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**Publication details**

Giles, Katherine (2000) *Chapter 7: Early Modern Guildhalls: Habitus in transition?*  
In: Hedges, John (ed) *An Archaeology of Social Identity: Guildhalls in York, c. 1350-1630*. British Archaeological Reports (BAR 315). John and Erica Hedges Ltd and Archaeopress, Oxford, UK, pp. 79-95. ISBN 1 84171 163 2

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## Chapter 7. Early Modern Guildhalls: habitus in transition?

### Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the archaeological evidence for aspects of continuity and change in the structure and spatial organisation of guildhalls between c.1530-c.1630. It seeks to establish the significance of these processes in relation to the idea of habitus and to the role of the guildhall as a locale in which social identity was structured in post-medieval York. The study of any aspect of this period must engage with the socio-economic, ideological, political and cultural shifts which are argued to have occurred across Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. These have been associated with large scale structural forces such as the development of capitalism, as well as the impact of cultural and political movements such as the Reformation and the Renaissance (Gaimster and Stamper 1997, x). The first section of this chapter will examine some of the historical and archaeological research frameworks and agendas which have been developed to approach these issues. Particular attention will be paid to those which relate to material culture and the built environment of the medieval town. Sections 7.2 and 7.3 will be explicitly concerned with the archaeological evidence of guildhalls, which suggests that we need to re-examine and re-frame the chronological context of these processes of change. Section 7.2 will argue that the lack of evidence for fundamental changes in the form and function of guildhalls in the immediate post-Reformation period is evidence that they continued to be used in traditional ways, to structure a sense of continuity with the medieval past.

However, in 7.3 a chronological shift dating to the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries will be identified in the structure of guildhalls and their function as habitus. Guilds appear increasingly concerned to control the activities and identities structured within their halls during this period. In part this was a response to the increasingly public use of guildhalls by multiple social groups within the urban community. But it can also be understood as part of a shift in habitus which consisted of a severing of links with the discourse and practices of Catholicism and the use of a range of political and ideological discourses (including Renaissance humanism and Protestantism) to underpin the construction of social identity, status and power. Emphasis was placed by all of these discourses on the responsibility of secular authorities to structure social control and moral order. Guildhalls will be argued to have been one of the material mechanisms through which particular forms of identity were framed and imposed by guilds, not just on other guild members, but also those on the disordered and dangerous margins of society, such as the poor.

## 7.1 An archaeology of transition?

### The development of capitalism

There are two traditions of scholarship which have dominated historical accounts of the transformation of the medieval world and the rise of modernity. The first is derived from the work of Marx (1990) and its qualification in the writings of Durkheim (1964) and Weber (1958; 1964). The second is an alternative tradition inspired by the Annales school of historians, most notably Bloch (1965), Febvre (1974) and Braudel (1972-3; 1984). Marx's economic determinism has inspired a generation of historians to chart the development of capitalism through the long rise of the mercantile middle classes and the expansion of external trade in the towns and cities of medieval or early modern Europe (Lipson 1956-9; Pirenne 1969; Sweezy 1976; Wallerstein 1983; Britnell 1993). An alternative paradigm which places emphasis on ideology and culture as well as economics as the locus of social and political power is that of the Annales school. The work of Bloch (1965; 1991) and Febvre (1974) is seen to offer an inter-disciplinary methodology for integrating the study of socio-economic structures with cultural mentalités through a form of 'total history' (Bintliff 1991, 5-6; Knapp 1992). Archaeologists such as Hodges (1982b) seeking to theorise long-term structural change have also adopted the Annaliste Braudel's tripartite model of long-term geographic and environmental structures -longue durée, medium-term socio-economic cycles -conjoncture, and short-term socio-political events -*l'histoire événementielle*. However, the emphasis this places on long- and medium-term structures of change at the expense of human agency and social practice has also been criticised (Moreland 1992, 116).

Traditional Marxist approaches have emphasised the centrality of medieval European towns and cities to the development of capitalism by seeing them as 'non-feudal islands in a feudal sea' (Postan 1972, 212). However this has led to a tendency to see towns as isolated subjects or reified social objects (Wirth 1938, 44; Weber 1958; Pirenne 1969; Sjoberg 1960). More recent scholarship (including that of Marxists such as Hilton (1990; 1992, 9)) has moved away from this position and argued that medieval towns were distinct but nevertheless active parts of the feudal system, 'fields of action integral to some larger world and within which the actions and contradictions of that larger world are displayed with great clarity' (Diederiks and Hohenberg 1992, 32). Indeed many recent syntheses have been explicitly concerned to challenge unilinear narratives of the emergence of capitalism and/or modernity (Friedrichs 1995, 9-15; Cowan 1998; Nicholas 1999). By stressing the level of continuity as well as contrast between medieval and post-medieval towns, historians are therefore developing a deeper contextual understanding of the early modern urban experience.

British archaeologists have not really explored the potential of historical or geographical research agendas concerned with the idea of the early modern town as a stage on which social, economic, political and ideological tensions were ‘played out’ in particularly visible ways (cf. Kearns & Philo 1993; Williams & Thrift 1987). This may well be because archaeologists concerned with the transition between medieval and early modern society, such as Johnson (1996), have turned their attention away from towns altogether and drawn on an alternative historiographical tradition which places emphasis on the pre-industrial countryside as a particularly visible locus, or arena, of social transformation (Tawney 1912, 408-9; Dobb 1963; Brenner 1977; 1993; Ashton & Philpin 1985; Harman 1989, 44-50). Johnson (1996) is concerned to counter the economic determinism of Marxism by linking shifts in the perception and consumption of material culture (including buildings and landscapes) to ideological and cultural as well as economic change. Few archaeologists have sought to contrast or explain the material conditions and experiences of towns during the period of the ‘great rebuilding’ identified in rural areas (Hoskins 1953; Alcock 1973; Johnson 1986; Airs 1994), for example. These developments highlight the need for a more coherent archaeological understanding of aspects of socio-economic continuity, as well as change, in the early modern town.

Although Marx’s model may be over-simplistic and deterministic, it cannot be denied that fundamental economic changes did occur within late medieval and early modern provincial towns and had a profound impact on social structure and relations. The economic decline suffered by many provincial towns in the later medieval period (see Chapter 6) affected particular sections of the craft and mercantile community and created tensions and changes in attitudes towards standards of living, social welfare and responsibility. The economic revival experienced by some of these towns and cities in the later sixteenth century also benefited particular sections of the urban community, and was therefore often associated with socio-economic polarisation. However, these economic factors must also be set within the context of processes such as the Reformation and Renaissance. Shifts in the perception and use of urban material culture not only reflected, but also structured, ideological and political change, as well as economic development.

### **The ‘urban Renaissance’**

The Renaissance is a specific historical phenomenon which had profound long-term implications for the intellectual, cultural and political life of early modern Europe. Although a detailed discussion of its development and impact is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth highlighting the wealth of historical and archaeological study concerned with its impact on the style and meaning of material culture, including architecture and artefacts (see for example Summerson 1993; Airs 1995; Douglas & Isherwood 1979; Shamma 1990; Weatherill 1988). Johnson (1996, 191-2) has emphasised the connections between an explosion in the distribution, consumption and perception of early modern material culture, and particular artistic, political or philosophical Renaissance discourses which placed emphasis on the individual and the fashioning of the self (Rose 1989; Contamine 1988; Braunstein 1988). The (re)discovery and dissemination of Classical principles in Renaissance architectural treatises is also perceived to have transformed ideas about the built environment and urban morphology. This perception can be found in the work of architects such as Le Corbusier (1971) and sociologists such as Weber (1958), where it is also directly associated with the development of capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie. At the heart of these interpretations lies the belief that medieval cities were essentially organic and piecemeal developments (Abercrombie 1933) whereas the Renaissance heralded the development of deliberate urban planning, morphological regularity and the replacement of the piecemeal design of individual buildings by an aesthetic concern with the production of a unified townscape (Hohenberg & Lees 1985; Borsari 1977; 1989).

The most complex integration of these ideas with traditional theories about the feudal-capitalist transition is Lefebvre's (1994) *The Production of Space* which emphasises the centrality of urban space in the medieval-early modern shift. Lefebvre (1994, 264-7; 1996) uses the terms 'absolute' and 'abstract' space to contrast the nature of medieval space with that produced within towns during the sixteenth century. Medieval absolute space consists of both commercial and religious space; it is characterised by Lefebvre (1994, 264) as 'at once spiritual and material, intellectual and sensory, and populated by signs of the body.' In contrast early modern abstract space is seen to be a product of long term structural changes including the Renaissance and the development of capitalism (Lefebvre 1994, 269-72). It incorporates representations of space which are

conceived not as the building of a particular structure, palace or monument, but rather as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which call for 'representations' that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms. (Lefebvre 1994, 42)

The changes made to individual buildings are therefore seen as being politically conceived modifications to the town as a subject in itself:

The Renaissance town ceased to evolve 'after the fashion of a continuous narrative', adding one building after another, an extension to a street, or another

square to those already in existence. From now on each building, each addition, was politically conceived; each innovation modified the whole, and each object -as though it had hitherto been somehow external -came to affect the entire fabric (Lefebvre 1994, 272).

