

LOCALITY, CULTURE AND IDENTITY
IN LATE MEDIEVAL YORKSHIRE, *c.* 1270 - *c.* 1540

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CORRIGENDA

- p. 7, l. 13 for *has* read *have*
- p. 10, l. 3 for *provincie)* read *provincie)*'
- p. 14, l. 18 for *argue* read *argues*
- p. 22, l. 3 after *gathered together* read *in the Public Record Office*
- p. 22, l. 4 after *gathered* read *in the Public Record Office*
- p. 29, l. 1 for *function*' read *function*'?
- p. 29, l. 12 for *common* read *common for*
- p. 31, l. 9 for *rebel* read *rebels*
- p. 35, 6 for *impact* read *the impact*
- p. 38 n. 52 should begin: *Brut, ed. de Brie, II, 336;*
- p. 48 n. 93, l. 2 for *behalf* read *behalf of*
- p. 51, l. 3 for *development* read *developments*
- p. 55, l. 16 for *whic* read *which*
- p. 55 n. 124, l. 3 for *117-8and* read *117-8 and*
- p. 59 n. 143, l.1 for *quiamalum* read *quia malum*
- p. 61, l. 16 for *northernness* read *northernness*
- p. 67, l. 11 for *hermit was* read *hermit who was*
- p. 69: footnote 199 should appear on p. 70, l. 1 after *effect* and conclude as follows: *RP V, 462b; CCR 1461-8, pp. 54-5.*
- p. 79, l. 18 for *Yorkshire* read *of Yorkshire*
- p. 81 for *Peasant's* read *Peasants*'
- p. 83, l. 15 for *election* read *the election*
- p. 104 n.121, l. 1 for *northernness* read *northernness*
- p. 113 nn.154-7, italicize *Paston*
- p. 115 n. 166, l. 1 for *p.* read *pp.*
- p. 117, l. 2 for *Yorkshire-* read *Yorkshire -*
- p. 143, l. 12 for *granted* read *the king granted*
- p. 173, l. 23 for *accomplishments also* read *accomplishments elsewhere*
- p. 173 n. 35, l. 4 for *Ecclesie John Scott,* read *Ecclesie, ed. J. Scott*
- p. 176: the final paragraph should form a continuous paragraph with lines 1-7 on p. 177
- p. 180, l. 7 for *variation* read *variations*
- p. 187, l. 5 for *importance.Naturally* read *importance. Naturally*
- p. 205, l. 12 for *influenced* read *influenced by*
- p. 207, l. 2 should form a continuous paragraph with l. 1
- p. 210 the heading at l. 22 should appear at the head of p. 211
- p. 241, l. 1 for *London* read *a London*
- p. 242, l. 18 for *Bisshopdale* read *Bishopdale*
- p. 245, l. 15 for *provide* read *provides*
- p. 245, l. 17 for *October 13* read *13 October*
- p. 258 for *400 l.* read *£400*
- p. 270 for *in an* read *above*
- p. 274, l. 10 for *such* read *more*
- p. 291 n. 2, l. 6 italicize *Monasterii*
- p. 293, l. 19 for *particular* read *particularly*
- p. 315, l. 19 for *arguing the* read *arguing that*
- p. 315, l. 20 for *particularly* read *particularly important*
- p. 317, l. 11 for *range* read *stress*
- p. 333 n. 73 should begin as follows: *For Walsingham see above, n. 18.*

ABSTRACT

The thesis is an exploration of the importance of locality to late-medieval English cultures and identities, through the study of a restricted area, the county of Yorkshire.

The approach and structure of the thesis are designed to reflect the complex experience of locality reflected in late-medieval terminology, particularly the concepts of 'country', *patria* and *pays*. These terms were used to describe areas of greatly varying extent, which were perceived as socially or politically cohesive; they could also describe the area dominated by a particular institution or individual, or an area perceived in terms of its terrain or geography. They also implied implicit judgements about the proper relation between individuals, communities and territory.

The thesis explores the full range of 'countries' which were important to cultures and identities in late-medieval Yorkshire. It argues that these 'countries' were constructed through over-lapping discourses that could be divided into three broad groups: discourses which circulated and operated at national, regional and local levels. Each framework is a potential complex of perceptions and attitudes - territorial, geographical, historical and what might be called 'ethnographic'. To a large extent, all three frameworks of locality were important to all levels of regional society. Territorial frameworks of the North, the shire or the district could be significant regardless of social rank, gender or age; ideas of home and neighbourhood were similarly widespread.

There have been no previous studies of locality as a whole in late-medieval England, and its importance in all spheres of medieval culture has not been appreciated. Thus, while the thesis offers a detailed account of the meaning and importance of locality in a particular region of England, it also aims to make wider suggestions about the nature of local and regional identities, which may be of interest to other medievalists and historians of other periods.

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Finally I would like to thank family and friends for material and mental support, particularly Sarah for last-minute help.

INTRODUCTION

LOCALITY, CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

This thesis was initially conceived as an exploration of regional identity in late medieval England. It is now best described as a study of the meaning and significance of locality - a word I use as an equivalent for the medieval terms *contre*, *patria* or *pays*. The difference may appear slight, but reflects an approach that is quite distinct from previous studies which have touched on the subject of regional or local identities. In this introduction I shall show how that approach took shape, how it is distinctive, and explain how this thesis has come to take the form that it has. I shall begin with a historiographical sketch which reviews the principal approaches and assumptions which have guided such earlier work as there has been in this field. Building on studies which have understood locality in terms of imagined communities, I suggest that much fuller attention needs to be given to the paradigms through which locality was organized and understood in late-medieval English culture.

The central concept is 'country' and its analogues, terms whose range of denotation and connotation are a central theme of this thesis. Such terms could refer to localities which ranged from the relatively small to the very large. They referred to communities as well as territory, and carried implications of 'belonging' and of obligations based around geographical relationships. Questions formulated around present-day concepts of 'region' or 'locality' run the risk of introducing distinctions that were alien to medieval usage and ignoring the complex of attitudes and values that informed relationships with 'countries'. We need to explore not the meaning of a single kind of locality or region, such as the county, but the whole range of 'countries' within which individuals and communities located themselves. How did these 'countries' - their territorial extent, physical characteristics, historical associations, and their inhabitants - come to be defined and how did they fit together? What sentiments and loyalties did they command from those who were born or lived within or beyond them?

*The historiography of late-medieval localities:
imagined communities and the geography of social life*

It would be a difficult, and perhaps impossible task to write a historiography of locality or local identities given the present state of research. There has been little work which has focussed directly on these subjects, little reflection on the concepts of locality or local identities, and consequently little sense of issues around which debate and disagreement could focus, let alone of consensus over why such concepts are important and how they might be studied. On the other hand, the body of work with some bearing on local cultures and identities is dauntingly large, ranging from the work of antiquarians and local record societies, to more recent studies of county communities and regional societies. Consequently the following section does not aim to provide a comprehensive survey or assessment of the relevant material, but to outline the approaches and problems that have been particularly important in forming the current state of scholarship and consequently the shape of this thesis. I have given particular attention to late-medieval studies and to what I see as the most important general contributions to the subject, and although the discussion is necessarily brief and broad I hope that the lines of argument it suggests may prove useful to historians of other areas and periods.

There is no general study of the meaning or importance of locality in late-medieval England, although there has been considerable interest in temporality and the sense of the past. On the other hand, there have been many studies of particular localities and local societies. It could indeed be said without much exaggeration that medieval English history in the latter part of the twentieth century has been dominated by such studies. Political history, led by K. B. McFarlane, was typified by a shift from the history of central and royal administration to studies of magnates and their affinities and the reconceptualization of politics in terms of the workings of power and patronage at local levels. Subsequent research deepened the picture of local society through attention to the

lesser aristocracy or gentry.¹ Recent work has seen a return of interest to the shared ideals of governance which informed conduct both at the centre and in the localities, but research into local political society remains fundamental.² Social and economic history, likewise, has been dominated by a series of local studies.³ Only cultural history, perhaps, has not been characterized by a comparable focus on the localities, despite the important contributions which individual scholars have made.⁴

In this historiographical context, the absence of any sustained interest in conceptual frameworks through which locality was perceived in late-medieval England is particularly striking and arguably unfortunate. The localities studied by modern historians are not of course obliged to reflect the localities understood by medieval contemporaries, any more than the historian's periodizations are bound by medieval concepts of chronology. But whereas few historians would want to claim that the periods they have selected were recognized by or significant to contemporaries, many historians of localities have made such claims - sometimes verging on the evangelical - on behalf of the areas they have studied.⁵ A fuller appreciation of how contemporaries understood locality is required, not only to assess such claims, but to inquire more broadly how, if at all, ideas like 'local identity' can help us understand late-medieval society and culture.

¹Best gauged in two review articles: C. Richmond, 'After McFarlane', *History* 68 (1983), 48-60; R. Horrox, 'Local and National Politics in Fifteenth-Century England', *Journal of Medieval History* 18 (1992), 391-403.

²C. Carpenter, 'Political and Constitutional History: Before and After McFarlane', in *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society*, ed. R.H. Britnell and A.J. Pollard (Stroud, 1995), pp. 175-206.

³Cf. L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 4-5.

⁴E. Salter, *Fourteenth-Century English Poetry: Contexts and Readings* (London, 1983), ch. 3; T. Turville-Petre, 'Some Medieval English Manuscripts in the North-East Midlands', in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 125-141; G. McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1989); R. Beadle, 'Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. F. Riddy (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 89-104; R. Beadle, 'Middle English Texts and their Transmission 1350-1500: Some Geographical Criteria', in *Speaking in Our Tongues: Medieval Dialectology and Related Disciplines*, ed. M. Laing and K. Williamson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 69-91; T. Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 5.

⁵A particularly striking example, in curiously gendered language, is the assertion that late medieval Cheshire was 'a strong and vital political entity based upon a potent local identity and community': T. Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State 1480-1560* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 1.

Rather than giving more attention to the meaning and significance of locality in past societies, many historians have preferred to define their areas of investigation according to geographical features, patterns of settlement and communication, and economic structures. Hilton's seminal study of the late-thirteenth-century West Midlands was partly based around administrative structures, but gave more attention to the unifying geographical features of the area: its river valleys, road system, and patterns of settlement.⁶ In his study of late-medieval Cheshire and Lancashire, Bennett stated explicitly that his 'field of investigation' was 'guided by reference to geographical factors and observable patterns of social life'.⁷ At a more general level, Phythian-Adams has recently suggested that pre-industrial English society can be profitably understood in terms of 'cultural provinces' formed by river drainage basins and watershed lines, where settlement is likely to be densest towards the centre.⁸

Each of these historians was primarily concerned with local society rather than local identities as such, and it would be churlish to criticize what was never intended to form a major theme of their studies. Nevertheless, occasions when localities - which have been identified on geographical, social or economic grounds - are straightforwardly equated with 'identities' fail to convince. It has been argued, for example, that 'regional identity' is something which naturally 'develops' in regions with 'good communications' or a 'clear physical identity'.⁹ Carpenter has argued that in Warwickshire 'regionalism was to some extent reinforced by poor communications' and 'localism was reinforced by the sometimes quite complex network of tracks and pathways'; elsewhere she writes of 'the definition of local identity' in the context of 'ties fostered by geographical

⁶R.H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1966), pp. 9-22.

⁷M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 3.

⁸Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction: an Agenda for English Local History', in id., ed., *Societies, Cultures and Kinship 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester and London, 1993), pp. 1-23.

⁹Hilton, *A Medieval Society*, p. 8; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, p. 8 (also referring to 'geographical integrity'); cf. pp. 7 ('well-defined geographical area'), 15 ('physical identity') and 16 ('short-distance communication').

proximity'.¹⁰ Identity in these contexts is a product of the social groups one moves in and the factors that condition such movement: there is little sense of the cultural frameworks through which social contacts are mediated, or that communities might be more a matter of ideology and belief than of regular interaction.

In contrast to these approaches, however, we need to set those works which portrayed local communities as 'imagined' rather than immanent in social relationships and thus to some extent geographically determined.¹¹ Such studies have argued that local identities are culturally constructed and that even the meaning of physical boundaries is variable and contingent. They have emphasized the 'filter of assumptions, experiences and expectations' through which such features pass and argued that 'even the significance of physical boundaries... is historically determined.'¹² These studies have much in common with sociological and anthropological studies of group identities, which have tended to focus on the cultural practices through which local identities are maintained, and which may have only an oblique relation to geographical or social 'facts'.¹³

Approaches to locality which are based around social structures are not wholly incompatible with those based around cultural perceptions and myths, and many historians have drawn on both. Carpenter's work recognizes the importance of cultural frameworks, and Bennett's study of Cheshire and Lancashire makes imaginative use of the north-western ballads in the Percy folio manuscript.¹⁴ We can explore more fully how 'social' and 'cultural' approaches might relate through a brief survey of scholarship on

¹⁰Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 28-9 ('regionalism' in this context refers to local identities at a smaller level than the county), 290, and cf. 311, 314 and 281-346 for a full analysis of 'local identities' in terms of social networks.

¹¹B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London, 1991).

¹²R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1995), p.19 and ch. 1; E. Royle, 'Introduction: regions and identities,' in id., ed., *Issues of Regional Identity*, pp. 1-13 (p. 1).

¹³See for example A. P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester, 1985); *Belonging: Identity and Social Organization in British Rural Cultures*, ed. A. P. Cohen (Manchester, 1982); R. Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London, 1996); *Locality and Belonging*, ed. N. Lovell (London, 1998); J. A. Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra*, second edn (Chicago, 1971), ch. 1.

¹⁴Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 8, 347-8, etc.; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, p. 19.

the late-medieval gentry and the county community.¹⁵ Most gentry studies contain some assessment of the significance of the county unit to the gentry who were associated with it, although there has been little consensus on how this significance is to be gauged. Some studies have examined marriage horizons and patterns of friendship and association, the latter usually assessed through analysis of witnesses to deeds and other legal instruments. Attention has also been concentrated on patterns of office-holding, membership of magnate retinues, or attendance at the shire-court and particularly at shire elections, although again there has been little consensus as to how these phenomena are to be interpreted. At the same time, and with increasing prominence recently, the county has been seen as an entity whose significance is best explored not in concrete social terms but in conceptual and cultural ones. Historians have used correspondence to explore the meanings that ideas of county and 'country' held for the gentry; they have charted the progress of demands that local administration should be the responsibility of local landowners; they have examined the significance of historical traditions in moulding attachments to the county; and they have generally assessed the county as an imagined community which could be evoked in a range of contexts.¹⁶

The question of how 'imagined communities' relate to 'the geography of social life' or patterns of friendship, association or administrative participation, however, has not been addressed. Virgoe's general survey of the county community devotes approximately half its space to what he calls 'county-mindedness', and the other half to an analysis of those present at elections in the county court. However, it is not clear how these bodies of evidence are related and arguably, they deal with completely different aspects of locality. Margaret Paston was not directly involved in the politics of country administration but her correspondence nevertheless suggests that she could be strongly affected by the idea of Norfolk. Partly this was a matter of her husband's position and the

¹⁵For a recent survey of this material, see C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994), 340-80.

¹⁶S. Walker, 'Communities of the County in Late Medieval England', paper given to the Political Culture Research Group, University of York, 25. 1. 99; Thorton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, ch. 2, 'The Political Culture of the Palatinate'; R. Virgoe, 'Aspects of the County Community in the Fifteenth Century', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. A. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 1-13; N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 108-11, 126-7, 162-7.

extent to which he was 'sett by in Norffolk', but Margaret also looked forward to John I's return 'home' into the county, and wished that her mother-in-law was 'her in Norffolk'.¹⁷

The present study is intended as a development of the argument that the relation between 'patterns of social life' and 'the myths that are imposed upon the region's people and the myths by which they live' cannot be taken as given.¹⁸ Arguing that locality must be seen as imagined and culturally constructed, it explores how and why locality was imagined, and the impact that such discourses had on individual and communal identities.

In formulating and researching this study, I have drawn on a variety of models (in addition to those mentioned above). Work on medieval national identities has given close attention to the concept of imagined communities, national communities being more self-evidently the product of representation and artifice as opposed to direct interaction.¹⁹ Studies of medieval national identities has brought into focus the diversity of means in which such communities are imagined, but also the common ingredients on which a number of attitudes draw: names, boundaries, kings and heroes, laws and customs, and language and historical mythology. Such work has also addressed some of the issues 'about how, where, when the nation is imagined, by whom, and on behalf of whom', although there has been less concern with the more intractable questions of how these

¹⁷*Paston I*, 345, 374, 281; below, ch. 2, p. 113.

¹⁸Quotations from Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, p. 3 and J. Walton, 'Professor Musgrave's North of England: A Critique', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies* 12 (1992), 25-31, p. 29.

¹⁹L. Johnson, 'Imagining Communities: Medieval and Modern', in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. S. Forde, L. Johnson and A. V. Murray (Leeds, 1995), pp. 1-19 (p. 6). I have found the following particularly useful: B. Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, tr. J. Vale (Oxford, 1985); R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400', *TRHS* 6th s. 4-7 (1994-7), 1-20, 1-20, 1-23, 1-24; M. Jones, 'Mon Pais et ma Nation: Breton Identity in the Fourteenth Century' (1976), repr. in id., *The Creation of Brittany: A Late Medieval State* (London, 1988), pp. 283-208; J. Kerhervé, 'Enter conscience nationale et identité régionale dans la Bretagne de la fin du Moyen Age', in *Identité régionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du moyen âge à l'époque moderne*, ed. R. Babel and J.-M. Moeglin (Sigmaringen, 1997), pp. 219-43.

imaginings affected attitudes and behaviour, whether at elite or popular levels.²⁰

In emphasizing local identities as entities which are constructed or produced rather than simply developing, I have also been influenced by anthropological and sociological studies of locality and local communities.²¹ These studies often stress the extent to which local identities need to be actively nurtured and maintained. They also offer suggestive frameworks for thinking about the ways in which social identities are constructed. The structure and arguments of the thesis, however, were largely determined not by earlier scholarship but by the nature of the surviving source material and the evidence of contemporary perceptions of locality.

Describing locality in late medieval England

The thesis is a study of the meaning of locality within a regional society. It does not consider the meaning of only a single unit of locality, such as the county, but aims to consider the whole spectrum of localities that were meaningful in late-medieval Yorkshire. This approach reflects the terms used to describe locality in late-medieval England, in particular the idea of 'country'. Earlier discussions of this word have focussed on particular aspects of its meaning - such as its use to describe the county, or a magnate's sphere of influence - rather than exploring its full significance and resonance.²² I have aimed to provide a full account of 'country' and its cognates in later sections of the thesis; here I shall outline only three main elements of its usage and meaning which are particularly important to the nature and structure of the thesis.

Firstly, 'country' is used to refer to territorial areas of varying and often imprecise

²⁰Johnson, 'Imagining Communities', p. 6.

²¹In particular the following: Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community; Belonging*, ed. Cohen; Jenkins, *Social Identity, Locality and Belonging*, ed. Lovell.

²²Virgoe, 'Aspects of the County Community', pp. 4-7; C. Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (London, 1987), pp. 160-79; J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 64-5, 70-1; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 347 n. 3.

nature and extent. This may be with particular reference to its geographical characteristics, in which case it is comparable to Latin *terra*: an early-sixteenth-century vocabulary has ‘this is a plenteous countre of corne’ for *hec terra frugum est fertilis*.²³ In other uses the term implies social or political organization. The area referred to is usually of unspecified extent, but when specified can range greatly in size: from a region such as the north, to the county or groups of counties, to smaller areas such as the hundred or wapentake. The Paston correspondence provides several examples of the territorial range of the term. References to ‘the North countre’ or ‘west countre’ are shared with many other sources.²⁴ In 1461, Clement Paston referred to ‘thys cowntre, more þan iij ore v scherys’; William Worcester around 1468 described Cambridge as ‘neere the cuntree of Norfolk and Suffolk’.²⁵ John Berney of Witchingham described the service he had done the king ‘in this cuntre of Norffolk’, while Margaret Paston wrote of Maltby as ‘þat countre’, or of ‘Gresham and all that countre’, and a petition of John I referred to overriding ‘the countrey...in the sayd hundred’.²⁶

Historical writings and other texts reveal a similar diversity: ‘Warkworth’s chronicle’ describes ‘the cuntre of Holderness’ as well as ‘the southe and west cowntre’ and ‘the north countre’. The *Brut* notes the request of London men in 1461 that threatening northerners ‘shold be sent home unto þer countre ageyn’.²⁷ In a single text, the *Arrival of Edward IV*, ‘country’ may refer to a county (‘the contrye of Kent’), but also to a particular stretch of terrain (‘a fowle contrye, all in lanes and stonny wayes’), and most often to an area of uncertain, but clearly small size. Explaining the lack of resistance to Edward’s progress through Yorkshire, the author suggests that ‘greate foly it had bene to the lattar cuntries to have attempted that the former cuntries would not’, and he later

²³*The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittinton*, ed. B. White, EETS o.s. 187 (1932), p. 60. Cf. Chaucer’s ‘mersshy countree called Holdernesse’ (*CT* III, 1710).

²⁴*Paston* II, 189, 134.

²⁵*Paston* I, 198; *Paston* II, 354 and cf. 51.

²⁶*Paston* II, 242; *Paston* I, 237, 240, 76.

