ J. Piaget & B. Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space*, trans. F.J. Langdon & J.L. Lunzer (London, 1956); R. Sommer, *Personal Space: The behavioural basis of design* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969); H. Proshansky, W.H. Ittelson & L. Rivlin (eds), *Environmental Psychology: Man and his physical setting* (New York, 1970); D. Fatouros, 'Perceptual ecology and the organization of physical environment,' in R. Küller (ed.), *Architectural Psychology* (Stroudsburg, PA, 1973), pp. 281-6; W.H. Ittelson (ed.), *Environment and Cognition* (New York, 1973).

⁶⁹ M. Sorre, *Les fondements de la géographie humaine*, 3 vols (Paris, 1943-52); P-H. Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne*, 2 vols (Paris, 1952); A. Buttimer, 'Social space in interdisciplinary perspective,' *Geographical Review* 59:3 (1969), pp. 417-26.

impacted people.⁷⁰ In the most detailed studies, theorists developed objective metrics for analyzing and quantifying spatial relations within buildings, streets and squares of widely varying types, from different cities and different periods throughout history, to look for causal connections between space and social phenomena. Spatial relation, it was concluded, had a social logic which produced observable sociological effects.⁷¹

It was therefore well established by the 1970s that structures in the environment exerted influence upon people. However, it was still unclear why exactly this should be the case, and how in practice the structures of the environment came to mould people's behaviour. It was anthropology which ultimately contributed these insights. In studying foreign cultures and societies, structural anthropologists had begun to perceive the way that political and social differences were encoded in every aspect of a community's life, from marriage practices and religious beliefs to world views and the organization of housing.⁷² It was the presence of these mutually reinforcing structures in communal life that allowed inequalities to be maintained and perpetuated from generation to generation. New studies by 'interpretative' anthropologists began to reflect on the way that political and social structures, also implicit in modern culture, helped to shape people's assumptions about the world. It was because spatial organization and the physical environment were imprinted with norms and assumptions that they were capable of shaping people.⁷³ The most important contribution to this picture was made by Pierre Bourdieu. While structural anthropologists had simply taken for granted that individuals somehow absorbed the dominant assumptions of the world around them, Bourdieu illustrated that this specifically took place through individual action or 'practice'.⁷⁴ Roles in family life, categories of social identity, strictures of religion, forms of spatial organization, shared assumptions about legitimate authority – all of these combined together, he suggested, to form one's environment or 'habitus'. But for Bourdieu it was through engaging with these environmental structures that they came to be imparted upon people. The environment and the need to adjust to it therefore shaped people through the practice of their everyday lives, helping to reproduce and perpetuate the dominant structures of society.

By 1980, therefore, two important insights had been achieved. On the one hand it was understood that people shape the environment, including its spatial organization, not only by

⁷⁰ G. Harrison & J. Gibson (eds), *Man in Urban Environments* (Oxford, 1976); A. Baum & S. Valins, *Architecture and Social Behaviour: Psychological studies of social density* (Hillsdale, NJ, 1977); E. Krupat, *People in Cities: The urban environment and its effects* (Cambridge, 1985).

⁷¹ B. Hillier & J. Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge, 1984).

⁷² E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (Oxford, 1951); C. Lévi-Strauss, 'The structural study of myth,' *The Journal of American Folklore* 270 (1955), pp. 428-444.

⁷³ C. Geertz, 'Centers, kings and charisma: reflections on the symbolics of power,' in J. Ben-David & T. Clark (eds), *Culture and its Creators: Essays in honor of Edward Shils* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 150-71.

⁷⁴ P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, 1977).

physically changing the land from its 'natural' state, but also by attributing symbolic meanings, imposing associations, generating mental maps in people's minds, and propagating and maintaining them. This work recognized, moreover, that it was the values of dominant groups which found clearest expression in the environments so produced. On the other hand, it was also understood that an environment, including its spatial organization, shapes the people inhabiting it, because neighbourhoods influence behavioural and cultural norms, macro networks dictate opportunities and risks, environments have psychological effects on individuals, and the societal norms implicit in spatial organization reproduce themselves in people through everyday practices. From the very beginning, both these lines of inquiry had stressed the reciprocity between man and environment and the need for a holistic understanding of society as a two-way process. Yet this was never properly achieved in practice. The introduction to the founding text of urban sociology declared that 'this vast organization [of the city], which has arisen in response to the needs of its inhabitants, once formed, imposes itself upon them as a crude external fact, and forms them, in turn, in accordance with the design and interests which it incorporates'.⁷⁵ However, in the chapters which followed, and the whole academic discipline they engendered, the inquiry was only really concerned for the latter half of this equation. A full synthesis required further insights into the relationship between structure as a determinant of individual action, and individual agency as a force creating structure, or what would come to be known as the process of 'structuration'.

From the perspective of spatial relation, it was the work of Michel de Certeau which first brought this process to a wider audience. Bourdieu had shown how individuals internalized the dominant values of society through everyday practices. But from the very outset of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), de Certeau explained that 'the purpose of this work is to make explicit ...the models of action characteristic of ...the dominated element in society,' and to show that being subordinate 'does not mean that they are either passive or docile'. On the contrary, as he went on to demonstrate, subordinate individuals were able to 'make innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules'.⁷⁶ While it was certainly true that the dominant order created the moral norms, material distribution and spatial organization of society, these things did not determine how people actually reacted to and *used* these structures. By using the vocabularies, spaces and products of the established order, expression could appear orthodox even when the ends to which it was put were corrosive of the status quo. Through the gradual but cumulative accretion of such uses and

⁷⁵ R. Park, 'Suggestions for the investigation of human behavior in the urban environment,' in Park, Burgess et al., *The City*, p. 4.

⁷⁶ M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley, CA, 1984), pp. xi-xii, xiii-xiv.

practices by more and more people, wider structural changes could sometimes take place before conservative forces had even identified a threat. For de Certeau, like Bourdieu, it was in the minutiae of daily life that such appropriation and subversion was to be found, and this therefore led him 'to a *polemological* analysis of culture', a view of everyday practices as an arena of silent and invisible struggle between individuals and the dominant structures of society – or in other words, a kind of battlefield.

Moreover, de Certeau described spatial action, or walking, as the everyday practice *par excellence*. He saw such spatial action not merely as a practical activity but as an inherently communicative performance with the power to carve out and define spaces. Looking down upon cities from on high, he regarded the flow of pedestrians as a 'swarming mass' made up of 'an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together.' In fact, walking was an act of communication, just like speaking – a pedestrian's path, he said, is 'like a series of "hellos" in an echoing labyrinth, anterior or parallel to informative speech.' Because a given urban environment was already filled with a forest of visible and invisible meanings, a person's path was in constant dialogue with the structures of the environment: 'Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses [or] respects' these structures, such that its trajectory 'speaks' a story.⁷⁷ From this perspective, the movement of individuals through a structured environment in the course of their daily lives was a paradigmatic example of how subordinate individuals could transform the dominant structures of society. As de Certeau put it, 'a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g. by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g. by a wall that prevents one from going further),' such that 'the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.' By this means, 'the long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be... It creates shadows and ambiguities within them'.⁷⁸

As a result of de Certeau's work, two insights were added to the expanding literature on the relationship between man and environment: first, that when a dominant group shapes space, it only influences not dictates behaviour and cannot totally preclude alternative practices; and second, that spatial organization, physical and mental, is always vulnerable to challenge and change. Together these contributions propagated the idea that space was a constant battlefield for competing interests, because asserting and maintaining a particular spatial

⁷⁷ de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 99, 100.

⁷⁸ de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 98, 101.

organization, or transgressing and undermining it, could be seen as crucial aspects of constructing and contesting the social and political status quo.

The present thesis uses this concept of space when considering acts of political communication. From this perspective, it can be seen that such performances had an important spatial dimension which contributed to the messages being communicated. The civic government used spatial structure in its self-presentation, while acts of resistance specifically targeted the spaces of official communication. Space was therefore involved in both constructing and contesting authority. Although historians of early modern London have paid increasing attention to the city's urban landscape, most have remained concerned only for plotting things and treat space as a reflection of society's structures rather than as an active agent as well. However, as this thesis seeks to show, the civic authorities were concerned to assert a particular physical and mental map of the city because it contained a set of authorized assumptions about social and political structures which contributed to the maintenance of the status quo. At the same time, people were able to contest this by appropriating space and subverting the authorized map, which could threaten to undermine wider societal structures. In this sense, it played an active role in the negotiation of political and social identities. Moreover, the urban environment was itself a medium of political communication, and this meant that its spatial structure was inherently political. Space, as will be argued, was an important dimension of the city's political culture and was implicated in both its change and continuity over time.

PART TWO – CONSTRUCTING AUTHORITY

In the introductory chapters of this thesis, two things have been suggested about power in society – first, in general, that power is not simply a given, but something which must be continuously legitimated, asserted and maintained; and second, in the specific case of early Tudor London, that the urban elite had a particular need to reinforce its claim to power. Part Two of this thesis argues that acts of political communication contributed to the process by which this was achieved. Over and above the practical function which proclamations, processions and public punishments were intended to fulfil, they also had a ritual and spatial structure designed to communicate a more general message about power and authority in the city. That is, each contributed on a daily basis to the presentation of a particular image of the civic government. Proclamations projected its presence and legitimacy; processions portrayed its hierarchy as a natural and essential part of the city as a community; public punishments constructed it as active and responsible. Moreover, through each of these performances, the civic government also created the image of a clear divide between the city's governors and those they governed – implicit in each of these acts of official communication was a structural difference between the governors who spoke and acted, and the governed who watched and listened. In this sense, it was partly in and through acts of communication – with their ritual and spatial structure – that civic authority was legitimated, asserted and maintained.

CHAPTER 3 PROCLAMATIONS

In early Tudor London, verbal proclamations were a major channel for the dissemination of laws, orders and other political information. But as the present chapter seeks to show, proclamations came in many distinct forms, and each was instantly recognisable as representing the exercise of a distinct kind of authority. The actual information conveyed was only one half of a performance in which the personnel, form and place of delivery also contributed to the communication of a larger message. In particular, this chapter is concerned for civic proclamations and the way they represented the specific authority of the mayor and aldermen. After reviewing the range of proclamations which early modern Londoners would have encountered and the different kinds of authority they represented, the exercise of mayoral authority by proclamation will be examined. As will be seen, mayors generally respected the limitations of their authority when communicating orders in this form, highlighting how proclamations could be important to the representation of civic government as legitimate. People were also highly sensitive to their spatial dimension, which demonstrates that the non-verbal aspects of proclamations were just as important to the communication of the message as the text itself. By looking at both what was said and how it was communicated, it is clear that proclamations played an important part in asserting and maintaining the authority of the civic government.

On January 31st, 1547, the death of Henry VIII was announced by that part of the Privy Council which had taken control of affairs in the king's final days. But announcing this information in London, along with the accession of his son as Edward VI, was no simple affair:

That daie, at tenne of the clocke, the mayor and aldermen assembled in the Guildhall in their skarlett gownes [with] Clarentius, one of the kinges of haroldes, tow other haroldes and a trumpeter, and so rode forth from thence with my lord mayor and aldermen to Sainct Magnus Church corner, where proclamation was made by Clarentius, after the blowing of the trumpett tow tymes, under the Kinges broade seale, Edwarde the Sixth, with the death also of Henry the Eight, the Kinges Majestys father, and so from thence they rode in order to Leaden Hall, the Standard in Cheepe, [and] to the conduite in Fleet Streete, where also the said proclamation was made.¹

Announcing this information in London was not just a matter of spreading the news and defining the new king's royal style, but also called for a special set of ritual elements – particular people, in particular dress, making announcements at particular places. Indeed, the

¹ Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England during the Reigns of the Tudors*, ed. W.D. Hamilton, 2 vols (Camden Society, New Series 11 & 20, 1875-77), i. 178.

four locations at which this solemn announcement was made – St Magnus at the Bridge foot, Leadenhall Corner, the Standard in Cheap, and the Conduit in Fleet St – was no random selection. It was at these four places that, for centuries, important proclamations had been made. For instance, when in November, 1388, the king's order had gone forth by authority of Parliament that all guilds should submit their charters and constitutions for examination, the sheriffs reported that they would

cause proclamation to be openly and publicly made in the city of London and in the suburbs thereof ... namely, in Fleet St in the suburbs of London; also, at the Standard in Westcheap, London; also, at the Leadenhall upon Cornhill, London; also, at the Church of St Magnus in Bridge St, London...²

This demonstrates that the form in which proclamations were made was crucial to the message being delivered, for the particular individuals making the announcement, and the places where they did so, said something about the nature of the proclamation – in this case, that it was an important royal proclamation.

There were in fact many different kinds of proclamations which early modern Londoners would have encountered on a daily basis, and yet each kind was immediately distinct because of its different manner and form. They can be grouped into four classes. Judicial proclamations announced the holding of courts, publicized the enrolment of deeds and wills, announced judgements, and declared outlawries. They were usually made by serjeants attached to the court and took place within the hall, at the posts of its doors, or at sites of punishment.³ Heraldic proclamations were delivered by the heralds of the College of Arms, announcing royal accessions and the granting or retraction of titles. Less formally, marshals attached to the royal household might also announce the coming and going of the king on progress.⁴ In a separate class, royal proclamations, issued by the king with the advice of his council, gave orders touching war and peace, domestic security, foreign relations, the rights of the Crown, and the better enforcement of the laws of the land. They were proclaimed by the city's Common Crier, with the assistance of one of the sheriffs' Clerks of the Papers, in those four locations traditionally associated with the most important announcements. Finally, civic proclamations, issued by the mayor, with the advice of the aldermen, dealt with issues such as market regulation, the price and quality of foodstuffs, and the management of

² *English Guilds*, ed. J. Toulmin Smith (Early English Text Society, Original Series 40, 1870), p. 129.

³ For instance, at the Court of Husting – *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*, ed. H.T. Riley, 3 vols (London, 1859-62), i. 49, 190; Rep. 9, ff. 81r-v, 178r; Rep. 10, ff. 245r, 282v; *Calendar of Wills proved and enrolled in the Court of Husting, London*, ed. R.R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London, 1889-90), i. xv, xxv, xliii; as also previously at the Eyres – *MGL*, ii. 285-7; deeds proclaimed in Husting had a special status – *Calendar of Wills*, i. xxiii, xxix; outlawries were originally proclaimed at the Folkmoot, but later at the Husting after that court's demise – *MGL*, i. 86, 190; ii. 333-8; *Year Books of Edward II: The Eyre of London, 1321*, ed. H. Cam, 2 vols (Selden Society, 85-86, 1968-9), i. li; *CPMR*, iv. 51-2.

⁴ *Wriothsley*, i. 121-2, 180; TNA SP 12/261, ff. 208v-209r.

the urban environment. They were set forth by the Common Crier on his own in the city markets and other places according to the nature of the orders.

The distinct form given to different kinds of proclamation served not only to distinguish their different purposes, but also the different kinds of authority which issued them. While the political implications of royal proclamations as an assertion of the royal prerogative have been explored by historians, the role of civic proclamations as an assertion of the mayor's authority has not been addressed.⁵ The remainder of this chapter will therefore examine the way in which civic proclamations specifically asserted the authority of the mayor within the city, before exploring more in depth how and where such proclamations were made. In answering these questions, it can be seen that managing the form of political communication could be a useful tool in asserting and maintaining the legitimacy of the power which the mayor exercised.

So far all major work on early modern proclamations has focused on royal proclamations, which have now been calendared, edited and subjected to study.⁶ This work has highlighted that royal proclamations were a very distinct and formal class of document with regard to their formulation, production and promulgation. But they were also distinct in a constitutional sense, for both judges and government ministers were aware that such proclamations relied on the royal prerogative for their authority and that the use of this authority was a constitutional question.

As Rudolph Heinze and Frederick Youngs have shown, the relationship between royal proclamations and statute law was carefully regarded, if not always respected, during the Tudor period. Legal opinion on the legitimate use of proclamations was sought from judges on a number of occasions throughout the sixteenth century. Thomas Cromwell had their authority ratified by Parliament, and although later governments preferred to leave their nature vague, it became accepted principle that while proclamations were legally enforceable they could not alter existing law nor create new offences. According to a number of Tudor theorists, certain matters were the legitimate domain of the royal prerogative – i.e., the feudal rights of the Crown, domestic security, coinage and currency, the administration of justice,

⁵ For the role of royal proclamations in the fifteenth century, see A. Allan, 'Royal propaganda and the proclamations of Edward IV,' *Historical Research* 140 (1986), pp. 146-54; J.A. Doig, 'Political propaganda and royal proclamations in late medieval England,' *Historical Research* 176 (1998), pp. 253-80.

⁶ R. Steele, *A Bibliography of the Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1910); *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P. Hughes & J. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven, CT, 1964-69); R. Heinze, *The Proclamations of the Tudor Kings* (Cambridge, 1976); F. Youngs, *The Proclamations of the Tudor Queens* (Cambridge, 1976).

and relations with foreign powers.⁷ But beyond these it was said that the Crown ought only to use proclamations for the better enforcement of existing laws or, in exceptional circumstances, to respond to crises. In practice, as both Heinze and Youngs observed, Tudor monarchs sometimes overstepped these bounds, but only advisedly, and they sometimes encountered indignant resistance when they did so.⁸

The relationship between the royal prerogative and parliamentary legislation was the same as that between the mayor's authority and the civic legislation passed by Common Council. The charters of the Crown had recognized the City as self-governing, and as having all the necessary authority to exercise such self-government. But like the later concept of 'king-in-parliament', this authority was vested in 'the mayor and commonalty' as a whole, not the mayor alone. Like Parliament, Common Council was a symbolic gathering of the community – the mayor, his councillors the aldermen, and the representatives of the wider commonalty – which together constituted the legislative body, with exclusive control over the voting of civic taxation. Indeed, in 1527, the Common Council was explicitly compared to the House of Commons by a committee appointed to consider political reforms.⁹ At the same time, the mayor was the direct representative of the king, and exercised jurisdiction over those things which fell within the royal prerogative, like the keeping of the peace, the administration of justice, and the levying of troops for war. In this sense, the use of civic proclamations can tell us much about the authority of the mayor and how it was intended to be seen relative to the authority of Common Council.

In the years 1500–1550, there were 148 separately devised civic proclamations, which can be divided into ten rough categories within three broad types of issue – the urban economy, law and order, and the enforcement of civic obligations – with a few others of a miscellaneous nature. By far and away the most important issue was the urban economy, encompassing four distinct kinds of things, of which unsurprisingly the largest was concerned with food. As an urban community, the greatest challenge to its continued existence was the need to import sufficient food from the surrounding countryside to support its non-agrarian population. Judging by the numbers of proclamations issued, the foodstuffs whose supply was most in need of regulation by the mayor were wines, poultry, grain, ale, meat, fish, butter and cheese. But the urban economy also required the supply of other things as well. Non-edible consumables, for instance, could be particularly important, especially wood and coal for fuel, but also hay for horses and the green rushes which served for floor coverings. Likewise, the wheels of the economy had to be kept running smoothly, with services such as public carts for the carriage of goods, and licensed brokers for currency exchange. In

⁷ Heinze, *Proclamations*, pp. 38-40.

⁸ Heinze, *Proclamations*, pp. 71-3.

⁹ Jour. 13, ff. 23v-4r.

addition to the provision of these specific victuals, consumables and services, the mayor also took pains to regulate the markets themselves and the general practices of buying and selling. This included the assignment of designated places and times for selling particular goods, the limitations upon non-citizens, the regulation of weights and measures, and the prevention of market offences such as forestalling and regrating.

		1499	1509	1514	1519	1524	1529	1534	1539	1544	Total
		-09	-14	-19	-24	-29	-34	-39	-44	-49	
Urban Economy	Victuals	3	12	5	3	13	10	11	2	6	65
	Consumables	1	4	-	4	2	1	5	-	1	18
	Services	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	7
	Market rules	-	4	3	1	3	3	5	6	1	26
Law & Order	King's Peace	-	2	3	-	3	-	-	1	-	9
	Social behaviour	-	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	12
	Justice	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	4
Civic Obligations	Urban nuisance	-	1	2	2	1	2	6	3	3	20
	Civic duties	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	4
	Other	1	-	1	1	-	-	2	1	1	7
	Total	7	27	18	14	26	18	33	15	13	

Note: Dates represent mayoral years; totals will exceed the number of individual proclamations because those dealing with more than one issue have been counted separately

The second most important issue was concerned with law and order. Proclamations calling for the city's inhabitants to keep the king's peace featured prominently among the mayor's declarations, particularly on festive occasions such as Shrovetide, May Eve, Midsummer, and the twelve days of Christmas. In the early sixteenth century, the maintenance of order was increasingly associated with the regulation of social behaviour, with proclamations now addressing issues such as beggars, vagabonds, and entertainments like bear-baiting. The administration of justice might also require the intervention of the mayor, where action was sometimes taken to reform the system of empanelling juries or assert the authority of the city's judicial officers. Under the third broad issue, that of civic obligations, I have grouped both the civic duties which were part of citizenship, and the regulation of those things which came with living in an urban environment. For instance, the mayor often had to remind the citizens of those duties which came with their rights and freedoms, such as paying lot and scot, participating in watch and ward, and providing lights outside their houses at night. At the same time, the mayor was concerned for regulating the urban environment. In particular, this included regular street cleaning, the times for household waste collection, the removal of structures which encroached into the streets or the Thames, and measures to prevent plague and fire. Together, these represent all the main issues which civic proclamations addressed. In order to properly assess the nature of the mayor's authority as represented by his proclamations, it is now necessary to determine which of them, if any, gave orders beyond what was already enacted by Parliament or Common Council.

In addition to their practical function as a means to disseminate laws and orders, proclamations were a bold claim to the legitimate exercise of authority within the city. The importance of this secondary function is clearly indicated by the effort to which the civic government went to ensure that the particular orders disseminated in this form would be perceived as legitimate. The arbitrary aspects of early modern power were much more likely to manifest themselves in the private orders of the mayor, while proclamations were much more carefully composed. This can be seen from the fact that almost all of the 148 civic proclamations promulgated between 1500 and 1550 were safely based on legitimate grounds. Moreover, the exceptions were clearly related to particular circumstances which called for more aggressive action on the part of the civic government and ultimately served to reinforce the rule rather than undermine it.

In early modern England, different aspects of life were the purview of different kinds of authority. Rightly speaking, the mayor could only exercise 'discretionary' authority over certain issues, just as the royal prerogative was limited to certain subjects. In this sense, the mayor's proclamations often relied on different sources of authority for the legitimacy of their orders and prohibitions, and not just his own. For instance, a number of civic proclamations made explicit reference to the passing of recent parliamentary statutes, and announced their imminent or renewed enforcement by the mayor and aldermen within the City of London. In October, 1509, it was ordered that proclamation be made of the fines for non-appearance of jurors as set down in 'the last statute', which must have referred to the fine of 12d. for a first offence, increasing thereafter, as found in 11 Henry VII, c.21.¹⁰

On other occasions the civic government might give notice when statutory enactments lapsed. In September, 1536, the mayor recalled an article in an act of 1531 which had banned the import of French wines, but now noted that 'the saide article in the same conteyned remayneth of noo force nor effecte,' and encouraged merchants to resume their trade.¹¹ But more often statutes remained a silent authority beneath the commands of mayoral proclamations. For example, the order in a proclamation of March, 1499, that no one should be a broker except those sworn and admitted by the mayor and aldermen, rested securely on an article in 3 Henry VII, c.7.¹² Likewise, the proclamation of February, 1500, setting out rules for the tentering, preparation and sale of woollen cloth, made no mention of the statute 1 Richard III, c.8, despite being entirely based upon it. The civic proclamation

¹⁰ Jour. 11, f. 89r.

¹¹ Jour. 14, f. 17r-v; Rep. 9, f. 193v; 23 Henry VIII, c.7.

¹² Jour. 10, f. 252r, and this was only the most recent in a long line of statutes on the subject.

recounted only certain paragraphs, and rearranged their order to emphasize particular points, but copied verbatim from the act without any reference to it.¹³

This was even more regularly the case with Acts of Common Council. These acts were sometimes explicitly cited, as in December, 1541, when a civic proclamation was made against stall-holders who placed their goods in the way of street traffic. The preamble began by rehearsing the ‘Act of Comen Councell holden at the Guihald the Sunday in the even off sainte Michell tharchaungell, whiche was in the xxvith yere of the reign of oure saide souereign lorde,’ where it was ‘enacted emonges other thinges as hereafter ffolowyth’, before observing that this ‘good, necessarye and reasonable acte my saide lorde the maire and masters thaldermen wolle yn [every] wyse shalbe put in dew execucion’.¹⁴ Other times the authority of Common Council was noted without specifying an actual act. This was the case in January, 1537, when fifteen men had been presented to the mayor and aldermen for selling woad, a dyeing material, contrary to accepted practice. A proclamation was thereupon made that woad must be sold according to net weight, not gross, noting only that ‘yt hath bene enacted by Comon Covnsell’ to this effect, ‘afore thys tyme’ – the reference here being to an Act of September 28th, 1536.¹⁵

But again, while the mayor was careful to frame his proclamations upon the ordinances passed by Common Council, the acts were usually silent partners to the orders proclaimed. For instance, a complex set of regulations governing the lengths, breadths and prices of different kinds of wood, along with rules on how to gather them into bundles, was proclaimed in January, 1508. These regulations were drawn, almost verbatim in parts, from an Act of Common Council made in December, 1472, over thirty-five years prior to that time, without citing it.¹⁶ Indeed, the frequent reminders which the mayor gave to the city’s inhabitants of their obligations to place lanterns outside their doors at night, to deliver household waste to the dungcarts at specified times, or maintain the pavement before their houses, were all based on distant but distinct acts passed in Common Council without the need to mention them.¹⁷

The same was true of the City’s Charter. In April, 1537, complaints were made that foreign merchants were selling their goods without taking them first to the Great Beam to be weighed by a city officer – which, by the City’s charters, they were obliged to do. A proclamation was put forth the following month demanding that they do so, explicitly invoking the City’s ‘auncyent right’ as established ‘by dyuerse grauntes of sondry noble

¹³ Jour. 10, f. 178r-v.

¹⁴ Jour. 14, ff. 158r, 287r-v; Rep. 10, f. 232v.

¹⁵ Jour. 14, ff. 19r, 26v; Rep. 9, f. 236v.

¹⁶ Jour. 8, ff. 36r-7v; Jour. 11, f. 29r-v.

¹⁷ Lanterns – LB. I, f. 37r; household waste – LB. L, f. 7r; street pavements – LB. L, f. 63v.

princes, kings of thys royalme' – here referring to articles first granted in the Eighth Charter of Henry III (Mar, 1268), the Constitutions of Edward II (June, 1319) and letters patent of Henry IV (May, 1400), all confirmed by Henry VIII in April, 1531.¹⁸ Much more often, though, the City's chartered rights simply remained implicit in the mayor's proclamations. During discussions in the Council Chamber, the civic authorities did regularly refer to the articles of the Charter. For instance, when commissioners appointed by the Emperor challenged the City's right to prosecute foreign merchants for trading amongst themselves in May, 1546, the City turned for its authority to the 'the artycle of kyng Rychard the secondes chartre excludyng foreyn bying & sellyng within the cytie'.¹⁹ By contrast, the mayoral proclamation on this issue in March, 1510, had spoken only vaguely of their actions as being 'contrary to the lawes'.²⁰ Most of the mayor's proclamations on such issues – like the duty for freemen to bear scot and lot, or the restriction on foreigners keeping open shop – tended to elide the charters from the basis of their authority.²¹

There were, however, two broad categories of business over which the mayor exercised a special *a priori* jurisdiction – the supply of victuals and the rules of the marketplace. Whereas on other issues the mayor did not act legislatively, but merely worked for the maintenance or better enforcement of existing laws, he was able in these two areas – with the advice of his fellow aldermen – to make and change the rules on his own authority. This was so in two ways. On the one hand, this right was safely enshrined in statute and royal ordinance. As early as the reign of Henry III, royal injunctions had been issued on how local authorities should set the price of bread and ale and punish market offenders, including twice yearly inquests by county officials to supervise local enforcement and inspect weights and measures.²² More expansively, the Ordinance of Labourers (1349) ordered that the victual of butchers, bakers, brewers, poulters and fishmongers be sold at 'reasonable price' and stipulated that 'the mayors and bailiffs of cities' 'shall have power' to identify offences and levy fines.²³ If any doubt remained, the statutes which reversed Edward III's free trade laws reiterated that all victuallers, free and foreign, 'shall be from henceforth under the governance and rule of the Mayor and Aldermen of the said City for the time being, as in time past it hath been used'.²⁴

¹⁸ Jour. 14, f. 35r; *Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London*, ed. W. Birch, rev. edn (London, 1887), pp. 41, 48, 99-105; in preparing for this proclamation, the City's counsel had also drawn up a list of all the important passages on this issue in the civic records – Rep. 9, f. 248v.

¹⁹ Rep. 11, f. 290r.

²⁰ Jour. 11, f. 104v.

²¹ Jour. 11, f. 259r; Jour. 12, f. 315r; *Historical Charters*, pp. 47, 48.

²² *The Statutes of the Realm*, ed. J. Raithby et al., 11 vols (London, 1810-28), i. 199-204.

²³ *Statutes*, i. 308.

²⁴ *Statutes*, i. 351; ii. 34.

On the other hand, none of these statutes or ordinances were actually responsible for endowing the mayor and aldermen with authority over these issues. To some extent their authority in such matters was an inseparable part of the rights and responsibilities which came with their jurisdiction over the wards of the city and which long predated the invention of Parliament. London had no charter of incorporation, for as a City it predated the Conquest and William I granted to uphold its existing rights.²⁵ Those who became the hereditary sokeholders of Norman London held their sokes by prescriptive right, a fact accepted and confirmed by the investigations of Quo Warranto under Edward I and II.²⁶ When, after 1189, a mayor emerged as their common representative, he exercised their prerogative in these matters on behalf of their collective jurisdictions. In acknowledging both these aspects of responsibility, the mayor swore each year, both in the Guildhall and the Exchequer, to take order for the ‘regulation of victuals’ as ‘unto the mayor of the said city it pertaineth to do’.²⁷

Indeed, the regulation of victuals and market practices are the only areas where the proclamations of the mayor and aldermen appear to operate in an unfettered fashion. In January, 1535, it was proclaimed that Butchers could not refuse to sell meat to a customer if it were in their view and they asked to buy it.²⁸ In October 1526, the tolls, price controls and rules for non-freemen selling grain in the city were suspended to encourage immediate supply;²⁹ by contrast, in July, 1528, everyone, including citizens, was banned from importing grain at all, because the city had a surplus store which it had to sell before it spoiled.³⁰ The tenor of such proclamations could also be quite distinct, sometimes explicitly citing a unilateral authority. In August, 1547, the preamble to a proclamation on new boundaries for the meat markets stated emphatically that the mayor and aldermen ‘haue thought yt good & expedient thus to manyfest, publisse & declare vnto all persons to whome it shall appertein by this present proclamacion a certaine acte & ordynance *by them* lately devysed & made’.³¹

To some extent the authority of the mayor over nuisance in the streets – such as projecting penthouses, maintenance of pavements, rubbish disposal – could be likened to that over markets and the food supply. The regulation of such nuisances were likewise attached to View of Frankpledge and fell within the scope of the wardmotes.³² Indeed, just as the major roads between towns were arrogated to the royal prerogative and loaded with special obligations by virtue of being the ‘king’s highway’, so the same might be said of streets and

²⁵ *Historical Charters*, pp. 1, 3.

²⁶ *Placita de quo warranto temporibus Edw. I, II & III*, ed. W. Illingworth (London, 1818).

²⁷ LB. E, flyleaf Ev; *Liber Albus*, p. 266.

²⁸ Rep. 9, f. 91r.

²⁹ Jour. 12, f. 370r.

³⁰ Jour. 13, f. 58r.

³¹ Jour. 15, f. 320v; emphasis added.

³² *Statutes*, i. 246-7; *MGL*, i. 337-8.

lanes within the city as particularly belonging to the common weal.³³ Although none of the mayor's proclamations between 1500 and 1550 went beyond the customary practices as ordained by Common Councils, they probably could have without objection. In the same way, while the niceties of Tudor constitutional practice seemed to constrain the action of authorities most of the time, one of the most important principles was the royal prerogative over civil order. In circumstances of local or regional disorder, the Crown and local authorities operated with much wider discretion than at other times. Officials certainly still operated within the law – inquests of riot had well-established procedures, the Privy Council had a long case history in this field, and when the law was to be consciously overstepped, martial law was formally declared.³⁴ But the law itself permitted wide discretion to local authorities in dealing with civil disorder, and as with regulation of the streets, the mayor's proclamations on the 'king's peace' could have operated much more widely had need required.

In all these ways, the vast majority of mayoral proclamations remained safely legitimate in their content, operating either on specific authority granted by Statute, Act of Common Council, and Charter, or restricting themselves to issues over which the mayor and aldermen exercised a personal authority. The exceptions to this norm were quite specific in their occurrence, and fell into three clear groups produced by exceptional circumstances at three particular times. The first of these was in the year following the death of Henry VII, which saw a radical period of renovation in the city of London as the henchmen which Empson and Dudley had used to subvert the city's jury system were rooted out, and attempts were made to reassert civic authority more boldly. One aspect of this was the noticeable spike in the number of civic proclamations themselves, which was well above average. Contributing to this number was the inclusion of one set of orders which would not normally have been made by proclamation. In May, 1510, a set of articles on the true making and packing of black soap was publicly proclaimed rather than being agreed in consultation with, and disseminated by, the relevant company – in this case the Grocers – as would usually be done. Moreover, in March of that year, a quite radical commandment had been made by proclamation, requiring that all beggars be set on work digging out the city ditches for 1d. a day with meat and drink. While it had been enacted by Statute back in 1388 that artificers in towns could be compelled to work the harvest, this order conscripting people to dig ditches was of questionable legality.³⁵ Moreover, the penalty which the mayor and aldermen threatened to impose on any such beggar who did not turn up for work was to be whipped

³³ Even smaller streets might be referred to as the 'king's highway', as when William Kyne, taylor, was bound in April, 1550, to take down 'a certain gallery or shed hangyng ouer the kynges hyghway in Sythen Lane in Tower ward to the noysaunce of the kynges subiectes there' – Rep. 12, f. 224v.

³⁴ Wriothesley, ii. 15-16.

³⁵ *Statutes*, ii. 56.

through the main thoroughfare of the city – a punishment which would become the norm from 1531, but in 1510 should not have extended beyond one day and a night in the stocks.³⁶

The second group occurred in the year following the riots of Evil May Day, 1517. Since 1514, the power of Cardinal Wolsey had increasingly come to be felt in London, as he endeavoured to bring order and reform to the Kingdom, and he took a particularly hard line against the city following the attacks against alien merchants. Under growing pressure from Wolsey in 1518 to take action on a range of issues, the mayor and aldermen developed an even more radical proclamation on the problem of beggars and vagabonds, which announced that asking for alms was to be restricted to a licensed group of the impotent poor, whose number was to be capped. Proclamations like this which inhibited people's accustomed practices without some kind of specific authority were likely to encounter resistance. Indeed, Wolsey himself was the target of popular animosity in 1518, because he had issued a royal proclamation introducing plague measures, borrowed from continental towns, which required that inhabitants from infected houses carry white staves in their hands as they walked through the streets.³⁷ Wolsey made it clear to the mayor and aldermen on several occasions that they had to exert some more authority in the city, and shortly afterwards we find a proclamation by the mayor which made further innovations, banning the sale of bedding from infected houses.³⁸ Thereafter, the mayor's proclamation for the peace in the lead up to Michaelmas, 1518, also contained much more severe penalties than usual, threatening 'grevous imprisonment, ther to remayne without baylle or maynprise at the kynges pleasure, or other condyngne punysshment'.³⁹

The third group occurred under similar circumstances. Among Wolsey's reform programmes, the increase of archery and the prosecution of unlawful games were both prominent themes, and the civic authorities in London routinely fell short of his expectations. The high point of his campaign on these issues began in May, 1526, when he published a royal proclamation which significantly exceeded the statutory provisions against unlawful games.⁴⁰ The order provoked considerable resistance, with Hall remarking that 'the people murmured against the Cardinal saying he grudged at every man's pleasure saving his own', and so the proclamation 'small time endured'.⁴¹ But Wolsey was adamant that the civic authorities tackle the issue, especially after he was angered by a supposed satire upon him in a Christmas play at Gray's Inn that year, and he gave strict orders for the punishment of the

³⁶ 19 Henry VII, c.12; 22 Henry VIII, c.12.

³⁷ *TRP*, iii. 81.5; Jour. 11, ff. 318v, 319r-v.

³⁸ Rep. 3, ff. 184v, 189v, 191r, 192r; Jour. 11, ff. 346v-7r.

³⁹ Rep. 3, f. 164v; Jour. 11, f. 360r.

⁴⁰ *TRP*, i. 108.

⁴¹ Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 91.

officials themselves if they failed to enforce his programme.⁴² It may have been this which pushed the mayor and aldermen to unaccustomed lengths in May, 1527, when a proclamation was made banning both May games and interludes – neither of which were actually prohibited either by statute or royal decree.⁴³ On the same day, it was also summarily proclaimed that the punishment for a second offence of forestalling had been increased to exposure on the pillory.⁴⁴

One further episode calls for comment with respect to the use of civic proclamations. The second mayoralty of John Aleyn, 1535/36, saw the highest number of proclamations made by any mayor during this period. It also saw the most aggressive use. While Aleyn never quite exceeded his remit, his style was a distinct departure from the norm. In December, the second month of his mayoralty, he proclaimed that the import of oysters was banned until next August. While probably within bounds, it stands in contrast to the way that, in the mayoralty of John Rudstone, a ban on the import of rabbits was first debated and ratified by Common Council before any proclamation was made.⁴⁵ Likewise, new rules on the manner of selling of green rushes were proclaimed by Aleyn, where the four prior proclamations on rushes had been direct products of enactments in the Common Council – two of which were made when he himself was first mayor.⁴⁶ In February, 1536, he issued a proclamation that aliens should neither bake nor brew within their houses – again, probably within his power to do, but certainly contrary to customary practice, which allowed anyone to bake or brew so long as it was for his own household use. Perhaps, like rushes, this was a particular interest of his, for a proclamation of his first mayoralty had been directed against foreigners keeping open shop – essentially the same issue, but more firmly based on a well-known point of the Charter.⁴⁷ Towards the end of his year in office, he proclaimed that wines, after being unloaded from a ship, must be held for twelve days before being sold; by law wines had to be unloaded before sale, and it was usual for things like fish to have a holding period of three days, but with twelve days Aleyn was stretching his authority as far he could.⁴⁸ However, his most audacious act was to have his own proclamation on wood and coal proclaimed outside London, in towns of the surrounding countryside where woodmongers and colliers lived. In May, 1536, he sent a letter addressed to ‘all maiers, shireffes, baylyffes, constables and other

⁴² S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), p. 166.

⁴³ Rep. 7, f. 193v; this proclamation also targeted bear-baiting on Sundays during divine service but, by contrast, this had already been banned by the Common Council the previous November – Jour. 13, f. 365r.

⁴⁴ LB. O, f. 35v.

⁴⁵ Jour. 13, ff. 124v, 125v, 126r.

⁴⁶ Jour. 14, f. 17r; Jour. 12, f. 320v; Rep. 4, ff. 43r-v, 46r; Aleyn’s first mayoralty was in 1525/26.

⁴⁷ Rep. 9, f. 189v; Jour. 12, f. 315v.

⁴⁸ Jour. 14, f. 22v; *MGL*, i. 263-4; 27 Edward III, st.2 c.11.

mynysters and officers of our soueraigne lorde the kyngé', ordering them to make a proclamation 'yn all open and convenyent places ... accordyng as is within conteigned'.⁴⁹

What clearly set John Aleyn apart from other mayors was that, from the time of his first mayoralty onward, he was a member of the King's Council. Moreover, in 1532, he had served with Cromwell on a treason trial and thereafter was increasingly involved in government at Westminster.⁵⁰ In fact, his election to a second mayoralty for 1535/36 was specifically at the king's request, being seen as a safe pair of hands for the city as the Dissolution got underway.⁵¹ Aleyn himself purchased a suppressed priory at Hatfield Peverel in Essex, and maintained order in the city during the moment of unrest occasioned by the Pilgrimage of Grace. In late 1536, the Court of Aldermen voted Aleyn the special honorific title, 'Father of the City'. Because of his personal favour with the king, Aleyn was able to exercise his authority much more assertively, though as an agent of Cromwell's he was careful not to actually overstep his constitutional powers.

Those times when mayoral proclamations did cross the line were all occasions when civic authority had to be asserted more aggressively. On the one hand, in 1510, it was part of a campaign to restore the respect of citizens for their civic government after the damaging prosecutions of several Lord Mayors orchestrated by the henchmen of Empson and Dudley. On the other, in 1518 and 1527, it was driven by the need to demonstrate to Wolsey and the Privy Council that the civic government was in control of the city and was taking action. But the vast majority of mayoral proclamations were clearly founded upon legitimate grounds. Many worked simply to enforce the existing laws as established by Statute, Act of Common Council or Royal Charter, while choosing not to mention that the mayor's authority actually relied on some external source. Others concerned themselves specifically with the food supply and the regulation of trading practices, over which the mayor had a special, personal authority. By consciously reserving proclamations for the communication of orders based on legitimate authority, the civic government reinforced their secondary function as a tool for asserting the legitimacy of its exercise of power. Indeed, the exceptions further demonstrate that proclamations were viewed by the civic government precisely as a way to assert such an image of authority during difficult times.

In this way, deciding how to communicate a piece of political information was not just about who needed to be informed, but also about how the legitimacy of the civic government could best be maintained on a day-to-day basis or asserted in the face of challenge.

⁴⁹ Jour. 13, ff. 479v-80v.

⁵⁰ E.L. Furdell, 'The King's man in London: the career of Sir John Allen,' *Proceedings of the Montana Academy of Sciences* 37 (1977), pp. 185-91.

⁵¹ Jour. 13, f. 452v.

Moreover, the image of legitimacy in such a performance was bound up with people's expectations that official announcements were made in certain ways. Understanding who conducted these performances and how they were embedded in particular places is therefore crucial to appreciating how they functioned within the city's political culture, and must be turned to next.

At the beginning of this chapter it was suggested that the actual text of a proclamation was only one aspect of the message which it was intended to convey. The personnel, ritual form, and place of proclamation were all aspects of what distinguished royal, civic, heraldic and judicial proclamations from each other, as well as being crucial to their perception as legitimate, official announcements. These facts have often been obscured in the work of historians by a lack of clarity over who exactly carried out the different kinds of proclamation and where they were performed. Systematic study of the civic records, however, sheds light on these questions.

To begin with, the evidence suggests that civic proclamations were carried out by the Common Crier alone, with others in attendance for royal and heraldic proclamations, while the sheriffs and their serjeants were responsible for those declarations which accompanied punishments. The nature of the records makes it difficult to disentangle this, especially with regard to royal proclamations. In earlier centuries, writs for royal orders to be proclaimed were addressed sometimes to the 'mayor, aldermen and sheriffs', sometimes to the 'mayor and sheriffs', but also sometimes to the sheriffs alone.⁵² However, this itself does not imply that they or their officers actually made such proclamations. The office of Common Crier was already in existence by 1291, and he is seen making regular proclamations in the city throughout the fourteenth century.⁵³ Moreover, according to a description of the office drawn up in 1419, though some proclamations were still at least considered the responsibility of the sheriffs, they were carried out in practice by the Common Crier who received 12d. from them each time he made a proclamation.⁵⁴ In fact, by the 1450s, the sheriffs were no longer receiving writs to carry out proclamations. Their register of writs, which survives for the years 1457–59, shows no such orders. The only writs recorded under 'brevia proclamationis' are exigents to be proclaimed in the Court of Hustings.⁵⁵

⁵² e.g. LB. C, f. 88v – November, 1306; LB. D, f. 143v – January 1312; *MGL*, i. 193 – August, 1356.

⁵³ LB. A, f. 56r, LB. D, f. 1v, LB. F, f. 20v; P.E. Jones, 'Common Crier and Serjeant-at-Arms,' *Transactions of the Guildhall Historical Association* 3 (1963), pp. 80-7.

⁵⁴ *MGL*, i. 49.

⁵⁵ LMA COL/SF/04/046.

Indeed, in the early Tudor period, the text of a royal proclamation started in the hands of the Court of Aldermen, and was also to be returned to them. For example, in March 1534, it was noted that:

At thys courte a proclamacion made for provysion & sellyng of flesshe betwene easter & the xxiiij day of June next commyng at certeyn prices yn the same declaryd, notwithstanding the actes therof made to the contrary, whiche proclamcion ys nowe delyuered to the Comen Cryar, & after proclamacion therof made than the same to be delyuered to the Vndershyref of Middelsex to be there yn the sayd countie [proclaimed] & then to be brougght agayn to thys courte.⁵⁶

The Common Crier was also the main officer responsible for the making of civic proclamations. In a similar fashion to the example just quoted, again in 1534, the Court of Aldermen delivered the text of a civic proclamation on forestalling to one ‘Halyday’ to be proclaimed, i.e. to John Halyday who had been admitted Common Crier earlier that year. The text was to be proclaimed and then returned to the Court of Aldermen.⁵⁷ Likewise, in January, 1542, the royal proclamation on the king’s title in Ireland was proclaimed ‘per Grene’, i.e. by John Grene, mercer, who had succeeded Halyday as Common Crier in 1540.⁵⁸

However, the manner of making these different kinds of proclamations was carefully distinguished. When making ‘royal’ proclamations, the Common Crier was assisted by one of the sheriffs’ officers, called the Clerk of the Papers. For instance, when certain heretical books were proscribed in July, 1546, we find the proclamation being made with ‘one of the Clerks of the Papers’ standing alongside the Common Crier.⁵⁹ On the more solemn occasions when officers from the College of Arms participated at proclamations in London – like for declarations of peace or the accession of a new monarch – we similarly find one of the Clerks of the Papers in attendance on the Common Crier. When martial law was declared during the commotion time of 1549, the group which carried out the proclamations went forth with ‘both the sheriffes riding, and the knight mershall with them in the middle with the trumpett, and the common cryer afore them with one of the clarkes of the papers with him’.⁶⁰ We also find the Clerks of the Papers assisting the Common Crier in his duty to announce the Hustings.⁶¹ Their role in such cases was not only ceremonial but probably functional as well. From an account of the manner of making proclamations at Exeter, we learn that there was a distinction between ‘reading’ and ‘proclaiming’, for there the crier’s

⁵⁶ Rep. 9, f. 49v; *TRP*, i. 144.

⁵⁷ Rep. 9, f. 53v; for the text, see Jour. 13, ff. 401v-402v.

⁵⁸ Jour. 14, f. 300v (*TRP*, i. 208); other examples also specifically name the Common Crier as making proclamation – Wriothesley, ii. 54 (*TRP*, i. 379), ii. 38 (*TRP*, i. 356); Jour. 15, f. 13r (*TRP*, i. 214), 45v-6r (*TRP*, i. 220); cf., however, Rep. 12, f. 159v.

⁵⁹ Wriothesley, i. 168 (*TRP*, i. 272).

⁶⁰ Wriothesley, ii. 15-16.

⁶¹ Rep. 9, f. 178r; Rep. 10, f. 282v.

task was ‘to pronounce openly, and with a loud voice, the proclamation then and there by the clerk to be read to him’.⁶²

By contrast, the proclamations which accompanied punishments handed down by the mayor and aldermen were always carried out by the sheriffs’ officers. As one of the city’s early customals prescribed, corn dealers who were convicted of deceitful trading practices were to have a ‘serjeant of the City standing by the side of the pillory with good hue and cry as to the reason why [he is so punished]’.⁶³ The serjeants-at-mace were the sheriffs’ principal body of officers, authorized to make arrests, distrain property, and generally enforce their orders. Their particular role in overseeing the punishment of those who transgressed the laws of the city can be readily traced in the civic records.

But it was seen at the beginning of this chapter that different kinds of proclamations were made not just by different people, but also in different places throughout the city. Royal proclamations, especially on the most solemn occasions, were accustomed to be made in four particular places – before the Church of St Magnus at the Bridge foot; at Leadenhall Corner; between the Standard and the Cross in Cheapside; and at the Conduit in Fleet St. That these were special sites of proclamation in the sixteenth century has been noted by others, such as Heinze and Youngs, whose concern was more with proclamations than with the city of London. But they were unaware that this practice stretched back to at least the fourteenth century, or that other kinds of declarations, such as the civic proclamations of the mayor, might be made elsewhere.

On major occasions, the use of particular locations was just one part of an elaborate ritual which endowed a given piece of political information with gravity and legitimacy. In addition to the order of progress between places of proclamation, there were also set forms to the procession of personnel and the performance at each site. The proclamation for universal and everlasting peace with France in July, 1546, affords one of the richest illustrations of such a performance. Having made the first proclamation before the Church of St Magnus at the foot of London Bridge, the formal party set off up Gracechurch St with

fower trumpettes riding in trump cowples, tow haroldes next in their cote armors, the Serjeant-at-armes of the cittie [i.e. the Common Crier] riding betwene them with his masse. Then Wyndsor, an harold, in his cote armor following alone. Then Norrey and Clarentius, Kinges-at-Armes, in their rych cotes of armes following ; then the tow shrives in their Scarlett gownes with

⁶² John Hooker, *The description of the citie of Excester*, ed. W.J. Harte, J.W. Schopp, & H. Tapley-Soper, 3 vols (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1919-47), iii. 846; likewise in London the proclamation for peace with France in 1546 was ‘read’ by Norrey King-at-Arms, and ‘proclaimed’ by Rouge Dragon Herald – Wriothesley, i. 165.

⁶³ LMA COL/CS/01/006, ‘Liber Custumarum’, f. 201v; as this passage was later copied into ‘Liber Albus’, it is printed in *MGL*, i. 263, and translated at *Liber Albus*, p. 230.

white rodde in their handes following ; and so rode in order to Leadenhall corner, where was made the second proclamation.⁶⁴

At each site, the performance began with ‘a trumpett blowing first three tymes’, then ‘Norrey Kinge-at-Armes reding the proclamation, and [Rouge] Dragon the harold proclayming,’ followed by a final blow of the trumpet in each place. Although the performance was more elaborate and distinct in London, other cities also had particular places where royal proclamations ought to be made. In smaller towns, the site was usually dictated by the practical consideration of reaching the widest audience. In Colchester in 1490, for example, a proclamation was made ‘in the king’s highway in front of St James Church near to east gate, because on that day the parishioners of the parish of St James procured certain musters and memorials to be displayed there’.⁶⁵ By contrast, larger towns were more likely to have special sites for their performance, which would of course reach a wide audience but were also hallowed by tradition. In York, for instance, royal proclamations were always made on the pavement before the Minster, while in Southampton there was a church porch known as ‘the proclamation house’ from its use as the official site for such acts.⁶⁶ As in London, the City of Exeter had a well-developed ceremonial procedure. It was customary there that the mayor should proceed

with his brethren the aldermen, and his officers, and then the swordbearer standing before [him] with the sword holden up, and the four serjeants. One of the said serjeants is to make three oyezys and to command every man to keep silence. Then one of them is to pronounce openly and with a loud voice the proclamation then and there by the clerk to be to read him.⁶⁷

These formalities were usually only a local consideration, and not of particular concern to the Crown. The form of the writ gave discretion to the local authorities, specifying such places as ‘seemed most convenient’ to them.⁶⁸ When the Act of Proclamations was drawn up in 1539, it ordered only that royal proclamations be made by the sheriffs in four market towns, or in the six largest villages if there were not enough towns of reasonable size. That said, on sensitive issues the Crown could take a more active interest and demand that a larger show be made – on one special occasion, the authorities in York received the order that proclamation be accompanied ‘with sound of trumpeters, procession, making of bonfires and other ceremonies’.⁶⁹ But certainly in London it was taken for granted that royal proclamations were made in particular places. When the Court of Aldermen received the

⁶⁴ Wriothesley, i. 163-5.

⁶⁵ Cited by Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 28.

⁶⁶ Cited by Youngs, *Proclamations*, p. 25.

⁶⁷ Hooker, *Description of Excester*, iii. 846.

⁶⁸ For the forms of writs, see Steele, *Bibliography*, i. xii-xiii, nn. 7-10; Heinze, *Proclamations*, pp. 24-6;

Youngs, *Proclamations*, p. 22.

⁶⁹ Cited by Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 29.

king's proclamation concerning plague measures to be taken in January, 1518, they ordered simply that it be proclaimed in the places 'of olde tyme vsyd & accustomed'.⁷⁰

Because of these ritual elaborations, viewers could easily distinguish both the gravity of the information being communicated to them and the authority on whose behalf it was being proclaimed. But whereas royal proclamations always took place at certain specific locations, the civic proclamations of the mayor could range more widely through the city, with sites chosen to indicate the significance and the nature of the matter at hand. First, issues of limited scope could be delivered simply within the public space of the Guildhall. Drawing on the ancient association of the Court of Husting as a place of formal public announcement, the Common Crier would ascend the slightly raised platform at the west end of the hall, where the court was normally held, and make his proclamation from there.⁷¹ The use of this place as a site for regular political communication would have heightened the effect when, in February 1554, Queen Mary likewise went 'up into the place of the hustinges' and addressed the Common Council, proclaiming the traitorous intentions of the rebel Wyatt 'with her owne mowth'.⁷²

Secondly, when a particular matter was judged fit for wider announcement throughout the city, the Common Crier was sent out to other places. Just as it was understood that the royal proclamation on plague measures in 1518 must take place at particular sites, so a civic proclamation on food prices in January, 1526, had to be made in certain 'places accustomed'.⁷³ These regular sites of civic proclamation were the city's marketplaces, but the choice varied according to the gravity of the situation. A general announcement, like that advertising the shooting games to be held in Finsbury Field in August, 1541, would call for the three major 'markett places' of the city – i.e. Newgate, Cheapside and Gracechurch St.⁷⁴ But when the city was facing a situation of grave danger, like popular unrest under the pressure of inflation and price rises, proclamations would be made at a series of other sites as well. For example, seeking to promote popular confidence in the civic government through a crackdown on offences in November, 1534, the authorities ordered that the relevant regulations and penalties be newly proclaimed at Billingsgate (the city's main wharf); New Fish St by St Magnus Corner (the main site for Fishmongers); inside Leadenhall (the main meat market for country butchers); and Smithfield (the place to buy livestock and horses), as

⁷⁰ Rep. 3, f. 184v.

⁷¹ Foster, *Politics of Stability*, p. 18; for instance, announcements relating to civic elections, or the recital of Acts of Common Council – Jour. 13, f. 35v.

⁷² Wriothsley, ii. 108-9.

⁷³ Jour. 12, f. 344r.