Lefebvre is not alone in seeing the visual representation, or 'enframing' of space as a characteristic of modernity. Mitchell (1988; 1989), Cosgrove (1985) and Gregory (1993; 1994) all link this process of framing to the development of linear perspective in the work of Renaissance architects such as Brunelleschi. These changes are seen to relate to the constitution of the individual as a rational human individual, and to place the eye and the 'gaze' rather than the body of the individual at the centre of human experience; a process described by Gregory (1994, 392) as the 'victory of decorporealisation'. This is also argued to explain a shift of emphasis to the perspectival qualities and exterior facades of buildings.

For Lefebvre, and other urban historians and social geographers, this process was facilitated by the use of particular forms of written discourse, particularly architectural and planning treatises, maps and plans (cf. Soderstrom 1996; Cosgrove 1985; Gregory 1994 and see Lilley 1999). Borsay's *The English Urban Renaissance* (1989) provides the most cogent exploration of these ideas in relation to English provincial towns. It contrasts a lack of aesthetic concern in medieval vernacular urban architecture (after Brunskill 1978) with the 'more ordered, integrated and therefore 'urban' appearance' of the unified early modern townscape (Borsay 1989, 42, 60; Airs 1982, 97-8; Platt 1976, 66-9):

Here was a highly theoretical architecture based on archetypal building forms and universal rules, which were intended to override local tradition and personal fancy. (Borsay 1989, 61)

However it is important to note that Borsay sees the English 'urban Renaissance' as a phenomenon of the period c.1660-1700, and notes that there were plenty of towns (including York) which retained their traditional appearance for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is a view shared by both Friedrichs (1995, 26) and Cowan (1998, 123-4) who stress that many early modern towns continued to be altered through the piecemeal addition of individual buildings or groups of buildings to existing streetscapes rather than by wholesale morphological transformation. This leaves us with an interesting question about the visible impact of the Renaissance in the early modern town. The phenomena which have been identified as characteristics of the Renaissance and/or modernity certainly require further consideration. Although there appears to be an expansion in the written discourses through which urban topography and architecture was manipulated during this period, similar concerns can be identified in the morphology and archaeology of medieval towns (Soderstrom 1996; Lilley 1998;

1999). The design of many medieval buildings also demonstrates an awareness and concern with aesthetics, proportion and symmetry, which can be found in the written treatises of medieval theologians and philosophers such as Albertus Magnus (Eco 1986). Urban archaeologists must therefore look to shifts in the ways in which members of the urban community perceived themselves and their relationships to others, and to changes in habitus, to explain the changes made to the individual buildings and the built environment of medieval towns.

### **The urban Reformation**

Even those historians who claim that very little changed in European towns during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries admit that the area of religion is an exception to this rule (Cowan 1998; Nicholas 1999). The historiography of the English Reformation has traditionally been polarised along religious lines. Protestant historians such as Dickens (1959; 1964) have argued that it was a warmly welcomed, inevitable consequence of the corruption and decline of late medieval Catholicism, whilst Catholics such as Scarisbrick (1984) and Haigh (1987; 1993) have maintained that it was a devastating break with an imperfect but nevertheless popular and vibrant form of late medieval religious belief. More recently historians have sought to find a balance between these two poles of opposition, emphasising the regional and chronological specificity of the Reformation, particularly in provincial towns (Collinson 1988; 1998, Marshall 1997; Hutton 1987). Particularly germane to this thesis has been recent research concerned with reassessing the chronological impact of the Reformation. Although substantial resistance and opposition can be identified in the immediate post-Reformation period of the 1530s and 1540s, it appears that by the end of the sixteenth-century Protestantism had made real progress at grassroots level in many communities (Duffy 1992; Marsh 1998, 16; Haigh 1993).

Historians have become increasingly interested in the material construction of the Reformation and resistance to it (Duffy 1992; Aston 1989; 1993; Cunich 1998). However, they have tended to focus on the impact of ecclesiastical legislation on the fixtures and fittings of parish churches rather than the ways in which these transformed the social use of space, and thus the material construction of habitus. An understanding of archaeological data as the material fragments of the recursive social practices of the past therefore offers archaeologists a unique perspective from which to approach these aspects of the Reformation (after Barrett 1987; 1988; Morris 1996). An archaeological agenda must engage with the physical effects of two processes of dissolution: that of the monasteries in the 1530s, and the chantries in the 1540s. The former had a profound effect on the topography and economy of both the medieval countryside and on provincial towns such as York, where over eleven major religious foundations were surrendered during the 1530s. This loss was accompanied by the confiscation of large amounts of urban property and land owned by



monastic foundations outside the city (VCH 1961, 117). Although in the long term civic authorities may have benefited from the acquisition of monastic properties (Tittler 1998a; 1998b, 192-3; Kitching 1970; 1972), in the short term the loss of institutional investment and monastic trade undoubtedly had profound consequences for the prosperity of religious centres such as York.

Historians have tended to play down the physical effects of the Chantries Act of 1547:

The dissolution of chantries exercised only an indirect effect on the profile of the city, for they were seldom linked with impressive architectural features.

(Palliser in VCH 1961, 117; see also 1971).

However this underestimates the topographical significance of the collegiate buildings and domestic structures associated with communities of chantry priests, and of other buildings such as *maisons dieu* which although not monumental, were important parts of the street and townscape. The descriptions of decay in sixteenth-century petitions to the fee-farm suggest that these acts of dissolution exacerbated the physical condition of a city already in decline (Palliser 1979, 214-5). However the real significance of the Chantries Act of 1547 was that it sought to destroy the ideological as well as the institutional framework of chantries, those ‘phantasising vain opinions of purgatory and masses satisfactory, to be done for them which be departed’ (Duffy 1992, 454; see also Burgess 1988). The long-term aim of the legislation was to remove any sense of meaning or significance that these institutions may have had in contemporary society. Therefore although some historians have suggested that the suppression of socially exclusive institutions such as perpetual chantries and colleges was less controversial than the Injunctions’ attack on the doctrine of Purgatory and the intercessory practices and popular institutions associated with it, the two were inextricably bound. The public image and self-perception which cities such as York projected was founded upon their function as religious centres, and the Chantries Act therefore swept away the ideological justification for numerous material and ritual expressions of parochial and civic pride.

Historians have suggested that one of the most devastating aspects of the legislation of 1547 was its attack on religious guilds, because they were one of the principal forms of medieval lay religious activity (Duffy 1992, 454; Cunich 1998, 162-5). However, it is difficult to gauge the true level of this impact because evidence for the number and popularity of fraternities before the Reformation is often derived from the chantry surveys themselves, and because there was a clear financial incentive for contemporaries to suppress evidence of guilds in order to avoid the confiscation of their assets. It is therefore likely that we are vastly underestimating the sheer scale and significance of these associations in pre-Reformation communities (Palliser 1971, 21-6;

Kitching 1970). This is easy to demonstrate in York, where the guilds of St. Anthony and St. John the Baptist are absent from the chantry surveys (VCH 1961, 148), but where probate evidence indicates that they were definitely still in existence at this date (see Appendices 4 and 5). This only serves to strengthen the hypothesis that the suppression of these institutions would have had a profound impact on sixteenth-century society.

## 7.2 An archaeology of continuity?

### York's guildhalls in the immediate post-Reformation period

This section will explore the archaeological evidence of guildhalls before the Elizabethan succession. Because of their connection with craft mysteries, a number of guildhalls appear to have survived the dissolution largely intact. The lack of archaeological evidence for substantial changes made to these buildings in this immediate post-Reformation period contrasts sharply with the fundamental alterations made to parish churches as a result of the ecclesiastical legislation of the 1530s and 1540s. It will therefore be suggested that whilst profound changes occurred within ecclesiastical discourses and the parish church, guildhalls provided an important locale in which a sense of continuity in habitus could be maintained in the immediate post-Reformation period.

Although the Chantries Act of 1547 technically included property relating to the intercessory or religious activities of craft mysteries, the general exemption of craft associations from the Act created a mechanism through which the fraternal origins and chantry functions of guildhalls could be concealed in practice. For example the survey entry for the hospital of 'Jhesus and Our Blessed Ladye' (Trinity hall), notes that its founder, John Rowclyff, had endowed it with one house but that

none other person, sithens that tyme, hath purchased any more landes, as the Kynges comysioners can perceyve, therefore the governour and kepers of the mysterye of merchaunts of the cytie of Yorke, incorporated the xijth day of Julye in the vijth yere of the reigne of Kyng henry the vjth, and auctorysed and licencyd by the same coporacion to purchase lands and tenements to the yerely value of xli and to fynde a prynte of the prouffytes of the same, did entre in to the said landes gyven to thospitall aforesaid. (CCCY 91, 76)

This was at best a partial, and at worst a deliberately misleading account, which suppressed all references to the religious fraternity who had constructed and used Trinity hall for over a hundred and fifty years! To evade suppression the mystery emphasised the purely charitable function of the hospital; a pattern repeated in relation to the cordwainers' maison dieu (CCCY 91, 54-5). St. John the Baptist's hall and maison dieu appear to have escaped the notice of the commissioners altogether, presumably because of their connection with the tailors' mystery. The concealment of their religious and chantry functions was a pragmatic mechanism designed by mysteries to avoid the sequestration of their fraternity assets. However, by retaining guild possessions they were also able to preserve a sense of institutional and social continuity for their brethren and sisters, many of whom had been members of both associations.