²⁷*A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth by John Warkworth D.D.*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camden Society o.s. 10 (1839), pp. 2, 4, 13; *Brut*, p. 531.

refers to ‘the contries adioynnye’ Nottingham, Warwick and Coventry.²⁸ A fifteenth-century collection of *vulgaria* from Bristol referred to ‘dyverse scheris of þis contrey (*diversis comitatibus istius provincie*), while in a petition from Clare Hall, Cambridge ‘the est partie of the wey ledyng from Hampton to Coventre and so forth no fether north than Rypton’ was one of the ‘contres of this your lond’.²⁹

I have dwelt on the potential territorial range of ‘country’ at some length to demonstrate the inadequacy of the argument that equates the term with the county.³⁰ The other important aspects of the term’s meaning can be dealt with more briefly. The second is that ‘country’ is used not only to describe territorial areas, but the societies associated with them. The ‘country’ is commonly said to hold an opinion; it also commonly has a military aspect. John Paston was told that he stood ‘gretly in the countreys conceyte’; in 1461 it was said that ‘the countre will rise’ if Heydon was not punished.³¹ *Gregory’s Chronicle* tells how Edward IV, asserting his presence in the North after his victory at Towton, ‘made alle the contray to ben sworne unto hym and to hys lawys’.³² This characteristic of describing society as well as territory is shared with a number of other terms for describing locality: ‘parts’ and ‘coasts’ of the kingdom, for example, could also be attributed agency, and the shire was conceived as a body of men as well as an area of land. It could be said that ‘the holy body of the shire is well dysposed and that the ille dysposed pepoll is but of a corner of þe hole shire’.³³

The third important characteristic of ‘country’ is closely related to its frequent territorial inexactness. The term often conveys an attitude or relationship to an area; in particular, it describes the land where one was born or in which one wields power. In

²⁸*Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV*, ed. J. Bruce, Camden Society o.s. 1 (1838), pp. 33, 27, 7, 8, 32.

²⁹N. Orme, ‘A Grammatical Miscellany from Bristol and Wiltshire’ (1982), repr. in id, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (London, 1989), pp. 87-112 (p. 108); *An Anthology of Chancery English*, ed. J. H. Fisher, M. Richardson, J. L. Fisher (Knoxville, 1984), p. 177.

³⁰Virgoe, ‘County Community’, p. 5.

³¹*Paston II*, 124, 240.

³²*The Historical Collections of A Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden Society n.s. 17 (1876), p. 218.

³³*Paston II*, 262.

Whittinton's *Vulgaria* 'my cuntry' translates both *patria mea* and *natale solum*.³⁴ In 1450 Gresham described to John Paston I how lord Moleyns 'hadde sore be laboured in his cuntry to pease and stille þe poeple there to restreyngne them from rysyng'; the *Arrival of Edward IV* records the loyalty of the south-west to Somerset and Devon, 'for that they reputyd them old enheritors of that contre'.³⁵ This concept was also expressed in other terms, such as 'the parts of his lordship', but 'country' was the most common expression.³⁶ These attitudinal connotations of 'country' and *patria* are not shared with other terms for describing locality. Instead, they ally the idea of 'country' with other concepts which were used to articulate relationships to territory and community, of which 'neighbourhood' and 'home' were perhaps the most important.

The idiom of 'country' and the associated terms that were used to describe locality have two main implications for the structure and argument of this thesis. The first is that the attitudes and values embodied in 'country' comprised perhaps the most important framework through which locality was understood in late-medieval England. But it is important to recognize that 'country' was not the only term used to describe locality, as references to 'the cuntry of Holderness' or 'thys cwntre, more þan iiii ore v scherys' suggest. 'Country' could be identified with other territorial frameworks, but the frameworks of the county or wapentake were also used independently to articulate locality. These frameworks were 'countries' in as much as they were perceived as geographically or socially cohesive areas; but the extent to which they were perceived as 'countries' of lordship or attachment was often variable and contested.

Second, the idea of 'locality' in late-medieval England incorporated a wide range of territorial areas and their associated societies. To focus on only a single locality or region and explore its significance to a particular culture or society fails to recognize the flexibility and complexity of late-medieval idioms of locality. These idioms reinforce the

³⁴*Vulgaria*, ed. White, pp. 67, 104 and cf. 22.

³⁵*Paston II*, 41; *Arrival*, p. 23.

³⁶Walsingham, *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS 28/4, III (1869), p. 343.

a priori argument that the significance of one kind of locality can only be understood in the context of locality as a whole. A number of studies have recognized this point, but there has been no attempt to seriously address the problem.³⁷ It is sometimes assumed that there is a relatively simple correlation between social status and the range and variety of localities that could inform identities, an assumption that this thesis will challenge.³⁸

This thesis is an attempt to explore the territorial and attitudinal frameworks through which locality was understood in late-medieval Yorkshire. It attempts to identify these frameworks, and to establish where they originated, how and in what ways they came to be meaningful, and how these meanings were developed or challenged. Which frameworks were significant, for whom, when, and in what ways? How far was the culture of locality shared between different social groups and institutions? How far did it vary according to status, gender or life-cycle? In short, it is a study of the ‘countries’ which were important in local cultures and identities which is sensitive to the range and complexity of the idea of ‘country’ and the overlapping frameworks through which locality was understood. Thus, while the thesis tries to offer a detailed account of the meaning and importance of locality in a particular region of England, it also aims to make wider suggestions about the nature of local and regional identities, which may be of interest to other medievalists and historians of other periods.

Locality and identity in late-medieval Yorkshire

I have argued above that the study of localities in late-medieval England should not be

³⁷For example, E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c. 1422- c. 1485* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 92 (‘it need not be that the gentry saw themselves as members of one community rather than another’); Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 290 (‘it is normal for people to belong to a variety of groups, each defining itself in different ways... none of these groups were mutually exclusive, and any one might prove the most important at any one time’).

³⁸Explicitly stated by Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 290 (‘the range of possible identities would increase further up the social hierarchy’), and also implicit in the opening chapters of Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*. Cf. A. Everitt, ‘Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional Evolution in England’ (1979), repr. in id., *Landscape and Community in England* (London, 1985), ch. 2, p. 12: ‘In the early modern period... the county came to have a meaning and a coherence for the gentry of the time which it can rarely have had for husbandmen, craftsmen and labourers.’

centred on a single region or locality, and ‘what it meant’ to those inside it. The focus should rather be on the (perhaps multifaceted) ways in which individuals and communities experienced and defined themselves in relation to locality as a whole; that is to say, in relation to a full range of more-or-less well-defined territorial units or concepts. I hope that the force of these arguments will best be demonstrated in their results in the following thesis.

Structure and arguments

This thesis concentrates on the experience of locality in a single area, the county of Yorkshire, in the late-medieval period defined with some flexibility as *c.* 1280-*c.* 1540. (The choice of area and period are explained below.) It is not confined to the significance of the county in the late Middle Ages; instead, the county is used as a heuristic lens through which the construction of local identities can be explored in depth. It attempts to explore all the shared territorial and conceptual frameworks in terms of which locality was understood, from ideas of the North at one extreme, to the landscape of the town or parish at the other, and to explore the roles that these localities played in particular cultures and identities. The only ‘country’ that the thesis does not explore is the kingdom as a whole: the construction and dissemination of images of national identity is a subject too large and complicated to be incorporated in the present study. Its omission is justifiable not only for expediency but on the grounds that although ‘country’, *patria* and *pays* were used to describe the kingdom throughout the late-medieval period, this was not their most common sense. Only in the sixteenth century, perhaps under humanist influence, does ‘country’ become a more common word for describing the kingdom.³⁹

³⁹*Contre* is given for *natio* in Whittinton’s *Vulgaria* (ed. White, p. 94) and the sense is frequent in Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T. F. Meyer, Camden Society 4th ser. 37 (1989). Earlier vocabularies have only *patria* for *contre*: cf. *Catholicon Anglicum: An English Wordbook dated 1483*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage, EETS os 75 (1881), p. 86; *Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum*, ed. A. Way, 3 vols, Camden Society os 25, 54, 89 (1843-65), I, 109. In France the neologism *patrie* appeared around 1530-40 to describe a kingdom that was also a homeland: C. Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, tr. S. R. Huston, ed. F. L. Cheyette (Berkeley, 1991), p. 5; G. Dupont-Ferrier, ‘Le sens des mots patria et patrie en France au Moyen Age’, *Revue historique* 188 (1940), 89-104.

The first part of the thesis examines the frameworks of locality which were part of shared national culture, the 'contres of this your lond' in the words of the Clare Hall petition. It argues that particularly important frameworks for imagining local territories and communities at this level were counties on the one hand, and on the other wider regional areas, especially the idea of the 'north parts' of England. The first chapter explores the origins of these frameworks and the functions they served, and shows how they pervasively structured perceptions of local territories and communities throughout late-medieval English culture. The second chapter asks how these national frameworks of the North and the county moulded local identities within late-medieval Yorkshire and among groups that were geographically separated from but emotionally or institutionally associated with the region. It describes a range of responses or strategies, ranging from a 'passive' reproduction of pre-existing languages to more 'active' appropriations which use accepted frames of reference to assert local or institutional prestige and subtly redefine these shared frameworks.

The second part of the thesis examines the images of locality which were disseminated by major regional families and institutions, exploring the idea of 'country' as the area associated with a powerful figure or institution. It explores how they borrow from or challenge the national frameworks explored in the first part, and argue that the production of these images of locality represented a major and hitherto largely unstudied dimension of ecclesiastical and aristocratic culture. The first chapter concentrates on the historical discourses of locality produced by regional ecclesiastical institutions in order to assert their regional rights and privileges. The second chapter looks first at the cultural impact of the aristocracy on ideas of locality, through genealogical narratives and heraldic display, and then at the institutional promotion of saints' cults. It argues that both discourses function by building an image of locality based around a number of focal locations. A final chapter explores the wider impact of these ecclesiastical and aristocratic representations of locality in regional culture.

The final part of the thesis moves on to consider more restricted constructions of locality: that is to say, those which both concerned and were circulated in smaller areas. The first chapter explores the nature and significance of the districts within the county of Yorkshire, such as Craven and Cleveland, that comprised an important territorial framework and focus for identification in local and regional culture. The following two

chapters focus on the 'country' of local society at the level of the parish, manor or small town. They argue that at this level the experience of locality is particularly characterized by detailed attention to what I have termed the 'shape' of locality. Local cultures focus on the boundaries and central places by which the edges and orientation of locality were determined; they focus on the particular characteristics of the surrounding landscape and make these meaningful in ways that reflect/foster the local identity of a community.

These studies explore the 'countries' in terms of which locality was understood in late-medieval Yorkshire. Understanding a 'country' as a cohesive area of locality, they ask which areas were perceived as cohesive, how, and why; they then go on to ask how far such territories and communities were infused with the senses of loyalty and belonging that could also be associated with the idea of 'country'. The final chapter examines the ways in which these senses of loyalty and belonging influenced interpersonal relationships with one's 'countrymen'. Ideas of neighbourhood and country have received little attention, but informed relationships between individuals and institutions at all levels of society. The final section of the chapter explores the language of 'country' in urban contexts, where it was distinctively used to dissociate an enfranchised and self-governing community from its hinterland. This leads to a brief discussion of how far attitudes to locality were structured by perceptions of differences between urban and rural, arguing that perceptions of such differences become increasingly prominent around the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The thesis thus takes the form of a series of studies of the overlapping and interrelated frameworks through which locality was understood. Each framework is a potential complex of perceptions and attitudes - territorial, geographical, historical and what might be called 'ethnographic'. The conclusion suggests opportunities for further research.

This structure is intended to allow for the exploration of how cultures and identities in late-medieval Yorkshire shaped and were shaped by a full range of frameworks of locality, from the 'countries' of the north to those of the parish, from 'countries' of lordship to those associated with home and fellow-feeling. It also embodies and carries

forward a series of arguments about how local identities are constructed and how images of locality are influenced by or borrow from earlier or more authoritative images. These arguments can broadly be summarized as follows.

Firstly, locality is not usually, if at all, constructed innocently or in a vacuum. To put it crudely, constructions of locality are produced by local institutions or communities in order to increase their prestige or to make particular territorial or jurisdictional claims. Such productions can often be related to moments of crisis - often institutional rights are justified most vigorously when their exercise can no longer be taken for granted, and local communities are most vocal about their antiquity or preeminence when their status in local society is least assured. Equally, however, sudden increase in a community's wealth or status may also call for new narratives of its place in the locality. The strategies used to naturalize these narratives, such as references to long historical continuity or the permanence of the landscape, often reflect not stability but change.

Whatever the underlying reasons for their creation, local or regional narratives were also produced in the context of wider cultural norms. Local stories needed to be as authoritative as possible, and the need for authority placed local narratives inescapably in the context of national constructions of locality. Authority was partly a matter of legal ideas about what constitutes proof or 'common fame', or of physical evidence said to result from a particular event. But authority also derived from reference to what was acceptable, plausible or significant according to received historical tradition. Many local narratives take place, as it were, in the gaps left by national historical tradition. The British kings named, but not given any deeds to perform, by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and who were later adopted as the founders of many English cities and towns, provide an excellent example.⁴⁰ Traditions which were already a part of national culture could be amplified to serve a variety of functions. Ebraucus, the founder of York in Geoffrey of Monmouth's narrative, was used by the metropolitan church of York to assert its rights over Scottish churches, and by the city to protest its loyalty to Henry VII.⁴¹ The local narratives typically produced by smaller communities, which focussed on the changes

⁴⁰The extent of this process can be seen by comparing the early sections of John Stow's *A Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* (London, 1565; STC 23319) with the corresponding passages in Geoffrey of Monmouth; but the details of its progress remain to be explored.

⁴¹Below, ch. 3, pp. 123-30; ch. 8, p. 309.

wrought on the landscape by giants or Danes, also drew on the motifs of national historiography.⁴²

Some local narratives had an impact, through design or accident, beyond the immediate contexts in which they were produced. This was perhaps particularly true of narratives which sought to demonstrate rights or power over a wide area, such as those produced by the metropolitan church of York, by the clergy of Beverley Minster, or by some magnate families. The versions of locality circulated by these institutions or families had a more substantial impact on local culture than the narratives produced by other religious institutions or local communities. But this impact did not always reflect institutional agendas - claims and narratives could be appropriated or emphases shifted. The fifth earl of Northumberland's assertion of his family's rightful 'room in the north' was recognized but also recast by the Pilgrims of Grace, who claimed the family as natural leaders of local society against the Crown and cried 'Thousands for a Percy' in 1536.

This leads to the second broad thread of argument in the thesis: that power and social status were important, but not absolutely so, in determining the meaning of locality. It is right to recognize the institutional power behind some versions of locality - backed up by financial exactions, administrative machinery, artistic or heraldic display, resources for textual production/dissemination. Equally, however, it is necessary to recognize that dissemination of local narratives did not determine their reception. Similarly, social context played a significant role in determining the form of local cultures and identities. Religious houses might interpret their localities using Biblical motifs and language, or through scholarly etymologies; local communities of village or town more usually referred to the work of giants.⁴³ But to a large extent frameworks of locality were shared among all of regional society. Territorial frameworks of the North, the shire or the district could be significant regardless of social rank, gender or age; ideas of home and neighbourhood were similarly widespread.⁴⁴ And while the attitudes of some strata of society will always be better represented than others, this does not mean that the

⁴²Below, ch. 8, pp. 299-313.

⁴³Below, ch. 8.

⁴⁴Below, chs. 2 and 6. B. Reay, 'The Cultures of the People in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies* 36 (1997): 467-72; B. Reay, *Popular Culture in England 1550-1750* (Harlow, 1998).

attitudes of 'the commons' are completely irrecoverable.

Period and area

Both the area, and the period over which it has been studied, call for explanation and justification. The limitation of the thesis to a restricted geographical area was inevitable given the relative lack of earlier scholarship on the meaning and importance of locality, the potential range of the issues explored, and the range and diffuseness of the evidence. Although any systematic sampling of all available material was still out of the question, this restriction made it possible to examine most major bodies of source material that might be thought to bear on the question and to explore the meaning of locality in a full range of cultural and social contexts.

The decision to concentrate research within the historic county of Yorkshire was made for a number of reasons. Local identities and cultures in some other parts of England, such as the north-west Midlands and East Anglia, have been explored by other scholars.⁴⁵ Although (as I argued above) their treatments have often been summary, it seemed preferable to draw on this research for comparative purposes rather than risk repeating it. Yorkshire presented an promising area of study on several counts. The county contained a large number of geographical regions, inviting exploration of how far geography and terrain impacted on local identities. Indeed, the size of the county had led some earlier writers to argue that Yorkshire could be seen as a 'region' in itself rather than a shire. Although I did not find this a helpful distinction, for reasons given above, it did pose the question of whether Yorkshire's exceptional size distinguished it from other counties in contemporary imagination, and more broadly whether territorial area was an issue in contemporary perceptions of counties.

The county also contained a number of substantial urban centres, from ports to market towns to industrial areas: how far did these places have a sense of differing

⁴⁵Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*; Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State*, esp. ch. 2; D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986); Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*; Beadle, 'Prolegomena'.

identities and how were they related to locality or region? York itself, styled for a long time as the second city of the realm, had an obvious importance in both local and national self-representation, partly because of its political importance in the period as the seat of royal government in the early fourteenth century, and as the centre of devolved administration in the fifteenth and sixteenth. It was the centre not only of a diocese but of an ecclesiastical province which was vigorously active in the defence of its privileges in Scotland and its independence from Canterbury. Finally, the county was part of, but on the edge of, the area identified in late-medieval England as the 'north parts': what impact did this important region have on local identities, and how was the region itself shaped by Yorkshire? In short, Yorkshire offered an area in which the meaning of locality promised to be particularly rich and complex.

The period of study is closely related to the area of study. Local identities are too various and complex to be placed as a whole in any narrowly-defined period. Late-medieval ideas of the north can be traced back to at least the twelfth century, and persisted in similar forms during the sixteenth century and later. Developments in the local cultures of town or village are often difficult to date with any precision, but some evidence likewise points to significant long-term continuities: St John of Beverley was still talked of in his town in the eighteenth century, while the mounds in the East Riding now called 'Danes Graves' were associated with the Danes in independent sources of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The period *c.* 1280 to 1540 was also one of change in local identities: administrative developments saw the Trent replace the Humber as the popular boundary of the North, for example. Nevertheless, the period between approximately 1280 and 1540 has a certain coherence for the student of Yorkshire. As elsewhere in England, the inquiries of Edward I's reign which produced the Hundred Rolls and the *quo warranto* pleas offer a major source for local identities. The renewal of war with Scotland in the 1290s gave the north of England a political importance that it retained until well into the sixteenth century. This political situation had a major impact on regional culture, inspiring Peter Langtoft's chronicle and influencing the historical claims made by a number of ecclesiastical institutions. The religious, administrative and cultural changes of Henry VIII's reign had a profound impact on local identities throughout the kingdom, for example through the dissolution of the monasteries and the suppression of local saints'

cults. Again, however, these changes were particularly significant in Yorkshire and the North, and lay behind the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536-7: an event that not only represented perhaps the period's most important expression of local conflicts and solidarities, but moulded perceptions of the North for a following generation.

Study of an extended period has advantages and dangers. It is likely that a fuller range of evidence will be available, so the issues under examination can be seen in more depth and more comprehensively. It is also possible to make a wider assessment of continuity and change between periods. The main dangers are superficiality, and insufficient attention to particular events and contexts and to change within the period. I hope that this thesis has some of the advantages; it has certainly not avoided the dangers. As I have said above, this thesis is a preliminary study of an issue that has lacked sustained scholarly attention. Inevitably it will be found to have dealt with some material with excessively broad strokes and to have misunderstood the complexity of some issues. My hope is that it succeeds in demonstrating the importance of locality to late-medieval cultures and identities at all levels.

A note on sources

Detailed discussion of the particular sources on which I have drawn, and problems of interpretation, has been reserved for appropriate moments later in the thesis. Some general points about the material I have consulted, however, can be made here.

In a pioneering discussion of 'the culture of regionalism', Victor Morgan identified some of the subjects that a study of the meaning of 'country' in early modern England would need to explore. These included the meaning of words like 'country', 'patria' and 'county'; the influence of classical ideals of rural retreat; the 'mythic topography of popular culture'; the representation of the counties in learned and popular literature; administrative developments and the workings of patronage networks; and regional specialization in manufacture and marketing.⁴⁶ *Mutatis mutandis*, similar arguments hold

⁴⁶V. Morgan, 'The Cartographic Image of 'The Country' in Early Modern England', *TRHS* 5th ser. 29 (1979), 129-54 (pp. 131-2).

true of late-medieval England, and the meaning of locality cannot be adequately explored without considering a range of sources traditionally associated with distinct disciplines.

An area described as ‘the north’, for example, appears in a wide range of materials: official and private correspondence, historical and prophetic texts, financial records and discussions of language.⁴⁷ A full understanding of its significance in late-medieval culture requires an assessment of each of these contexts. For reasons discussed below, ‘the north’ was a particularly important unit of locality in late medieval England, but similar points apply to other kinds of local identity. The use made a number of regional institutions of the Anglo-Saxon king Athelstan in formulating their local claims, for example, needs to be traced in historical texts, institutional records, antiquarian descriptions of art-historical evidence, and various legal proceedings, among other sources.⁴⁸ Like many problems of cultural history, the meaning of locality cannot be adequately explored from a narrow range of sources, and in the absence of any previous studies which had dealt with any particular body of material, a broad and inclusive approach to the evidence was unavoidable. To some extent, therefore, this thesis must be seen as a survey of material, much of which would undoubtedly repay fuller study.

The sources on which my research concentrated were those with an explicit concern with locality. Perhaps the largest single body of material could broadly be described as historical writing. Historical texts were central to the articulation and circulation of the nationally shared frameworks of locality that are the subject of the first part of this thesis; they were also fundamental to the local identities of the aristocracy and religious institutions, which are explored in the second and third parts. Many of these texts are in print; others are found in manuscript miscellanies or alongside estate records in cartularies.⁴⁹ Equally important to national frameworks of locality was the machinery of central administration: an adequate picture of its construction of locality, for the present purpose, is available from printed and calendared material.

In exploring the ways in which individual and institutional identities were related

⁴⁷Below, chs. 1 and 2.

⁴⁸Below, ch. 3, pp. 140-61.