⁷⁴ Rep. 10, f. 220v.

well as the ‘other places accustomed,’ i.e. the major markets of Newgate, Cheapside and Gracechurch St.⁷⁵

During the sixteenth century the promulgation of a proclamation was also increasingly accompanied by the posting up of written or printed copies of the text, and this had an influence on the way that political communication was distributed throughout the city. At the beginning of the period, the posting of public notices was limited to a few centralized places, but increasingly they came to penetrate into every ward of the city. Long before the sixteenth century, a few important texts were regularly put on display in the public space of the great hall of the Guildhall, and this practice continued under the early Tudors. The assizes of bread and ale, the assize of measure, and other essential texts would have been made available for public consultation in this way.⁷⁶ In addition to this, we find some examples in the early sixteenth century of civic ordinances being posted up in important public spaces. At a Court of Aldermen in December, 1507, it was noted that ‘the pryces of all pultrye wares been ratid and tables commaunded to be made of the same and to be sette vp in iij seuerall places, that is to saye, on at Ledenhall, another at the Stockes and the thyrde at Grayfreres,’ i.e. before the Greyfriars’ gate, where Newgate market was held.⁷⁷ With even greater elaboration, it was noted in 1512 that:

to the entent that no man shall excuse his offence by ignoraunce nor no persone shuld be damaged by non knowlege of the seid prices, the seid maire & aldermen hathe ordeyned iij tables of the seid prices of poultry, oone of the same tables to be sett vp at Ledenhall, another at the Stockkes in the Pultry & the iij^{de} table to be sette vp at the Greyffeers gate, there to remayne for the due knowlege of euery man that to the seid places & market shall repaire.⁷⁸

However, from the 1520s onward, political information was made publicly available with increasing frequency and with wider distribution throughout the city. As early as 1519, the civic government had ordered that copies of some Acts of Common Council be drawn up and handed out, probably in manuscript, at Guildhall.⁷⁹ In 1527, a committee of the Common Council made three separate proposals concerning the publication of important information, including the names of merchants holding letters of protection, the rates of tithes, and a digest of civic laws. Indeed, by 1538, acts of Common Council, civic proclamations, and other orders were regularly being put in writing and distributed throughout the city. For instance, in January of that year, an Act of Parliament to prevent

⁷⁵ Rep. 9, f. 81v.

⁷⁶ In 1546, rates of scavage were hanging in the Council Chamber, while rates of balliage were in the Outer Chamber – Rep. 11, f. 290r; Jour. 15, f. 236r-v; in 1548, the rules on treatment of prisoners were hanging in each Compter – Rep. 11, f. 411r; Rep. 12, f. 257v; the Assize of Bread was hanging in the Council Chamber in 1590 – Rep. 22, f. 132r.

⁷⁷ Rep. 2, f. 37r.

⁷⁸ Rep. 2, f. 127v.

⁷⁹ Jour. 12, f. 29v.

silting in the Thames was ordered to be set up in tables at Billingsgate and the city's other wharves, while in September the City had Cromwell's religious injunctions put in print at its own cost.⁸⁰ In July, the Court of Aldermen had devised a civic proclamation on the prices of poultry which it then put in print, ordering that 'euery one of my maisters thaldermen shall have one & euery [company] hall one, & dyuerse peaces of the same to be sett vpon dyuerse open places of thys cytie'.⁸¹ Finally, in December, the Act of Parliament on silting in the Thames was ordered to be printed, this time with a new Act of Common Council on the same subject, and Thomas Gybson, 'prynter', received 51s. 4d. for producing them.⁸²

At the same time, the Crown's royal proclamations were increasingly being printed, the earliest survival being that on coinage in 1504.⁸³ However, not all royal proclamations were printed as a matter of course, for in Exeter in the 1540s it was observed that, after the crying of the proclamation was performed, 'the said proclamations, *if* they be imprinted, are to be set up'.⁸⁴ Indeed, not all royal proclamations were suited to printing, because their texts might be composed differently for each county, city and palatinate.⁸⁵ Even where they were printed, Chancery continued to write out one manuscript copy to be sent to each local officer under writ of proclamation, sealed with the Great Seal, which would then be accompanied by a dozen or more printed copies for posting throughout their jurisdiction.⁸⁶ But in several instances where royal proclamations had not been distributed in print, the City decided on its own initiative to have them printed. For example, in 1534, the royal proclamation suspending the statute on the sale of meat was printed at the city's own costs, as was that against the cult of Becket in the following year.⁸⁷ The City naturally took a particular interest in those royal proclamations which upheld its liberties, and in March, 1543, a proclamation reaffirming the mayor's jurisdiction over the Thames was specially put in print by the City and distributed to the towns which lined the river.⁸⁸ It was also probably one of these printed copies which the Waterbailiff said he carried with him as a warrant for his authority when conducting searches for illegal nets in July of that year.⁸⁹ From this it can be seen that the City saw a particular advantage in the printing and posting of such political information at an early stage.

⁸⁰ Rep. 10, f. 17v; 27 Henry VIII, c.18; Rep. 10, f. 44v; *L&P*, xiii. pt 2, 281.

⁸¹ Rep. 10, f. 40v.

⁸² Rep. 10, f. 73r.

⁸³ *TRP*, i. 54.

⁸⁴ Hooker, *Description of Excester*, iii. 846; emphasis added.

⁸⁵ Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 23.

⁸⁶ Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 22.

⁸⁷ Rep. 9, f. 79v; Jour. 13, f. 428r (*TRP*, i. 148); Rep. 9, f. 145r (*TRP*, i. 161).

⁸⁸ Rep. 10, f. 317v (*TRP*, i. 215).

⁸⁹ Rep. 10, f. 346r.

But what was done with these written copies of proclamations, acts and orders?⁹⁰ The printing of documents did not of itself imply that they would be posted, for as mentioned above, copies were sometimes produced simply to be distributed to civic officials, livery companies and interested individuals. This distinction was made clear when the Court of Aldermen ordered that:

the Act of Comon Cownsayll [is] to be enprynted as foloweth, that ys to say, viij skynnes of parchemyn to be sett vp yn tables of wood yn dyuerse places of thys cytye & the residue to be prynted yn paper, so that no man shall excuse hymself by ignorance, and the sayd papers to be deluyered to the wardemote enquestes.⁹¹

Here a distinction is drawn between the eight parchment copies to be given a formal wooden frame and set up in particular places, and the paper copies to be given to each of the wardmotes. In the same way, the number of copies produced when printing civic proclamations suggests that the majority were intended to be distributed to individuals or groups. When a new proclamation on sturdy beggars and vagabonds was devised by the mayor and aldermen in January, 1540, it was ordered ‘that the same shalbe put yn prynte, & CCC papers to be made at the charges of thys cytie’ – i.e. far too many just for posting.⁹²

Sometimes it is explicitly clear that a proclamation or other decree was only to be posted at a select number of places specially relative to the text, like acts on the Thames put up at the city wharves, or an act on the civic water supply in 1541 which was to be affixed to each of the city’s conduits.⁹³ But by 1549 at the latest, it is clear that particular places had been established in each of the city’s twenty-five wards for the posting up of official information. In that year, the Court of Aldermen made specific reference to the places where ‘proclamacions are usually accustomed to be set vp’, when giving an order concerning ‘the proclamacions that are & shalbe set forthe & fyxed vpon the postes & places accustomed within their seuerall wardes’.⁹⁴ It is unclear when exactly these proclamation posts had appeared in the wards of the city, but some indication can be gleaned from the changing language of the writs of proclamation which the Chancery composed for London. When in 1533 the City received copies of some recent Acts of Parliament with specific orders to

⁹⁰ Tiffany Stern has vividly evoked the extent to which London must have been saturated with posted bills and offers an interesting perspective on the posting of seditious libels (considered below) but she does not address the evidence here discussed and is not greatly concerned with the sites of official posting – T. Stern, “‘On each wall and corner poast’: playbills, title-pages, and advertising in early modern London,” *English Literary Renaissance* 36:1 (2006), pp. 57-89.

⁹¹ Rep. 10, f. 69r.

⁹² Rep. 10, f. 158r; 50 copies was normal – *Chamber Accounts of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B.R. Masters (London Record Society, 20, 1984), pp. 30, 88-9; see also the accounts of Thomas Berthelet, royal printer, in *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640*, ed. E. Arber, 5 vols (London, 1875-77), ii. 50-60.

⁹³ Rep. 10, ff. 50v, 232r.

⁹⁴ Rep. 12, f. 153r.

proclaim them, they were accompanied by a new form of the writ *de proclamatione facienda*, having an additional clause:

... mandantes praeterea quod immediate post proclamationes, sic ut premittitur, per vos factas, omnes et singulas huiusmodi cedulae in separatis distinctis et publicis locis, ut subditis et ligeis nostris plenius apparere poterit, in tabulis affigi et poni similiter faciatis...⁹⁵

The novelty of this form is suggested by the fact that the scribe has entered the writ into the city records, even though he has not copied out the text of the acts themselves. This is the earliest example, of which I am aware, of a writ of proclamation which specifically orders that copies of an accompanying text be ‘put up and affixed’. One ought not to place too much weight on the use of this form, as it is found on only a handful of subsequent occasions, while proclamations were quite frequently printed from that time forth and posting presumably took place regardless. But clearly the practice of posting up political information in the city of London was something which had reached the consciousness of the Chancery clerks by 1533.

Even more telling, perhaps, was an earlier and more permanent change in the form of the writ, first encountered in London in May 1526. Whereas for centuries the writ of proclamation ordered only that a text be proclaimed ‘in singulis locis civitatis praedictae et suburbiorum eiusdem, ubi magis expediens fuerit’,⁹⁶ the mayor and sheriffs of London were now explicitly instructed to publish the text ‘in *singulis wardis, parochiis, et aliis locis* infra civitatem nostram praedictam et suburbia eiusdem ... tam infra libertates quam extra, ubi magis expediens videritis’.⁹⁷ Thereafter this is consistently the form in which the writ of proclamation is found, and may reflect the growing use of a post in each ward where printed copies of official communications were being put up. Again, the language of the writ here is probably descriptive of emerging practice rather than its prescriptive impetus. For at an even earlier stage there is evidence that a civic proclamation was actually proclaimed in each and every ward, though admittedly on only one occasion. In October, 1514, the Court of Aldermen ordered ‘that a proclamacion be made tomorowe in euery ward, that euery person ther kepe & sell after the maires price & not aboue, of all maner of vitailles ther to be sold’, and the text of the proclamation appropriately spoke of the prices to be observed ‘within this warde’.⁹⁸ While such a practice is never met with again, it adds context to the appearance of

⁹⁵ Jour. 13, f. 370v.

⁹⁶ Proclamation of the truce with Brittany in 1414 – *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica*, ed. T. Rymer, 3rd edn, rev. G. Holmes, 10 vols (Hague, 1739-45), iv. pt 2, p. 70; writs of essentially the same form are found as late as *TRP*, i. 107, in April, 1526.

⁹⁷ Jour. 12, f. 337r; emphasis added.

⁹⁸ Rep. 2, f. 196r; Jour. 11, f. 199v.

proclamation posts in each ward of the city, which were well established by the 1540s and probably appeared throughout the 1520s and 1530s, if not earlier.

As this chapter has attempted to show, proclamations were a directly verbal way of communicating political information throughout the city, but they also had significant non-verbal dimensions which were important to the message being communicated. The personnel, their ritual actions, and the places where they made the proclamations served to highlight the subject of the message and indicated the person or group which had issued it. But by virtue of doing so, each and every proclamation was also a re-assertion of the authority of that individual or group and the legitimacy of the power which they exercised. Making use of, and monopolising, these customary forms of communication was an integral part of asserting and maintaining authority in the city. In early modern society, the act of speech was particularly freighted with claims to authority, while the imperative to listen silently was a key attribute of subordination. In every civic proclamation, regardless of its subject, part of the message was about the civic community – that it was made up of ‘the governors’ who spoke and ‘the governed’ who listened.

These non-verbal aspects of a proclamation were not lost on the audiences of early modern London. This was evocatively illustrated, for example, by the scenes which attended the city’s declaration for Mary, when people in the streets were able to ‘read’ the message before the information was actually delivered verbally. The episode demonstrates how readily certain meanings could be communicated by the passage of civic officials, at a particular time, with particular starting point, company and route. On a Wednesday, the nineteenth of July, 1553, eight days after news had arrived in the city that the Lady Mary had ‘proclaymed herselfe as Quene and heyre to the Crowne’ amongst supporters in Norfolk, the Lord Mayor was on his daily business over by Paul’s Wharf. On this particular occasion he was met by the Earl of Shrewsbury, a member of the late King Edward’s Privy Council, asking him to meet at Baynard’s Castle within the hour, with the sheriffs and ‘such other of the aldermen as he should thinke best’. The Lord Mayor, thinking quickly, summoned the Recorder and his fellow aldermen ‘to meet him incontinent at Paules Church’. This was a canny choice, for not only was it nearby, but it would attract little suspicion because it was a regular meeting place for the daily business of the city government and was under the hand of Bishop Ridley, a committed supporter of Jane’s claim to the throne. Gathering, presumably, in the chapel ‘where the lorde mayer & aldermen doo comenly vse to mete’, they had a conference to agree on their course of action.⁹⁹ Having taken their decision, they then travelled the short

⁹⁹ Rep. 12, f. 159v.

distance down to Baynard's Castle, where the Council quickly convinced them 'to proclaime a new Quene'. With horses having been provided, it is then reported that, 'And ere the Counsell had rydden up the hill to Pawles Churchyard, the people were so great assembled runninge into Cheap, that the Lordes could scarce passe by,' everyone perceiving, of course, that the mayor was now riding, in the company of the heralds, sheriffs, and members of the Privy Council, from the Earl of Pembroke's residence at Baynard's Castle (i.e. not from the Tower, where Jane lay), going northwards by the shortest route towards Cheap, where the only occasion could be the making of a sudden proclamation. And so,

the Lord Mayor and the counsell [came] to the Crosse in Cheap, where the proclamation should be made, [with] Mr. Garter, the Kinge of Armes, in his riche coate of armes, with a trumpetter being ready, and, [when] the trumpett blewe, there was such shoute of the people with castinge up of cappes and cryinge, 'God saue Quene Mary', that the style of the proclamation could not be hard, the people were so ioyfull, both man, woman, and childe. The proclamation there [being] ended, the ... Counsell departed and commaunded Mr. Garret the sheriffe with the Kinge of Armes and trumpetter to see the proclamation made immediatly in other accustomed places within the City.¹⁰⁰

In this episode, a large role was played by the passage of particular people, to and from particular places, distinguished by specific ceremonial dress, like Garter King of Arms who was there 'in his riche coate of armes'. From these things, those in the streets knew not only that a proclamation was about to be made, but also what kind it was and hence what it was probably about, before it was actually made. This fact highlights the great extent to which non-verbal performances were capable of communicating important political information, and it is this point which the present chapter has chiefly sought to elucidate.

Therefore, by looking at the actual manner in which political information was communicated, much can be learnt about the political culture of the city which would not otherwise be apparent. For instance, the importance and communicative potential of the ritual elements which accompanied verbal proclamation highlight the political significance of other public but non-verbal acts. Two of these – processions and public punishments – form in turn the subjects of the following chapters. Although they often contained little verbal element, both had a ritual structure which was capable of communicating important political messages. Moreover, like proclamations, a significant part of this ritual structure was rooted in the streets and spaces of the city. Taken together in this fashion, it can be seen that political communication in the city was a process, implicated in the urban environment, where the specific message being communicated was only one part of a larger performance. In each instance, civic authority was also being asserted and maintained, and the urban

¹⁰⁰ Wriothesley, ii. 88-9.

community was presented in terms of those who actively performed – verbally or visually – and those who sat passively to watch and listen.

CHAPTER 4 PROCESSIONS

In the preceding chapter it has been suggested that proclamations were more than just the sum of their verbal contents – and that this was so for two reasons. First, the very act of proclamation was perceived as an expression of prerogative authority, and could be used to assert such authority more or less forcefully as required. Secondly, non-verbal elements, such as the personnel involved and the places of proclamation, were carefully employed to distinguish the authority on whose behalf a particular proclamation was being made. Together, these two things meant that, in the city of London, proclamations could be an effective tool for making statements about the authority of the mayor and aldermen – both that it was legitimate, and that it was actively in control of the city. In this sense, proclamations were certainly a way of communicating political messages, but such messages were not limited just to the verbal contents of their text.

In the same way, processions were also perfectly capable of communicating political messages even if they had little or no verbal element at all. Of course, processions were naturally symbolic acts, designed to mark a day, event, or person as significant. But by bringing particular people together, arranging them in a particular order, and leading them to particular places, processions were also capable of expressing something about the community of people who came together and how they related to each other. Although long neglected, ceremony and ritual are now understood as part of the wider political landscape, playing an active role in the creation and maintenance of status and hierarchy. As one recent review of the field concluded, Tudor monarchs ‘needed to secure ...the compliance of subjects through careful acts of representation – in words, images and spectacular performances that did not simply reflect or enact power but helped to construct it’.¹ It is certainly clear that the Crown consciously used performances like processions as political tools. Alongside the work done on ceremony and dramatic performance at Court, there has been an important vein of research on those acts of royal display which took place in cities and towns, especially coronation processions and royal entries.² With respect to the processions and pageantry orchestrated by Henry VII, it has been shown that ‘these ceremonies were no mere embellishment of political realities; they were, in fact, the instruments employed to erect the entire Tudor dynasty upon a sure foundation’.³

¹ K. Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and image in sixteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2009), pp. 6-7.

² L. Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, ritual and art in the Renaissance* (Geneva, 1986); G. Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, liturgy, and ritual in the medieval civic triumph* (Oxford, 1998).

³ S. Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969), p. 11.

However, this focus upon the Crown has obscured the fact that *civic* processions also functioned as political performances. Although coronation processions were the largest spectacles that inhabitants of Tudor London would have witnessed, they were infrequent and must be seen in the context of the more regular civic processions which filled the city's streets.⁴ Moreover, most studies addressing civic processions in early modern England have done so with a concern for the pageantry which they sometimes included, as a context for understanding Elizabethan drama.⁵ Instead, seen on their own terms, processions in early Tudor London appear as political performances overseen by the civic government as a way to project a particular image of the urban community. While it has been shown that civic processions on Corpus Christi served as representations of a harmonious urban political community in some late medieval English towns, their absence in London has been taken to show that the capital was an oligarchic place without the need for rituals of social inclusion.⁶ In fact, closer study of the civic processions which did take place each year in London suggests rather that it was a fluid place in which the urban elite had to work hard to construct an image of the city as a single community.

There were many processions in London besides royal ceremonies, and they tended to revolve around the city's local communities. Indeed, on an almost daily basis, individual parishes worshipped their patron saints with processions, trade companies celebrated their election days with ceremonial display, and armed men took it in turns to inspect the streets of their wards at night. But on particular occasions every year, each of these kinds of community came together in a representation of the city as a larger whole. At Midsummer, each of the wards contributed armed men to go with the mayor and sheriffs on a ceremonial watch through the city; at Whitsuntide, the parishes were all represented in a procession together to the cathedral church; and on the morrow of SS Simon and Jude, every trade company in the city contributed men to attend on the newly elected mayor. Each of these greater processions celebrated the city as a series of smaller communities knitted together into larger wholes – urban neighbourhoods into a walled town, parishes into a diocesan congregation, and trade companies into a corporation.

While the rituals of Lord Mayor's Day have been well-treated as a communal expression of civic identity, the same cannot be said of the other two. The following two sections of this chapter therefore provide a reassessment of London's ceremonial watches and religious processions from this perspective of the city as a civic community. Moreover, like other acts

⁴ M. Berlin, 'Civic ceremony in early modern London,' *Urban History Yearbook* (1986), pp. 15-27.

⁵ L. Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995); A. Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City drama and pageantry from Roman times to 1558* (Cambridge, 2002).

⁶ 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* (London, 1972), pp. 57-85; James, 'Ritual, drama and social body', pp. 3-29.

of political communication, processions could make representations because they were carefully structured, both visually and spatially, and these dimensions will be examined in turn.

The Midsummer Watch was an annual procession of armed men which took place each year on the night of June 23rd, being midsummer eve, and again five nights later, on June 28th. Drawing on the liturgical calendar, these processions were also known as the watches of St John the Baptist and SS Peter and Paul, on the eve of whose feast days the rituals took place. The associations of the ritual were threefold – the summer solstice, the need for communal protection, and the practice of military muster. First, being the summer solstice, midsummer was a major date in the seasonal calendar, not only in London, but across all of Europe.⁷ The one feature widely shared in common was the burning of bonfires, which also took place in London. This was not a ritual embodiment of the summer sun, but rather a celebration of fire as a means of purification against disease, which spread more easily in the summer heat. In some places, people jumped through the flames of bonfires and later walked over the dying coals, taking them home with them as a sign of good luck. Elsewhere, burning brands were carried around fields to ward them from blight.⁸ Indeed, it is clear that the bonfires in London were also associated with purification, for commentators said they were thought to ‘purge the infection of the ayre’.⁹

Summer was also a period of heightened concern for urban security. On the one hand, this was traditionally the season during which towns had taken communal responsibility for setting a night watch. From 1242, Henry III had required regular watches at city gates each night during the months from Ascension to Michaelmas, and in London during the 1300s watches in each ward became a responsibility rotating amongst householders throughout the season.¹⁰ On the other hand, summer also posed a threat for house fires. While serving against crime, the summer watches were also related to guarding against fire, and since the early 1200s Londoners had met at midsummer to coordinate its prevention in each ward.¹¹ In the 1300s, the articles of wardmote required barrels of water to be placed outside large houses from Pentecost to the feast of St Bartholomew, and from 1385 precepts for the

⁷ J. Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (London, 1810) pp. 301-12; J. Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (London, 1810), pp. 346-50.

⁸ R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 311-21.

⁹ John Stow, *A Survey of London, reprinted from the text of 1603*, ed. C.L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908), i. 101, ii. 283; for similar comments, see *The Diary of Henry Machyn: Citizen and Merchant Taylor of London*, ed. J.G. Nichols (Camden Society, 42, 1848), p. 310; *Hall's Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1809), p. 750.

¹⁰ *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, ed. W. Stubbs (Oxford, 1870), pp. 362-3; on ward watches in London, see further Ch. 9.

¹¹ M. Weinbaum, *London unter Eduard I and II*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1933), ii. 38-9.

Watch at midsummer often included a reminder of this ordinance.¹² It was therefore a meaningful time for a ritual celebration which acknowledged the importance of the regular summer night watches and the constables who were responsible for keeping them in order.

The third context in which the Midsummer Watch must be understood is that of the annual muster. In 1181, Henry II ordained in his Assize of Arms that every freeman must have and maintain a set of arms appropriate to his station, and Henry III took measures to see that the arms themselves should be presented for inspection and a record of this made. As with the summer watches, this move towards standardizing local practice was formalized in the Statute of Winchester, which first required arms to be inspected twice each year by the constables.¹³ The two processions of armed men in late June each year were therefore ceremonial representations of the regular activities of the constables and householders in the wards.

Each of these traditions shaped one of the three elements which constituted the ritual performances in London at midsummer – bonfires before houses, night watches in the wards, and a procession of armed men through the centre of the city. All three were elaborate in their organization. Despite the nostalgia with which he recalled the events of his childhood and an earlier religious age, the best description of the bonfires in Tudor London is still provided by John Stow, who recalled how ‘euery man bestow[ed] wood or labour’, while nearby ‘the wealthier sort’ set up tables of food and drink for their neighbours ‘to sit and bee merrie’, so that there might be ‘good amitie amongst neighbours that, being before at controuersie, were there by the labour of others, reconciled, and made of bitter enemies, louing friendes’.¹⁴

There is sufficient evidence to confirm the outlines of this picture in the early sixteenth century. For instance, upon the birth of Prince Edward in October, 1537, there were great celebrations in London, including ‘new fiers made in everie streete and lane, people sitting at them banquetting with frutes and wyne, the shalmes and waites playing in Cheepeside, and hogsheaddes of wyne sett in divers places of the Cittie for poore people to drinke’.¹⁵ Similar scenes accompanied the other momentous events of the early sixteenth century, such as royal marriages, peace treaties, and military victories.¹⁶ The general elements of Stow’s picture are all there – the bonfires in streets and lanes, the wine, the food, an element of charity to the poor, and in this case even music. In fact, it is clear that the neighbourhood

¹² LB. H, f. 190v; so also in the 1500s – Jour. 12, f. 55r; cf. *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth, and XVth Centuries*, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1868), p. 419 n. 3.

¹³ Stubbs, *Select Charters*, pp. 146-9, 363-4, 365-6; *Statutes*, i. 96-8.

¹⁴ Stow, *Survey*, i. 101.

¹⁵ Wriothesley, i. 67.

¹⁶ *Holinsbed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, ed. H. Ellis, 6 vols (London, 1807-08), iii. 527; Rep. 7, ff. 89v, 91v; Wriothesley, i. 64, 149, 186.

commensality of such bonfires was indeed intended as an expression of local harmony and sense of community, though not in quite the way that Stow suggested. When news of the Battle of Pavia reached London in March, 1525, huge celebrations took place throughout the streets, but while much of this would have been sincerely felt by the city's inhabitants, the festivities themselves were entirely orchestrated by the civic government, with a mayoral precept to the aldermen ordering them to make

certayn ffires, after the maner of misdomer fyres ...and that the yong childern of the same your warde be goodly garnysshed and so to sitt vpon the stalles aboute the said ffires, after the maner of a somer game, with mynstrals accordingly, and the housholders, with their seruants attendyng vpon theym, be neybourly drynkyng together at the said ffires in joyous maner.¹⁷

This image of communal bliss – children playing games in the street, neighbours drinking and feasting together around a fire, apprentices and servants dancing to the music of minstrels – is exactly what Stow described seventy-five years later, except for one omission – it was all being organized by the mayor and aldermen. Yet regardless of whether the sentiment was genuinely felt or not, it is clear that, as far as the civic government was concerned, these local bonfires, ‘after the manner of midsummer fires’, were designed to project an image of neighbourliness and communal identity.

Indeed, midsummer fires specifically referred to ‘local’ bonfires, within the smaller streets and lanes of each ward, as opposed to the major city thoroughfares. When special festivities were ordained to mark the accession of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor in July, 1519, events were to take place on two levels. On the one hand, there were ‘pryncypall fyres to be made’ at nine special sites throughout the main streets of Gracechurch, Bishopsgate, Cornhill and Cheapside, where cresset bearers, aldermen, constables and other ‘substancyall’ men were to be present, ‘well appareled’ and ‘in ther best array’. On the other hand, it was also decided that, ‘in all other stretes, smaller fyres to be made, after the maner of Midsomer nyght’.¹⁸ Therefore, long before Stow wrote, the midsummer bonfires were already distinctly associated with the city’s local neighbourhoods, an association which the civic government chose to reinforce, and sometimes exploit.

Alongside these bonfires, night watches in each ward were another aspect of midsummer ritual which took the city’s neighbourhoods as its basis. According to Stow, the night involved ‘standing watches, all in bright harnes, in euery ward and streete’.¹⁹ These several ‘standing watches’, as opposed to marching watches, are not to be confused with the other standing watch of men, with lights and torches, which was accustomed to line the major

¹⁷ Jour. 12, f. 329r; *Greyfriars*, p. 32; *Hall's Chronicle*, p. 693.

¹⁸ Jour. 12, f. 9r.

¹⁹ Stow, *Survey*, i. 101-2.

thoroughfares where the marching watch passed. Instead, Stow is here referring to the separate groups of men who would stand on display in each of the twenty-five wards, on this occasion in ceremonial dress, but otherwise in exactly the same manner as the regular night watches which took place throughout summer. This distinction can be amply illustrated. For instance, in preparing for the Midsummer Watch of 1514, the Court of Aldermen ordered that, on ‘the ij nyghts of saint John Baptist and Peter & Poule ...euery constable with his watchemen shalle kepe their owne wardes ...from the begynnyng of their watche vnto iij of the klokke in the mornyng’.²⁰ This is what Stow meant when he said of the city’s 240 constables that ‘the one halfe of them ech night went in the marching watch, the other halfe kept their standing watch’.²¹ This was certainly the practice in the early sixteenth century as well, for in 1517 it was ordered that:

the seyd alderman in his proper persone [shall] haue the ouersight, setting forthe & orderyng of the seyd wacche, and also to send the oon halff of the most & commely & best apparelyd constables of the seyd ward in eyther of the seyd vigilles to the Guyhall to attend vppon my lord mayr vntyll the wacche be doon, and that the residue of the other, that shall wacche, [shall] kepe their wardes contynuelly duryng the seyd wacche.²²

These standing watches in the wards would have helped to keep revellers at the bonfires in check, but they were also ceremonial in that they were specially dressed for the occasion. This can be inferred from evidence during the demise of the traditional watch, when orders had to be issued *against* the wearing of ceremonial dress by the watchmen in the wards. First, in 1547, commandment was given ‘by euery alderman to the constables of their wardes that they be well harnysshed & nott to were any cheyne, cap or other ryche apparell but onely their jornettes & to haue pollaxes in their handes and also that they haue no dromes’.²³ Then, in 1550, there was to be nothing ceremonial at all:

but onely a double watche in euery warde, bothe of the constables & of the watchemen beyng honest & sad householders, and that without eny maner of mynstralsy, lyght or jurnettes, vsyng none other kynde of thyng vpon their bodies but onely good harnes in suche quyete maner as at other tymes of the yere is comenly vsyd.²⁴

The practice of setting night watches was inextricably linked, in several ways, to the organization of the city into wards. First and foremost, each ward had a responsibility to hold its own night watch, and participating in the watch was a part of the duties of every inhabitant who held a house in that ward. Secondly, it was the beadle of each ward who was responsible for seeing that the watch was actually performed, and it was headed throughout

²⁰ Rep. 2, f. 179r.

²¹ Stow, *Survey*, i. 102.

²² Rep. 3, ff. 146v-7r; likewise in the 1400s – LB. K, ff. 19r, 30r, 37v, 45v, 51r, 64r, 74r, 85r, 107r, 169v.

²³ Rep. 11, f. 355v.

²⁴ Rep. 12, f. 240r.

the night by one of the constables. Like participation in the watch itself, the office of constable was another duty which fell by rotation upon the householders of a given ward, and appointment took place at the annual wardmote each year. In fact, the jurisdiction of a constable was strictly limited to his own ward, as appears from a dispute in September, 1538, wherein ‘the constables of Dowgate camme ynto part of Vyntrye warde’, and the constables had to be reminded ‘that euey one shall kepe hys owne warde & yn no wyse entermedle yn others warde’.²⁵ Thus, like the bonfires, the constables and the night watch were closely associated with the wards of the city and the shared responsibilities of neighbourhood.

The third, and most elaborate, part of the Midsummer Watch was a procession of armed men through the centre of the city. Although it has not always been appreciated, the major element in this procession was the ritual riding of the mayor and sheriffs accompanied by men from each of the city’s twenty-five wards. The focus by literary scholars on drama as part of the Midsummer Watch has led to an emphasis on the contributions of men and pageantry by the livery companies, but these were never more than secondary elements which were added, from the 1470s to the 1540s, to an existing ritual which persisted from the 1370s to the 1570s.

Instead, there are two things which stand out as the continuous basis of the marching watch throughout the whole period – (1) the mayor and sheriffs processing through the city; and (2) men from the wards accompanying them. In 1378, when this was recorded for the first time, it was stated that ‘all the Aldermen, with the good men of their Wards, assembled in Smythefeld,’ and went on procession ‘through the city,’ in six groups of four wards, each group being armed with lances but dressed in different colours.²⁶ The following year, in 1379, the precept called not for lances, but instead ordered that the ‘sufficient men of your Ward’ be ‘armed with bacinet and gauntlets of plates, and with an axe in hand’.²⁷ In 1385, the orders did not specify the arms, but only the colours red and white, while the following year the precept had become formalized as a summons ‘to go with us through the said city, in manner as was done last year, or in better manner, if you may’.²⁸ It cannot be known for certain what exact practice was continued from year to year in this fashion, but scattered records clearly show it involved a procession of the mayor and sheriffs with men contributed by the wards.²⁹ The scale of the spectacle is suggested by the report of one chronicler, who

²⁵ Rep. 10, f. 45r.

²⁶ LB. H, f. 79r; *Memorials*, p. 420.

²⁷ LB. H, f. 111r; *Memorials*, p. 433.

²⁸ LB. H, ff. 190v, 200r; *Memorials*, p. 488.

²⁹ For instance, in 1418, there was a ‘processus’ – Jour. 1, f. 47r; in 1454, there were ‘vigiliae ... per maiorem et vicecomites equestr[ae]’ to which the aldermen sent men – Jour. 5, f. 167v; and in 1464, they sent ‘homines armatos ad intend[um] et noctivagend[um] cum eodem maiore’ – Jour. 7, f. 2r.

described the performance in 1445 as ‘the royallest wacche that ever was seyn ther a fore, and the king and queen and the lordes wer present’.³⁰

In producing this spectacle, it has generally been assumed that the muster of armed men accompanying the mayor and sheriffs was contributed by the livery companies.³¹ Certainly, from the 1470s onwards, it became customary for the companies to contribute the cresset lights which stood stationary along the procession route, and a body of around three hundred archers.³² The individual companies of the mayor and sheriffs in a given year might also contribute morris dancers, horsemen and, at a later date, musketeers. But in describing the procession of armed men on midsummer eve in 1521, the Venetian ambassador Lodovico Spinelli spoke of ‘a band of some 2,000 halberdiers’, which followed after the archers and others.³³ These were the men of the wards, sent by the aldermen to the mayor and sheriffs, ‘ad intendum et noctivagandum’. Indeed, the civic records show that a major performance of the marching watch in 1567 contained a muster of 1381 men, drawn from each ward, in bands of between ten and eighty, according to their size and wealth. In a plan for reviving the Watch by John Montgomery in 1585, the muster was likewise rated on the wards, gathering a total of 1068 men armed with a combination of halberds, pikes, bows and calivers.³⁴ This was the group that Stow was referring to when he spoke of ‘pike men in bright corslets, burganets, and holbards, the like bill men in Almaine riuets, and apernes of mayle in great number’.³⁵

Furthermore, the presence of the constables, as representatives of the twenty-five wards and their respective night watches, was an important aspect of this contribution by the wards. In Ambassador Spinelli’s account, they walked in ranks directly before the mayor, as an honour guard. Montgomery, on the other hand, planned to divide them between the mayor and the sheriffs, with 48 for the mayor and 42 for each sheriff, and like Stow, placed them slightly further forward in proceedings, as a vanguard. Their regular presence in the marching watch throughout the early sixteenth century is attested by references in the civic records.³⁶ Special attention was also paid to ensure that they wore the proper ceremonial dress in the

³⁰ *Six Town Chronicles of England*, ed. R. Flenley (Oxford, 1911), p. 92, cited by Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, p. 155.

³¹ S. Lindenbaum, ‘Ceremony and oligarchy: the London Midsummer Watch,’ in B. Hanawalt & K.L. Reyerson (eds), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 171-88.

³² Rep. 1, f. 160r (dual foliation, 211r); Rep. 2, ff. 91r, 134v; Rep. 10, ff. 98v, 99v; Jour. 10, f. 314r; Jour. 11, f. 347v; Jour. 12, ff. 54r, 334v; Jour. 14, ff. 101v, 208r-v, 260r; Jour. 19, ff. 48v, 111r.

³³ *Calendar of State Papers ... in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, ed. R. Brown, 38 vols (London, 1864-1947), iii. 136.

³⁴ Jour. 19, f. 59r; *Harrison’s Description of England in Shakespeare’s Youth*, pt. 1-3 ed. F.J. Furnivall (London, 1877-81), pt. 4 ed. M. Stopes (London, 1908), pt. 4, pp. 375-80.

³⁵ Stow, *Survey*, i. 102.

³⁶ Rep. 3, ff. 146v-7r; Jour. 12, f. 55r; ‘Two London chronicles from the collections of John Stow’, ed. C.L. Kingsford, in *Camden Miscellany XII* (Camden Society, Third Series 18, 1910), p. 5.

procession.³⁷ Moreover, the constables were among those who continued to accompany the mayor and sheriffs through the city even after the procession had been shorn of the other elements contributed for some time by the livery companies. In 1546, when no pageantry was included, one London resident nevertheless reported that:

My lord major rode on Midsommer Even and Saint Peeters night, having an hundred constables going before him well apparayled, with their hensemen and cressett lightes, all my lord majors officers and servantes in cassackes and jerkins of yellow satten of Bruges, the three squires in yellowe damaske, the swerde bearer riding in a cassocke of yellow velvett with a great chaine, and my lordes footemen in doblettes and sloppes of yellowe vellvett, with his armes embrodered on their breastes and backes, the tow sherives and their officers followinge my lord major, and after them fortie constables more with their cressitt lightes, which was a proper sight.³⁸

Despite assumptions to the contrary, this practice continued throughout the 1550s and 1560s. In 1555, for instance, another Venetian ambassador reported that, for this year only, the Lord Mayor had been asked ‘not to permit the performance of the accustomed festivities of St John’.³⁹ Anne Lancashire has acknowledged this, buried deep within footnotes, saying that, ‘to 1558 and on into the 1560s, the mayor with an entourage appears to have ridden around the wards, presumably following the traditional Midsummer Watch marching route’.⁴⁰ At the same time she points out that she has ‘not pursued the Midsummer Watch in any detail past 1558’. In fact, beyond this date, the civic records paint a picture of ongoing ceremonial performance until 1572. Precepts continued to provide for constables, armed men, cresset lights and drums, to be drawn from each ward.⁴¹ In 1567, the full marching order and provisions for pageantry are laid out in the Journals.⁴² In subsequent years there are orders for the mayor to march with men from the wards, while on one occasion it was noted that an alderman had to take the mayor’s usual place in the march, presumably because of illness.⁴³ Chroniclers and local records indicate that the mayor’s march was often embellished by pageantry, but that this was now provided by individuals and parishes, not livery companies.⁴⁴ For this reason, while the civic records contain orders for ceremonial standing watches to line the traditional procession route, it is only in other sources that the actual march of the mayor and men is discovered.⁴⁵ However, in 1572, the mayor and

³⁷ Jour. 13, f. 444v; Jour. 14, f. 36v; Rep. 9, f. 252v.

³⁸ Wriothesley, i. 166.

³⁹ *CSPV*, vi. 142.

⁴⁰ Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, p. 296, n.37.

⁴¹ Jour. 18, ff. 234v, 319r-v, 328r; Jour. 19, ff. 46v, 176r.

⁴² Jour. 19, ff. 58v-60r.

⁴³ Jour. 19, f. 110v; *Holinsbed’s Chronicles*, iv. 234-5.

⁴⁴ John Stow, *A Summarye of the Chronicles of Englande* (1570), 411r; *Machyn*, p. 201.

⁴⁵ For instance, in 1571, precepts were issued for ‘all the constables of your said ward to appoint themselves to watch and that in as comely apparel or armour as they in ability be able ... and that your whole watch be brought to stand and furnish the high streets of this city ... [and] every constable to have his cresset light and bag bearer’ – Jour. 19, f. 346v; moreover, in the same year, the parish records

aldermen explicitly ordered that the watches in the wards should have neither music nor cresset lights, but only lanterns and candles like a normal night watch, and no further mention is made of the mayor and sheriffs processing about the city. Thereafter, the night was marked only by a 'double watch', and this soon became the norm rather than the exception, such that the magnificent displays in 1585–86, in the lead up to war with Spain, were considered a 'revival'.⁴⁶

Thus the central features of the Midsummer Watch – the bonfires, the night watches, the procession of mayor and sheriffs with men from the wards – were a regular part of London life from about 1378 until 1572. Within that period, the core procession was further elaborated with a larger muster and some extra entertainment from sometime in the fifteenth century until the year 1543, after which date large-scale accompaniments were added only in certain years. Taken together in this broader perspective, it is clear that the central features celebrated, and had always celebrated, the city as a series of physical neighbourhoods which collectively formed a larger urban community. The bonfires in the 'smaller streets and lanes' displayed, or tried to project an image of, neighbourhood identities based around hospitality and charity. At the same time, they reflected the mutual obligations of urban sanitation which inhabitants had towards each other, particularly in the season of festering heat. Likewise, the standing watches in the wards marked, with their ceremonial lights and decorations, the shared responsibility of nocturnal security and fire-prevention which the householders of each ward had to shoulder in turn. Finally, the contribution of constables and watchmen from each ward, united in one body and accompanying the civic officers on a procession through the major thoroughfares, celebrated the city as a series of wards banded together into an urban whole under the authority of the mayor and sheriffs.

Early Tudor London was also an ecclesiastical community, and its streets were filled with parochial processions on an almost daily basis. The greatest amongst these took place each year at Whitsuntide, when a series of processions were held over three days, being the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Whitsun Week. On each day, the clerks and parishioners of one of the three archdeaconries under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London went on procession to St Paul's. On the first day it was the parishes of the city, on the second, those of Middlesex, and on the third day, the parishes of Essex took their turn. In making their procession on the Monday, the clerks and parishioners of London

of St Giles Cripplegate reveal that morris dancers and a giant were provided 'to go before the mayor in the watch' – Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, pp. 168-9.

⁴⁶ The new form of precept was henceforward repeated verbatim – Jour. 20, ff. 2r, 136v, 222v, 289r, 412r; Jour. 21, ff. 215r, 296r, 357v; Jour. 22, ff. 107r, 188v, 301v, 394v; with the exception of 1585-86 – Jour. 21, ff. 441r, 442r; Jour. 22, f. 31r.

distinguished the city as a series of parishes bound together into a single congregation united in common worship. Moreover, the mayor and aldermen also occupied pride of place on the two subsequent days as well, accompanying the archdeacons of London's hinterland through the streets of the city. Taken together, these events constituted the largest processional performance of the year.

This tradition was not unique to London, but was part of a wider practice called 'pentecostals', in which every parish of a diocese had to go on procession to their cathedral church, once a year in Whitsun week, to deliver an annual offering. Although well-attested in Normandy, no reference to these practices is known in England from before the Conquest, and as they first appear in diocesan statutes of the 1100s, 'it seems quite likely that they were introduced by the Norman bishops,' to stamp their authority on newly centralized jurisdictions.⁴⁷ However, evidence for this institution is found at only eight cathedrals, and it appears to have died out in most places by the fourteenth century, as attempts had to be made to revive it at Exeter, in 1335, and at Chichester, in 1410. Even where the practice was maintained, 'it is very hard to assess on what scale processions actually took place'.⁴⁸ The size of many dioceses made it impractical for every parish to travel to its cathedral, and in most places the bishop nominated a regional church to receive such processions and collect the offerings. Eventually the processions themselves were simply commuted to a payment collected by the archdeacons, though David Lepine notes their continued practice on the eve of the Reformation in Lincolnshire and Lichfield.⁴⁹

In London, however, their continuous performance is better documented. During the tenure of Dean Robert de Watford, 1218–27, it was ordained by the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's that 'the oblations of the processions at Pentecost' should be divided only among those canons who were present on the day.⁵⁰ The processions and their offerings must therefore have antedated this act, and possibly by some considerable time. A charter to the Dean and Chapter in 1229–30 relates that Bishop Eustace (1221–28) had 'restored' to them that half of the offerings of Whitsun week which they had granted to 'previous bishops' for the repair of the church fabric after its destruction by fire.⁵¹ Presumably this relates to the great rebuilding of St Paul's during the 1100s, and shows that the offerings had been customary for some time already. Details concerning the processions themselves are also

⁴⁷ M. Brett, *The English Church under Henry I* (London, 1975), p. 164.

⁴⁸ D. Lepine, "'And alle oure paresshens": secular cathedrals and parish churches in late medieval England,' in C. Burgess & E. Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donnington, 2006), p. 44.

⁴⁹ Lepine, "'And alle oure paresshens",' pp. 44–45; he seems to be unaware of the later evidence for London.

⁵⁰ *Registrum statutorum et consuetudinum ecclesiae cathedralis Sancti Pauli Londinensis*, ed. W.S. Simpson (London, 1873), p. 184.

⁵¹ *Early Charters of the Cathedral Church of St Paul, London*, ed. M. Gibbs (Camden Society, Third Series 58, 1939), p. 46.

available at an early date. Statutes drawn up for the archdeaconry of London by Bishop Niger, 1229–41, show that already by this time it was expected that all the clergy and parishioners of the city churches would go to St Paul’s on the Monday of Whitsun week.⁵² That this referred to a procession to St Paul’s, to be followed by those of the other archdeaconries on subsequent days, is made further clear by Bishop Basset (1245–59), whose statutes for the diocese of London ordered that:

All rectors, vicars and priests who minister in any church should warn their parishioners and firmly command them to attend the procession of their archdeaconry in Whitsun Week, on their day appointed of old, and to come to the cathedral church, as they ought.⁵³

The continuing performance of these processions, as well as the presence of the mayor and aldermen, was further attested in 1382. In this year, one of the aldermen was fined for failing to wear the correct ceremonial dress on the Monday of Whitsun Week, ‘when the said Mayor and Aldermen went to the Church of St. Peter on Cornhille, to go in procession from thence through the City, according to the ancient custom, to the Church of St. Paul’.⁵⁴ Thereafter, in 1419, when many civic customs were being compiled and memorialized in a new custumal, the ‘Liber Albus’, the Whitsun processions were given the description which they are assumed to have maintained:

It was the custom for the Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs, arrayed in their suits, to meet in the church of Saint Peter upon Cornhulle, as also all those of the livery of the Sheriffs as well as of the Mayor. From which place, the Rectors of London heading the procession, those who were of the Sheriffs’ livery followed, and, next to them, preceding the Mayor, those who were of his livery; after whom came the Mayor, with the Recorder and Aldermen, in order of precedence, the procession passing through Chepe to the churchyard of Saint Paul’s ...an angel meanwhile censuring from above [as they entered]. This ended, the Mayor and Aldermen, ascending to the altar, made their offerings; after which they returned, each to his home.

On the Tuesday, they met again, this time at St Bartholomew’s, where they were joined by ‘a procession of the common folk of Middlesex,’ whom they led to St Paul’s via the Old Change and St Augustine’s Gate. Finally, on the Wednesday, the mayor and aldermen would gather at the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon, where they were met by ‘a procession of the common folk of Essex’, whereupon ‘they moved on straight to the churchyard of Saint Paul’s, the proceedings being just the same as on the Monday before’.⁵⁵

⁵² *Councils and Synods*, ed. F. Powicke & C. Cheney, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964), i. 328.

⁵³ *Councils and Synods*, i. 652.

⁵⁴ LB. H, f. 146r; *Memorials*, p. 466; D. Keene, ‘From conquest to capital: St. Paul’s c.1100–1300,’ in D. Keene, A. Burns & A. Saint (eds), *St Paul’s: The Cathedral Church of London, 604–2004* (New Haven, CT, 2004), p. 30 and notes thereto, but with typographical errors.

⁵⁵ *Liber Albus*, pp. 26–7; for evidence in practice, see LB. I, f. 203r; LB. K, f. 73v.

These processions continued to take place in the sixteenth century, but the only evidence comes from the moment when they were discontinued in the 1540s, and then temporarily revived again under Mary in the 1550s. For instance, it was observed in 1548 that the mayor had instituted a new practice of going to St Mary's Spital to hear sermons on the holy days in Whitsun Week, while the 'censing' in Paul's was 'cleene putt downe' – the reference here being to the censing of those arriving into the nave at St Pauls, as described above.⁵⁶ The following year, the sermons were transferred to St Paul's Cross, and one chronicler tells us that the aldermen went there on foot from the Guildhall without accompaniment – in contrast, presumably, to the greater processions which usually took place.⁵⁷ Some indication of what these greater processions had involved in the sixteenth century was also given when they were reintroduced in 1554. On the Monday in Whitsun Week that year, according to the diarist Henry Machyn, there took place 'sant Peter in Cornhulle's prossessyon, with a goodly qwyre of clarkes syngyng, and a iiij^{xx} of prestes wayryng copes of cloth of gold, and so folohyng my lord mayre and the althemen in skarlet,' who all went together 'to Powlles, and ther they dyd the oblassyon after old fassyon'.⁵⁸ The 'Greyfriars' Chronicle' further observed that they went on 'procession un-to Powlles, as they were wonte to doo, but there was no sensyng; and dyvers other pariches camme alle the iij. dayes as they ware wonte'.⁵⁹

In describing these processions, Machyn added two other details. First, he enumerated the 'diverse other parishes' which came on the Tuesday and Wednesday, saying, 'The xv day of May cam Haknay prossessyon to Powlles, and after cam sant Clement's prossessyon and the mayre and althermen, and ther wher goodly quersse syngyng', while 'the xvj day of May cam to Powlles Eslyngton prossessyon'.⁶⁰ If this is an accurate account, it would indicate that the pentecostal processions fell somewhat short of the ideal set out in 'Liber Albus' and the diocesan statutes. In about 1450, Thomas Lisieux, dean of St Paul's, had completed a compilation of the Statutes of the cathedral chapter up to his own time. The custom as he described it specifically ordered that on the Monday, all the clergy of the city with their parishioners, banners and cross, should process to Paul's 'with hymns and praise', followed on the Tuesday by those of the archdeaconry of Middlesex, and on Wednesday by those of the archdeaconries of Essex and Colchester. Those who could not attend on the appointed day were expected to make their own pilgrimage at the first possible occasion thereafter.⁶¹ By contrast, Machyn's description would suggest, much more plausibly, that the diocesan orders were fulfilled for most parishes by proxy, with one parish making the ceremonial

⁵⁶ Wriothesley, ii. 2-3; *Greyfriars*, pp. 55, 56.

⁵⁷ Wriothesley, ii. 14-15.

⁵⁸ *Machyn*, p. 62; note that Nichols has mistranscribed the date as 'May xiiij', while the manuscript actually reads 'May xiiij' – BL MS. Cotton Vit. F.v., f. 32r.

⁵⁹ *Greyfriars*, p. 89.

⁶⁰ *Machyn*, p. 62.

⁶¹ *Registrum statutorum*, pp. 79-80.

procession on behalf of the others. The parish of St Peter's in Cornhill, whose rector was the most senior ranking clergyman among the London parishes, appears to have performed this duty on behalf of the city. Likewise, on the following days, one parish, and then another two, made the procession to St Paul's, as proxies for the other three archdeaconries.

The choice of parishes was not dictated by their jurisdictional membership but instead reflects their geographical location ringing the city to its east, west and north, where the surrounding archdeaconries lay.⁶² At the same time, independent traditions of going to St Paul's to deliver payments may have kept the processions alive in these particular parishes.⁶³ In their descriptions, chroniclers also noted that other corporate groups such as the Fishmongers, Goldsmiths and gentlemen of the Inns of Court, participated in some of the processions.⁶⁴ The Fishmongers appear to have regularly attended the Monday procession with St Peter's Cornhill, probably because, being dedicated to St Peter, they were major benefactors of that church and since 1403 had been joined with the parishioners in a fraternity of common worship.⁶⁵ The same was probably true of the Inns of Court, which fell within the parish of St Clement Danes. The appearance of the Goldsmiths, however, noted by some on the Monday in 1554, was an ad hoc occurrence because their own annual procession to St Paul's for the Feast of St Dunstan conflicted that year with Ember Saturday.⁶⁶ Because the Fishmongers were accustomed to attend the Goldsmiths in their annual celebrations, as a show of solidarity, the Goldsmiths evidently chose instead to join them that year on their procession with St Peter's Cornhill.⁶⁷

Therefore, in the sixteenth century, the Whitsuntide processions still took place over three days, with priests and parishioners processing to St Paul's from different directions, representing the diocese and its archdeaconries. However, only one parish and its inhabitants from each would appear to have made the processions by this time, and perhaps that had always been the reality behind the ideals set forth in customals and statutes. In some instances, corporate groups associated with a particular parish – like the Fishmongers at St Peter's in Cornhill or the Inns of Court at St Clement Danes – also took part. But what appears to have stood out visually to observers was the 'goodly qwyre of clarkes syngyng',

⁶² *A History of the County of Middlesex*, ed. W. Page et al., 13 vols (London, 1911-2009), i, 139.

⁶³ *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot*, ed. A. Morey & C.N.L. Brooke (Cambridge, 1967), p. 440; *History of the County of Middlesex*, viii, 88, x, 75.

⁶⁴ *Machyn*, p. 62; *Greyfriars*, p. 89; Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1811), p. 714.

⁶⁵ *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1877), pt 1, pp. 407-18; see also, Jour. 1, f. 21v; *CLBI*, p. 188 n.1.

⁶⁶ W. Herbert, *History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London*, 2 vols (London, 1837), ii, 213-15; *Memorials of the Goldsmiths' Company*, ed. W.S. Prideaux, 2 vols (London, 1896-97), i, 32; T.F. Reddaway, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company, 1327-1509* (London, 1975), p. 265.

⁶⁷ The statement in 'Liber Albus' that the mayor and sheriffs were regularly accompanied by men of their 'liveries' refers to officers of their households, not men of their companies.

and the 'prestes wayryng copes of cloth of gold', or later the city's 'hundred copes unto Paul's', and the 'sixty copes' from St Clements. Although it probably took some time for many parishes to regain the appropriate ornaments after Mary's accession, a major feature was evidently also the great profusion of crosses borne aloft on staves and carried by clerks. Indeed, by 1555, this was a particular point of comment, when on the Tuesday, 'in the midst of the crosses was the Spaniard's cross of the Savoy, and it was round like to that hangs over the sacrament, of crimson velvet embroidered rich'.⁶⁸

This highlights the similarity between the performances of Whitsuntide and the more frequent but less regular 'General Processions' which were made by the city's clergy and their crosses on occasions of either thanksgiving or supplication. These general processions were a distinct species of performance, with both civic record-keepers and individual chroniclers employing consistent terminology. The Greyfriar usually speaks of 'a grete generall procescion', Wriothesley 'a solempne generall procession in London', and Machyn 'a general procession from Paul's.' In this they reflected the Church's own language. As Machyn put it when relating events of 1558, 'the vj day of feybrurarij dyd pryche at powlls crosse the bysshope of westchaster ...& ther he declaryd that of wedynsday next to go on generall prossessyon & pray to god'. Sure enough, on the Wednesday, 'a commandment came that all bishops, priests and clerks should go a procession about London,' which, as he went on to explain, is 'callyd the generall procession'.⁶⁹

These processions of thanksgiving and propitiation could reach dazzling proportions. In 1535, Francis I fell ill and a grand procession was arranged to pray for his health, which included city schoolchildren; the friars, canons and monks of every religious house in and around London; the priests and clerks of each city parish; and an array of mitred abbots, culminating in the Bishop of London under a canopy. In train were the mayor, his bachelors, the aldermen, and all the crafts in order.⁷⁰ This was certainly an exceptional event, but it was modelled on customary practice. The main idea was for all of London's parish clerks and priests to go forth, 'with every places of relegione', and on this occasion the boundary was simply extended somewhat beyond London itself.⁷¹ On other occasions of equal importance a more modest performance was usually employed. When peace with

⁶⁸ *Machyn*, pp. 62, 89, 138-9.

⁶⁹ *Machyn*, p. 165.

⁷⁰ 'Two London chronicles', pp. 11-12; C. Burgess, 'London, the Church and the Kingdom,' in A. Prescott & M. Davies (eds), *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline Barron* (Donington, 2008), pp. 98-117.

⁷¹ *Greyfriars*, p. 33.