Purely religious fraternities without connections to craft mysteries could not, however, escape suppression in York in 1547-8. The guild of Corpus Christi was dissolved in 1547 (RGCCY, 113; VCH 1961, 147) whilst in 1549 the possessions of the St. Christopher and St. George guild were granted to the city for the sum of £212 by the Crown (YCR 5, 28). The guild of St. Anthony was not technically dissolved until 1627, but its function was reduced to providing a triennial feast for the corporation (YCA B35, f.31), and in 1554 the use of St. Anthony's hall was granted to all those craft mysteries in the city without halls of their own (YCR 5, 106-7). Despite this, two important senses of continuity also survived in these buildings. First, their hospitals and *maisons dieu* continued to exist well into the seventeenth century, like their counterparts in craft guildhalls. Second, there may have been a considerable degree of continuity between the social groups who used these buildings before and after the Reformation. Many of the members of the crafts who met in St. Anthony's after 1554 may have been members of the religious fraternity before its dissolution. It is also likely that many of the members of the civic corporation who used the city Guildhall after 1549 had also used it in the past as members of the guilds of St. Christopher and St. George.

It can therefore be argued that there is a disparity between this archaeological evidence of continuity in guildhalls during the immediate post-Reformation period, and the locale of the parish church, where fundamental changes were heralded by the Injunctions of 1547. These changes have been discussed at length by Duffy (1992, 454ff.), Kreider (1979) and Mason (1896). The significance of the Edwardian Reformation was that it sought to remove not only the physical manifestations of Catholicism, but also the ideological underpinning and liturgical rituals through which the material culture of the parish church had been incorporated into religious practice (Addleshaw 1948; Hurlbut 1941). Historians have therefore focussed on the locale of the parish church, and written sources such as the chantry certificates, Edwardian inventories and ecclesiastical visitation records, to find evidence of the devastating impact of the Reformation on 'corporate Christianity' and parochial pride (Duffy 1992, 454 ff.; Cunich 1998, 164-6). In York this transformation was further exacerbated by the closure of thirteen parish churches in 1547, ostensibly on financial grounds (Palliser 1979, 239-40).

Parish churches were spaces of surveillance in which the material expression of doctrinal orthodoxy was regulated and controlled by the machinery of the ecclesiastical visitation. Secular authorities were also keen to ensure that parish churches expressed conformity with Reformation legislation. Following their disastrous involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, for example, the corporation of York were keen to ensure that outward conformity and obedience to royal policy took precedence over expressions of personal belief. Despite the high levels of

Catholic survivalism suggested by contemporary probate sources (Dickens 1938-9; 1959, 206), it is therefore not surprising that ‘passive resistance to change is the most that can be detected’ in the ecclesiastical and civic records and material culture of Edwardian York (Palliser 1979, 238). This raises important questions about whether the structural and spatial changes made to parish churches during the Reformation simply reflect official ecclesiastical policy and civic polity, or a much deeper shift in the ideology and habitus? This is therefore in essence a question about the material evidence for the progress of the Reformation at the level of popular belief and practice.

Given the hypothesis advanced in Chapter 6 that medieval habitus operated in a range of building types, we would expect a shift in habitus to be reflected not only in parish churches, but also in guildhalls. However guildhalls were not subject to the same kind of official surveillance and control mechanisms as parish churches. Many evaded the attention of the chantry surveyors altogether, whilst those that did not appear to have played down or successfully concealed their religious possessions in 1547-8. Although the lack of inventories and visitation records therefore makes it more difficult to assess their form and function, it is highly significant that no archaeological evidence for fundamental changes to their structure and spatial organisation can be identified in those in York during the immediate post- Reformation period. Moreover, although guild chapels and the religious rituals which occurred within them must have been affected by the Injunctions of 1547, there are numerous sources which suggest that there was a strong degree of concealment and survivalism in these buildings. An inventory of Trinity chapel which may date to c.1554 suggests that many of its medieval fixtures and fittings - including the high altar and the subsidiary altars of St. Thomas a Beckett and St. John the Baptist - survived the Reformation to be restored under Mary (YMA, 96-7). The main altar of St. Thomas’ hospital, York, also appears to have survived the Reformation, if not in situ, for in 1553 the corporation ordered it to be ‘furthwyth sett up agayn’ (YCR 96, 100). It therefore seems likely that, as in parish churches, guilds concealed aspects of traditional material culture and reinstated them during the Marian regime (Duffy 1992, 545-6).

Unlike parish churches, guilds may also have managed to maintain more of a sense of continuity in the ritual practices which occurred within their halls, and the particular forms of habitus which underpinned them. The paraliturgical qualities of their feasts may have continued to be invoked during this period, and although the daily liturgical round of obits and masses may have ceased to be said in guild chapels, craft mysteries may have continued to encourage and expect the

intercessory prayers of the inmates of their hospitals or *maisons dieu*. Inmates may well have continued to perform these acts of intercession both because they still felt bound into a reciprocal relationship with their patrons and because their own sense of identity was still based on this privileged spiritual role. If many of the spatial and symbolic resonances of the medieval guildhall did survive the Reformation, it may explain why there was so little guild resistance to the dissolution of 1547, or need for guilds to make substantial changes after the restoration of Catholicism in 1553.

Habitus is the strategy-generating principle by which people gain an understanding of how to go on in the world. It is therefore only a shift in the individual's perception of their place in the world, and how to structure it, which will result in a change in habitus. The fact that there is a disparity between the parish church and the guildhalls in the immediate post-Reformation period suggests that although change may have been occurring within particular fields of discourse (namely official ecclesiastical and political policy), this may not have resulted in an immediate change in the habitus operating within medieval society as a whole. Support for this hypothesis comes from the evidence of widespread resistance to the process of the 'stripping of the altars' within the parish church (Scarisbrick 1984; Marsh 1998). Duffy (1992) for example, has demonstrated the ways in which Catholic fixtures and fittings were often concealed by parish communities and subsequently restored under Mary. It can therefore be argued that York's guildhalls provided contemporaries with an important locale in which an sense of continuity with the past could be structured in traditional ways. Additional support for this hypothesis comes from the fact that craft mysteries also continued to perform the traditional Corpus Christi cycle in York (with the tactful exception of the Marian plays) right up to their suppression in the 1570s (Palliser 1979, 239, 280; Dickens 1944).

There are several explanations for this lack of a change in habitus in York in the immediate post-Reformation period. First, it must be related to a lack of an ideological shift in the minds of contemporaries who were reluctant to dismiss deeply-held and long-established spiritual beliefs about Purgatory and the intercessory power of prayer. Second, this must be related to the continuing importance of the reciprocal relationship between the communities of the living and the dead. There is considerable contemporary probate evidence to indicate that contemporaries were unwilling to dismiss the idea of Purgatory, or to relinquish the intercessory power of the saints (Scarisbrick 1984, 136ff). Moreover, even those who were willing to accept the ideological

implications of the Edwardian Injunctions, many have continued to feel a sense of obligation to their friends and relatives who had died believing in Purgatory. This highlights the importance of understanding the chronology of the Reformation in terms of the life-cycles of those who lived through it (Marsh 1998). Finally the desire to maintain a sense of continuity in habitus can be linked to the fact that the structuration of medieval social identities and political relations was embedded in, and underpinned by, Catholic ideology and practice. It was not only religious belief which contemporaries felt was threatened by the Reformation, but also their sense of parochial pride and communal identity which was symbolised by the material culture of the parish church (Duffy 1992; Morris 1996).

The first section of this chapter stressed the need to develop a more contextual understanding of the chronology of transition between the medieval and early modern communities of provincial urban England. This section has sought to argue that although the Henrician and Edwardian Reformations may have resulted in a weakening of a sense of religious community in the parish church, we need to be wary of assuming that this 'inevitably had an impact on social and civic values, and ...did much to lower the cohesion and morale of the whole nation' (Cunich 1988, 166-7). In the immediate post-Reformation period guildhalls and craft mysteries may have been an important mechanism through which a sense of communal identity, pride and a familiar sense of habitus could continue to be structured. The conclusions drawn in this section must remain conjectural until further research is carried out on guildhalls in other early modern towns and cities. However, it is an area of study which is of central importance because it refines our contextual and chronological understanding of the Reformation, and because it contrasts so vividly with the transformation of guildhalls which occurred in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It is to this evidence that this chapter now turns.

### **7.3 The transformation of habitus. York's guildhalls in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries**

This section will focus on the increasingly complex and 'public' use of guildhalls during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It will examine the transformation of the visual cues through which their tripartite arrangement had traditionally been articulated, and the increasing 'regionalisation' of the guildhall itself. These changes were associated with the growing desire of craft mysteries to exercise control over access to and use of the guildhall, which was also realised through the creation and addition of more private spaces within the building. What follows will also focus on the ways in which the traditional relationship between guild hospitals and chapels was ruptured during this period. The suppression and secularisation of guild chapels will be argued to reflect a severance of the relationship between the fraternal community of the living and the dead, whilst the partitioning of guild hospitals will be interpreted as a mechanism through which they were converted from chantry communities into institutions with an almshouse function.