⁴⁹T. D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials Relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols. in 4, RS 26 (London, 1862-71), remains an extremely useful guide for the earlier part of the period.

to frameworks of locality a range of material has proved helpful. I have made full use of surviving correspondence, both printed collections and the varied documents now gathered together as Ancient Correspondence. I have also drawn heavily on petitionary materials, which I understand to include not only documents such as those now gathered as Ancient Petitions, but a number of bills presented in Chancery and other legal contexts. I regret that I have only been able to make limited use of the records of King's Bench and of various itinerant justices. The material that I have used suggests that these records would prove a fertile ground for future research. The same is true of the Council and Privy Seal files, which are incompletely catalogued and which I have only been able to make sparing use of. The other class of government records which I have found particularly useful are various inquisitions, which I have consulted in calendared form. I have also consulted a number of surviving manuscripts from late-medieval Yorkshire, these were identified from secondary literature and library catalogues, and again I have not tried to be comprehensive.⁵⁰

My researches among institutional records have concentrated on memoranda, minute and act books, rather than accounts or records of property, although for reasons stated above I have examined the bulk of cartularies from the region. Similarly, I have made little use of records of property held by individuals, preferring to concentrate on the more immediate expressions of personal identities that emerge from wills, epitaphs and in some cases manuscript ownership or artistic patronage. For the local culture of manor or village society, I have relied largely on antiquarian records and the evidence of place-names, although depositions in the ecclesiastical court at York have also proved a rich source. I have made very little use of manorial records, as the printed material I examined did not suggest that such records would yield much for my purposes. My other main source for popular attitudes to locality has been the records of northern rebellions, in particular the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536-7. For this I have been reliant, largely due to constraints of time, on printed sources and on the nineteenth-century calendar of documents for the reign of Henry VIII. This calendar is apt to summarize documents

⁵⁰Valuable resources for identifying these manuscripts included A. McIntosh et al., *A Linguistic Atlas of Late-Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986); J. B. Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (Syracuse, 1995), pp. 237-54; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd edn (London, 1964); A. G. Watson, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: Supplement* (London, 1987).

rather abruptly, however, and a reexamination of the original documents is another desideratum for future research.

This thesis, then, is founded on source material which can broadly be described as discursive and in which questions of locality are explicitly addressed. I have made relatively little attempt to infer attitudes to locality from patterns of behaviour which lack what might be called an obvious discursive context. I have not, that is, given much attention to such subjects as the choice of witnesses or feoffees among the gentry, or to marriage horizons or migration, except in the rather rare instances where such behaviour can be explicitly related to attitudes to locality: as, for example, the request for a marriage licence which refers to the neighbourhood of the two families. In contrast I have given detailed attention to the actions involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace or in various conflicts at Oxford, which were directly related to ideas about locality (in these cases, about ideas of north and south), even if these ideas do not provide a total explanation for what happened.

I have not neglected other kinds of behaviour because I think them uninteresting or irrelevant. The reader may consider that the present discussion of attitudes to locality suffers from a lack of attention to ‘the geography of social life’ that other studies have considered. Further consideration of how the two relate would be a valuable subject for further research. But two important points need to be made. The first is that the evidence for ‘the geography of social life’ is often fragmentary and its interpretation problematic. It is never likely to be fully clear how such evidence relates to attitudes to or perceptions of locality. More important, though, is that a very substantial body of explicit evidence for these attitudes and perceptions does survive, and has been largely neglected.⁵¹ A more adequate sense of the frameworks and structures through which ideas of locality were organized is a necessary preliminary to interpretations of the attitudes embodied in ‘the geography of social life’. This thesis sets out to map these frameworks and structures and to explore their impact on local identities in one area of late-medieval England. Whether or not it fulfils this aim, I hope it succeeds in demonstrating to future researchers the importance of locality in late-medieval culture, the large and diverse body of evidence in which local identities can be explored, and the many exciting possibilities for further

⁵¹I therefore disagree with Carpenter’s claim that ‘we have no choice but to rely on deductions of motive drawn from the analysis of actions.’ (*Locality and Polity*, p. 8.)

study. The preceding paragraphs, as Hutton has stated in a similar context, 'are not intended to extenuate any weaknesses or shortcomings but to indicate the large quantity of even elementary research which remains to be done.'⁵²

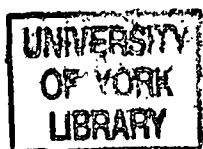
⁵²R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), p. 3.

PART I

'THE COUNTRIES OF THIS YOUR LAND':
NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS OF LOCALITY

In the introduction, I explained that this thesis was divided into three parts, dealing with national, regional and local frameworks of locality. These correspond roughly to the three most important senses in which 'country' and its cognate terms were used in late-medieval England: firstly, to describe a politically or socially cohesive area and/or its inhabitants; secondly, to describe the area dominated by a powerful institution or figure; and thirdly to describe the qualities of a particular landscape or terrain. These senses are not, of course, mutually exclusive or entirely distinct from one another, and neither were the divisions between national, regional and local frameworks clear or fixed. Nevertheless, these divisions do provide a broad framework for understanding the differences between discourses of locality, not only in terms of their circulation, but in terms of their characteristic content and approaches.

By national frameworks of locality I mean those perceptions of the units and parts into which the kingdom was divided which were shared, broadly speaking, in all parts of late-medieval England and also across a relatively wide social spectrum. The claim that such frameworks existed begs a number of questions and requires a certain amount of immediate qualification. Clearly, knowledge of and attitudes to the various 'countries' of the kingdom varied according to both social and geographical location. However, this variation took place in the context of consistent and widely-shared frameworks which determined how these 'countries' were imagined. This will be fully demonstrated in the following discussion; but we can note here that when chroniclers throughout England responded to the revolt of 1381 they conceptualized it in the same terms as the central administration, as a revolt of the commons of Kent and Essex. For the rebels of 1450, most of whom seem to have been drawn from the lower ranks of Kentish society, it was again the county which provided the framework through which several complaints were articulated. The lists of England's counties, bishoprics or major



towns which are found in a number of late-medieval manuscripts from a variety of contexts, similarly speak of a shared national culture of locality.

This first part of the thesis offers a preliminary outline of how national frameworks of locality were structured and functioned. The first chapter examines the fundamental assumptions about the nature of the 'countries' of which England was made up that informed a range of contemporary sources. Briefly, these assumptions were threefold. One, which I deal with only briefly, perceived England in terms of major urban centres. The second perceived the kingdom as a collection of counties. The third perceived the land in terms of broad regional divisions, north, south, east and west, of which the North was by far the most important. Perceptions of the northern counties, which usually included Yorkshire, were both overshadowed and influenced by ideas of the North.

The second chapter explores the impact of these national frameworks on local identities. It does not attempt to assess this impact in global terms, but examines a range of situations in which Yorkshire or the North could become particularly important to individual or collective identities: in the construction of petitions, in the formation of local or regional solidarities, especially in situations of conflict, and in conceptualizing the 'country' of one's birth or home.

CHAPTER 1

NATIONAL CULTURE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF LOCALITY

We can identify three principal frameworks through which the ‘countries’ of England were identified in late-medieval culture. The first identified the ‘countries’ around major towns and cities; the second was based around the division of the kingdom into a number of counties; and the third imagined larger regional ‘countries’, such as north and south, east and west, of which the North was the most important. These frameworks were not mutually incompatible: the ‘country’ around a major town could be imagined in terms of a county or a regional area such as the North, and the North itself could be imagined in terms of a group of counties. The importance of towns and cities as focal points for imagining locality is explored in later sections of the thesis, although it would repay fuller study.¹ This chapter will explore the nature and importance of ideas of counties and of larger regions in English culture. The emphasis will naturally be on ideas of ‘Yorkshire’ and of ‘the North’: but a full understanding of the nature and function of these ideas requires relatively detailed discussion of other counties and regions.

The centrality of the county to conceptions of English history, geography and politics in the early modern period is well known.² It is clear, though, that the county also performed most of these functions in the later medieval period. For many parts of England it was the most natural and meaningful way of thinking about locality, for locating a whole range of individuals and events, and for conceptualizing local communities. In other areas, however, such ‘county consciousness’ was challenged by alternative conceptions of locality that, for various reasons, were more attractive or powerful. Such conceptions would include, for example the West and the Marches: but the most important in this period was the idea of the North. The concepts of ‘Yorkshire’

¹See below, ch. 2, pp. 80, 89-90; ch. 7, pp. 263-8. Fuller research might begin with the nature and function of the lists of British cities compiled by Nennius, included by so many later historians, and found independently in several manuscripts.

²See in particular V. Morgan, ‘The Cartographic Image of the Country in Early Modern England’, *TRHS* 5th ser. 29 (1979), 129-54.

and of 'the North' prove to be closely connected in both their nature and their development.

The idea of the county and the construction of Yorkshire

The precise significance of the county in late medieval England has been the subject of much recent scholarly debate.³ However, we will sidestep the arguments about the nature or existence of 'county communities' (which may be understood as arguments about the importance of particular counties as foci of consistent, regular and significant social activity), since it seems to have become clear that the issue has a number of difficulties. We will explore instead a topic that is arguably both more straightforward and more rewarding: what might be called the idea of the county. How important was the county - as a geographical or territorial unit, or as an 'imagined community' - in articulating perceptions of social and political life in England? Were some counties perceived as particularly distinctive or coherent, and if so, why? And how might the idea of Yorkshire fit into such perceptions?

We do not need to dwell on the origins or early history of the different English counties, although I shall suggest later that these diverse origins are not without significance for the identities that various counties come to assume.⁴ Nor do we need to rehearse the manifold ways in which the workings of royal administration helped to make the county a unit of vital importance for bureaucrats, landowners, criminals and many others. Our central concern is with the question Gross has outlined: to what extent did 'sentiments and cultural influences ... coalesce around the core of the administrative

³For remarks to this effect see A. Gross, 'Regionalism and Revision', in *Regionalism and Revision: the Crown and its Provinces In England 1250-1650*, ed. P. Fleming, A. Gross and J.R. Lander (London, 1998), pp. 1-13 (p. 4). R. Virgoe, 'Aspects of the County Community in the Fifteenth Century', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. A. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 1-13.

⁴Thus Kent (a comparatively old county) and Rutland (an uncharacteristically new one): see below, pp. 40-1 and ch. 2, pp. 87-8.

function'.⁵ We may approach this question from two angles, corresponding to the medieval usage of *shire* or *comitatus* to denote both an area of land and the people resident or holding land in that area.⁶ We shall begin with the significance of the shire in territorial terms, and proceed to conceptualizations of shires as political communities, and finally as communities associated with distinctive and long-lived characteristics.

The county as a territory

From a relatively early date the county was a natural way of thinking about the different areas of England, in a range of non-administrative contexts. A large number of manuscripts include some account of English geography, ranging from the full to the perfunctory. The historical collections compiled partly at York by Robert Populton, for example, include the description of England from Higden's *Polychronicon* as a prologue to material concerning the history of Britain.⁷ It is very common historical manuscripts to include such material, often derived (as is much of Higden's account) from the influential twelfth-century accounts of Henry of Huntingdon or Geoffrey of Monmouth, in the same way that English historical narratives themselves frequently cannibalize these accounts.⁸ Still more common, perhaps, are the geographical lists – of towns, dioceses, counties, natural wonders and so on – found in an even wider variety of contexts, from

⁵Gross, 'Regionalism and Revision', pp. 7-8.

⁶F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, 2 vols., 2nd ed (Cambridge, 1911) I, 536.

⁷J.C. Crick, *A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts, The Historia Regum Britannie* of Geoffrey of Monmouth 3 (Cambridge, 1989), no. 164. A similar selection in Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 86, fos. 31v-49v, is mentioned by A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Influence and Audience of Higden's *Polychronicon*: Some Observations', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Literary and Historical Section*, 17/6 (1980), 113-9 (p. 113).

⁸L. Johnson, 'The Anglo-Norman *Description of England*: An Introduction', in *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays*, ed. I. Short, ANTS Occasional Publications 2 (London, 1993), pp. 11-30.

legal or administrative to devotional.⁹

The English shires have a central place in virtually all such accounts, and the shorter such accounts are, the more important the county tends to become. In Huntingdon, Higden, Robert of Gloucester or Castleford's Chronicle the counties are only one way of organizing English geography, alongside towns, rivers, bishoprics, the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and so on. In shorter descriptions they are faced with less competition. The estate book of Henry de Bray, to give only one example, includes lists *de Comitatus Angliae*, *de Episcopatus*, and *nomina quinque portuum Angliae* alongside a list of English kings. These are the secular equivalent of lists of the ten commandments or seven works of mercy: a minimum of useful information on the history and geography of the kingdom.¹⁰ That the shires occupy a central place in such compendia indicates their importance in this relatively popular version of political culture.

The alternative ways of organizing locality that occur in these chorographical, descriptive materials are considerably less important in more narrative texts, and it can safely be said that in the latter, the county is the single most significant unit of locality. Perhaps the most significant indication of the extent to which English locality was understood in terms of counties is the use of shire or shires in a non-specific context, to denote the different parts of the realm or to describe an area of considerable size. When Chaucer wants to indicate the universality of pilgrimage to Canterbury he says that pilgrims come 'from every shires ende'; Hoccleve and Hardyng write of disorder 'wel ny in every shire', and the *Libel of English Policy* describes native incursions in Ireland as 'lyke as England to shires two or three'.¹¹ A sermon described the ascent of greed as the

⁹Some idea of the variety of manuscript contexts may be suggested by the following. Bodl., MS Digby 196 (1453/61), containing historical and prophetic materials, fo. 164v 'comitatus et episcopatus Anglie'; BL, MS Arundel 310 (from St. Augustine's Canterbury, c. 1300), fo. 88v 'nomina comitatum totius Anglie' (following a collection of statutes); Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 1440 (O.9.28) (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, perhaps from the collegiate church of Warwick), fo. 28v: brief historical and geographical notes in a largely theological and devotional manuscript.

¹⁰*The Estate Book of Henry de Bray of Harleston, co. Northants., c. 1289 - 1340*, ed. D. Willis, Camden Society 3rd ser. 27 (1916), pp. 3-5.

¹¹Chaucer, *CTI*, 15; 'Extracts from the First Version of Hardyng's Chronicle', ed. C. L. Kingsford, *EHR* 27 (1912), 740-52 (pp. 745, 749); Hoccleve, *The Regement of Princes*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 72 (1897), iv.2792; *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, ed. G. Warner (Oxford, 1926), ix.721.

desire for lordship over first a house, then a village, a city, a county, and a kingdom.¹² The county appears as the natural way of conceptualizing, in a general way, the different parts of England, and also as a natural analogy for describing areas of other countries.

Individual counties were also fundamental to the organization of specific localities. It is easy to overlook the frequency with which events were located in terms of counties in later medieval culture. One of the London chronicles reports a case of poisoning ‘in Northamptonshire’ and refers elsewhere to ‘Depforde in the schire of Kent’, ‘Redyng in Berkschire’, and ‘Portsmouth in Hamptonshire.’¹³ Walsingham described how men flock to defend Carlisle *de appendicibus comitatibus*, and the damage caused by the rebel of 1381 ‘in Northfolcia’ and ‘in reliquis comitatibus’.¹⁴ The strength of such habits of thought is revealed even more strongly when the actual county is omitted, as in Fabyan’s reference to ‘a vyllage in [blank] called Tewkysbury.’¹⁵

Contemporary correspondence is rich in examples of all kinds of events being located in terms of a range of counties. Godfrey Grene inquired when Sir William Plumpton ‘wold be in Nottinghamshire’; Edward Plumpton told Sir Robert that ‘in all Lancashire cold none [wild fowl] be had for none money’; German de la Pole stated to Sir Robert that ‘many a gentleman in Darbyshire’ marvelled that he would not speak with him.¹⁶ These easy and familiar references to counties were not confined to the gentry or their agents: Richard Fox as bishop of Winchester instructed his friend John Claymond to head toward the archdeaconry of Surrey ‘when ye be retournede out of Worcestershire’, and referred elsewhere to ‘Kenelme Aden of Glocestershire’.¹⁷

Individuals were located in terms of the county of their birth or residence with equal frequency. Walsingham refers to *quidam miles de Comitatu Wyltesiriae*, Chaucer’s

¹²G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1961), p. 318.

¹³*A Chronicle of London from 1089 to 1483*, ed. E. Tyrell and N. H. Nicholas (reprinted, Felinfach, 1995), pp. 90, 125-7.

¹⁴Walsingham, *Historia anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols., RS 28/1 (1863-4), I, 450; II, 8.

¹⁵R. Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. H. Ellis (Lonaon, 1811), p. 661.

¹⁶*Plumpton Letters and Papers*, ed. J. Kirby, Camden Society 5th ser. 8 (1996), pp. 33, 89, 166; cf. *Paston*, I, 289, 415; II, 12, 93, 298; etc.

¹⁷*Letters of Richard Fox*, ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen (Oxford, 1929), pp. 90, 107; cf. *The Cely Letters 1472-1488*, ed. A. Hanham, EETS o.s. 273 (London, 1975), pp. 54-5, 121, 232.

Reeve is 'of Norfolk', and Langland has 'Bette the Bedel of Bokynghamshire, / Reynald the Reve of Rutland Sokene'.¹⁸ This conceptual framework can be seen in a great number of other sources (in which, unlike say legal cases or tax records, there is no particular reason for the county to be important), such as accounts. The York Chamberlains' rolls refer to *Thoma Jurdeyn de Northfolk*, for example, while in the early sixteenth century Henry Willoughby's accounts record payments to 'ij sowgear of Notyngamshyre', 'a pore man of Shesshyre', 'fowlars of Lyngcolneshyre' and even 'a play of Cheschyre'.¹⁹

Examples of individuals being located in terms of counties could easily be multiplied. A common late-medieval idiom stated that a person was as willing or happy as anyone in a given county: Robert Clere told John Paston III that he was as glad to do or say anything on his behalf 'as ony gentilman with-in Norfolk', and Richard Page stated that an acquaintance of his was 'as glad... as any gentilman in Kent' to respect William Stonor's 'dewte'. William Pickenham wished that Margaret Paston was as well 'as any woman in Norfolk'.²⁰ The appearance of this idiom in the Cely papers indicates that this sense of the county as a framework for comparisons was not confined to the gentry.²¹

In a list of Knights of the Bath sent to John Paston III, the county was the most prominent frame for describing individuals.²² It is a small step from this to lists of county notables, such as those in Leland's *Itinerary* noting, for example, 'gentilmen of Leyrcestershir that be there most of reputation'.²³ These in turn may be compared to heraldic rolls, which from the early fourteenth century are sometimes arranged according

¹⁸Walsingham, *Historia anglicana*, I, 438, Chaucer, *CTI*, 619; Langland, *Piers Plowman B*, II, 110-1

¹⁹*York City Chamberlains' Account Rolls, 1396-1500*, ed. R.B. Dobson, SS 192 (1980), p. 29; *HMC: The Manuscripts of Lord Middleton Preserved at Wollaton Hall* (London, 1911), pp. 349, 351, 352, 380.

²⁰*Paston II*, 454, 366 (the latter altered from 'pat ys wyth rygth'); *Stonor Letters and Papers*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, Camden Society 3rd ser. 29, 30, 34, ed. C. Carpenter (Cambridge, 1996; cited by original volume and page), II, 153.

²¹*Cely Letters*, ed. Hanham, pp. 178, 182.

²²*Paston II*, 471. The other framework is regional, the south and west.

²³*Paston I*, 21. The lists of county gentry in Harley 433, and related materials, were probably compiled for administrative purposes: see *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, ed. R. Horrox and P.W. Hammond, 4 vols. (Upminster, 1979-82), I, xxxiv-xxxv and references there.

to counties.²⁴ Even in rolls organized on other principles, knights may be identified according to counties, such as ‘Sir Gylberd Umferwyle of Northumberland’ or ‘Sir John Constabyll Yorkchyre’.²⁵

As the *Libel of English Policy*’s reference to ‘shires two or three’, or the reference to the yield of ‘a gret schire’ in *Pierce the Ploughman’s Crede* suggest, for most people counties can only have been conceived in quite fuzzy geographical terms, although there was an awareness that shires varied considerably in size.²⁶ When Clement Paston wrote in 1461 of the hatred felt towards northerners he thought in terms of ‘all thys cwntrre, more þan iiii or v scherys.’²⁷ A sense of the relative size of a county, especially in relation to its neighbours, can sometimes be detected among its inhabitants: Fox, for example, complained to Wolsey of being placed on a commission for Southampton, Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset because these shires ‘specially Wiltshire and Dorset, be veray large’.²⁸ The assessments for military service or purveyance levied by the crown from different counties also indicate some sense of their varying size or manpower, although petitions from areas which felt they had been over-assessed suggest how approximate the crown’s sense might be.²⁹

Similarly, knowledge of county boundaries among the political classes can only have been approximate, although the difficulties that such boundaries could cause a fiscal

²⁴A. R. Wagner, *A Catalogue of English Medieval Rolls of Arms*, *Aspilogia* 1 (London, 1950), pp. xiv-v, 14-16, 42-50, 63-5, etc.

²⁵BL, MS Harley 2169, printed as ‘A Fifteenth Century Roll of Arms’, in *Ancestor*, 3 (1902), 185-213; 4 (1903), 225-50; 5 (1903), 175-90; 7 (1903), 184-215; 9 (1904), 159-80. (quotations from 4, 231-2). The provenance of this manuscript is considered in further detail in ch. 6 below, p. 238.

²⁶*The Piers Plowman Tradition*, ed. H. Barr (London, 1993), p. 69, l. 197.

²⁷*Paston* I, 198.

²⁸*Letters of Richard Fox*, ed. Allen and Allen, p. 100.