France was celebrated in June, 1546, city priests and clerks went with Paul's School and the Cathedral Chapter, followed by civic officers and the companies.⁷²

But the basic ingredients of a general procession – giving thanks for a military victory, for instance – were simply the clerks, priests, and crosses of all the city parishes, followed by the clergy of the cathedral, and the mayor and aldermen. Upon receiving news of Philip's victory at St Quentin, in August 1557, there 'cam a commondement to all the churches of London to go to Powlles, all prestes in copes [for] a prosession,' and after *Te Deum* was sung, 'they whent a prosessyon into Chepe, round about the crosse syngyng *Salve festa dies*, and my lord mayre and aldermen in skarlett round abowtt Powlles withowtt'.⁷³ Likewise, when the siege of Boulogne was lifted in 1545, 'there was a solemnpe generall procession kept at Powles ... all the priestes and clarkes going in rytch copes, and 70 crosses of silver gilt of the parishes of the cittie borne before them'.⁷⁴

Indeed, whether or not the other corporate institutions attended, like the children of the schools or the craft companies, it was 'all the priestes and clarkes' (and before the Dissolution, the monks, canons and friars) with the 'crosses of silver gilt of the parishes of the cittie' that made a general procession. Their purpose was to symbolically combine the city's many individual communities of prayer into one great processional body, to laud or propitiate God on behalf of the whole city. The laity need not take part themselves, for each parish was present in the persons of their clerks and priests who were specially qualified for praise and prayer. In this respect, the parish crosses played a particularly important symbolic role, being brought from each individual parish to take part at St Paul's. When in October, 1537, the city came together to pray for the recovery of Queen Jane, the priests and clerks were there with 'the best crosse of everie parish', just as the week before they had been there to give thanks for the birth of Prince Edward, with 'the best crosses and candlestickes of everie parrishe church in London'. Likewise in January, 1555, when the city celebrated reconciliation with Rome, there was 'a general procession of St. Paul by every parish', but what this actually meant was their 'priests and clerks in copes to the number of a 160, singing *Salve festa dies*, with ninety crosses borne'.⁷⁵

In the Whitsuntide processions, the suburban parishes had to act as proxies for far distant places. But by contrast the city's procession on the Monday was able, through the priests and clerks of all the churches and their crosses, to represent, both visually and spiritually, the coming together of all the city parishes. Just as the constables of the wards paraded with

⁷² Wriothesley, p. 164.

⁷³ *Machyn*, p. 147.

⁷⁴ Wriothesley, p. 161.

⁷⁵ Wriothesley, pp. 66, 69; *Machyn*, p. 80.

their cressets in the Midsummer Watch as symbols of the city's neighbourhoods, so once a year on Whit Monday, and at other times in General Processions, the clergy of the parishes came together to represent the city as a series of spiritual communities united into a larger congregation of the faithful.

Others have shown that, in exactly the same fashion, the procession on Lord Mayor's Day witnessed the coming together of all the separate trade companies in a celebration of the city as a community of crafts joined together into a greater corporation.⁷⁶ Thus the three largest annual processions complemented each other. They were all representations of the city as a community – physical, religious, economic – and in that sense they remind us of the Corpus Christi processions of provincial towns. But what distinguished the London processions was their emphasis, not on fraternal equality, but on hierarchy. Processions in London had developed an elaborate structure and visual language for expressing these hierarchical relationships. Moreover, ceremonial order was deeply ingrained in the city's ritual traditions and Londoners were highly sensitive to precedence. Indeed, while the great annual processions differed in the aspects of community which they celebrated, they all shared one thing in common – the primacy of the mayor and aldermen in each of their ceremonial hierarchies.

All processions, of course, involve the passage of individuals in a series. But in the great processions of early Tudor London, individuals were always grouped together and divided according to status identities. At midsummer, when the city's structure as a collection of physical neighbourhoods was being celebrated, the marching watch was divided into sections to emphasize not only the men from the wards, but also the constables placed in authority over them, as well as the sheriffs' yeomen, serjeants-at-mace, and officers of the mayor's household. Together they constituted the pyramid of forces responsible for law and order throughout the city, atop which sat the mayor and his sheriffs. Likewise, in General Processions, the participants were divided into a series of groups according to levels of status within the Church – the Bishop 'enthroned' at the head of the diocese, with the Dean and Chapter of his cathedral church, then the rectors or curates of the city parishes, but also the chantry priests subordinate to them, as well as the 'clerks' in minor orders on the ladder towards priesthood, and the school boys under their tutelage still aspiring to that path. On Lord Mayor's Day, the new incumbent was accompanied not only by the liverymen divided between greater and lesser fellowships, but also by the 'bachelors' of his company, being

⁷⁶ F.W. Fairholt, *Lord Mayors' Pageants* (Percy Society, 10, 1843-44); S. Williams, 'The Lord Mayor's Show in Tudor and Stuart times,' *Guildhall Miscellany* 10 (1959), pp. 3-18; Berlin, 'Civic ceremony'; Manley, *Literature and Culture*, pp. 258-93; Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, pp. 171-84.

men from the yeomanry who had not yet achieved the status of the livery, as well as a group of poor men in receipt of company charity.

Not only were individuals divided into status groups, but the ordering of these groups in the procession reflected their hierarchical relationships by arranging them according to ceremonial precedence. Usually this meant a vanguard, ascending from lowest to highest, culminating in the head figure or group, sometimes followed by a rearguard in descending order. In complex processions, the series constituting the van might be made up of groups, which would have their own internal ordering from lowest to highest, sometimes even with their own van and rearward. For instance, the account of the procession for the health of Francis I describes the ceremonial order as ascending from the children of schools and hospitals, up through the levels of the secular and religious priesthood, to the Bishop of London with the consecrated host, followed at the rear, in descending order, by the mayor, aldermen and city crafts. This was relatively simple. By contrast, the Venetian ambassador's account of the Midsummer Watch presents it thus:

Fifteen armed men – drums – archers – musicians – pikemen – halberdiers – musicians – pikemen – pageant – halberdiers – pageant – halberdiers – pageant – halberdiers – pageant – halberdiers – pageant – morris dancers – constables – swordbearer – mayor – sheriffs – pages – musketeers and torchbearers – halberdiers – pageant – halberdiers – musicians – pageant

In this presentation, the basic structure is still there, with armed men, musicians and five pageants forming the long vanguard, the mayor and sheriffs in the place of honour, and a smaller rearguard of armed men, musicians and two pageants. Within the van, the main elements were the archers, pikes, pageants and constables, in ascending order, which were divided by single rows of halberdiers or musicians. Within the central element, the Swordbearer provided a personal vanguard for the mayor and sheriffs, with their pages bringing up the rear. In the actual rearward, the major elements of musketeers and two pageants, in descending order, are again separated by single rows of halberdiers and musicians. This elaborately ordered procession was then balanced by the undifferentiated group of two thousand armed men from the wards which followed with their cresset bearers. Other descriptions and plans for the Midsummer Watch give different but equally elaborate pictures shaped by the same principles.

Moreover, this division and ordering according to status and hierarchy was given special visual emphasis by the use of distinctive dress for each group. It is not surprising that the clergy, for whom ritual activity was a major occupation, had an elaborate series of vestments which could be used to distinguish status levels – tunicles, dalmatics, chasubles, amices and

pontificals, to name a few.⁷⁷ But the same can also be said of the men and officers who walked in the Midsummer Watch. The constables, for instance, had special cloaks or 'jornets', worn over their armour, which were reserved for this occasion. The aldermen often specifically ordered constables to go in the Watch 'yn jurnettes' and stipulated they be of uniform colours 'so that they may goo all after one sorte, for the honour of thys cytye'.⁷⁸ They were closely associated with this event – when ordered to wear them for a muster in 1539, constables were told to do so in such manner 'as they have bene accustomed vpon Mydsomer nyght'.⁷⁹ Likewise, the officers of the mayor and sheriffs had their own distinctive dress, with coloured cloth differently patterned according to their respective households.⁸⁰

This visual differentiation of status and hierarchy was nowhere more apparent than in the liveries and ceremonial precedence of the trade companies when going in civic processions or lining the streets to honour an important guest. Precedence in standing watches specifically mirrored that of processions, as was made clear at the funeral procession for Henry VII, where it was agreed 'that every company shall stande in lyke maner as they use to goo a procession'.⁸¹ These standing watches were carefully orchestrated, with the crafts in ascending order along specific streets, 'the lowest craft' at the foot of London Bridge, 'upward' through Gracechurch St to Leadenhall Corner, and 'thorough Cornehill to Paules ward ... soo always ordered that the most worshipfull crafts shall stande next vnto Paules'.⁸² The foreign merchants had specific places, even their own order of precedence, and the responsibility of each craft to fill a section of the route was so detailed as to be given a specific number of yards in length.⁸³ Chroniclers noted at royal coronations, like that of Henry VIII, how 'euery occupacion stode in their liueries in ordre, beginnyng with base and meane occupacions, and so assendyng to the worshipfull craftes'.⁸⁴

It was likewise in this reverse order that the procession was formed for Lord Mayor's Day and other civic occasions. For instance, the passage of barges to Greenwich for Anne Boleyn's coronation was specifically likened to how 'the mayer dothe to Westmester whan he takys hys othe'.⁸⁵ This comparison was made in reference not only to the act of going by

⁷⁷ M. Hayward, 'Reflections on gender and status distinctions: an analysis of the liturgical textiles recorded in mid-sixteenth-century London,' *Gender and History* 14:3 (2002), pp. 405-7.

⁷⁸ Rep. 9, f. 252v; Rep. 9, f. 107v.

⁷⁹ Rep. 10, f. 90r; Wriothesley, i. 95.

⁸⁰ Stow, *Survey*, i. 102-3, ii. 188-9.

⁸¹ Jour. 11, f. 68r.

⁸² Jour. 11, f. 69r.

⁸³ Rep. 1, f. 124r(165r); Jour. 11, f. 370v.

⁸⁴ *Hall's Chronicle*, p. 507.

⁸⁵ *Greyfriars*, p. 36.

barge, but also to the specific ceremonial order which such civic processions took. As Stow described the same event:

In thys order they rowed by Greenewiche to the pointe beyande Greenewitche, and there they turned backward in another order, that is to weete, the Maiors and Sherifs officers firste, and the meanest crafte nexte, and so ascendyng to the uppermoste crafte in order, and the maior laste, as they goe to Paules at Christmasse.⁸⁶

Occupying that final place, the mayor and aldermen would have been further distinguished by the special clothes which came with their exalted status.⁸⁷ They had at least four gowns and two cloaks, with special colours and trimmings, whose use varied according to the season and occasion but would always have been immediately recognizable.⁸⁸ Scarlet gowns were used for celebrations, violet for more sober occasions, and cloaks were added to distinguish greater ceremonies from lesser ones.⁸⁹ At the same time, there was further order and precedence within this uppermost echelon of civic officials. First, aldermen were divided into two ranks – those who had held the mayoralty and those who had not. This was given visual distinction by the chains of office which ex-mayors were entitled to wear.⁹⁰ Moreover, they were also to have their cloaks furred with grey amice, a valuable squirrel fur, while their juniors used calabre, a more whitish and less expensive squirrel.⁹¹ But these two tiers were also internally ordered according to the length of time that each man had been a member, and this manifested itself on all formal occasions such as going in procession, sitting in church, and around the council table.⁹² Outside the chamber, the mayor was further distinguished at the head of this group by the presence of the Swordbearer before him, and on occasion he might also wear crimson.⁹³

Hierarchical precedence was deeply ingrained in the ritual lives of London's inhabitants. It has been noted that the city's companies each had their own place in an ordered series which they observed when going in procession or lining the streets. But it went further than this. Ceremonial precedence permeated public life – they even had allotted and closely delimited places when attending divine service. For instance, it was noted in July, 1509, that:

⁸⁶ John Stow, *The Chronicles of England* (London, 1580), p. 909.

⁸⁷ For contemporary depictions, see *Hugh Alley's Caveat: The market's of London in 1598*, ed. I.W. Archer, C. Barron & V. Harding (London Topographical Society, 137, 1988), pl. i, iii.

⁸⁸ *The ordre of my Lorde Mayor, the Aldermen and shiriffes, for their metings and wearynge of their apparell throughout the yeare* (London, 1568); *The Survey of London*, ed. A. Munday (London, 1618), pp. 963-73; on numbers, cf. Rep. 8, f. 174v; the pamphlet is well corroborated for the early sixteenth-century – *Machyn*, pp. 112, 218, 303, 307, xxiv; Jour. 15, f. 86v; Rep. 4, f. 128v; Rep. 7, f. 66r.

⁸⁹ Rep. 3, f. 46r; *Machyn*, pp. 147, 150-1; Rep. 10, f. 288v; Stow, *Survey*, i. 167-8.

⁹⁰ LB. Q, f. 94v.

⁹¹ *Survey of London* (1618), p. 972.

⁹² *Liber Albus*, pp. 23-5; *Ordre of my Lord Mayor*, sig. Biii^r; Rep. 8, f. 174v.

⁹³ Stow, *Survey*, ii. 193; *Greyfriars*, p. 50.

Att suche dayes as the Stokfishshmongers and the companyes of euery mistere of this citee been accustomed to goo to paules, the seid Stokfishshmongers shall haue their standing and rowme in the bodye of the seid churche of paules on the lyfte side next to the grocers, standing and fulfilling their rowme vpward towarde the image of our lady of grace.⁹⁴

Similarly, when standing in Cheapside, the companies had specific places. When the Butchers tried at one time to usurp the place of the Goldsmiths it had to be reiterated that ‘of olde tyme the Goldsmythes of the same citee, whan of her craft is no mayr, they haue vsed to houe and stonde aboute the Cros of Chepe afore the Goldsmythe rowe’.⁹⁵

Indeed, Londoners were incredibly sensitive to precedence in these contexts, as attested by conflicts like that between the Skinners and Merchant Taylors, resulting in the Billesden Award of 1484 with its annual alternation of precedence between the two.⁹⁶ But similarly, in January 1516, the Court of Aldermen had to intervene between the Salters and Ironmongers, ordering the latter to ‘charitably & louyngly ffolowe next ... withoute eny farther stryfe or debate’. When variance arose between the Shermen and Dyers over precedence, the Court upheld the rights of the Shermen. But the Dyers refused to accept the award, and said they would absent themselves rather than appear in the lower place.⁹⁷ Such conflicts over precedence were by no means limited to the trade companies. The mayor and aldermen sometimes had to arbitrate between rectors as to who had pride of place in the city’s procession to St Paul’s on Whit Monday.⁹⁸ Conflict even arose in the Court itself. In October, 1514, a disagreement between two senior aldermen over recent nominations for the shrievalty turned into a fight over precedence, and one of them refused to attend court until it was established who would sit higher at the table.⁹⁹ Questions like this saturated everyday life, and Londoners all appear highly sensitive to such ceremonial precedence.

The same was also true of distinctions in dress, to which people were also very sensitive. Clothing, ornaments, and their colours were clearly used to differentiate the different groups in processions. But they did more than just that. They also made statements about political office and authority. Contemporary depictions of the mayor and aldermen emphasize their special dress and reproduce in detail the elements which denoted their particular rank on the aldermanic bench. For instance, when Hugh Alley put together a plan for better regulating the city’s markets in 1598, he included depictions of the civic officers who would be responsible for its enforcement. As the editors of his work concluded,

⁹⁴ Jour. 11, f. 82v; likewise the Broderers – Rep. 11, f. 325v; and Drapers – Herbert, *Livery Companies*, i. 448.

⁹⁵ Herbert, *Livery Companies*, ii. 218.

⁹⁶ Herbert, *Livery Companies*, ii. 319-20.

⁹⁷ Rep. 3, ff. 64v-5v, 65v-6r.

⁹⁸ LB. I, f. 203r; *Memorials*, pp. 651-3.

⁹⁹ Rep. 2, f. 197r-v.

This fastidious representation of the dress of the aldermen ... indicated how important to Elizabethan society was the outward and visible appearance of a man. Dress was often carefully controlled by society ... and, if read aright, could reveal a man's place and standing within his community: no fine dress, no significant office.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, in early Tudor London, elements of dress were directly used as metonyms for political status. Most obviously, the city's trade guilds came to be called 'livery' companies. Their distinctive dress was synonymous with their corporate status and political franchise. Moreover, within each guild, the liverymen – those 'in the clothing' or 'of the livery' – had special political status within their trade and were entitled to vote for civic officers.¹⁰¹ The power of this link between clothing and status is best illustrated by its punitive withdrawal. In 1528, when Robert Wade perjured himself in trying to avoid the office of sheriff, he encountered this identification of clothing and status very publicly – in full Common Council, the mayor 'then & there openly toke from the seyd Robert Wade, standyng on the borde before theym, *bis luyery hode*, and also then & there discharged hym of his *rowme of oon of the wardens* of his ffeliship of Merchaunt Tailleurs, to thentent that noon other persone hereafter shuld take eny boldenes in case like'.¹⁰²

Indeed, dress was not just a badge of office, but seen as synonymous with the office itself. If taking a man's hood could deprive him of his status as a liveryman, so 'cloaks' were synonymous with aldermen. First, this was recognized by a special sanctity attached to the physical items themselves – such cloaks could not be given away or sold within a year of their use, even after death.¹⁰³ Second, whenever the office of aldermanship was spoken of, it was usually in terms of the cloak. When an alderman retired, he offered 'the surrender of his cloak,' or was granted 'the discharge of his cloak'.¹⁰⁴ These garments were sometimes the subject of hot words. When the Court refused to allow Stephen Pecocke to retire in 1531, he told the mayor 'I haue made an othe that my cloke shall neuer cumme vppon my bak'. Having brought in the actual cloaks to surrender them, he further said 'that he wolde no lenger be an aldremen, nor that he wolde no more were theym'.¹⁰⁵ This was not just technical terminology, but also used in challenges to authority.¹⁰⁶ Even the distinction in furs which lined their cloaks could penetrate into language. A civic delegation in 1516 was to

¹⁰⁰ *Hugh Alley's Caveat*, p. 34.

¹⁰¹ Jour. 10, ff. 373v-4r.

¹⁰² Jour. 13, f. 75v; another example – Rep. 11, f. 303v.

¹⁰³ *MGL*, i. 35; LB. G, f. 45r.

¹⁰⁴ Rep. 1, f. 117r(158r); Rep. 2, ff. 83r, 97v; Rep. 3, f. 133v; Rep. 10, f. 281v; Rep. 12, f. 228r; Rep. 14, f. 271r; cf. *CLBG*, xxv.

¹⁰⁵ Rep. 8, f. 174v.

¹⁰⁶ Rep. 2, f. 183v.

consist of ‘ij of my masters thaldermen of the grey clokes, & other ij of the calibre’ – i.e. two senior and two junior aldermen.¹⁰⁷

The major processions of early Tudor London represented the city as a community made up of parts, but their physical and visual structure also sought to show that those parts were hierarchically arranged. With such sensitivity to precedence and dress, none of this would have been lost on those watching or participating. Moreover, the multiplicity of these representations of community throughout the year, from physical, spiritual, and political perspectives, would have reinforced the perception that hierarchy was a necessary and natural aspect of all communal life. Indeed, the only other thing that all these processions shared in common was the primacy of the mayor and aldermen at the head of each hierarchical community. On the morrow of SS Simon and Jude, the new mayor, in the company of his fellow aldermen, was conducted to Westminster, the Guildhall, and St Paul’s, with every craft of the city leading the way before them. At Whitsuntide, the culmination of the liturgical year, it was the mayor and aldermen who occupied pride of place on each of the three days, with the priests, clerks and parishioners proceeding before them. At Midsummer, the procession was centred on the mayor and sheriffs, while the aldermen processed about their wards with the other half of their constables and night watches in ceremonial gear. But even here the need for the visual presence of the aldermen in the marching watch was felt – to satisfy that need, the Watch could include twenty-four ‘grave personages to tend and wait upon the lord mayor’, in order ‘to present, as it were, the aldermen’.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, the presence of the mayor and aldermen could be perceived by Londoners as the central element of any major procession, even when noblemen and royalty were present. This is vividly captured in the Society of Antiquaries diptych of 1616, which portrays an imaginary procession by James I to St Paul’s. In this painting, accurate depiction was entirely subordinated to the larger agenda of Henry Farley, scrivener, who commissioned the piece as part of a petition to the king to fund the repair of St Paul’s. As one recent discussion points out, ‘neither queen nor ladies would have marched a mile on foot,’ while the portrayal of the king as walking ‘at the head of the procession’ is ‘a most unlikely disposition’.¹⁰⁹ In theory, Farley was trying to emphasize the honour which would be bestowed on the king by his coming to save the cathedral. It is therefore interesting to observe that although the route, the participants and the background were completely distorted to further this end, the artist has still used the alternation of coloured dress, distinguishing different groups, as the central trope with which to convey the idea of men on procession. In this scheme, moreover, the

¹⁰⁷ Rep. 3, ff. 70v-71r.

¹⁰⁸ *Harrison’s Description*, pt. 4, p. 383.

¹⁰⁹ P. Tudor-Craig, *Old St Paul’s: The Society of Antiquaries Diptych, 1616* (London Topographical Society, 163, 2004), p. 13.

bright scarlet of the mayor and aldermen, placed at the very centre of the picture, appears fundamental to Farley's notion of how to depict a procession through the streets of London.

By grouping individuals together, setting them in order, and distinguishing them with particular dress, the great processions of early Tudor London had a visual structure which emphasized hierarchy as a natural part of community in all its forms. But these processions were structured not just visually, but also spatially. The routes which they took were all different, and the choice of path through the city's streets was often integral to the representation of what they celebrated. In fact, as Lawrence Manley has shown, processions in London had a spatial syntax and vocabulary – a language of their own – which allowed them to communicate complex messages, and the evidence suggests that both those who performed them and those who watched them were surprisingly sensitive to this spatial dimension. Moreover, space was fundamental to the nature of a procession as a symbolic act – it went around something or from one place to another. Whether escorting prisoners to the Tower, seeking protection from the plague, or celebrating a royal coronation, processions either said something about the space through which they passed, or drew on the power of a place to give meaning to their actions. In so far as the visual structure of the great annual processions gave representation to the city as a hierarchical community, presided over by the mayor and aldermen, their spatial structure presented the city as a 'jurisdiction' over which they exercised legitimate authority.

The streets of London were filled with processions on a daily basis, as parishes, wards, guilds, households and other corporate institutions went about their ritual lives. Yet these processions were all of particular types, and contemporaries could and did distinguish between them. Amongst the structural elements which made it possible to distinguish one from another, the route of a procession was of particular importance. To begin with, the marching watch at midsummer had a specific route which is well attested in the sixteenth century. In 1598, Stow described it as going 'from the litle Conduit by Paules gate, through west Cheape, by the Stocks, through Cornhill, by Leaden hall to Aldgate, then backe downe Fenchurch streete, by Grasse church, aboute Grasse church Conduite, and vp Grasse church streete into Cornhill, and through it into west Cheape againe'. This picture is corroborated in all its details by an identical description in the civic records of 1541.¹¹⁰ By contrast, the Whitsuntide processions took place over three days, each heading to the west door of St Paul's but starting from a different point – St Peter's on Cornhill, Smithfield, and St Thomas of Acon. According to the account in 'Liber Albus', the procession on the second day also

¹¹⁰ Rep. 10, f. 210r; Stow, *Survey*, i. 102.

entered the cathedral precinct from a different direction, going past St Paul's Gate and down Old Change to St Augustine's Gate at the south-east corner. On Lord Mayor's Day, the procession began at Guildhall and headed to the Crane in the Vintry, where each company went by barge to Westminster and back. Upon their return, they landed at Paul's Wharf and, in the sixteenth century, went up to the Guildhall for a feast, before processing to St Paul's and then accompanying the new mayor to the house where he would hold his term of office. Each of these processions was clearly distinct in its route.

These particular routes, however, served not only to distinguish one procession from another, but also to add meaning to the performances. For instance, the marching watch at midsummer was a ceremonial muster celebrating the ability of the city's wards to marshal themselves together for the common defence. In this respect, the route of the Watch in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries drew on earlier traditions of military muster.¹¹¹ According to a city custom of 1321, leadership during military emergencies was traditionally handed over by the mayor and aldermen to the sokeholder of Castle Baynard. When receiving this charge, the Lord of Castle Baynard rode forth from his soke to the great gate of St Paul's, where he received the Banner of St Paul at the hands of the mayor. With the bell rung for the muster and the men of the city arrayed in arms, he was then to lead them to Aldgate, where the banner would be raised and the troops set forth. If there was time, he and the city's leaders would then proceed to the Priory of Holy Trinity, to hold military council.¹¹² In its passage from St Paul's to Aldgate the later Midsummer Watch clearly recalled this earlier tradition. At the same time, the circuit back via Fenchurch St also took a route past the Priory of Holy Trinity. The military associations of this place rested on its relationship with the ancient Cnihten Guild, formerly responsible for the city's defence, whose lands and members the priory had absorbed.¹¹³ Aldgate therefore had long-standing associations with military muster, and the route of the midsummer procession to and from this place added meaning to its performance.

Likewise, St Peter's in Cornhill was not an arbitrary place for the city's procession on Whit Monday to begin. St Peter's stood on the highest point of the city, at the crossroads of its two principal thoroughfares and opposite Leadenhall where the Roman forum had stood. St Peter's was also the site of the city's oldest church, and in the sixteenth century it was generally believed that St Peter's had been the seat of an archbishopric and the metropolitan see of Roman England, before the country's reconversion by St Augustine and his settlement

¹¹¹ Manley, *Literature and Culture*, pp. 238-9; Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, p. 236 n.100.

¹¹² *MGL*, ii. 147-51, 554-8.

¹¹³ H.C. Coote, 'The English Guild of Knights and their socn,' *Transactions of the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society* 5 (1876-81), pp. 477-93; G. Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (London, 1908), pp. 24-7.

at Canterbury.¹¹⁴ It was for this reason that the Rector of St Peter's took precedence before all other parish priests, and was thought of as representing the city's long history which predated even the foundation of St Paul's in 604. The Whit Monday procession to St Paul's involved the priests, clerks and crosses of all the city parishes, representing the city as a great spiritual congregation. By beginning at St Peter's, the route recalled the proud spiritual history of that congregation, which antedated and was independent of the cathedral, and hence the route contributed to the meaning of the procession. Moreover, since the early fifteenth century, the advowson of St Peter's had been in the hands of the mayor and aldermen, giving a civic dimension to its role as representative of the city's parishes.¹¹⁵

The route of the procession on Lord Mayor's Day underwent some changes in the mid fifteenth century. Instead of proceeding on horseback from Guildhall to Westminster and back via Newgate, the procession went from Guildhall to St Paul's Warf, then by barge to the Exchequer and back, before proceeding to the mayoral feast.¹¹⁶ However, in both cases, the rituals after lunch remained the same. That is to say, after the feast, everyone gathered at the Church of St Thomas Acon, from where they went down Cheapside to St Paul's. There the mayor and aldermen said psalms in the nave by the stone of Bishop William, 'who by his entreaties, it is said, obtained from his lordship William the Conqueror great liberties for the City of London'. They then moved out into the churchyard to offer prayers at the tomb of Thomas Becket's parents, before returning down Cheap to St Thomas Acon, where the procession ended.¹¹⁷

In both versions, the route of the procession contributed to the celebration of the occasion in two important ways. First, and most importantly, this was the only event in the civic year to involve a major procession outside the city.¹¹⁸ As a series of urban neighbourhoods and parish congregations, the city's other processions acknowledged the importance of the sheriffs and of the bishop, both of which were to some extent internal to itself. As a corporation of trade companies, however, the City had to acknowledge the importance of Westminster, which was external to it and superior in status. Each new mayor had to present himself before the Crown and swear to serve faithfully, but that occasion need not have become a major focus for annual civic display – that it did says much about the symbolic significance of the procession itself to Westminster and back. Like all good lordship, the relationship between City and Crown was one of mutual obligation – the City

¹¹⁴ *Memorials*, pp. 651-3; Stow, *Survey*, i. 194, ii. 125-6, ii. 304.

¹¹⁵ *CLBI*, p. 92.

¹¹⁶ *Liber Albus*, p. 19; Rep. 1, f. 88v(129v); *Machyn*, pp. 47-8, 96, 155-6, 294; Stow, *Survey*, i. 273; Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, pp. 53, 146-8.

¹¹⁷ *Liber Albus*, pp. 22-4; Wriothesley, i. 29.

¹¹⁸ The City conducted annual trips to the conduit heads, its hunting grounds, and the Lea Valley, where courts for the Thames Conservancy were held, but these occasions were not of the same order – Berlin, 'Civic ceremony', p. 20; Lindenbaum, 'Ceremony and oligarchy', p. 176.

gave its allegiance, and the Crown granted rights, liberties, and institutions of self-government which it promised to uphold. In this respect, the journey to Westminster was not only an occasion for delivering the mayor's oath to the Barons of the Exchequer; it was also a day on which the mayor brought back with him a renewal of that authority which the Crown had vested in his office. Like the absolution which parishioners received on making their pentecostal processions to their cathedral, so the mayor was hallowed by his pilgrimage to Westminster Hall. The spatial dimension of the procession was one way to articulate the special authority which the mayor was given by the Crown, to be exercised back in the City.

On the other hand, the processions within the city during the second half of the day told a very different story. After the feast, the mayor, aldermen and crafts assembled at St Thomas Acon, at the east end of Cheapside, which was a place with special meaning for the city. A major collegiate church, it was dedicated to Thomas Becket and founded on the site of his father's house, with the altar reputedly above the place of his birth.¹¹⁹ Although St Paul was the patron saint of the city, St Thomas had quickly been adopted as the popular favourite after his martyrdom, and was also represented on the City's common seal.¹²⁰ The procession in the afternoon on Lord Mayor's Day specifically celebrated the city's relationship with St Thomas by beginning at the principal site of his cult, proceeding to the shrine of his parents in the cloistered churchyard of St Paul's, and then returning to his church again to make offerings at his altar. Moreover, it was clearly his reputation as a champion of liberties which was being celebrated. The other cult site visited at St Paul's was the memorial stone of Bishop William, who was thought to have negotiated recognition for the City's ancient liberties from William the Conqueror. Thus if the new mayor had given his allegiance and received authority at the hands of the Crown with his travel to Westminster, so his procession between cult sites in London prepared him as a champion of the City's liberties against the Crown.

The importance attached to the routes of these civic processions, and the extent to which they themselves were capable of expressing ideas, is further illustrated by their persistence through the changes of the Reformation. The hospital of St Thomas Acon had been dissolved in 1538 and the cult of Becket suppressed by royal proclamation.¹²¹ Yet the procession on Lord Mayor's Day continued to follow its existing route, even though the cult sites themselves were no longer being explicitly venerated. For instance, where in the past they had stopped in the nave to recite psalms for the soul of Bishop William, the mayor still

¹¹⁹ J. Watney, *Some Account of the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon* (London, 1906); Wriothesley, i. 87; Stow, *Survey*, i. 269.

¹²⁰ C. Barron, 'The political culture of medieval London,' in C. Carpenter & L. Clark (eds), *Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 113.

¹²¹ TRP, i. 186.

went up the nave past the same spot, and ‘sayd the Psalme of *De Profundis* as he passed by, which they of ould tyme used to say about the stone’. Likewise, the procession continued to circle the cloister of Pardon Churchyard, in the centre of which had been the shrine of Becket’s parents. Prayers for the dead and the cult of St Thomas may have been suppressed, but the route of the procession was integral to the celebration of Lord Mayor’s Day and to what it represented. Only when the Pardon Churchyard was physically torn down in 1549 did the procession have to adapt.¹²²

In fact, processions were not only passively given meaning by the associations attached to the cult sites which they passed. Through continuous repetition of their own route they could also actively shape the way people viewed those places and their associations. This has been convincingly demonstrated by Lawrence Manley in his study of the pageant texts composed for coronation processions and royal entries. His analysis is based on two important observations. First, coronation processions and royal entries were occasions when two kinds of authority publicly met each other – the royal authority of a monarch and the civic authority of the mayor and aldermen – and the rituals on such occasions were part of negotiating the relationship between those two worlds. But secondly, in making their way through the city of London, royal processions did not move through a void; the streets through which they passed also carried other more regular processions, and this shaped the way that royal entries were structured.¹²³

As Manley points out, while the city’s annual civic processions were all distinct in their routes, they also all overlapped for a certain span – i.e. along Cheapside, from the Little Conduit at its west end to the Great Conduit at its east end. The marching watch at midsummer started at the Little Conduit and traversed that span eastward, before continuing through Cornhill, making a loop around the streets of Aldgate, Fenchurch, and Gracechurch, and then returning to the Little Conduit; on Whit Monday the city’s procession started at St Peter’s in Cornhill and traversed it westwards on its way to Paul’s Gate by the Little Conduit; and on the morrow of SS Simon and Jude, the mayor and his entourage went from Guildhall to the Vintry, Westminster, Paul’s Wharf and the Guildhall again, but also from St Thomas Acon to St Paul’s and back, which was precisely that span of Cheapside between the two conduits. In doing so, the city’s processions marked out that stretch as constituting a peculiarly civic space, where the urban community was accustomed to put itself on display in all its guises.

¹²² Wriothesley, ii. 29.

¹²³ The following is based on ‘The ceremonial route and its syntax’ in Manley, *Literature and Culture*, pp. 221-40.

This fact shaped the way royal processions through London took place. Royal processions through the city had a long history with their own well-established forms. But as Manley points out, their ritual and spatial structures were formed in relation to the meanings of the city's spaces. To begin with, just as a reigning monarch had a different relationship to the city than one still hoping to be crowned, so coronation processions and royal entries were distinct from each other in their ritual elements and routes. While both shared a common central section, they had different points of entry to the city, and terminated in different ways. Coronation processions always began at the Tower, moved up Mark Lane, Fenchurch St and Gracechurch, then down Cornhill and Cheapside to St Paul's, before continuing through Ludgate towards Temple Bar and Westminster. On the other hand, crowned monarchs returning from abroad made their approach over London Bridge, went up Gracechurch to the central axis, and were received into St Paul's before being escorted to nearby lodgings. Moreover, this differentiation of routes was matched by different kinds of pageants. Foreign princes and triumphant kings returning from battle met their first pageant while entering the city's battlements at the southern foot of London Bridge. Here they were typically confronted with fearsome giants, the city's autochthonous guardians, as a symbol of the city's ability to defend itself. By contrast, a coronation procession first encountered children, usually dressed as angels, who sang songs of welcome. The two routes then converged, passing a number of important pageant stations until they reached St Paul's, after which they once again divided. For victorious monarchs and foreign princes, the final rite was the triumphant performance of *Te Deum* in St Paul's, followed by retirement to a seat of noble power. Those on their way to being crowned at Westminster, however, encountered a final pageant at Temple Bar, the edge of the City's jurisdiction. Having been welcomed and lauded on their passage through the city, the expectant monarch was here given precepts on good governance or minatory reminders of the duties of kingship to which they would be held accountable.

In this way, both entering and leaving the City's territory was an occasion for making particular statements, their substance differing according to the nature of the royal procession. However, both kinds of royal procession shared a central phase along the same route, where pageants were presented to them before they were received by the mayor and aldermen. As Manley has shown, the pageantry and rituals through this central phase formed a series of increasing theatricality and significance, which climaxed as the procession entered that zone – between the Great and Little conduits – where civic identity was accustomed to display itself. Here the relationship between Crown and City was dramatized, and the two finally confronted each other in the persons of prince and mayor, whose ritualized interaction expressed mutual respect in the traditional language of subject and sovereign.

The implication here is that the association of this space with civic processions dictated the location and contributed to the meaning of these pageants. The critical reader of Manley's work rightly questions whether it was the overlap of civic processions in Cheapside which prescribed the location of this climactic series of pageants there, or if it was just the nature of Cheapside as the widest thoroughfare in the city and its principal market. But on reflection, this question draws a false dichotomy. Certainly, Cheapside was an important market and a wide thoroughfare fit for public display. But the importance of markets in the city could rise and fall over time, the width of streets could shrink and expand accordingly as encroachment was either tolerated or repressed. To the extent that Cheapside maintained its centrality and breadth over such a long period, it was because it continued to be used and dignified by civic ritual.¹²⁴ In this sense, civic processions were capable of actively contributing to the series of meanings inscribed on a space, as well as drawing significance from the cult sites or places through which they themselves passed.

Reflecting on the routes of different processions, and their relation to streets and spaces in the city, is important because contemporaries appear to have done so in great detail themselves. Indeed, those going on procession often went well out of their way in order to go by or avoid a particular route which held meaning for them. For example, when Prince Edward was headed from Hertford towards the Tower of London following his father's death in January, 1547, the royal party chose to go around the city and enter at Aldgate, because Edward was not making a formal entry. In a few weeks' time, Edward would make his coronation procession along Mark Lane, Fenchurch and Gracechurch St. Therefore, on this occasion, they avoided those streets by entering at the eastern gate and skirting the wall along minor laneways.¹²⁵ He was not arriving in secret – on the contrary, there was a huge shot of guns as he entered the Tower. The route was simply chosen to express something different.

Those in the street who watched such processions also appear to have paid great attention to the spatial dimension of these performances. The picture of a series of distinct processions presented in this chapter has only been possible because of the detailed descriptions of routes given by contemporary observers. Even lesser processions were minutely particularized. For instance, when the king's Lord of Misrule was received into the city during Christmastide celebrations, he was often given a kind of mock royal entry. In describing the event in 1553, the diarist Henry Machyn observed their movements in incredible detail, even to the point of the time spent at different stops along the way:

¹²⁴ V. Harding, 'Cheapside: commerce and commemoration,' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 71:1 (2008), pp. 77-96.

¹²⁵ Wriothesley, i. 179.

The sam day a ffor non landyd at the Towre wharf the kyngs lord of myssrull & ther mett with hym the shreyffes lord of myssrull with ys men ... and so rod through Marke lane and so through Grasyus strett & Cornhulle ... and so went a bowt Chepe with ys [gaolers] and ys presonars and afterwards the ij lords toke ther horssys and rode unto my lord mare to dener and after he cam bake through Chepe to the crosse and so done Wodstrett vnto the shreyffs house for more than alff a nore and so forthe the Olde Jury and London Wall unto my lords tresorers plasse and ther they had a great banket the spasse of alff a nore and so don to Byshopgatt and to Ledenhall & thrughe Fanchyrche strett and so to the Towre warffe and the shreyffs lord gohyng with hym with torche lyght and ther the kynges lord toke ys pynnes with a grett shott of gonnes and so the shreyffes lord toke ys leyff of ym and came home merele with ys mores danse danssyng.¹²⁶

People were sensitive like this to the routes of processions because space was crucial to their nature as a symbolic act. An important implication of this was the potential for processions to assert an image of power over a certain area or lay claim to it as a jurisdiction. The idea of procession as a meaningful act was predicated on seeing a relationship between the processional body and the space through which it moved, whether circling an area, linking two places together, or passing through some larger space. There were many processions of each kind in early modern England. For instance, both crop blessings around a field and rogationtide processions along the parish boundaries involved circling an area. In each case, the procession traced out a line, enclosing a space, and called for that area to be specially regarded. By contrast, when a procession travelled ‘to’ a particular site, it was the power of the place which conferred blessing. This was the purpose of visiting holy sites and shrines. In addition to the lessons of self-sacrifice represented by travel, those on pilgrimage benefited from the power located at the sacred place, and they took that back with them when they returned home.

Other processions emphasized that they travelled ‘through’ a larger space. One instance of this kind of procession was that of the triumph, as when Henry VIII processed ‘like a puissant conqueror’ into the captured town of Boulogne.¹²⁷ By ritually passing through a place, the triumphant leader went past people who were stationary, symbolizing his ability to pass through their space according to his own will. In doing so, the performance asserted an image of ‘dominion’ – not just lordship over the people who waited, offering him praise or deference, but also control over an area, as represented by his free movement through its space. As Sheila Lindenbaum says, speaking of the Midsummer Watch as a statement of civic authority, ‘it was by riding in the watch themselves that the mayor and sheriffs most decisively asserted their rights over the local terrain... This was not a legal claim, nor was it self-consciously articulated, but it was a powerful symbolic gesture’.¹²⁸ In the same way, but

¹²⁶ *Machyn*, pp. 28-9.

¹²⁷ *Holinsbed's Chronicles*, iii. 841.

¹²⁸ Lindenbaum, ‘Ceremony and oligarchy’, p. 175.

in reverse, being 'led' through a place under the control of someone else was regularly employed to express submission, repentance, or deference. Again, it was the spatial dimension of the performance which evoked this. Being deprived of, or relinquishing, self-direction through a place acknowledged that it was under someone else's control, and this allowed the act of procession to contribute in expressing one's submission to authority.

That contemporaries were sensitive to the political implications of moving through space can be clearly seen in the nature of royal processions entering London. When the Crown made formal entry into the city, the triumphal nature of the procession implicitly turned the space of the city into a political space, a jurisdiction, which demanded a symbolic accommodation between the two kinds of authority now present, royal and civic. Indeed, this was a major part of the ritual ceremony which took place on such occasions. Whenever the sovereign approached, it was usual for a delegation to meet them at the 'bars', which marked the boundary of the mayor's jurisdiction. Having escorted the monarch through the city, the civic party only withdrew once the procession reached the other boundary on its way out. Moreover, before crossing that threshold upon entry, mutual recognition of their respective authorities had to take place. For example, when Mary and Philip processed through London in August, 1554, after their coronation at Winchester, they were met by the mayor at the boundary of his jurisdiction. Here the mayor 'kneled and delivered a mace, whiche signified his power and authoritie within the cite of London, to the queenes grace, whose magestie deliver[ed] the said mace to the lord maior again'.¹²⁹ In doing so, the mayor symbolically represented his authority as something which he exercised on behalf of the Crown, and which he yielded up on the queen's approach. Having accepted his submission, the queen then returned the mace to the mayor, underlining his power as being derived from the Crown, but also reaffirming the status of the mayor as the legitimate agent of royal authority. They then went in procession through the city together. Such explicit statements of mutual recognition were necessary because the triumphal nature of the royal procession through the city's space made inherent assertions about jurisdiction which could not go unqualified.

The city's processions therefore had important spatial aspects. They not only contributed to the meaning of particular processions, but were also capable of inscribing meanings into the urban environment. The most important of those meanings was the authority that the mayor and aldermen thereby asserted within the city. Visually distinguished at the head of

¹²⁹ *The Chronicle of Queen Jane and of two years of Queen Mary*, ed. J.G. Nichols (Camden Society, 48, 1850), p. 146; a similar ritual took place on Elizabeth's first arrival as queen in 1558 – LB. S, f. 183r; on certain occasions it was the mayor's ritual sword, carried by his chief esquire the Swordbearer, that was offered up – P.E. Jones, 'The surrender of the sword,' *Transactions of the Guildhall Historical Association* 3 (1963), pp. 8-13.

each of the great annual processions, the civic authorities transformed the physical space of the city into a political jurisdiction.

Processions were not just form for form's sake but a means of political communication. Indeed, kings and royal councillors clearly saw them as tools for projecting images of authority and legitimacy. For instance, Henry VIII saw this as an important element in legitimating his marriage to Anne Boleyn. He later got an Act of Parliament and oaths from every subject in the realm, but his first move was a coronation procession. To this end, he specifically wrote to the mayor of London and instructed him 'aswell to fetche her grace from Grenewyche to the Tower by water as to see the citie ordered and garnished with pageauntes in places accustomed, for the honor of her grace'.¹³⁰ Henry was well aware that Katherine had been presented with 'pageauntes in places accustomed' on two occasions already, and those for Anne had to rival them. They were important to the popular legitimacy of a royal marriage.

Likewise, Cardinal Wolsey clearly regarded processions as a powerful weapon. He himself took every opportunity to process through the city's streets, sometimes taking unnecessary detours when travelling from York Place to Greenwich. Apparently it was not unusual when, having boarded a boat at the stairs of his palace, he landed at the Vintry and from there 'rode vpon his mule with his crosse, his pillars, his hat and broade seale carried afore hym on horsebacke through Thamis streete vntill he came to Billingsgate, and there tooke his barge againe, and so was rowed to Greenewiche'.¹³¹ Even early in his career, Wolsey had a flair for advertising his authority in this way. Although he had been appointed Cardinal in September, 1515, Wolsey took the opportunity to advertise this further when, two months later, a courier arrived in England with the red hat. Wolsey turned this delivery by a poor messenger into a magisterial act of state. As the chronicler relates it,

Yorke, beyng aduertised of the basenesse of this messenger, and of the peoples opinion, thought it meete for hys honour, that this Iewell should not be conueyed by so simple a person, & therefore caused him to be stopped by the way immediatly after his arriual in England, where he was newly furnished in all manner of apparell, wyth all kynde of costlye silkes, whyche seemed decent for suche an hyghe Embassador, and that done, he was encountred vpon Blacke heath, and there receyued wyth a greate assemblye of prelates, and lustie gallant gentlemen, and from thence conducted throughe London with greate triumph ... which was done in so solempne a wise, as had not bene seene the like,

¹³⁰ *Hall's Chronicle*, p. 798; Jour. 13, f. 371v; *L&P*, vi. 396.

¹³¹ Stow, *Chronicles*, p. 918.

vnlesse it had bin at the coronation of a myghty Prince or King obtayning thys dignitie.¹³²

What made this a ‘triumph’ like unto a ‘coronation’ was the combination of route and manner of proceeding – distinctive apparel, reception beyond the bars, and an ordered entourage. Moving through the city in this manner was understood as an attribute of power and authority. But it had to be done right, or the performance had the opposite effect. For instance, in 1471, the Archbishop of York was hoping to encourage the citizens of London to stand firm for Henry VI against Edward’s approach. In order to promote Henry’s legitimacy within the city, the Archbishop turned to procession as the first and foremost strategy, but his inability to manage the performance undermined the attempt:

And ffor to cawse the cytyzins to bere theyr more ffavour unto kyng henry, the said kyng henry was conveyd ffrom the paleys off pawlys thowth Chepe & Cornhyll, and soo abowth to his said lodgyng agayn by Candywyk strete & wattlyngstrete, beyng accompanied wyth the archbyssshop of york whych held hym alle that way by the hand and the lord Sowch an old & inpotent man which that day beyng Shere thursdaye abowth ix of the klok, bare the kyngys sword, and soo wyth a small company of gentyllmen goyng on ffoot beffore, and oon beyng on horsbak & beryng a pool or long shafft wyth ij ffoxe taylys ffastenyd upon the said shafftye eende, held wyth a small company of servyng men ffoluyng, the progresse beffore shewid, the which was more lyker a play then the shewyng of a prynce to wynne mennys hertys, ffor by this mean he lost many & wan noon or rygth ffewe, and evyr he was shewid in a long blew gounne of velvet as thowth he hadd noo moo to change wyth.¹³³

In this way, processions were regularly employed to communicate – or try to communicate – political messages, and they were an integral part of the city’s political culture. However, this has been obscured by the concentration on royal processions as dynastic politics and civic processions as simply vehicles for early dramatic practice. While royal entries were by far the greatest performances, they were irregular occurrences and involved an external element entering the local domain. Such ritual performances must be understood from the city’s own perspective and in the context of the more regular civic processions which imprinted themselves on its spaces. In fact, the episode above is a case in point. In his later account of the same affair, Holinshed explicitly interpreted the route of Henry VI and the Archbishop in terms of the city’s own processions:

He caused king Henrie to mount on horssebacke, and to ride from Paules thorough Cheape downe to Walbroke, & so to fetch a compasse (as the custome was when they made their generall processions) returning backe againe to Paules.¹³⁴

¹³² Stow, *Chronicles*, pp. 911-12.

¹³³ *Great Chronicle*, p. 215.

¹³⁴ *Holinshed’s Chronicles*, iii. 310.

Among the many processions which trod the streets of the city, three stood out for their antiquity, size, and importance – at Midsummer, Whitsuntide, and the inauguration of the new mayor. Each was different in terms of season, composition, and route, but they also shared a number of things in common. Each represented the coming together of the city's parts into larger communities which overlapped and complemented each other – urban neighbourhoods into walled town, parishes into city congregation, and trade companies into corporation. Each also had a visual structure of grouping, precedence, and dress which represented their respective communities as ordered and hierarchical. Moreover, they all, in their own way, placed the mayor and aldermen at the pinnacle of each of those hierarchies. To the city's inhabitants, who appear so sensitive to precedence, dress, and movement through the urban space, these performances were powerful statements of community, hierarchy, and authority – not necessarily an accurate reflection of life in the city, but a particular representation of it.

One of the most striking things about these civic processions in early Tudor London is that, despite making representations about the city community, they did not include many of the people who actually made up those communities. In the real world, the majority of inhabitants did actually participate in the urban, spiritual, and economic life of the city, yet in the great annual processions most people were relegated to the role of spectators. Of the trade companies on Lord Mayor's Day, only the liverymen took part. The bachelors from the mayor's company, and the poor men in receipt of his company's charity, served as representatives for the rest of the city's yeomanry and inhabitants. On Midsummer, the constables acted as representatives of their wards, and in the muster of armed men only a selection participated in the marching watch. Moreover, rather than householders themselves, these were individuals 'sett foorthe bi the wealthiest comoners' of each ward.¹³⁵ Likewise, the priests and crosses went in the city's procession to St Paul's on Whit Monday, as the representatives of their respective parishes. While the diocesan statutes imply that all the city's parishioners were expected to go in the procession, in the sixteenth century it was only those of the wealthy parish of St Peter in Cornhill who took part.

In this respect, major civic processions were representations 'about' the community and not performances by those who constituted it. They represented the city as made up of different kinds of community, all of which were naturally hierarchical and united by the ultimate authority of the mayor and aldermen. Moreover, they presented a spectacle in which people were encouraged to see themselves and identify their place in the hierarchy of the community, yet at the same they figured it as a community in which only a few played an active part. In the exclusive nature of their performance, the city's processions created a

¹³⁵ *Harrison's Description*, pt4, p. 377.

ritual divide between those who took action and those who merely watched. Taken together, the civic processions presented both the cohesion of different kinds of community through civic authority, and a general division between governors and governed, as natural aspects of life in the city.

CHAPTER 5 PUBLIC PUNISHMENT

In addition to proclamations and processions, the streets of early Tudor London were also sites for the conduct of public punishments. Like other acts of political communication, these public punishments were not just practical acts of governance but also carefully scripted performances with important messages to deliver as part of their function. This can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, the punishments handed down made use of a complex symbolic language to distinguish types of offences and the seriousness of particular transgressions. On the other, they were also spatially structured to distinguish the community which had been threatened and the particular authorities who were taking action to police it. When understood in this way, it is further clear that public punishments and their spatial dimension were used by the civic government in the early sixteenth century to project and construct an image of civic authority as active and robust. In shifting the principal site of civic punishment to a more central location, and causing penitential processions to proceed more widely throughout the city, the authorities displayed a growing preference for visual performances which could project as widely as possible the active policing of the city by the civic government.

The streets and spaces of the early Tudor city regularly bore witness to public punishments, but there were many kinds of such punishment because different kinds of offences fell under different jurisdictions. Felonies, punishable by death, were judged by royal justices named in Commissions of Gaol Delivery and Oyer et Terminer, and the hangings were carried out at Tyburn, which had been the regular site for executing felons from London since the early fifteenth century.¹ It was generally only high profile victims of royal justice who found themselves beheaded on the scaffold at Tower Hill. The church courts also handled a wide range of offences, from slander and heresy to debt and fornication, and their public punishments relied on the exposure of the offender in an act of repentance. While serious offences like heresy might be punished at Paul's Cross, everyday offenders were more likely to be wrapped in a white sheet and made to stand before their parish community during divine service in the local parish church.² Likewise, regular offences of disorder like drunkenness or brawling were punished in the stocks, a pair of which could be found in most wards of the city by the early sixteenth century.³ Between these two extremes of felony and heresy on the one hand, and the disturbance of one's neighbours on the other, there lay

¹ J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* (London, 1984) and *Judicial Punishment in England* (London, 1990).

² R. Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of Reformation* (Cambridge, MA, 1981).

³ Stow, *Survey*, ii. 176, 179.

a wide range of ‘misdemeanours’ which were punished by the civic government, covering offences from poor quality manufacturing to prostitution, from forged bills to slander of the mayor.⁴ The worst of such misdemeanours were not quite felonious, but the least of them were also considered worthy of punishment beyond that which the local constable might devise. In the language of the courts, the perpetrators were not just offenders, they were ‘common’ offenders, meaning their behaviour was ongoing and threatened a wider community beyond their immediate neighbours.⁵

The public punishments of the civic government were not just practical attempts to coerce individuals into obedience, but also performances designed to communicate important messages to a wider audience. In fact, such communication was crucial to the functions which punishment was intended to achieve in late medieval and early modern society. This was true in three ways. First and foremost, such punishments were ‘demonstrative’, being designed to announce that a particular boundary had been violated. This was particularly important because to contemporaries the difference between casual misdemeanours and heinous crimes was one of degree not kind, a spectrum of sin where the smallest indiscretions were but the first steps on a slippery slope towards felony and the hangman’s noose. For this reason, guarding against minor misdemeanours was felt to be important for the prevention of more serious crimes, which were thought to follow each other almost inexorably. The moral of the story was best communicated when spectators noted that criminals on the gallows had been previously exposed for minor misdemeanours, and so distinguishing different degrees of crime was very important. To the modern mind this betrays the failure of a penal system, but to contemporaries it expressed a universal truth about sin and human action.⁶

Secondly, the punishments were also meant to be ‘punitive’ for the individual offender and preventative of future crime, but they achieved this specifically by communicating a perpetrator’s shame to an audience of their neighbours – a heavy sentence in a society where reputation counted for so much. Indeed, for independent male householders, or those aspiring to achieve such status, reputation was everything, for it determined commercial success, social relations, personal status and marriage prospects. Young men with other support to fall back on, however, could sometimes endure shame punishments unscathed, as evidenced by those who chose to suffer punishment rather than marry a woman of lower

⁴ M. Ingram, ‘Shame and pain: themes and variations in Tudor punishments,’ in S. Devereaux & P. Griffiths (eds), *Penal Practice and Culture, 1500-1900: Punishing the English* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 36-62.

⁵ M. Ingram, ‘Juridical folklore in England illustrated by rough music,’ in C.W. Brooks & M. Lobban (eds), *Communities and Courts in Britain, 1150-1900* (London, 1997), pp. 78-9.

⁶ P. Griffiths, ‘Introduction: punishing the English,’ in Devereaux & Griffiths, *Penal Practice and Culture* (2004), pp. 14-16.

status.⁷ Likewise, Stow lamented that a man once carted through the city might yet rise to be a member of the wardmote inquest.⁸ For almost all women, on the other hand, such shame punishments would have dire consequences, particularly where sexual reputation was concerned. Only professional prostitutes had little to lose by it, a fact which sometimes drove the Court of Aldermen to find new and harsher punishments.⁹

Yet thirdly, public punishments were also intended to be ‘reintegrative’, in the same way that church penance was designed to express the repentance of the individual before the parish congregation, returning them to the community which they had offended and restoring the relationship of ‘charity’ so crucial to late medieval life. Those who refused to appear repentant during the enactment of civic punishments always suffered further correction until they finally conformed to the appointed script.¹⁰ In this sense, public punishments were performances designed, by their very nature, to communicate important messages about norms, identity, and communal belonging.

Public punishments were able to communicate these messages because of a complex ritual and spatial structure inherent in their performance. With respect to ritual, the mayor and aldermen had at their disposal a sophisticated symbolic language for distinguishing the nature of a particular offence and the seriousness of the transgression. For instance, civic punishments were arranged in a graduated ladder of increasing severity and shame. The lightest punishments were public but not actually personal. Poor quality goods, trade tools of incorrect dimensions, and weights and measures not conforming to current standards were routinely searched out and publicly destroyed. In the early sixteenth century, the fish markets were surveyed each year in March and ‘all such corrupt ffysssh’ as was ‘seasyd & taken’ would be ‘brent at suche places within this citie as of olde tyme hath been accustomed’.¹¹ Likewise, nets, coalsacks, and other measures were checked annually in October and ‘brentt accordyng to the old & auncient lawes & custumes of this citie,’ ‘to thentent that all other mysdoers may take example’.¹² However, those who actually put to sale rotting food or tampered with measures might be made to appear in person alongside the destruction of the goods. In August, 1522, it was found that William Adam had ‘falsely & disceytfully sowed in [the] botoms of vj sakkes’ so that they ‘lakked of their measures’, and it was therefore ordered that they ‘be brent in open markett, the seid William standyng vppon a pype therewhiles’.¹³ Moreover, the public display of those who committed more

⁷ Rep. 13, f. 26v; *Machyn*, p. 32.