These structural and spatial alterations will be related to long-term processes of economic, political and ideological change, and to shifts in the nature of the habitus through which early modern social identities and social relations were structured. Particular emphasis will be placed on the fact that by the later sixteenth-century Catholicism had been replaced as the dominant discourse within society by a range of philosophical, ideological and political discourses, including Renaissance humanism and Protestantism. The fields within which these discourses operated shared an overwhelming concern with secular authority, moral order and social control. They had a profound impact on the ways in which individuals perceived their ontological status and their relationship to other members of society. As in the medieval period, guildhalls were used to reproduce the authority of master craftsmen over their families, households and workshops. But the spatial and structural changes made to guildhalls during this period appear to have deliberately reduced the material opportunities for women, apprentices, and those lower down the social scale, to negotiate or mediate these existing hierarchies of power. These shifts in discourse also transformed the relationship between secular governors and the civic community, particularly the poor. The latter were no longer perceived to have an important spiritual function within the community, but rather seen as a financial burden and social threat to the moral economy of civic society. The following argument will examine the ways in which guildhalls were used to structure changes in the discourses of poverty and charity, to categorise particular kinds of pauper, and to impose particular forms of discipline on the urban poor.

#### **The economic and social context**



It is widely accepted that England experienced a period of increasing socio-economic fluidity and change during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Thirsk 1978; Wrightson 1982, 1986; Sharpe 1997). Any discussion of perceptions of status, standards of living and poverty in early modern York must therefore be considered in the context of the processes of economic decline and revival experienced by the city in the later fifteenth and later sixteenth centuries respectively. During the former period York suffered from an economic decline largely associated with the shift of cloth production out of the city and into west Yorkshire and a commercial decline in its long-distance trade (VCH 1961, 128; Palliser 1979, 201-225; Dobson 1973, 17). Although the scale and extent of this economic and demographic downturn is still the subject of some debate, the pleas of poverty made by the corporation in the early-mid sixteenth century were still sufficiently convincing to secure the remission of the fee farm (Palliser 1979, 215-8; Dyer 1991). As Chapter 6 has argued, the fact that it was York's craft and mercantile communities who felt the impact of economic decline most acutely lends weight to the hypothesis that they may have deliberately used guildhalls to boost their sense of communal pride during this difficult period.

However, some sections of York's craft and mercantile communities profited most markedly from the upturn in the city's economic fortunes in the 1560s and 1570s. This economic revival was partly the result of improvements in long-distance trade with the Baltic, and inland trade with other provincial centres (Ramsay 1957, 97; 1963; Palliser 1972b; 1973; Everitt 1968-9; 1973). Many of these groups also profited from the revival of the city's political role as the permanent headquarters of the Council of the North and the Northern Ecclesiastical Commission from 1561. Suitors to these courts created substantial business for the city's victualling, hostelry and legal trades, whilst many prominent craftsmen were actively involved in civic politics as well as trade (Palliser 1979, 53-4; 262). However the long-term economic confidence of the urban populace was shaken by these changes, and an atmosphere of uncertainty and caution continued to pervade York throughout the sixteenth century. This was exacerbated by the presence of large numbers of rural poor who had sought refuge and relief in the city during periods of economic decline and scarcity, particularly during the successive harvest failures of the early-mid sixteenth century. This influx prompted the development of particular policies which are further discussed below (see p.183-4). Moreover, since many of the traditional sources of institutional charity had disappeared from provincial towns such as York as a consequence of the Reformation, the problem of the poor was a burden which fell directly on the shoulders of civic authorities (Slack 1984; 1988; 1999; Pelling 1998; Walter & Schofield 1989).

Intrinsically related to these economic shifts was an increasing social fluidity and polarisation and the phenomenon of the rise of the 'middling sort' or early modern 'bourgeoisie' (Hexter 1950;

Thompson 1968; Barry & Brooks 1994). A number of historians have linked this social group to the formation of political oligarchies, particularly in urban contexts (Clark 1984; 1986; Clark & Slack 1972; 1976; Neale 1981). Both have also been directly associated with the development of an ideology of individualism (Macfarlane 1978; Stone 1984; Clark 1986; Horwitz 1987). However, we must be wary of appropriating this as a historical model and simply fitting it to the archaeological evidence of the use of guildhalls to structure particular kinds of identity. The nature of oligarchic rule and its relationship to the ‘middling sort’ requires much more careful consideration than many architectural historians and archaeologists have previously accorded it (Tittler 1991; Borsay 1989; Steane 1985). Moreover, historians such as Barry (1994, 91) have argued that rather than encouraging the development of individualism, the socio-economic fluidity of early modern towns actively encouraged the middling sort to seek to forge a sense of civic identity based on communal, or collective association. We must therefore guard against using guildhalls as a source of selective illustration for particular historical narratives, and rather engage with the material evidence in a critical way.

### **Guildhalls, social control and habitus**

The archaeological evidence of York’s guildhalls reveals evidence for two fundamental changes made to guildhalls during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. First, the visual cues encoded in the timber-framing and material culture of the hall itself were masked by architectural and decorative changes, and second, new spaces were created within, or adjacent to guildhalls. The visual cues encoded in the fixed and semi-fixed elements of guildhalls were subtly altered through the addition of features such as wainscot, which was added to Trinity hall in 1571-2 (YMAA Acc. Roll 100) and 1572-3 (YMAA Acc. Roll 102; see p. 71). In 1575-6 this was enhanced by the ‘payntyng the marchantes Armes’ on the walls (YMAA Acc. Roll 105). The ‘diverse occupacons & companies’ using St. Anthony’s hall also ‘bestowed cost in the wainscoting and seallinge of some partes in St. Anthonyes hall to the beutyfyinge thereof’ in 1611 (YCA B33 f.250r). In the same year the corporation ordered that ‘the place wher my Lord Maior & Aldermen do use to sit in the same shalbe wainscotted and sealed with the Kinges armes and suche like work’ (YCA B33 f.250r; see p. 110). The tailors may also have paid for the wainscoting of their hall and the painting of their arms and those of the drapers shortly after their formal amalgamation in 1552 (YCR 5, 57-62; see p. 91). These features were renewed in 1705 (MTA 2/2 f.121v) and 1660 (MTA 2/1 f.76r) respectively.

The traditional hierarchies of the open, tripartite hall were again disrupted at Trinity hall by the ceiling over of parts of the wall frames and roof trusses in 1584-5 (YMAA Acc. Roll 114; see p.

70-71) and the insertion of the four-fireplace complex in the south-west aisle in 1574-5. A new fireplace and windows with ovolo-moulded mullions were also inserted into the north-east wall of St. John the Baptist's hall in the early seventeenth century (RCHME 1981, 89). And a series of fireplaces was constructed in St. Anthony's hall in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century, when the aisles may also have been partitioned from the rest of the hall (see p. 111). All of these changes masked the visual cues through which the tripartite medieval division of the hall had been articulated, and created an emphasis on areas of the hall other than the dais end alone. This shift must have been enhanced by semi-fixed and moveable features such as the tables and chairs in St. Anthony's which the silkweavers ordered to be painted with their Arms in 1630 (Hogarth and Webb 1993, f.69/66r; f.108/92r), or the joiners' table which survives in the hall to this day.

These visual and structural changes require careful consideration. Rather than simply focussing attention on the tripartite arrangement, visual cues such as the coats of arms painted on the wainscot and furniture of the guildhalls articulated the 'regionalisation' of spaces within the guildhall (after Giddens 1985). This was related to their increasingly complex and 'public' use by a number of guilds or social groups rather than a single fraternity and its associated mystery. For example, from the later sixteenth century onwards St. John the Baptist's hall was used not only by the tailors, but also by the crafts of the drapers and hosiers, with whom they had amalgamated. St. Anthony's had been handed over to all those craft guilds without halls of their own in 1554, but was also used by the corporation for a triennial feast, held by the master of St. Anthony's guild. Rather than being used to structure the relative status of individual members within an individual craft mystery or guild, guildhalls such as St. Anthony's were now being used to articulate the relative status of all the city's crafts within a single locale. During the medieval period, and up to the 1570s, this was a function which had been served by the Mystery Plays (James 1983). After the disappearance of the plays, the use of St. Anthony's for communal civic gatherings must have become increasingly important; a hypothesis which is supported by the fact that even guilds such as the merchants and the tailors, who retained their own halls, were contributing to the upkeep of the hall in the early seventeenth century (Appendix 5, table 2 from Drake 1736, 224; Knight 1944, 445).