²⁹H. J. Hewitt, *The Organization of War under Edward III, 1338-62* (Manchester, 1966), p. 36. For the varying exactions placed on different counties see also *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in domo capitulari Westmonasteriensi asservati*, ed. D. Macpherson, J. Caley, and W. Illingworth, 2 vols. (London, 1814-9), I, 68, etc.

and judicial system that operated largely in terms of individual counties were acknowledged from an early date.³⁰ The Statute of Winchester (1285) recognized that inquests in two, three or four counties might be necessary where a felony had been committed ‘on the borders of counties (*en marche de cuntez*)’.³¹ A sense of the approximate location of these ‘borders’ was probably quite widely diffused in political society. The records of the Pilgrimage of Grace contain several references, from the crown as well as local gentry, to the borders of Yorkshire to the south and west.³² But even for the central administration, the exact course of these borders was a matter to be determined by local juries rather than recourse to documents, even though records of some county boundaries were enrolled.³³ Writs addressed to the wrong county, although not common, were a natural result of this situation, and can be paralleled by mistaken impressions of county boundaries in regional society, although communities which were situated close to such boundaries seem to have had a more precise and enduring sense of their location.³⁴

The growth of a general interest in a more exact definition of the kingdom’s internal geography does begin in the late-medieval period, particularly with Leland’s interest in tracing county boundaries in the 1530s. But the concept of the county as an identifiable, visualizable and bounded territorial entity cannot have been available at an administrative or wider cultural level until the production and dissemination of county surveys and histories, especially Christopher Saxton’s county maps and their derivatives,

³⁰ A vague sense of the position and relation of counties emerges, for example, both from Matthew Paris’s maps (reproduced in S. Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora* (Aldershot, 1987), pp. 366, 368, 370) and from the more diagrammatic ‘plattes’ of England described in A. Bell, ‘The Royal Brut Interpolation’, *Medium Aevum* 32 (1963), 190-202 (pp. 190-1).

³¹ *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, ed. W. Stubbs, 9th edn. (Oxford, 1962), pp. 464, 467.

³² *L&P* XI, 715, 737, 1140, etc.

³³ For inquisitions to determine the boundaries between Richmondshire and Westmorland, see *CPR 1272-81*, p. 471; *RP* II, 96; *CCR 1337-9*, pp. 326, 384. For boundaries between Staffordshire and Shropshire, see *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*, 7 vols. (London, 1916-69), I, no. 1646; and for the boundaries of Herefordshire see *ibid.*, no. 444.

³⁴ *RP* IV, 124a-5a (writ to the sheriff of Westmorland to arrest men of Sedbergh in Yorkshire; subsequent writs to sheriffs of Yorkshire, Cumberland and Westmorland); for local awareness of county boundaries see below, ch. 2, pp. 87-8 and ch. 7, p. 274.

from the late sixteenth century.³⁵

Nevertheless, it is clear from all the sources surveyed above that the county, if not the only, was a deep-rooted and indispensable way of thinking about locality for a significant proportion of later medieval English society. It even impinged on the description of other administrative structures, as in the description of Alexander Neville as ‘bishop of 3orkshire’.³⁶ Arguably, in searching for more concrete evidence of impact of the county on social and political interaction, historians have neglected its more evident, better documented and equally significant conceptual importance.

The county as a community

We have been considering the county as a territorial idea and its importance as a way of imagining the landscape of English politics. As we saw above, however, the idea of the county extends further than this: it also functions as a way of imagining the community of the realm, and of defining and characterizing the different elements of that community.

The lists of knights and heraldic rolls discussed above already go some way to creating a sense of an imagined community of the shire, and the conceptual framework in which a county implies a body of men as well as an area of land can be seen in a wide range of other sources. According to the *Annales Paulini* Queen Isabella was supported by *tota communitas comitatum Northfolck et Suthfoch* on her return to England in 1326; the *Brut* similarly described how Hotspur gathered ‘a grete pepill of diuers shires, and specialy of Chestreshire’ in 1403.³⁷ The description of the English forces at Flodden in *Scotish Field* (c. 1515) operates entirely in terms of counties, whether referring to individuals (‘of Yorkshire a yong knight... Sir William Wanhope’) or groups (‘Darbyshire

³⁵ Morgan, ‘Cartographic Image of the Country’.

³⁶ ‘Copy of a Libel Against Archbishop Neville’, ed. W. Illingworth, *Archaeologia* 16 (1812), 80-3 (p. 82).

³⁷ *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols., RS 76 (1882-3), I, 314; *The Brut, or the Chronicles of England*, ed. F. W. De Brie, EETS o.s. 131 and 136 (1906-8), II, 548.

that day deyred many Scottes.’).³⁸

These passages describe or imply military activity, and conceptions of the shire as a coherent body of men may well have been influenced by the use of commissions of array to levy forces for external attack and local defence within counties, developed particularly by Edward I and continued by his successors.³⁹ For the same reason, communities of the shire were particularly easy to imagine in the pseudo-military context of rebellion. The *Continuation of the Eulogium Historiarum*, for example, related how Richard II was especially wary of *Londoniensium et septemdecim comitatuum adjacentium*.⁴⁰ Similarly, it was the dynastic conflicts of the 1450s and 1460s that prompted Davies’s *Chronicle* to write of ‘alle the knyghtes and squyers of Chestreshyre’, ‘alle Kente’, ‘the peple of Kent and of other shyres aboute’, ‘the Kentyssshmen’, and that led one Thomas Skrymshire of Nottingham to say that Edward IV was made king by the Kentishmen.⁴¹

It is clear, though, that the imagined community of the shire was important beyond these contexts, and that its significance to contemporary conceptions of late medieval society and politics developed not only from administrative practices but from a mentality in which land and community were closely associated. Such imagined communities lie behind the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*’s description of Thomas Cobham as *flos Cantiae*, or the claim of one Gilbert Tuyt in 1336 that all the youth of Lincolnshire would be cursed if they did not avenge the death of one Roger of Alford.⁴² The social penetration of such ideas is also suggested by the confession Walsingham gives to Jack Straw, claiming that the rebels of 1381 planned to ‘have created kings, Walter Tylere in Kent and one each

³⁸*Scottish Feilde and Flodden Feilde*, ed. I. F. Baird, Garland Medieval Texts 4 (New York, 1982), pp. iii (the date) and lines 299, 385.

³⁹For a brief account of the system, see A. Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society 1452-97* (London, 1981), pp. 137-39 and references there.

⁴⁰*Eulogium (historiarum sive temporis)*, ed. F. S. Haydon, 3 vols., RS 9 (1858-63), III, 378.

⁴¹*An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI*, ed. R. S. Davies, Camden Society o.s. 64 (1856), pp. 79, 84, 91, 97; *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, ed. J. Bain, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1881-8), IV, no. 1357

⁴²*Select Cases in the Court of King’s Bench*, ed. G. O. Sayles, 7 vols., Selden Society 55, 57, 58, 74, 76, 82, 88 (1936-71), V, 87.

in other counties', a claim which Dobson at least finds plausible.⁴³ Parts of Cade's manifestos are structured around the county of Kent, and further research would probably uncover other evidence of the conceptual importance of the county at a relatively popular level.

In the above examples the community of the shire is conceptualized in intentionally unspecific or inclusive ways, but it was also common for social groups within the shire to be distinguished. In a case heard before King's Bench in 1398, a rebellion in Oxford was said to have been stopped by *gentiles comitatus predicti*.⁴⁴ The *Brut* describes how Richard II assembled 'a grete and an huge multitude of peple, bothe and kny3tis and of squyers, and prynspally of yemen of Chestreschire', and likewise for the *Annales Ricardi Secundi* Richard's retinue was *non...de generosis patriae, sed tracti vel de rure, vel sutoria*.⁴⁵ The same chronicle described how Yorkshire was *in se...divisa* by a conflict between a local knight and esquire.⁴⁶ These examples illustrate the potential flexibility and subtlety of the modes of thought we are discussing: they also indicate how essential the county framework was to late medieval conceptions of English politics and society.

The pervasiveness of such habits of thought in late-medieval culture is clear. As a final example, let us consider how the rising of 1381 was understood by contemporaries, and remembered by succeeding generations. The earliest historical texts almost invariably situate the revolt and rebels in county terms in their descriptions of the outbreak and the progress of the revolt, both in Kent and Essex and in other parts of England. Walsingham, Knighton, the Westminster chronicler all narrate in these terms; the Anonimale chronicler refers once to the commons of southern England, but most frequently to those of Kent and Essex. Documentary sources - such as the account in London's Letter Book H, in the Coram Rege roll, or in the Rolls of Parliament - work

⁴³Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, II, 10; *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. R. B. Dobson, 2nd edition (London, 1983), pp. 366 and 364.

⁴⁴*Select Cases*, ed. Sayles, VII, 94.

⁴⁵*Brut*, ed. de Brie, II, 353; *Johannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneforde*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS 28/3 (1866), p. 208.

⁴⁶*Johannis de Trokelowe*, ed. Riley, p. 160

in the same way.⁴⁷ Sometimes these descriptions expand into characterizations of the county communities, such as the monk of Westminster's comment that the men of Kent 'ran wild like the most rabid dogs.' In a striking passage, Walsingham describes how Richard II decreed that 'that whole breed of Kentishmen and Jutes should be wiped from the face of the earth (*totam illud germen Kentensium et Juttorum statuerunt de terra viventium explanare*)', as if the county was ethnically distinct and not truly English.⁴⁸ A couplet on the flyleaf of a copy of Gower's *Vox Clamantis* reads 'In Kent all care bygan / Ibi pauci sunt sapientes'.⁴⁹

There were undoubtedly other terms in which the revolt was contemporaneously understood and later remembered.⁵⁰ But the county framework was undoubtedly the dominant model. Roger Burton of York, for example, complained of his treatment at the hands of Simon de Whixley *apres cest enmyable et horrible lever fair per les comons des countes de Kent et de Essex*.⁵¹ Accounts of the revolt in popular political discourse are typified by the *Brut*: 'þei of Kent and of Essex madyn hem ij cheveteyneȝ to rewle and gouerne þe compayne of Kent and of Essex.' The shorter and more annalistic entries become, the more striking is the emphasis on the county: 'this yere was the rysyng of the comunes of Essex and of Kent', in the words of one London chronicle; elsewhere it is said 'þe Kentisshmen arose', or there are references simply to *insurrectio comitatus Cantie*, *insurreccio Cantie*.⁵² It seems that these associations were a significant influence on later conceptions of the counties. One description of Cade's revolt associates the

⁴⁷In addition to the items printed in *Peasant's Revolt*, ed. Dobson, see *RP* III, 143b and 175a.

⁴⁸*Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, II, 14 (cf. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, 9 vols., RS 41 (1865-91), V, 265, for the probable source of this attitude); *The Westminster Chronicle 1381-94*, ed. and tr. L. C. Hector and B. F. Harvey, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1982), pp. 2-3 (= *Peasant's Revolt*, ed. Dobson, p. 199).

⁴⁹Quoted in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, ed. J. B. Severs and A. E. Hartung, 10 vols. (New Haven, 1967-), V, 1511.

⁵⁰PRO, SC8/139/6949 (*temps des rumours et levers des comones*); *Brut*, ed. de Brie, II, 336 (*hurlyng tyme*).

⁵¹SC8/103/5143. See R. B. Dobson, 'The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough, 1380-1381', in *The English Rising of 1381*, ed. R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 112-42.

⁵²*Chronicle of London from 1089 to 1483*, ed. Tyrell and Nicholas, p. 73; Bodl., MS Bodley Rolls 5, m. 13; *Abbreviata Chronica ab anno 1377 usque ad annum 1469*, ed. J. J. Smith (*Publications of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society I: 1840-6* (Cambridge, 1846), no. 2), pp. 3, 22.

commons of Kent and Essex, as does an account of Edward IV's regional support.⁵³

Characterizing the county

The examples above show how readily the conceptualization of a county as a socio-political community could lead to the ascription of occasional opinions and allegiances, and more supposedly permanent characteristics. In this section I shall attempt to survey the development of such characterization, although my conclusions can only be tentative. The argument presented here needs to be tested against the further examples of county characterizations that could probably be found in published or unpublished sources: legal and sermon literature would probably offer a particularly rich hunting ground.

We may begin by considering the articulation of England's economic diversity in terms of counties, less known but arguably as common as the association of particular towns with particular products in late medieval culture.⁵⁴ Perhaps the best example is the mutual association of Norfolk and worsted from at least the late fourteenth century, which fired John Paston with such enthusiasm.⁵⁵ But we also hear, for example, in a wide range of contexts, of 'clothes called Suffolk streytes', 'Devenyshe tynne' or 'a deuonyssh axe', 'Essex chese', 'tawny Kentyshe clothe' and a 'Kentisshstaf'.⁵⁶

Such well-diffused traditions certainly individualize the territories and communities of particular shires, but need to be distinguished from the conceptualization of counties in terms of the allegedly permanent moral or physical traits of their inhabitants. In this

⁵³*Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden Society n.s. 28 (1880), p. 77; *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France*, ed. J. Stevenson, RS 22, 2 vols. in 3 (1861-4), II, ii, [771].

⁵⁴'List of English Towns in the Fourteenth Century', ed. C. Bonnier, *EHR* 16 (1901), 501-3.

⁵⁵*MED*, s.v. *nor-folk* (b).

⁵⁶*MED*, s.v. *south-folk*, (b); *Devenish* (a), *Kentish* (a); Langland, *Piers Plowman* B, V, 93; 'Extracts from the Household and Privy Purse Accounts of the Lestranges of Hunstanton from AD 1519 to AD 1578', ed. D. Gurney, *Archaeologia* 25 (1834), 411-569 (p. 448). See also *Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter Book K*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1911), p. 342, for a distinction (of 1451) between 'Devenyssh tynne' and 'Cornyssh tynne'.

sense, it seems that the individualization of counties only becomes widespread - both in terms of the range of counties characterized, and the diffusion of such characterizations - in the opening decades of the sixteenth century. This shift seems to reflect both the changing nature of the source material, and changes in conceptions of locality.

Before the later fifteenth century the majority of the surviving examples are confined to a handful of counties: Kent, Norfolk, and (perhaps to a lesser extent) Cheshire and Lancashire. We have already seen something of the way in which men of Kent could be characterized in terms of brutality or savagery. Already in the twelfth century William of Malmesbury had described the people of Canterbury as more conscious than other Englishmen of their antiquity, and more eager to repel hostilities; for Polydore Vergil at the beginning of the sixteenth the Kentish were 'most prone' to 'civill dissension' because 'they can hardly beare injuries'.⁵⁷ In the fifteenth century, the language of Kent comes to be seen as particularly 'symple' or 'rude'.⁵⁸ Remarkably, the inhabitants of the shire could also be seen as physically distinct. In 1662 Fuller noted how the ascription of tails, originally 'cast by foreigners as a note of disgrace on all the English, ...chanceth to stick only on the Kentish at this day', and this was already true in the late fifteenth century when, according to a poem on Edward IV's recovery of the throne, Kentishmen 'vanysshed away as thayre talyes had be brente'.⁵⁹

Norfolk was likewise characterized – at a local level from the twelfth century, and more widely by the fourteenth - in terms of linguistic rudeness and a poverty which bred greed; Cheshiremen were also seen - particularly after Richard II's recruitment from the

⁵⁷*Willelmi Malmesbirensis monachi De gestis pontificorum Anglorum libri quinque*, ed. N.E.S.A. Hamilton, RS 52 (1870), p. 3; *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, ed. H. Ellis, Camden Society o.s. 29 (1844), pp. 83-4; P. Vergil, *Anglicae historiae libri vigintisex* (fascimile reprint of the Basle edition of 1555, Menston, 1972), p. 498. Other comments are cited by R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority 1422-1461* (London, 1981), p. 632, and cf. also *Paston II*, 148

⁵⁸Whiting, K11.

⁵⁹M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1950), K17; Whiting, E109. Earlier in the fifteenth century the later pope Pius II had visited 'the village [in Kent] where they say men are born with tails': *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope: The Commentaries of Pius II, an Abridgement*, tr. F. A. Gregg, ed. L. C. Gabel (London, 1960), p. 32. Arundel allegedly threatened to make William Thorpe 'as sikir as ony peef pat is in Kent': *Two Wycliffite Tracts*, ed. A. Hudson, EETS o.s. 301 (1993), p. 88.

county - as warlike and violent, *natura bestiales* in the words of one commentator.⁶⁰ These and similar materials share a number of tropes which we might describe as stereotypes of provinciality, based on ideas of unpleasant speech or appearance, ferocity, bestiality, slipperiness or untrustworthiness and a tendency to plunder: tropes which probably derive ultimately from the frameworks developed by twelfth-century intellectuals for describing barbarian peoples.⁶¹ Why these tropes became particularly associated with these three counties is not fully clear: a convincing explanation would need to refer to the genuine distinctiveness of certain shires (such as Kent's antiquity and Cheshire's jurisdictional peculiarities) and the adventitiousness of political circumstance, as well as the conservatism of literary and intellectual conventions.

Comments on the characteristics of other counties and areas are known, but they usually seem to reflect local pride or rivalries, rather than more widely diffused attitudes. This is the case with the *Eulogium Historiarum*'s amplification of Higden's account of English counties, written at Malmesbury in Wiltshire, in which we are told that *Wiltshire* was once called *Severiana* on account of the savagery of its inhabitants (*gentis saevitiam*).⁶² The reference to 'Rutlandie hominibus bestialibus' in the ledger book of Vale Royal abbey (c. 1338) reflects only that institution's anger at their arrest of its abbot, and not widely shared attitudes.⁶³ We also need to distinguish permanent characterizations from the attitude behind the description of Shropshire as a county 'which abounds in these days in homicides and rapines far beyond the rest of the counties of England.'⁶⁴ This comment clearly depends on the network of ideas relating to the county community that we explored above, but it does not imply any *permanent* association between that community and a set of traits, *natura*. On the other hand, when

⁶⁰M. J. Fletcher, 'Chaucer's Norfolk Reeve', *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983), 100-3; R. Beadle, 'Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. F. Riddy (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 89-104 (pp. 92-4); *Trokelowe and Blaneфорde*, ed. Riley, p. 160, 208. See T. Thornton, 'Cheshire: The Inner Citadel of Richard II's Kingdom?', in *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. G. Dodd (Stroud, 2000), pp. 85-96 (pp. 90-6).

⁶¹Below, n. 134.

⁶²*Eulogium*, ed. Haydon, I, 152.

⁶³BL, MS Harley 2064, f. 16v; translated in *Peasants' Revolt*, ed. Dobson, p. 82.

⁶⁴*Select Cases*, ed. Sayles, VII, pp. 227-9 (1414).

Thomas Bekynton described Exeter as ‘the lande of wildernesse, wheras be ferne and fiefes inowe, and good ale non or litell’ he seems to have thought it irremediably provincial, but not to have associated this with the county as a whole.⁶⁵

The diffusion of county characteristics lies behind a series of comments in which the association of individuals with particular counties conveys information about their character. There may be such hints behind the description of Osbern Bokenham as ‘a suffolk man’ in a Norfolk copy of his poem; John Bokkyng told John Paston I in 1456 that there were ‘in Suffolk but fewe men as of gentilmen’.⁶⁶ This comment may reflect only local prejudice, but more widely diffused attitudes informed Godfrey Grene’s account to Sir William Plumpton in 1464 of ‘a young man, a mercer in the Chepe’ who was labouring for Grene’s sister in marriage: ‘lyvelode he hase none, a Norfolk man and of birth no gentleman as I can understand.’⁶⁷ William Paston’s letter to John III in 1487 is worth quoting at length:

my lorde hathe made grete boste of the fayre and goode gentylwomen of þe contre and so the Kynge seyde he wolde see them sure....my lorde hath sente on-to þe most part of the genty-men of Essex to wayte vp-on hym at Chelmnysford, where as he entendythe to mete wyth the Kynge, and þat they be well apoyntyd þat þe Lankeschere men may see þat ther be genty-men of so grete sobestaunce þat þei be able to bye alle Lankeschere. Men thynke that 3e amonge yow wol doo þe same. Your contre is gretely bostyd of, and also the jnhabytours of þe same.⁶⁸

By the later fifteenth century, then, there is scattered but persuasive evidence that counties and their inhabitants, conceived in terms of distinct and stable characteristics (whether physical, moral or social), had become a relatively widespread and familiar framework for understanding English society. As such perceptions became more

⁶⁵*Letters of Margaret of Anjou and Bishop Beckington*, ed. C. Monro, Camden Society o.s. 86 (1863), pp. 75, 83, 85; compare Thomas Langley’s letter of 1417 from Pontefract relating news in ‘yis poore cuntre’: see below, ch. 2, p. 116.

⁶⁶*MED*, s.v. *south-folk*, *Paston II*, 142.

⁶⁷*Plumpton Letters*, ed. Kirby, p. 33.

⁶⁸*Paston I*, 654.

common, they seem to have helped to create new structures of feeling in addition to consolidating older ones: Henry VII, in William's description, has something of the Renaissance tourist or ethnographer, an attitude later echoed in Cuthbert Tunstall's description of Yorkshire.⁶⁹

These developments seem to have gathered momentum around the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A short poem describing the characteristics of the English counties may be tentatively dated to the late fifteenth century: it builds on earlier stereotypes and apparently contributes new ones ('Sowtherey, gret bragere').⁷⁰ It is only known in two copies, one now lost and both of uncertain date and provenance, but there is no reason to doubt that the general mentality it embodies, and many of its specific descriptions, reflect relatively common perceptions. Around the first quarter of the sixteenth century the earlier material in the Percy Folio manuscript, with its lively sense of county identities, was probably written. Comparable evidence, such as the duke of Norfolk's reference in 1536 to the distinctive horsemanship of Essex men, becomes more common in other kinds of records.⁷¹ By mid-century the inter-county curiosity and rivalry evident in William Paston's letter was taking institutional form: Henry Savile invited William Plumpton to cock-fighting at Tankersley near Barnsley, promising 'ther wilbe Lanckeshre of one parte, and Derbeshire of another parte, and Hallomshire of the third parte' and noting 'your cocking varieth from ours'.⁷²

Such ways of thinking seem both to have stimulated, and received impetus from, the development of the jestbook. Early-sixteenth-century jestbooks, in common with the

⁶⁹See below, ch. 2, p. 115.

⁷⁰*LMEV* 3449; most recently printed in *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. C. and K. Sisam (Oxford, 1970), no. 235, where the manuscript copy (BL, MS Harley 7371, fo. 80v) is dated c. 1500. *MED*, which calls the poem 'The property of every shire', dates it ?a. 1500. For another copy, apparently from a lost manuscript, see *Reliquiae Antiquae*, ed. T. Wright and J. O. Halliwell, 2 vols. (1841-3), II, 41-2.

⁷¹Perhaps especially 'Bosworth Field', with its statement that '2 shires' (Lancashire and Cheshire) fought for Henry VII against 'all England' (*Bishop Percy's Folio MS*, ed. J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall, 3 vols. (London, 1867-8), III, 233-59, line 340; cf. M. J. Bennett, *Community Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [Cambridge, 1983], p. 19). For Norfolk's letter, see *L&P* XI, 831.