⁸ Stow, *Survey*, i. 191.

⁹ Rep. 12, f. 435r.

¹⁰ For example, Rep. 12, ff. 521v, 523v; Rep. 13, ff. 7v, 9r-v.

¹¹ Rep. 3, f. 11r.

¹² Jour. 12, f. 141r.

¹³ Rep. 4, f. 125r.

serious offences could be heightened and extended by leading them upon penitential processions. In August, 1549, ‘ij auneynt comen harlottes of thair bodies whom no comen or indyfferent correccion or punyshement wyll stey, reforme or withdrawe from their detestable & devyllyshe vice & synfull lyfe’ were led in a show of derision ‘thourrough the hyghe stretes of the citee’.¹⁴ However, the most shameful crimes were further distinguished by the use of the city’s pillory, which physically restrained the offender and exposed them to public odium. In May, 1532, Nicholas Broun and John Roche were convicted of having ‘falsely forged and counterfetyd certeyn wrytynges in the name of my lorde mayr,’ and therefore it was agreed ‘that they bothe shalbe tomorowe sette vppon the pyllory’.¹⁵

Furthermore, there were a host of specific visual symbols which could be used to identify and advertise the exact nature of the offence being punished at any particular time. For instance, some offenders being publicly exposed were made to wear striped or ‘ray’ hoods and carry ‘white roddis in their handes’, ‘in token of comen strumppettes or harlottes’; others were given a distaff, wrapped in low-quality flax, ‘in signe & token of comen scoldes’.¹⁶ Though it was only encountered on a handful of occasions in the sixteenth century, particular associations were also attached to the cutting of hair. In June, 1510, two men were convicted ‘for keping of comon bawdry’ – that is, hosting or procuring illicit sex for others – and orders were given for ‘either of their hedes to be polled aboute the eires’ in preparation for their public punishment. In the following month, another two men had their hair ‘clipped aboute the eres’ for being ‘comon bawdes’, just as in March, 1522, Thomas Belton had ‘his here clyppd of aboute his eerys’ for the same offence.¹⁷ By contrast, carrying a lighted taper represented repentance, often for slandering those in authority. In November, 1516, a sherman carried ‘a taper of wex in his hand of a lb. of his own coste,’ to offer at the Guildhall Chapel, in submission ‘for slanderous & sedicious wordes spoken of an alderman’. Likewise, when a woodmonger ‘contemptuously rebuked the shireffes’ in September, 1529, he was sentenced to carry ‘a taper of wex of the weyght of lb. in his hande,’ and go to St Thomas Acon, ‘there to offre vp his seid taper in accomplyshyng of his seid penance’.¹⁸

In fact, the mayor and aldermen sometimes went to elaborate lengths to communicate the actual specifics of a given offence. When two men were caught trying to steal a load of lead in January, 1530, they were made to bear between them the sling which they had been using to carry off the goods. Another man convicted two years earlier of having ‘cutte downe diuerse lanterns’, which he had then ‘stolen & borne away’, was dressed up and publicly

¹⁴ Rep. 12, ff. 128v-9r.

¹⁵ Rep. 8, f. 228r.

¹⁶ Jour. 12, ff. 169r, 277v.

¹⁷ Jour. 11, ff. 112r, 114v-5r; Jour. 12, f. 169r.

¹⁸ Rep. 3, f. 112r; Jour. 13, ff. 153r, 155r, 162r.

exposed with ‘a lanterne with [a] candell brennyng therin vppon his hed, with diuerse other lanternes & candelles brennyng therin hangyng vppon hym’.¹⁹ Likewise, Edward White, a cesspool cleaner, forgot his usual diligence in February, 1535, and let an entire load of dung fall into the streets; the mayor and aldermen therefore made him ‘stande yn fylthe’ ‘yn one of hys owne pypes’ or barrels.²⁰ For particularly unusual crimes, detailed representations might be devised. When a woman was found to have ‘carded’, or beaten, her maid with a sharp-toothed instrument usually reserved for combing wool, they commissioned ‘a picture of a childe and a woman cardinge yt, after the manner that she had punished her,’ which was, according to one chronicler, ‘too pitifull a sight to be sene’.²¹ In addition to these visual aids, most public punishments were also accompanied by a proclamation by one of the sheriffs’ officers, narrating the offence committed, its trial in court, and the sentence awarded thereon. For some people public exposure lasted several hours; others had only ‘to stond & abyde duryng the tyme of makyng of this proclamacion’.²² However, in the early sixteenth century, these proclamations were increasingly supplemented by written signs as well. When a man was set on the pillory for forgery in April, 1532, the court ordered that ‘a paper be made & sett vpon his hedde mencioning the cause of his mysdemeanour’.²³ Sometimes the general sense of the sign was set down by the court, and sometimes the actual script. A woman punished in March, 1522, was to have ‘a paper on her hed declaryng that she is bawde to her own daughter’, while in February, 1517, the court stipulated ‘a paper wreton vppon his hed hauyng thees wordes, “For puttyng to sale of mesell & stynkyng bacon”’.²⁴ These signs could become elaborate elements in their own right. Some men went with several papers, ‘oon vppon his breste & tother vppon his bak’; notorious crimes called for signs ‘written yn great lettres’, or demanded a second ‘be affyxed to the pyllorye ouer hys hed, that euerye person may easely see & red the same’. They multiplied as time went on, so that some offenders appeared ‘with seuerall papers fyxed ouer their heddes & also vpon eyther syde of the pyllorye’.²⁵

Indeed, even on the pillory itself, infinite ritual variation was available to indicate the greater or lesser gravity of an offence. As the greatest symbol of shame within the city, simply standing in proximity to the pillory was a serious sentence. For instance, because the pillory was raised up on a platform, some people were ordered just to stand beneath it. In January, 1508, a man who fraudulently diluted his oil was ordered to ‘be sette vnder the pillorye till his offence be proclamyd’, while others were left ‘standyng vnder the same by the space of one

¹⁹ Jour. 13, ff. 190v-91r; Rep. 8, f. 13r.

²⁰ Rep. 9, ff. 95v-6r.

²¹ Wriothesley, ii. 68-9; *Machyn*, p. 17; *Greyfriars*, p. 74.

²² Jour. 11, f. 391r.

²³ Rep. 8, f. 224v.

²⁴ Jour. 12, f. 169r; Rep. 3, f. 129v.

²⁵ Rep. 8, f. 7v; Rep. 10, f. 146r; Rep. 12, ff. 53v, 105r.

quarter of an howre'.²⁶ Alternatively, offenders might stand upon the platform but not actually be placed in the restraints. In February, 1548, a man was ordered to 'be sett vpon the pyllorye', but 'his hed not putt thorough the hole'.²⁷ Likewise, the pillory made it possible for groups of offenders to be linked together in their punishment. When three men perjured themselves as part of a larger conspiracy, there was an order for 'their iij hedes to be put within iij hooles of the same pillorye'.²⁸ Further elaboration was possible for the most serious crimes. Theft, false dice, or impersonating an officer could result in one of the perpetrator's ears being nailed to the pillory.²⁹ This usually entailed a permanent stigma, for the ear would have to be slit to be removed. Though in special cases it could happen that 'the nayles were pulled out with a payre of pinsers', usually the offender's ear had to be 'slytte or pulled away by hymself'.³⁰ Even worse, those guilty of seditious words against the Crown or other heinous crimes had one or sometimes both ears entirely cut off.³¹ And in rare cases, some people might suffer branding on the cheeks or forehead, as in February, 1545, when a false accuser was branded with an 'F' and 'A', though this was usually on the orders of privy councillors, not the civic authorities.³²

It is also clear that the mayor and aldermen consciously stage-managed these events and put considerable effort into scripting complex symbolic arrangements. For instance, in March, 1549, the court was putting special effort into designing a fit punishment for an adulterous man who was conspiring to kill his lover's husband. As one chronicler later observed, his 'punishment was deferred' at first while preparations were put in place. Only then, when everything was ready, was he 'sodenlie taken on the Thursdaie afore selling fleshe at his shopp and sent to ward not knowing the cause.' In order to maximize the shock which would be caused by his public exposure and the declaration of his offence, 'commandment [was] geauen to the keeper that no person should speake with him, so that when he came to doe his pennance no person knewe it till he rode aboute'.³³ In fact, the moral stories which the authorities devised using this ritual language could be quite complex, and the arrangements of people and symbols were sometimes extraordinarily elaborate. Perhaps the most outstanding example of this was produced in December, 1557, when a man convicted of sex with a prostitute was ordered to 'ryd in a care' pulled by a horse, while the bawd who had procured the girl for him was 'wypyd at the care-arse' by the very harlot she had provided. At the same time, this strange menagerie was headed by 'a nold harlott of iij skore

²⁶ Rep. 2, f. 39r; Jour. 11, f. 388r; Rep. 3, f. 257v.

²⁷ Rep. 11, f. 415v.

²⁸ Jour. 11, f. 78r.

²⁹ Rep. 9, f. 83v; Rep. 11, f. 388r-v; Rep. 12, f. 54r.

³⁰ Wriothesley, ii. 101; *Machyn*, p. 42; Rep. 13, f. 130v.

³¹ Jour. 10, f. 253r; Wriothesley, ii. 42.

³² Wriothesley, i. 153; *Greyfriars*, 48-9; cf. *Machyn*, p. 235.

³³ Wriothesley, ii. 8.

and more [years]', who 'led the hors'.³⁴ In this spectacle, the young man sat dumb in the cart to show he had relinquished manly control of himself, while the real culprit, the bawd, was pulled behind like a felon and beaten by the woman she had sold, while an old decrepit whore stood at the front, leading them all, as a symbol of the future life that lay ahead of them. The punishments handed down by the civic authorities were not just practical matters of governance but carefully orchestrated performances designed to communicate important messages about moral norms, social reputations, and membership in the community.

At the same time, this ritual structure was complemented by a spatial dimension which greatly enriched the messages communicated by these performances. To begin with, just as particular symbols like striped hoods and white wands were used to identify particular kinds of offenders, so also different offences were punished in different places. For instance, the sites for enacting royal justice stood in contrast to those of civic authority. Three principal places used by the Crown lay at a short distance from the city. The regular execution of felons convicted at London Sessions took place at Tyburn, and had done so since the early fifteenth century.³⁵ Those convicted of piracy, however, were hanged upon a gibbet set at the low-water mark at Wapping, while offenders from south of the river often met their end beside St Thomas à Watering, a rivulet which marked the boundary between Southwark and Surrey on the Old Kent Road.³⁶ Two other sites lay closer to hand. High-profile prisoners were beheaded on scaffolds within the Liberty of the Tower of London, either on the Hill to the north of the moat, or the Green within the walls. Finally, Smithfield, at the city's north-west corner, could also be used as an occasional site for execution. The Elms in Smithfield had been the regular site for hanging London criminals before the move to Tyburn, while in the sixteenth it remained in use for extraordinary executions such as the burning of heretics or those few who were boiled alive for petty treason.

The sites of regular royal justice were therefore spaced about the circumference of the city. In fact, this pattern is further highlighted by the emphasis which the royal government placed upon the 'gates' of the city, similarly spaced about its circumference, as sites for punishing rebellion against the Crown. Many of those hanged at Tyburn for treason were subsequently quartered, and 'their quarters hanged at divers gates of the Cittie'. Such was the fate of four men who 'made an insurrection in Coventree' in 1524.³⁷ The logic of the

³⁴ *Machyn*, p. 161.

³⁵ H.T. Riley, 'Tyburn', *Notes & Queries*, 4th Ser., XI (1873), p. 164; A. Marks, *Tyburn Tree: Its history and annals* (London, 1908), pp. 58-60.

³⁶ W.L. Rutton, 'Executions at Tyburn and elsewhere,' *Notes & Queries*, 9th Series, 7 (1901), pp. 121-2; W. Rendle & P. Norman, *The Inns of Old Southwark and their Associations* (London, 1888), pp. 386-93.

³⁷ *Wriothesley*, i. 14.

practice was made even more explicit whenever rebels threatened to take London itself by marching upon the city. In the aftermath of Wyatt's rebellion and his attempt to take the city, gallows were set up, amongst other places, outside each gate in the city wall, and hangings conducted over the course of two days. On the first day, the focus was upon the east and west gates of the city – Ludgate, Newgate, Bishopsgate, and Aldgate. On the second day, it was the north and south – Aldersgate, Cripplegate, Moorgate, and the 'water gate' along the river at Billingsgate.³⁸ At the same time, the sites chosen *within* the city were the four places associated with the making of royal proclamations, underlining the explicitly communicative nature of these enactments.

By the same token, a very different strategy was taken when the citizens themselves rose in arms or unrest. The events of Evil May Day in 1517, although not explicitly directed at the royal government let alone the Crown, were very much interpreted as such by Wolsey, who felt the mayor and aldermen had allowed things to boil over in an attempt to discredit him in the king's eyes. The ritual procession made to Westminster by those taken in the fray, with halters about their necks, to receive the king's pardon, speaks clearly of how it was perceived.³⁹ For the executions which followed, effort was put into devising a spectacle which would sufficiently terrify the city's population – 'tenne payre of Gallowes were made with wheeles to be remoued from streete to streete, and from dore to dore' – an image of royal justice uprooted from its fixed sites and ready to strike anywhere in the city.⁴⁰ The first sites chosen were those where the disturbances had taken place, as the riot moved eastward across the city – St Martin's, Bread St Compter, Poultry Compter, Leadenhall, Gracechurch St, and Blanchapleton. At the same time, the symbolic power of the city gates was not forgotten – Aldgate, Newgate, Aldersgate, and Bishopsgate.⁴¹ Finally, those identified as the ring leaders were taken to the symbolic heart of the city – the Standard in Cheap – where, after executing the chief scapegoat, John Lincoln, the others received that most potent token of royal power, a gallows pardon.⁴² The meaning of all this was patently clear to the city's inhabitants, as Edward Hall noted, for 'this sight sore greued the people to se galowes set in the kynges chamber'.⁴³

It would be wrong, of course, to over-emphasize an antagonism between civic and royal authority, for even though the two were indeed distinct, they were in many ways mutually reinforcing, and always sought to represent themselves as such. Just as an attack upon the city was always an attack upon the Crown, so the judgement of high treason, often in cases

³⁸ Wriothesley, ii. 111-12.

³⁹ John Stow, *The Annales of England* (London, 1592), p. 849.

⁴⁰ Stow, *Chronicles*, p. 923.

⁴¹ Stow, *Annales*, pp. 848-9.

⁴² Stow, *Annales*, p. 849.

⁴³ *Hall's Chronicle*, p. 590.

of the highest profile, took place at the Guildhall. But reflecting upon the sites employed for the enactment of royal justice, as well as those employed by officials at the local levels of ward and parish, underlines the fact that certain spaces within the city were distinctly reserved for the actions of the civic authorities. Moreover, the public punishments carried out by the civic government itself were spatially differentiated according to the kind of offence. Trading offences were punished in the market place; social or sexual transgressions were awarded penitential processions through particular streets; while more serious crimes, such as forgery or slandering the mayor, were dealt with on the city pillory at Cornhill. In this way, the spatial structure of these performances helped to distinguish both the kind of offence committed and the particular authorities who were taking action to punish it.

In fact, the consciously spatial dimension of public punishment in London is powerfully communicated by a set of civic ordinances for the punishment of sexual offences first promulgated in 1382 and which formed the basis for such punitive practices throughout the fifteenth century.⁴⁴ A central aspect of these articles was the differentiation of punishments according to particular offences. While on the one hand this meant associating particular symbols with different offenders – such as tonsured hair for bawds, striped hoods for common women, and the distaff of towen flax for scolds – it also meant that the routes taken for parading offenders were differentiated according to the crime, too.⁴⁵ First, bawds would be paraded with minstrelsy from one of the sheriffs' compters directly to Cornhill, where men would be set on the pillory, or women on the 'thewe', a pillory for women which was then in use. By contrast, harlots were to be taken from the compter to Aldgate, the main gate on the city's eastern side, with their striped hood and white wand; once at Aldgate, minstrels were to join the parade, and only then did they proceed westward along Aldgate Street, into Cornhill there to be publicly displayed. Furthermore, after exposure there, a harlot continued her procession westward through Cheap to Newgate, and then out through the gate to Cokkelane in Smithfield, 'there to take up her abode', as the ordinances state.⁴⁶ Finally, this route was reversed for the offence of adultery. Those who were found guilty before the mayor and aldermen would be taken straight from the Guildhall to Newgate first of all, at the opposite end of the city to Aldgate, and proceed with minstrelsy eastward through Cheap, to the Tun, a prison for nightwalkers located on Cornhill at that time.

We must remember, of course, that these ordinances are evidence of prescriptive measures, not practice. What they illustrate clearly, however, is the fact that contemporaries conceived

⁴⁴ LB. H, f. 146v; see *Liber Albus*, pp. 394-6.

⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion of these ordinances and an imaginative interpretation of the symbols used, see F. Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, trans. P. Selwyn (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 172-87.

⁴⁶ See Figure 1, p. 224.

of different crimes as demanding different spatial expression. This is borne out in the records of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, where it is clear that great attention was paid not only to the routes for penitential processions but also to their starting places and end points, which drew significance from the rich associations of the city's spaces. For instance, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the central axis of the city between Newgate and Aldgate remained the major space for penitential procession. The practices described above, being first laid down in 1382, codified in the 'Liber Albus' of 1419, and reiterated in 1439, had carved out this space through both westbound and eastbound processions.⁴⁷ In the first decades of the sixteenth century it is clear that this axis remained the default spatial resource in the aldermen's punitive framework. For instance, in March, 1510, the mayor and aldermen offered to employ all the city's beggars in digging out the ditches, in return for meat, drink and 1d. per day, while all those able to work and yet refusing to do so were to be punished. The punishment was to begin by being 'sett in the stokkes ij dayes with brede and water', but then they were also to be 'beten naked with whippes from Algate to Newgate and so to be banysshed the citie foreuer'.⁴⁸ In laying down this procession from 'Aldgate to Newgate', the aldermen were following the normal route taken by harlots, who in such processions were also being ritually 'banished the city'.

Processing through this axis, wholly or in part, was the central element in civic punishments, and in all penitential processions the use of this space remained constant while the direction and other aspects were varied according to the offence and particular situation. One common variation was to link the enactment of punishment in the city's central civic space with the local site where the offences had been committed. For instance, in one example from the late fifteenth century, William Campion was found guilty of tapping a conduit pipe and conveying it to his house in Fleet St. It was because he had stolen the water from the conduit in Fleet St that, after riding from the Bread St compter along Cheap to Cornhill, he was then made to go all the way out to Fleet St, proceeding via Cheap, Pater Noster Row, and out through Ludgate, before returning back to the compter.⁴⁹ This practice is further illustrated by the case of Richard Wyer, who was sentenced in 1529 to an eastbound procession from Newgate to Aldgate. Having proceeded through Cheap, with 'basons & pannez ryngyng before hym', and arriving at Cornhill, he was to be set on the pillory there; however, before proceeding on towards Aldgate, he was first to go back and 'be conveyed in & abowte the seid warde of Bradstrete,' where it was that he had committed his crimes and

⁴⁷ For the reiteration of the ordinances in 1439, see *CLBK*, p. 179 n. 18.

⁴⁸ Jour. 11, f. 104v.

⁴⁹ LB. L., f. 137v; Jour. 8, f. 185r.

been indicted by the wardmote. Having done this, he still had to return to the central axis and complete his procession to Aldgate.⁵⁰

If the places visited along the way were one aspect of variation, the starting and end points were also important. The most summary and perhaps least opprobrious starting place was to proceed directly from Guildhall, the place of judgement. For instance, a merchant upholsterer who was convicted of selling by short measure in 1552 was had straight ‘from the Guyldhall’ to the marketplace where he committed the offence.⁵¹ Sometimes this procession specifically began at the very doors of the court room. On one occasion the mayor and aldermen ordered that an apprentice, who had attempted his master’s wife, be ‘stryppyd nakyd to the gyrdlestede at the vtter doore of this hall and so be lead frome thence’ to the place of his public punishment.⁵² More elaborately, offenders might begin at one of the compters. Sometimes this may have been because their judgement at Guildhall took place in the afternoon, and their offence demanded they be processed ‘in the market time’, which was in the morning and would have to wait until the following day. But on other occasions offenders were committed to ward the day before their procession simply as an extra mark of shame.⁵³ In September, 1551, a baker who had broken the assize of bread, despite having ‘had diuers tymes this yeare warninge and yett neuer kept his weight’, not only suffered public exposure but, as one observer noted, did ‘lay in ward the daie before his pennance’, that he might proceed from hence.⁵⁴

Newgate Prison was associated with felony and execution, and it is not surprising that the aldermen sometimes committed more serious offenders there before their public penance. However, simply starting penitential processions at Newgate was also a way of marking an offender with its associations without actually committing them as a prisoner there. Indeed, offenders being held in one of the compters were often specifically taken to Newgate just to begin their route there. For instance, a ‘comen harlott and strumpet’ who had aggravated her sexual offences by showing contempt for authority, was to be ‘brought from the prison of the counter to Newgate and from thens to be ledde with basyns and pannes’ ringing before her.⁵⁵ Royal justice showed a similar sensitivity to the routes of prisoners. For instance, Benedict Wolman, convicted of high treason, was a prisoner in Newgate when he was ordered to be executed at Tyburn. However, instead of going westward straight there like a regular felon, he first had to be taken ‘from the gaol aforesaid to the Tower’, so that he could

⁵⁰ Jour. 13, f. 141v.

⁵¹ Wriothesley, ii. 71.

⁵² Rep. 13, ff. 291v-2r.

⁵³ On the place of the compters in the cultural world of the city and the performative nature of their space, see J.E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The places of London comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia, PA, 2007), Ch. 2.

⁵⁴ Wriothesley, ii. 55.

⁵⁵ Jour. 11, ff. 264v-5r.

then be 'drawn' from the Tower on a hurdle, like a traitor, back 'through the middle of the city' past Newgate again, and only then 'to the gallows at Tyburne'.⁵⁶

Likewise, different endings to a route had a significant bearing on their meaning. A lesser offender might be dismissed directly after his public exposure – 'discharged and sent home to his house'.⁵⁷ A rare, but serious alternative was to actually be processed to one's own house itself. In April, 1552, a woman was carried 'unto her owne dore in a care, and there was a proclamasyon by on of the bedylles of her shamful ded-dohyng'.⁵⁸ Of course, many offenders completed a full circuit, returning either to the compter from which they came, or back to Newgate. Returning to prison was an unattractive option, because it implied to those watching that the culprit's shaming was not over. Many of those punished by procession had to suffer the indignity 'on three market days'. Finally, offenders could be symbolically, and sometimes actually, removed from the civic community by ending at the city gates or bars. The civic ordinances of the fifteenth century stipulated that prostitutes, having passed out through Newgate, were to end their route in West Smithfield, 'there to take up their abode'. That is, they were not explicitly 'banished', but were segregated from the civic community as temporarily unredeemable.⁵⁹ This, along with its history as a major site of executions and its continued use for the burning of heretics, gave West Smithfield special associations. Though it may seem ridiculous to the modern mind, the city's inhabitants did not have to stretch their imaginations very far to understand why the aldermen acted as they did when, in March 1510, they ordered that a load of corrupt fish be burnt at seven places in the city, 'and the residue that cannot be brent to buried in the ground in Smythfeld'.⁶⁰ The meanings of the city's spaces were integral to the message that public punishments conveyed and the functions they were intended to fulfil.

In fact, in addition to the nature of public punishment as exemplary, punitive, and reintegrative, these performances were also acts of authority. In this respect, space and place were particularly important to public punishment because together they denoted 'jurisdiction'. In every aspect of pre-modern life, the right to regulate affairs, punish infractions, and collect tolls or fines, belonged to someone as a piece of property, and those rights extended over a certain space. Public punishment was an integral element in this equation, and carrying out such punishment in a particular place inherently made a claim to jurisdiction over that space and the community it represented. As Frank Rexroth has noted of the pillory, 'late medieval thought deemed it a sign of sovereignty, since it demonstrated

⁵⁶ *Memorials*, p. 638-41.

⁵⁷ *Wriothesley*, ii. 71.

⁵⁸ *Machyn*, p. 17.

⁵⁹ R.M. Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and sexuality in medieval England* (Oxford, 1996), p. 15.

⁶⁰ *Rep.* 2, f. 86v.

that one adjudicated and punished according to one's own customs'.⁶¹ The authority to do so was one amongst a bundle of rights commonly invested in those who held land of the king, as can be seen in charters from the Conquest onwards.⁶² As a result, much litigation survives where 'the question is of the jurisdiction of the manor as symbolized by the maintenance of the tumbrel' or other instruments of public punishment.⁶³ Indeed, from Bracton and Britton onwards, the failure of local authorities to provide, maintain and make use of such instruments led, by definition, to the forfeiture of the jurisdiction which they represented.⁶⁴

In London, we likewise find that public punishment was a key aspect of authority and jurisdiction. In the early fourteenth century, the ward of Castle Baynard remained a private soke owned at the time by the family of Fitzwalters. The owner was not only lord of his soke, but also the hereditary Castellan and Bannerman of the City of London. He therefore had a special status, and this was expressed in a number of different ways. First, he was given pride of place, next to the mayor, whenever he attended the Court of Husting in the Guildhall. Secondly, whenever one of his sokemen or tenants was found guilty of a crime by civic officials, the judgement was not to be published in the Guildhall but only by the sokeholder of Castle Baynard in his own court. Furthermore, he had the right to execute those of his ward found guilty of treasonable crimes by drowning them in the Thames, where his ward fronted the river.⁶⁵ The right of the lord to have judgements proclaimed in his own name, and carry out executions within the boundaries of his ward, reflected his special jurisdiction there.

The same care for the jurisdiction implied by public punishment was equally observed in the sixteenth century. For instance, in June, 1557, Adryan Steward, a goldsmith dwelling within the precincts of St Martin le Grand, was convicted of making counterfeit gold rings. Because a number of goldsmiths worked in that area, it was decided that a makeshift pillory should be set up at the gates to St Martin le Grand, and there the culprit be exposed. However, because the precinct of St Martin le Grand had historically enjoyed special status among the

⁶¹ Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 110.

⁶² For example, when Henry I endowed Milton Abbey with lands, he granted that the monks should hold them 'cum sac et soc, et tol et them, et infangenthef et wayf, et assisa panis et cervisie, cum furvis, pilloriis et cum omnibus aliis pertinentiis' (my emphasis) – W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis & B. Bandinel, 6 vols (London, 1817-30), ii. 351.

⁶³ J.W. Spargo, *Juridical Folklore in England Illustrated by the Cucking-Stool* (Durham, NC, 1944), pp. 64-5 n.90.

⁶⁴ Britton, ed. and trans. F.M. Nichols, 2 vols (1865), i. 191; for an example in practice, see *Placita de quo warranto*, pp. 518-19.

⁶⁵ *MGL*, ii. 147-51, 554-8.

legal jurisdictions of the city, the mayor and aldermen proceeded only after obtaining ‘the assent and consent of the Lorde Abbot of Westminster, gouernour of the said sanctuary’.⁶⁶

Moreover, the series of actions undertaken by the mayor and aldermen upon taking control of Southwark as the newly incorporated ward of Bridge Without, in 1550, clearly illustrates the importance they gave to such public performances in asserting their jurisdiction. Having acquired legal ownership of the borough from the Crown, the mayor and aldermen then carried out three public performances to advertise and demonstrate the city’s new jurisdiction there – first, a procession, in which the mayor rode around the boundaries of the new ward; second, a proclamation in five places throughout the borough, made by the city’s Common Crier, concerning certain civic ordinances; and third, the use of the pillory in the market place.⁶⁷ Furthermore, penitential processions were used to link the old and new jurisdictions together. For instance, when Edmund Ellis, a cordwainer of Southwark, was condemned for using false cards, he first had to stand on the pillory in Cheap in the city of London, but then he was also led in procession, sitting backwards on a horse, over the Bridge into Southwark, where he was placed on the pillory there as well.⁶⁸ Public performances such as processions, proclamations and punishments, which navigated the urban space, were precisely the tools through which the civic authorities advertised and asserted their jurisdiction.

If the public punishments of the civic government were more deliberately situated in the city’s spaces than has sometimes been acknowledged, then they were also more fluid and changing over time. Between 1510 and 1560, two subtle shifts took place in the spaces used for civic punishments. The first of these saw the city’s principal site for public punishments move from Cornhill to the Standard in Cheap, a tall stone monument containing a water conduit which stood in the middle of Cheapside. This began in 1516 when a man, with a yellow letter ‘V’ cut of woollen cloth affixed to his breast, was proclaimed a vagabond at the Standard in Cheap and banished from the city.⁶⁹ This had never been done before, but in succeeding years a number of others who were rounded-up for the same offence likewise suffered this sentence.⁷⁰ Corporal punishment was also introduced here in 1518, when a man was ‘beton with a rodde of birche’ at the Standard for impersonating the household officer of an alderman.⁷¹ In 1521, ‘a new engyne’ was constructed and ‘set fast to the

⁶⁶ Rep. 13, f. 517r-v.

⁶⁷ Wriothesley, ii. 38.

⁶⁸ Rep. 12, f. 302v.

⁶⁹ Rep. 3, f. 95v.

⁷⁰ Rep. 3, f. 164r; Jour. 11, f. 305r.

⁷¹ Rep. 3, f. 195r.

Standard in Cheap' for punishing malefactors, on this occasion some petty thieves 'open knowen for pryve brybours & pykers'. Not only was the Standard a more centrally located site, it was also where the mayor and aldermen thought 'the most confluence of people shall be'.⁷²

In the following years several men also had their ears nailed to this new apparatus, on account of slanderous words, while others were ordered to 'stand upon the planckes' of its scaffold.⁷³ From 1522, crimes of serious dishonesty, such as the forgery of obligations and testimonials, were also more regularly punished here.⁷⁴ In 1533, a penitential procession of bawds, strumpets and scolds travelling from Newgate to Aldgate made two stops en route to have their offences proclaimed, the first at the Standard in Cheap and the second at the Pillory on Cornhill.⁷⁵ Indeed, this decade marked a kind of transition point between these two sites, for in the following years the first mention of a pillory at the Standard is made, while in 1543 is found the last mention of the pillory on Cornhill.⁷⁶ That year a man convicted of forging letters was to be publicly exposed upon the pillory on three separate days, the first day in Cheap, the second on Cornhill, and the third day back in Cheap. This is the last time someone was sentenced by the mayor and aldermen to the pillory on Cornhill in the period under review.⁷⁷ Furthermore, in 1553, there was a new post set up at the Standard to which malefactors could be fastened and then whipped, an apparatus which soon became known as 'the post of Reformation'.⁷⁸ By this time, the Standard in Cheap had become the principal site for the public punishments handed out by the civic government.

Over the same period a second shift took place, in that the penitential processions regularly awarded for social and sexual transgressions were taking routes which travelled more widely throughout the city. During the later fifteenth century, such processions generally took a direct route from Aldgate to Newgate, traversing the city westwards along its central axis. From 1541, however, those convicted by the mayor and aldermen at their periodic sessions for bawds, strumpets and scolds were now ordered to be had in a cart through 'all the open streets and market places of this city'.⁷⁹ As the records of the court elsewhere make clear,

⁷² Rep. 4, ff. 76v-7r.

⁷³ Jour. 12, f. 114v; Rep. 4, f. 171v.

⁷⁴ Jour. 12, ff. 159r-60v, 165r, 242r.

⁷⁵ Jour. 13, f. 353v.

⁷⁶ Rep. 10, f. 89r.

⁷⁷ Rep. 10, f. 313r.

⁷⁸ *Greyfriars*, p. 78; Rep. 13, f. 61v; *Machyn*, pp. 34, 164.

⁷⁹ LB. Q, f. 24r, where the Latin reads 'per publica civitatis loca et presertim per fora mercatoria', which is elsewhere Englished by the court scribes as 'the opyn stretes & markt places of this citie', e.g. Rep. 13, f. 19v.

this specifically meant ‘thurrough all the comen markt places of this cytye, that ys to say, Newgate Markt, Chepesyde & Graschurche markt’.⁸⁰ This was formerly not the case.

The records of the city government reveal that both of these spatial shifts were part of a wider policy on the part of the mayor and aldermen to project an image of more active civic governance. In many aspects of city administration at this time, a general preference was emerging for strategies which visually displayed active policing and enforcement by the civic authorities.⁸¹ This is not at all to suggest that the period 1510–60 witnessed particularly stricter standards of moral, social and sexual behaviour, or even necessarily stricter attitudes to enforcement, but rather a preference for such standards to be policed and enforced by the civic authorities, and for this to be *seen* to be so. This is also borne out more widely by the increasing amount of resources for policing and enforcement which were now coming under the direct control of the civic government.

There were two audiences which the civic authorities sought to impress with these performances, and although these developments were taking place across the same period and were part of the same process, it is clearer to address each context and chronology separately in turn. On the one hand, this image of activity was aimed squarely at the Privy Council. In these years, an increasing amount of the city government’s attention was devoted to dealing with the concerns of the Privy Council and the ‘great men’ who came to dominate it under Henry VIII. To begin with, on June 4th, 1516, Cardinal Wolsey had sent the mayor and aldermen a list of things needing immediate reformation in the city of London, to which the Court turned its entire attention for the next few months.⁸² One such concern was for the number of beggars and vagabonds about London, and it was in this context that the mayor and aldermen devised the new exemplary punishment for vagabonds, marking them with a yellow ‘V’ and exposing them at the Standard in Cheap.⁸³ A city-wide investigation then produced several householders who were judged to be receiving ‘suspicious persons’, and they were all duly evicted.⁸⁴ The suspicious persons themselves were then examined by the court on their origins and employment.⁸⁵ A number were convicted as bawds, some others as ‘vicious persons’, and together they were sentenced to a penitential procession with striped hoods and white wands. As with the vagabonds, this was

⁸⁰ Rep. 10, f. 335r; Rep. 11, f. 305r.

⁸¹ Paul Griffiths has elaborated a concept of ‘optic order’ to describe similar changes taking place in Norwich from 1570 onwards – P. Griffiths, ‘Bodies and souls in Norwich: punishing petty crime, 1540–1700,’ in Devereaux & Griffiths, *Penal Practice and Culture*, pp. 85-120; for a discussion of surveillance in London in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Griffiths, *Lost Londons*, Chs 8-9.

⁸² Rep. 3, f. 86r.

⁸³ Rep. 3, f. 95v.

⁸⁴ Rep. 3, f. 97r.

⁸⁵ Rep. 3, f. 97v.

to begin with public exposure and a proclamation against them at the Standard in Cheap.⁸⁶ This was part of how the mayor and aldermen attempted to answer Wolsey's concerns, and advertise their diligence to the Privy Council.

Over the coming months their priorities remained fixated upon these issues, and as late as February, 1517, we find the mayor demanding reports from the aldermen on what each 'hath doon in his ward concernyng thavoydyng of vagabundes sythens the last terme accordyng to the commaundment of the kinges counsell'.⁸⁷ This state of affairs, however, was disastrously exacerbated by the xenophobic rioting of Evil May Day that same year, after which Wolsey, and now Henry himself, viewed the city with significant suspicion. In response, the city increased its campaign of exemplary punishment by rounding up a group of thirteen men, proclaiming them as vagabonds at the Standard as before, ringing them through Cheapside with basins and pans like bawds or harlots, and expelling them from the city.⁸⁸ The same month, a man convicted of deceiving a young girl into following him to the Stews, under the pretence of getting her service in a household, was given a penitential procession from Aldgate to Newgate which likewise made proclamation at the Standard.⁸⁹ In January, 1518, Wolsey again sent a series of articles pointing to serious issues needing immediate reform, and again the civic authorities made this the focus of their regular court business for the coming months.⁹⁰ Vagabonds, among other things, were again highlighted by Wolsey, and so one of the city's immediate responses was a comprehensive set of ordinances for dealing with the problem of sturdy beggars, and resulted in the first serious attempt to license the impotent poor and ban all unlicensed begging. These measures also included the appointment, at the city's cost, of a Surveyor and a number of assistants to enforce the ordinances on a city-wide basis.⁹¹ The civic government took the concerns of the Privy Council very seriously, and sought the means to make its efforts visible to those watching from Westminster.

On the other hand, public punishment had long been a strategy which the mayor and aldermen had used to assert their authority over the urban population more generally. When Henry le Waleys had sought to re-establish law and order in the capital in the 1280s, he built the Tun, a new kind of lock-up located in the middle of the street on Cornhill where nightwalkers and adulterous priests could be seen in captivity pending their judgement.⁹² When John of Northampton sought to demonstrate the hard line on public morality he

⁸⁶ Jour. 11, f. 258r.

⁸⁷ Rep. 3, f. 129v.

⁸⁸ Rep. 3, f. 164r; Jour. 11, f. 305r.

⁸⁹ Rep. 3, ff. 157v-8r.

⁹⁰ Rep. 3, f. 189v.

⁹¹ Rep. 3, f. 190v; Jour. 11, ff. 337r-8v.

⁹² G. Williams, 'London and Edward I', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., 11 (1961), pp. 89-90.

would take during his second mayoralty in 1382, he devised the novel street parades for sexual offenders which traversed the city's central axis in different directions.⁹³ Subsequent mayors likewise built reputations for themselves throughout the fifteenth-century by instigating campaigns of public punishment, particularly against bawds and common women, which revived Northampton's ordinances of 1382.⁹⁴ Under Stephen Browne in 1439, those ordinances were revised, re-proclaimed and re-enforced, prompting 'Gregory's Chronicle' to report how 'the mayre ordaynyd that yere that comyn wemmen shulde were raye [i.e. striped] hoodys, and bawdys to the pelory ...and so hyt was done at dyvers tymys'.⁹⁵ In 1473, over sixty men and women were prosecuted for such offences, leading the 'Great Chronicle of London' to celebrate the mayor, William Hampton, who 'dyd dyligent & sharp correccion upon Venus servauntys, and cawsid theym to be garnysshid & attyrid wyth raye hodys, and to be shewid abowth the Citye wyth theyr mynstralsy before theym ...and sparid noon for mede nor for favour'.⁹⁶

In exactly the same way, the years 1509–10 saw a radical re-assertion of civic authority, part of which involved wide-ranging performances of public punishment. This particular episode came in reaction to the final years of Henry VII's reign, during which the civic elite had felt increasingly powerless within the city. In the interests of crown finance, the royal ministers Empson and Dudley had managed to subvert the city's system of juries, allowing them to prosecute rich citizens with impunity and extort massive fines.⁹⁷ This not only undermined the legal system upon which the civic government relied for the maintenance of public order, it also eroded respect for the city's magistrates by threatening their status as trusted partners of the Crown.⁹⁸ As early as 1505, the Court of Aldermen had tried to banish a number of these men for perjury, but powers at Westminster had forced the city to re-accept them and allow them to continue serving on juries.⁹⁹ When Henry VIII came to the throne in 1509, Empson and Dudley were finally arrested and the civic authorities swiftly moved against their agents in the city, dismissing a number of men from the powerful positions which they had gained.¹⁰⁰ Those who had escaped previously for perjury and the suborning of juries were now rounded up, and their punishment was specifically designed to re-assert civic authority over the city.

⁹³ Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 126-56.

⁹⁴ S. Tarbin, 'Gender, Order and Sexuality in London, 1400–1530,' (University of Western Australia, PhD., 1999), Ch. 6, and pp. 232-33.

⁹⁵ LB. K, f. 179r; *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the 15th Century*, ed. J. Gairdner (Camden Society, New Series 17, 1876), p. 182.

⁹⁶ *Great Chronicle*, p. 222.

⁹⁷ *Great Chronicle*, pp. 334-6.

⁹⁸ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 25-7.

⁹⁹ Rep. 1, f. 171v(222v); Jour. 11, ff. 74v-5r.

¹⁰⁰ Rep. 2, ff. 69r-v, 70v, 72r, 73r.

The pillory was the usual civic punishment for those convicted of perjury, though at times a first offence might escape with public exposure in the Court of Husting.¹⁰¹ There was a tradition however, in egregious cases, that those found guilty be placed on horseback and led on a penitential circuit about the city. For example, three men were punished in this way in 1467, being led from Newgate Prison on horseback along Cheapside and up Cornhill to Leadenhall Corner. Their procession then continued down Gracechurch St to the church of St Magnus at the foot of London Bridge, and proceeded westward along Thames St, Candlewick St and out through Ludgate to the Conduit in Fleet St, before finally returning to Newgate.¹⁰² In June, 1509, this exact same route was dictated to the six men now likewise condemned for serious perjury and suborning, going from Newgate to Leadenhall Corner, then to St Magnus and the Conduit in Fleet St.¹⁰³ In doing so, the civic government re-asserted its authority to punish egregious perjurers according to its own traditions, something which the interference of royal ministers had recently been preventing.

This demonstration was followed by a wider campaign to reform civic government. From February, 1510, the authorities began reforming the justice system, including new initiatives on court days, times, and the role of legal officers.¹⁰⁴ This was accompanied by a crackdown on violence, the carrying of weapons, unlawful gaming, even deceitful fishing practices; they instituted commissions into encroachments, took new initiatives to deal with begging and, significantly, called for all wardmote inquests to sit at once and draw up fresh verdicts.¹⁰⁵ In June of that year, a large number of the people presented by the city's wardmotes were tried and found guilty before the civic authorities. On this occasion, the Court explicitly connected the punishment of these bawds and strumpets with their prosecution of perjurers and suborners twelve months ago, by sentencing them to the same penitential procession from Newgate to Leadenhall, St Magnus, and the Conduit in Fleet St, very different to the usual route for such offenders. In doing so, the civic government used the spatial dimension of its public punishments to sustain the image of a new and reinvigorated civic authority.

As suggested earlier, there was little that was new in the mayor and aldermen's use of public punishment as a strategy for asserting civic authority. However, from 1510 onwards it was a strategy to which they resorted all the more widely and frequently. Richard Wunderli, historian of London's church courts, describes civic punishment in the 1520s as characterized by 'outbursts of reforming zeal', while Martin Ingram sees the period as 'an

¹⁰¹ LB. G, f. 140r.

¹⁰² LB. L, f. 50v.

¹⁰³ Jour. 11, ff. 74v-8r.

¹⁰⁴ Rep. 2, ff. 84v, 85r, 88r; Jour. 11, f. 89r-v.

¹⁰⁵ Rep. 2, ff. 83r-v, 84r-v, 86v, 92v, 93r; Jour. 11, ff. 104r-v, 104v, 109v.

intensification of an earlier pattern' alongside 'marked and striking innovation'.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, during the 1520s and 1530s, new punishments like whipping were pioneered for regular use by the mayor and aldermen, and the duckingstool was introduced in the city of London for the first time.¹⁰⁷ In 1528, a group of bawds and strumpets made their penitential procession in a cart, a practice later known as 'carting' and which was soon to become synonymous throughout England with sexual transgression.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, from the 1540s, the civic punishment of bawds, strumpets and scolds became a more regular practice, and it was from this time that their cartings ceased to travel just the central axis of the city, but went through 'all the open streets and market places'. At the same time, it is from the 1540s that the chronicler Charles Wriothesley begins to record public punishments in Cheapside as a regular feature of London daily life, while in the 1550s the diarist Henry Machyn notes such public punishments on almost every other day.¹⁰⁹ The concerns of the mayor and aldermen were entirely traditional, and the actions they took were deeply rooted in city custom, but never before had civic authority been put on public display so frequently and so widely throughout the city.

The desire of the civic authorities to advertise their active governance of the city, whether to the Privy Council or to the general urban population, was not limited to the spaces and frequency of major punishments. The civic government was also becoming more directly involved in the business of daily policing and correction. It has been noted that in 1518 the mayor and aldermen established for the first time a Surveyor, responsible for the city-wide enforcement of the ordinances against unlicensed beggars. This man and his assistants were soon enlarged into eight 'Beadles of the Beggars', a team which was further doubled again after that.¹¹⁰ Moreover, as the correction of misruled men and women became a more routine aspect of daily civic governance, the city took over responsibility for the costs of carrying out such punishments, instead of the sheriffs.¹¹¹ Likewise, the Court of Aldermen became interested in supplying and maintaining stocks and cages in every ward throughout the city, at the cost of the civic government.¹¹² Also, where previously each local neighbourhood had made their own use of such instruments, now each Beadle of the

¹⁰⁶ Wunderli, *London Church Courts*, pp. 95-96; M. Ingram, 'Regulating sex in pre-Reformation London,' in G. Bernard & S.J. Gunn (eds), *Authority and Consent in Tudor England* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 84, 92.

¹⁰⁷ Rep. 4, f. 215r; Rep. 5, f. 295r-v; Rep. 7, f. 224(h)v; Rep. 8, f. 43v; Rep. 9, ff. 104r, 178r, 256v; Jour. 13, f. 43r; Rep. 8, f. 66v; Rep. 9, f. 165v.

¹⁰⁸ Rep. 7, f. 260v; Rep. 9, f. 104r; G. Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespeare and Stuart Literature* (London, 1994), s.v. 'carting'; though being drawn in a cart was known as an image of shame throughout the medieval period, its close association with sexual immorality dates only from this period; for the earlier history of related punishments, see Spargo, *Juridical Folklore*, pp. 57-69.

¹⁰⁹ Wriothesley, i. 149 ff.; Machyn, passim.

¹¹⁰ Rep. 9, f. 105r; Rep. 10, f. 204v; Rep. 12, f. 289r; Rep. 16, f. 450r.

¹¹¹ Rep. 10, ff. 206r, 266v; Rep. 11, f. 226v; Rep. 12, ff. 230r, 247v, 402r, 457r; Rep. 13, f. 544r.

¹¹² Rep. 11, ff. 41v, 482v, 513r; Rep. 12, f. 460r.

Beggars was to have keys to all the cages throughout the wards.¹¹³ Finally, in 1553, a new institution was established, to be funded and controlled by the civic government, whose direct responsibility was the city-wide policing of masterless and misruled men and women.¹¹⁴ Indeed, with the opening of Bridewell Hospital, the civic government provided itself with a permanent and visible token of the right it asserted, as well as the responsibility it accepted, for policing the personal conduct of all those within the city.

* * * * *

In the period 1510–60, when under pressure from the Privy Council and an urban population suffering restlessly through crises of inflation, famine and disease, the civic government developed a stronger preference for those strategies, among its traditional responses, which projected an image of active authority and reform. In the city of London, there were many agents and authorities beyond the civic government which also played a part in maintaining order and punishing disorder, from householders, constables and beadles, to parish priests, church courts, and the bishop, not to mention the juries which heard pleas of the Crown against felons at Sessions of Gaol Delivery. While late medieval and early modern London lacked a professional police force, communities were not destitute of the means to restrain offenders, nor were moral standards in any way lax. However, in this period, the civic government increasingly chose to employ the punishments at its own disposal, rather than leave such misdemeanours to be addressed and reformed by others. In re-asserting control of the city after its subversion by Henry VII's ministers, in responding to Cardinal Wolsey's specific demands for action, and in maintaining a façade of order against rising tides of immigration and political instability in the 1540s and 1550s, the civic government used public punishment and the urban landscape to advertise the exercise of its own authority.

Public punishments were therefore acts of political communication with an important spatial dimension which, alongside proclamations and processions, projected an image of civic authority as active and robust. Taking place in the streets of the city on a daily basis, these performances constructed a difference between actors and audience which made it possible to imagine that the city was neatly divided between those who were governors and those who were governed.

¹¹³ Rep. 12, f. 289r.

¹¹⁴ On Bridewell, see Griffiths, *Lost Londons*, esp. Chs 6-9; A.L. Beier, 'Foucault redux? The roles of Humanism, Protestantism, and an urban elite in creating the London Bridewell, 1500–1560,' *Criminal Justice History* 17 (2002), pp. 33-60.

PART THREE – CONTESTING AUTHORITY

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that proclamations, processions and public punishments were not only pragmatic acts of administration but carefully orchestrated performances designed to project an image of active rule being exercised over the city, with a supposedly clear distinction between the city's governors and those they governed. Together they show that the legitimacy of the civic government and its status quo lay not only in the history of its institutions, but was also being constantly constructed and reiterated through such acts of political communication. By contrast, the three chapters that follow will examine the manifold ways in which civic authority was regularly being contested. Indeed, the importance of political communication to the construction of civic authority is underscored by the way that acts of individual agency, resistance and sedition targeted the very modes and means of official communication. In the ritualized performance of submitting petitions to the authorities, the rhetoric of official acts and proclamations was appropriated and redeployed to achieve the ends of individual petitioners. In the posting of anonymous libels and seditious bills, the act of pinning up official proclamations and written notices was appropriated and inverted as a means to communicate resistance. And in face-to-face confrontations with superiors, the discourse and authority of the council chamber could be appropriated and subverted by the language of the street and the threat of collective action, in direct challenge to the institutions of civic government.

CHAPTER 6 PETITIONS AND APPROPRIATION

The vast majority of inhabitants in early Tudor London were formally excluded from power, but petitions presented one available means for expressing needs and achieving redress. This chapter begins by considering the nature of petitions as acts of political communication, before moving on to illustrate the way that petitioners appropriated the values of the elite as put forth in proclamations and Acts of Common Council. Although a highly conservative strategy among the means of contesting authority, petitions demonstrate the agency of subordinate individuals and the importance of the urban environment in the political culture of the city.

In its broadest terms, a petition was a complaint or request to a figure or institution of wealth, authority or power. It had, moreover, a particular written form and structure, or was spoken with particular comportment and gestures, in order to posit this difference in status, and it appealed to the recipient's sense of either justice, paternalism, charity or mercy. In everyday understanding, a petition was assumed to be distinct – though it was not always so in practice – from a proposal backed by an offer, a demand backed by a threat, or a mere request between friends and equals. However, in many studies on petitioning in England, it is assumed that petitions were something much narrower. In some works they appear as a specific kind of written document submitted to the central government which was properly concerned only for the kind of grace and justice which royal authority could provide. In others, they are only a specific way of initiating legal action without a writ, or a means of avoiding the machinery of the common law. It is worth therefore remembering that petitioning was, and always had been, one of the most common acts of everyday life, and was appropriate in many different contexts. In London, for instance, the mayor commonly accepted petitions at his house, which the Swordbearer had responsibility for receiving and prioritizing.¹ More formally, petitions of different kinds were submitted to the deliberative sessions of the Mayor and Aldermen, the legal adjudication of the Mayor's Court, or the legislative assembly of the Common Council. Likewise, as leaders of local communities, individual aldermen received pleas for help and mercy from the inhabitants of their wards, just as they received presentments and complaints between neighbours while presiding over the wardmote. The master of a trade company heard similar petitions from guildsmen, both in writing, in person and sometimes both together, either addressed to him personally or as president of the company's Court of Assistants. As prominent dispensers of charity and forgiveness, ecclesiastical officials were also regularly petitioned, and it was possible to

¹ Rep. 1, f. 154r.

proceed in the church courts on the basis of oral or written complaint. Petitions therefore came in many shapes and sizes.

In assessing the place of petitions in the political culture of early Tudor London, it will be necessary to take into account the bold claims made by recent works for the significance of petitioning in the medieval and early modern polity. First, as Alan Harding has suggested, petitions clearly played a part in the growth of the state and the increasingly active role pursued by central governments.² Indeed, Harding argues that

the appearance of plaints in the records of the king's justices in the thirteenth century is more than an episode in the development of English legal procedure. It represents a stage in the growth of government in western Europe. One of the main problems of thirteenth-century kings was to control the fast-growing corps of officials who acted in their name, and in sending commissions to elicit complaints, whether against their own bailiffs or against the bailiffs of the nobility, they were serving their own interests at the same time as their subjects.³

Having shown itself receptive to such grievances, the increasing flow of local petitions towards royal government served thereafter to stimulate the growth of central organs and bureaucratic departments of state, further increasing the capacity of central government to intervene in the localities despite lacking a police force or standing army.⁴

Second, Gwilym Dodd has argued extensively for the importance of parliamentary petitions in developing new notions of legislation, the public good, and the constitution.⁵ To begin with, the earliest bills put forward by the parliamentary Commons to be enacted as statute were actually drawn up as petitions, and parliamentary legislation long retained something of this character. Dodd sees such bills as evolving out of the private petitions which were regularly submitted to the King and Council during sessions of Parliament, a practice which was deliberately begun *ex nihilo*, he suggests, in about 1275.⁶ As the knights and burgesses became accustomed to bringing private petitions with them to Parliament they began to club together where the grievances from their local communities overlapped, first to form regional petitions, and then later 'common petitions', which all the MPs of the House put forward collectively, on behalf of the 'community of the realm'. According to Dodd, the Crown placed petitioning at the heart of English political culture when it started accepting these common petitions as the direct basis for statute. As he puts it, 'the petition was both a symptom and, to an extent, the reason for the emergence of the parliamentary Commons as

² A. Harding, *Medieval Law and the Foundations of the State* (Oxford, 2002).

³ A. Harding, 'Plaints and bills in the history of English law, mainly in the period 1250-1350,' in *Legal History Studies*, ed. D. Jenkyns (Cardiff, 1975), p. 67.

⁴ Harding, *Medieval Law*, Ch. 6.

⁵ G. Dodd, *Justice and Grace: Private petitioning and the English Parliament in the late middle ages* (Oxford, 2007).

⁶ Dodd, *Justice and Grace*, pp. 19-25.

a distinct political entity within the late medieval parliament'.⁷ It was the king's duty to uphold the common good with the advice of his natural counsellors, the lords. But through petitions the knights and burgesses took it upon themselves to inform him how and where the realm was threatened, and by this means the House of Commons claimed the protection of the common good as its special province. Indeed, from 1315 onwards, 'it is clear that there was an increasing expectation that MPs should now act as the true champions of the common people'.⁸

Richard Hoyle has added a further voice calling for the importance of petitions to be recognised.⁹ For him, however, the significance of petitioning is the insight it can offer into the nature of popular politics – that is, the political participation not of the parliamentary classes but those specifically excluded from such formal office. In fact, Hoyle sees petitioning as the very essence of popular political participation. Having studied the use of petitions by the inhabitants of York, Hoyle determines that 'the characteristic process of popular politics might be seen to be the formulation and submission of a petition'.¹⁰ For those without a formal role in civic government, petitions were a means not only to communicate grievances but also to spur the authorities into action. As he suggests, 'petitioning might be used as a lightning conductor, allowing the urban commons or the less influential trades to raise grievances with their urban oligarchs or even remind them of their responsibilities'.¹¹ However, in pointing to their radical potential, Hoyle also acknowledges that petitions were rarely a confrontational strategy – rather, 'petitioning was a deeply conservative and public activity which accepted the existing political structures but tried to make them work in the interests of the petitioners'.¹² Indeed, as this chapter will go on to argue, petitions were an important aspect of political culture mostly because they illustrate the agency which subordinate individuals could exercise in spite of formal political exclusion.