These structural changes to York's guildhalls also completely transformed the ways in which visual cues in the timber-framing of guildhalls had traditionally articulated their internal spatial arrangement and the form of habitus which operated within them. At Trinity, St. John the Baptist's and St. Anthony's halls, the plastering over and wainscoting of the walls concealed the

bay rhythm and bracing through which the spatial hierarchy of the guildhall had traditionally been expressed (see p. 70-71; 90-91; 109-111). The ceiling over of roof trusses, as at Trinity hall, also masked their articulation of the medieval tripartite arrangement, and its emphasis on the paraliturgical dais end of the hall. The symbolism of the central hearths or brasiers may also have been swept away during this period through the addition of chimney stacks and fireplaces to walls, as at St. Anthony's and St. John the Baptist's, or occupying a whole bay of the hall, as at Trinity hall (see p. 71; 91; 111). These changes made it much more difficult to 'read' the guildhall, and therefore to achieve the sense of ontological security required actively to manipulate its internal spatial organisation. Moreover the articulation of the bay rhythm and tripartite arrangement by the external timber-framing of guildhalls was also masked by the addition of buildings such as the north-east range to Trinity hall and the re-facing in brick of St. Anthony's and St. John the Baptist's in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (fig. 82; see p. 72; 88-89; 112).

The second fundamental change which occurred within guildhalls in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was the creation of new types of space for administrative or business functions within or adjacent to the guildhall. The north-east range at Trinity hall dates to the later sixteenth or early seventeenth century, and provided the guild with three additional rooms, two of which were known as the 'parlour' and 'sitting room' (see p. 72). In 1574-5 a room had already been constructed at the low end of the south-west aisle of Trinity hall for the storage of cloth (YMAA Acc. Roll 104). The 'Great Chamber' on the first floor of the 'counsel' or 'counting house' at St. John the Baptist's hall provided similar administrative space for the guilds of the tailors, drapers and hosiers at this date (MTA 2/1 f.131r; see p. 92). These changes suggest that rather than being discussed within the hall, many of the economic and political affairs of craft mysteries were being withdrawn to, and resolved within, private rooms. It is significant that at both St. John the Baptist's and Trinity halls these rooms had windows providing direct visual access - and thus control - over the entrances into the guildhall and hospital. Moreover, at Trinity hall the north-east range actually transformed the way in which people entered the building, creating a lobby where both visual and physical control could be exercised over those entering the hall (fig. 183).

At one level the use of these additional spaces might be argued simply to reflect an expansion in the administrative business of early modern craft guilds. This could be related to a rise in the estimation and value of written records in early modern society (Orlin 1994, 185-7; Jed 1989; Fox 1996), an interpretation which has certainly been used to explain the popularity of the study during this period (Schofield 1995, 81). However, these spaces might also be seen to reflect a

concern of the guild elite to keep particular business matters private from the other social groups using the hall, including the other members of the mystery. It is therefore highly significant that a similar process has been identified in contemporary town halls. Tittler (1991, 98-128) argues that private rooms such as parlours and sitting rooms, along with other aspects of civic regalia including mayoral seats, aldermanic benches, maces and robes, were mechanisms through which the urban elite sought to distance themselves physically and politically from the wider commonalty. He interprets this process as the ‘proliferation of oligarchic rule’:

..the hall seems often have been regarded not only as a place of government but as a semiotic object. That is to say, in anthropological terms, that the hall appears to have functioned as the tangible formulation of the notion of civic authority. (Tittler 1991, 93 after Geertz 1973, 91)

Tittler’s work is significant because it would be very easy to try and fit the archaeological evidence of York’s guildhalls to a similar historical narrative, and to argue that guildhalls reflected the dominance of civic politics by a craft-based or mercantile elite. However, there are two problems with this interpretation. First, although the crafts inevitably played a prominent part in civic government, York’s civic elite was drawn from the ranks of the gentry, the clergy and lesser freemen as well as the city’s craft mysteries. Moreover the wealthy mercantile crafts did not monopolise civic government. From 1517 onwards, the Council of Twenty-Four provided political representation for the minor as well as the major craft groups within the city (Palliser 1979, 46; 106). Second, the changes made to guildhalls during this period are of considerable significance because they not only parallel those within town halls, but also those in contemporary domestic and ecclesiastical buildings. Since Chapter 6 has argued that a similar form of habitus operated within these buildings during the medieval period, the evidence of fundamental changes within all of them during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries must be understood as evidence of a wider and much more fundamental shift in the habitus of early modern society.

To say that early modern habitus was structured through a new range of political and social discourses is not the same as saying that it had been ‘secularised’ (see Somerville 1992). The changes in guildhalls during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries cannot simply be interpreted as the ‘transfer of public buildings from the spiritual to the secular and civic domain in the Tudor town’, as Tittler (1991, 95) has argued in relation to contemporary town halls. Chapter 6 has demonstrated that this is in many ways a false division, since secular and political identities were always embedded in and underpinned by, religious discourse and practice. The significance of the intersecting religious, political and philosophical discourses which underpinned early

modern habitus was that all placed overwhelming emphasis on the importance of social order, civility and control, and on the power, authority and responsibility of social governors to impose order and control on the rest of society.

Several writers have drawn attention to this trend in early modern political and philosophical writing (Fletcher & Stevenson 1985; Underdown, Amussen & Kishlansky 1995) and to an obsession with its converse: disorder, social unrest and crime (Clark & Slack 1972; Sharpe 1984; 1986; Slack 1984). Of particular importance were the two inter-related ideas of the 'body politic' (Harris 1998) and the 'common weal' (Slack 1999, 5-28). Writing in 1530, for example, Thomas Starkey stressed that the latter 'rested in' a healthy 'political body...the multitude of people, the number of citizens' and that the heart and soul of such a body were 'civil order and politic law administered by officers and rulers' according to the 'governance of the comminality and politic state.' (Mayer 1989a, 31-3; 1989b, 115). The common good and the body politic were therefore seen to be predicated on the proper functioning of government. Both humanist and other Renaissance discourses contrasted idealised images of the commonwealth which were modelled on the 'godly cities' of Europe, with the physical and moral decay of English urban communities (Todd 1987; Fidler 1992; Slack 1999, 10). They emphasised that the only mechanism of realising these ideals was personal and communal reform (Slack 1999, 8; Ingram 1996). That it was the duty of social governors to impose this on the rest of society, starting with the microcosm of the Commonwealth - the household unit - was emphasised by discourses associated with Protestant calls for the 'reformation of manners' as well as those associated with the humanist ideal of civility.

It is this shift in discourse which enables us to begin to make sense of the nature of the shift in early modern habitus, and the archaeological parallels between guildhalls and contemporary domestic buildings. As Johnson (1993a; 1996) has argued, the changes which occurred within late medieval and early modern vernacular housing were part of a much more fundamental shift in the ways in which people thought about themselves, their relationships with each other, and their role in society. Johnson focuses on a number of structural and spatial changes in domestic buildings, which closely parallel those identified in contemporary guildhalls above. These include the physical 'closure' of the timber frame, the ceiling over of the open hall and the shift of central fireplaces to wall stacks to create lobby entries and are described as a process of architectural 'closure'. These changes transformed the ways in which people moved around the house and therefore enabled the master of the house to gain visual and social control over the physical movement and moral behaviour of the family and other members of the household (Johnson

1993a, 171-3). Johnson (1993a, 108) relates the ‘social and cultural closure that architectural closure is mapping out’ to an emphasis on order and discipline in contemporary discourses such as Protestantism and Puritanism, and to a wider shift from the idea of the household-as-community to the idea of the household as a microcosm of society (Hill 1966). These are set within the context of the long-term structural shift from medieval to feudal society, a theme subsequently developed in *An Archaeology of Capitalism* (Johnson 1996).

The contemporary changes made to guildhalls can therefore be understood to have structured and reflected a parallel shift in habitus. They were a mechanism which also reinforced patriarchal authority because they enabled master craftsmen and the guild elite to impose particular forms of social identity, social control and moral discipline on members of their households and workshops, (Amussen 1988; Breitenberg 1996), particularly women (Wittenburg 1982; Burt and Archer 1994), adolescents (Ben-Amos 1994; Sharpe 1996), and servants (Hill 1966, 475). The closing down or masking of the traditional visual cues through which the tripartite arrangement and medieval habitus of guildhalls had been articulated reduced the ability of others to ‘read’, recognise, and therefore manipulate its spatial arrangement. It was therefore much harder to achieve ontological security within the guildhall, or to use it to contest, negotiate or transform ascribed social identities and social relations. The meanings produced within it were therefore being more tightly controlled, and the opportunities for others to question or contest existing power relations deliberately reduced. Indeed at St. Anthony’s hall in 1622, direct action was taken to exclude those whose status or behaviour was considered inappropriate and threatening to this ideal of order and obedience:

Nowe this Court takeinge into consideracon what great numbers of people have resorted unto the same feasts and verie manye not invited or bidden to the same feast which have taken upp in the said hall most of the Romes before such tyme as the bidden geistes do come to the same hall so as by suche disorder diverse of ther bidden geistes for want of placeinge do depart from the same feast, which if the same were upon a worken daie ther would not be suche great resort of unbidden geistes. It is therefore thought that good and ordered and agreed by this court that from hensforthe the same feast shall not hereafter be made upon a Sabath daie but upon mondaie anye custume usage or order to the contrarie in anye wise not withstanding. (YCA B33 f.250v)

These changes enabled the guild elite to secure control over both ‘allocative’ and ‘authoritative’ resources: not only the material culture of the guildhall itself, but also the kinds of identities which could be structured within it (after Giddens 1984, 33). Once again, power can be seen to have resided with those able to manipulate material culture to define their own bodies as being socially superior, or to impose particular kinds of bodily identity on others (Shilling 1993, 140).