⁷²*Plumpton Letters*, ed. Kirby, p. 221 (1546). A fight in 1598 between cocks of Lancashire and Cheshire on the one hand and Shropshire and Wales on the other is described in Hea! and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 309.

fabliaux and *exempla* which are their generic antecedents, often have an important geographical dimension.⁷³ Much of jestbook geography is county based: *A Hundred Merry Tales* (1526), for example, has stories set in Suffolk, Essex, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire; *Tales and Quick Answers* (1532?), although it has a greater geographical range, has a story set in Cheshire; *The Sack-Full of News* (1557?) has two stories set in Essex. One of these, short enough to quote at length, illustrates how the genre could build on and disseminate the ideas about counties which we have been exploring:

there was a man born in Essex that had been brought up in Norfolk from a child, and on a time he was purposely minded to see his father and mother in Essex; and as he went he heard a cow cry. Thanked be God, said he, that once before I die, I hear my mother's tongue.⁷⁴

These ideas about counties might seem characteristic of popular milieux, but they also inform official discourse in this period. The Lincolnshire rebellion of 1536 inspired Henry VIII to address the rebels as 'the rude commons of one shire, and that one of the most brute and beestelie of the hole realme,' while a correspondent of Cromwell's wrote that the knights and esquires of the county were more like bailiffs, void of fashion or wit.⁷⁵ The official tract composed in response by the young humanist Richard Morison echoed this characterization, referring to 'these rude countries' as opposed to 'other civil places of England'.⁷⁶

⁷³ For jestbooks, see *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. by G. Watson and I. R. Willison, 5 vols. (Cambridge, 1969-74), I, 2025-30; S. J. Kahrl, 'Medieval Origins of the Sixteenth-Century Jestbook', *Studies in the Renaissance* 13 (1966), 166-83; D. Brewer, 'Prose Jest-Books Mainly in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries in England', in *A Cultural History of Humour from Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 90-111.

⁷⁴ *Shakespeare Jest-Books*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, 3 vols. (London, 1864), II, 180-1. (This collection includes the other jest-books referred to, RSTC 23663-4, 23665. *The Sackfull of News* was printed in 1673 but Hazlitt argues that it contains material of mid-sixteenth-century origin.)

⁷⁵ *State Papers: King Henry the Eighth*, 11 vols. (London, 1830-52), I, 463; *L&P* XI, 888.

⁷⁶ *Humanist Scholarship and Public Order: Two Tracts against the Pilgrimage of Grace by Sir Richard Morison*, ed. D. S. Berkowitz (Washington, 1984), pp. 97, and cf. 91, 93, 95 for other instances of 'county thinking.'

The construction of Yorkshire

We have explored three aspects of the importance of the county in late medieval England: as an area of territory, as the embodiment of a community, and as a way of characterizing that community. In several ways the development of an idea of Yorkshire can be understood in the chronological and conceptual framework outlined above. In two respects, however, the shire stands apart from most other English counties. Firstly, its internal subdivisions - Holderness, Craven, Cleveland and suchlike - were unusually important in conceptualizing the shire.⁷⁷ Secondly, the shire was faced with competition from an alternative way of conceiving political locations and communities: the idea of the North. This has a crucial impact on the characterization of Yorkshire.

We have seen that from relatively early dates other counties become associated with distinctive exports or accents, but it does not seem to have been until the seventeenth century that Yorkshire wool or Yorkshire dialect entered the general vocabulary.⁷⁸ On the other hand, 'northern wool' and 'northern language' are pervasive categorizations from a much earlier date.⁷⁹ Likewise, the fullest enumeration of different varieties of cloth, in a statute of 1551-2, refers to 'Devonshire karseis', 'Lancashire and Chesshire cottonnes', and cloth made in various other counties and towns, but also simply to 'all and everie Northerne clothes'.⁸⁰

In fact, all aspects of Yorkshire - as territory, as community, and as type - develop in relation to, and are often overshadowed by, the North. We have seen above that the early-sixteenth-century accounts of Henry Willoughby contain a number of payments to individuals, or for actions, identified in county terms, such as William Nowtman's costs 'into Notynghamshyre', but the accounts contain no references to the northerly counties,

⁷⁷Below, ch. 6.

⁷⁸*OED*, s.v. Yorkshire.

⁷⁹See *MED*, s.v. *northern(e)*, and for another example of cloth of 'Northcuntre' see *Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter Book L*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1912), p. 17 (1462).

⁸⁰*Statutes*, IV/i, 136-7; cf. H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries from the Earliest Times up to the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1920), pp. 129-37.

only to John Hogswyn's costs 'into the northe contryth'.⁸¹ This absorption of Yorkshire into the North can be seen pervasively in historical writing. The *Brut*, for example, located Bolingbroke's 1399 landing at 'Rauensporne' in 'Yorkschyre'; but for most chroniclers it was 'in the north cuntre' or even an unspecified *loco insolito...terre in partibus borealibus*.⁸² The *Brut* itself referred to Bolingbroke's progress 'out of þe Northcuntre' and Richard II's imprisonment at 'Pomfret in þe Northcuntre'.⁸³

Likewise, and in striking contrast to understandings of the revolts of 1381 or 1450, fifteenth-century northern revolts are most usually located not in county terms but in terms of 'the north'.⁸⁴ When the county is a way of locating events, it is frequently not a way of conceptualizing those involved in revolt: Warkworth's Chronicle describes the rebellion of 1469 as 'a grete insurreccyon in Yorkeschyre', but the rebels themselves are described as 'northemenne' and the slain 'of the north party'.⁸⁵ Only with the Pilgrimage of Grace does revolt become understood in terms of the 'commonalte of Yorkshire' or 'ye our comons of Yorkeshire'.⁸⁶ John Babyngton wrote to Cromwell of keeping Nottinghamshire safe from the rebels, while Henry VIII instructed Norfolk to keep the bridges of Newark and Nottingham to prevent the rebels leaving Yorkshire.⁸⁷ As we shall see below, however, even on this occasion county perceptions appeared alongside, and were arguably less important than, ideas of the North.

When the imagined communities of Yorkshire do acquire distinctive characteristics,

⁸¹*HMC: Middleton Manuscripts*, pp. 353, 341. The Le Strange accounts refer to journeys 'into Yorkshire' but to 'Northern sters [i.e. steers]': 'Extracts from Accounts of the Lestranges'. ed. Gurney. pp. 500, 512, 551-2.

⁸²*Brut*, ed. de Brie, II, 357; *Chronicles of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1905), p. 19; *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377-1421*, ed. and tr. C. Given-Wilson., Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1997), p. 52-3 and compare the Louth Park annals description of Henry's landing 'in parte boriali': *Chronicon Abbatie de Parco Lude*, ed. E. Venables, tr. A. R. Maddison, Lincolnshire Record Society 1 (1891), p. 43.

⁸³*Brut*, ed. de Brie, II, 358-9.

⁸⁴See below, pp. 66-73.

⁸⁵*A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camden Society o.s. 10 (1839), pp. 6-7.

⁸⁶See for example *L&P XI*, 605, 692; *State Papers I*, 506-9; 'Letters of the Cliffords, Lords Clifford and Earls of Cumberland, c. 1500 - c. 1535', ed. R. W. Hoyle, *Camden Miscellany* 31, Camden Society 4th ser. 44 (1992), pp. 1-191 (p. 54); *Correspondence of Edward, Third Earl of Derby, During the Years 24 to 31 Henry VIII*, ed. T. Northcote Toller, Chetham Society n.s. 19 (1890), pp. 36, 56-7.

⁸⁷*L&P XI*, 609 and 816

these characteristics derive from those of the North. This can be seen clearly in the different versions of Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia*. In the manuscript, Vergil tends to refer to *boreales*, as in his description of Henry VII's northern progress in 1485 or the rebellion of 1489. In the printed versions, however (1534 onwards), these northerners are specified as *Eboracenses pariter atque Dunelmenses*. Instead of *boreales populos, feroces...ante alios* we have *Eboracensem provinciam adversariorum partium in primis studiosam*.⁸⁸ Vergil's characterization of Yorkshire emerges from an earlier idea of the North.

So too, a few early-sixteenth-century sources imply a more widely understood idea of Yorkshire centred around military prowess. *Scottish Field* describes how at Flodden, 'Yorkshire like yorne men egerly they foughten'; and such ideas probably lie behind the description of the county in 'The property of every shire' as 'full of knights'.⁸⁹ Most striking and revealing, though is Norfolk's claim to Henry VIII (in a lost letter preserved in a later account of the Pilgrimage of Grace) that 'these Yorkshiremen are more considerable than them in Lincolne, the one the worst men of your Realme, and the other the best, the one never saw wars, the other often.'⁹⁰ This idea of Yorkshiremen as hardened by years of battle against the Scots derives directly from late-medieval ideas about 'northerners'. Likewise the claim that 'there is such a company of wilful gentlemen in Yorkshire as are not found in the rest of England' is easily related to ideas of headstrong, rash or impulsive northerners.⁹¹ Glancing ahead into later periods, this interconnection between ideas of Yorkshire and of the North seems to continue: by 1700 'to put Yorkshire' on someone had become proverbial for deceiving them; the expression 'as vile as a pair of Yorkshire sleeves' is recorded in 1620; and a collection of proverbs from 1659 records 'Three ills come from the north: a cold wind, a shrinking cloth, and

⁸⁸ *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, 1485 - 1537*, ed. D. Hay, Camden Society 3rd ser. 74 (1950), pp. 9-10, 39.

⁸⁹ *Scottish Feilde and Flodden Feilde*, ed. Baird, p. 15, lines 384-5; *Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. Sisam and Sisam, no. 235, l. 15.

⁹⁰ 'Thomas Master's Narrative of the Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. R. W. Hoyle, *Northern History* 21 (1985), 53-79 (p. 68).

⁹¹ *L&P* VII, 313 (1535).

a dissembling man.’⁹²

Some counties were more easily seen than others as imagined and individualized communities. Partly, this was a question of precedent, but it was also a result of the lack of competing conceptions of locality. The conceptualization of Yorkshire as a territorial, political or social entity, in contrast, was subject to interference from the more resonant and powerful concept of ‘the north’. The same may well have been true of the other northern counties, although not apparently of Cheshire and Lancashire.⁹³ We shall explore this idea of the North more fully below.

Beyond the county

The conceptual importance of the county, however, extended beyond the role of individual counties as geographical reference points, political communities or bearers of distinctive characteristics. Counties were also important as members of groups: they articulated not only the smaller-scale subdivisions of the polity, but its larger divisions too. A number of counties were not wholly independent administrative units, but shared a sheriff, for example, with a neighbouring county. Some pairings of counties became significant ‘countries’ in their own right in both local and national culture: Norfolk and Suffolk and Cheshire and Lancashire are perhaps the best examples.⁹⁴

Larger groups of counties were portrayed in the chorographical tradition outlined above, in both its extended and its less developed forms. Both Higden and Polydore Vergil, for example, assembled counties into southern, middle and northern groups: Higden on the basis of Anglo-Saxon legal divisions, and Vergil on geographical

⁹²*OED* sv Yorkshire; W. G. Smith, *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 3rd edition, rev. F. P. Wilson (Oxford, 1970), p. 924.

⁹³While the deponents produced in the Scrope/Grosvenor controversy on behalf of Scrope refer to the ‘common fame’ of both Yorkshire and the north, those testifying on behalf Grosvenor speak only of ‘le conte de Cestre et... autres lieux procheins’ (*Scrope and Grosvenor*, p. 317 and *passim*: and for further discussion, see below, ch. 6, p 238). For a rare example when the north-western counties are included in ‘the north’, see below n. 97.

⁹⁴For ‘the cuntree of Norffolk and Suffolke’ see *Paston II*, 51 and 354; for Cheshire and Lancashire see Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, p. 19.

grounds.⁹⁵ Shorter plats and lists often have similar arrangements, suggesting that ideas like 'north' and 'west' could be understood in county terms. This also holds true for the organization of royal administration throughout the period, although the counties included in an area like 'the north' varied. Edward I's administration, for example, directed writs to inhabitants *de singulis comitatibus ultra Trentam*, containing instructions to the sheriffs of Yorkshire, Nottingham and Derby, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Cumberland and Lancashire.⁹⁶ Henry VII's proclamation of October 1485 against the 'many and divers persons of the north parts of this our land' who had opposed him with Richard III was ordered to be proclaimed in Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland and the bishopric of Durham.⁹⁷ The heraldic province of Norroy, north of Trent, was defined in 1534 as including Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire and Staffordshire north of the Trent in addition to Yorkshire, the bishopric of Durham and the border counties.⁹⁸ When the Council of the North was established, it was initially referred to (in the regulations of 1484) as the King's 'Counsell in the North parties'. Ordinances of 1537 specify the counties involved (Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, the bishopric of Durham, and the cities of York, Hull and Newcastle).⁹⁹

⁹⁵ *Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, II, 84-90; *Polydore Vergil's English History...The First Eight Books*, ed. H. Ellis, Camden Society o.s. 36 (1846), pp. 1-2.

⁹⁶ *The Parliamentary Writs and Writs of Military Summons*, ed. F. Palgrave, 2 vols. in 4 (London, 1827-34), I, 11/7, 270/16.

⁹⁷ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, 3 vols. (New Haven, 1964-9), I, no. 2; cf. 90 (Henry VIII's order for a muster against the Scots, in August 1522, referring to 'the defence, safeguard and weal of his said north parts and marches and subjects of the same', directed to the sheriffs of Staffordshire, Shropshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Durham as well as the three northern counties), and 138.

⁹⁸ *Visitations of the North I*, ed. F. W. Dendy, SS 122 (1912), p. xxxiii.

⁹⁹ *Harleian Manuscript 433*, ed. Horrox and Hammond, f. 264v-265r; R. R. Reid, *The King's Council in the North* (London, 1921), pp. 505-7.

*The idea of the North*¹⁰⁰

In the preceding section, we have seen how the county became increasingly important to a wide range of later medieval society in articulating the geography of the realm, in imagining its social and political community, and in characterizing its inhabitants. It is apparent from expressions such as ‘Pontefract, in the north country’ or ‘the lords and commons of the north’ that the idea of the North played the same functions. But there are important differences of emphasis. The idea of the North had an older and richer cultural history than the shires, and certain characteristics of northern England seem to have crystallized by at least the twelfth century. As a result, the North was correspondingly more important in contemporary conceptions of English society and politics, and its application to contemporary events in turn added further depth to its cultural resonance. Our discussion here will focus on the territorial definition of the North, and its characterization.

Locating Northern England: The Trent and the Humber

The changing organization of royal administration in the later Middle Ages created a number of frameworks in which the North might be located. For naval purposes, for example, the kingdom was divided into coasts north and south-west of the Thames.¹⁰¹ The most enduring and important of these divisions, however, was that made by the river Trent. By 1239, two forest bailiwicks *citra* and *ultra Trentam*, had been created, and

¹⁰⁰For a survey of the concepts of ‘north’ and ‘south’ to c. 1500, see H. Jewell, ‘North and South: The Antiquity of the Great Divide’, *Northern History* 27 (1991), 1-25.

¹⁰¹E.g. appointment in 1336 of John de Norwich ‘ab ore Thamas (*sic*) per costeram maris versus partes boriales’ (*Rotuli Scociae* I, 415; cf. 468, 535, etc.).

escheatrics were similarly divided between 1258 and 1321.¹⁰² A king of heralds 'citra aquam de Trente ex parte boreali' is mentioned in 1276, and the demarcation of territory north of the Trent became increasingly important in later administrative development, perhaps in particular the organization of war against Scotland.¹⁰³

While the Marches strictly defined were limited to the border counties of Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmoreland, and the 'northern counties' could sometimes be understood as Yorkshire, Northumberland, Westmoreland and Cumberland, in a number of contexts the marches were associated with the 'north parts'.¹⁰⁴ They were described as the Marches 'versus partes boreales', and in 1344 John Darcy and Thomas Ughtred were sent 'versus partes boreales' to treat with the magnates of those parts concerning the defence of the Marches.¹⁰⁵ The office of Warden of the Marches was sometimes held together with that of Lieutenant of the North, an office which conveyed powers of array north of the Trent against the Scots.¹⁰⁶ The Trent sometimes served as a boundary for assessing military service against Scotland, and was also used as a boundary for ad hoc ordinances and commissions, such as the nomination of Newcastle, Nottingham and York as the towns *pur les Countees dela Trente* where royal seals should be held in 1312.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰²G. J. Turner, 'The Justices of the Forest South of Trent', *EHR* 13 (1903), 112-6 (113); S. T. Gibson, 'The Escheatrics, 1327-41', *EHR* 36 (1921), 218-25 (218). The use of *citra* and *ultra* was relative to the geographical position of the king, so does not create an absolute sense of country 'beyond Trent'. but nonetheless it sets up the river as a potentially important boundary.

¹⁰³A. Wagner, *Heralds of England: A History of the Office and College of Arms* (London, 1967), p. 6 and cf. pp. 20, 50.

¹⁰⁴*Rotuli Scociae* I, 564-5; cf. the array ordered on 22 Feb 1337 in the three border counties 'ac in partibus comitatus Ebor. eisdem comitatibus adjacentibus' (*Rotuli Scociae* I, 483).

¹⁰⁵*Rotuli Scociae* I, 588, 651; cf. 137 for a meeting in January 1315 of 'magnates of the parts beyond Trent' concerning the safety of 'the Marches of our kingdom toward the north'.

¹⁰⁶For example, Edmund, Earl of Woodstock, appointed Lieutenant of the Marches of Scotland, 15 Feb 1323; 'lieutenant for preservation and defence of the parts of this side of Trent against the incursions of the Scots and rebels', 16 March 1323 (*CPR 1321-4*, pp. 245 and 265). The office of Lieutenant of the North, which could also be described as 'between Trent and Berwick', 'between Trent and Roxburgh' or 'in the several counties beyond Trent' (*Rotuli Scociae* I, 130, 148, 166, 169, 524) has yet to be properly studied and I cannot do justice to it here. For the office of Warden of the Marches, see R. L. Storey, 'The Wardens of the Marches Towards Scotland 1377-1489', *EHR* 72 (1957), 593-615.

¹⁰⁷*RP* I, 285b. Other parts of England were divided as follows: the south and west, the parts of Lincoln and Northampton, the parts of London and Canterbury, of Shrewsbury and of Norwich. None of these units became formally established either in administrative practice or elsewhere, in striking contrast to the relative homogeneity, consistency and stability of constructions of the north.

It is not always clear how these references to land ‘beyond Trent’ were understood. Gibson showed that to some extent the river did act as a genuine administrative boundary, separating the Isle of Axholme from Lincolnshire, and the northern and southern parts of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire respectively, in the division of the escheatrics. On the other hand this seems only irregularly to have been the case in Staffordshire.¹⁰⁸ In 1344 Adam de Everynham and others were directed to levy archers in the parts of Nottingham and Derbyshire beyond Trent, but were ordered to assess the whole of Nottinghamshire after the men of the county petitioned that the shire be considered as it had in the past, as a whole (*integer*) and without any separation of its parts.¹⁰⁹

This suggests that the Trent usually functioned not as a more or less precise administrative boundary, but as a ‘shorthand’ for invoking the North. This is suggested by other references to ‘counties’ north or south of Trent (such as the petition in 1354 from *les Comunes de les Countees dela Trente* for the presence of a justice of either bench in those counties twice a year), and the fact that the same counties are not always referred to.¹¹⁰ Certainly by the fifteenth century the Trent was widely accepted as the figurative boundary of the North. Accounts of the events of 1461 describe northern armies licensed to plunder south of Trent; Leland described Wressle as one of the finest houses beyond Trent; and the fifth earl of Northumberland was overheard concocting a plan to rule from all Trent north.¹¹¹ In the seventeenth century the river had entered proverbial language as the boundary of the North.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸Gibson, ‘Escheatrics’; cf. J. C. Holt, *The Northerners: A Study in the Reign of King John* (London, 1961), pp. 14-15.

¹⁰⁹*CCR 1343-6*, p. 471; *Rotuli Scociae* I, 655 (the dates of these entries seem confused, the latter being 8 September and the former 13 October).

¹¹⁰*RP* II, 261a; above, p. 49; and cf. references to counties or sheriffs north of Trent in *Rotuli Scociae*, I, 595, 662, 666, etc.

¹¹¹1461 - see below, pp. 69-70; Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 53; *Letters of Richard Fox*, ed. Allen and Allen, p. 43.

¹¹²Tilley, *Proverbs*, M143 (‘Find me a true man Trent northward and I will find you an honest whore’, from 1659); see also P184. Tilley does not record any proverbs involving the Humber, while Whiting does not record any mentioning the Trent.

For all the importance of the Trent as a boundary of the North, however, it coexisted with an older and arguably more powerful idea of the North as bounded by the Humber. This probably denoted a more restricted geographical area; more importantly, it acquired distinctive and powerful cultural resonances.

Before the gradual conquest and unification of England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Humber was recognized as the major cultural and political boundary between the peoples of Anglo-Saxon England.¹¹³ Later on, the geography of Danish settlement and influence produced an alternative division of England roughly along the line of Watling Street. This lies behind many accounts of the Danish invasions of 1013, but seems to have lost most of its significance after the Norman Conquest.¹¹⁴

Northumbria, on the other hand, remained a powerful idea after the Conquest: William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon refer to *Northanimbriam* and *Northanimbri* (when William writes of *gentes aquilonares* it is usually to describe foreigners such as Danes and Normans).¹¹⁵ In the time of King John, *Northanhumbrenses* was still current, although *Aquilonares* or *Norenses* had become the usual terms for 'northerners'.¹¹⁶ But until at least the fifteenth century, despite the potential for confusion with the county of Northumberland, *Northumbria* and *Northumbrenses* continued to be used in reference to a wider North. Higden remarked on this ambiguity, distinguishing between *Northumberlond proprie sumendo* ('to speke propurliche of Norþumberlond') extending from Tyne to Tweed, and *plaga Northimbrana quae fuit olim ab Humbera usque ad Twedam* ('the contrey of Norþumberlond, þat was somtyme from Humber anon to Twede').¹¹⁷ Few writers were so precise, though: Giles's Chronicle, for example,

¹¹³For example, F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1971), p. 32; cf. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969), i.25 (p. 72); index s. v. *Nordanhymbrorum*; generally Jewell, 'Antiquity', pp. 2-4.