Studying the petitions submitted to the mayor, aldermen and common council of early Tudor London bears out each of these important points, but also adds to them significantly. First, the practice of petitioning was not something created wholly by the Crown, as Harding and Dodd suggest, but had its roots in institutions of local government. Certainly, the petitions submitted to the civic government in London in the early sixteenth century share immediate similarities with those submitted to Parliament, and at first glance might appear as just local variations on the practice established at the centre. For instance, both kinds are

⁷ Dodd, *Justice and Grace*, p. 132.

⁸ Dodd, *Justice and Grace*, p. 130.

⁹ R.W. Hoyle, 'Petitioning as popular politics in sixteenth-century England,' *Historical Research* 190 (2002), pp. 365-89.

¹⁰ Hoyle, 'Petitioning', p. 367.

¹¹ Hoyle, 'Petitioning', p. 368.

¹² Hoyle, 'Petitioning', p. 367.

distinguished by a regular structure, whose parts Dodd usefully describes as the address, identification, complaint, specific remedy, and supplication. The similarities also extended to their verbal formulae. For instance, when the Merchant Adventurers petitioned Parliament in 1497, they addressed themselves to the ‘discrete commons in this present parliament assembled,’ just as in London the Beer Brewers addressed themselves in 1530 to ‘the discrete commons in this common council assembled’.¹³ Likewise, the body of a petition was regularly introduced by specific verbs in a particular archaic form, ‘shewen’, ‘complainen’ and ‘besechen’. When a petition was submitted to Parliament in 1504 against itinerant pewterers, its authors did ‘humbly and lamentably shewen and complayn,’ just as the London Company of Farriers did ‘in humble wise shewen and complainen’ to the Mayor and Aldermen in 1517.¹⁴ Given the long tradition of private petitioning in Parliament by this time, it would be easy to see petitions to the London authorities as modelled upon those made to the central government.

However, the practice of petitioning the civic government in London, including the use of specific formulae, had a long history of its own. In the mid fifteenth century, when the yeomen of the Bakers were defending themselves against the accusations of their wardens, they composed a petition in which, ‘full mekely and in the most humble wyse,’ they did ‘shewen & besechen’ unto the mayor and aldermen.¹⁵ When, in 1433, petitions appear in the records in English for the very first time, the Skinners concluded their petition with a supplication that the civic authorities hear their prayer, ‘for goddes love and in wey of charyte’, just as one hundred years later a city serjeant would appeal to the same authorities in precisely the same terms, ‘for the love of god and in the wey of charyte’.¹⁶ Moreover, these expressions of the 1430s were direct translations from a set of Anglo-Norman equivalents, which until that time had been the normal language for such documents. When, in the early fifteenth century, the Fletchers petitioned the mayor and alderman, they did so in Anglo-Norman, hoping they might ‘moustrent humblement’ their complaint to the court and secure a remedy, ‘pur dieux et en oevre de charite’.¹⁷ In fact, petitions characterized by these formulae go back to the very beginnings of civic record-keeping, and a continuous stream of petitions from those who would ‘moustrent et se pleynent’ survive from 1327 onwards, from which time the full text of petitions was regularly recorded.¹⁸

In fact, while before this time the language of petitions disappears from the written record, the practice of petitioning the local authorities in London can be seen to extend back much

¹³ *Statutes*, ii. 638; Jour. 13, f. 210v.

¹⁴ *Statutes*, ii. 651; Jour. 11, f. 304v.

¹⁵ LB. K, f. 198v.

¹⁶ LB. K, f. 129v; Rep. 10, f. 217v.

¹⁷ LB. K, f. 6r.

¹⁸ LB. E, f. 176v; LMA CLA/024/01/02/002, m. 14v.

further. As early as August, 1299, Ralph de Attendern had complained before the mayor and aldermen against unjust exactions being charged upon him by the sheriffs.¹⁹ In fact, it was not unusual for the mayor and aldermen to hear cases like this, especially when sitting in their judicial capacity as the Mayor's Court, where the earliest records show them holding sessions 'concerning complaints and petitions', as they did in July, 1305.²⁰ In explicating this expression A.H. Thomas, the editor of the court rolls, observes that 'a plaint [i.e. pleading without writ] was the usual method of beginning an action in the Mayor's Court,' and 'petitions' invoked its 'equitable jurisdiction', but 'the occurrence of the two terms thus early suggests that the Mayor already decided cases for which no ordinary legal remedy was appropriate. A similar development was taking place in the Chancery, though hardly so early'.²¹ The actual form and nature of the 'plaints and petitions' to which reference was here made can be inferred from the 'original bills' of the Mayor's Court which survive from later in the fourteenth century, during the reign of Edward III, and which regularly introduce themselves by the familiar terms 'moustre,' 'supplie' et 'se pleint'.²²

As this shows, no writ or royal command was needed in order to get justice done by the mayor and aldermen, nor were they restricted to hearing cases which fitted the forms of action recognized by the common law of the late thirteenth century. They also provided kinds of remedies as yet unknown to the royal courts. Indeed, from the moment records begin in the late 1200s, the Mayor's Court is operating with a competence far beyond that of the Court of Common Pleas and is doing so long before the Chancery began to develop an equity side. Many suits specify a recognizable form of action such as debt, covenant, detinue, or trespass vi et armis. But just as many are brought as general 'complaints', 'accusations', or 'charges to be answered', often dealing with issues outside the common law of the time, such as defamation, deceit, minor injury, threats and general injustice.²³ In this sense, the mayor and aldermen, both in their administrative and judicial capacities, were already receiving complaints and requests in established petitionary forms in the late 1200s, when the records of their courts first begin to survive.

This constituted a jurisdiction of considerable breadth, yet it originally fell to the mayor and aldermen not by the king's commission, but by delegation from the Court of Husting. Originally the Court of Husting had been the city's main court, the equivalent of a county court, where administrative ordinances were adopted, law suits adjudicated, appeals from the courts of local sokeholders heard, and authoritative acts declared. As S.F.C. Milsom

¹⁹ LB. C, f. 31r; other early examples – LB. C, ff. 54v, 119r.

²⁰ *CEMCR*, p. 196.

²¹ *CEMCR*, p. 196 n. 1.

²² For instance, LMA CLA/024/02/001, nos. 4, 7.

²³ *CEMCR*, passim; on the areas of early equity, see *Select Cases in Chancery, AD 1364-1471*, ed. W.P. Baildon (Selden Society, 10, 1896).

explains, 'after the conquest, as before it, the primary government of England was through counties and hundreds,' and these courts 'were the governing bodies of their communities, dealing with all their public business'.²⁴ In London, as A.H. Thomas acknowledges, 'an aggrieved citizen in the 11th and 12th centuries would rarely think it necessary to invoke the aid of the King; he was content to carry his complaint either by word of mouth or in writing to the City authorities, and if he were granted access to the Husting, he explained his grievance in his declaration'.²⁵ Like any communal court, the Husting was of course presided over by the king's official – originally the sheriff, later the mayor – but its judgements and declarations were the responsibility of those who owed suit to the court, the men of free status owning property in the city.²⁶ However, as the Hustings gradually became dominated by real actions initiated by writ, administrative business and other causes were increasingly delegated to special meetings of the mayor and aldermen, which led to the separate but derivative institution of the Mayor's Court, emerging somewhere between 1220 and 1250.²⁷

Thereafter, the mayor and aldermen came to differentiate between business which concerned the administration of the city and its ordinances, dealt with as the Court of Aldermen, and that which sought the resolution of disputes by legal process, dealt with as the Mayor's Court. These were both very appropriate places to bring petitions, whether one's competitors were breaking the market rules, the rules themselves were unfair, the complexity of a dispute made it unclear how justice should be pursued, or simply because poverty and misfortune had prompted a plea for help. As modern historians of the early common law point out, the communal courts originally exercised a sovereign and omnicompetent jurisdiction – 'to begin with they were in principle omnicompetent and had, in our language, jurisdiction over all kinds of legal dispute'. The shire court, whose sessions were 'essentially community meetings', 'had to make all kinds of decision', but it was 'sovereign in the matter and its decisions final'.²⁸ In this sense, petitions and the authority to receive them were not created by the Crown in the thirteenth century. At that time and also long before it, it had always been normal to bring complaints, redress grievances, achieve justice, and seek assistance in the Husting, and to do so orally or by bill, expansively and without being confined to a limited range of actions. While elsewhere the jurisdiction of the county court was allowed to wither, in London part of its authority was simply delegated to the courts held before the mayor and aldermen.

²⁴ S.F.C. Milsom, *Historical Foundations of the Common Law*, 2nd edn (London, 1981), pp. 12, 13.

²⁵ *CEMCR*, p. xviii.

²⁶ Milsom, *Historical Foundations*, p. 15.

²⁷ *CEMCR*, xvi-xviii.

²⁸ Milsom, *Historical Foundations*, pp. 1, 16.

This fact highlights a second qualification to be made to the picture of petitioning as described in recent historiography. Rather than making unambiguous claims upon the kind of 'justice' and 'grace' which only the Crown could dispense, the nature of the authority to which petitioners appealed was not always clear cut. There were several kinds of authority which were recognized in late medieval society, and the Crown by no means held a monopoly on either justice or grace, even if it claimed to do so. This was recognized by the early legal historians, although the implications of it have rarely been appreciated:

Who, asks Bracton, ought to be judge in temporal causes? The king; no one else – this is the meaning of the kingship, that the king should do justice to all.. But Bracton was a royal justice, and, though he could easily show that he and his fellows derived their authority from the king, he does not attempt to prove, and could hardly have succeeded in proving, that, even in legal theory, all the jurisdictional powers of the feudal lords were delegated to them by the king.. [And] could the suitors who made the judgments in [the communal] courts be called the king's deputies? Bracton takes the easiest of courses, that of ignoring difficulties.²⁹

In this sense, the source of authority to which petitioners addressed themselves could be ambiguous. In fact, part of the power of petitions was precisely their ability to draw out the tensions inherent in late medieval and early modern government. For instance, petitions ostensibly left the act of judgement and execution to the authority figure to whom they were addressed, while the petitioner appeared the passive recipient. Yet it was the latter who had initiated the exchange and dictated its terms. Petitions were also presented as appeals and not demands, asking for something which the addressee was free either to give or deny. But in their appeals to justice and charity, they highlighted the obligations on which figures of wealth and power professed their authority to be based, and in denying any petition those leaders risked undermining the legitimacy of their own authority. Moreover, petitions were addressed to particular individuals of exalted status, but on certain issues it was always in the context of a larger court, assembly or public institution. For instance, while complaints about the implementation or enforcement of civic ordinances might be brought simply to the mayor and aldermen, requests for the alteration of custom or new formulation of law were addressed to a larger assembly attended by individuals drawn from each of the city wards.³⁰ In doing so, petitions highlighted the tension between the authority of the lord and that of the communal assembly over which he presided.

These observations offer important additions to current work on the nature of petitioning. Private parliamentary petitions certainly played an important role in the emergence of 'common petitions', and contributed to the sense of initiative, spokespersonship for the public

²⁹ F. Pollock & F. Maitland, *History of English Law before the time of Edward I*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1898), i. 528-9.

³⁰ For example, LB. E, f. 179v.

good, and constitutional role which were increasingly being claimed by the parliamentary Commons in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But they were able to do this precisely because of the ambiguities of initiative, power, and authority which such petitions highlighted, and this was not specific to Parliament. These ambiguities were inherent in the structures of English government more generally and the practice of petitioning itself, both of which were already, and would continue to be, central to the political culture of local communities like the city of London.

A final point to be made is that while petitions can reveal popular agency, they do not offer direct insight into popular politics or necessarily reflect an authentic popular voice. First and foremost, petitions were acts of political communication and formed an interface between governors and governed. They were 'acts', not just texts, in very much the same way that proclamations, processions and punishments have been shown to be. Their presentation in court was ritualized and demonstrative. Richard Hoyle rightly approaches petitions as a political interface in this respect. Speaking of the submissions of the urban commonalty at York, he observes that 'petitions of this sort, and the act of petitioning, were perhaps one of the key mechanisms of interaction between popular politics and the state, or, if one wishes, it was another "point of contact" between governed and government'.³¹ But Hoyle treats petitions as a means to uncover the specific political agenda being pursued by the unenfranchised crowd. For him, petitions 'allow a degree of insight into popular political activity which is otherwise denied to us,' because 'where we know what the commons requested, we find their petitions are informed critiques of the city's policy or sensible proposals to amend it'.³² Hoyle is only interested in petitions in the context of popular revolts, because they suggest that 'behind these disturbances there was some form of political organization'.³³

Petitions, however, were not straightforward indications of popular sentiment, but carefully constructed performances. Petitioning in court, whether orally or in writing, was very much a formal act. As noticed above, they conformed to a strict and regular structure, with specific verbal formulae identifying the transition from one section to another. The way that petitioners presented themselves, their plight and their needs was highly rhetorical. Indeed, the terms in which petitioners addressed their intended recipients was calculated to establish a difference in power, authority and status, whether or not this was really the case. The narrative of events, the nature of the threat and the potential consequences of inaction, as set out by petitioners, cannot be regarded as direct reflections of either the contemporary situation or even the author's own perspective on the issue. Instead, the entire content of a

³¹ Hoyle, 'Petitioning,' p. 366; Dodd, *Justice and Grace*, p. 279.

³² Hoyle, 'Petitioning,' p. 373.

³³ Hoyle, 'Petitioning,' p. 381.

petition was shaped by a logic which sought to establish the ‘duty’ of the recipients to hear the complaint or request, and to suggest, without explicitly asserting, the dangers or benefits which action or inaction could potentially bring to the recipients themselves.

In this sense, petitions were highly rhetorical, but it would be a mistake to dismiss these rhetorical strategies as mere window-dressing. As Dodd would have it, ‘the manipulation of language to present petitioners in a favourable light was common practice. The fact that it was done, however, does not necessarily mean that it made any difference to the outcome of a petition’.³⁴ This, however, misses the point to some extent. In framing their complaints and requests in terms of the duties of governors, petitioners were not making idle claims, for they made use of precisely those duties and obligations which governors themselves acknowledged and celebrated as part of the legitimacy of their own authority. In fact, as the remainder of this chapter seeks to show, petitioners latched onto exactly those ideas which the civic authorities deployed in official acts and proclamations to justify and legitimate their rule. The power of petitions lay in their ability to appropriate the elite’s own rhetoric and redeploy it to the petitioner’s benefit.

Petitions, therefore, demonstrate some of the agency which those excluded from formal office could potentially exercise. Petitioners not only took the initiative to bring their grievance or request to the attention of the authorities, but they also appropriated the language of official political communication and turned it to their own advantage. In this respect, petitions formed a crucial interface of political communication and an important part of the city’s larger political culture. Previous chapters have explored the detailed attention which the civic government put into its performances of political communication as a means to demonstrate its active and legitimate exercise of authority. In appropriating the language and ideas of official acts and proclamations, petitions reveal the importance of these performances as a site for constructing but also contesting authority in the city.

In its acts, ordinances and proclamations, the civic government of early Tudor London sought to justify its policies in terms of good order, honest rule, and the common weal. Obedience to authority, they suggested, was not only a prerequisite for good order, but a legitimate expectation when those who exercised it came first in age, substance and honour. Crucial to the exercise of just government was also a careful regard for the common good, and together these principles were considered the necessary qualities for good lordship, the touchstone of legitimate authority. To this end, the civic government went to great lengths

³⁴ Hoyle, ‘Petitioning,’ p. 301.

to cultivate an image of good lordship over the city – caring for the good of its inhabitants in return for their obedience.

As part of this culture of good lordship, the civic government tried to be both proactive in anticipating problems as well as responsive to grievances. On their own initiative, the mayor and aldermen were keen to be seen upholding the rights and privileges of the city and its citizens, especially against foreigners and aliens, but also against the Crown and other jurisdictions. They took preventative measures to avoid popular disturbance, especially by advancing money for the provision of grain stocks in the face of potential famine. And in all its institutions and rituals, the city's governors worked hard to maintain an image of rule by consent. But subordinate groups and individuals could also get the authorities to act at their instance in a wide variety of ways. Upon notice they were willing, for instance, to punish or reform any abuse of authority, and showed sympathy in causes where lesser individuals were oppressed by those of wealth and power; they took pity on people in times of need, or rewarded long and faithful service; and they could be relied upon to intervene in local communities, by policing local morality, eliminating neighbourhood nuisances or building local amenities. However, in procuring the assistance of the authorities, people also strengthened their case by framing their claims in terms of the values by which the elite itself thought to legitimate its power. A study of petitions to the Court of the Mayor and Aldermen and to the Court of Common Council highlights six important values – order and obedience, diligent and faithful service, care for the poor and impotent, honest work and reputation, civic duty, and regard to the commonweal – which recur again and again in the language of petitioners. Each of these ideas, it will be seen, was drawn directly from the acts, proclamations and other modes of official political communication with which the city was saturated and which people encountered on a daily basis.

Indeed, order and concord, along with their correlates obedience and good lordship, were constant themes in the discourse of the civic government when it sought to explain or justify its political decisions. As the conceptual basis of peace and justice, a vast range of actions could be justified by the need to maintain order. This rhetoric saturated all the means by which political information was communicated – the Acts of Common Council promulgated from the place of the Hustings in the Guildhall, the proclamations read out in the streets, the judgements delivered in open court, or even the civic processions, carefully ordered, which marched through the city. In this respect, one of the most important roles of the Court of Aldermen was in the arbitration of disputes. For instance, in October 1508, the court was arbitrating between the Company of Butchers and one John Partidge who ran the scalding house for the company's hogs. In the resolution which it eventually awarded, the court began by decrying the 'great & contynuell varyaunces, stryves and debates' between the two

parties, and their failed negotiations, with which the Butchers had ‘helde them sore greved and therwith were not contented,’ so that ‘the seid variaunces, stryves and debates daily encreaced and thervpon diuerse and manyfold sutes were afterward had and contynued’. Arbitrating such a conflict gave the court ample opportunity to advertise itself and its work, for:

nowe of late all the seid parties of their own free wylles, mocions and assentes, wylling to be at rest and peas and to haue some good ordre and direccion to be sett and made betwene thaim in the premissis, instanced me, the said Laurence Aylmer, being maire, to take vpon me the labour and besynes to ordre and sett the said parties at vnitie, rest and peas, and them to ordre in the premisses, compromytting them to stande and abide to myn ordinaunce.³⁵

In such declarations, conflict of interest was denounced as the problem, while only the good lordship of the mayor and the obedience of the parties could secure peace and order. In Acts of Common Council, too, the city’s legislators ever sought to uphold concord and to demonize discord. At Easter, 1529, they took emergency measures to deal with the tithes controversy, ‘to thentent that vnyte, concorde & good peace at this blessed tyme may be had,’ while in August, 1521, they attacked the Bakers, who ‘of their pure malice & envye dayly in diuerse places of this citie uncharitably sowe scismes & grugges’.³⁶ In running the new Hospital of St Bartholomew’s in 1548, as in governing the city more generally, the civic government portrayed itself as working ‘with gret industrie, studye and paynes’ to devise ‘good and necessarye ordres, rules and constitucions ... for the obseruacion, mayntenance and contynuaunce of good and godlye rule, order and lyvinge’.³⁷ Crucial in this important task was the obedience and conformity of those whom they governed and whose interests they professed to advance. At a Common Council in July, 1528, measures had to be taken against the Bakers of Stratford because ‘they have yet, styll abyde & contynewe in their ffroward & obstynat myndes ... notwithstaundyng the good & gentyll exhortacions at dyuerse tymes to them made’.³⁸

In valorizing order, obedience and harmony, and denouncing their opposites, the civic government provided a language which other individuals excluded from formal positions of power could call upon in pursuit of their own aims. Thus when addressing petitions to the Court of Aldermen or Common Council, individuals often stressed their own support for, conformity to or desire to uphold these same ideals of order, obedience and harmony. For instance, when John Taillour, sherman, presented his petition to the Common Council in September, 1529, it was as ‘your obedient citizen’ that he addressed the gathering and sought

³⁵ Jour. 11, f. 50v.

³⁶ Jour. 13, f. 127r; Jour. 12, f. 128v.

³⁷ Jour. 15, f. 384r.

³⁸ Jour. 13, f. 66r.

his discharge from office, professing himself ‘not willyng to be disobedient or by any craft or sotelte to disceyve or dissemyll’.³⁹ Likewise, the Freemasons and Tilers were careful in how they framed their own request in June, 1504, saying that while ‘the said ffelaushippes haue bene in variaunce for certayn causes betwene them pendaunt of tyme passed, to the grette charge of booth the said ffelaushippes,’ it was now the case that ‘they & everyche of them, of oone assent, been fully aggreed and assented for an vnyte and wele of booth the same ffelaushippes, foreuermore herafter to contynue’.⁴⁰ Here they invited the court to be the champion of order and harmony, while really their petition was concerned for the exclusion of a third party, foreign traders, from the London market.

When submitting new ordinances for the court’s ratification, city companies often presented them as ‘dyuers articles ryght necessary & expedient to be added to the ordynances of their mistere’ in order for ‘good politique gouernance, rule & ordre to be hadde & contynewed of and in the said mistere’.⁴¹ Alternatively, innovations and new measures could be presented as the solution to present disobedience and disorder. When ‘the gode and honest ffolkes of the craft or mistery of Upholders’ sought such ratification, it was currently the case, they claimed,

that for lak of gode rules and ordenaunces within the said craft for the sadde and politique gudyng of the same by yore worshipfull auctorites to theym to be graunted, many evill disposed persones of the same craft in maner as people vnder none obedience, gouernance nor gudyng, folowyng more their own pleasure and singuler weys then the weys of thryfte and sadnesse to their own distruction ...be like to falle to gretter decay onles your gode lordship and maisterships herin to theym be shewed.⁴²

Indeed, authority figures lower down the hierarchy might also raise the spectre of rebellion as an added spur when petitioning the mayor and aldermen, in the hope that they would sympathize with the problems of maintaining good order. For instance, when the wardens of the Bowstringmakers put forward a new set of ordinances in March, 1499, they did so under the pretence that they currently did not have ‘sufficient rules nor ordenaunces amonges theym self to ordre and guide theym bye, ffor lak wherof many inconueniences and hurtes haue fallen and also grete disobedience, rancour and malys by the inferior persones to the superiors haue ben shewed’.⁴³ A picture of conflict in the market place or disorder in the streets could be deployed to similar ends, for the maintenance of order, and

³⁹ Jour. 12, f. 147v.

⁴⁰ Jour. 10, ff. 314v-5r.

⁴¹ Jour. 12, f. 142r.

⁴² Jour. 10, ff. 118v-23r.

⁴³ Jour. 10, ff. 152v-3r.

the suppression of disobedience, were powerful arguments by which the civic authorities were likely to be persuaded.⁴⁴

In return for the loving obedience of their subordinates and dependents, the city's elite professed itself to offer a good lordship which took special care for the poor, the impotent and those otherwise in need. Indeed, the city's responsibility to the poor was often loudly proclaimed and publicly avowed by the civic government. For instance, in December, 1545, the Common Council declared its enduring desire

for the inuenting & devysing of some good charitable & godly wayes & meanes wherby the very pore, indigent, syke & weke persons of this cittie not able to lyve of themselffes may charitably be ayded, comforted & releyved by the deuocyon and charitable almes of the good & well disposed citizens & inhabitauntes of the same cittie.⁴⁵

Likewise, in April 1518, the council justified its curtailment of the established rights of botchers – those repairing garments rather than tailoring new clothes – in terms of protecting the livelihood of elderly tailors. The work of the botchers, it was suggested, was 'to the greate hurt & damage of thold persones of the same craft which nowe in their ages haue not the experience nor cunnyng to cutt or shape garmentes of the newe & dyverse fassions'.⁴⁶ It was publicly professed that the civic authorities would look to the needs of the poor, the elderly, and the disabled.

Therefore, in making petitions, individuals and groups regularly adopted a similar image of poverty and impotence by presenting themselves in the guise of humility, declaring their inability to help themselves and seeking the court's assistance not as a matter of desert but merely as an act of grace, 'in reverence of god and by way of charity'. To this end, petitioners often described themselves as 'your pour oratours' or 'your poore and daylye oratours', here being the Freemasons and the workers of tanned leather, or elsewhere 'the poure ffelishippes of the craftes of Pynners and Wiremongers'.⁴⁷ Indeed, when seeking ratification for a new set of ordinances in October, 1497, the Founders were specifically appealing 'for the comfort and relief of the pore, impotent and good people' of their craft, while in July, 1511, the Lorimers called for assistance to their fellowship, 'whiche of long tyme hathe be[en] a poore honest company among other within this citie'.⁴⁸

People knew that if they conformed themselves to a particular set of criteria which distinguished them as worthy of charity, they might prevail upon the sense of obligation

⁴⁴ Jour. 11, f. 269v; Rep. 10, f. 167r.

⁴⁵ Jour. 15, f. 213v.

⁴⁶ Jour. 11, f. 336v.

⁴⁷ Jour. 11, f. 97r; Jour. 15, f. 375v; Jour. 10, f. 93v.

⁴⁸ Jour. 10, f. 107r; Jour. 11, f. 137r.

which the whole of society expected of those in positions of wealth, power and authority. This, for example, was successfully done in October, 1509, by a tenant behind on his rent:

In lowly wise besechyng, shewyth vnto your masterships your poore bedemen William Godfrey baker, late tenaunt of the Bakhouse called the signe of the hande in seint oluffes parysshe in Suthwerk belonging to the brighous aforesaid, that where of late the goodes of your besecher were distreyned for xl s. to be due at mighelmas next comyng for a yeres rent of the seid bakhous, so yt ys good masters the seid William ys nowe aged, croked and in extreme pouertie & not able to redeme the seid distresse whiche ys to his grete discomfourt & hurte and verely lyke to be vndone in this wor[ld]de foreuer onles that your masterships of your mere charitie haue an [e]ye of pitie herunto, It may therefore pleas you for the reuerence and love of god, tenderly considering the premisses, with that the same William was borne within the borowe and of long tyme hath contynued there, and forasmoche as the same your besecher hath lytill or nothyng to helpe hym self wyth, that ye wold forgeve hym the seid rent and that he may haue his goodes agayne to hym restored frely, and all the dayes of his lyf he shall specially pray to almighti god for your good prosperities long to endure.⁴⁹

William was not only 'poor' but was also humble, 'in lowly wise beseeching', and a 'bedeman', mindful of his betters, who though 'aged, crooked and in extreme poverty' did not demand aid as a right, but as 'mere charity' for pity's sake, in that an honest man 'born within the borough' was 'like to be undone in this world forever', unless he could get a little help. He, and others like him, were successful in such petitions.

The stress which the civic elite placed upon humility and hard work in the rhetoric of their acts and ordinances made the status of humble craftsman an important battleground between rival economic interests. For instance, the Fletchers sought to defend their craft in January, 1503, so that 'the yongmen of the seid craft' who 'had truely served their termes' might find employment rather than be 'idell and not sett awerke, to their greate [astirredness]', for they 'haue ben brought vp in their seruice and fayne wold werke for their levying'.⁵⁰ On a different tack, the Cordwainers and others sought to shame the Curriers in the eyes of the court for abandoning their traditional manual labour. While in the past the Curriers 'were wonte to lyve and susteyne theym sellfes, wyfes, children and ffamelye by the verye arte and crafte of curryinge', 'now of late the fforeseyd Curriours, leaueing their manuall and handye occupacion of currying of lether, haue fallen to practesing and excercysyng of merchaundizes'. Not only had pride gotten the better of them, but now they were also 'engrossing into their handes all or the moost parte of all maner of tanned lether, so insacyatlye frome tyme to tyme that the cutters and woorkers of the same cannott gett ne come by verye lytle of the same'.⁵¹ In their public actions, the civic elite would have

⁴⁹ Jour. 11, f. 89v.

⁵⁰ Jour. 10, f. 280v.

⁵¹ Jour. 15, f. 375v.

to support those who appeared humble and hard-working against such threats from the proud and greedy.

Those who rose to high office in the civic government, like the mayor and aldermen, justified their own positions in terms of hard work, commercial success and long service to the city. Indeed, they were not reticent in publicly enumerating the sacrifices they made as part of their diligent civic service. For instance, when in October, 1545, the mayor and aldermen sought to lighten their own burdens a little, the action was justified in Common Council by virtue of

the contynuall, tedyous & almoste intollerable labours, watchyng & paynes that men nowe adayes lyke good lovyng & obedyent cytezens do beare & susteyne, exercysing aswell the rome & offyce of shrevealtye as also the seid offyce of mayeraltye of the seid cytie, wherbye somme of theym have fallen thorough the paynes & labours by theym taken in their seid offyces into greate & daungerous sykenes & dyseases in their bodyes.⁵²

Likewise, the civic elite were always ready to congratulate each other on their good performance of high office. When John Grene, gentleman, who ‘by the space of xxvj yeres nowe passed hath contynuelly been in thoffice of Comen Sergeaunt,’ retired in December, 1521, he was rewarded by the Common Council with an annual pension of £4 and a summer livery gown, ‘consideryng the long contynewance of the seyd Mr Grene in the seyd office & his good and feithfull seruice & diligent attendaunce’.⁵³

At the same time, other civic officers in much lower stations could also therefore seek reward or relief by appropriating to themselves the very same terms. Some petitioners highlighted their diligence in office and the dangers it posed for them, as did the serjeants and yeomen of the sheriffs in September, 1519, pointing out not only that ‘they at dyuerse tymes in due executyng of their offices be put in grete blame and jeopardy of their lyves to their gret costes, charges, vndoing and hevynesse, and also sum of them often tymes maymed and sum kylled,’ but also that ‘sum of them haue been so long in office that they be disvsed and dyscontynued in executyng & exercysing of their craftes’.⁵⁴ Others, like the Clerks of the Mayor’s Court, might point to their efforts above and beyond the call of duty, in that ‘your sayd seruantes willyngly take paynes and labours for causes of thys cytie when they therunto be commaunded, havyng neyther stypend or ffe of thys cytie’.⁵⁵ Long service was also a powerful argument in addressing the court. One particular serjeant of the sheriffs, Richard Grygge, stressed that ‘the same your oratour hath contynued in the offyce of a seriaunt thys xxvj yeres past and hath seruyd hys worshypfull masters the sheryfes of the

⁵² Jour. 15, f. 189r.

⁵³ Jour. 12, f. 154r.

⁵⁴ Jour. 12, f. 17r.

⁵⁵ Rep. 10, f. 174r.

seyd cytye successyvely duryng the seyde yeres to the best of hys power'. Moreover, because Grygge had been seriously injured in the course of his duty, he wanted to retain his office while being discharged of duties, 'for a recompence to youre seyde oratour for the myschaunces in hys seyde offyce & rewarde off hys long seruyce & spendyng of hys yong tyme in the same'.⁵⁶ His petition was duly granted.

On the other hand, the civic elite were also responsive to petitions against those in authority who lacked diligence or abused their office. In late 1519, for instance, the Bakers of Stratford were becoming daily more incensed by the officials of the city Bakers, having oversight of their bread, who would often 'enforce theym wyth disdaynfull wordes and wythout good maners to lay down their bredde in the stretes & tak it forth of their sakes & shewe it theym, & when they haue handled & tossed it at their plesure the[y] cast it down & go their ways, the which they do oonly of malice'. This meant, firstly, that their bread was 'ofte tymes broken, mynysshed & empyred by reason of the ofte castyng downe & fowle handelyng therof'. Secondly, it meant the bread could be confiscated on trivial grounds, and if not, then 'many tymes they feyne a default wher none is'. It was unjust, argued the Bakers of Stratford, that their competitors should be the ones responsible for policing their bread, 'forasmuch as it stondest not with reason nore equitye that any mannes foo shuld be his juge'.⁵⁷ The mayor and aldermen agreed, and ordered that officials from the Bakers of London should henceforth be accompanied by a civic officer when searching anyone bringing bread to the city.

Great weight was also placed by both governors and governed upon notions of honesty, honour and reputation. The civic elite certainly saw their own position as founded to a certain extent upon a reputation for honest dealing and quality workmanship, both of which found their fruit in commercial success and were ultimately rewarded with honours. Collectively these things were comprehended in the idea of *honestas*, a kind of honour, which took account of such things as keeping one's oath, fair and honest dealing, the ability to provide for a household, masculine self-control, and care for one's reputation. It was in these terms, for instance, that the Common Council could justify the admission of an alien to the freedom, something which the wider population frequently objected to. Indeed, Nicholas Deryng, alien goldsmith, was admitted in August, 1546, on the basis that 'the said Nicholas is a quyet & honest person & a very good workeman & hath contynued here xxⁱⁱ yeres & aboue, teachyng alwayes wyllyngly & instructyng in his said occupacion all & euery suche apprentyces & other seruantes of Inglyshemen as it hath pleasyd them to put to hym,

⁵⁶ Rep. 10, f. 217v.

⁵⁷ Jour. 12, ff. 19r, 21v.

and intendency here styll to abyde & honestly to vse hymselff in all thynges'.⁵⁸ By contrast, oath-breaking, deceitful trading practices and unjust gain at the expense of others were the common terms in which malefactors were denounced by the authorities. For example, in October, 1526, the Common Council took exception to a new game of gambling called 'double lots', and it took the opportunity to expatiate on the evils of dishonesty, seeing that there were

dyuerse evill disposed persones of small reputacons not gevyng theym selves to labour for their lyvynge nor to exercise some good handycraftes or other lauffull occupacions, wherby they myght honestly lyve but do studie & geve theym selves to idelnes, slouth & other disceptfull games ... wherby they haue procured & also caused many mennys seruantes, apprentices & laborers, & that to a great nombre, to pike, pilfer & stele their maisters goods & money.

At the same time, the ringleaders were exposing the 'many yong people then & there beyng' to 'rybaudy & other most shamefull & detestable wordes', while they themselves 'take to their owne sengle lucre & aduantage great summes of money out of the same at their pleasures without any comptrollement of eny persone'.⁵⁹ The civic elite were also concerned for good reputation. This might mean taking action against things like powders made of 'deceitfull thynges' with 'subtyll instrumentes ... in their celers and other pryvy, hyd & secrete places', because fraudulent spices and resins were 'not oonly to the greate hurte and deceite of the kynges liege people but also to the greate rebuke and sclaundre of the hole company of Grocers'.⁶⁰ Indeed, the honest reputation of the city's companies was important not only for the maintenance of a particular industry, but for the reputation of the city as a whole. This was of particular concern to the mayor and aldermen because it might endanger their standing with the Crown. Action had to be taken to improve the quality of spices in February, 1527, because 'dyuerse and many greate compleyntes, rumours and exclamacions have theruppon ensued by a greate nombre of persons which have found themself sore agreved in that behalf, and have made sondry sute and supplicacions to the kynges grace and his honorable counsaile for reformation in that behalf'.⁶¹

These ideas of *honestas* were readily appropriated and redeployed by petitioners in sixteenth-century London. For instance, William Mathewe, engaged in legal wrangling with one Lewis Chaloner in September, 1519, pulled his case out of court and appealed instead to the mayor and aldermen when his opponent made the mistake of suing William in King's Bench instead of in the City. Because by the custom of London no citizen should be impleaded outside the City, and because every citizen, in his oath upon admission to the freedom, swore to uphold

⁵⁸ Jour. 15, f. 269r.

⁵⁹ Jour. 12, f. 363r-v.

⁶⁰ Jour. 12, f. 271v.

⁶¹ Jour. 12, f. 372v.

the city's liberties, William complained that Thomas was 'voluntar[il]y periured', and warned that such behaviour would be 'to the grete audacite & boldenes of periurye aswell of hym as of other malefactours in lyke cases in tyme to cumme yf [he] shuld be suffred or passe vnpunysshed, the which god defend'.⁶² Petitioners also knew that the court would not look favourably upon deceit, especially when the court itself had possibly been misled. In March, 1510, Agnes Awstyn, 'widow', complained against one Thomas Samme, baker of Stratford, who had tricked the Court of Aldermen, as she claimed, into granting him the standing room for a bread cart by the Cross in Cheap which rightly belonged to the tenants of her bakehouse. When the said Thomas had been the tenant, she said, he had 'fraudelently sued and opteyned a graunt to be made vnto hym in his owne name of the seid standing place,' purely 'of his subtile and crafty mynde onely to disceyue and disappoint your seid oratours and their tenant of the seid rowme and standing place'. Having relinquished his tenancy, he yet kept the grant of the standing room, 'contrary to right and conscience'.⁶³ Such deceitfulness, she argued successfully, was not to be tolerated in London.

The question of reputation and honour was perhaps the most important among these ideas. In particular, many individuals and groups who found themselves in difficulty highlighted the way that, although until now they had been of good reputation, present circumstances threatened to undermine their honourable standing in the city. For example, the Dyers were very worried in June, 1523, that low quality imports from outside the city, 'vntrue, sleight & vntrue', were being passed off as London dye work, which 'euer hath been & yet is vsed to be doon truely, surely & substancially and with the best & truest workmanship that could be doon or wrought' such that now 'the good name & fame of your said <suppliants> is hugely emblemysshed & sore defased to ther grete <shame> and infamy'. The immediate assistance of the civic authorities was required so that they might 'be restored ayen to their good name and fame'.⁶⁴ A constant watch was likewise kept amongst the Plasterers against 'vnlawfull and vnproffytable stuff & workemanship', lest it encourage the 'sklander of the good ffolke of the said companye'.⁶⁵ Unjust loss of reputation was not only pitiable but would itself have profound repercussions for the continued existence of an industry. In July, 1511, the Lorimers explained that the import of horse-bits from France had so undermined the reputation of their craft that 'yong persones whiche shuld be brought vp by apprenticehod in the seid occupacion disdeyne to be bounden apprentices to the same for

⁶² Jour. 12, f. 16r-v.

⁶³ Jour. 11, f. 103r-v.

⁶⁴ Jour. 12, ff. 222v-3r.

⁶⁵ Jour. 10, f. 236v; Jour. 12, f. 232v.

feare that the seid occupying and bying of suche ffrenche bittes shuld be the cause of hynderaunce of their lyfyng in tyme to come'.⁶⁶

Profitable crafts, on the other hand, highlighted precisely the contribution that they made to the honour of the city as a whole. When the Innholders wanted to absorb the Coursers in September, 1515, they reminded the court that they 'at all tymes haue been redy in clothing and lyuery to do theire duetie and [give] theire diligent attendance vpon you and your predecessours to the honour of this noble citee to the best of theire powers as other seuerall craftes of this citee vse to doo'.⁶⁷ The new articles put forward by the Woolmen and Woolpackers in April, 1522, had been devised, they said, 'aswele for the worshipp of the said citee' as much as for 'the good rule, gouernance and guydyng to be had in the same ffelishipp and craft'.⁶⁸ Threats to the honour of the city were also thought of as persuasive arguments to put to the mayor and aldermen. In October, 1495, an objection to 'newe invencions and craftes vsed in bruyng of ale with hoppes, rosen and other thynges' should be addressed, it was suggested, because 'grete disclaunder renneth vppon this citee' as a result.⁶⁹

Indeed, threats to livelihood were presented as much in terms of their impact on a company's standing in the city and ability to contribute to civic charges as that of material deprivation. For example, in July, 1501, the Bladesmiths reacted against threats to their income with the preamble

that where they and their predecessours in tyme passed haue well and honestly lived by the same craft and occupacion and also haue been of habilitie and power to bere almaner taxes and tallages vpon them leyd and assessed within the same citee till now of late that they be empouerysshed ... to thutter decay and distruction at leyngthe of the said craft or occupacion ... onles then a remedye by your grete wisdomes the rather be purveid.⁷⁰

The need to uphold the city's liberties and share the burden of civic duties was another important way in which the government couched its own actions. The city had accumulated many great privileges from the Crown on account of its importance in the realm, and these special rights were the just inheritance of every freeman. It was every citizen's duty, therefore, to uphold them, both for the present and for future generations, and the civic government often presented its policies in these terms. They also praised those who were duly mindful of them. In December, 1523, for instance, the wardens of the Grocers were applauded for submitting their ordinances to the mayor and aldermen for review, as it was important that there not be 'eny thyng in the said book that shuld be inconsonant to reason,

⁶⁶ Jour. 11, f. 137r.

⁶⁷ Jour. 11, f. 236r.

⁶⁸ Jour. 12, f. 179r; Jour. 11, f. 285r.

⁶⁹ Jour. 10, f. 60r.

⁷⁰ Jour. 10, ff. 226v-7v; likewise, Jour. 10, f. 140r-v; Jour. 11, f. 304v.

hurtefull or preiudiciall to the liberties or ffree customes of the seid cite or in enywise soundyng into the derogacion or breche of them or eny off them'.⁷¹ But if there were rights of citizenship that needed to be upheld, there were also civic duties which needed to be shared. It was in these terms for example that the Common Council demanded in August, 1516, that all freemen live within the jurisdiction of the city. This was necessary, it declared, because

diuerse & many persones, fremen of this cite, [who] nowe of late by their grete instaunces & labours for their singler lucre & auantage haue been made free & admytted to the liberties of this cite ... contrary to their othes absent theym selves & dwell oute of this cite & liberties of the same & be not contributorye nor charged with the citzens of this cite in tax, tallages, lott, scotte & other charges as freemen of the seyd cite been, in discept & preiudice of the citezens of the same cite.⁷²

The emphasis placed by the government on such civic-mindedness was easily appropriated by petitioners. For example, a panicked cry for the protection of the city's liberties was used in October, 1503, to call for the office of the Undersheriff of Middlesex to be reserved for freemen of the city. The position was a lucrative one, but its arrogation to freemen was to be understood as necessary for the maintenance of the city's liberties, which might be neglected and undermined if such an influential position were in the hands of someone not committed to the city's best interests. The office, it was claimed,

for the most parte hath been gyven & graunted to straungers nether beyng ffreemen nor ffreendes of this citee lytyll or nothyng regardyng the liberties of the same, which for favour & mede haue suffred many & dyverse persones pretending & claymyng without title or ground dyuerse ffraunchises within the said countie of Middlesex to haue & vse suche pretended fraunchises ... to the greate hurt & derogacion of the liberties of this cite and also the said cite many tymes charged with greate amerciamentes of grene wexe & other whiche shuld not be yf the said vndreshirifwyk were occupied by an officer sworne to this cite.⁷³

Where they could, petitioners might also highlight their status as freemen and present themselves as mindful of civic interests, which they as citizens contributed to and hence expected to benefit from as well. To this end, petitioners sometimes described themselves as 'your pour con-citezens', 'oratours & co-citezeins', or the 'generaltie & felishipp of Powchemakers,' being 'freemen of this cite & enfraunchised in the saide craft'.⁷⁴ On the other hand, failure to conform to the obligations of a citizen could be grounds for denouncing one's competitors. A petition in September, 1519, explained with a sense of incredulity that 'certen false persons beyng free of this cite, not regardyng god nor ther

⁷¹ Jour. 12, f. 263r.

⁷² Jour. 11, f. 259r.

⁷³ Jour. 10, f. 296v.

⁷⁴ Jour. 10, f. 140r-v; Jour. 11, ff. 228r, 315r; also Jour. 10, ff. 183r, 280v; Jour. 12, f. 372r.

others, nor their own or the comen weale,' were helping foreigners to sell their goods by retail by pretending them to be their own, simply 'for a litill couertyse of a small reward'. To undermine the monopoly on retail in this way, one of the city's most cherished liberties, showed a serious lack of civic-mindedness.⁷⁵ Likewise, failure to contribute to *lot and scot* was another powerful accusation open to petitioners. In August, 1526, one faction among the citizenry appealed to the judgement of the Common Council against Robert Hogen, who had 'ben absent from the same [city] of long tyme, not beryng for his part & porcion scott nor lott as other co-citezyns do, nor kepyng a house & [being] resiaunt in the seid citie,' which underscored the fact 'that he hath ben and yet is a greate hynderer of the said citezyns and greatly hurtfull to the comyn welth of the same'. By appropriating the same terms and values which the government itself employed, they succeeded in getting him disfranchised.⁷⁶

However, the broadest and perhaps most important rhetoric which the civic government used in characterizing its rule was its picture of a dutiful magistracy working for the advancement and protection of the 'common weal'. All their actions, they suggested, were guided by a desire for the greater good of the community as a whole. This had two aspects to it. First, the greater good was presented as the goal to which all policies ultimately aimed and hence was synonymous with the business of good governance itself. Whenever the mayor, aldermen and common councillors were 'assembled & gathered togyther for the stablishement of certeyn laudable actes & ordynances,' they did so 'for the good rule, gouernance & comen weale of the said cytie'.⁷⁷ In this sense, all manner of actions might be undertaken in the name of the greater good. A common stock of salt was established by the Common Council in January, 1526, 'to be had, vsed & contynued for the comen welth of the citezyns of the seid citie,' while an act on the sale of fish was confirmed and reiterated in September, 1521, because it was 'seen to be verey good & beneficiall to & for the comen weale'.⁷⁸ Those who had offended civic ordinances were denounced in similar terms. Engrossers of fish were condemned as 'nothyng regardyng the comon welth,' while perjurers suffering public punishment might be decried in the street as 'not dreding god nor regarding their conscience, [nor] the good ordre and comon weale of this noble citie'.⁷⁹ By contrast, in the face of famine in November, 1511, a proclamation explained that the mayor and aldermen of London, 'having especial zele and loue to the comon weale of the citie and thenhabitauntes of the same,' were ready to take action for the provision of wheat.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Jour. 12, f. 24v.

⁷⁶ Jour. 12, f. 349r.

⁷⁷ Jour. 13, f. 453v.

⁷⁸ Jour. 12, ff. 344r, 146v.

⁷⁹ Jour. 13, f. 473r-v ; Jour. 11, f. 74v.

⁸⁰ Jour. 11, f. 169r.

Second, the mayor and aldermen might present themselves as protecting the common good in the sense of upholding the public interest against private and individual greed. In a proclamation of July, 1514, reforms for the import and sale of poultry were being provided because ‘the comen weale of this cite of london ys nowe more and more hyndred and hurted,’ in that individuals were acting ‘for their oonly singler lucre, profytt and avantage’ at the expense of ‘the grete preiudice and hurt of all thenhabitauntes of the said cite’.⁸¹ In doing so, the civic elite might also claim to recognize that working for the greater good sometimes meant having a special regard to the ‘poor commons’ who made up the majority of that public interest. Much was made of this, for example, when the Common Council acted to protect local industry in November, 1530. The act declared that several ordinances had already been made concerning hats and caps, ‘to the greate relefe, socour & aduantage of many pore citezens within this cite of london & subbarbes of the same, to the nombre of vij or vij M pore people as men, women & children, which live only vpon the makinge of the said caps & hattes’. However, it appeared that certain malefactors continued to trangress them, ‘not regardinge the comen welth of the pore people beinge inhabitaunt within the said cite,’ and acting rather ‘for the particler welth & proffitt of very fewe persones in nombre and to the vtter distroccion of the greate nombre abouesaid’.⁸²

If in this way the civic government gave legitimacy to its power by grounding it in a commitment to the common weal of all the city’s inhabitants, petitioners were equally able to turn the idea to their own ends or to call upon the authorities to remember their promise. To begin with, petitioners often expressed their own commitment towards the common good as a reason to accede to their requests. Articles put forward by the Grocers in September, 1523, had been devised ‘not oonly for the weale of their company but also for the comen wele & profite of the kynges liege people’.⁸³ In February, 1530, the Beer Brewers addressed the Common Council and sought such aid as would befit ‘your said besechers,’ who were ‘wyllyng as moche as in theym is to aduaunse the comen well of this cite’.⁸⁴ The authorities were pleased to aid them in their efforts.

But petitioners might also appeal to the mayor and aldermen to take greater heed for the common weal, and their rhetoric sometimes reached epic heights. In December, 1521, the Carpenters and others were aggrieved against those wharfingers who had taken to buying up wood upon its arrival at their wharfs, and were gaining a monopoly over its supply. However, in dealing with the squeeze on their own profit margins that this might have, they began their petition with a fervent warning to the mayor and aldermen that the city, as a very

⁸¹ Jour. 11, f. 193r.

⁸² Jour. 13, f. 254v.

⁸³ Jour. 12, f. 245r.

⁸⁴ Jour. 13, f. 211r.

commonwealth of citizens, was in peril of destruction, crying ‘please it your good lordship and masterships of your goodnesses to remembre and tenderly consider a comon weale the whiche is gretely decayed and dayly like to be more & more without remedy therfore be the sonner prouyded.’ They then went on to denounce the

dyuers wodmongers & other that kepe wharfes by the Thamysseyde not beyng content with suche reasonable and competent gaynes & profyt as they haue of their wharfage & cariage of all suche stuf as commeth to their wharfes, but of their inordinate covetouse myndes for ther own privat profit to the grete hurte & destruccon of the comen weale dayly engrosse vp all maner of stuff ... which is to the grete preiudice, losse & hurt aswell of the Chambre of London as of the vniuersall body of the same.⁸⁵

The irony of the manner in which this problem was presented is that the Carpenters themselves had brought the situation about. In 1519, they had successfully petitioned the Common Council to enact that wood brought by boat should be sold without being unloaded.⁸⁶ As a result, such boats could not leave to fetch another shipment until their stock had been sold, which seems to have had the unintended effect of encouraging the sale of the whole shipment to the owner of the wharf, who could retail it at greater leisure. In the analysis of the Carpenters, however, it was the covetousness of the wharfingers and the threat to the weal of the whole city (including the Chamber revenues), that had to be addressed, both of which were issues close to the civic government’s heart. Moreover, in August, 1548, a similar complaint was made by the Cordwainers and others against the engrossing of tanned leather by the Curriers. After stating the problem in equally hyperbolic terms, the petitioners went on to appeal that

yt maye therfore please your right honorable lordshipp and worshippffull marstershippes as ye zeale, love, favour and tender the comen weale of this seyde realme of Englund and in especiall the comen weale of this seyde noble cytye the principall member of this seyde realme, to provyde somme conuenyentt remedye in this behallfe by the authorytye of this presentt Comen Counsell withoute deleye, and so all your seyde oratours with their wyeffes and children shalbe bound not onlye to praye to almyghtye god ffor the prosperous estate of your good lordshipp and mastershippes longe to endure but also the hole comens of thys realme haue good and just cause to wyshe, praye and desyer the same accordinglye.⁸⁷

Such petitioners capitalized on the mayor and aldermen’s own protestations of their ‘zeal and love to the common weal’, while others sometimes appealed to their promise of special protection to the ‘poor commons’. For example, this rhetoric was deployed by the Cobblers in June, 1503, when they came into conflict, as they often did, with the Cordwainers. As a minor fellowship under the oversight of the Company of Cordwainers, the specific repair

⁸⁵ Jour. 12, f. 155r.

⁸⁶ Jour. 12, f. 30r.

⁸⁷ Jour. 15, f. 375v.

work which Cobblers were permitted to do upon shoes was closely defined by an agreement which the mayor and aldermen had previously brokered between the two. New fashions in shoes made by the Cordwainers, however, had forced Cobblers to use ‘a newe sole with one ende according to coblers occupacion,’ lest the repair work fall apart soon after. In fact, in their petition to the Court of Aldermen, they explained that they had long used this technique ‘and by the Cordwayners of this citee haue ben suffred peasyble to do without interrupcion’ for considerable time, ‘tylle nowe [of] late that the same Corwayners malingnyng repunge therat and wille not suffer your seid poore orators so [to] doo, but they wold them selffe vse the patchyng and clouting of the seid olde weres’. In appealing for assistance against the Cordwainers, the Cobblers presented themselves as less concerned that this would ‘take away the poore lyving of youre seid oratours’, as that their own occupation in repairing shoes was crucial to the ‘poor commons’ who could rarely afford to buy new pairs. It was the Cordwainers who made such shoes which, ‘whan they be worne & brought by the poore comon people as wele of the cuntre as of the citee to youre seid poore oratours to be cobled, the soles of the same wares be so feble & weyke, and the seid poore people [worn] so nygh that noo stych can holde nor coblyng vpon them can be made,’ without adding new soles. Indeed, they only did so because otherwise ‘yf they shuld coble & cloute such weres they shuld do it to the great dissayte & begyling of the seid poore comon people as well of the citee as of the cuntre which be not able to by newe wares as is aforeseid’. They asked instead that it might ‘pleaseith therfore your good lordship & maistershipps the premysses tenderly consydered,’ to intervene ‘for the poore comon well,’ and uphold the interest of the ‘poor commons’.⁸⁸

In fact, in the hands of some petitioners, regard for the common weal of the city’s inhabitants was not just a principle of good governance, it was a sacred duty. In a petition of August, 1538, on the rather prosaic issue of who should pay the costs of legal proceedings which were non-suited by a judge, the Common Council was begged that it might please ‘your lordship & maistersships to haue yn remembrance & in tender consyderacion the dyscencions & dysorde[r]s the whiche ar yn thys cytye’ by reason of ‘invegelyng’ and the ‘huge suytes whiche at thys present tyme be dependyng & lyke he[re]after to growe & encrease withyn thys cytye of London, the whiche ys & hereafter may be greatly to the hynderance & vnquyetnesse of the comon welthe of thys cytye’. Moreover, they should have ‘remors of equitye & love vnto the comon welthe of thys cytye’ not just as an end in itself, but because protection of the common weal was a sacred duty, ‘vnto the whiche euery manne by the comaundement of god & by the order of charytye ys bounde for the quyetnes of theyre own christen soul’.⁸⁹ If the civic government sought to legitimate its authority in

⁸⁸ Jour. 10, ff. 286v-7r.

⁸⁹ Jour. 14, f. 102r.

terms of regard for the common weal, petitioners could equally insist upon this as a moral imperative and demand that it live up to its promises.

In addition to the picture so far developed, the nature of sixteenth-century London as an urban community was also a particularly important aspect of its political culture. As the foregoing section has suggested, the language of official political communication was structured around certain key ideas – order, charity, service, honesty, civic-mindedness and above all a regard for the common good. Together, these ideas constituted a picture of good governance, a roadmap for negotiating not only the relationship between rich and poor, or master and servant, but also mutual respect among honest, hard-working equals and the way the individual related to the group. In each case, such relationships were to be founded upon mutual obligation, and in this respect much has already been said about the reciprocity between the benefits and burdens of citizenship. However, the rights and obligations of civic-mindedness were not limited just to citizens. In the proclamations and public acts of the civic government, residence in the urban environment itself was presented as bringing a similar host of shared opportunities and duties. To live in the city, it was suggested, was to share in both a common identity and a mutual dependence with one's fellow urban inhabitants. These two ideas featured prominently in the discourse of official communication as well as the language of petitioners who appropriated them to their own ends.