So far this section has emphasised the parallels between guildhalls and domestic buildings in order to discuss the shift in habitus which occurred during this period. However, it is not the contention of this thesis that this reflected a shift from *Gemeinschaft* - an organic form of community characterised by intimacy, kinship networks and stability- to *Gesellschaft* - a society characterised by ego-focused, discontinuous relationships and social tension (Tonnies 1955; Johnson 1993a, 107-9). Neither can the shift in habitus observed archaeologically within the guildhall be seen to reflect the emergence of urban oligarchies, or an ideology of individualism. Guildhalls were being used to refashion both the social identities of the craft community through the discourses of social order, humanist civility and moral discipline, but the purpose of this was to distinguish these communities from those on the margins of urban society, particularly the poor. This interpretation supports Barry's (1994, 91) contention that rather than encouraging the development of individualism, the socio-economic fluidity of early modern towns and the fear of social disorder actively encouraged the middling sort to forge a sense of civic identity based on communal, or collective, association. It is significant that these shifts occurred precisely at the same time as the mercers and tailors re-fashioned their communal identities through charters of incorporation and amalgamation (see p. 72; 90). In the contemporary understanding of a humanist such as Starkey it might have seemed that the guildhall was being used to structure the ideal common weal:

the prosperous and most perfect state of a multitude assembled together in any country, city or town, governed virtuously in civil life. (Mayer 1989a, 38)

### **Guildhalls: framing the poor**

The use of guildhalls to impose particular kinds of identity and particular forms of control and discipline on the poor must be set within the wider socio-economic and political context of early modern society. As Slack (1988, 2) has emphasised, poverty is a relative rather than an absolute concept, and perceptions of poverty and economic decline are therefore contingent upon the expectation of particular standards of living as much as the reality of these conditions themselves. It has traditionally been argued that early modern society was characterised by increasing levels of poverty, and a fall in standards of living associated with the long-term impact of late medieval economic decline, demographic change, Tudor inflation (Ramsey 1963) and successive harvest failures in the sixteenth century (Hoskins 1964). Revisionist historians, however, have queried these interpretations and argued for a more optimistic view of the Tudor economy (Palliser 1978; Thirsk 1978). It is therefore important to acknowledge that there were multiple types of 'poor' in early modern society; those for whom poverty was a temporary state of welfare related to a



specific crisis or dearth, and those who constituted the ‘dependent poor’, who were incapable, for various reasons, of escaping the trap of permanent poverty.

This understanding begins to make sense of the discourses of poverty and charity which emerged during the sixteenth century. Most historians agree that the ‘problem of the poor’ was one which concerned all levels of society and government during this period (Slack 1988; 1999; Himmelfarb 1984; Beier 1983; Williams 1979), and that the notion of poverty was intrinsically bound up with the threat of disorder and social unrest (Clark and Slack 1972; 1976; Juetten 1994). Part of the reason for the increasing visibility of the poor was undoubtedly the disappearance of particular forms of institutional charity from society during the Reformation. However, the system of sixteenth-century English poor relief cannot simply be understood as a Protestant reaction to an indiscriminate and salvation-orientated form of medieval Catholic charity (Jordan 1959; Hill 1966). The significance of the Reformation was that it changed the ways in which national and local authorities perceived themselves to be responsible for the relief of poverty:

The progress of Reformation by statute added extra weight to the argument that lay manipulation of charity was both intellectually defensible and socially necessary. (Slack 1998, 117)

The legislative and institutional ‘framing’ of the poor must therefore be set within the context of those discourses such as Renaissance humanism and treatises such as Juan Luis Vives’ *De Subventionem Pauperum* which stressed the responsibility of governors for the social and moral welfare of their subjects.

The early Tudor Poor Laws adapted existing medieval legislation to deal with the social and political threat of vagabonds and wandering beggars. A statute of 1531 (22 Henry VIII, c. 12) attempted to ensure their licensing by justices of the peace by extending the London practice of giving badges to the licensed poor to the whole of the country. Although a subsequent statute of 1536 never passed the Commons, it greatly influenced the development of local legislation and policy throughout the 1540s (Slack 1988, 118). This Act made provisions for vagabonds and poor children to be put into service on public works or craft industries. It also centralised charity by legislating against indiscriminate almsgiving to individual paupers, and ordering regular collections of alms for the genuinely impotent poor. Another round of Poor Laws was passed during the 1550s-1570s. The Acts of 1552, 1555 and 1563 (5 and 6 Edward VI, c. 2) condemned begging and ordered weekly parochial collections for the poor, which were to be recorded. After the Northern Rising in 1569, which shook the propertied classes, an increasing concern to identify vagabonds and rogues prompted the introduction of penal measures against vagrants and a national compulsory poor rate in 1572 (14 Elizabeth I, c. 5). In 1576 this was followed by an Act

(18 Elizabeth I, c. 3) ordering ‘work-stocks’ of wool, hemp and flax to be provided for the poor by the justices of the peace, as well as ‘houses of correction’ for those who refused to labour for their living.

During the 1590s successive harvest failures and the fear of social unrest resulted in over seventeen bills concerning the poor being presented to the Commons (Slack 1988, 126). In 1598 the final pieces of the Tudor Poor Law were put into place. The first act (39 Elizabeth I, c. 3) was concerned with the provision of work for the able-bodied, apprenticeship for poor children, and outdoor relief for the genuinely impotent, whilst the second (39 Elizabeth I, c. 4) focussed on the punishment of rogues and vagabonds. Both placed responsibility firmly on the shoulders of parochial authorities. A further act of 1598 (39 Elizabeth I, c. 5) permitted benefactors to found almshouses, houses of correction or hospitals without the need for a charter or letters patent. In many ways York anticipated national legislative responses to the problem of the poor. In 1515 a genuine pauper was ordered to wear ‘a token upon his shoulder of his overmost garment that he may be knowen’ (YCR 3, 46); a measure which was introduced by statute only in 1531 and 1536. The control and banning of begging was being implemented in York in 1518 (YCR 3, 46), well before the Vagrancy Act of 1547 and subsequent legislation of 1552, 1555 and 1563. York was also ahead of national policy in 1566 and 1567 when complete censuses of ‘all impotent aged and poor folke’ and all ‘ydle and vagrant persons’ in the city were carried out (YCR 7, 169; YCR 8, 115), and in 1569-70 when the first ‘viewe’ of the poor’ was organised (YCA B24, f.38r).

Apart from these legislative mechanisms, York’s civic community used a number of material mechanisms, including guildhalls, to impose social control and discipline over the poor. Guildhalls fulfilled this function in three ways. First, they were used for the mayor and aldermens’ quarterly public ‘viewe’ of the poor. These were occasions in which the poor were classified as either genuinely impotent and deserving and therefore licensed to beg for alms, or idle ‘rogues’ who were perfectly capable of carrying out physical labour and contributing to the economy of the city. Second, following this classification, guildhalls were used to impose discipline on the indigent poor. Those willing to work were sent to guildhalls which had been set up with municipal stocks where discipline was imposed through a regime of work. Those who persisted in their idleness were sent to guildhalls which had been set up as houses of correction, where discipline was imposed through a regime of physical punishment. The third and final mechanism through which guildhalls were used to frame the poor was through the structural and spatial transformation of guild hospitals and chapels. These changes were designed to erase civic memories of their medieval chantry function, and replace it with a carefully manipulated image which reinforced the official policies and normative values of civic authority.

Guildhalls had always been spaces in which the identity and social role of the impoverished had been observed, manipulated and controlled. In the early modern period this function was extended to the whole community of the urban poor, who were ordered to present themselves to be ‘viewed’ quarterly by the mayor and aldermen, usually in Trinity or the Common hall. It was surely no coincidence that the corporation chose the city Guildhall, which was a powerful symbol of civic authority, and Trinity hall, which was associated with the most politically dominant craft in the city, for this purpose. The aim of the ‘view’ was to distinguish genuinely impotent and disabled paupers from those idle and ‘rogeissh vacabondes’ who were able but unwilling to labour for their livings (YCA B28, f.130v). The genuine poor were given lead badges as symbols of their licence to beg, but those who failed to convince might be recalled for a repeat performance,

Also it is agreed that all those poore people upon whose heads especiall nootes were maide at the late viewe of the poore shalbe further viewed by My Lord Mayor and Aldermen at the Common hall on Wednesday next. And badges of Leade to be in the meane tyme maid and provided for such poore as shalbe allowed to go abroade. (YCA B28, f.132v)

It is unclear exactly how Trinity hall and the Common hall were used during these occasions, but it is likely that the mayor and aldermen exploited their familiarity with guildhalls to reinforce their own authority and intimidate the poor. The disappearance of visual parallels between guildhalls and parish churches, moreover meant that there was no familiar habitus through which the poor could maintain ontological security within these buildings. The view replaced the medieval use of guild hospitals as chantries, by a ritual which classified and displayed a community of ‘genuine’ paupers to the rest of the civic community. These badged and betokened paupers were permitted to beg publicly for alms, whilst the unlicensed poor were shut away from the eyes of the civic community in houses of work or correction.