¹¹⁴Jewell, 'Antiquity', pp. 5-6; and see M. Innes, 'Danelaw Identities: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and Political Allegiance', in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. D. M. Hadley and J. D. Richards, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 2 (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 65-88.

¹¹⁵William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum anglorum*, ed. and tr. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998-9), ii.134 (I, 214) (William's first use of *Northanimbriam*), ii.141 (I, 228), etc.; ii.121 (I, 186), ii.154 (I, 254), etc.; a possible exception is *omnes populi qui Angliam ab aquilone inhabitant* (ii.177, I, 300).

¹¹⁶Holt, *Northerners*, p. 8.

¹¹⁷*Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, II, 88-9.

refers to *Berewico, Alnewico, et Warkworth in Northumbria*, but also *regimen totius Northumbrie versus Eboracum*; while Walsingham describes a Scottish raid on Cumberland and Westmoreland as retaliation against *Northumbrensibus*.¹¹⁸ Higden also provides some idea of how the Humber was understood as a boundary in the late middle ages, running west along the boundaries of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, into the Mersey ‘anon to þe corner of Wyreale: þere Humber falleþ in to þe west see.’¹¹⁹ Expressions such as ‘from Dover to Humber’ or ‘hence to Humber’ suggest the importance of such a boundary even at a proverbial level.¹²⁰

The legendary and prophetic North

The continuing importance of the Humber to later medieval ideas of the North partly resulted from the continuing importance of Anglo-Saxon history in late medieval England. It is quite common for symbolic representations of England to be divided into the seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and most historical narratives or miscellanies feature some account of them.¹²¹ But perhaps most important in creating and maintaining the Humber as the boundary of the North was the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth and its later derivatives. In Geoffrey’s *Historia Regum Britannie*, whose importance in late medieval culture is well-known, the Humber was perhaps the most significant boundary within Britain, frequently marking the division of the realm between rulers. Frequently the land north of Humber was given to younger brothers, who grudge at their share and lead rebellions.

Although there has been relatively little study of its impact on political consciousness, it would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of Geoffrey’s *Historia*. There are over two hundred manuscripts of the *Historia* itself; the work was used by

¹¹⁸*Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Anglie de Regnis Trium Regum Lancastrensiu*, ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1848), pp. 42, 44; Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, I, 437.

¹¹⁹*Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, II, 105.

¹²⁰Whiting, D369 and H631.

¹²¹See references in nn. 8 and 30 above.

virtually all succeeding historians; and a number of vernacular works, some extremely popular, derive from it. It is perhaps not surprising that a text which circulated so widely in space and time was subject to accretion and change, but the Humber continued to play a central role in later versions. Indeed, its meaning is even amplified on some occasions. The Middle English *Brut* described the land south of Humber as ‘þe better parte’, while Robert Mannyng was led to observe of land north of the Humber that ‘contek and couetyse / Out of þe north wyl alwey ryse’.¹²²

Geoffrey’s *Historia Regum* was important not only in its own right, or in its vernacular versions, however, but in its assimilation into the discourse of political policy and commentary.¹²³ In particular, materials from the *Historia* provided an important way of conceptualizing England’s relations with Scotland after the renewal of open hostilities under Edward I. Although the issue remains to be properly studied, the well-known appeal to Geoffrey’s narrative made by Edward and his successors seems to have promoted the production of prophetic materials which used Geoffrey’s *Prophecias Merlini*, or other parts of his narrative, to explore Anglo-Scottish relations. A good example is the poem known as ‘Regnum Scottorum’, which often appears in the context of materials demonstrating English lordship over Scotland, and which referred to Geoffrey’s Albanactus and the fate of Scotland at the hands of a *rex borealis*.¹²⁴ Another example is the poem ‘Als I yod’, from Cotton Julius A. v., an early-fourteenth-century manuscript containing Peter of Langtoft’s chronicle and other materials on Anglo-Scottish affairs, and whose action involves a mole, a bear ‘on yond side Humber’ and a leopard.¹²⁵

Other prophecies show how the northern geography of the *Historia Regum Britannie* could be adapted to wider and vaguer contexts. ‘The Cock in the North’ begins

¹²²*Brut*, ed. de Brie, I, 24; *The Story of England by Robert Manning of Brunne*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, RS 87, 2 vols. (1887), I, 100 (marked with a *nota* in the Lambeth MS).

¹²³Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England*.

¹²⁴H. Walther, *Initia carminum ac versuum medii aevi posterioris latinorum* (Göttingen, 1959), 1654-7. Three versions of this text are printed in *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, ed. W. F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1867), pp. 117-8 and 330-1. Some versions seem pro-Scottish but for evidence that they were understood in relation to English kings (in particular Edward I) see Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 71-2 and see also ch. 3 below, p. 128.

¹²⁵*The chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. T. Wright, RS 47, 2 vols. (1866-8), II, 452-67; *IMEV* 379; *MED* dates ? c. 1350.

by echoing the prophecies attributed to John of Bridlington, but its later sections derive from the *Prophecias Merlini*. . . . in one manuscript (Cotton Rolls ii.23, a Yorkist compilation) the poem apparently refers to the Percy rebellions of the early fifteenth century. Galfridian prophetic traditions were certainly used both by Henry IV and by those opposed to his rule, including the Percies.¹²⁶ Similar prophecies of a battle involving ‘many Lords out of the North’ seem to have been interpreted with reference to the Wars of the Roses.¹²⁷

A manuscript of prophecies which seems to have been compiled for the fourth earl of Northumberland, apparently as part of the family’s realignment with the Yorkist regime, further illustrates the currency of prophetic discourse in contemporary political perceptions.¹²⁸ A number of prophecies were tailored or interpreted to refer to the Percy family or its badge of a crescent moon, which was sometimes associated with the North.¹²⁹ The North is also a common presence in other prophecies in the manuscript: one, whose annotations suggest that it was understood in relation to the events of 1455 and later, involves a ‘crowd of northerners’ and ‘northern thunder’; another refers to ‘the captain of the North’.¹³⁰ In December 1537 the Vicar of Mulston, as well as interpreting prophecies in relation to the Percies, had identified the Cock in the North as Lord Lumley (after his crest) who would ‘do great adventures.’¹³¹ A concept of the North deriving largely from Galfridian historiography was an important component of prophetic discourse, and such discourse was an important and widely diffused way of thinking

¹²⁶P. Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimacy 1399-1422* (New Haven 1998), ch. 1.

¹²⁷*The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, ed. J. A. H. Murray, EETS o.s. 61 (1875), pp. lxxxi-ii, 49(l. 99).

¹²⁸BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E. VII, discussed by A. Allan, ‘Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, Prophecy and the ‘British History’ in the Reign of Edward IV’, in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. C. Ross (Gloucester, 1979), pp. 171-92 (pp. 179-86). The prophecies are accurately described in H. L. D. Ward and J. A. Herbert, *Catalogue of the Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols. (London, 1883-1910), I, 320-4.

¹²⁹The thirtieth prophecy refers explicitly to ‘Percy’ (Cotton Vespasian E. VII, fos. 95v-96r, at 96r); at fo. 91v the marginal note ‘Percy’ is given next to ‘Luna’. The moon and the north are associated in a version of ‘The Cock in the North’, fo. 132r.

¹³⁰BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E. VII, fos. 86v, 120r.

¹³¹*L&P XII/2*, 1212, i. The case is fully discussed in S. L. Jensen, *Political Prophecy and Protest under Henry VIII* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 1-4.

about political affairs throughout the late-medieval period.

Medical, ethnographic and biblical discourse

Constructions of England north of Humber, particularly those deriving from Geoffrey of Monmouth, carried implications as to the quality and character of the North in ways that the Trent does not seem to have evoked. Both versions of the North, however, were informed by ideas available in medical, ethnographic and biblical discourses.

One such idea related to northern geography. We have seen how the *Brut* constructed the land south of Humber as ‘better’. Similarly, Robert Mannyng expands Geoffrey’s narrative to portray the south as having ‘mo and betere cites / And larger londes and rentes and fees,’ while Higden suggested that one of the reasons that kings rarely ventured north of the Humber was that the south had nobler cities and was ‘better corne londe.’¹³² In the early sixteenth century Polydore Vergil argued that England was ‘moste frutefull on this syde the river of Humber, for on the other side it somewhat to mucche abowndethe with mountaynes.’¹³³

Such descriptions are reminiscent of an ethnographic discourse which developed in twelfth century England to describe the Scots, Welsh and Irish, in which a lightly urbanized and cultivated, mountainous and woody landscape carried associations of barbarousness.¹³⁴ Its late-medieval manifestations include Higden’s account of Ireland as mountainous and woody and his claim that the Welsh had only recently begun to become like the English in cultivating their land and building towns.¹³⁵ He described the Scots as

¹³²*Story of England*, ed. Furnivall, II, 539: (this addition comes from Wace, to whom Mannyng adds ‘þe southe þer-fore was chef kyng / and coroune bar ouer þem ilk-one’, and there is a note in the MS, *Australes semper dominabant Boriales*); *Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, II, 162-3.

¹³³Vergil, *Anglicae historiae libri vigintisex*, p. 5; *Polydore Vergil's English History...The First Eight Books*, ed. Ellis, p. 4.

¹³⁴J. Gillingham, ‘The Beginnings of English Imperialism’, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5 (1992), 392-409; for the European context see R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146-1223* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 158-77; and also R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093-1343*, The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford in Hilary Term 1998 (Oxford, 2000), ch. 5.

¹³⁵*Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, I, 332, 356, 402, 410-11.

barbari satis et silvestres, and Vergil portrayed northern Scotland as ‘full of hills (*montosam*)’, inhabited by ‘a moste harde and rough kinde of men.’¹³⁶

Vergil’s comment shows how this ethnographic language could become associated with conceptions of the North originating in classical medical discourse, in which the North was associated with hardness. According to Bartholomaeus, the northern wind (amongst many other, and not entirely congruent properties) ‘makeþ bodies harde’; the *Secreta Secretorum* says that ‘thay that dwellyth towarde the northe, bene stronge and coragious.’¹³⁷ These medical ideas also permeate thinking about warfare and chivalry. Particularly influential was the late classical militarist Vegetius, who argued that men of southerly climes had their blood dried up by the heat of the sun, and were consequently less martial, whereas ‘the people of the north, far away from the flames of the sun, while they may be more ill-advised, are however readier to fight because they abound in plentiful blood.’¹³⁸ As well as being enormously popular in itself - there survive over 250 manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries alone - the work was twice translated into Middle English, one translation known in three and the other in eleven manuscripts.¹³⁹ It was certainly known to abbot Whethamstede, who used Vegetius’s reasoning to account both for the course of events at the first and second battles of St. Albans.¹⁴⁰ It seems to be such thinking that lies behind Higden’s summary that ‘the peple of the sowthe beþ easier and more mylde; and men of þe north be more vnstable, more cruel, and more vnsey.’¹⁴¹

From the idea of northerners as violent and cruel, we may move to Mannyng’s

¹³⁶*Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, I, 386; Vergil, *Anglicae historiae libri vigintisex*, p. 7; *Polydore Vergil's English History...The First Eight Books*, ed. Ellis, p. 10.

¹³⁷*On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum*, ed. M. C. Seymour, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1975), II, 577; *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, ed. R. Steele, EETS e.s. 74 (1898), p. 222.

¹³⁸*Flavi Vegeti Renati Epitoma Rei Militaris*, ed. C. Lang (Leipzig, 1885), p. 6.

¹³⁹*The Earliest English Translation of Vegetius' De Re Militari*, ed. G. Lester, Middle English Texts 291 (Heidelberg, 1988), pp. 7 and 9; *Knyghthode and Bataile: A XVth Century Verse Paraphrase of Flavius Vegetius Renatus' Treatise 'De Re Militari'*, ed. R. Dyboski and Z. M. Arend, EETS o.s. 201 (1935).

¹⁴⁰*Registra quorundam abbatum monasterii S. Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols., RS 28/6 (1872), I, 391, where Vegetius is referred to; also p. 171, where the description of the northern army of 1455, ‘licet fortiores in armis, promptioresque ad bella, ac etiam in sanguinis effusione’ either misremembers or plays on Vegetius: ‘septentrioles populi... largo sanguine redundantes, sunt ad bella promptissimi.’

¹⁴¹*Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, II, 166-7.

comment that ‘contek and couetyse / Out of þe north wyl alwey ryse’. The immediate origins of this sentiment, however, are not medical or ethnographic, but biblical. The association of the devil with the North arose from patristic interpretations of Isaiah 14.13-14, which assumed an importance in medieval culture rather greater than its Biblical significance, and was alluded to in relation to the north of England by both Chaucer and Langland.¹⁴² Related to this idea in medieval perceptions is the role of the North in some of the prophetic books, particularly Jeremiah and Daniel.¹⁴³ These perceptions of the North were disseminated in sermon and devotional literature, and were occasionally directly referred to in political discourse.¹⁴⁴ The second continuation of the Crowland chronicle, for example, described the Lancastrian army after the battle of Wakefield, as ‘like a whirlwind from the north’, and cited Jeremiah 1.14: ‘et dixit Dominus ad me ab aquilone pandetur malum super omnes habitatores terrae’.¹⁴⁵

The combination of the discourse of royal administration and influential conceptual frameworks involving the North meant that, by the fourteenth century if not earlier, the North had become such a powerful and easily available way of conceptualizing a region of England that a whole range of social and economic differences were articulated through it. From the early fifteenth century - as we saw above - there are references to *northerin ston* and also to *falsam lanam vocatam Northeren woll*.¹⁴⁶

Still more important was the articulation of linguistic variation in terms of north and south. Linguistic variation in late-medieval England was perceived in terms of

¹⁴²Chaucer, *CT*, III, 14; Langland, *Piers Plowman C*, I, 114.

¹⁴³cf. Jeremiah 4.6 (malum ego adduco ab aquilone et contritionem magna), 6.1 (quiamalum visum est ab aquilone et contritio magna), 10.22 (commotio magna de terra aquilonis), 46.20; Daniel 11.40.

¹⁴⁴*The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, ed. S. J. H. Herttage, EETS e.s. 33 (1879), pp. 20-3, pp. 357-60 (at p. 359).

¹⁴⁵*Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland: with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers*, tr. H. T. Riley (London, 1908), p. 422; *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations, 1459-1486*, ed. and tr. N. Pronay and J. Cox (London, 1986), p. 191; see also Jewell, ‘Antiquity’, p. 9.

¹⁴⁶*MED* s.v. *northern*(e (adj.)), 2b.

'countries'. These could sometimes be identified as counties. The friar of King's Lynn who produced the English-Latin wordbook known as *Promptorium Parvulorum* noted that it followed 'comitatus...Northfolcie modum loquendi' and included instructions for those who wanted to insert words from other dialects, 'alterius patrie vocabula'.¹⁴⁷ The most common way of distinguishing between different accents or dialects, however, was in terms of northern and southern speech.¹⁴⁸

References to 'southern English' appear in a range of Northern texts, from the early-fourteenth-century *Cursor Mundi*, to the mid-fifteenth-century cycle of drama associated with Wakefield, and a cartulary compiled at Anlaby, near Hull, also c. 1450.¹⁴⁹ A witness in a marriage dispute at York in 1364 was declared unreliable because his manner of speaking varied between southern English, northern English and Scots; similarly, the compiler of material in Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114 (c. 1450) apologised for his style as 'as umwhile soperen, oþerwhile norþen'.¹⁵⁰ A manuscript written in Norfolk language in the mid-fifteenth century was described as 'translat out of Northarn tunge into Sutherne'.¹⁵¹ There were also more hostile comments on northern English: Higden's citation of William of Malmesbury's reference to 'inconditum' Northumbrian language, attributed to the proximity of 'barbarorum gentium', was particularly widely disseminated.¹⁵² Such hostility informed Walsingham and Whetamstede's references to northern 'barking' (*latratus*).¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷*Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum*, ed. A. Way, 3 vols., Camden Society o.s. 25, 54, 89 (1843-65), I, 1-3; the friar also described his dialect as 'vulgarem modum loquendi orientalium Anglorum'.

¹⁴⁸For many of the following references, see C. Clark, 'Another Late-Fourteenth-Century Case of Dialect Awareness', *English Studies* 62 (1981), 504-05.

¹⁴⁹*Cursor Mundi*, ed. R. Morris, EETS o.s. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101 (1874-1893), lines 20059-64 (Cotton MS); *The Towneley Plays*, ed. M. Stevens and A.C. Cawley, EETS SS 13, 2 vols. (1994), I, 135; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 324, fo. 2r (printed in M. R. James, 'The Anlaby Cartulary', *YAJ* 31 (1934), 334-47, p. 340).

¹⁵⁰D. M. Owen, 'White Annyes and others', in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford, 1974), pp. 331-46 (p. 344; cited by Clark, 'Dialect Awareness'); A.I. Doyle, 'Reflections on Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*', *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 14 (1983): 82-93 (p. 91 n. 16).

¹⁵¹Quoted by A. McIntosh, 'A New Approach to Middle English Dialectology', *English Studies* 44 (1963), 1-11 (p. 8).

¹⁵²*De gestis pontificum*, ed. Hamilton, p. 209; *Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, II, 156.

¹⁵³Below, pp. 64, 70.

More broadly, in attempts to conceptualize basic divisions among the entire community of the realm, north and south were indispensable in a way that east and west were not.¹⁵⁴ References in all contexts to *pars boreae* or *austreae* were far more common than their easterly or westerly equivalents. The *MED* records both *northern* and *southern* as surnames, but not *eastern*; we have already quoted Higden's division of the English into north, south and middle. In 1379 (and later in 1478 and 1521-2) the mercantile community of England was spoken of in terms of *Marchaundez de Londres* and *des autres Marchaundz vers la North*.¹⁵⁵ In both Bromyard's fourteenth-century preaching manual and Richard Morison's early-sixteenth-century humanist treatise against rebellion, tensions between northerners and southerners are described as the source of serious conflict.¹⁵⁶ So strong, indeed, was the idea of the North that the spectre of a separate 'king in the north' seems to have inspired real disquiet.¹⁵⁷

Defining the North, 1280-1540: Scotland

These frameworks, both geographical and conceptual, opened a number of ways in which the North could be seen - positive as well as negative. The following section will explore in more detail the construction and perception of the North in late medieval England. We can identify two principal constellations of northerness: one based around its proximity to Scotland, and the other around the idea of rebellion. Broadly speaking, the former is more important towards the beginning of our period, and the latter towards its end; it will

¹⁵⁴For references to 'western men' or 'west contre' see *Paston* II, 47, 134; *Cely Letters*, ed. Hanham, pp. 34, 193.

¹⁵⁵*RP* III, 63a; *The York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers, 1356-1917*, ed. M. Sellers, SS 129 (1918), p. 75; *York Civic Records*, ed. A. Raine et al., 9 vols., YASRS 98, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119, 138 (1939-78), II, 78.

¹⁵⁶Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 563 (Bromyard may have been influenced by experiences at Oxford: see Emden, *BRUO*, I, 278 and below, ch. 2, pp. 98-101); *Humanist Scholarship and Public Order*, ed. Berkowitz, p. 132.

¹⁵⁷Compare, for example, the 'Libel against Archbishop Neville', ed. Illingworth (probably c. 1387); *The Gest of Robyn Hode*, in *Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw*, ed. R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor, rev. edn (Stroud, 1997), stanza 324; *Hugh the Chanter: The History of the Church of York 1066-1127*, ed. and tr. C. Johnson, rev. M. Brett, C. N. L. Brooke and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1990), p. 5.

become clear, however, that they are closely related.

The boundary between northern England and Scotland, and the relationship between the peoples on either side of that boundary, had been explored in political discourse since at least the twelfth century. William of Malmesbury, as we have seen, explained the uncouth language of York and Northumbria in terms of their proximity to *barbarorum gentium*.¹⁵⁸ The relationship became the focus of renewed interest, though, as a result of Edward I's claim to the throne of Scotland. The campaigns of Edward and his successors gave renewed currency to an emphasis on the dangers posed by the king's 'ancient enemies': producing an idea of the North as the hardy defender of the extremities of the kingdom, but also as vulnerable to those same enemies and even potentially allied with them. These campaigns were accompanied by an expansion of royal propaganda through which such ideas became more widely disseminated.¹⁵⁹ We can identify three principal ways in which the North was constructed in relation to Scotland: as militarized and warlike; as vulnerable and ravaged; and as treacherous and untrustworthy.

The area north of the Trent was particularly associated with the defence of the realm against Scotland. The Commons petitioned in 1344, 1346 and 1348, for example, that aid granted *par dela Trente* should be used *en defens du North* or in *la guerre..entre nostre Seigneur le Roi et ses Enemyes d'Escoce*, and John Wodehouse was appointed receiver 'in singulis comitatibus ultra Trentam'.¹⁶⁰ Polydore Vergil claimed that the Cornish revolt of 1497 arose from resentment at taxation for a Scottish campaign, and that the northern revolt of 1489 was partly due to objections to paying for a campaign in Brittany. Likewise, counties north of the Trent supplied manpower against Scotland.¹⁶¹

A parliamentary petition of 1385 requested that marcher lords (*les Seigneurs*

¹⁵⁸ *Gesta pontificum*, ed. Hamilton, p. 209.

¹⁵⁹ D. W. Burton, 'Requests for Prayers and Royal Propaganda under Edward I', in *Thirteenth Century England III*, ed. P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 25-35 (esp. p. 25).

¹⁶⁰ *RP II*, 148b, 150b, 201b, 202a; *Rotuli Scotiae*, I, 662 (the counties were Nottingham, Derby, York, Lancaster, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland). For full references see M. Jurkowski, C. L. Smith and D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales 1188-1688*, Public Record Office Handbook 31 (Kew, 1998), pp. 46-7, 50-1.