First, regardless of how true it was in practice, the civic elite encouraged the idea that the city's inhabitants shared a common identity by virtue of physically living within the city and being enmeshed in its social networks. From the perspective of the elite, to identify with the city and its history was part way to accepting the legitimacy of its institutions. In this respect, the civic government was apt to celebrate the image of the city-dweller living amongst his neighbours, enjoying the advantages afforded by the city while contributing in like measure to the burdens and responsibilities which came with urban life. Indeed, those who had grown up in the city during their youth were specially to be counted good and worthy members of the community. For instance, in November, 1537, the Common Council granted Thomas Ryshton a reversion to office 'for dyerse especiall consideracions theym movyng,' and in particular 'that the said Ryshton ys borne within this citie' and 'bredde and brought vp within the same,' as well as being 'an olde seruant and officer of the said citie and a longe contynuer within the same from his tender youth'. Likewise, two years earlier, the Court of Aldermen had preferred Richard Mody to the office of Clerk of the Compter ahead

of William Pynchon for the simple reason that Mody was ‘of longe continuans bredde & brought vp yn the same’.⁹⁰

Petitioners, of course, often called this to mind when framing their requests. Although Symond Martynson had worked as a stationer in London for many years, he had been born overseas and therefore lacked the freedom. When in October, 1538, he petitioned the Common Council to be admitted, great stress was laid on the fact that he had ‘from his infancy and chyldehood beene brought vpp’ within the city.⁹¹ Indeed, in a community where the majority of people including the elite had been born elsewhere, birth was not as important as the simple fact of residence and involvement in urban life. This is amply illustrated in Edmund Dudley’s petition for licence to lay a water pipe to his house in the city in late 1507. Although by no means a poor and humble man in need, Dudley had a particularly tense relationship with the civic authorities at the time and he therefore had to work especially hard to establish his credentials as a worthy member of the civic community. In his attempt to do so he specifically highlighted that he was ‘now enhabyted within the same [city] amonges you and propoeth duryng hys naturall lyfe to contynue his household in the said citie, and to bere scotte and to be contributory to all other reasonable charges in the same lyke as a citezen of the said citie oweth to bere and be’.⁹² Not only did he claim to be a citizen in the legal sense of a ‘freeman’, but also in the affective terms of living ‘amongst you’. Moreover, in seeking dispensations from the authorities people also professed a sense of indebtedness to the opportunities which the city had afforded them, and a willingness to repay that debt. For instance, Richard Calard sought to be discharged from bearing office in August, 1529, because, he said, he was going blind and would soon be unfit to do his duty. However, if he was granted dispensation now he would happily pay a fine in acknowledgment of his debt to the civic community, seeing that ‘he hathe gotten parte of his goodes within the same citie’. Likewise, another petitioner negotiating a similar discharge described himself to the Common Council as a man of heartfelt civic identity, confessing that ‘vpon good consciens ... I haue goton that litle that I haue within this citie’.⁹³ In a way, to live within the city was to become a part of it.

Second, by occupying shared space in such a dense fashion, life in the city placed people in a state of mutual dependence on each other. This was true both for the need to satisfy particular urban requirements – such as maintaining markets, water supply or street lighting – and to restrain threats to the shared environment – like disease, fire or neighbourhood conflict. In each case, the civic government both reiterated and reinforced the existence of

⁹⁰ Jour. 14, f. 51r; Rep. 9, f. 136r.

⁹¹ Jour. 14, f. 113r.

⁹² Jour. 11, f. 21r.

⁹³ Jour. 13, f. 155v; Jour. 12, f. 147v.

such mutual dependence among the city's inhabitants while also presenting itself as the chief means for ensuring that these communal needs and threats were properly addressed. For instance, it was announced to the city's inhabitants by proclamation in March, 1516, that a new brotherhood had been formed with a monopoly on common carriage. As the preamble to the mayor and aldermen's decree explained, this was necessary because

dyuers and many persones with there horses & cartes bryngyng and conveyng vytailles to the cite of london as whete, malte, wode, cole and other thyngis been oftyen tymes vexed and troubled for the vnreasonable takyng of ther horses and cartes by the officers of the said cite for the kynges cariage and purveaunce by the occasyon wherof they oftyen tymes absent and withdrawe them selves from the said cite whiche causith the said vitalles to be derer and of more excessyue pryce then they haue bene in tymes passed.⁹⁴

In order that such people not be discouraged from bringing their goods to the city, the civic community would have to jointly shoulder the burden of providing enough carts for the king's carriage so that those of the market folk were no longer being commandeered. The safe supply of the city with victuals – by promoting the confidence of buyers and providing sellers with a reliable market – was the backdrop to many such acts and pronouncements of the civic government. Sufficient access to water was another problem generated by dense living in shared space which the authorities showed themselves keen to address. As an act of Common Council acknowledged in December, 1545,

the vse & commodite of freshe & swete water wherof this cittie of London of late yeres hath hadd grete lack & scarcyte, is so plesaunt, requysyte & necessary a thyng that the reasonable plentie & store therof cannot nor may not conueniently be myssyd or forborne without the greate & intollerable evyll, lose and hynderaunce of all the citizens & inhabitauntes of the same cittie.⁹⁵

Here the problem was not just that some parts of the city might lack water, but that if they did so it would have an impact on 'all the citizens and inhabitants' throughout the rest of the city. Likewise, the provision of street lighting was something to which all householders should contribute, as all inhabitants throughout the city – free, foreign or otherwise – needed it and benefited from it. As the mayor and aldermen set forth in a proclamation of December, 1537,

all & euery whatsoeuer persone & persons inhabityng within thys cyte of London & liberties of the same aswell spirituall, temporall, Inglyshemen, aliens & oders, from hensforth shall fynde lanterns with light in them nyghtly to hange oute of their wyndowes of their houses on the strete syde, duryng all such tyme as lightes haue bene accustomed to be hanged out.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Jour. 11, ff. 286v, 291r-v.

⁹⁵ Jour. 15, f. 213v.

⁹⁶ Jour. 14, ff. 53v, 121v.

The civic government acknowledged that life in the city brought with it a mutual dependence among urban inhabitants which they professed to coordinate, and petitioners might therefore appeal for help in meeting such urban needs or emphasize their own role in serving the city. For instance, when the Beer Brewers sought relief from the rising cost of barrels in a petition of February, 1530, they did so by first emphasizing their role as ‘vittellars of this honorable cite’. They then presented their own problem with the cost of barrels as a threat to the city’s food supply, because ‘som that were than occupiers haue ben dryuen to suche extreme pouertie by reason of berebruyng that they ben compelled of pure necessitye to forsake’ their ‘occupacion of berebruyng’ and ‘prouide otherwyse for their pour lyuyng’.⁹⁷ Likewise, when seeking the aid of the mayor and aldermen, their ‘dayly oratours the pore Bakers of Stratford atte bowe’ were apt not only to stress the worthiness of their petition, ‘in their full humble wise shewen and complaynen vnto your good lordship & maisterships,’ but also to remind the court of their diligent service to the urban community, in that ‘they be dayly repayryng vnto this said cite wyth brede to the vniuersall welth & comfort of thenhabitauntz of the same’.⁹⁸

In seeking help, petitioners were also able to remind the authorities that, in as much as they contributed to the cost of infrastructure in other parts of the city, so they deserved civic assistance in meeting their own urban needs. It was in precisely these terms that the parishioners of St Sepulchre without Newgate appealed to the Common Council in September, 1507, for help in building a new conduit to bring water to Holborn. On the one hand, they emphasized that they currently used the conduit in Fleet St, which reduced the water available to residents there. On the other, they called for communal assistance in building their own conduit,

humbly besechyng your said lordship & masterships to geve them licence so to do and also to ayde them with your good almes towards the same by cause it wilbe to them a grete charge & the rather for that they be contributory to the making and reparacions of other condites ferre from them in the said cite wherby they haue non ease ne socour.⁹⁹

The Common Council approved the project, and ordered the levy of one-eighth of a fifteenth across the whole city to pay for it.¹⁰⁰ Other people also justified their petitions with reference to the service which they provided to the civic community. For instance, when John Colet sought to purchase a city property in order to expand his new school at St Paul’s, he presented it to the Common Council in terms of its benefit not just to the cathedral church but to the sons of the city’s inhabitants. As Dean of St Paul’s he did not need to

⁹⁷ Jour. 13, ff. 210v-11r.

⁹⁸ Jour. 12, f. 19r.

⁹⁹ Jour. 11, f. 21v.

¹⁰⁰ Jour. 11, ff. 21v, 49v.

frame himself as a humble petitioner, yet he went so far as to explain that the new building would be not only ‘a gret plesour’ to himself but also ‘to the more commodite and weale of your sonnes that nowe and hereater shall resorte to the seid scole’.¹⁰¹

Likewise, the Master of St Thomas Acon went to great lengths in April, 1518, to secure licence from the Common Council for an archway gallery over the street of Old Jury, which would link the hospital to a new building purchased on the other side of the thoroughfare. In doing so he highlighted first the extent to which the Hospital provided religious services for the city, with ‘the brethern & daily mynsters of dyuyne service withyn the same’ being ‘about the nombre of ffyfty persones’. Secondly, he appealed to the role of the Hospital as a symbol of civic identity, ‘forasmuch as seynt thomas the martir was born withyn the said place and is the advourie & protectour of this noble citie’. Finally, he emphasized a further way in which the Hospital could contribute to the needs of the urban community, promising ‘to make on either side of the said galery a wyndowe & theryn yerely in the wynter tyme to haue a light sufficient for the comferte of theym that shall passe that way’.¹⁰² In each instance, the language of the petition was calculated to appeal to the same idea of mutual dependence that the civic government propounded in its acts and proclamations.

In addition to the special communal measures required to satisfy the needs of urban life, the authorities also promoted their role in defending the shared environment against disruption and destruction. For instance, in a proclamation of June, 1518, the mayor and aldermen declared that

the clene keepyng of euery citie from all filthy & stynkyng thynges, ordurs, corrupte eyeres & evill savours is a principall cause of preseruacion of the bodely helth of thenhabitautes of the same, and the contrary & reuerse therof is perilous & daungerous to the same inhabitautes, ffor by reason therof dyuers infirmyties, syknesses & diseases daily doo ensue to the greate perell & ieopardy of thenhabitautes of the same.¹⁰³

In fact, this logic could be used to justify the government’s increasing regulation of the urban environment more generally. For example, an act of Common Council in December, 1514, explained that

by the grete & often resort and comen course of cartes, conveyyng into this citie and subarbes of the same bryke, sande & gravell, the pavementes of the said cite be often tymes hurted & broken, by reason wherof moche dunge & other filthe is daily encreased, and the stretes & lanes of the same cite and the subarbes of the same therwith be moche desoyled, and the citezens of the same

¹⁰¹ Jour. 11, ff. 147v-8r.

¹⁰² Jour. 11, f. 334r-v.

¹⁰³ Jour. 11, f. 348r.

cite and other the kynges liege people repairyng to the same with the infeccions therof be gretely anoyed.¹⁰⁴

For this reason, it was suggested, anyone whether free or foreign importing building materials was to pay 2d. in wheelage per cartload, and the money would be put towards a centrally administered programme of street cleaning. When plague did strike, of course, there were standard procedures to be followed and these were the subject of proclamations on several occasions during the first half of the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁵ The threat of fire also loomed large in official rhetoric. The city's building regulations, which included provisions to minimize the risk of fire, were among the oldest and most venerable civic ordinances on record, dating from the period when civic authority was first being consolidated in the hands of the new office of the mayoralty. In their enforcement it was the responsibility of the individual aldermen to see that the proper precautions were being taken in each ward. However, threats from other quarters continued to feature in the public discourse of acts and proclamations. For instance, in May, 1525, the Common Council lamented that

afore this tyme and specially nowe of late by casueltie of fyre great hurte hath comen and fallen vpon dyuerse houses within this cite adioynnyng to the watersyde of Thamise, by reason that suche personses as vsen to bryng and convey by water to this cite hay and straw to be solde, haue layed and cowched [the same hay] within certeyn houses by the watersyde there to abyde the sale therof, to the great damage and periell of the neyghbours there dwelling.¹⁰⁶

It was enacted, therefore, that no hay should be stored in bulk within the city, but be sold from out of individual boats instead. The same concern for the spread of fire to 'neighbours' motivated other restrictions, such as the ban on melting wax or tallow within the city, 'for perell of ffyre,' and the provision of a certain number of horses to be kept on hand to help with 'what so euer nede the cite hath' should any fire occur.¹⁰⁷ Another threat liable to spread from house to house, if left unchecked, was conflict between neighbours. As noted in previous chapters, the ideal of amity among neighbours was promoted by the civic authorities through the careful coordination of bonfires and celebrations of neighbourhood. At the same time, those who disrupted the harmony of a local community were liable to do penance and be publicly paraded. When Joan Irysshe, Alice Adderton and Katherine Aleyn carried 'toven distaffes' on procession in March, 1522, they did so 'in signe & token' of being 'comen scoldes', 'to the great anoyauns of all ther neyghbours'.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, running bawdy houses was not just a sin against god but a threat to the values of a local community and its peaceful co-existence. Five women given sentences of public punishment in June,

¹⁰⁴ Jour. 11, f. 204v.

¹⁰⁵ Jour. 11, ff. 346v-7r; Jour. 12, f. 135v; Jour. 13, f. 184v; Jour. 14, ff. 17v, 198r.

¹⁰⁶ Jour. 12, f. 335r.

¹⁰⁷ Jour. 11, f. 86v.

¹⁰⁸ Jour. 12, f. 169r.

1529, were condemned for ‘continually vsyng thabhomyable custume of the fowle & detestable synne of lechery & bawdry, to the gret dysplesure of almyghty godd and to the gret noysaunce of their neighbors’.¹⁰⁹

Threats of filth, fire, noise and conflict likewise featured in petitions and were effective in spurring the authorities to act on particular local issues. Of course, the wardmote was the usual forum for bringing such grievances to the attention of the authorities, and the presentment of the wardmote inquest, read out in the presence of every householder of the ward both free and foreign, was in many ways a petition to the alderman for the assistance of his good lordship in solving local urban problems. In exactly the same fashion, people brought their petitions to the Common Council or Court of Aldermen with the reasonable expectation of receiving assistance. For instance, when a group of inhabitants wanted a new house of easement on London Bridge, they complained to the mayor and aldermen that ordure was currently piling up in the open street. When John Maynard wanted a laneway by Moorfields cleaned up, he cited the need for ‘avoydyng of many fylthy ayres’. In January, 1537, the inhabitants of Farringdon Without put in a petition against various ‘hurtyng’ done to the Fleet ditch ‘by castyng yn of rubysshe, rysshes & other thynges’, and they proposed that every householder fronting the ditch bear the cost of dredging the section along their land.¹¹⁰ Others appealed to the threat of fire and the need to contain a blaze before its spread became unstoppable. For example, when the house where John Atkynson lived was lost in a fire that broke out on the Bridge in December, 1503, he petitioned the Common Council to vouchsafe him a lease to one of the properties being rebuilt. He especially deserved this not only because of the ‘grete hurt, extreme losse and vtter vndoing of the same your orator,’ but because of his role in preventing widespread destruction, forasmuch as ‘he taketh god to witnessse [that] assoone as he had vnderstandyng therof he did the best of his power, his lyfe saved, to quenche and repressse the violence thereof,’ which would otherwise have been ‘to the grete feare and comon hurt of this citie’.¹¹¹

Noise and disturbance were also used to bring issues to the attention of the authorities. For instance, in February, 1543, a group of fishermen, hoping to disadvantage their smaller competitors, petitioned for the ‘noisy’ business of fishing to be banned on Sundays, because it was much ‘to the dysturbyn of the dyuine servyce sayed & songe in menyne & dyuerse parysshe churches standing nere vnto the sayd Theamys’.¹¹² Likewise, groups of inhabitants called on the authorities for assistance in dealing with those they claimed were neighbourhood troublemakers. In a sitting of the Court of Aldermen in June, 1530, it was

¹⁰⁹ Jour. 13, f. 143v.

¹¹⁰ Rep. 10, ff. 175v, 88r; Rep. 9, f. 233v.

¹¹¹ Jour. 10, f. 301r-v.

¹¹² Rep. 10, f. 307r.

recorded that ‘the inhabitantes of saynt Sepulchres without Newagte by iij seuerall petitions complayned vpon Richard Shaklok’, claiming ‘that the sayd Shaklok ys a comon barratour & a pykker of quarelles & a great disturber of his neighbours’.¹¹³ A particularly serious case came in January, 1538, when a bill by some residents of Portsoken was read to the Court of Aldermen, saying,

plesyth it you to knowe of certeyn mysdemeanyd persones that dwell withyn your libertyes the whyche persones vse to shote with handegonnes the whyche have dyuerse tymes put the kynges liege people yn jeopardy of theyre lyves, that ys to say, Poll the smyth of the Tower Hyll, for shotyng ynto dyuerse mennys gardeyns ... the whych ys great noyaunces to vs that be your neighbours, & it ys contrary to the kynges act, prayeng you to looke vpon it accordyng to your othes for savegarde of the kinges liege people.¹¹⁴

Because the civic government made regular pronouncements on the mutual obligations which inhabitants owed to each other by virtue of living in the city and proclaimed itself ready to uphold those obligations, petitioners could appropriate the same terms in pursuit of their own ends and did so in good expectation that their appeals would be heeded.

In their legislation and proclamations, the civic authorities turned again and again to key ideas like order, charity, service, honestas and civic-mindedness, evoking them as the principles which guided their political decisions. These values were ideological tools which valorized obedience, demonized confrontation, and provided moral credibility to inequality as a mutually beneficial partnership; they represented honour and success as the just reward of hard work and moral virtue, conceding a measure of dignity to all those who thus conformed; and they promoted the benefits of citizenship while making the fulfilment of its obligations the ultimate sign of worth and belonging. However, these were also values which, broadly conceived, both governors and governed shared in common. In appealing to these ideas, the civic government represented its actions as founded upon the values held by those they governed, and hence to be governing by consent.

At the same time, the importance of upholding these ideas made it difficult to act contrary to them. Petitioners were therefore able to mobilize the same ideas and turn them to achieving their own individual ends. This was double-edged. On the one hand, to adopt the guise of obedience, humility or dutifulness was indeed to conform to the dominant and ideologically-loaded discourse of the elite. But on the other, such conformity did not imply actual acceptance. Instead, it showed that subordinate groups and individuals were aware of their own interests, were active in pursuit of them, and able in fact to achieve some of them given

¹¹³ Rep. 10, f. 107r.

¹¹⁴ Rep. 10, f. 13r.

the right circumstances. Indeed, as the following chapters will argue, a widespread culture of inverting and subverting authority would suggest that conformity was but one strategy among others in contesting such control. Moreover, in specifically appropriating the same terms employed in official political communication, petitioners reveal an awareness on their own part that power was transformed into legitimate authority by and through those acts of communication. The discourse of reciprocity and mutual obligation which so characterized the city, especially because of the interdependence of life in urban space, was a key battleground in the contest over power. This awareness of authority as a construct meant that the civic government had to work all the harder to sustain belief in its legitimacy and maintain the status quo. Popular appropriation of official discourse was therefore an integral element of the city's political culture.

CHAPTER 7 LIBELS AND INVERSION

While the majority of inhabitants in early Tudor London were formally excluded from power, they were capable of turning the discourses of official acts and proclamations to their own advantage. This illustrates the agency they could exercise and an awareness that power rested to some extent in the performances of political communication. It also suggests that conformity to elite expectations did not imply an acceptance of the status quo but could be a calculated strategy in pursuit of one's interests. On the basis of these observations, the present chapter considers the expression of more direct dissent in the early Tudor city. Such dissent was often expressed through attacks upon the official modes of political communication, especially by inverting them so as to make the civic government the recipient, rather than deliverer, of the message. These attacks also engaged with the spatial dimension of official communication. Both of these facts can be clearly seen in the way that seditious libels were an inversion of the posting of official bills. Their power to communicate resistance lay as much in their inversion of an official mode as it did in their content, and they partly achieved this by appropriating the spaces and places associated with official communication. Moreover, the meanings associated with particular places often contributed to the particular message which a libel sought to express. In this way, acts of political communication and their spatial dimension were important to how people contested authority.

As noted in chapter two, historians have shown that libels were not just idle sniping, but a meaningful way to express political opinions and assert pressure.¹ While many took the form of doggerel verse or crude threats, they were collected by members of the elite and evidently considered to be important. They had the power to make and influence the reputations of public figures, and the individuals concerned clearly acknowledged this in their concern to combat libellers. In fact, in late medieval and early modern England, reputation was an objective reality for which one was personally responsible – 'common fame' was a legal fact and legitimate grounds for indictment. Indeed, as Wendy Scase has argued, libellers sometimes specifically went about to create such negative fame with the legal context in mind.² In many instances, libels show a sophisticated understanding of contemporary political issues and were capable of expressing complex messages.

The posting of seditious material as a practice in London has received some attention. For instance, Alistair Bellany has investigated the use of libels to undermine and appropriate the

¹ See references above, p. 23 n. 26, and the recent historiographical review, A. Bellany, 'Railing rhymes revisited: libels, scandals and early Stuart politics,' *History Compass* 5:4 (2007), pp. 1136-79.

² W. Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England, 1272-1553* (Oxford, 2007), Ch. 1.

messages of public rituals in early Stuart London, and in doing so he has commented on how particular sites could add meaning to particular libels.³ The mental map of the city and the associations of its sites, however, are a secondary aspect of the process he helps bring to light. By contrast, Andrew Gordon has argued that libels in late Elizabethan London were inherently spatial and that part of their power lay in the appropriation of the city's carefully governed urban space.⁴ But as the present chapter seeks to show, the power of such actions lay more precisely in the way they appropriated the specific places occupied by official political communication, not just urban space in general.⁵ That is, expressing dissent in early Tudor London took place through the inversion of official modes of communication, and this had an important spatial dimension.

Both governors and governed were aware that the modes of political communication were important to the enactment of authority, and the civic government was particularly sensitive to the appropriation of official modes of communication by others. The Church's concern to monopolize preaching provides a useful analogy. For instance, during the tumultuous years of the early Reformation, a system of licensed preaching was introduced to distinguish the 'official' voice of the Church from the competing interpretations of the multitude. Likewise, silence was the first weapon against the unorthodox. When Robert Dycenson clothworker was sent to Newgate in 1546, being 'a pestilent heretic and rank sacramentary' who denied transubstantiation, it was additionally ordered that he was 'saufely to be kepte aparte from the other prisoners' lest he infect them with his erroneous opinions.⁶ However, even perfectly orthodox sentiments were problematic if someone took it upon themselves to speak of the scriptures within an official or authorized space. In July, 1549, a cordwainer was arrested on the spot by an alderman's deputy for 'redying & expounyng of holy scripture', because he was doing so in St Paul's church on a Sunday.⁷ By addressing a crowd in the spaces of St Paul's Cathedral, he threatened to appropriate the Church's official mode of communication, and was duly sent to ward.

The civic government had always been concerned for punishing those who counterfeited the symbols of authority. Forgery, impersonation and pretence had long been considered serious crimes. Christopher Squire haberdasher was punished in June, 1546, for 'false

³ A. Bellany, 'Libels in action: ritual, subversion and the English literary underground, 1603-42,' in Harris (ed.), *Politics of the Excluded* (2001), pp. 99-124.

⁴ A. Gordon, 'The act of libel: conscripting civic space in early modern England,' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32:2 (2002), pp. 375-97.

⁵ For a similar argument in the context of England's provincial towns, see A. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2000), p. 316.

⁶ Rep. 11, f. 300r.

⁷ Rep. 12, f. 117v.

forgyng & counterfeatyng of a letter dyrectyd vnto master Lok alderman in the name of Sir Thomas Clere knyght', just as Laurence Neuport was punished back in 1412 for forging 'a bull of dispensation, with a seal of lead, resembling the seal of the most Holy Father in Christ'.⁸ Symbols of public office were often the targets of counterfeit. In May, 1532, for instance, two men were found to have 'falsely forged and counterfetyd certeyn wrytynges in the name of my lorde mayr'.⁹ Likewise, in November, 1547, Thomas Young was convicted of 'counterfeityng hymselfe, stonyng in the hyghweys aboute this cytie, to be a purveyour for the kynges maiestie,' sometimes by 'forgyng of false tokyns & messages' and other times by producing a box in which he pretended to have a commission, showing it forth only 'to them that he perceyveth to be unlearned'.¹⁰

But such pretence was simply a matter of fraud for private gain. It did not threaten to subvert the established order in the same way that one could by appropriating a channel of official communication, where the crime lay as much in the usurpation of the authorized mode as in the words or damage of the act itself. Elizabeth Chekyn, a prostitute convicted of selling her services to the city's priests, was simply insulting the authorities and had nothing else to gain when she made a mocking performance of a priestly procession in September, 1516. Earlier that month she had been 'taken in bed' with Sir William Lewas priest, where she was found 'lying between the seyde Lewes & another preste'.¹¹ At her interrogation she insisted that Lewas had already 'had to do with her ii times' before, but there is no evidence that he or the other priest received any public penance. Perhaps it was a sense of the injustice of this that then encouraged Elizabeth to dress herself up in ecclesiastical robes and walk through the city streets, knowing that this mocking performance of a priestly procession was the best way to indict her judges' double standards – what William Painter would call the elite's tendency 'to decke and clothe vice with the holy garment of vertue, and to call that Curtesie and Civilitie whiche is manifest whooredom'.¹² Indeed, the Court of Aldermen reacted with horror when this 'comen harlott and strumpet' was found 'walkyng by the stretes of this citie in a preestes array & clothyng in rebuke and reproche of the Ordre of Presthod, asmoche as in her is'.¹³ Her priestly attire was a deliberate act of defiance with a pointed message, which she communicated by inverting one of the city's key ritual performances.

Indeed, when people wanted to contest authority, they often began by appropriating or inverting an authorized mode of political communication. Written precepts, for example,

⁸ Rep. 11, f. 292v; *Memorials*, p. 583.

⁹ Rep. 8, f. 228r.

¹⁰ Rep. 11, f. 388r-v.

¹¹ Rep. 3, f. 103v; on this episode, see further Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 77-8.

¹² William Painter, *The second tome of the palace of pleasure* (1567), p. 202.

¹³ Jour. 11, f. 264v.

were an essential part of the civic government's daily operation, delivering the lord mayor's executive orders to the aldermen, or the sheriffs' instructions to civic officers and other private individuals. These documents sometimes found themselves at the centre of larger conflicts. For instance, the minutes of the Court of Aldermen on October 24th, 1515, relate that:

At this court camme William Seynt oon of the shireffes sergeautes & shewed that a precept was directed to hym from his master to sumon & warn William Gardener grocer, which with diuerse other was empanellyd in a jury betwen ij parties in a plee of land, to appere before my lord mayr in the Court of Husteng vppon Tewesday last passyd for the same, wheruppon on Monday last passyd the seyd sergeaunt camme to the hous of the seyd William Gardener & shewed hym his precept & prayed hym then & ther to appere in savyng of his issues, and then the seyd Gardener toke the panell & precept & with penne & ynk blotted & strake oute his name.

This, as Gardener went on to explain, was his way of saying that 'he wold not apper neyther for mayr or sheryff'.¹⁴ In this instance, the defacement of the sheriff's precept was the defacement of his authority – a way of communicating not just disobedience but a more explicit challenge to authority. At other times, people actually appropriated the medium of the precept itself for their own purposes, rather than defacing one directed to them. One disgruntled individual actually drew up his own message in a written note and had it delivered to the Lord Mayor. As the mayor later complained, the message

was put into my handes as I came this forenone from the Cessions, by one that named himself servant to the right honorable my Lord Admirall, which I receaved thinking it had ben a lettre, & when I came home, finding it to be a libell & looking for the partie that browght it, he was not to be found.¹⁵

In this brazen rebuke to the mayor, the medium of his own political communication was usurped and reversed in order to deliver a very different, though equally political, message. Such reversals briefly illuminate the power to articulate roles and relationships which was always implicit in the commission and delivery of written precepts. It was through the performance of such communications that the mayor's (normally uncontested) authority was articulated on a daily basis.

Proclamations were another medium of political communication which people tried to appropriate when contesting authority. In March 1513, John Wymerk fuller claimed that he had written out a new ordinance for the city and given it to the mayor, demanding that it be enacted by proclamation. As Richard Garnam skinner subsequently informed the Court, John had also issued threats against the mayor, saying 'if he do it not to be proclamed

¹⁴ Rep. 3, f. 54r.

¹⁵ *Calendar of the Manuscripts ... at Hatfield House* (London, 1883-1976), xi, 57, no. 135.

shortely he shall be pulled owt of his house & his hedde shall be strekyn of.¹⁶ There was obviously a particular issue in contention, but John was also concerned for the way it would be enacted – it had to be by proclamation. He apparently thought of this as the key to transforming his oppositional views into legitimate practice. In fact, some people went even further, taking matters into their own hands and actually usurping the act of proclamation. In April 1513, Thomas Clare shoemaker went so far as to carry out a proclamation himself about the city and, having appropriated the civic government's own medium of communication, soon found himself imprisoned by the Court of Aldermen.¹⁷

Like written precepts which could be defaced or transmitted in reverse, so the written notices which the government posted about the city could be sites for contesting authority. For instance, in September 1514, the Innholders were aggrieved at the contribution which was demanded of them at the great feast to be held for the inauguration of the shrieval term on Michaelmas day that year. The Innholders' role at the feast had been publicly announced and was detailed in a bill posted amongst others on display at the Guildhall. In expressing their grievance at what was demanded of them, a group of Innholders conspired to have Thomas Cardyff deface the bill and cross out the part where the name of their company appeared. Upon discovery of the deed, the aldermen were incensed. Not only were three of the company's wardens bound in recognizance to obey the Court, but they were ordered to appear at every subsequent session of the Court until further notice.¹⁸ The court took several weeks before assessing a fine upon their company, which they reduced only once satisfied with 'their humble submission' upon the occasion of each appearance.¹⁹

Alongside verbal proclamations, the posting of public notices was an indispensable part of the government's political communication. Conscious of their importance to the enactment of authority, the civic government took care to police the sites where such things were accustomed to be set up. As seen in the above example of defacement by the Innholders, this policing was not foolproof. But during times of political stress this policing could be specifically heightened to ensure that the official channels of political communication were not intruded upon. Such was the case in the tense weeks of October, 1549, as the city waited for the confrontation between the duke of Somerset and the earl of Warwick to play itself out. At this moment, when the legitimacy of the Lord Protector's authority was being challenged, the civic government went about to protect its own, and ordered that

euery of my masters the aldermen, where eny comen proclamacions are usually
accustomyd to be set vp, shall this presente day apoynt by hymself ij discrete

¹⁶ Rep. 2, f. 155v.

¹⁷ Rep. 2, f. 156v.

¹⁸ Rep. 2, f. 186v.

¹⁹ Rep. 2, ff. 188v, 189r, 191v, 192v, 194r, 195v.

men of the Comen Counsell of his warde to survey & loke that the proclamacions that are & shalbe set forthe & fixed vpon the postes & places accustomed within their seuerall wardes be suffryd to stonde styll and to apprehende those persones that shall go about to take downe eny of the seyd proclamacions.²⁰

Of course, the authorities were concerned not only that official notices might be torn down or defaced, but also that these sites of political communication might be used by others for their own purposes. In March, 1547, it was ordered that the bealdes of each ward take responsibility for patrolling the public posts each week, and in particular ‘to pull downe vpon Sundayes in the mornyng all suche bylles of interludes as the comen players of the same interludes shall cause to be affyxed or sett vp vpon eny post’.²¹ In fact, the policing of public notices had long been a concern of the civic government. In April 1516, two men were reprimanded because they had ‘set up a bill’ soliciting participants for a lottery. The following year, another man was similarly told to take down a banner which he had set up without licence of the mayor, and was threatened with disfranchisement, which suggests how seriously the authorities regarded the issue.²²

As previous chapters have shown, punishments in the streets of the city were another way that the civic government was able to make representations about its own authority and the nature of the urban community. The nature of such civic rituals as a medium of communication is underscored by the way that both spectators and participants sometimes sought to subvert the authorized meanings of the performance. Sometimes the authorities were able to contain the potential disturbance to the authorized script by acting quickly. In January 1557, a woman was making a penitential procession, sitting in a cart being drawn through the streets, when a serving man interrupted the procession by lifting her out of the cart and trying to carry her away. But quick action was taken by whoever was overseeing the punishment. Not only was the woman returned to the cart, but a summary punishment was devised for the serving man, who was bound to the tail of the same cart and whipped along behind it for the remainder of the journey.²³ The message of penitence before the offended community remained intact and was further strengthened by the summary punishment carried out on its behalf by the quick-thinking officer.

On other occasions, however, people were more successful in subverting the messages which such rituals were intended to communicate. For instance, in January 1567, the wife of one Symson, a tinker in Southwark, was among a group of women who publicly insulted Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London, on account of his acquiescence in the vestiarian

²⁰ Rep. 12, f. 153r.

²¹ Rep. 11, f. 339v.

²² Rep. 3, ff. 78v, 128r-v.

²³ *Machyn*, p. 123.

controversy the previous year.²⁴ She was ordered to do an hour's penance 'uppon two laddars lyke a cuckengstole', but far from expressing repentance she rejoiced in her punishment as a suffering in the name of truth. Moreover, she was encouraged by the watching crowd, for

lyke wyse the beholdars of the same dyd myche rejoyce ther in and anymatyd the lewde woman to rejoyce and prayse the Lorde for that He had made hir worthy to soffer persecution for ryghywysnes, and for the truths sake (as they said) and for crienge owt a gaynst supersticion as the[y] termed it.²⁵

Precepts, proclamations, public notices, processions and public punishments were all modes of political communication between governors and governed where authority was not only put into practice but also re-presented and reinforced. It was therefore here that people chose to express dissent and contest that authority.

In the early Tudor period, the conflicts of the Reformation were often the most visible flashpoints between governors and governed, and much popular dissent was concerned with religious matters, whether in attacks upon, or defense of, traditional religion. However, the issue of religious change was very much bound up with civic policy, and theological protest was often closely intertwined with resistance to the secular authorities. For example, in January 1538, a 'slanderous bill' was discovered in London which attacked the entire hierarchy of the city's secular powers – 'justices, serjeants, coroners, mayor, aldermen, shreves, common council [and] wardmote inquests' – and denounced them all as 'high heretics'.²⁶ Indeed, it was often the particular stance taken by the civic government at a given time that individuals were concerned for, and such acts were squarely directed towards the city authorities. For example, when Giles Strother wanted to make a daring protest against continued tolerance for the mass in July, 1547, he chose to do so in the chapel where the mayor and aldermen attended its performance as part of their official public duties. As Elizabeth Hart testified,

she sawe Gyles Strother mercer tere thre leves out of a mas boke lying in the Guyldhall Chappell, wherof he rent ij leves by & by into small peces & the thirde he toke away with hym, and this he dyd evyn att the tyme of the leuacion of the sacrament of the alter wherunto he dyd no maner of honor or reuerence.²⁷

Unhappy with the city's official attitude to the mass, Giles chose to subvert the ritual by showing disrespect during its culminating moment, and he did so in the chapel of the civic

²⁴ P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), pp. 74-83.

²⁵ 'Historical Memoranda of John Stowe', in *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gairdner (Camden Society, New Series 28, 1880), p. 140.

²⁶ Rep. 10, f. 16v.

²⁷ Rep. 11, f. 362r.

government. His strategy was also clearly an attack on the nature of the mass as a performance communicating a particular text. His failure to do ‘honour or reverence’ at the elevation was not unique, for others typically showed a ‘wretched & lewde demeanour towards the blessed sacrament of the aulter’ when expressing dissent against the mass.²⁸ More radically, however, Giles actually took up a mass book belonging to the chapel and tore pages from it before proceeding to rip them into little pieces, even as the host was raised. In doing so, he specifically attacked the text upon which the ritual was based and the message which it was thought to convey. Furthermore, he took away with him one of the pages which he had torn from the book. As the court record later reveals, Giles had been busy writing ‘an heynous byll of heresyge ageynst the moste blessed sacrament of the alter’, which he had written anonymously and probably intended to distribute around the city’s parishes like an official circular.²⁹ Having subverted the ritual of the mass itself, he further appropriated its role as a means of communication by taking away with him the text of the mass book and producing a counter-text to challenge and replace it.

A consciousness of the importance which official modes of communication had for the exercise of legitimate power made them key sites for contesting authority. Ethan Shagan has made a similar observation in his work on the politics of rumour. He notes that when popular challenges to authority gathered momentum and left the relative safety of rumour to find more concrete expression, they began by ‘co-opting’ the media of official communication. As he explains,

this was especially true of nailing up bills in public places, a practice which both evoked the power of the written word and mimicked the government’s own method of spreading information.³⁰

The public posting of bills was only one way that people might mimic ‘the government’s own method of spreading information’, for there were a number of other official modes of communication, as has here been shown. However, a closer study of this particular practice also reveals much about how the official modes of communication, and their appropriation, were bound up with the urban environment and the life of the city in the sixteenth century.

Previous chapters have gone some way to demonstrating that the official modes of political communication were deeply rooted in the city’s spaces. The meanings of places informed the text of ritual actions at the same time as habitual performances configured mental maps

²⁸ Rep. 11, ff. 464v, 495v.

²⁹ Rep. 11, f. 362v.

³⁰ E.H. Shagan, ‘Rumours and popular politics in the reign of Henry VIII,’ in Harris (ed.), *Politics of the Excluded* (2001), p. 36.

of the city. In its tendency to find expression by appropriating and inverting these official modes of communication, popular politics similarly found itself rooted in the city and its spaces. The following section will focus on one of these official modes – the posting of public notices – and the repeated attempts to invert it through the public posting of libels or other seditious material. The relationship between the two further illustrates that the media of political communication were central to asserting, and contesting, authority. Indeed, the public posting or casting of a seditious bill was a powerful means for an anonymous individual or group to express dissent precisely because it appropriated and inverted an official mode of political communication; regardless of the content of its text, the action itself threatened elite control over the channels of communication and reversed the roles of actor and audience. However, libels and seditious bills did this not only by copying the verbal or material format of official bills, but also by usurping the places and spaces reserved for communication by the authorities. As will be seen, seditious bills in early Tudor London were always located in places associated with official political communication.

To begin with, some common sites for seditious bills to be found in sixteenth-century London were the main city markets, with several copies of the same text usually appearing simultaneously in different places. In July 1545, for example, as French fleets harassed the English coast and animosity to conservative clergy continued to fester, ‘ij bills’ were found ‘declaringe in them of certeine preistes and straungers that would fyre the citey in divers places’.³¹ Likewise, in April 1551, as the conflict between Somerset and the Earl of Warwick reignited, a ‘thyrde trayterous bill’ was discovered and forwarded to Westminster along with ‘thother ij like bylles which are alredie delyuered to the seid counsell’.³² But the simultaneous distribution of identical bills in the city’s marketplaces was also true of official notices. For example, in 1512, when a table of ordinances had been drafted by the Court of Aldermen they gave an order for ‘oone of the same tables to be sett vp at Ledenhall, another at the Stockkes in the Poultry & the iij^{de} table to be sette vp at the Greyffeers gate,’ which faced onto Newgate market.³³ This was a regular practice, for on other occasions it was similarly suggested that official notices be produced in triplicate and set up ‘in seuerall places, that is to saye, on at Ledenhall, another at the Stockes and the thyrde at Grayfreres’.³⁴ The sources for the early sixteenth century are notably laconic in their description of seditious bills and exactly where they were placed. However, evidence from later in the century is often more explicit and reveals that multiple copies of a seditious bill were often produced and placed in precisely those places used for official bills – Leadenhall, the Poultry, and Newgate Market.³⁵

³¹ Rep. 11, f. 215r.

³² Rep. 12, f. 327r.

³³ Rep. 2, f. 127v.

³⁴ Rep. 2, f. 37r.

³⁵ *Calendar of the Manuscripts ... at Hatfield House*, xi. 132, no. 300.

Certainly these were places of public congregation where bills would be readily found and read, but the choice of location was not primarily dictated by concern for dissemination among the city's inhabitants. If that had been the priority, bills would not have been posted in places where they were likely to be detected by those in authority and swiftly removed from public view. Instead, the choice of location was a statement directed to the authorities themselves, by appropriating the same places used for official notices.

Church doors were another likely site for libels and seditious bills, particularly those criticizing the city's religious policies. There was already, of course, a long tradition of nailing seditious bills to the doors of St Paul's Cathedral. An anti-monastic tract had been posted there in 1387 and a libel against the Archbishop of York in 1388, just as the *Lollards' Twelve Conclusions* appeared there in 1395, as well as verse satires in a similar vein that same year.³⁶ The practice equally continued in the early sixteenth century. For instance, in the heady days of 1548, a number of 'railing bills' were set up there which denounced the consecrated wafer of the mass as 'Jack of the box', 'the sacrament of the halter', and 'round Robin'.³⁷ However, it must be emphasized that church doors were also among the most regular places for the posting of official bills; while chroniclers typically note the appearance of an outrageous libel on a church door as a matter of note, the everyday use of the same space for official texts is simply taken for granted. The role of the church door as a place of public announcement had long been central to local parish life in London, and it was here that the public part of every marriage ceremony was performed. Moreover, the door itself also acted as a kind of public notice board for official communications. For example, when an apparitor was serving a summons to the church courts, manuals of canon law stipulated that the summons be posted upon the door of the parish church if the recipient could not be found in person.³⁸ Libels set up in such a place therefore inverted the normal process of communication, calling the magistrates to justice rather than the other way around.

The role of the church door in the legal process of the church courts was clearly the context for the posting of seditious bills and libels on several occasions in early Tudor London. For instance, in early 1546, Dr Crome had recently preached against the real presence in a sermon at the Mercers' Chapel. When the authorities found out, Crome was brought before the Bishop of London and sentenced to do penance at Paul's Cross. But his supporters refused to be silent; in May that year the mayor reported to the Council that 'a lewde bil' had been 'set upp lately uppon a church doore in London', attacking those who had made

³⁶ *Thomæ Walsingham... Historia anglicana*, ed. H.T. Riley, 2 vols (London, 1863-64), ii. 158, 216; *Jobannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneфорde... Chronica et Annales*, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1866), pp. 174, 182-3; Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, pp. 79-80, 87-94, 97.

³⁷ *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. S. Cattle & G. Townsend, 8 vols (London, 1837-41), v. 523.

³⁸ O.J. Reichel, *A Complete Manual of Canon Law* (London, 1896), p. 272.

depositions in the court against Crome. 'Other lewde bokes and writenges ...which medle further in thies matiers' were also circulating, but criticism of such false depositions was necessarily best expressed by a bill upon a church door.³⁹ However, the nature of seditious posting upon church doors as an inversion of official communication is further seen in an episode from 1521. On May 12 that year, Cardinal Wolsey had presided over a spectacular performance in Paul's Churchyard before a crowd of 30,000 spectators at which the books of Martin Luther were cast into a bonfire and the cardinal himself pronounced the sentence of excommunication upon him. Written copies of the judgment were posted upon the doors of St Paul's. Meanwhile, the following day, the Duke of Buckingham was tried at Westminster and led back to the Tower on foot through the city of London, with the axe turned towards him in token of his condemnation for treason, and the morning after it was found that:

Above the two placards at the doors of the Church, excommunicating Luther and his works in the name of the Cardinal, the following words were added in some unknown hand; namely, over one, 'Bulla bullæ ambæ amicullæ,' and over the other, 'Araine ante tubam'.⁴⁰

After the Duke of Buckingham's execution it was reported that 'his death is universally lamented in London'. In popular verses circulating in the city, Buckingham's downfall was directly attributed to Wolsey's malice, and other seditious bills were set up against the cardinal deriding him as the 'son of a butcher'.⁴¹ But out of all of this Wolsey was most incensed by the libel placed upon his own official bills which, according to the Venetian ambassador, 'greatly displeased the Cardinal, and, from what I understand, he has determined to excommunicate the writer, although he knows not who the author is'.⁴² Not only did this anonymous individual deface the official act of communication, he turned the message into a condemnation of Wolsey's pride and usurped authority. The text of the libel, 'By a bull, both bulls are made friends,' suggests that the condemnation of Luther and Buckingham had the same source – Wolsey's usurped authority, which derived partly from the Pope's bulls, one of which had just 'arrived from Rome giving greater authority to the Legate Cardinal Wolsey than he had previously',⁴³ and his own ambitious pride, for now 'the copper horn goes before the trumpet'. The choice of Latin for this squib was designed to mirror the language of the official text which it played upon.

Civic spaces associated with official acts of communication were also powerful targets for the posting of seditious material. For instance, as has been noted, it was at the Cross in

³⁹ *State Papers ... [of] Henry the Eighth*, 11 vols (London, 1830-52), i. 846.

⁴⁰ *CSPV*, iii. 208, 210, 213.

⁴¹ *CSPV*, iii. 213; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 154.

⁴² *CSPV*, iii. 213.

⁴³ *CSPV*, iii. 210.

Cheapside that the mayor and aldermen were accustomed to receive monarchs passing through the city, and where they usually made protestations of loyalty in a speech given by 'the mouth of the Recorder'.⁴⁴ On occasion the civic authorities had even chosen this as the place to publicly post up royal letters calling upon that loyalty.⁴⁵ Because of these associations, William Collyngbourne's attack upon the royal ministers of Richard III's falling regime in 1484 gained extra force by being 'fastenyd upon the Crosse in Chepe', where it decried that 'the catt, the ratt and Lovell owyr dogge ruly n all Engeland undyr an hogge'.⁴⁶ Likewise, in April 1554, those out early in Cheapside were met by the sight of a dead cat hanging upon the gallows beside the Cross where rebels of Wyatt's rebellion had lately been hanged. Although lacking the text of a libel like Collyngbourne's, this had a complex message to communicate, for the cat was dressed in 'a clothe lyke a vestment of the priest at masse with a crosse on it afore and another behinde', while spectators also found 'the crowne of the catt shorne, a peece of paper lyke a singinge cake putt betwene the forefeete'.⁴⁷ In this dark parody of the mass, symbolic execution had been carried out upon a dehumanized Catholic priesthood which was pictured as feral and even diabolical, emphasizing its separation from, and threat to, the community. Further, by being hung upon the gallows in Cheap, on which Wyatt's rebels had just been hanged, the executed cat became a vision of future retribution for the quelling of the rebellion. It both justified the past uprising in religious, rather than populist, terms and threatened further action. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, by choosing the gallows which stood by the Great Cross, the action appropriated the site where the City was accustomed to present itself to the Crown on ritual occasions. On this occasion, however, the 'city's voice' was making protestations to the Crown of an entirely different kind.

The city's pulpits were also places for the voice of authority, and both ministry and magistracy were liable to come under attack here. For instance, radical divines, calling for the stripping of the altars with the support of Protestant mayors, soon found bills cast into the pulpits from which they preached.⁴⁸ Moreover, like the cat upon the gallows in Cheapside, these libellous attacks were sometimes symbolic rather than textual, yet always with a clear message directed to the authorities. For instance, in early April, 1559, the mayor and aldermen went to attend a Paul's Cross sermon due to be given by Thomas Sampson, recently returned from exile, as part of a campaign to discredit opposition to the Supremacy

⁴⁴ e.g. Wriothesley, i. 12, 19, 182; and see further p. 88 ff. above.

⁴⁵ *A Chronicle of London, 1089-1483*, ed. N.H. Nicolas & E. Tyrrell (London, 1827), p. 50.

⁴⁶ *Great Chronicle*, p. 236.

⁴⁷ Wriothesley, *Chronicle of London*, ii. 114; Rep. 13, f. 147r; Jour. 16, f. 285v; *Machynn*, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁸ *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation*, ed. J.G. Nichols (Camden Society, 77, 1859), p. 158.

and Uniformity bills which were then being hotly debated.⁴⁹ However, ‘when the Lord Mayre and Aldermen came to their places in Paules Church-yarde, the pulpitt dore was locked,’ and after the mayor had ‘sent for a smyth to open the pullpett dore’ they found it ‘verie vile arayde within with ordure and fylth’.⁵⁰ This was not simply a crude act committed by coarse individuals, but a pointed political message – Paul’s Cross, which ought to be the city’s mouth of virtue, had become instead a source of defilement. In fact, this was not an isolated incident but was a strategy employed elsewhere to the same effect. In almost identical fashion, criticism of the bishop of Peterborough was expressed by defiling the place from which he gave his judgments. His consistory court, ‘scituate within the parish church of All Saints in Northampton, being a place used for publique administracion of justice in causes ecclesiastical within that dioces,’ was targeted by dissidents who ‘did in most obscene, beastly and filthie manner, with their ordure and excrementes of nature, defile the table standing in the middest of the said consistorie, about which the Judge and other officials of the said court doe use to sitt’. As Andrew McRae has argued, this act sought to express the extent to which the judges, whose voices took on authority in the ritual space of the court room, were themselves defiled and a threat to the spiritual health of the community.⁵¹

In addition to the places for posting and pronouncing official documents and texts in the course of daily government, other spaces held authoritative texts of a more permanent character. In St Paul’s Cathedral, for instance, there stood upon the walls of the north transept a chronicle of major events in the city’s history.⁵² Every parish church had a copy of Pope Nicholas’s bull on display, which set out the rate of tithes and oblations payable in the city of London.⁵³ But there were also other things upon the walls and in the windows, those images or ‘poor men’s books’, which had long been intended to communicate official teachings to the people. Across the course of the Reformation, these spaces and the nature of their communication became increasingly controversial, especially when they were sites for the performance of civic authority. For instance, as early as August, 1531, a seditious tract was found ‘parieti affixit Paulinis in edibus’, i.e. fixed to a wall of the Dean and Chapter’s buildings at St Paul’s. The pamphlet was circulated and discussed by monks and canons across the country, who were dismayed by the author’s attack upon saints, fasting, and pilgrimages.⁵⁴ But the Chapter of St Paul’s, with its famous cloister of paintings and verses on the medieval theme of *memento mori*, was a natural target for iconoclastic reformers,

⁴⁹ For the context at this time, see M. Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul’s Cross Sermons, 1558-1642* (Oxford, 2011), p. 70.

⁵⁰ Wriothesley, ii. 144.

⁵¹ A. McRae, ‘The verse libel: popular satire in early modern England,’ in D. Cavanagh & T. Kirk, *Subversion and Scurrility: Popular discourse in Europe from 1500 to the present* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 60.

⁵² *Great Chronicle*, xxv.

⁵³ LB. K, f. 273r-v; LB. O, f. 47r.

⁵⁴ *The Letter Book of Robert Joseph*, ed. J.C.H. Aveling & W.A. Pantin (Oxford, 1967), pp. 155-6.

particularly as a site on the route of the Lord Mayor's Day procession. On the other side of the conflict, the new English books which parishes were required to obtain in the 1530s, and the Royal Supremacy they represented, soon became targets for attacks by desperate conservatives. In early 1536, the parish priest of St Leonard Eastcheap confessed to having placed a seditious bill in the books of his church, which pointedly read, in Latin, 'Rex tanquam tyrannus opprimit populum suum'.⁵⁵

For the most part London's inhabitants were critical of the slow pace at which the city's governors advanced the cause of reform. Those who objected to this sometimes took matters into their own hands. In October, 1533, it was lamented by a priest of St Antholin's that 'images byth taken fro ther places and cast owt off the churche as stockys & stonys off no valu & somme wyll pryke them with betkynnys [i.e. bodkins] to se whether the wyll blyde or nay; thes with many other damnable abusions we haue yn London'.⁵⁶ These images, which had served for most Londoners as the official version of their religious texts, were now being directly torn down.

However, such attacks were rarely indiscriminate. Rather, location and context were often crucial to the selection of a target, and they were just as much an attempt to send a message to the civic authorities as they were to destroy a particular religious object. This is clearly seen in the following two cases. First, one of the earliest public acts of popular iconoclasm to be committed in the city was directed, in 1533, against an image of Thomas Becket, the city's popular patron saint and symbol of civic community.⁵⁷ As Sir Thomas More reported in October that year, someone had 'pulled down of late vpon London brydge thimage of the blessed martyr saint Thomas'.⁵⁸ This was undoubtedly the painted signboard of Becket, standing 'over the bridge', outside the chapel upon London Bridge which was dedicated to him.⁵⁹ With increasing moves towards the Royal Supremacy, but long before the official suppression of his cult in 1538, Becket's chapel on the Bridge was already an important battleground for reformers. Significantly, this was the starting point of the pilgrimage trail to Canterbury, and upon their return here people cast 'pilgrim signs' brought from his shrine into the river as an offering to him. To the theologically-minded, the bridge itself was also an allegory of the path 'between heaven and earth', with Becket as protector and intercessor, just as every priest was a 'pontifex', and none more so than the Pope.⁶⁰ The location of this

⁵⁵ *L&P*, x. 113.

⁵⁶ TNA SP 1/79, f. 193r; *L&P*, vi. 1311.

⁵⁷ T. Borenius, 'The murderers of St Thomas Becket in popular tradition', *Folklore* 43:2 (1932), p. 176.

⁵⁸ *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, 15 vols (New Haven, CT, 1963-97), x. 16.

⁵⁹ *London Bridge: Selected accounts and rentals, 1381-1538*, ed. V. Harding & L. Wright (London Record Society, 31, 1995), p. 107.

⁶⁰ B. Watson, T. Brigham & T. Dyson, *London Bridge: 2000 years of a river crossing* (London, 2001), pp. 109-10.

public image gave meaning to what it communicated, and its desecration was a powerful way to reverse the message and separate London from the pilgrimage trail.

That pulling down an image was intended as a way to send a message is clearly illustrated by a second attack upon an image of this same saint. One morning in January, 1559, at a moment of some uncertainty over the direction of the English Church, ‘the image of Thomas Bekett, which stood over the dore of the Mercers Chapell in London toward the street, was fownd broken and cast downe, and a bill sett on the churche dore depravinge the setters up thereof’.⁶¹ Again, the location of the site was important to the target chosen. The Mercers’ Chapel was attached to the dissolved collegiate church belonging to the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon, which had been the centre of Becket’s cult in London before the Reformation.⁶² The altar reputedly stood upon the site of his birth, and the hospital had been founded there by his sister after his death. At the Dissolution, the church was acquired by the Mercers for their own place of corporate worship, with their existing chapel serving as a new entrance to it from Cheapside. The Mercers had long been patrons of the Hospital because they were the city’s leading company and Becket was London’s most famous son.⁶³

Indeed, Becket had come to symbolize London identity, and he appeared on the reverse of the city’s seal until the Reformation as a way ‘to represent the civic community’.⁶⁴ Moreover, it was on the feast day of St Thomas Apostle, his namesake and fellow martyr, and reputedly the day of Becket’s own birth, that the annual wardmotes took place, the one day of the year when all male householders gathered together under a civic aegis.⁶⁵ Moreover, the site of his cult had long been central to civic ritual, which was itself a symbolic representation of the city’s community. The chapel faced onto Cheapside almost opposite the Great Conduit, one of the principal stations on the city’s main thoroughfare, and so provided an important backdrop for pageants staged there. Significantly, the procession of mayor and aldermen in their ceremonial gowns to St Paul’s on holy days had, prior to the Reformation, begun in the church of St Thomas, and even after its dissolution the procession from Guildhall took a circular route so as to pass by the site.⁶⁶ Thus the site and its location in mental maps of urban space was intimately bound up with the city’s civic government and its sense of corporate identity. By setting up a statue of Becket on the façade of their chapel, the Mercers explicitly reconnected their company with the cult of the city’s most famous saint, and asserted the space of their own chapel as a major site for the civic and communal life of the city. In the same way, pulling it down was an attempt to undo this reconfiguration.

⁶¹ Wriothesley, ii. 143.

⁶² Watney, *St Thomas of Acon* (1906).

⁶³ Wriothesley, i. 87; Stow, *Survey*, i. 269.

⁶⁴ Barron, ‘Political culture,’ p. 113.

⁶⁵ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. ‘Thomas Becket’.

⁶⁶ *Liber Albus*, p. 24; Manley, *Literature and Culture*, p. 237.

Moreover, in this episode, the link between vandalizing a street façade and producing a textual statement was made explicit by the added commentary of the libel placed on the church door beneath. In the same way, one might equally observe that the posting of a libel on a site of official communication was analogous to physically pulling down a statue or other symbol of authority.