The introduction of national compulsory poor rates in 1572 and the Vagrancy Acts of 1598 further increased this concern with the visibility and classification of the urban poor (Slack 1988, 125-6). York’s corporation became obsessed with identifying and expelling rural immigrants or ‘undersettlers’ who ‘in the countries from whence they came might have bene employed in workes and laboures necessarie for the comon wealth’ (YCA B33, f.173v; YCA B29, f.90v-91r). In 1596 watches were set at the Bars and in the streets of York (YCA Bf.252r) and in 1609 the corporation forbade the letting of tenements to ‘enie person or persons cominge furthe of the countrie’ (YCA B33, f.173v). Written mechanisms for identifying and controlling the poor were also developed, such as the ‘bylles fayre wrytten’ listing the impotent and vagrant in 1565/6

(YCA B24, f.38r), the ‘books of the poor’ produced in 1578 (YCA B27, 66v), and the ‘calendars mayd for the poore people’ in 1586 (YCA B29, f.103r). These reflect an increasing use of the administrative machinery of civic government and the authority of the written record to tackle the problem (Slack 1998, 139).

The second way in which York’s guildhalls were used to frame the identity of the poor was through their conversion into houses of work where the poor laboured on municipal stocks, or houses of correction where those who refused to work were disciplined and punished. Once again York anticipated the official legislation of 1572 and 1576 by setting up St. Anthony’s hall and St. George’s chapel in 1567 and 1569 as weaving establishments for the poor (YCR 6, 129-30, 144-8; YCR 7, 3, 12, 18, 29, 32, 66-73). Proposals to modify the scheme were made in 1574 when St. Thomas’ hospital, St. Anthony’s, St. John the Baptist’s and Trinity halls were viewed ‘to see if the same places or how many of theym be mete places for settlyng of the said poore’ (YCA B25, f.114v). It was ordered that

beddes shalbe prepared and made readye with all spead in Saynt Thomas howse  
Trenyties hall and Saynt Anthonyes hall for the placyng and lodging of the aged  
impotent poore and lame people within this city. (YCA B25, f.124r)

Stocks of hemp, linen and tow were to be provided for them to spin (YCR 7, 86, 90, 93).

However, it appears that either St. John the Baptist’s was considered unsuitable for conversion in 1574, or that the tailors and drapers opposed the corporation’s proposals. There are no references in the House Books to ‘mylnes’ or ‘loomes’ being purchased for St. John the Baptist’s or indeed for Trinity hall, where the mystery of mercers may also have objected to the proposed establishment a house of work. This hypothesis is supported by a view of Trinity hall made in 1585 which noted that there were ‘no poore never in yt’ (YCA B29, f.18v).

York’s municipal project to impose discipline on the poor through a regime of work therefore focussed on the institutions of St. Thomas’ hospital and St. Anthony’s hall, whilst discipline was imposed through a punitive regime in the house of correction at St. George’s chapel. Previous scholars have suggested that this changed only in 1586, when part of St. Anthony’s was also converted into a house of correction (YCA B29, f. 90v; Palliser 1979, 176). However references in 1577 to two ‘mylnes’ for the ‘settyng of Rogisshe and idle persons on worke hable to labour’ at St. Anthony’s (YCA B27, f.16r) suggest that this distinction was not always quite so clear cut. It must certainly have played an important role before the refitting of the decayed St. George’s in 1610-11 (YCA B33, f.203r, f.283r). In 1627 the House Books note that St. Anthony’s hall was the

official house of work for paupers from the east side of the Ouse, whilst St. Thomas' hospital catered for those on the west side of the river (YCA B35, f.37v).

The complete loss of both St. Thomas' hospital and St. George's chapel means that we are entirely reliant on the documentary evidence of the House Books and chamberlains' accounts, and the archaeological evidence of St. Anthony's hall, to inform us about the spatial framing of the poor in these institutions. Equipment may well have been set up in the aisles of St. Anthony's hall as well as some parts of the ground floor hospital (YCA B27, f.50v; f.57v). The aisles were certainly being used for weaving when Edward Whalley transferred the looms from St. George's chapel there in 1637-8 (YCA B35 f.331r). However evidence of the windows which were added to provide additional light for the looms in 1637-8 and the location of the two 'treasure howses' constructed in 1627 for the storage of the 'stuffe' for setting of the poor on work (YCA B35 f.37v) has subsequently disappeared. The fact that a school was established in the chapel in 1569 (YCA B27, f.195r) and Peter Metcalf was appointed to teach poor children to knit 'in the lower howse in St. Anthony hall' in 1614 (YCA B34, f.37v) suggests that no substantial changes were made to the ground floor of St. Anthony's before 1622, when the hospital was partitioned (YCA B34, f. 246v).

It is difficult to underestimate the profound sense of contrast which must have been structured by the use of St. Anthony's hall during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. This was a space in which unskilled paupers were forcibly coerced into labouring to the benefit of the civic economy, but it was also a space which symbolised the collective identities of York's industrial craft community and civic corporation. Perhaps it was this saturation of St. Anthony's with the idea of work which made it such an effective institution in which to frame and discipline the poor. It was a locale in which individual social identity could be defined in relation to the working community, and the moral and economic welfare of the city. This may well have influenced the corporation's decision to use St. Anthony's in 1593 for a 'viewe' of semi-skilled labourers, who usually assembled to seek work at the city staithe (YCA B31, f.17v). It reflects an increasing pro-activeness on the part of municipal authorities to extend control over all sections of the potential labour market (Slack 1988, 72). The next entry in the House Books demonstrates the mechanisms through which this could be effectively applied:

Also it is agreed that if any Labourer be takne playnge at cardes or at any other unlawful game or drinking or siting or ideley loytering upon anye worke daye when anye work is at the staithe to be done, that the searchers shall make presentment thereof. (YCA B31, f.18r)

Apart from their use to ‘view’ and discipline paupers, there was a third way in which guildhalls structured shifts in attitudes towards the poor. The changes made to guild hospitals and chapels during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries swept away the structural and spatial mechanisms through which the chantry function of the poor had traditionally been structured. The visual and spatial links between the hospital and chapel could be severed through the construction of partitions, as at Trinity and possibly St. Anthony’s halls. Alternatively, the religious function of the chapel could be completely suppressed, as at St. Anthony’s in 1565/6 (YCA B24, f.38v) or masked or destroyed, as at St. John the Baptist’s hall. Their religious spaces might be appropriated by secular authority, as at Trinity hall where a staircase was inserted providing direct access to the chapel from the dais end of the hall, or St. Anthony’s, where the chapel became a school in 1579 (YCA B27, f.195r).

Guild hospitals were gradually transformed into institutions which were functionally and structurally similar to almshouses, where the open infirmary was replaced by separate cell-like accommodation for individual inmates. Similar changes had been made to medieval hospitals such as St. Mary Chichester and St. Mary Magdalene, Glastonbury during the fifteenth century (Orme and Webster 1995, 88-90), but appear in guild hospitals in York only during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A series of individual cells was created at Trinity hospital through the insertion of longitudinal and transverse partitions into the undercroft (figs. 64-65). The four-fireplace complex inserted into the sixth bay of the undercroft in 1574-1575 provided some of these with separate heating (YMAA Acc. Roll 104). Similar alterations may have been made to St. John the Baptist’s hall, where the admission of inmates to ‘bedrooms’ within the maison dieu is recorded in the seventeenth-century Minute Books (MTA 2/1 f.116r). St. Anthony’s hospital appears to have been converted into similar accommodation in 1622 when ‘convenient places and Lodgeings’ were created by the insertion of chimney stacks and partitions into the undercroft (YCA B34, f. 246v). A subsequent view of 1627 refers to ‘roomes’ within the hospital (YCA B35 f.52).

These structural changes were accompanied by an increasing degree of control which was exercised by the corporation over admission to these institutions. In 1576/7 (YCA B26, f.114r) and again in 1587/8 (YCA B30, f.8r) the Council Chamber ordered that ‘none of the poore of this Citie shall from henseferthe be placed or settled in any of the hospitalles of this cittie onlesse they be first admytted and allowed by this hows’ (YCA B26, f.114r). In 1586 all those ‘aged persons’

seeking admission to the city's 'three hospitalles' were ordered to appear before the mayor and aldermen (YCA B29, f.109r). The corporation clearly sought to ensure that only the genuine poor were admitted to their hospitals, but also appear to have been increasingly discriminatory on the grounds of the age of potential inmates. In 1622 at St. Anthony's it was ordered that

none of the poore people nowe being in the said hospitall be suffered to remaine ther, but such as be old and decayed people and to displace such as are younge hable persons to Laboure for their Liveinges. (YCA B34, f. 246v)

This may well reflect a desire to manipulate the image of the poor presented in the guild hospital. The corporation could be seen to be rewarding those who had contributed during their working lives to the economic welfare of the civic community, and it is significant that those subsequently admitted to St. Anthony's were often elderly tenants of the corporation, such as Lawrence Thorp and his wife Ann Easter (YCA B35, f.83v), who were admitted in 1630.