¹⁶¹ *Anglica Historia*, ed. Hay, pp. 39, 90-3, and cf. 202. For military service from north of Trent see pp. 51-2 above and also, e.g., *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland V*, ed. G. G. Simpson and J. D. Galbraith (Edinburgh, 1986), no. 216 (of 1299). For the form of land tenure known as tenant right, found in the north and north-west of England and in highland Yorkshire and associated with Border service, see M. Bush, 'Tenant Right Under the Tudors: A Revision Revised', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 77 (1995), 162-88, with references to earlier discussions.

marchiers) together with knights and esquires with property in the marches and *par dela Trente* should repair to their homes until the next parliament to resist the enemy, and a similar request was made in 1386.¹⁶² In 1461, an exception was made in the statute against livery for the Warden of the Marches, whose livery could be used ‘from Trent northwarde, at such tyme as is necessite to reyse people for defence of the Marches.’¹⁶³ Again, Henry VII’s leniency towards supporters of Richard III was based partly on the fact that ‘they of those parts be necessary, and according to their duty must defend this land against the Scots.’¹⁶⁴

This association of the North with military activity interacted with the medical and ethnographic discourses discussed above to produce a characterization of northerners as warlike and violent. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Vergil described *boreales populos* as *feroces ac nouarum rerum ante alios cupidos*, but a similar characterization can be seen earlier in the Westminster chronicler’s account of Scottish raids in the 1370s and 1380s.¹⁶⁵ On a number of occasions he remarks that the defence of the North has been made the responsibility of local magnates; he speaks of ‘domini boreales’ as being ‘Scotica bella magis experti’ and complains that (in 1385) ‘our northerners (*nostris boreales*)’, formerly active and vigorous, have become lazy and spiritless, failing to protect their homeland.¹⁶⁶

Ideas of northern spiritedness seem to lie behind Walsingham’s account of the disagreement between John of Gaunt and the earl of Northumberland in 1381 when the earl is described as impatient ‘typically of his race’ (*more gentis suae*).¹⁶⁷ They likewise inform his story about the capture of a Scottish boat by men from Newcastle and Hull. This is how Walsingham describes their response to the earl of Northumberland’s claim of the boat on behalf of the king:

¹⁶²RP III, 213a, 223a; and cf. 138b and *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, ed. Bain, IV, nos. 241 and 286.

¹⁶³RP, V, 487b.

¹⁶⁴*Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Hughes and Larkin, I, no. 2.

¹⁶⁵*Anglica Historia*, ed. Hay, p. 10.

¹⁶⁶*Westminster Chronicle*, ed. Hector and Harvey, pp. 138-39.

¹⁶⁷ Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, II, 44. That Walsingham means *gens* to refer to northerners is clear not only from the wider contexts which we have been considering, but from the immediate context of the passage in which the earl’s northern identity is twice mentioned. (II, 43-5)

At Boreales, mox spiritum habentes in naribus, prout moris est illius gentis, satis incomposite, ore distorto, naribus prae furore vento repletis, turgide responderunt, cum summa indignatione latrantes...¹⁶⁸

Such excessive spiritedness was associated by Walsingham with rashness and pride: he writes of the ‘great harm and shame’ inflicted on the whole kingdom by *imprudencia et superbia Northumbrorum* in a rash and ill-considered raid into Scotland in 1378.

The damage inflicted on the north parts of the kingdom by the Scots receives greater emphasis in other texts. This damage could be used to criticize the royal administration: the *Vita Edward Secundi* described how Robert Bruce invaded ‘partes Northumbrorum’ when they lacked royal protection.¹⁶⁹ Barbour recorded a division in the English council in 1319, after the battle of Myton-on-Swale, between ‘southren men’ urging the king to continue the siege of Berwick and ‘northir men’ urging him to abandon the siege and protect their estates.¹⁷⁰

On the other hand, damage also figured largely in royal requests for aid, whether spiritual or material. In December 1318 Edward II, describing the damage inflicted by the Scots not only in the Marches but ‘inside our kingdom as far as the county of York’, announced his plan to spend winter ‘in partibus borealibus’ for the safety of his people, and requested ‘the magnates and faithful men of the same north parts’ to levy their tenants north of Trent.¹⁷¹ Edward III requested prayers from archbishop Melton, referring to Scots ‘partes nostri boreales ... hostiliter invadentes ... ordini, aetati et sexui non parcentes’.¹⁷² To some, the North was not only particularly vulnerable to but particularly hated by the Scots: the Prior and Convent of Durham saw them in 1347 as *ferme propos a destruire le North*, while according to the chronicler at Meaux they planned to make the Humber the boundary of their kingdom.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, I, 436.

¹⁶⁹ *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. and tr. N. Denholm Young, (London, 1957), p. 48.

¹⁷⁰ John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. W. M. Mackenzie (London, 1909), p. 319, ll. 842-51.

¹⁷¹ *Rotuli Scotiae* I, 190.

¹⁷² *Chronicles of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. Stubbs, II, 47, cf. 113, 116; see also 81.

¹⁷³ *Letters from the Northern Registers*, ed. Raine, p. 390; *Melsa*, III, 61.

The sufferings of the North were of genuine concern to many commentators. Others, however, surmised that Scottish successes, particularly in the early fourteenth century, showed not the vulnerability of the North but either its laxity or its complicity. We have seen how the monk of Westminster blamed northerners for failing to protect the realm; for others, even within the region itself, elements of the North were positively treacherous. The Bridlington chronicle claimed it as common report that the enemy would not have been able to reach the neighbourhood of York without English assistance; Castleford's chronicle has a long passage on the shifting loyalties of Northumberland.¹⁷⁴

The spectre of this lax or complicit North is particularly common in royal rhetoric against rebellion. A writ of 1319 to the sheriff of Yorkshire requests proclamations to be made against conventicles of armed men 'non pro defensione partium illarum contra Scotos'.¹⁷⁵ A number of rumours circulated that Thomas of Lancaster was confederate with the Scots, and similar accusations were levelled - with more or less justice - against several other northern insurrections.¹⁷⁶ Henry VII's proclamation of October 17, 1485 recorded the defeat of 'certeyne oure rebelles...confedered with oure auncient enemyes the Scottes...in the north parties of this our realme'. Henry VIII's pardon to the Pilgrims of Grace accused them of having nearly brought about 'the utter ruyne and destruccion of those whole countreys to the great comfort and avauncement of your auncyent ennemyes the Scottes.'¹⁷⁷

The impact of the Scottish wars also contributed to the association of the North with poverty, already present in the ethnographic and legendary material discussed above. The *Vita Edwardi Secundi* claimed that during the famine of 1316 horses and dogs were eaten *in partibus Northumbrorum* because the area was so afflicted by Scottish

¹⁷⁴*Chronicles of Edward I and II*, ed. Stubbs, II, 81, cf. p. 97; *Castleford's Chronicle or the Book of Brut*, ed. C. D. Eckhardt, EETS 305 and 306, 2 vols. (1996), II, 1060.

¹⁷⁵*Foedera* II, i, 154.

¹⁷⁶*Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. Denholm Young, pp. 76, 97; *Chronicles of Edward I and II*, ed. Stubbs, I, 302; cf. J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster 1307-22: A Study in the Reign of Edward II*, (London, 1970), pp. 205, 207, 212, 238, 331.

¹⁷⁷*HMC: The Manuscripts of the Duke of Rutland, Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, 4 vols. (London, 1888-1905), I, 8; *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Larkin and Hughes, I, no. 169; for a northerner's reaction, see *L&P* XII/1, 1023.

incursions.¹⁷⁸ For a later writer, this poverty was directly linked to the other principal characteristic of the North in late medieval England: its inhabitants' inclinations to rebellion and plunder.¹⁷⁹

Defining the North, 1280-1540: Rebellion

The association of the North with rebellion was long-standing in medieval political discourse. William of Malmesbury makes a number of relevant comments in reference both to Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, and the rebellious North is a significant presence in Geoffrey of Monmouth and his derivatives.¹⁸⁰ The identification of the baronial opposition to King John as 'northerners' is well-known thanks to J. C. Holt's study.¹⁸¹ The impact of such discourses in the North itself is suggested by Peter Langtoft's chronicle.¹⁸² Langtoft's account of tenth and eleventh-century history, which is based on Henry of Huntingdon, has much to say about 'les malvays Norays', and in an unusual account of the Norman Conquest, describes how Robert Comin bound 'the barony of the North' to refuse to submit to William I.¹⁸³ Only under Edward I do northerners and southerners consistently unite against the Scots.¹⁸⁴

Perhaps surprisingly, though, the concept of the rebellious North finds little expression in the fourteenth century, although some accounts of Thomas of Lancaster's rebellion suggest a regional dimension to the loyalties of both sides. Adam Murimuth, for

¹⁷⁸*Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. Denholm Young, p. 70.

¹⁷⁹*Registra quorundam abbatum monasterii S. Albani*, ed. Riley, I, 171-2.

¹⁸⁰William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum anglorum*, ed. Mynors et al., iii.271 (I, 498-9), ii.121 (I, 186-7), ii.141 (I, 228-9); for comments about Northumbrian love of liberty, see ii.200 (I, 364-5), ii.177 (I, 300-2), ii.120.

¹⁸¹Holt, *Northerners*.

¹⁸²For the later section of the chronicle, Wright's edition has been superseded by *Edition critique et commentée de Pierre de Langtoft, Le regne d'Edouard Ier*, ed. J. C. Thiolier (Creteil, 1989). I have consulted Thiolier but cite Wright's edition as it provides Langtoft's entire text.

¹⁸³E.g. Langtoft, ed. Wright, I, 332, 336 (cf. Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. D. E. Greenway, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1996), pp. 316-7), 412.

¹⁸⁴Langtoft, ed. Wright, II, 176-7, 240-1, 300-1, 304-7.

example, stated that after the rebellious magnates had headed ‘versus partes boreales’ to join Lancaster, Edward II gathered a great army ‘versus partes boriales’, although Murimuth attributed Lancaster’s final defeat to ‘multi de partibus Humberlandie’. According to the Lanercost chronicler Edward was supported by ‘cives Londoniae et alios australes’ and by ‘tota fortitudine australium ultra Trentam’.¹⁸⁵

Although Henry IV’s usurpation of the throne had not been widely interpreted in regional terms, at least one chronicle emphasized the support of Henry Percy as a northern magnate, *cum tota potentia Boreali*.¹⁸⁶ This chronicle seems to be particularly interested in the idea of an oppositional North: it tells how Richard II was rebuked by *quidam eremita de partibus Borealibus* and told to restore the possessions of the lords he had disinherited. Presumably it was the same northern hermit was executed by Henry IV on the same day as the Battle of Shrewsbury, an event which allows the chronicler (unlike most others) to build on these ideas of the North, claiming that Hotspur’s *boreales milites et armigeri* returned to their Northumbrian castles, distrustful of the king’s grace.¹⁸⁷

The North was certainly central to the responses of the crown to the Percy rebellions of the early fifteenth century. The earl of Westmoreland advised Henry in July 1403 to travel *vers les parties de North* on account of rumours about the survival of Richard II being spread by the earl of Northumberland in Northumberland, Yorkshire and the bishopric of Durham.¹⁸⁸ In May 1405 the Council was speaking again of *les troubles si aucuns aviendront es dites parties du North*; Henry wrote to them of Northumberland, Marshall, Bardolf *et autres de leurs adherentz es parties del North* and news of his victory in July was endorsed *touchant les nouvelles ed parties du North*.¹⁸⁹ If

¹⁸⁵*Adae Murimuth Continuatio chronicarum; Robertus de Avesbury: De gestis mirabilibus Regis Edwardi Tertii*, ed. E. M. Thompson, RS 93 (London, 1889), p. 36; *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 242; compare *Brut*’s account of how Edward II was helped by southern men (*Brut*, ed. de Bric, I, 215). In contrast the Bridlington chronicle seems to deliberately play down any regional elements in Lancaster’s support (*Chronicles of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. Stubbs, II, 62: *plurimi barones, baneretti et milites, australes et boriales*).

¹⁸⁶*Eulogium*, ed. Haydon, III, 389. Cf Walsingham’s description of the Earl’s retinue *de partibus Borealibus* at his face-off with Gaunt in London (*Historia anglicana*, ed. Riley, II, 44).

¹⁸⁷*Eulogium*, ed. Haydon, III, 380, 397-8.

¹⁸⁸*Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, ed. H. Nicolas, 7 vols. (London, 1834-7), I, 209.

¹⁸⁹*Proceedings of the Privy Council*, ed. Nicholas, I, 262, 264, 276.

the first version of Hardyng's chronicle is to be trusted, Robert Umfraville persuaded the earl of Westmorland to march against the rebels to York with the statement that he had no need to dread the North, and later advised Henry V 'get the North, then work ye not in vain'.¹⁹⁰ The North was also the space in which rebellion was located for a number of contemporary commentators, and in which it entered historical memory, although a number of sources noted northern resistance to Percy's rebellion of 1408. It is striking, however, that the troubled and eventful reign of Henry IV did not produce a corpus of reflection on the character of the North, even in those contexts - such as St Albans - where such reflection had flourished in the later fourteenth century and would reemerge later in the fifteenth century.

It is in the later fifteenth century, when ideas of rebellion became intertwined with more general violence and hostility, that the North assumed a much greater importance in both official and informal political discourse. In 1443 the privy council was told of 'grete riot and mysgoevernance' spread by the earl of Northumberland 'in þe north contrey'; in 1444 proclamations were issued concerning the riotous behaviour of various Percies 'in diversas partes partium dicti regni nostri borialium'. In 1453 the *Brut* likewise refers to 'an affray in þe north contre.'¹⁹¹

Ideas of North and south were an important element in contemporary interpretations of the Wars of the Roses.¹⁹² Abbot Whethamstede, for example described both the Yorkist army at St Albans in 1455 and the Lancastrian army of 1461 as northerners and consequently, as Vegetius had laid down, bloodthirsty, warlike and eager for plunder.¹⁹³ The attitude taken by Sir Thomas Malory seems to have been similar. The action of the opening sections of what Vinaver calls 'The Tale of King Arthur' is related in terms influenced by the events of the 1450s and 1460s, as a number of scholars have noticed.¹⁹⁴ Uther battles 'a grete hoost of the North' at St Albans; Arthur creates Sir Brastias 'wardeyn to wayte upon the Northe fro Trent forwardes'. The North at that time

¹⁹⁰C. L. Kingsford, 'The First Version of Hardyng's Chronicle', *EHR* 27 (1912), 462-82 (p. 472).

¹⁹¹*Proceedings of the Privy Council*, ed. Nicholas, V, 273, 309; PRO, C255/3/9 no. 14 (*CCR* 1441-7, p. 217); *Brut*, ed. de Brie, II, 523.

¹⁹²For 'local patriotism' in the Wars of the Roses see Goodman, *Wars of Roses*, pp. 224-6.

¹⁹³*Registra quorundam abbatum*, ed. Riley, I, 171-2; 381-413.

¹⁹⁴P. J. C. Field, 'Fifteenth-Century History in Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in his *Malory: Texts and Sources* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 47-71 (esp. p. 52).

was ‘the most party the kynges enemyes’, but within a few years ‘Arthur wan alle the North, Scotland, and alle that were under their obeissaunce,’ although a ‘northir hoste’ was later raised against the king.¹⁹⁵ As in Whethamstede, an idea about the opposition between North and south seems to have become a better way of conceptualizing what must have seemed to many the baffling shifts of contemporary politics, than explanations based on political or dynastic allegiance.

This is not to deny, of course, that such ideas of the North are relatively rarely expressed in the surviving written sources. On the other hand, it is undeniable that they were extremely important on certain occasions and contexts. In September 1460 the king wrote to Beverley concerning the ‘greet assembles’ of ‘divers persones of the North parties of this oure reame’.¹⁹⁶ In October 1460 friar John Brackley wrote to John Paston I of a rumour he had heard from ‘northerners and their supporters’ that Queen Margaret planned to kill not only him but ‘all the Friars Minors on this side of the river Trent’, and it was Margaret’s southern progress in early 1461 which brought the idea of a northern faction into the mainstream of political discourse.¹⁹⁷ News travelled fast: on 23 January 1461 Clement Paston was writing to John I that

þe pepill in þe northe robbe and styll and ben apoynted to pill all thys cwntre, and gyffe a-way menys goodys and lyfflodys in all þe sowthe cwntre... My lordys þat ben here haue as moche as þey may doo to kep down all thys cwntre, more þan iij ore v scherys, fore þey wold be up on þe men in northe, fore it ys fore þe welle of all þe sowthe.¹⁹⁸

On the 28th, the privy council sent out letters stating that ‘thoo mysruled and outerageous people in the north parties of this reame been commyng towards thees parties, to the destruccion therof.’¹⁹⁹ A proclamation of March 6 compared the violent northerners to Saracens or Turks; an entry on the Parliament Roll dated 12 November

¹⁹⁵ *Malory: Works*, ed. E. Vinaver, one volume text of second edition (Oxford, 1971), pp. 6, 10, 17.

¹⁹⁶ Beverley: East Yorkshire Record Office, BC II/7/1, fo. 154v; *HMC: Beverley*, p. 139.

¹⁹⁷ *Paston*, II, 213; for Brackley, see Emden, *BRUC* p. 87. The Trent did not mark an administrative boundary for the Franciscans, who were divided into seven ‘custodies’ in England: see J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 122 and n. 44.

¹⁹⁸ *Paston* I, 198.

¹⁹⁹ *Proceedings of the Privy Council*, ed. Nicholas, VI, 307-10.

is to the same effect.

These representations had a wide impact. Davies's chronicle describes the events of 1460-1 almost entirely in terms of 'the malyce of the Northermenne' and compares them to 'paynems or Sarracens, and no Crysten menne'.²⁰⁰ Hardyng likewise conceptualizes events in terms of North and south after the second battle of St Albans: in his account of the battle of Towton, Edward IV, who has taken the crown 'by counsaill of the lordes by south' defeats 'the north partie' with the help of 'lordes fele by south'.²⁰¹ A poem on the battle of Towton, preserved in a collection of strongly Yorkist political poems in a manuscript from Northampton, describes how 'the lordes of the northe' and 'the northen men' attempted to destroy 'us' in the south, but were resisted by Edward IV and 'al the south of Englund vnto the watyr of Trent'.²⁰² Whethamstede's depiction of the northern army, probably written around 1461, adds other negative ideas of the North to these: the northerners (*gens Boreae*) are boastful, and think one of them can subdue a thousand southerners; their plunder is worse than that of pagan barbarians; their language is like barking.²⁰³

The experience of 1461 seems to have coloured attitudes to the North for at least a generation. The rebellion of 1469 was variously described as 'an insurrection in the northern parts' or *conflictu militum et belligerorum borealium*.²⁰⁴ The Croyland Chronicle spoke of 'a whirlwind from the North' (probably echoing Daniel 11.40). Other political discourse from the 1470s suggests continued distrust of the North: the Duke of Clarence instructed Henry Vernon to 'have sure and trusti men in the North' and intended in 1471 'to comme in all goodly haste into the north partyes for theestablishement of pease, tranquillite and restfull fule and governance of the same'.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ *English Chronicle*, ed. Davies, pp. 106-10 (p. 107). Compare the burgesses of Grantham, who claimed their charter had been stolen by 'great rebels coming out of the north country'. (C. L. Schofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols. (London, 1923), I, 136, n. 2.)

²⁰¹ *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1812), pp. 405-6 (at p. 406).

²⁰² *Early English Carols*, ed. R. L. Greene, 2nd edition (London, 1977), no. 431. Cf. *Croyland Chronicle Continuations*, ed. Pronay and Cox, p. 112, for the claim that the *populus regni australi* wanted Edward IV for king.

²⁰³ *Registra quorundam abbatum*, ed. Riley, I, 388-90, 399-400.

²⁰⁴ *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. Gairdner, p. 183; 'Hearne's fragment' in *Chronicles of the White Rose of York*, ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1845), pp. 24-5; *Abbreviata Chronica*, ed. Smith, p. 13.

²⁰⁵ *HMC: Rutland Manuscripts*, I, 3-4.

John Paston II reported ‘many folkes vppe in the Northe’ in August 1470, and ‘much ado in the Northe’ in September 1471.²⁰⁶

Ideas of the North gained renewed importance in political discourse under Richard III, partly as a result of his deliberate appeal to northern self-consciousness.²⁰⁷ The Crowland chronicler interpreted his reign in terms of his northern support, and southern (less so, western) opposition.²⁰⁸ When a force traveled to London for his coronation in 1483 the vice-chancellor of Cambridge hired a man to refute ‘certos rumores de adventu virorum borealium’.²⁰⁹ Under Henry VII, the north’s association with Richard strengthened its rebellious potential: a royal proclamation of October 17, 1485 referred to the defeat of ‘certeyne oure rebelles’ making ‘insurrecions ... in the north parties of this our realme’ and intending the subversion of the kingdom. In December 1485 Thomas Betanson was writing to Robert Plumpton and others from London that ‘here is much spech that we shall have aschip agayne, and no man can say of whom; but they deme of Northernmen and Walchmen’²¹⁰ Henry VII’s proclamation against the rebels of 1489, like the Yorkist letters of 1461, warned against ‘great rebels and traitors of the north parts of Yorkshire’ intending ‘to rob, despoil and destroy all the south parts of this his realm.’²¹¹

Under Henry VII and Henry VIII, northern rebellions are articulated in county terms as much as in terms of ‘the north.’ The Earl of Surrey faced down a ‘commotion of our subiects in our county of York’ in 1492, and Vergil described a protest of 1513 against taxation on the part of ‘Eboracenses atque Dunelmenses...id genus exactionis

²⁰⁶Paston, I, 431, 440.

²⁰⁷C. D. Ross, *Richard III* (London, 1981), pp. 44-59 and 119-24; more fully *Richard III and the North*, ed. R. Horrox (Hull, 1986).

²⁰⁸*Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, ed. Pronay and Cox, pp. 163, 170, etc, although note the claim that the northerners threatened to rise if Richard married Elizabeth (p. 175).