Before concluding, it is worth discussing one final context in which libels and vandalism had a tendency to be found when attacking the city authorities – the door or façade of a civic official's house. Like other surfaces attacked by libels, the street façade of a civic officer's house was a site reserved for official political information. To begin with, each year the two sheriffs of London and Middlesex were expected to paint their houses a distinctive colour for the term of their office, marking them out in the public mind.⁶⁷ Moreover, movement between the houses of the incoming and outgoing mayors played a crucial role in the symbolic transfer of power between the two men. On the Feast of SS Simon and Jude, the new mayor would take his oath at the Guildhall and assume the mayoral chair. However, his term of office did not properly begin until the following day when he would make his oath before the Barons of the Exchequer. Therefore, following the oath at Guildhall, the ceremonial sword was still borne before the outgoing mayor, 'who led the incoming mayor by the hand...to his house, after which the sword preceded the past mayor as far as his own house.' Finally, following the oath the next day, the procession returning from Westminster ended at the house of the incoming mayor.⁶⁸ Such decorations and symbolic processions marked out a house, and its inhabitants, for special honour throughout the year.

Therefore, because the city's governors used the façades of their houses to make representations about their status, libellers sometimes fixed their bills here in an attempt to subvert the reading of such façades from one of honour to dishonour. In April, 1543, as Convocation sat in London drafting the conservative *King's Book* and the Privy Council interrogated the city's printers and booksellers on the continued circulation of prohibited tracts, someone set up a 'byll on my lorde mayers gate ageynst doctour Wylson & doctour Weston'.⁶⁹ By such means people could dissent from the mayor and aldermen's complicity, or at least collaboration, in the conservative religious reaction. In a different way, but with exactly the same intent of signifying blame, the Keeper of Ludgate gaol dumped the naked body of a dead prisoner at the door of the man's creditor – a way of publicly accusing the

⁶⁷ Wriothesley, i. 171.

⁶⁸ *Liber Albus*, pp. 22-3.

⁶⁹ Rep. 10, f. 322v; *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, ed. J.R. Dasent, 9 vols (London, 1890-1907), i. 107, 117, 120.

creditor of uncharitably keeping a sick debtor in prison, and vividly illustrating the phrase, ‘to lay the blame at one’s door’.⁷⁰

Indeed, within the street façade of a house, the door held a particular significance as a site of representation. For instance, signs upon house doors were important indicators of the relative safety or danger of a particular place. Civic ordinances demanded that special signs be affixed to the doors of infected houses during periods of visitation by the plague. In November, 1547, it was ordered that infected inhabitants ‘shall cause to be fyxed vpon the vttermost post of their strete dore a certain crosse of saynt Anthonye devysed for that purpose there to remain xl dayes after the setting vp therof’.⁷¹ Likewise, the posting of the mayor’s seal upon the door to a house or chamber was considered sufficient to keep its domestic space inviolable. In 1553, provoked by concern for the integrity of an assessment rated upon a leading merchant, a man ‘had all the cheife places in his house sealed and sequestred with my Lord Mayors seale’, until an inventory of all his goods could be personally drawn up by the Recorder and one of the sheriffs.⁷²

Libellous attacks might also find their way under such doors and into a house, though with a different kind of significance. Such bills were not an inversion of public notices, but rather of mayoral precepts and official admonitions. For instance, in March 1517, as tensions grew over aliens and foreigners, the Chamberlain found himself in a controversy over tolls to be paid at city gates. In recording the circumstances at the time, the Court noted ‘the sedicious bill’ he had recently received, but where the scribe had originally described it as being late cast ‘at’ the Chamberlain’s house, his report was corrected to read ‘*into* master Chamberleyns hous’.⁷³ The difference was important, but not because, as Gordon has suggested, a ‘dual violation of the domestic and defensive spheres’ made such libels more threatening.⁷⁴ In reality, the city’s merchants and craftsmen had large open windows deliberately allowing passersby to look in to their workshops. Open windows were the sign of an honest craftsman, while closed windows or those covered by lattice (in the case of non-free craftsmen) indicated an artisan whose work could not be trusted on its own merits.⁷⁵ Indeed, as Lena Orlin’s recent work on privacy in Tudor London has clearly shown, the walls and doors of the domestic sphere were not considered an impermeable barrier between public and private.⁷⁶ Certainly, bills cast into an official’s house could contain threats – when Tunstall was bishop, a ‘letter’ was ‘cast into the palyce’ in which ‘amonge many other

⁷⁰ Rep. 12, f. 293r.

⁷¹ Rep. 11, f. 387r.

⁷² Wriothesley, ii. 92.

⁷³ Rep. 3, f. 137v.

⁷⁴ Gordon, ‘Act of libel,’ p. 388.

⁷⁵ L. Luu, ‘Natural-born versus stranger-born subjects: aliens and their status in Elizabethan London,’ in N. Goose & L. Luu (eds), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Brighton, 2005), p. 64.

⁷⁶ L.C. Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford, 2007).

bragyng words, mete what so euer they were for those heretyke bretherne that made it, were these wordes conteyned: “there wyll onys come a day”.⁷⁷ Yet it was those libels posted on posts, façades and doors, in the view of passersby, which were more subversive, because they appropriated those sites which were implicated in the wider communication of honour and shame, health and disease, and other kinds of status.

* * * * *

This chapter has suggested that challenges to authority often sought to undermine the official media which the government used to communicate its own information, and that the civic authorities were anxious to police people’s access to those media as much possible. It has also demonstrated that the practice of usurping one mode of political communication in particular – the publicly posted bill or notice – had a significant spatial dimension and was rooted in the meanings of the city’s spaces. In this sense, official and unofficial acts of political communication, along with their spatial dimensions, were important aspects of contesting authority in early Tudor London.

⁷⁷ *Complete Works of St Thomas More*, ix. 158.

CHAPTER 8 POPULAR DISCOURSE AND SUBVERSION

Submitting petitions and posting anonymous bills were two ways that ordinary people might express themselves, but perhaps the most regular context for addressing the civic government was face-to-face, either in the courtroom before the mayor and aldermen or when encountering civic officers in the city's streets and markets. Although more prosaic than processions and public punishments, these exchanges and interactions were also an occasion for performances of authority which might posit a distinction between governors and governed. The Inner Chamber at Guildhall in particular was the stage for a courtroom drama in which judges were physically and symbolically separated from those who came before them. Moreover, interaction in and out of the courtroom was constrained by expectations of speech and gesture which demanded that continuous expression be given to this structural difference. However, as previous chapters would suggest, people were still able to turn this situation to their advantage, express dissent, or even challenge the legitimacy of the civic government itself, because the official mode of communication in such interaction, which expected a closely-scripted exchange between superior and subordinate, could be subverted by the forms and strategies of popular discourse. Rebukes on the basis of shared values, a popular idiom undermining elite postures, and challenges to the basic assumptions underlying civic authority could all serve to contest the exercise of power. At the same time, the conduct of these contests can be seen to have had an important spatial dimension. In the early sixteenth century, the civic authorities were highly sensitive to the locations of these interactions, and they actively sought to control the space of the courtroom and prevent the streets from serving as sites for political discourse. In this sense, seditious speech and action in the streets were especially powerful because they posed as subversive alternatives to performances of official communication in the city's courtrooms and the authorized map of political space.

So far this thesis has made much of visual and textual modes of communication, whether in written precepts, public notices and petitions, or the more explicitly ritualized forms of public punishment and procession. By contrast, verbal communication, the speaking of words between individuals, is of course what we think of as the paradigmatic form of communication more generally, and it is only by analogy to this that we understand ritual actions to be a form of communication. Implicit in this view is the assumption that verbal exchange is somehow more direct and unmediated than written, printed or ritual forms of communication, which are structured by and rely on the conventions of textual and visual culture. However, face-to-face confrontation could also be highly structured. Forms of address and expressive gestures were ritualized elements, while speakers conformed to roles

according to the place and audience. In fact, as this chapter will show, even insults can be seen to have conformed to generic patterns and forms. This means that the kind of discourse a speaker adopted was as significant as the content expressed through their language. Just as other modes of communication mediated political information in a way that structured the relationship between governors and governed, so verbal exchange took place on a structured terrain, not a blank slate.

The wider political significance of speech and gesture has increasingly come to the fore as historians become more sensitive to the way that unequal relationships of power are given expression in contests, not just over material resources, but over the concepts by which such inequality is justified.¹ The historian's concern for speech and gesture in early modern London is certainly well-placed, for these things gave everyday expression to the city's social and political relationships, and their proper ordering was taken as indicative of good order more generally. Indeed, we have come to refer to petty crimes as 'misdemeanours' precisely because displaying a disrespectful or mis-'demeanour' towards a figure of authority was symptomatic of all petty offences. In the same way, replacing such mis-demeanour with good demeanour was symbolic of restoring an individual to obedience as a whole.

This can be seen in the events of July 1517, when the mayor brought to an end a long-running dispute which John Atkynson haberdasher had been engaged in with the wardens of his company since at least early 1515. After considerable acrimony on both sides, what the Court ultimately wanted was Atkynson's verbal and gestural submission to the authority of his wardens. The mayor explained his offence to him, saying, 'you haue diuerse & many tymes obstinately & frowardly disobeyed & mysbehaued you to your wardens...and also that you haue had sedicious & vnfytyng wordes to oon of your late wardens.' In expiation of which, the mayor continued, 'I wyll aduise you to be tomorrow at the Haberdasshers Hall afore noon & ther in the presence of suche of my masters & brethren as I shall name & appoynt & other worshipfull & honest persones of the Haberdasshers then to be assembled, & then & there afore theym you shall lowly submytte you to theym ...with other *ordres* & *demanours* as in a wrytyng shalbe reduced & expressyd.'

Indeed, it was specifically by good 'orders' and good 'demeanours' that he was to efface the dis-orders and mis-demeanours of his previous speech and behaviour. It was only through proper speech that he could atone for the 'seditious and unfitting words' spoken to his wardens. He was therefore ordered to kneel before them and publicly say to them:

I, John Atkynson, of my good & fre wyll, knowlegge & sey that I diuerse & many tymes obstinately, frowardly & inobediently haue vsed & disordred me

¹ M.J. Braddick (ed.), *The Politics of Gesture: Historical perspectives* (Oxford, 2009).

otherwise then becamme me agenst you my masters, the master & wardens of the worshipfull company of Haberdashers & also ageynst other my masters & wardens yours predecessours.²

Through these acts of verbal and gestural re-ordering, Atkynson could signify his return to obedience more generally, because his speech was understood to reflect his wider social and political relationships. In the same way, disordered speech and gesture could signify resistance or dissent, and, as the following section will suggest, people often used them to contest the exercise of authority.

When examining instances of insubordination in early Tudor London, what stands out is the remarkable confidence with which individuals, often very humble, seriously insulted the Court to its face, in full knowledge of the possible consequences. They could do so in one of several ways. First, rebukes aimed at individual governors could be used to reject allegations and instead put the mayor and aldermen on trial if elite values could be appropriated to the defendant's cause. Second, open defiance could also be used to good effect because the authorities preferred to secure voluntary submission and were reluctant to use forcible coercion. In many such cases, the language of vulgar insult could be more than mere crudity; often it was part of a popular idiom that helped to cut through the strictures of official political discourse. Thirdly, such manoeuvres were not always just strategies of negotiation with essentially conservative aims, for behind closed doors popular politics could be quite radical, and individuals sometimes brought challenges to the authorities which questioned and subverted the legitimacy of the civic government itself.

In the first instance, as with petitions, people could frame rebukes within the government's own language, pointing either to a failure in the elite's maintenance of its reciprocal obligations or to contraventions of the principles upon which all natural authority was seen to rest. As has been suggested, the civic government relied heavily on representations of itself as guardian of the commonweal. Extravagance and excessive consumption by the city's merchant elite could therefore become a potent theme in popular complaint. In June 1510, for example, John Axe attacked the mayor by describing how 'he wold bryng vC in a mornyng to a brekefast' at his mansion house yet let others starve.³ This accusation may seem to have been calculated only to provoke and inflame the mayor, but such rhetoric could also be used by people to defend their own actions against the Court.

² Rep. 3, f. 151r-v.

³ Rep. 2, f. 90v.

For instance, in December 1507, Thomas Goldsborough poulterer, charged with selling his poultry wares above the prices decreed by the mayor, defended himself against the charge by ‘slaunderously’ saying to the Court ‘that if summ of the aldermen myght haue a swan for xij d. and therby to distroye a poore man, they caryd not.’ He was asserting here that the mayor was keeping prices low so that he and his wealthy brethren could have cheap poultry even if that meant the ruin of an already poor retailer. By contrast, Thomas’s own breach of the official price was motivated by necessity, not greed or profit. In doing so, Thomas appealed to the rhetoric of ‘commonweal’ by which the elite themselves justified their authority, and which demanded that the mayor fix prices with an eye to both consumers and producers. By the same token, such words were still also designed to provoke. Having been called before the Court of Aldermen to face the charge, Thomas had had the opportunity to confess his fault and pay a fine, but instead he chose to challenge his judges, with ‘greate disobedience and sedicious wordes spokun in the presence of a full courte of the maire & aldermen’.⁴ Standing alone in the middle of the court did not stop him, and he called upon the mayor and aldermen to remember their duties.

Another common charge against the authorities was a failure of good lordship. In an episode from September, 1509, Thomas White skinner complained that one of the aldermen was showing partiality in his assignment of jury duties. As the records describe it, Thomas ‘said inobediently and vnreuerently to Stephen Jennyns knyght and maire of London in face of the courte that if he hadde been gud ffrende to hym he hadde not ben chargyd nor sworn in the enquest and jury that was charged between the late kyng and Sir Laurence Ailmer, late maire’.⁵ The cause for his distress is evident, for no one would want to have been a juror in what was one of Empson and Dudley’s most notorious show trials. But Thomas was particularly outraged that although someone else ‘was callyd to the book to haue tain his oithe ... the saide master Jannyns discharged hym and causid the saide Thomas White to be sworn’ instead. A charge of partiality was likely to be taken seriously, because impartial arbitration between citizens was one of an alderman’s most essential duties.

In another case, Thomas Pyerkas skinner may appear to have grossly overstepped the bounds when in July, 1510, he was charged with ‘certeyn opprobrious wordes spoken by hym to master Myrfyn in the Skynners halle, saying that he was a false and a vntrue man’.⁶ Pyerkas was here attacking his reputation for honestas, his name for honest dealing in business and faithful treatment of his neighbours. Certainly, Thomas’s actions were an affront to good order, Myrfyn being not only an alderman but also the master of Thomas’s own company at this time. But the city authorities themselves played a large role in

⁴ Rep. 2, f. 38r.

⁵ Rep. 2, f. 73v.

⁶ Rep. 2, f. 95r.

enforcing the values and behaviours of honestas, and constantly sought to reinforce them as a key aspect of citizenship. Like impartiality, it thus provided a ready rhetoric for criticizing the behaviour of the elite while working within a discourse and set of values which they themselves accepted as legitimate.

Indeed, angry protest could be provoked in the rank and file of a company if their leaders were perceived to have lapsed from the ideal of honestas by failing to keep faith with their fellowship. Such was the case in 1514 when William Bayly was elected to the Court of Aldermen and, being free of the Shermen, was ordered by the aldermen to translate to one of eight more important companies.⁷ Bayly initially tried to resist the Court's order, and appears to have promised his fellow shermen that he would stay faithful to them. According to the deposition given by William Eggerley tailor, 'he herd oon Richard Saunder & oon William Ledys sherman sey that master Bayly dyd swere afore all his company vndesyred & vnbydden that he wold neuer chaunge his copy'.⁸ Indeed, the court later heard from this Ledys himself, who attested 'that he herd master Bayly sey that he wold dye a true Sherman and that he sware to'.⁹ Bayly soon became the target of seditious bills cast in at his door, but he was also 'had in abusyon' in the street, with people 'vnclenly saying [his] name'. As he himself complained to his fellow aldermen, one sherman had been 'pronounsyng hym but a periured man and not oonly that but also [saying] at the same tyme that I am worse then an heretyk in so moche that I chaunged my copy'.¹⁰ His transgression of popular norms made him the object of both threats and promises. John Davy, another sherman, confessed to a conversation with one of Bayly's servants, in which he had said, 'Yf I wyst that he were a Draper, contrary to his othe, I wold he were hangyd, and yf he lakked oon to hang hym I wold hang hym myn own self'. In a more sanguine mood, Davy subsequently offered, 'Let hym kepe his hold and I wyll geue hym xx marcs'.¹¹ People could thus be quite fierce in their criticism of the elite, even to their faces, when they had a legitimate rhetoric with which to do so.

In addition to couching seditious words within a language calculated to remind aldermen of their reciprocal duties as governors, people might also appeal to the wider ideological basis upon which authority in the city was commonly seen to rest. For instance, law and custom were an accepted basis for justifying the existence of hierarchy and the exercise of power, and often it was in these terms that authority was resisted and insults were given. Such a case was occasioned when Thomas Bradbury died in the course of his mayoralty in 1510, and

⁷ Rep. 2, f. 182r.

⁸ Rep. 2, f. 191v.

⁹ Rep. 2, f. 194v.

¹⁰ Rep. 2, f. 187r-v.

¹¹ Rep. 2, f. 190v.

a replacement had to be chosen. Accession to the mayoralty generally followed a set pattern, with the office almost invariably falling to the longest-serving alderman who had already held the shrievalty but not yet the mayoralty. When an incumbent died in office, established practice demanded that his replacement be an alderman who had already served as mayor and hence had the experience to take on the role at short notice. But because this happened infrequently, there was less consensus as to who among the senior aldermen should be ‘put in election’ in such cases. On this particular occasion, George Harward merchant taylor had heard that Sir William Capel was favoured for the role, but he objected to this on various grounds. It was reported by one observer that, at the meeting of congregation on the day of the election, ‘the seid George whanne so euer he herde any man speke of Sir William Capell knyght he seid it was contrary to the lawes and constitucions of this cite that he shuld be in election, for his tyme was not comyn.’ Harward was right in that two aldermen, Sir John Tate and William Remyngton, had been elected to the Court slightly earlier than Capel, and both had served their first mayoralty long before Capel, who had been raised as recently as 1503–4. Another witness, William Louth, reported that during a debate with him ‘the seid George seid it ys shame euery day to breke the lawes and constitucions of this cite,’ to which the deponent replied in kind, ‘there was a gretter breche of the lawes whanne there was a shireff chosen and sworne, and by the meanes and sute of oon of your company ... he was discharged’.¹² Louth was referring here to the controversy over William FitzWilliam, a merchant taylor like Harward, who had secured the shrievalty for himself in 1506 with letters from the king.¹³ Capel was successfully elected in the end, but it is clear that both men were used to drawing on a discourse of law and custom to justify their positions.

The city’s charter was an integral part of this picture and its importance to the everyday language of authority is clearly seen in an episode from July, 1517. To begin with, more than two years before that date, the Court of Alderman had asked the churchwardens of St Martin’s within Ludgate by what title they claimed to possess the small plot of land alongside their parish church, which they currently occupied with a wooden bench. The churchwardens replied that they could show no title to the land, but that ‘tyme oute of mynde yt hath been vsed for persones syttyng in harnes & keypyng the wacches or the gate in tyme of warre, to rest & sytte ther.’ They accepted, however, that the Chamberlain could reclaim it, if he should ‘do the best therwith that he myght to thuse of the cite’.¹⁴ In line with the Court’s characteristic preference for consultation, an alderman and two common councillors were dispatched the following week to discuss the details of re-appropriation

¹² Rep. 2, ff. 87v-87*r.

¹³ Rep. 2, f. 15r; *Great Chronicle*, pp. 332-3.

¹⁴ Rep. 3, f. 10v.

with the local parishioners.¹⁵ The proposed use for the land, however, seems to have occasioned some resistance among the local inhabitants. The city had decided to build a shop and have it leased to one Lupton, but six months later work had not yet begun, and the Court threatened that if the parishioners would not remove their bench, it would be confiscated.¹⁶ This threat proved vain, and a year later the Court sought the support of the ‘best inhabitantes’ of the parish, hoping they could wield their influence to some effect.¹⁷ After another six months the mayor, by now probably approaching despair, sent Roger Wryght to take the bench and enforce the Court’s orders. As the records reveal, he met there with strident resistance.

Wryght’s first strategy was to appeal once more to the ‘best inhabitants’ of the parish, who at some stage appear to have promised their assistance to the Court. Addressing Stephen Pecock, a local notable, he claimed that ‘you & other honest men of the paryssh & master parson seyde that you wold see [the mayor and Chamberlain] discharged agenst hym that maketh sute to haue the benche.’ But Pecock denied this, saying, ‘Let theym take yt down yf they wyll but neyther the mayr nor thaldermen nor chamberleyn shall carye yt away’. According to another witness, this was taken a step further by one of the churchwardens, who ‘sayd vnto the seyde Roger thees wordes, “I wyll aduise the, high the hens or elles thou shall be sent forward,” with many other diuerse & obprobrious wordes & called the seyde Roger knaue for doying of his message.’ With tensions escalating, there also came ‘oon Robert Sonnyff a yong man & swore a grete othe & seyde that not so hardy the mayr nor thaldermen nor the chamberlain to medell with yt, nor noon they shuld take [it] down ther, & made meanes as though he wold haue drawen his dagger to the seyde Roger.’ Faced with such resistance, Roger Wryght at some point tried to assert the mayor’s authority with reference to the Great Charter, but Pecock undermined this claim, saying ‘that the Chamberleyn & the mayr & his brethern marred all & lost the liberties ffor ther ys a poynt in the Chartre that ther shall nothyng be made within the cite to the noysaunce of the Cominaltie.’ Just as the Court of Aldermen so regularly justified their own rulings with reference to the protection of the common weal against nuisance, as defined in the Charter, so local inhabitants could contest civic authority in these terms. Moreover, a local apothecary called Reve gave voice to the popular awareness of how tenuous could be the aldermen’s claims to derive authority for their actions from the Charter. With both audacity and insight, Reve demanded of Roger, ‘What spekest thou of the Chartre? I can shewe eury

¹⁵ Rep. 3, f. 13r.

¹⁶ Rep. 3, f. 44r.

¹⁷ Rep. 3, f. 112v.

article in the Chartre with a wete ffynger & can tell what yt menyth aswell as the mayr & all thaldermen; ye ought to haue no such thyng ado here by the Chartre'.¹⁸

Thus when articulating resistance to authority in the face of their betters, people could offer insults and defiance if they did so in terms which attacked individual behaviour rather than hierarchy or authority itself. In this sense popular resistance to authority was usually conservative. However, the confidence with which people were therefore able to insult the Court, and the tolerance which the aldermen showed to such rebukes, remains remarkable. Indeed, people were amazingly willing to reproach the Court in full knowledge of the possible consequences. For instance, in August 1514, alderman Brugge, in his role as sheriff that year, confronted Roger Preston concerning a barrel of herring. The alleged offence is not recorded, but Brugge clearly intended to confiscate the barrel, for Preston angrily attacked him, saying, 'yf thoue polle other men as thou pollest me thou mayst kepe thy house the better as farre forthe as a barell of heryng cummeth to'.¹⁹ Preston now risked not only the forfeit of his goods, but also the ire of the Court of Aldermen, before whom he was interrogated later that month. But Preston clearly knew that his 'rebukefull and obprobrious wordes' to Brugge, calling him 'extorcioner and poller', had remained within the acceptable language of commonweal, for he felt confident enough to continue, and further provoked the Court when later delivering a pledge of ten pounds. As the records relate it, during a session of the Court 'the seyd Preston brought inne to my lord mayr & my masters thaldermen the seyd x li. in money, then presumptuosly saying thees wordes, "I had neuer such a wrong doon and so boldly born in no land that euer I haue been".²⁰ This episode illustrates not only the confidence with which men might insult the city authorities when on safe ground, but also the effectiveness of such resistance – in the end Preston's fine was entirely remitted and it was agreed that the forfeited barrel of herring would go to the mayor rather than Brugge.²¹

Likewise, many men chose to make a show of resistance to the Court and accept chastisement, rather than capitulate to its demands. Hugh Colyer, baker, was ordered to pay a fine of xxv s. for selling his bread above the mayor's price, but 'bycause the seyd Colyer did pleyne denye so to do he was commyttyd to warde'.²² Robert Fayrthawayt, tailor, went further in January, 1514. He had been engaged in a dispute with one Mone, which the aldermen sought to bring to an end, but when summoned to the arbitration he 'apperid &

¹⁸ Rep. 3, ff. 152r-3r; to read 'with a wet finger' is to be able to interpret a text 'with the utmost ease', *OED*, s.v. 'finger' n., 3B.

¹⁹ Rep. 2, f. 183v.

²⁰ Rep. 2, f. 196v.

²¹ Rep. 2, f. 207r.

²² Rep. 12, f. 198v.

vttterly denyed to be orderid by this court'.²³ He later brought in six gilt goblets with covers as a pledge of xx li. for a fine to be assessed on him for his 'disobediens & vnfyttynge wordes as he afore tyme had commytted & spoken to Sir John Tate, mayr of this cite, in presence & face of this court'. But when the following month his fine was assessed at ten pounds and he was informed of this by the Common Serjeant, he 'obstinately ansueryd & seyde thees wordes, "I wyll go to pryson, kepe all,"'.²⁴ As previous examples have so far suggested, it was not unlikely that Fayrthaway's resistance might actually prove to his advantage. In fact, a week later, his fine was reduced from £10 to the more modest sum of £3 6s. 8d.²⁵

However, the confidence with which some people challenged the Court must be seen in the wider context of civic politics. The city authorities always did their best to represent the civic government as a homogeneous and likeminded group, which made decisions on the basis of consensus and always remained unified under the mayor. For instance, the minutes of the Court's meetings, though themselves kept confidential, only ever record the decisions actually taken and not the debates which ensued or the particular views held by different aldermen. Only rarely was it admitted that a petition had been discussed but 'nothing agreyd therupon', or that, after receiving letters from the Lord Protector, they couldn't agree on 'the execucion of the contentes therof'.²⁶ But in reality, of course, dissent and disagreement was a normal part of everyday government. When the Court of Aldermen set prices or rated an assize, it was always done in consultation with the representatives of the relevant industry, and sometimes these men used dissent to force the hand of the Court. A discussion with the wardens of Brewers on the assize of beer was begun in December, 1516, but 'was not concluded'.²⁷ In April of the previous year the wardens of the Fruiterers were consulted on the new fees to be taken by the Meter of Onions. Patryk Cornyssh agreed to accept the proposal in principle but wanted to put it to his company as a whole, while Cantwell and Crips refused outright. Only after several months of negotiation were new ordinances finally drafted and agreed upon.²⁸

In fact, as chief proponents for the interests of their crafts, wardens often suffered punishment for such dissent on behalf of their fellowships. The Butchers had a particularly adversarial relationship with the Court in the early years of the century. In 1507, their wardens were imprisoned because members of the company were disobeying the Court's orders.²⁹ The following year, two wardens, John Long and John Bodfeld, were sent to ward

²³ Rep. 2, f. 170r.

²⁴ Rep. 2, f. 192r.

²⁵ Rep. 2, f. 195r.

²⁶ Rep. 11, f. 368v; Rep. 12, f. 39v.

²⁷ Rep. 3, f. 120v.

²⁸ Rep. 3, ff. 18v, 62r.

²⁹ Rep. 2, f. 36v-7r.

for 'disobedience and contempt'.³⁰ Likewise, in April 1516, the wardens of the Tallow Chandlers were unhappy with the price of candles set by the Court. Members of the company were clearly ignoring the official price, and it had to be reiterated in July, with the wardens ordered 'to geue warnyng to all their company'. Doing no such thing, but rather leading the resistance against it, the wardens themselves were imprisoned in Newgate. Two weeks later, the wardens were brought from Newgate to the court for further discussion, only to be 'remytted to the seyd prison for that they contynewe styll in their obstinacyes & froward myndes'.³¹ The wardens were objecting that the price set on buying tallow from the Butchers, combined with the price set on selling candles, left no profit given the costs of manufacture, and they challenged the Court to prove otherwise. A week later, the Court offered a compromise. Coming before the aldermen,

they were demaunded whether that they wold sell candell for i d. a lb. vnto suche tyme that their bill presentyd to this court of the costes & charges of the makyng of a weigh of talugh in candell myght be duely examined, which to do they contemptuously & disobediently refused, wherfor they were ageyn commytted to the seyd prison of Newgate.³²

The process was repeated, with the same result, two days later. It was not until September 18th that the wardens gave in, agreeing to observe the mayor's price while the aldermen made 'assay' of the actual costs.³³ Resistance to the court, to the point of weeks or even months spent in Newgate, was clearly a negotiating strategy which leading citizens like wardens sometimes chose to resort to.

As themselves members of the mercantile elite, the resistance of wardens was a matter of negotiation, not sedition. But this made it possible for other inhabitants of the city to use similar strategies. Indeed, disobedience and dissent could be used to good effect. For example, in February, 1546, Thomas Wetan, John Atkins and Roger Wright, simple servingmen presently out of work, stood up to a household officer of Sir Richard Long knight, for which 'mysdeameanour' they were immediately arrested. Doing so, however, brought to light the legitimate circumstances of their unemployment, and so the aldermen, 'for certeyn reasonable consyderacions movyng the courte', ordered that they be 'nott onely dysmyssed & sett at large but also theyr fees paid att the compter by the court & ouer that the Vndechamberleyn was commaunded to sett them awerke in Fynnesbury Feld in the workes of the cytye & the court delyuered hym xl d. to buy them spades & toles to worke wyth & to otherwyse bestowe vpon them as he shulde cause besydes xij d. whiche the seyd

³⁰ Rep. 2, f. 50r.

³¹ Rep. 3, ff. 77v, 95v, 98r.

³² Rep. 3, f. 98v.

³³ Rep. 3, ff. 99v, 103v-4r.

court dyd here presently geve them in theyr purses'.³⁴ People only insulted a figure of authority to their face when it could be justified in terms which members of the city elite might themselves accept as legitimate. In fact, doing so could often be to their advantage.

However, such 'opprobrious words' offered by people in confrontation with the authorities should not be seen solely as a negotiating strategy. The civic elite could respond to them in this way, but they could never be openly defended as such, because the 'negotiation' could never be made explicit. As Andy Wood has noted, 'the periodic theatricality of public encounters between ruler and ruled could be advantageous to both sides,' but 'both sides colluded in concealing the negotiation, confrontation, threat and brokerage which went on'.³⁵ This means that disobedience and dissent, even when carefully orchestrated within the framework of paternalism, always resonated with something more radical. As Lynn Forest-Hill suggests, disordered language always contained an inherent challenge to authority. Oaths, curses and the careless use of shame-bearing words had long been described in medieval theology as 'sins of the mouth' and were warned against in sermon cycles. Along with an illicit vocabulary in the 'speche of harlotrye and rybaldrye', such disordered language was in itself an act of transgression and inherently insubordinate.³⁶ Forest-Hill has shown how the use of insults traded between characters in late medieval mystery plays functioned not only as comedy but also provided 'the means by which the dramatists reveal the presence of discord in their society'.³⁷ Therefore opprobrious words could always carry a more serious threat.

Moreover, it can be seen that the insults and lewd words found in reports of seditious speech in London followed a series of generic patterns, and they point to the existence of a distinct political language, though the surviving evidence can only hint at it. To some extent, these patterned forms of expression can be thought of as part of a verbal 'idiom' for voicing popular politics in a distinct way. To begin with, the insults used against figures of authority were often structured by an awareness of the elite's reliance on an outward show of honour in order to maintain respect. Insults therefore often focused on clothing and other outward symbols of status, while imagery of defilement or allegations of secret vice hidden behind an honourable facade represented an individual's claim to authority as superficial and unjustified.

The imagery of excrement was particularly common in this respect. For instance, when a man railed violently against the aldermen in June, 1508, he also 'bade the devillys torde in all

³⁴ Rep. 11, f. 266r.

³⁵ Wood, "'Poore men woll speke'", pp. 77-8.

³⁶ L. Forest-Hill, 'Sins of the mouth: signs of subversion in the medieval mystery plays,' in Cavanagh & Kirk, *Subversion and Scurrility*, p. 12.

³⁷ Forest-Hill, 'Sins of the mouth', p. 12.

their tethes'.³⁸ In fact, the idea of having shit in one's teeth or mouth was often specifically associated with the uncovering of an unwarranted or pretended superiority. In the *Second Shepherd's Play* of the Wakefield Cycle, the affectation and haughty southern accent with which Mac, the sheep-stealer, greets the shepherds is attacked in the same way:

Mac: I am a yeoman, I tell you, of the King;
The self and the same, sent from a great lording
...I must have reverence...

First Shepherd: But Mac, is that sooth?
Take out that southern tooth, and set in a turd.³⁹

In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, set in the city of London, the phrase is repeatedly used by Wasp Numps whenever challenged or called to silence by presumptuous authorities. When the magistrate's wife warns him, 'Nay, good Mr Numpes, doe you shew discretion,' he replies 'Mary gip, goody she-Iustice, Mistris French-hood! Turd i' your teeth ...Must you quote your Adam to me! you thinke you are Madam Regent still.' Likewise, when warned by her brother, 'Good Numps, hold that little tongue o' thine ...I am resolute Bat, thou know'st,' Numps contradicts him, saying, 'A resolute foole you are, I know, and a very sufficient Coxcombe ...turd i' your teeth'.⁴⁰ In this sense, bidding an alderman to put turd in his teeth was one way of expressing dissent against the legitimacy of his authority.

The imagery of purity and defilement, like inward vice covered by outward honour, was also symptomatic of a tendency towards binary oppositions which can be seen in the verbal idiom of popular discourse.⁴¹ A common instance of this came in February, 1547, when four porters of the Fishmongers' company, engaged in carrying goods up from the docks, witnessed a series of threats and insults heaped upon their company by a porter of the Vintners. As they testified to the aldermen, Lucas Down 'dyd yesterday att the Thamys syde besyde the Crane in the Vyntrey raylle ageynst the wardeyns & hole ffellowship of the Fysshmongers callyng them chorles & gubbonmongers & also thretenyd to bete away their porters'. Although reported by its victims, many of the details here ring true. In framing his insult, Lucas transformed the proud sellers of fish, who were among the city's leading merchants, into sellers of fish-guts, or 'gubbenmongers', a vile and worthless occupation without honour.⁴² This exchange of the honourable for the dishonourable was typical of the strategies of popular insult.

³⁸ Rep. 2, f. 48v; the same insult was employed in other English towns, as when Thomas Benson, a Norwich cobbler, bade 'a turd in mr mayor's tethe' – cited by Tittler, *Reformation and the Towns*, p. 310.

³⁹ *The Tonneley Mysteries*, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Society, 3, 1836), p. 103.

⁴⁰ Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. C.S. Alden (New York, 1904), pp. 23, 60-1.

⁴¹ Wood, 'Pore men woll speke', p. 82.

⁴² Rep. 11, f. 333r.

However, such language was also capable of carrying significant political weight. This episode had come at the end of a dispute arbitrated in the Court of Aldermen wherein the Fishmongers had claimed the right to use their own porters to carry up wine barrels from the docks, rather than paying the porters of the Vintners to do it for them. Four days earlier, the Court had ordered that only the wine porters were to carry out the 'ladyng & celleryng of wyne', and no one else, 'vntyll suche tyme as this court shall take some further order therin'.⁴³ This was particularly controversial because of the important role which portage played in company life. In the sixteenth century, porters' positions were often reserved for company members fallen on hard times, and so the jurisdiction of a company's porters was integral to its social mission as a fellowship. Lucas's attack on the honour of the Fishmongers was therefore directed not only at any violation of the Court's orders which these rival porters may have intended, but also at their theft of his company's charity. This highlights the political dimension which crude insult could carry.

Indeed, seemingly crude insult was sometimes the only way for humbler individuals to express political opposition in a meaningful fashion. One way that such insults could carry force was by undermining elite honour through the creation of (negative) public 'fame'. This may have been the intent of Nicholas Ewen and James Richardson, who had felt themselves aggrieved by Alderman Aldernes during his time as sheriff. In retaliation, they sought to blacken his name in the presence of some of the sheriffs' yeomen officers, saying to them 'that the shreff that was the last yer ete not a crane at his tabill but that he had it by pollyng'.⁴⁴ The theme of unjust exaction, here generalized into a pithy and memorable slander, in fact rested on the more concrete grievance that 'that thei wer yisterdaie at the Gyldehall & ther it cost them vij d. a pece to the fyndyng of the shrieffes'. Indeed, insulting Aldernes to recent members of his household was specifically designed to bring the slander to the ears of the target himself. As one witness reported, James Richardson, having stated their case, continued on, 'and as to master Aldernes he is a chorle, and than seid the officer that he [James] was to blame, than said James ayen, 'Did I call hym chorle? Now I call hym erraunt horson chorle. Tell hym if thou wylte'.⁴⁵

While it is true that people usually confined themselves to more conservative discourses when confronting figures of authority face-to-face, this does not imply that popular political thought was incapable of thinking outside elite discursive structures. Indeed, when talking amongst themselves, people were quite capable of articulating the fragile basis upon which the elite's authority rested. Some people even questioned the legitimacy of civic authority itself. Much of the symbolism of civic ceremony was designed to represent the mayor's

⁴³ Rep. 11, f. 331v.

⁴⁴ Rep. 2, f. 168v.

⁴⁵ Rep. 2, ff. 168v-9r.

authority as legitimate by being a direct commission from the Crown. When receiving a sovereign into the city during a royal entry, the culminating moment was the presentation of the ceremonial mace – symbol of the mayor’s authority – to the monarch, acknowledging the dependence of the mayor’s authority upon the grace of the Crown. By the same token, the sovereign would then re-entrust the mace to the mayor, symbolising the Crown’s continued trust in his rule. But that did not prevent one man claiming that neither ‘the maire nor all the benche shuld not rule hym,’ saying rather that ‘the king and his counsell shuld rule hym and no man elles’.⁴⁶ In expressing dissent, some people were capable of questioning the very validity of the relationship between Crown and civic government.

This was typical of more radical popular sentiments which denied the authority of the mayor and aldermen, not in terms of the absence of authority, but with reference to an alternative hierarchy of power. For instance, in January 1517, Richard Saunder and Geoffrey Chaundler admitted that William Smyth had slandered alderman West as a ‘false harlot’, claiming that ‘he was parcyall amonges theym in the parysh’. But in this private context, Smyth also went further, and threatened ‘that he wold bryng hym before my lord Cardynall’, in an attempt to undermine his authority.⁴⁷ In the same way, someone with connections in the country could also assert ‘that he hadde iijC men of his affynyte,’ or that ‘thei haue ij or iij hundred to take ther part’ in their confrontations with the civic government.⁴⁸ Such statements threatened an invasion of the city and looked to an alternative vision of power from the world of landed authority beyond the walls. In one egregious example, the legitimacy of civic authority was flatly denied in comparison with the majesty of landed wealth and power. Gabriel Fennel was reported as saying in June, 1508, that

the maire, aldermen nor shireffes hath no auctorite to medell with any of theym, for he had a master that was a gret gentilman borne which payed the king CC li. a yere for custome and seid, as for the maire and the benche, [they] were but beggars to them, and furthermore shewed that they shuld be herd with the king & his counsell when they shuld stande abak.⁴⁹

In fact, the evidence suggests that the city’s inhabitants were also capable of some quite seriously radical thought. While it was surely rebellious to call into question the legitimacy of the civic elite’s authority by appealing to other accepted models, it was altogether more radical to think entirely outside the discourse which married wealth, honour and political responsibility as mutually dependant and necessarily correlated. Such was the achievement of Philip Snakir, citizen and joiner, who in February, 1513, asserted ‘that it were better for the commons of the citie to ber an eide yerly & chose a poer man to be maier of this citie

⁴⁶ Rep. 2, f. 48v.

⁴⁷ Rep. 3, f. 121v.

⁴⁸ Rep. 2, ff. 168v-9r.

⁴⁹ Rep. 2, f. 48v.

than for to haue ony riche other maier or shrieff.⁵⁰ Upon inspection, this rather innocuous statement reveals the potential for a radically alternative view of the relationship between citizenship, politics, and authority.

In the dominant discourse of sixteenth-century England, wealth and honour were prerequisites for the exercise of authority. Detailed justifications for this relationship can be found in critical thought on governance later in the century, even in the lowest of public offices. For instance, one handbook designed to aid the new legion of Overseers for the Poor gave a series of reasons why ‘competencie of wealth in an Ouerseer is very requisite’: firstly, ‘the sufficiencie of wealth will cause circumspection in the officer...because he hath somewhat to loose’; secondly, ‘he that is wealthie may the better neglect his owne affaires to attend of his office’; and thirdly, ‘if he be poore, it is to be suspected that he will abuse his office for benefit sake’. But the author also gave another two points which operated at a more fundamental level, explaining that wealth was necessary to actually command respect as a governor. On the one hand, ‘the very ornament of wealth doth adde a kinde of grace & maiestie to a man’, for even a good man appears despicable if poor. On the other, ‘if he be poore he will not be respected: for commonly the poore despise him that is poore, if he be set in office ouer them’. Both of these facts rested on the deeply ingrained belief that authority was misplaced if ‘a mans wealth is not answerable to his heart, nor his estate sutable to his calling’.⁵¹ In the humanist strand of elite landed discourse, authority was a function of honour and ability, no longer just of birth, but only ‘wealth’ and ‘calling’ were true indicators of such honour and ability. In the assertion that a poor man would do a better job of governing the city, this sixteenth-century truism found a rare dissenting voice.

Moreover, in his denial that a ‘rich mayor or shrieff’ could truly govern in the interests of the poor, there is an unusual perception of civic politics as an adversarial arena for the contest of opposing interest groups. From this perspective the rhetoric of common weal and care for the poor, through which the elite so often justified its rule, is represented only as self-serving. However, it is the nature of the proposed solution which really differentiates this outburst from a mere fantasy of inverting the social order. Clearly accepting that the functions of the mayoral household have significant annual costs, Philip wanted ‘the Commons of the city to bear an aid yearly’ to supply the charges of the office. Life in the city of London would have furnished Philip with many examples of different kinds of communities raising money for their respective common aims – church ales to fund church repairs; parish tithes to fund the pastor; quarterage to pay for guild regulation and the protection of a trade; tolls to fund common markets and maintenance of London Bridge; levies on the Great Companies for

⁵⁰ Rep. 2, f. 151v.

⁵¹ *An Ease for Overseers* (1601), pp. 9-10.

mustering troops or provision of grain; and ad hoc fifteenths and tenths assessed on the wards of the city for civic projects like the construction of a new conduit or provision of a coronation gift. However, it is difficult to find any direct analogue with which to explain (away) this particular notion of subsidizing the political representation of the Corporation's poorer citizens.

This is a very isolated example of the politics of one London citizen, and it is less significant for its particular vision of political community than for what it tells us about popular speech more generally. Andy Wood has pointed out that while the subversiveness of riot and rebellion has rightly been downplayed by revisionists, to correct the inherited perception of popular action as disordered and animalistic, historians ought not to underestimate the extent to which resistance was motivated simply by social conflict and not part of any negotiating strategy in pursuit of specific aims. Wood points to the subversive and confrontational aspects of resistance as evidence that people could think outside patriarchalism, or at least criticize it as a mere façade for injustice. As has been suggested here, the city's inhabitants could play the game of conformity, but they could also get frustrated and lash out more incisively. Therefore, while opprobrious words in face-to-face confrontations often worked within dominant discourses and were a way of negotiating authority, they were also sometimes intended as open attacks. Moreover, as some examples have suggested here, people were aware of the potential challenges which civic authority faced from other jurisdictions, and on occasion they were even capable of imagining a radically different order.

In face-to-face encounters between civic officers and the city's inhabitants, the expectations of deference and obedience demanded by official forms of communication could be subverted and contested by the idiom of popular discourse. However, as the remainder of this chapter suggests, such contests had an important spatial dimension. In early Tudor London the urban elite were highly sensitive to the locations of political confrontation, particularly to any link between seditious speech in the court and popular agitation in the streets. Two developments at the time were symptomatic of this concern – first, an attempt to reinforce the courtroom as a place exclusively for rational discourse and civility; and secondly, an emphasis on restricting the conduct of politics to the places of formal government. Such concerns were not new, but behavioural expectations were being codified and formalized at this time, and they highlight the challenge which popular discourse posed in its threat to the city's authorized political map.

To begin with, the civic government was increasingly drawing a distinction between the courtroom and the street in the opening decades of the sixteenth century. For instance, speech and behaviour in the city's courts and councils came under increasing scrutiny, and in January, 1509, formal limits were placed on what could be said outside the court concerning discussions which had taken place inside it. That month, all the aldermen were sworn to 'kepe the secretes of this courte & not to disclose eny thing ther spoken'.⁵² Within a few years, Alderman Henry Worley fell foul of this regulation. In March 1514, he was accused of 'certen wordes by hym hadde to hys ffelaushipp of goldsmythes concernyng a certe[n] acte made by this court'.⁵³ Moreover, Worley's reaction to this accusation illustrates the limits of acceptable of behaviour by a member of the Court of Aldermen. When, during a session of the court, he was ordered by his brethren to bring in a pledge of £20 until such time as a fine should be assessed on him for his offence, he erupted angrily and stormed out of the court room. Later that week, he was reprimanded 'for his depart[ure] at the last court, the which depart[ure] is thought by this court wilfull'.⁵⁴ His failure to observe the orderly behaviour appropriate to the court room meant that the original pledge demanded was now doubled to £40.

The relationship between ordered speech and social status, especially in the space of the court room, was underlined in an episode from August, 1546. At that time, the first of August was the day for electing the sheriffs for the following year, and at a meeting of the aldermen in the council chamber before the election, Thomas Malby fishmonger, 'for certeyn hys evyll & mysdemeanour towards my lorde mayer', was stripped of his status as a liveryman of his company.⁵⁵ Thomas had his status restored to him a month later, upon his 'humble sute & submysson' and a promise 'so to demeane hymself in all thinges from hensforward that this court shall haue no further compleyntes of hym'.⁵⁶ But the aldermen had made their point that the nature of a man's discourse in the space of the court ought to reflect his social status.

Moreover, this care for ordered speech in the court room was no longer just a case of showing respect for one's betters or for the finely-graded hierarchy of civic officeholding. For instance, in December 1548, Robert Maddy gent., who held an important office as one of the attorneys in the Sheriffs' Court, was sent to ward and suspended from his office 'for his mysdemeanour this day shewed to the Cominers of this cytie sytting in the Court of Requestes'. As a landed gentleman, he regarded himself as superior to the city's merchants,

⁵² Rep. 2, f. 58r; Rep. 3, f. 72v; Rep. 12, f. 290r-v.

⁵³ Rep. 2, f. 174v.

⁵⁴ Rep. 2, f. 175r.

⁵⁵ Rep. 11, f. 303v; Wriothesley, i. 170.

⁵⁶ Rep. 11, f. 304v.

but the civility of court-room speech now demanded that limits be placed on the articulation of this superiority. Indeed, he ‘was enjoyned to amend his manours & no more so to vse himself, vpon payne of losing of his seid offyce’.⁵⁷ This new sensitivity to appropriate language was not limited to verbal exchanges; it was also extended to the written record. When a beadle of the Court of Requests was dismissed from his office for misdemeanour, his charges included some ‘notorious matters and causes <which are> not thought fit to be publiquely and partyculerly sett downe of record’.⁵⁸ It appears that the records of the court were now being routinely sanitized of any unfitting language which the vicious lives of offenders had made it necessary to voice.

This concern for ordered speech in the Court was further expressed by changes to the space of the room itself, which indicate a shift in how the business of court-room discussion was being perceived. Firstly, there was an increasing emphasis on formally recording the decisions of the Court as they were taken, and it was decided that a specific place be set aside for the clerk to stand in and take minutes. In September, 1506, it was ordered that ‘the Chamberlen shall make in the counsell chamber a baye wyndowe for the Comen Clerck to haue place to stande and wryte yn and to conveye and feycche such bookes from tyme to tyme as shalbe requisite and necessarye’.⁵⁹ Furthermore, it became established procedure that the decisions taken at each court be read out at the beginning of the next session.⁶⁰ Secondly, around the same time that oaths were introduced to protect the secrecy of discussions within the court room, the space was being transformed from an open hall to a closed chamber. In February, 1509, it was ordered that

the door openyng oute of the maires courte to the book howse shalbe shytted and bolted on the inside so that no person duryng the tyme of the courte sitting shall nether passe nor repasse that waye between the counsell chamber and vtter courte, but only the aldermen and the counsell that been sworne.⁶¹

Clearly, before that date, people had freely come and gone through the court to reach adjoining rooms, regardless of whether a session was in progress. Furthermore, in keeping with this move away from the style of a ‘great hall’, the shape of the courtroom was redesigned to accommodate roundtable discussion. In July, 1515, the mayor and aldermen decided that:

Forasmoche as thendes of the table standyng in the counsell chamber been of so farre distauns the oon from thother, so that the maters commenyd & publysshed in the same may not conveniently nor easely thurghoute the seyde

⁵⁷ Rep. 12, ff. 13r, 27v.

⁵⁸ Rep. 22, f. 32r.

⁵⁹ Rep. 2, f. 30v.

⁶⁰ Rep. 10, f. 254r.

⁶¹ Rep. 2, ff. 60v-61r.

chamber be herd, yt ys therfor agreed by this courte that the seyde chamber shall be enlarged & transposed in such maner that the table or borde in quadrat-wyse made may be sette therein, so that the mayor & aldermen for the tyme beyng may therein be sette more nygh eyther to other then they were afore sette, & such seyde maters ther to be commenyd more perfightly herd & declared.⁶²

Likewise, increasing concern was also devoted to keeping the civic records safe, ordered, and secret. In February, 1509, the city clerks were ordered to ensure that no one had access to the city's customals, except the learned counsel, without prior permission of the Mayor, Recorder or Common Clerk.⁶³ New shelves were added in the 'tresoury hous of bokes' in February, 1518, and it was to be given new doors and locks.⁶⁴ Records customarily held in the hands of particular officers were progressively called in and ordered to be kept in the Treasury.⁶⁵ Increasing efforts were made to catalogue the ancient civic records, and a host of initiatives were undertaken in the first half of the century to calendar and index them.⁶⁶

In this way, the space of the court room and its procedures were coming to be associated with a specific kind of discourse – rational, civil, and well-governed. Politics, moreover, was increasingly confined to this sphere, such that debating civic politics in the street was unacceptable. For instance, alderman Richard Haddon was strongly reprimanded in October, 1514, for questioning the mayor's stance on an issue in the open street, rather than in the controlled environment of the council chamber. John Tate, lord mayor at that time, reported to the Court that

where he had commytted oon to ward for a certeyn offence by hym commytted, master Haddon seyde wordes to hym in the open strete, 'By god you do hym wrong,' and my lord mayer then ansueryd hym & seyde that yt became hym not to tell hym in that place, and he [Haddon] seyde ageyn that that he dyd or seyde to hym was but for good counsell, and yf he wold not be counceyled by hym he wold comme the lesse at hym.⁶⁷

Haddon's defence of his actions in terms of 'good counsel' was rhetorically strong, for it was incumbent on the mayor to accept such counsel from the aldermen. In fact, Tate may have misrepresented Haddon's words, interpolating the oath 'by god' and making his statement more assertive than it was, for Haddon himself claimed 'that he had theys wordes & noon other, that "Yf you commytted this man to ward without due examinacion had, you do hym wrong."'⁶⁸ Regardless, however, Haddon was put under pledge because such questions were now to be confined to the council chamber and should never be discussed in the street.

⁶² Rep. 3, f. 35v.

⁶³ Rep. 2, ff. 58v, 61r-v; Rep. 9, f. 251v.

⁶⁴ Rep. 3, f. 191r.

⁶⁵ Rep. 4, f. 143r; Jour. 12, f. 280r.

⁶⁶ Rep. 9, ff. 123r, 124v, 130r, 185r, 209r, 251v; Rep. 10, ff. 132r, 229r, 236r.

⁶⁷ Rep. 2, f. 195v.

⁶⁸ Rep. 2, f. 197v.

Likewise, in January, 1518, John Bodfeld, a warden of the Butchers, was taken to task for debating with the mayor in public. It was reported by the mayor that

when he was in the flesshamelles, Bodfeld bocher then seyde there openly that my seyde lord mayntenyd oon Harryson bocher ageynst their ordynaunces, wherin he dyd open wrong, and then my seyde lord seyde, 'Bodfeld, take good hede what thou sayest to me here in the open strete'.⁶⁹

An emerging distinction between speech in and out of the civic council chamber has also been noted by Robert Tittler, who identified 'an increased emphasis on such behavioural constraints' in the ordinances of civic communities in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁷⁰ In his study of post-reformation political culture in provincial towns, he pointed to an 'increased emphasis on maintaining the secrecy of official proceedings', both in terms of restricting access to the physical space of the council chamber and rules against publicizing court business outside official channels. In Abingdon, for instance, fines were introduced from 1562 for anyone who might 'reveale, declare or saye anye wordes being spoken in the councelle howse', and it was ordered that no one was to leave the council chamber until a meeting's formal conclusion. Paul Griffiths has made similar observations concerning attitudes to records and record-keeping in London in the early seventeenth century.⁷¹ Moreover, Tittler has observed that this 'concern for appropriate use of speech also extended to the enforcement of censorship in oral discourse'. Again in Abingdon, this time in 1561, it was decided that any 'unseemly words' spoken in the council chamber would be punished with commitment to ward. In fact, the town of Hartlepool had even put together a table of fines for insulting civic officials. This table listed a graduated series of fines which varied according to the insult used and the rank of the person insulted. Significantly, the fine was doubled if the offender – the person using such opprobrious language – was himself a civic officer.⁷² The same developments were taking place in London, but they dated from the first rather than second half of the sixteenth century.

Likewise, the civic government was sensitive to the places and spaces in which seditious speech was encountered. Opprobrious words 'in open court' were always noted with outrage, like those offered by Thomas Broke in March, 1533, and Richard Barley's offence in July, 1528, was made worse by being uttered 'in this open courte in the presence of diuerse & many substancyall Comeners'.⁷³ But punishment was much swifter and more severe when offences took place in the streets and marketplaces. For instance, Robert Johnson was

⁶⁹ Rep. 3, f. 184r.

⁷⁰ Tittler, *Reformation and the Towns*, pp. 306-7.

⁷¹ P. Griffiths, 'Secrecy and authority in late sixteenth-and seventeenth-century London,' *Historical Journal* 40:4 (1997), pp. 925-51.

⁷² Tittler, *Reformation and the Towns*, pp. 309-10.