The structural and spatial transformation of York's guild hospitals and chapels during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries destroyed the material and ritual mechanisms through which a relationship between the fraternal communities of the living and the dead had traditionally been structured. Sociologists such as Berger have suggested that this severing of the links was a product of the development of capitalism (Appendix 7). However the hypothesis advanced within this chapter suggests that they are part of a wider shift in habitus, which was bound up with the disappearance of Catholicism as the dominant discourse in society, and with changes in the ways in which people thought about themselves and their social identity. Although in the immediate post-Reformation period people may have resisted change and sought a sense of continuity with the past (section 7.2 above), by the end of the sixteenth century there had been an important generational shift which meant that many people had no personal experience or memory of pre-Reformation Catholicism. Moreover even the memories of those who had may have been worn down by years of religious turmoil and ideological change. As Marsh (1998; see also Thomas 1984) has noted, the sheer passage of time may have resulted in the diminution of the sense of obligation felt by contemporaries for ancestors or relatives who had died in the faith. This was exacerbated in urban contexts such as York where there was a high level of demographic turnover and lack of dynastic continuity.

The long-term impact of the deliberately moderate policies of men such as Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII and Edward VI may help to explain why Protestantism began to take hold at grassroots level during the mid sixteenth century, and why Marian Catholicism was not received with the overwhelming rapture that historians such as Scarisbrick (1984) and Whiting (1989) might lead us to expect. Cranmer noted that the retention of certain ceremonies in

the Prayer Book were necessary ‘lest the people, not yet having learned Christ, should be deterred by too extensive innovations from embracing his religion’ (Marsh 1998, 206). The Elizabethan Settlement deliberately trod a flexible middle way. Although it was undoubtedly Protestant, it retained important aspects of doctrinal and liturgical continuity with the past which may have enabled many Catholics to participate in the new religion (Haigh 1987; 1993). The Elizabethan Settlement’s emphasis on obedience to the spiritual and political authority of the Queen, through the Act of Supremacy and the Injunctions of 1559, was another reason why religious conformity appears to have characterised even reluctant late sixteenth-century communities such as that of York. As Brown (1995, 243) has argued, it enabled people to ‘follow the ship of state without rocking the boat’.

It must also be emphasised that there were aspects of both Protestantism and Puritanism which appealed to specific levels and social groups within sixteenth-century society, particularly their emphasis on social authority and social control. A number of authors, including Cross (1976), Collinson (1988; 1997; 1998), Hill (1966; 1974), Spufford (1985) and even Duffy (1992) have explored this important link. Moreover this chapter has already stressed its importance in relation to a wider shift in early modern habitus which resulted in a transformation of the ways in which people thought about and structured their sense of identity. There was no longer a concern to ground this in a reciprocal relationship with the social memory of the dead. Sixteenth-century communities were concerned primarily with the community of the living, and with developing mechanisms whereby their social status could be differentiated from those lower down the social and economic scale of civic society.

The idea of work provided civic communities such as York with the common frame of reference they required, since everyone could be defined by their possession, or lack of possession, of the civic franchise. This was a field of discourse in which the ideals of social order, discipline and control could be reproduced, but it was also a mechanism through which those on the margins of society could be identified, stigmatised and disciplined. It can therefore be argued that the poor were still essential to the structuration of the social identity of craft mysteries in early modern York. However, rather than playing an important spiritual role as a chantry community to structure intercession between the living and the dead, they were being used as a yardstick against which new social norms and value systems could be measured out.



#### 7.4 A caveat: the craft tradition and civic space

Given the relationship between habitus and the craft tradition outlined in Chapter 6, it must follow that the structural changes made to guildhalls in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were associated with some form of shift within the building industry itself. Johnson (1993a, 108) suggests that three aspects of technical change are evident in contemporary domestic buildings. The first of these is a movement from a formal congruence between spatial form, the technical system and the social ideas embedded within a building, towards a divergence of these three and a severance of connections between them. The second is the shift in architectural form from ‘open’ to ‘closed’ houses, and the third, an associated transition from a unifying, centralising house to one which dispersed and segregated the movement of individuals. These amounted to

a closure of the links given by a common use of building material and craft tradition between social groups at the parish or community level.

(Johnson 1993a, 149)

There is a clear need for archaeologists to explore changes in, and the disappearance of, particular building traditions in relation to a range of building types, construction materials, and the craft industry itself.

One explanation of these changes is that changes in building techniques resulted from a national contraction of supplies of building timber (particularly oak) due to the depletion of woodlands for domestic and industrial fuel sources and the shipbuilding industry, and an associated decline in traditional woodland management practice. However, Rackham (1995, 90-1), Flinn (1959) and Hammersley (1975) have that this hypothesis does not fit the evidence. We must distinguish between building timber and the underwood used as a fuel source, whose availability and affordability fluctuated according to wider economic conditions, prompting comments such as that of the York corporation in 1597 that ‘woodes are decayed and coles grown dear, turfe is now the greatest parte of our fewell’ (YCA B31, f.275r). In fact there was a plentiful supply of Baltic timber in York during the early modern period (Palliser 1979, 273), and craftsmen also appear to have drawn upon a large quantity of re-used timber which had been systematically salvaged from demolished buildings from the mid 1550s onwards, and stored in a warehouse in Jubbergate (YCA, B23, f.108v). The most important issue in terms of changes in the craft tradition during this period was therefore not a decline in the sources of timber per se, but rather the willingness of carpenters to use recycled timber, not just for repairs, but in new buildings such as the north-east range of Trinity hall (fig. 95; Woodward 1985).

Contemporary commentators such as Harrison in 1587 attributed this use of re-used and waney timber to the skill and ingenuity of sixteenth-century craftsmen:

sith our workmen are grown generally to such an excellency of device in the frames now made that they far surpass the finest of the old. And such is their husbandry in dealing with their timber that the same stuff which in time past was rejected as crooked, unprofitable and to no use but the fire, doth now come in the fronts and best part of the work. (Harrison (1587) 1994, 276)

However, medieval craftsmen did not lack the technical competence or skill to build with re-used or waney timber. It was simply that such material was not considered suitable; a concern which had as much to do with the visual and symbolic function of the ‘grammar of carpentry’ as with structural concerns. There were, however, changes within the carpentry craft itself which might partly explain these shifts. In the later sixteenth century the carpenters were struggling to protect their monopoly from the tilers, who were engaging in all manner of construction work. In 1586 it was therefore ordered that ‘no tyler...shall take anie bargain...for anye manner of buyldinge of timber worke’ (YCA, B29, f.156r; Palliser 1979, 172-3). There is also evidence of internal tensions within the carpentry craft, as the carvers gained increasing precedence and power over the joiners and other timber-related trades (Swanson 1983, 17). Their ascendancy may have been related to the increasing emphasis on the decorative rather than structural aspects of buildings such as the elaborately carved bargeboards which are a prominent feature of the north-east range of Trinity hall, as well the Herbert house, Pavement, and Mulberry hall, Stonegate (fig. 184).

The fact that York’s early modern buildings were not necessarily being built or repaired by carpenters may partly explain the disappearance of traditional carpentry techniques. However this is only a partial explanation. The real significance of the disappearance of the ‘grammar of carpentry’ was that the habitus which it structured was clearly also no longer meaningful for the patrons of these buildings. Indeed, the disappearance of a shared habitus may have fundamentally altered the relationship between these two groups. Johnson (1993a, 115; 1996, 188) has argued that the split between the ‘functional’ and decorative’ aspects of carpentry shifted the balance of power to the consumer or patron, rather than the craft tradition. Clarke (1981; 1992, 3) has also suggested that the breakdown of the traditional subdivisions and specialisms of the craft industry under capitalism shifted power and emphasis to the sources of building capital rather than building construction. These arguments therefore bring us full circle to the issue of the relationship between the built environment and long-term historical processes of change such as capitalism, Renaissance and Reformation, discussed in 7.1, and to the conclusions already drawn in section 7.3.

## **Conclusion**

As the first section of this chapter has illustrated, the alterations made to individual buildings and the wider built environment of early modern towns have been argued by historians and geographers to reflect a number of long-term historical processes of change. It would therefore be relatively easy to fit the archaeological evidence of guildhalls to a wider spatial historiography of the built environment such as that outlined by Lefebvre (1994), Cosgrove (1985), Gregory (1994) or Borsay (1989). However, this would, once again, reduce archaeological evidence to a source of selective illustration for other disciplines' idea of the past. It would also fail to address problems with the ways in which historical and cultural processes such as the development of capitalism and the Renaissance, are elided in these studies, and with the over-simplistic characterisation of medieval architectural space on which they are often based. Moreover, it would reinforce the idea that archaeological interpretations using structuration theory tend to fall back on historical narratives to explain social and structural change (Samson 1990, 15). As this chapter has demonstrated, the significance of the processes of continuity and change identified in buildings such as guildhalls during the post-medieval period can only be appreciated in the light of an understanding of their medieval use and the habitus through which this meaning was structured over time. The processes by which the world familiar to the fraternities and mysteries of medieval York was transformed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were much more messy and complex than those scholars seeking to fit the evidence to a neat and holistic narrative of change might like. However, I would argue that it is precisely this complexity and contextuality which makes the material culture of this period, particularly its architecture, such a fascinating and intriguing subject of study.