⁷³ Rep. 8, f. 278r; Rep. 7, f. 275v.

publicly punished in May, 1549, for rebuking a civic officer ‘openly in the market place at Ledenhall’, while John Scott was sentenced to a penitential procession in August, 1529, after a serious confrontation with the mayor while he was selling wood in Cheapside.⁷⁴ He died in prison shortly after. Moreover, as noted in the previous chapter, the city’s elite were particularly sensitive to the gates and façades of their houses. In one especially serious case, a cordwainer was sent directly to the pillory because he ‘did yesterday openly curse my lorde mayer at his owne gate & there shamefully reyle vpon hym with many slaundersous opprobrious wordes in the heryng of dyuerse honest persones’.⁷⁵

At the same time, the idea of commotion throughout the wider city, fired by popular political grievance, was increasingly alarming. The events of Evil May Day sent a shock wave through the urban elite and the repercussions were felt for a long time after wards. In this respect, one of the most immediate concerns was for those who sought to repeat the event. Later that same year, two tailors were interrogated for allegedly ‘seying that on Sunday next afore Mighelmas day next cummyng shuld be as good a skyrmyssh with straungiers as was on May Day last passyd’.⁷⁶ The civic government continued to fear that a popular uprising could be rallied by seditious bills cast throughout the streets, and this fear was not entirely imaginary. For instance, in May, 1526, John Hubank, tailor, ‘confessyd that he hath sett vp diuerse sedicious billes in diuerse open places of this citie soundyng towardes commocion of the kinges people’.⁷⁷

But these concerns were part of a wider demonization of rumour as irrational and uncontrollable, leading to great anxiety about people congregating in the streets. Indeed, the mayor and aldermen were greatly alarmed in May, 1547, when two men, summoned to court to answer for ‘spekyng of certeyn sedycious wordes concernyng the orderyng of the water att the Standerd in Chepe,’ were said to have ‘caused a grett number of people to assemble & to come hither with theym to maynteyn theym in theyr evyll doyng’.⁷⁸ Indeed, the marshalling of factions for political purposes was considered highly inflammatory. Great scandal was provoked when John Onley packed a Common Council to overturn a decision by the mayor and aldermen to remove him from office.⁷⁹ In this climate, serious steps were taken at the first mention of any unrest. Aldermen, deputies and leading citizens were called forth to supervise the arrival of bread each day in October, 1527, because of reports that ‘dayly there ys moche ruffelyng & grete truble & rumour made by mennys seruantes at the

⁷⁴ Rep. 12, f. 88r; Jour. 13, f. 155r.

⁷⁵ Rep. 12, f. 89r.

⁷⁶ Rep. 3, f. 164v.

⁷⁷ Rep. 7, f. 103v.

⁷⁸ Rep. 11, f. 349r.

⁷⁹ Rep. 9, f. 206v.

breede cartes'.⁸⁰ Likewise, the authorities were greatly concerned when a jury, appointed to investigate 'a ryot to be doon at the lytel conduyt yn Chepe,' in March, 1538, 'wolde not regarde theyre evidence' and failed to convict anyone.⁸¹ In fact, the civic authorities became so sensitive to gatherings that little passed in the streets without action. In 1547, a group of servants, walking through the streets on May Day were interrogated and placed under recognizance. In the following year, apprentices playing football in the street in the evening were summarily committed to ward.⁸²

From the perspective of the urban elite, politics should be confined to the civic courts, which were identified as spaces of rational discourse and civility. However, popular discourse, and the threat of collective action which it carried, could subvert the scripts of official courtroom performance. Moreover, threats of radical popular action often targeted those very spaces colonized by the authorities. In March, 1513, a Fuller calling for reforms demanded the mayor take action or 'he shall be pulled owt of his house & his hedde shall be strekyn of at his owen thressholde'.⁸³ That same year, another man railing against the civic authorities threatened, not violence against the mayor and alderman, but rather that he and others of the city would raze the entire neighbourhood of the civic courts and 'make a new Aldermanbury'.⁸⁴ Such people were aware that, if the merchant elite had colonized both the institutions and spaces of the civic government, such that popular interests could not find proper expression, it was only by pulling down and rebuilding those spaces that another world could be possible.

⁸⁰ Rep. 7, f. 221v.

⁸¹ Rep. 10, f. 25r-v.

⁸² Rep. 11, ff. 350r, 409r.

⁸³ Rep. 2, f. 155v.

⁸⁴ Rep. 2, f. 169r.

PART FOUR – IMPLICATIONS

Part Three has shown that despite formal exclusion from power, ordinary people were able to assert themselves in everyday life, exercising agency in the submission of petitions, the posting of anonymous libels, and the uttering of seditious speech. Significantly, they often did so by appropriating, inverting or subverting the official modes of communication, particularly in their urban and spatial dimensions. This was an important part of negotiating authority in the city, for by doing so they challenged both the idealized image of active and responsive governors ruling over passive and obedient subjects, as put forth in official communication, as well as the culture of reciprocity which it professed to embody. People were capable of questioning the means by which the mercantile elite legitimated the inequalities of the status quo. At the same time, Parts Two and Three have also demonstrated that both constructing and contesting authority were deeply implicated in the urban environment and its spatial dimension. However, as the following chapter argues, the urban environment itself was a medium of communication and part of how the image of civic government was constructed and asserted. The urban environment was already inherently political and had long been giving expression to the presence of civic authority, though this picture was also expanding and changing over time. These observations have implications for an understanding of the changing nature of early modern English towns and the later transformation of London's political culture.

CHAPTER 9 THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

It can be seen from the foregoing thesis that acts of political communication were integral to the processes of political culture in early Tudor London, being central to both constructing and contesting authority, and that these acts were spatially structured. But this conclusion has two important corollaries. First, the spatial structure of the city was more than just a canvas on which political interests were played out; it was itself a means of political communication involved in the negotiation of authority. The map of the urban environment, physical and mental, reflected the structures of power in the city and thereby normalized them, while remaining open to challenge and the potential for change. That is, acts of building and the control of the urban environment were performances that dramatized the existence of authority in the same way that proclamations, procession and punishments have been shown to have done. They also created spaces where transgressive acts could take place with the potential to undermine and overturn established meanings. Secondly, the changing nature of the image of civic authority expressed in this urban environment provides a context for understanding the development of a distinctive urban culture in early modern England. It has been shown by others that the nature of political culture was transformed in London and provincial towns in the early modern period. This thesis suggests that the existing nature of space as inherently political and a medium of communication was a crucial context for later transformations.

At the most basic level, the physical layout of the city itself embodied an authorized structure of space and time. The shape of the city skyline was dominated by three major buildings – the Tower, Cathedral, and Guildhall – reflecting the presence of three kinds of authority: royal, ecclesiastical, and civic. The wall and gates gave physical testament to the city as a distinct place from the surrounding countryside, while its orientation towards the river and bridge underscored the importance of domestic and international trade to the life of the community. The substance of the urban environment itself was a patchwork of overlapping communities – a forest of church spires intermingled with the halls of trade companies and the spaces of neighbourly relations, each a physical embodiment of the social worlds of parish, company, and ward. Meanwhile, the structure of the ritual year bound each of these kinds of community into a civic whole. The great processions of Whitsuntide, Midsummer and Lord Mayor's Day celebrated the city as an amalgamation of parishes, neighbourhoods and trades united by civic authority. Thus the physical and ritual shape of the city openly pronounced its reciprocity with the crown, the Christian nature of its community, the primacy of civic authority, and its commercialized economy based on trade, manufactures and services.

Moreover, authority was present in and through the ongoing regulation of urban space. This, of course, was not new in the early sixteenth century, but drew on well-established traditions of policing the neighbourhoods, controlling the markets, cleaning the streets, and regulating the nature of building. Indeed, the idea that the city was a bounded area of special ‘peace’ is among the earliest things that can be said of London, as also of towns in general. The ‘frith gild’ established among Londoners in the 930s had aimed to ensure tight policing within the city, while the earliest urban communes of the 1000s were formed upon the core of a *conjuratio* sworn to protect the peace in the close quarters of street and marketplace.¹ Already in the 1100s, London householders held special watches in their wards during the three periods of the King’s Peace at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost,² while throughout the year the city was watched at night from upon the walls and gates, with extra attention during the summer months.³ From the 1340s onwards, watches also came to be held in the wards themselves each night during summer, as well as at Christmas, and the provision of a man to serve in the watch emerged as a regular duty rotating among householders.⁴ Simply entering the space of the city had long entailed special restrictions upon behaviour – taverns closed at curfew and walking abroad at night was limited from at least the late 1200s, while carrying a sword in public was contrary to civic ordinances after 1319.⁵

Within the bounds of the city, the marketplaces were spaces specially subject to regulation by the civic authorities. The provision of a reliable and trusted place for the exchange of goods,

¹ ‘Judicia Civitatis Lundoniae’ [VI As], in *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. F. Liebermann (Halle, 1903-16), i. 173-83; *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, ed. B. Thorpe (London, 1840), i. 97-103; Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*, p. 201.

² BL Add. MS. 14252, ‘London Custumal of 1216’, edited in Weinbaum, *London*, i. 38, 43; the reference to a sheriff in the singular suggests the ordinance had its origins before 1141; cf. variant readings in J.H. Round, *The Commune of London* (Westminster, 1899), p. 255; the periods of the King’s Peace are discussed earlier in the same Custumal, in a copy of the ‘Leges Edwardi Confessoris’, Art. 12, a text which dates to the 1130s – see B. O’Brien, *God’s Peace and King’s Peace: The laws of Edward the Confessor* (Philadelphia, PA, 1999), pp. 44-48, 73-77, 168-9.

³ ‘Willielmi Articuli Londoniis retractati, Art. 6,’ [W1 art Lond. 6], c.1210, in *Gesetze*, i. 490; see also the ‘London Custumal of 1216’, in Weinbaum, *London*, i. 90; Henry III merely formalized existing practice when he ordered in 1242 that cities be watched at night by 6 men at each gate from Ascension to Michaelmas – *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1874), pp. 353-4; for the correct date, see Powicke, ‘Writ for enforcing watch and ward’.

⁴ In the late 1200s and early 1300s, regular watches in the wards (as opposed to emergency security measures) by householders (as opposed to the beadle and/or constables on their own) were still restricted to Christmas, Easter and Pentecost – *CEMCR*, pp. 57, 70, 124-5, 154-5, 155-6; but the watch at Easter disappeared after 1320, while evidence of a regular watch in the wards appears in 1341, and precepts at Ascension for watches throughout the summer survive from 1376 onwards – LB. E, f. 102v; *CPMR*, i. 137-8, ii. 57; LB. H, ff. 39r, 132v, 199v; LB. I, f. 149r; Jour. 5, f. 167v.

⁵ Curfew was an accustomed practice before 1276 – LB. B, f. 124v; in the 1280s, armed nightwalkers were punished by the civic authorities both on their own initiative and also in response to royal concerns – LB. B, ff. 1r-5v; LB. A, f. 127r; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward I*, 4 vols (London, 1893-1901), ii. 80; rules on tavern hours and nightwalking were absorbed into the code of the Royal Warden in 1285, proclaimed each year as customary civic ordinances from the early 1300s, and formed part of the Articles of Wardmote – LMA COL/CS/01/002, ‘Liber Horn’, ff. 212r-v, 232r-3r, 245v-6v; on swords, see *Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London*, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1843), p. 253; LB. E, f. 2*r, 45v, 95r, 194v.

especially of essential foodstuffs, was fundamental to the nature of local government, and reflected a communal or seigniorial authority in the city more than it did any royal authority. An assize of bread and ale was known in London in the mid twelfth century, with particular local customs proclaimed, enforced and put on record during the 1200s, by the end of which century detailed procedures and a dedicated custumal had been established to assist city officers.⁶ Standardized weights and measures are attested as early as the 1130s, set by the authority of the Husting, and while early codes of civic ordinances called for them ‘to conform to the king’s standard’, this had always been set by the Londoners themselves, as recognized in Clause 35 of Magna Carta.⁷ The conduct of business in the marketplace was limited to certain hours of the day, and strict trading rules existed against forestalling victuals, regrating manufactures, or engrossing anything for the purposes of creating a monopoly and enhancing the price.⁸ In these places, different people had different rights, for only citizens of the city were permitted to sell merchandise (as opposed to victuals) by retail. First recorded in the ‘*Libertas Londoniensis*’, dating from 1132–55, this regulation of activity within the bounds of the markets was one of the oldest facts about life in the city.⁹

The streets themselves had also long been spaces that were subject to particular rules and regulation. Measures to keep the streets clean featured prominently when civic customs were first being codified in the late 1200s. Inhabitants were already expected not to dispose of rubbish or ordure in the streets; pigs left loose would be compulsorily acquired and Fishmongers were required to carry their waste water to the river rather than let it run in the gutters.¹⁰ By the time the Articles of Wardmote were formalized in 1311, a detailed set of standards was being insisted upon. Fines were appointed for littering the streets and anything which was left obstructing a thoroughfare would be forfeited to the city. Moreover, every householder was now responsible for maintaining the pavements and keeping clean whatever stretch of street lay in front of the house they inhabited. In each ward, officials were elected at the wardmotes and charged to survey the streets, enforcing these

⁶ Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 8-10, 68-9, 79-80; *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, ed. T. Stapleton (Camden Society, 34, 1846), pp. 40-41; LB. A, ff. 52v-3v, 110r-29v; LMA COL/CS/01/004, ‘*Liber de Assisa Panis*’, (1284-1438); ‘*Liber Horn*’, ff. 226r, 234v-5v.

⁷ Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 32-3; *Antiquis Legibus Liber*, p. 70; LB. A, f. 130r; J. Holt, *Magna Carta*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1992), p. 461.

⁸ Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 40; *Antiquis Legibus Liber*, p. 104; LB. A, f. 129v; ‘*Liber Horn*’, ff. 237v-8r, 239r, 242v-3r.

⁹ Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 41-2; an expanded version in the ‘*Consuetudines*’, after 1155 – Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 71-2; prosecution in practice, c. 1294 – LB. C, f. 19v; codified in civic ordinances of Dec, 1312 – LB. D, f. 157r; confirmed in the Great Charter of June, 1319 – *Historical Charters*, p. 48; the citizen monopoly on retail of merchandise was undermined for a time by 9 Edward III, Stat. 1, c.1, and 25 Edward III, Stat. 3, c.2, but later restored by the Sixth Charter of Edward III (1376) and confirmed by Parliament in the *Inspeximus* Charter of Richard II (1377) – *Historical Charters*, pp. 69-70; by contrast, most victuals could be retailed by foreigners, the main exception being fish – *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward III*, 16 vols (London, 1891-1916), xiii. 5-6.

¹⁰ LB. A, ff. 129v-30r.

expectations, while rakers were employed at the cost of the householders to keep public places clean. There were also particular sites appointed outside the city and at the Thameside, where waste was to be disposed of or removed from the city by boat.¹¹ In fact, the very path of the streets bespoke the existence of civic authority. Continual efforts were made to maintain the breadth of the streets against encroachment by individual property owners – at least at ground level, to the height of a man on horseback – and reforming mayors often coupled crackdowns on crime with a perambulation of the city to remove purprestures as a show of effective power.¹² Despite images of the medieval city as a squalid and disordered place, the streets of London had a long history of expectations being imposed upon them by the authorities.

From a very early stage, the regulation of urban space extended not only to the open streets and public marketplaces of the city but also to the private houses of its inhabitants. At the beginning of the 1200s, just after the city was first united under mayoral authority, a ‘Lex de Assisa’ was developed to standardize the procedures for building walls between neighbouring properties and settling boundary disputes.¹³ Over the succeeding seventy years, these ordinances grew into a substantial building code governing party walls, gutters, waste disposal, the obstruction of windows, construction materials, and methods for resolving disputes, later thought of as an ordinance of London’s first mayor and known as ‘Fitz-Ailwyn’s Assize of Buildings’.¹⁴ But the close proximity of buildings in the city not only provoked disputes between neighbours; it also increased the risk of fire spreading from one building to another. Indeed, after a substantial fire in 1212, new articles were added to the building code to mitigate the risks of outbreaks – bakers and brewers were not to work by night; cookshops were to be whitewashed on the inside; roofs were to be tiled, not thatched; and wooden houses that posed a threat were liable to compulsory renovation or removal.¹⁵ Later, to discourage the use of wood, special rights were offered to those who built houses of stone. In the early 1300s, when records from the city’s Assize of Nuisance begin to survive, the code was being regularly enforced in private suits, while ward officers made public presentments against those who contravened the fire regulations set out in the Articles of Wardmote.¹⁶ Thus already in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the policing of the city’s walls and neighbourhoods, the control of activity in marketplaces, the

¹¹ LB. A, ff. 88v, 130v; LB. B, f. 100v/38r, 105r/33v; LB. C, f. 96v; LB. D, ff. 155v, 157v, 158r-v; ‘Liber Horn’, ff. 232r-3r.

¹² LB. A, ff. 129v-30r; LB. B, f. 105r/33v; LB. D, f. 157v; *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and II*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (London, 1882-3), i. 175; LB. E, f. 56r; *MGL*, ii. 338-47, 444-55; LB. F, ff. 105r-v, 133r.

¹³ Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 45-8.

¹⁴ *Antiquis Legibus Liber*, pp. 206-11; LB. C, ff. 13v-14r; ‘Liber Horn’, ff. 227r-9v, 231r-v.

¹⁵ Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 89-90.

¹⁶ LB. C, f. 65r; *London Assize of Nuisance, 1301-1431: A calendar*, ed. H.M. Chew & W. Kellaway (London Record Society, 10, 1973); ‘Liber Horn’, ff. 232r-3r.

maintenance of clean navigable streets, and the regulation of private building gave constant expression to the existence of authority and the reality of its power.

But the nature of this control over the urban environment was not static and it continued to evolve in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For instance, the local nightwatch developed from a limited and episodic obligation into a part of daily life. Having grown into a regular practice held during the summer months, watches in the wards were gradually but increasingly extended to other seasons by ad hoc precepts until, in the early sixteenth century, it was expected that watchmen be on duty every night throughout the year.¹⁷ Thereafter, the numbers of the nightwatch were steadily increased. The use of the double watch at times of trouble became a regular practice, but precepts also began calling for a ‘greater number then heretofore hath been vsed,’ until the regular watch had effectively doubled in size by the 1580s.¹⁸ The standards expected of watchmen also changed. In addition to the constable, a watch ought to include a ‘substantial householder,’ present in person, and the deputies supplied by others had to be fit for service, ‘not of boyes & nakyd men’.¹⁹ The more regular nature of the watch can be seen in the efforts of the Court of Aldermen to see that all inhabitants contributed to it, at least financially if not in person. One by one, foreigners, aliens, royal officers, Barber Surgeons and even priests were brought within the liability of watch and ward until it was properly a duty of all urban inhabitants.²⁰ While this betrayed a more encompassing vision of the city, the attention of the authorities also became more finely focused – precincts emerge in the sixteenth-century records as subdivisions in every ward, averaging just a hectare in size, each patrolled by its own constable.²¹

¹⁷ The continued use of periodic precepts in the sixteenth century and beyond, calling for watches to be held ‘until further advised’, were indications not of episodic watches but notices to the aldermen that they would be held personally liable if watchmen were not properly performing their duty, as per an ordinance of 1513 – Rep. 2, f. 154r; that watchmen were in fact on duty at all times can be seen from incidental remarks in the court records – Jour. 12, f. 11*r; Rep. 7, f. 156r; Rep. 8, ff. 68r, 113v; Rep. 9, f. 261v; Rep. 10, f. 85r; Rep. 11, ff. 275r, 340v, 369v, 447r; Rep. 12, f. 92r.

¹⁸ Jour. 13, ff. 349r, 428v-9r, 446v; Rep. 11, ff. 297r, 355v; Rep. 12, ff. 130v, 149v, 224r, 240r; Jour. 22, ff. 22v, 48r, 100r, 107r, 239v, 250r, 286v, 287r, 301r, 314r, 314v.

¹⁹ Rep. 9, f. 252v; Rep. 10, ff. 73v, 139v; Rep. 11, ff. 215v, 297r, 355v, 462r; Rep. 12, ff. 102v, 117r, 401r; Jour. 16, ff. 17v, 91v, 247r, 247v, 263r, 338v, 383r; Jour. 17, ff. 68r, 324v; Jour. 18, f. 216r.

²⁰ Rep. 3, f. 121r-v; Rep. 4, f. 63r; Jour. 12, ff. 83r, 335v; Jour. 13, ff. 62v-3r; Rep. 9, f. 170r; Rep. 10, ff. 6v, 201r; Jour. 14, ff. 53v-4r; LB. Q, f. 95r; Rep. 11, f. 234r; Rep. 11, f. 291v; Jour. 16, f. 17v; Jour. 17, f. 116r; Rep. 12, f. 247v; in keeping with the same idea, those freemen dwelling *outside* the liberties were discharged – Jour. 11, f. 365r-v; contributions in lieu of personal attendance even came to be levied on physicians and surgeons, who were theoretically exempt by royal charter, until the moves were explicitly overruled by Acts of Parliament – Rep. 2, f. 101v; Rep. 10, ff. 8r, 35r, 42r; 32 Henry VIII, cc. 40, 42; G.N. Clark et al., *History of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1964-2005), i. 81-2.

²¹ Rep. 12, ff. 102v, 107v, 187v; Jour. 17, f. 313v; Jour. 18, ff. 248v, 319v; Jour. 19, ff. 10v, 243r, 346v, 406r.

Market regulation also changed. The mayor's responsibility for, and control over, the provisioning of the markets was repeatedly extended from a simple assize of bread and ale to the setting of prices on all victuals, as well as some consumables like hay and fuel, while in other cases an actual sample of the goods had to be submitted before they could be put to sale.²² Minute control was developed over the market times and places for particular goods – for instance, cloths had to be taken to Blackwell Hall, and foreign turners and tanners were limited to the selds beneath the Mayor's Court.²³ The duty of aldermen to inspect and seal the measures used in their wards was supplemented by the provision of official measures in each ward, for important goods like coal, at the cost of the city government.²⁴ In some trades, regulation which would usually have been left to individual companies was subjected to civic oversight. Searchers for Wines were sworn before the Court and had to submit a report, while Aleconners came to be elected by the wardmotes and were responsible to the alderman for the quality of ale in each ward.²⁵ A wide array of market officials, appointed by the civic government, were established to regulate each commodity – there was a series of Corn Meters, Onion Meters, Coal Meters, and Salt Meters; a Weigher of Cloth, Weigher of Silks, and a Common Weigher for all other dry goods sold in gross; as well as a Garbeller of Spices, Gauger of Wines, and Packer of Cloths.²⁶ Where the civic government had lost control over the appointment of particular market officials, usurped by the Crown and granted away as forms of patronage, the city fought long and hard to recover them.²⁷

In practice, the civic authorities delegated most market responsibilities to individual companies, while simply retaining oversight, but it also exercised direct control through the growing number of civic officers who made up the Mayor's Household – some of the serjeants and yeomen of the Mayor and Chamber doubled as Serjeant of the Markets, Yeoman of the Fish Markets, Weigher of Bread, Yeomen at the Waterside or Foreign Taker.²⁸ In special cases, the mayor might intervene in a particular trade by requiring all transactions to take place with civic officers as brokers in order to enforce the official price.²⁹ To improve enforcement, a share of the fines for market offences came to be offered to those who seized and presented such goods, while in times of particular stress a dedicated

²² Barron, *London*, pp. 56, 58; Jour. 13, ff. 355r-8r; hay and coal – LB. G, f. 255r; LB. H, f. 204r; samples – Jour. 9, ff. 131v-2r; Rep. 2, f. 177r; Jour. 11, f. 196v; Rep. 3, f. 172v; Jour. 12, ff. 28v-31v; Rep. 7, f. 201r.

²³ LB. D, f. 87v; LB. H, f. 327r; LB. K, f. 255v; Jour. 11, ff. 258v-9r, 366v; Jour. 13, f. 438v; Barron, *London*, pp. 53-4.

²⁴ 'Liber Horn', ff. 232r-3r; Jour. 7, f. 131v; Jour. 8, f. 35v; Jour. 11, f. 93r-v; Rep. 2, f. 85v; Rep. 8, f. 87v; Rep. 9, f. 98r.

²⁵ LB H, 71v; *CPMR*, ii. 256.

²⁶ C. Barron, 'The Government of London and its Relations with the Crown, 1400-1450,' (Ph.D., Westfield College, 1970), pp. 233-8, 582-7.

²⁷ Barron, *London*, p. 57.

²⁸ B.R. Masters, 'The mayor's household before 1600,' in A.E.J. Hollaender & W. Kellaway (eds), *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), pp. 95-114.

²⁹ Jour. 13, f. 452r.

group of surveyors might be drawn from the companies to police the city marketplaces.³⁰ In all of this, the civic government aimed to secure a reliable and abundant supply of quality victuals at the lowest possible prices. In its attempt to do so, it developed an ideal of perfectly ordered and rationalized spaces, as seen in the grand and idealized projects put forward by Hugh Alley for reforming the markets in the later 1500s.³¹ Indeed, the structure and presentation of urban space was increasingly thought of as instrumental to the control which the civic government sought to exercise.

The management of the streets was also increasingly centralized and comprehensive in its vision. In the fifteenth century, ward rakers were each supplied by the civic government with carts and horses for clearing public places, while in the sixteenth century they collected waste from every household at appointed hours three times a week as part of their regular duties.³² Ward officers were ordered to flush the channels with buckets of water on appointed days, and the ultimate responsibility of the aldermen to see that these duties were carried out was reinforced by requirements to personally peruse the streets each week.³³ These measures addressed many of the problems created by leaving responsibility for household waste disposal and the cleaning of street frontages in the hands of individual householders. Furthermore, wheelage tolls were established on each cartload of goods entering the city to pay for the cleaning of marketplaces, just as tolls on the landing of boatloads funded the maintenance of hithes and quays.³⁴ Special rules were developed to govern the disposal of trade waste, especially the entrails left over from butchers' stalls, while other noxious practices, like animal slaughter or the melting of odorous substances, were increasingly banned within the built-up area of the city and removed to places outside the walls.³⁵ Even acquisitions of land outside the city were made by the civic authorities when room for new dumping grounds, or 'leystowes', was needed.³⁶ Furthermore, the regulation of buildings and boundaries was continually expanded. On the one hand, the enforcement of the building code was made more efficient by the delegation of site inspections to a panel of City Viewers, while streets and waterways were regularly inspected for purpresture and

³⁰ Share of fines – Jour. 10, f. 298r; Jour. 11, f. 118v; Rep. 7, ff. 173v, 230v, 297r; LB. O, f. 49v; Jour. 14, f. 105v; Jour. 13, ff. 438v, 456r; Rep. 9, ff. 244v, 269r; Rep. 10, ff. 199v, 333v; Rep. 11, ff. 284r, 294v, 358r, 375v, 422v; Rep. 12, ff. 7v, 31v, 36v, 86v, 180r, 192r, 196v, 197r, 198r, 203r-v, 205v, 212v, 213r, 273v, 281v, 282r, 293r; new officers – Rep. 10, f. 6v; Rep. 22, f. 97r; surveyors – Rep. 2, f. 164r; Rep. 9, ff. 64v-5r, 65v, 68v, 91v, 99r; Rep. 10, f. 315r-v; Rep. 11, f. 72r-v; Rep. 12, ff. 138v-9r, 150v.

³¹ *Hugh Alley's Caveat*.

³² LB. G, ff. 71v-2v; *CPMR*, ii. 147; LB. I, ff. 48r, 63r; Rep. 3, f. 247r; Rep. 9, f. 134v; Jour. 11, ff. 195v-6r, 348r-v; Jour. 14, f. 121v.

³³ LB. L, f. 7r; Rep. 2, f. 166v; Rep. 9, ff. 135v, 141r, 154v.

³⁴ Wheelage – Jour. 11, ff. 204v, 286v-9r; Jour. 14, ff. 105v-106r; hithes – LB. G, ff. 176r, 300r; Jour. 1, f. 61r; Jour. 7, f. 124v; Rep. 1, f. 147r(188r); Rep. 2, f. 55v; Rep. 3, f. 176v.

³⁵ Entrails – LB. H, f. 278v; LB. L, f. 264v; location of slaughter houses – Jour. 11, f. 365v; Rep. 3, ff. 80r, 214v, 217v; melting – Rep. 7, f. 31v; Rep. 8, f. 182v.

³⁶ Rep. 11, ff. 426v, 431v, 436r, 467r; Rep. 12, ff. 260r, 262r, 286v, 299v.

encroachments.³⁷ On the other, the civic government took a more direct hand in protecting the city from fire by financing and overseeing the provision of buckets, ladders, hooks and other fire fighting equipment in each ward.³⁸ Likewise, trades and hazards posing a fire risk were removed from the city by civic ordinance.³⁹ Thus existing traditions of regulating urban space continued to develop, often in ways that aimed at a more comprehensive and totalizing control of the urban environment.

There were also other developments in the early sixteenth century which, though they built on existing traditions, were characterized more by change than continuity. For instance, begging in the streets or simply loitering while in a masterless condition became unacceptable in the eyes of contemporary Londoners. At first, begging was to be limited and licensed by official tokens, but soon the casual asking of alms was put under a total ban as experiments in compulsory rates and the centralized provision of poor relief took place.⁴⁰ A civic officer was appointed to guard the gates against masterless men and street beggars, but the task was quickly given over to a team of four Beadles of the Beggars, whose number doubled and then doubled again.⁴¹ The civic government funded the provision of stocks and cages for every ward, and founded for itself a new kind of institution dedicated to supplying work to the unemployed while punishing beggars and vagrants.⁴² At the same time, the civic authorities took a greater interest in limiting the practice of particular games. While it was already statutorily unlawful for servants and apprentices to play at certain games, the civic government moved to eliminate all places of common resort where such games could be publicly played.⁴³ Tippling houses also came under increased scrutiny and their operation was restricted to citizen householders specifically licensed by the alderman of their ward. Ultimately the number of these licences was restricted and tippling houses throughout the city were tightly limited.⁴⁴ As the pressures of population growth came to be felt, moves were also taken against the subdivision of tenements for the receipt of multiple households, and ordinances were enacted against the leasing of rooms to new residents or ‘inmates’

³⁷ *London Assize of Nuisance*, p. xix-xx; *London Viewers and their Certificates, 1508-1558*, ed. J.S. Loengard (London Record Society, 26, 1989); surveys of encroachments – Rep. 1, ff. 151r(202r), 162r(213r), 166r(217r); Rep. 2, ff. 13v, 37v, 43r, 84v; Jour. 11, f. 330r; Rep. 9, f. 94r; Rep. 10, ff. 6v, 10r, 71r, 229r, 231v, 297v; Jour. 14, ff. 158r-v, 287r-v; Rep. 12, ff. 9r, 213v.

³⁸ LB. K, f. 140v; LB. L, f. 63v; Jour. 11, f. 86v; Rep. 2, f. 120v; Rep. 9, f. 267r; Rep. 10, f. 35r.

³⁹ Jour. 11, f. 86v; Rep. 3, ff. 86r, 212r; Rep. 7, ff. 95r, 97r, 111r; Rep. 8, f. 47r; Jour. 13, f. 433r; Jour. 14, ff. 158r-v, 287r-v; Rep. 11, ff. 343r, 348v.

⁴⁰ Rep. 3, f. 190r-v; Jour. 11, ff. 337r-8v; Rep. 8, f. 274v; Wriothesley, *Chronicle*, i. 77-8; Rep. 11, ff. 353r, 358v, 362r, 445v-6r, 509v-10r, 512v; Jour. 15, ff. 213v, 325v, 398r-400v; Jour. 17, f. 310r.

⁴¹ Jour. 11, f. 337v; Rep. 3, ff. 197r, 209v; Rep. 4, f. 154v; Rep. 10, ff. 158r, 204v, 266v; Rep. 11, f. 249v; Rep. 12, f. 289r; Rep. 16, f. 437r.

⁴² Rep. 2, f. 146v; Rep. 9, f. 165v; Rep. 10, ff. 72v, 106r, 206r; Rep. 11, ff. 43v, 202v, 408v, 482v, 513r; Rep. 12, ff. 235r, 464r.

⁴³ 12 Richard II, c.6; 11 Henry IV, c.4; Jour. 8, f. 127v; Jour. 11, f. 109v; Rep. 3, ff. 89r, 90r; Rep. 4, f. 27v.

⁴⁴ Rep. 2, ff. 9r, 40v; Rep. 4, ff. 3r, 67v; Jour. 12, f. 13r; Rep. 8, f. 153r; Rep. 9, f. 233v; Rep. 11, ff. 404r, 419v; Rep. 12, f. 173v.

without prior licence of the parish. Vestries appointed surveyors to police the situation and enforce the new rules.⁴⁵ In each case, the authorities showed increasing concern for the social behaviour of individuals in the spaces of the city – not just in streets and marketplaces, but also taverns and tenements. In doing so, the civic government continued to expand the scale and scope of its control over, as well as its responsibility for, the urban community.

The intensity with which the civic government monitored and regulated urban space was not only ongoing but also increasing, and these gradual changes were reflected in the physical and mental map of the city. Indeed, civic buildings proliferated with new vigour at this time, independent jurisdictions were progressively eliminated or subordinated, and representations of London became dominated by a memorialization of civic-minded charity. For instance, the constellation of new hospitals and the merchant bourse later built on Cornhill significantly reconfigured the position of civic space within the city. In London, buildings and spaces that were explicitly civic had been growing up gradually. The site of the Folkmoot had always stood in the shadow of the Cathedral, from which the Bishops had effectively governed the city, and the stone bridge, built 1176–1209 with funds from a series of ‘bridge guilds’, antedated the formation of a permanent civic bureaucracy and was administered separately from it.⁴⁶ But an area known as ‘terra Gialle’ c.1128 may point to an early building shared by the city’s guilds, and a ‘Guihallam’ for the urban government is firmly attested in 1212. It was located in St Lawrence Jury and rebuilt in the late 1200s, along with a chapel, before taking on the shape it retains to today in 1411–30. The collegiate church, founded in 1356, was also rebuilt at that time, along with a library.⁴⁷ Covered markets were another early kind of civic structure. The Stocks, built in 1283, and the Custom House at Whool Wharf set up in 1376–77, were both initially individual enterprises supported by the Crown rather than civic projects, but Blackwell Hall was later built as a city market for cloths in 1396–98.⁴⁸ Leadenhall was only being leased by the city in the 1300s, but was bought in 1409–11, whereafter it acquired a granary, grain market, chapel and school, under the leadership of Simon Eyre, 1439–53. By this time it could be described as ‘one of the most important civic buildings in the late medieval city’.⁴⁹

The merchant elite also had traditions of addressing disease and poverty among the urban community. Although necessarily standing at some distance, the city was ringed by a series

⁴⁵ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, 184–5, 244; Griffiths, *Lost Londons*, p. 309 nn. 86, 87.

⁴⁶ J. McEwan, ‘Medieval London: The development of a civic political community, c.1100–1300’ (Ph.D., Royal Holloway, 2007); Barron, *London*, pp. 50–51.

⁴⁷ C. Barron, *The Medieval Guildhall of London* (London, 1974), pp. 15–18, 21, 23, 33, 35–9; BL Add. MS. 14252, f. 129v; Weinbaum, *London*, ii. 89–91.

⁴⁸ Barron, *London*, pp. 52–3; LB. H, f. 327r.

⁴⁹ A.H. Thomas, ‘Notes on the history of the Leadenhall, AD. 1195–1488, *London Topographical Record* 13 (1923), pp. 1–22; M. Samuel, ‘Reconstructing the medieval market at Leadenhall,’ in G. Milne (ed.), *From Roman Basilica to Medieval Market* (London, 1992), p. 123.

of leper hospitals in Southwark, Hackney, Mile End, Knightsbridge, Highgate and Hammersmith. Of these Southwark and Hackney were 'of the foundation of the city', c.1280, and under direct civic control, while those at Mile End (c.1274), and Knightsbridge (probably in the 1300s), were founded or acquired by the city at some stage. The houses at Highgate and Hammersmith dated only from the late 1400s, but the city was responsible for them in the sixteenth century. In addition to these there was the leper house of St Giles in the Fields, which was founded by Queen Matilda before 1118, but where the city had a right to 14 beds and exercised some supervision after 1354.⁵⁰ In and about the city itself were also a series of hospitals serving the urban population. Although they were administered by religious orders, many of these were supported, or had been founded by, members of the merchant elite, such as Elsing Spital, established in 1331 by William Elsing, mercer.⁵¹ From the early 1400s almshouses began to appear, some founded by pious individuals like Richard Whittington and his executors (1424) or Thomas Beaumont (1454), while others were set up on the initiative of guilds and fraternities like those of the Taylors (1413), Grocers (1433), and poor priests of St Augustine Papey (1442).⁵² Thus by 1500 there was a handful of explicitly civic buildings and spaces in the city, supplemented by individual and corporate foundations dedicated to serving the urban community.

In the sixteenth century, two major developments greatly expanded the presence of civic space in the city while remaining firmly within the traditions established by London's urban elite. First, in refounding the hospitals after their dissolution the civic government created a comprehensive system that aimed at a total solution to the problems of poverty and sickness in the city. The sick poor were to be cared for at St Bartholomew's, 'impotent and lame persons' at St Thomas Southwark, orphans at Christchurch, and the mentally ill at St Mary's Bethlem. Regular pensions were to be paid to those unable to labour, while Bridewell was established to provide work stocks for the unemployed, as well as punishment and moral reform for those able to work yet unwilling to do so. Moreover, they were all under direct civic control and managed by a board of governors made up of aldermen and common councillors.⁵³ Ringing the city to the south, west and north-east, the hospitals became major landmarks in the map of the urban landscape, as well as being implicated in the regulation of

⁵⁰ M. Honeybourne, 'The leper hospitals of the London area,' *Transactions of the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society* 21 (1967), pp. 1-61.

⁵¹ C. Rawcliff, 'The hospitals of later medieval London,' *Medical History* 28 (1984), pp. 1-21; Barron, *London*, pp. 289-95.

⁵² Stow, *Survey*, i. 170-71, 181, 242-3, 263; *London Livery Companies Commission*, iv. 39-41, 502; Barron, *London*, pp. 298-300.

⁵³ C. Daly, 'The hospitals of London: administration, refoundation and benefaction, c.1500-72,' (DPhil., Oxford, 1993); P. Slack, 'Hospitals, workhouses and the relief of the poor in early modern London,' in A. Cunningham & O. Grell (eds), *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe, 1500-1700* (London, 1997), pp. 234-51; John Stow, *A Summarie of the Chronicles of England*, ed. B.L. Beer (Leviston, 2007), p. 294.

the streets through their role in the campaign against begging and vagrancy.⁵⁴ The expanding scope of authority and responsibility which the civic government claimed to exercise was thus given physical expression in the changing landscape of the city.

Secondly, the foundation of a merchant bourse created a totally new kind of space. Proposals for a bourse first began in 1518 when a move from Lombard St to Leadenhall was considered. Committee reports were drawn up and submitted in the 1530s but difficulties in finding a suitable location meant that little progress was made until the 1560s when Thomas Gresham offered to build it himself if the city could provide the land.⁵⁵ Based on the bourse at Antwerp, Gresham's building between Cornhill and Broad St created a rationalized square in the classical style which celebrated commerce as a grand and honourable undertaking. Patronized by Elizabeth as the Royal Exchange in 1571, the bourse became a major centre of city life and was administered after Gresham's death in 1579 by the civic authorities under the terms of his will.⁵⁶ Prior to this time, the stretch of Cheapside from the Great Conduit to Paul's Gate had functioned as the symbolic centre of civic space, where processions converged and ritual celebrations culminated.⁵⁷ But unlike its counterparts on the continent, London never developed this into a formal square or piazza that made space for and represented the urban community as a whole. In London, formal civic spaces were bounded, institutional, and palpably controlled by the merchant elite.

In general terms, it was the dissolution of the monasteries that had the greatest impact on the fabric of the urban environment in the first half of the sixteenth century, but this impact was not limited to the physical alteration of churches into storehouses and workshops. It also provided an opportunity for the civic government to continue its elimination of the independent franchises nestling within the broader area of its territorial jurisdiction. Ten such franchises survived as liberties after being sold to private individuals, one of which – St Bartholomew's – the city itself acquired. As the most recent commentator has noted, 'In the decades after the dissolution the City treated the franchises of exempt places with newfound jealousy [which] ... grew from its increasing conception of itself as a geographically coherent authority'.⁵⁸ This conception prompted the civic government to wage an ongoing campaign to acquire the rights, overturn them in court, or have them annulled by Parliament. In this it achieved little success until 1592, when it was able to purchase Holy Trinity Aldgate, and

⁵⁴ P. Griffiths, 'Building Bridewell: London's self-images, 1550-1640,' in N. Jones & D. Woolf (eds), *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 228-48; Griffiths, *Lost Londons*, pp. 259-69.

⁵⁵ Rep. 7, f. 222r; Jour. 13, ff. 417r, 420r, 435r, 442v, 443r; Rep. 9, ff. 72r, 90v, 255v, 257v, 258r; Jour. 14, f. 124r-v; Rep. 10, ff. 42r, 46r, 66v, 69v; Rep. 15, ff. 237v, 406v-7r, 410v.

⁵⁶ A. Saunders (ed.), *The Royal Exchange* (London Topographical Society, 152, 1997).

⁵⁷ Manley, *Literature and Culture*, pp. 221-40; Harding, 'Cheapside'.

⁵⁸ A. House, 'The City of London and the Problem of the Liberties, c.1540-c.1640,' (D.Phil., Oxford, 2006), p. 23.

again in 1608, when James I extended its legal jurisdiction over Black Friars, White Friars and Cold Harbour.⁵⁹ But where it could not take control itself it sought to secure the cooperation of those who were responsible for exercising authority within them. At the same time, it made progress across the river when it purchased the Borough of Southwark in 1550. The City had long enjoyed power there, having acquired the Vill of Southwark as early as 1327 by a charter of Edward III, but full jurisdiction still eluded it. The return of writs, exclusive right of arrest, arraignment before City justices, and the regulation of victuals were further secured from Henry IV, along with rights of local taxation from Edward IV, but not until it had acquired the borough and remaining royal estates was its control there complete.⁶⁰ The elimination and subordination of these rival jurisdictions reflected and projected the all-encompassing terms in which the civic government increasingly saw the city and its authority over it.

Controlling representations and images – both of particular places and of the city as a whole – was also important to maintaining a particular structure of urban space and the community inhabiting it. In pre-Reformation London, the merchant elite had celebrated an image of the urban community as an organic body united in Christian charity.⁶¹ Although the Reformation undermined this picture, a new protestant culture now made it possible to reconfigure merchant wealth as justly earned and inherently contributing to the common good. Indeed, new kinds of building, ornamentation and representation in the sixteenth century increasingly memorialized the urban elite as dedicated to civic-minded charity.⁶² For instance, schools like those of the Mercers, established in 1542, and the Merchant Taylors, in 1561, became monuments to their founders and the socially profitable uses of merchant wealth. Gresham College and Thomas Sutton's Charterhouse continued this tradition in later decades.⁶³ Under this reconfiguration, the long-standing tradition of founding almshouses was able to continue, and the urban landscape was increasingly punctuated by bequests like the eight houses for poor widows endowed by Lady Askew in 1540, the six houses at St Helen's left by Andrew Judd in the late 1550s, or those for fourteen singlewomen set up by Richard Hills near the Tower.⁶⁴ Gresham left eight houses behind his residence in Bishopsgate St, while Ambrose Nicholas founded another twelve near

⁵⁹ House, 'Liberties', p. 34.

⁶⁰ MGL, ii. 433-6; *Historical Charters*, pp. 59-60, 80-4, 110-27; Rep. 12, f. 219r; D. Johnson, *Southwark and the City* (London, 1969), appendices.

⁶¹ Brigden, 'Religion and social obligation'.

⁶² I.W. Archer, 'The arts and acts of memorialization in early modern London', in J.F. Merritt (ed.), *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 89-113; for Catholic precedents, see R. Tittler, 'Sir Thomas White of London: civic philanthropy and the making of the merchant-hero', in idem, *Townsperson and Nation: English urban experiences, 1540-1640* (Stanford, CA, 2001), pp. 100-120.

⁶³ Watney, *St Thomas of Acon* (1906), pp. 132, 144-5, 154, 160; Stow, *Survey*, i. 74, 76; G. Davies, *Charterhouse in London: monastery, mansion, hospital, school* (London, 1921).

⁶⁴ Stow, *Survey*, i. 113, 174, 302; *London Livery Companies Commission*, iv. 120-21, 338.

Cripplegate in 1578.⁶⁵ Coats of arms proliferated upon the walls and in the windows of company halls and parish churches, while funeral monuments sometimes had lists of the deceased's benefactions etched upon their tablets. These physical and visual manifestations were part of a wider movement to memorialize protestant and civic-minded charity in the streets and spaces of the city. Dramatists composed panegyrics celebrating such men and women as John Allen, Agnes Foster, and Avis Gibson, while Stow and the continuators of his chronicles began to include annual catalogues of charitable giving by prominent Londoners.⁶⁶

In fact, nothing better captures the struggle to defend or impose particular sets of meanings and narratives upon the urban landscape than Stow's *Survey* itself. Eschewing the top-down geometric approach to surveys being developed by agrarian improvers, often in tension with the rights of customary copyholders, Stow insisted upon describing the city through a perambulation that recounted the history of civic identity embedded in its sites and places. Stow feared that the changes of the sixteenth century were dissolving the traditional structures of the urban community, and it is profoundly significant that he attempted to reinforce those structures by reinscribing a particular picture of civic identity in his readers' mental maps of the urban landscape.⁶⁷ As Andrew Gordon says, it is 'indicative of both his diagnosis of, and prescriptive remedy for, the state of civic identity that Stow should oversee London in a textual "survey" undertaken in the company of an imagined textual community'.⁶⁸ The power of Stow's presentation and its potential to be used by those in authority, especially as edited by his continuators, is demonstrated by the Bishop of London's order for every parish church to acquire a copy.⁶⁹ In this way, gradual changes in both physical and mental maps of the city were implicated in the process by which the civic government expanded its scope and positioned itself as responsible for the totality of urban life.

⁶⁵ Stow, *Survey*, i. 177, 299; *London Livery Companies Commission*, iv. 504.

⁶⁶ *Two Historical Plays on the Life and Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, by Thomas Heywood, ed. J. Payne Collier (Shakespeare Society, 45, 1851), pp. 94-8; C. Wheatley, 'The pocket books of early modern history,' in H. Turner (ed.), *The Culture of Capital: Property, cities, and knowledge in early modern England* (London, 2002), pp. 183-202.

⁶⁷ I.W. Archer, 'The nostalgia of John Stow,' in D.L. Smith, R. Strier & D. Bevington (eds), *The Theatrical City: Culture, theatre and politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 17-34; E. Bonahue, 'Citizen history: Stow's Survey of London,' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 38:1 (1998), p. 65; I.W. Archer, 'John Stow: citizen and historian,' in I. Gadd & A. Gillespie (eds), *John Stow (1525-1605) and the making of the English past* (London, 2004), pp. 15-16.

⁶⁸ A. Gordon, 'Overseeing and overlooking: John Stow and the surveying of the city,' in Gadd & Gillespie, *John Stow*, p. 88.

⁶⁹ I.W. Archer, 'Discourses of history in Elizabethan and early Stuart London,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68 (2006), pp. 205-26; J.F. Merritt, 'The reshaping of Stow's *Survey*: Munday, Strype, and the Protestant city,' in eadem, *Imagining Early Modern London*, pp. 52-88.

Two important things emerge from this picture. First, the urban environment was itself a medium of official political communication and inherently political. The physical shape of the city embodied an authorized picture of the community, in which civic authority united a series of parallel but overlapping social worlds, each with their own hierarchical structure, while civic authority was made present in the ongoing regulation of the urban environment. By the same token, like other forms of official communication, the city's spaces and their meanings could become targets of appropriation, inversion or outright subversion as a means to contest the official construction of authority. Secondly, while the image of civic government expressed in London's urban space already had a long history in policing, market rules, street cleaning and building codes, these well-established practices were evolving in the sixteenth century into a more centralized and holistic approach to the management of urban life that rendered civic authority increasingly omnipresent and all-encompassing. This shift was further emphasized by new civic buildings, an expanding conception of civic jurisdiction, and representations of the city as embodying a culture of civic-minded charity.

This adds to our understanding of how and why cities and towns in early modern England were developing a distinctive political and social culture. The ability of urban space to communicate new visions of government and authority was one aspect of evolving urban attitudes. Moreover, the existing nature of urban space as inherently political and its implication in how authority was constructed and contested was part of why the challenges of urban growth in London after 1550 had such an effect on the strategies of, and attitudes to, governance.

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

On the basis of the foregoing chapters, this thesis draws two conclusions: first, that acts of political communication were important to the political culture of early Tudor London; and second, that the spatial dimension of this political culture was part of what made London, like other early modern towns, distinct. It was also, I suggest, a crucial context for the transformation of London's political culture in the century after 1550.

The thesis began in Part One with the observation that the urban elite had a particular need to assert the presence and legitimacy of civic authority, and that it needed to project a clear distinction between governors and governed in the face of a more complex reality. It was then argued, in Part Two, that the civic government sought to do this through the performative and spatial dimensions of political communication. Over and above the practical function which proclamations, processions and public punishments were intended to fulfil, they also had a ritual and spatial structure designed to communicate a more general message about power and authority in the city. That is, each contributed on a daily basis to the presentation of a particular image of the civic government. Proclamations projected its presence and legitimacy; processions portrayed its hierarchy as a natural and essential part of the city as a community; and public punishments constructed it as active and responsible. Moreover, through each of these performances, the civic government also created the image of a clear divide between the city's governors and those they governed – implicit in each was a structural difference between the governors who spoke and acted, and the governed who watched and listened. In this sense, it was partly in and through acts of communication – with their ritual and spatial structure – that civic authority was legitimated, asserted and maintained.

At the same time, as argued in Part Three, acts of political communication were not only a way for the civic government to construct and project an image of its own authority; they were also sites for contesting authority and its particular representations. In fact, when contesting the status quo, those formally excluded from power specifically focused upon the modes of official political communication. People took the performances of the authorities and put them to their own uses, copied their style for seditious purposes, or sought to turn them on their head. In the ritualized performance of submitting petitions to the authorities, the rhetoric of official acts and proclamations was appropriated and redeployed to achieve the ends of individual petitioners. In the posting of anonymous libels and seditious bills, the act of pinning up official proclamations and written notices was appropriated and inverted as a means to communicate resistance. And in face-to-face confrontations with superiors, the

discourse of the council chamber and the authorized map of the city were appropriated and subverted by the idiom of popular language and the threat of political action in the streets.

Taken together, these things shows the importance of political communication to an understanding of political culture in the city. Both the urban elite and the wider population were aware that the status quo rested to some extent in the picture of governors and governed put forward in and through official acts of communication. It was here that authority was constructed and contested. Moreover, the spatial dimension of these acts must be recognized in order to fully understand them. It was important to the message which they sought to communicate, and people were highly sensitive to their spatial meanings. In fact, the urban environment was itself a medium for political communication. Control of urban space and acts of building projected an image of authority which reinforced the status quo but, like other acts of communication, remained open to contest and change. In this sense, the physical spaces of the city, people's actions in them, and their mental maps of it, were inherently political and a constant battleground for the negotiation of power. At the same time, the city's urban space was evolving and asserting new images of authority and government. In addition to the associational culture of trade guilds, the demands of managing communal resources, and the attitudes encouraged by corporate citizenship, the nature of urban space as a medium of communication and inherently political was one of the things that made early modern towns distinct.

It was, moreover, a crucial context for the transformation of London's political culture in the century after 1550. Across the early modern period, London continued to be dominated by a merchant elite, yet the nature of authority changed. Urban government became more total, pervasive and rationalized in the hope of justifying itself and maintaining the status quo, but in the process it subjected itself to greater accountability. This was partly so, I would suggest, because of the performative and spatial dimensions of the city's political culture and its urban environment. Dramatic urbanization presented London's governors with great challenges which demanded new responses, but changing political culture was not just a reaction to physical developments. Instead, it was the existing nature of the urban environment as a battlefield for competing interests which made urban change such a powerful political challenge and demanded new strategies as a means to legitimate civic authority and the power of the urban elite. At the same time, some of these changes were already underway in the early Tudor city. The performative and spatial dimensions of the urban environment were therefore important to the changing political culture of London in the early modern period.

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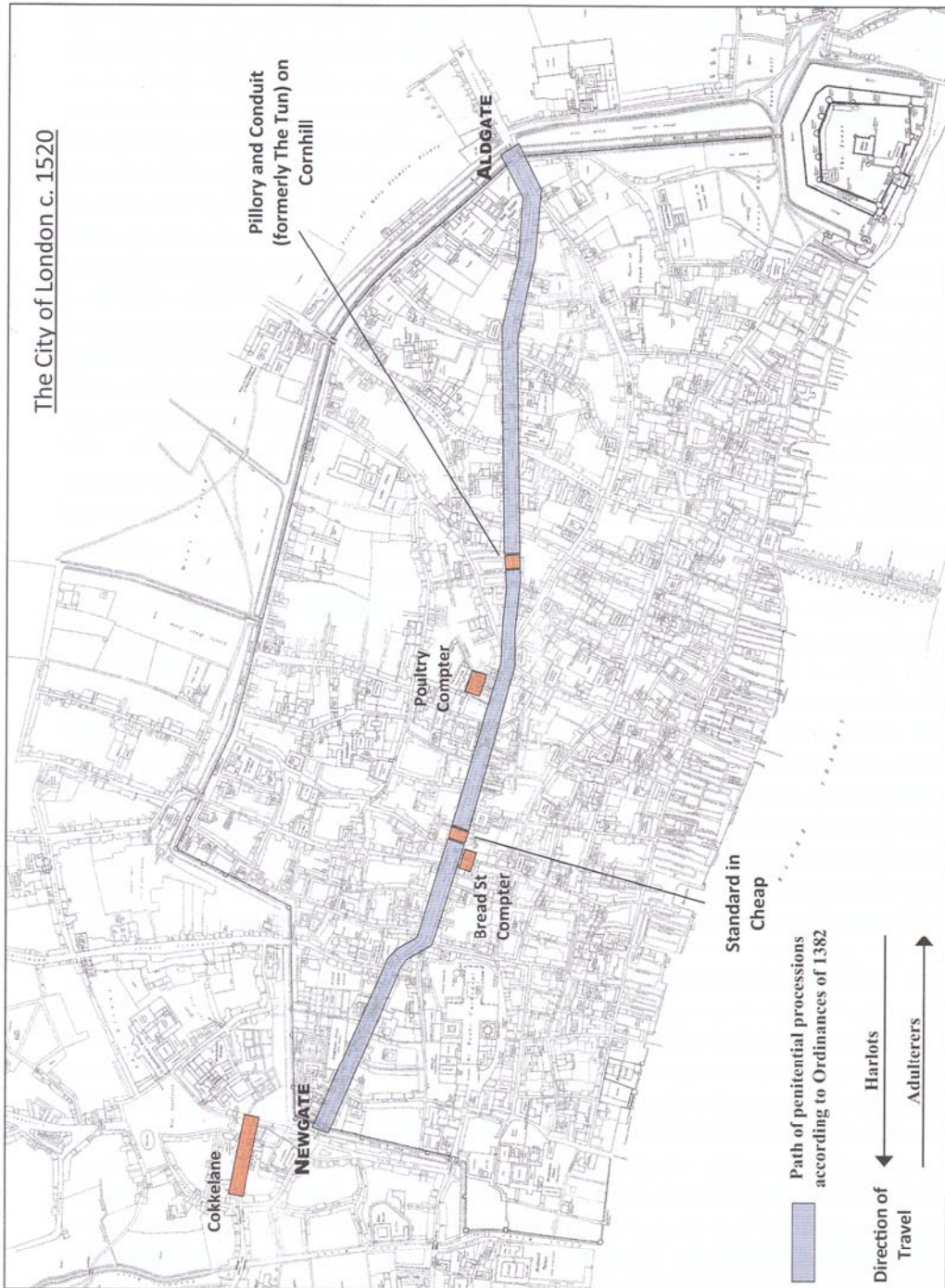


Fig. 1. M. Lobel (ed.), 'The City of London from Pre-Historic Times to c.1520', *British Atlas of Historic Towns*, 3 (1989).
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