²⁰⁹C. A. J. Armstrong, ‘Some Examples of the Distribution and Speed of News in England at the Time of the Wars of the Roses’, in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, ed. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin and R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1948), pp. 429-54 (p. 430).

²¹⁰*HMC, Rutland Manuscripts*, I, 8; *The Plumpton Correspondence*, ed. T. Stapleton, repr. and intr. K. Dockray (Gloucester, 1990), p. 49 (Kirby’s edition omits a line here, presumably through eyeskip from ‘&’ to ‘&’: p. 63); *aschip* probably ‘a chip, a quarrel’: *OED* chip v. 2, although only recorded as nineteenth-century dialect.

²¹¹*Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Larkin and Hughes, I, no. 19.

semper peius quam quicquam odissent'.²¹² In 1535, though, there were reports of 'riots in the North', and the idea of the rebellious North received probably its fullest expression during the rebellion of 1536-7.²¹³ Royal perceptions of the origins, aims and nature of the rebel forces were shaped by conceptions of the North, and the evidence amassed in the aftermath of the revolt also shows clearly the importance of these ideas at a more popular level.

From early on, there were references to 'northern men', the 'commons of the north' or 'northern rebels' in governmental writings. For Brian Hastings, the revolt would inevitably spread beyond Yorkshire because 'the common people of all the north are so confederated.'²¹⁴ Norfolk attempted to excuse his perceived lack of resolve by talking up the rebels as 'all the flower of the North', while he lamented to the rebels themselves that 'ye Northern men, that have so well served their prince, in our companies and in many other places, sholde nowe com to fight against us.'²¹⁵ The Lancaster herald invoked related discourses when he reported having encountered 'verry crewell fellowes'; he was later accused of having attempted to intimidate the royal army by 'sayng to them that the Northen men were a mervelus great number, the best harnysed and horsed in the world, and kept the best ordre of batell.'²¹⁶ An opposite danger - of underestimating the rebels - arose from ideas of the North as underdeveloped and underpopulated. This can be seen in Somerset herald's conversation with Darcy, in which he mocked Darcy's claim that the armies of Westmoreland, Cumberland, Durham and Lancashire contained around 140,000 men with 'there are not so many men of war in all the north and half Scotland.'²¹⁷

While in 'official' writings references to the North appear alongside more specific references to counties, it seems that popular conceptions of the revolt operated almost

²¹² Account of Surrey's life, on a table fixed to his tomb at Thetford, printed in J. Weever, *Antient Funerall Monuments* (London, 1631), p. 556; *Plumpton Correspondence*, ed. Stapleton, p. 96 note a; for 1513 see R. W. Hoyle, 'Resistance and Manipulation in Early Tudor Taxation: Some Evidence from the Tudor North', *Archives* 20/90 (1993), 158-75 (161-63)

²¹³ *L&P* VII, 892

²¹⁴ *L&P* XI, 663.

²¹⁵ *L&P* XI, 909; *State Papers*, I, 496

²¹⁶ *State Papers*, I, 485, 488.

²¹⁷ *L&P* XI, 1086.

entirely in terms of North and south. Marmaduke Neville and his companions were asked ‘How do the traitors in the north?’, while a Kentishmen was satisfied that ‘his grace hath overcome his enemies of the north’. Conversely a London butcher spoke of ‘ye good felowes of the north’, John Woodard of Bromshill (Staffs.) opined that ‘the northern men did rise in a good quarrel and for a common wealth’, and a London cobbler sold Thomas Lunde his shoes cheaply ‘because ye are a northern man [and]... ye have done very well there of late.’²¹⁸ Ideas of northern military strength were invoked by a sympathetic inhabitant of Boston, who told Cromwell’s informant that ‘ye shall find them there one man good enough for two of the best should come out of this country’; the abbot of Colchester, conversely, echoed earlier comments on northern boasters in his reputed remark that the northerners were ‘mokyll in the mothe, great cracars, and nothing worthe in their dedes’.²¹⁹ All in all, the Pilgrimage provides extremely suggestive evidence of the extent to which ideas and stereotypes of the North were diffused among all levels of late-medieval society, and of the extent to which they could condition perceptions of politics and events.

²¹⁸Hall, *Chronicle*, ed. Ellis, p. 823; *L&P* XI, 1319; XII/1, 990, 193, 201/v; see also XII/1, 1000-1.

²¹⁹*L&P* XI, 920; XIV/2, 439.

Conclusions

The national frameworks of locality examined in this chapter constituted a shared culture in more ways than one. This culture was not only widely diffused, but developed and was articulated in a wide range of disparate texts and discourses. No particular discourse or institution determined the shape these frameworks took: some were more influential than others, but those that aimed for the widest circulation often appealed to pre-existing frameworks and prejudices to increase their impact. Even the structures of royal administration, which were probably the single most important force in determining how locality was perceived, were influenced by other discourses, and generally only provided a framework within which a range of prejudices could be articulated.

How this culture was acquired and how far it was socially diffused are questions that require much further research. The chorographical lists and texts referred to above may have had a didactic as well as a mnemonic role, but relatively little is known about various kinds of education in English history or geography. There would have been many opportunities for lower-status and illiterate social groups to come into contact with national frameworks of locality, whether through the pulpit or the delivery of secular proclamations, and we have seen that there is considerable evidence for the impact of those frameworks on such groups. But much remains to be learnt about the influence of national frameworks on what might be called the popular culture of locality.

I hope to have demonstrated in this chapter the existence of national frameworks of locality in which the kingdom was conceptualized in terms of its constituent counties on the one hand, and in terms of wider regional areas, particularly the North, on the other. To a certain extent these frameworks interacted and interfered with one another, so that perceptions of Yorkshire, and apparently of the other northern counties, are less precise and slower to develop than those of other counties, with the idea of the North offering a more meaningful and resonant framework. I hope also to have shown that these frameworks were widely disseminated throughout late-medieval England, and exerted powerful influences on the conceptualization of late-medieval political life, and even on the formulation of policy. The question remains, however, of what impact these frameworks had on the identities of those associated by birth, residence or otherwise with the areas of Yorkshire and the North. This is the question explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND LOCAL IDENTITIES

The preceding chapter explored the frameworks through which locality was understood in national discourses or culture. It concentrated in particular on the development of, and interaction between, ideas of Yorkshire and the North of England. This chapter examines the impact of these ideas on the construction of local identities, and suggests a framework through which the complexity and multiplicity of this impact can be appreciated without over-simplification or generalization.

It is helpful to see identities not as fixed and static but as plural and fluctuating between different contexts.¹ The organization of this chapter is intended to emphasize the extent to which the available sources present identities in a limited range of situations, all of which exert their own pressures or impose their own conventions. The petitionary process, for example, encouraged constructions of locality which emphasized its dependence on particular institutions, or its poverty and vulnerability. Social and geographical mobility could develop attitudes to 'home' that might not be available to those of more fixed locality. Attitudes which might be strongly-felt in some situations - threat or conflict - could be much less important in others. Rather than trying to assess in global, abstract terms the importance of particular frameworks of locality we need to recognize that different situations imposed different priorities. As we shall see, in situations of petition and conflict the idea of the North was often more powerful than that of the county; in constructing various ideas of 'home', the county was frequently more important.

¹Two recent statements to similar effect are G. Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work in the Late Medieval Town', *Past & Present* 154 (1997), 3-31 (p. 7); L. Johnson, 'Imagining Communities: Medieval and Modern', in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. S. Forde, L. Johnson and A. V. Murray (Leeds, 1995), pp. 1-19 (p. 8); and see also the introduction, above, for anthropological and sociological literature.

Locating identities

I shall begin by asking how paradigms of locality informed the self-representations of individuals and institutions situated within those localities. How did ideas of the North or the county inform local identities in Yorkshire? This section deals with material designed for 'internal' rather than 'external' consumption, produced by those 'inside' rather than 'outside' the areas in question. Sources which are shaped by 'external' interests, and the attitudes of those whose careers took them 'outside' a locality, are considered in later sections. It is not always possible to make neat distinctions between these two bodies of material, and it would be anachronistic to think of a civic memorandum as a 'private' document in contrast to a 'public' petition: but nevertheless, it is important to recognize the different pressures and conventions within which different discourses were produced.

The historical texts produced by regional institutions offer a substantial body of material in which attitudes to locality may be traced, but there are a number of difficulties in tracing these attitudes. Although a relatively substantial body of manuscripts containing historical writing was produced in or owned by institutions, and in particular religious houses, in late medieval Yorkshire, it is a much more difficult matter to establish the provenance of the texts they contain.² The origins of the later sections of Leeds, Brotherton Library MS 29 (the manuscript containing the 'Anonimalle' chronicle), written at St Mary's abbey, York, have been traced to a lost Guisborough chronicle as well as sources of London origin. The 'short continuation' of the French prose Brut which precedes this in the manuscript has strong London connections, and the unusual prose Brut which precedes this may have been produced at Byland abbey.³ The diverse origins of the contents of this manuscript may represent an extreme case - it is certainly

²J. Taylor, *Medieval Historical Writing in Yorkshire*, St Anthony's Hall Publications 19 (York, 1961), provides a summary of the relevant texts; further details are provided in the ensuing notes.

³J. Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 136-45; *The Anonimalle Chronicle 1333 to 1381*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1927); *The Anonimalle Chronicle 1307-1334*, ed. W. R. Childs and J. Taylor YASRS 147 (1987); J. Taylor, 'The Origins of the Anonimalle Chronicle', *NH31* (1995), 45-64. Childs and Taylor argue that the short prose continuation may have been the work of a clerk who followed the royal household north, but its interest in London and its franchises (pp. 49, 134-5, 136-7, 142-3) is perhaps more suggestive of a civic origin.

true that as a result of the manuscript's great historical interest, its sources have been unusually well-explored. Nevertheless, the Brotherton manuscript suggests that the homogeneity of historical manuscripts should not be taken for granted, and its diversity can be paralleled elsewhere.

The historical collections associated with Kirkstall abbey, for example - now dispersed among a number of manuscripts - include material originating from York, Glastonbury, and Whalley abbey.⁴ The short chronicle which is most likely to have been copied at the abbey is evidently a compilation from a number of different materials, some of which may have originated in the Northamptonshire area.⁵ Historical manuscripts from other houses are more homogeneous in style or draw on a narrower range of sources, but our understanding of the contents and outlook of many historical texts should perhaps start from the assumption that they resemble some 'commonplace books' - heavily dependent on the accidents of textual availability - rather than narratives whose contents and organization were planned from the outset.

A further difficulty in locating the origins or viewpoint of historical texts is their adoption of what might be called an 'impersonal' voice. The Meaux chronicle is divided into 'local' and 'non-local' sections dealing respectively with the abbey and its estates, and with 'things which do not pertain to us': in the former sections, *nos* always denotes the abbey, but in the latter sections, in exceptional moments such as the battle of Myton, it refers to 'our English'.⁶ In Walter of Guisborough's chronicle, and in Castleford's chronicle - for all its northern interests - *nos*, *noster* or 'our' have the same meaning.⁷

⁴See in particular *The Kirkstall Abbey Chronicles*, ed. J. Taylor, Thoresby Society 42 (1952); M.V. Clarke and N. Denholm-Young, 'The Kirkstall Chronicle 1355-1400,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 15 (1931), 100-37 is still useful; and more generally J. Krochalis, 'History and Legend at Kirkstall in the Fifteenth Century', in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscript, their Scribes and Readers. Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. P. R. Robinson and R. Zim (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 230-56.

⁵The central section of the chronicle contains references to Silverstone, Peterborough and Stilton: *Kirkstall Chronicles*, ed. Taylor, pp. 64, 73.

⁶*Melsa*, II, 336; shared with the related text in BL, MS Cotton Domitian A. XII (*Melsa* II, xxxviii-ix, n. 2).

⁷Guisborough, for example, refers to the borders of England as 'fines nostros' (*The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, ed. H. Rothwell, Camden Society 3rd ser. 89 (1957), p. 277); Castleford describes how 'At Strevelin was our Englise lorne' (*Castleford's Chronicle or the Book of Brut*, ed. C. D. Eckhardt, EETS 305 and 306, 2 vols. (1996), II, 1054).

The later sections of the Anonimale chronicle refer to 'Nostre Dame Deverwyk' as opposed to 'our abbey'.⁸

The meaning of this 'impersonal' style - widespread and easily paralleled elsewhere - has not, I think, been fully explored, but it can probably be explained by a combination of factors. In most cases, it does not seem to relate to the actual audience of these texts, several of which survive only in single copies for which there is no evidence of external circulation; although if the circulation and exchange of historical texts was as frequent as the St Mary's and Kirkstall manuscripts suggest, there might be good reason for imagining a audience outside the institution. There may also be a desire, similar to that identified by Kerhervé in Breton historiography, to avoid 'marginality' or 'excentricity'.⁹ The style also seems to imply, however - like the separation of institutional and non-institutional history at Meaux and St Alban's - that national historical writing *per se*, by virtue of its very subject matter, invites the adoption of a 'regnal' perspective. The origins and diffusion of such an idea need fuller exploration, but it is notable that a number of the examples quoted above occur in the context of the military campaigns of Edward I and his successors. It is now well-known that the scale of these campaigns necessitated the circulation of propaganda and news of the English cause, and it is equally clear - although the issue remains to be fully explored - that the writs and newsletters produced by the crown and others had a major impact on the content and style of historical writing.¹⁰ Such 'propaganda' probably lies behind an intensification of an impersonal historical style from the early fourteenth century.

There are a number of reasons, then, why we might not expect a pronounced identification with an idea of the North or the county in historical writing associated with

⁸*Anonimale 1333-81*, ed. Galbraith, pp. 63, 106-7; cf. the account of the fire in the abbey's belfry, p. 95.

⁹J. Kerhervé, 'Enter conscience nationale et identité régionale dans la Bretagne de la fin du Moyen Age', in *Identité régionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du moyen âge à l'époque moderne*, ed. R. Babel and J.-M. Moeglin (Sigmaringen, 1997), pp. 219-43 (p. 235).

¹⁰See above, ch. 1, p. 62.

regional institutions, and why awareness of the North might be closely related to contemporary perceptions elsewhere in the kingdom.

Chroniclers' awareness of and identification with 'the north parts' is particularly pronounced during the Scottish attacks of the early fourteenth century, and responds both to the stimulus of external attack, and its representation in official writs and proclamations. The chronicle of Bridlington priory is typical in its description of how the Scots 'fines Angliae boriales invasit... patrias spoliantes et incendentes.'¹¹ The Meaux chronicle similarly describes how 'partes boreales Anglie' were destroyed by the Scots under Edward II, and how Robert Bruce plundered 'fere totam borealem partem Angliae'.¹² There is little to distinguish such accounts from those written elsewhere in England: northern chroniclers are distinctive in the detail they provide and in their reference to local districts, but they do not, as a rule, offer distinctive representations of the county or the North or suggest particular institutional attachments to those frameworks.¹³ In contrast, a poem displayed on a table at Durham priory narrated the battle of Neville's Cross in terms which not only identified the *gens Northumbroborum* as the front line of the English army, but situated the priory's patron Cuthbert at the centre of the English success.¹⁴

The framework of the North is more common than that Yorkshire in descriptions of Scottish raids, but the latter does figure in royal writs as well as regional chronicles. In December 1318, for example, Edward II described the damage inflicted by the Scots not only in the Marches but 'inside our kingdom as far as the county of York'.¹⁵ The

¹¹*Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols., RS 76 (1882-3), II, 47, 113, 116; see also 81.

¹²*Melsa*, II, 332 and 356.

¹³For added detail, cf. the accounts of the battle of Myton in *Melsa* II, xxxviii-ix, n. 2; *Anonimale 1307-1334*, ed. Childs and Taylor, pp. 98-9; for geographical precision cf. references to 'fines Angliae boreales usque Richemond' or 'partes boriales fere usque ad Humbriam, Pontemfractum, Cravennam et Fornasfelles' (*Melsa* II, 332 and 355-6; cf. 391); for use of districts, below, ch. 6, pp. 239-40.

¹⁴*The Poems of Laurence Minot*, ed. J. Hall (Oxford, 1887), pp. 108-15 (l. 95.) This poem is preserved in BL, MS Harley 4843, for which see A. J. Piper, 'The Historical Interests of the Monks of Durham', in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. D. Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 301-32 (pp. 325-6).

¹⁵*Rotuli Scociae* I, 190.

description of the battle of Myton in the Meaux chronicle also focuses on the area of Yorkshire - the Scots 'suddenly entered into the county of Yorkshire, spoiling and burning a great part of the country (*patriae*) they went over'.¹⁶

No other text, however, is comparable to the focus on the county in *Castleford's Chronicle*. Throughout the account of early-fourteenth-century Scottish raids, the territorial idea of Yorkshire acts as a focus for the chronicler's perception of Scottish attacks, which penetrate the boundaries of the shire and inflict damage within it. After the capture of Berwick the Scots are said to have 'entrede into Yorkschire', created 'gret sorow wiȝin Yorkschire', and in summary 'fifetene sikes, bi numbre and tale, / Entrande Yorkschire wrought sorow and bale'.¹⁷ Before the battle of Myton we hear of Scots 'robbande contres, þe folk þai slogh, / Into Eborwikesschire þai drogh'.¹⁸ Such events also seem to have influenced the chronicler's portrayal of earlier English history: Scottish attacks under Athelstan, for example, are described as passing through Northumberland 'ouer into Yorkschire'.¹⁹

Regional chroniclers' awareness of, and identification with, frameworks of the county or the North were heightened by the Scottish attacks of the early fourteenth century, when those frameworks were seen as threatened and penetrated by foreign adversaries, and when such threats were widely diffused through royal writs. A sense of the south as a coherent area with an identity - and perhaps interests - distinct from that of the North is also apparent in some texts from this period. Walter of Guisborough's chronicle describes the opportunities given to Wallace by the earl Warenne's journey south to parliament (*ad partes ... australes*). The statement may carry a note of criticism similar to that levelled at Edward II by the Northumberland knight Thomas Gray, who claimed the king had 'left his marches in great tribulation...and retired to the south (*le*

¹⁶*Melsa* II, 336.

¹⁷*Castleford's Chronicle*, ed. Eckhardt, II, 1060. 'Fifetene sikes' presumably derives from a misreading of 'v' in the source: compare *Melsa* II, 356.

¹⁸*Castleford's Chronicle*, ed. Eckhardt, II, 1062.

¹⁹*Castleford's Chronicle*, ed. Eckhardt, II, 799; see further below, ch. 5, pp. 223-4.

sewe)'.²⁰ Such comments indicate that identification with the North could be sharpened by external threat while being independent of royal discourses.

A similar identification with the North as an area under threat emerges from the Anonimalle chronicle's account of the Peasant's Revolt. Much of this account is copied from a detailed source which is almost certainly of London origin, but the compiler at St Mary's began his account of the Revolt with the statement that 'the commons of southern England (*del southpais Dengleterre*) suddenly rose in two groups, one in Essex and the other in Kent'.²¹ It must also be this compiler who is responsible for the much less well-informed account of the risings in the eastern counties and the suppression of the revolt. This includes a striking description of a party of the commons [who] took their way towards Huntingdon in order to pass towards the north (*le north*), where in their malice and villainy they intended to ravage the land and destroy good men.'²² Again, the identification with a threatened North is independent of official discourse: it seems to reflect long-standing traditions of antipathy between north and south.

Awareness of the frameworks of the county and north or south was not wholly restricted to moments of stress or crisis: it seems likely that they were a persistent background presence and could emerge to describe situations both mundane or unusual. The Meaux chronicle, for example, describes a miraculous fall of honey throughout Yorkshire in 1316, while a chronicle associated with St Mary's, York describes flooding 'in comitatu Eboracensi' and states that a charter to the abbey was proclaimed through the whole county.²³ The Anonimalle narrative describes a speaker in the Good Parliament as a southerner (*del southpais*), and the Kirkstall chronicle recounts an earthquake in 1382 which destroyed 'the largest buildings in the south parts.'²⁴ Nevertheless, stress or

²⁰Walter of Guisborough, ed. Rothwell, p. 294; A. King, 'Englishmen, Scots and Marchers: National and Local Identities in Thomas Gray's *Scalachronica*, NH 36 (2000), 217-31 (p. 228).

²¹Anonimalle 1333 to 1381, ed. Galbraith, p. 133, as translated in *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. R. B. Dobson, 2nd edition (London, 1983) p. 123. For the interpolated nature of the account of the Revolt, and speculations as to its provenance, see *Anonimalle 1333 to 1381*, p. xli, and Taylor, *English Historical Literature*, pp. 318-19.

²²Anonimalle 1333 to 1381, ed. Galbraith, p. 150; Dobson, *Peasants' Revolt*, p. 236

²³Melsa II, 333; *The Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey, York, from Bodley MS. 39*, ed. H. H. E. Craster and M. E. Thornton, SS 148 (1934), pp. 7, 43.

²⁴Kirkstall Chronicles, ed. Taylor, pp. 65; *Anonimalle 1333 to 1381*, ed. Galbraith, p. 81.

crisis do appear to be related to the intensity with which frameworks of the county or North were perceived, and the extent of institutional identification with those frameworks.

The civic records of late-medieval York similarly suggest that urban identity could be related to regional territorial frameworks in a variety of circumstances. These could include situations of threat or conflict such as those outlined above: one of the few references to events beyond the city in a brief mayoral chronicle is the account of the battle of Myton, which describes how Mayor Nicholas Fleming was killed ‘cum magna multitudine populi dicte civitatis ipsum sequentis et populi comitatus Ebor.’²⁵ On other occasions, royal visits seem to have been particularly important in stimulating the city’s sense of its regional importance, just as they seem to have provoked local pride elsewhere in England.²⁶ An account of Edward IV’s visit to the city in 1474 was designed partly to show York to good effect in the context of ‘almost all those of noble birth from the north, who came to him in droves from all quarters.’²⁷

York’s regional importance could also be asserted for pragmatic ends. A petition of the commonalty from the 1390s described the city as *une citee de graunde reputacion...la secoude citee du roialme* and as the *chef...barbican...de ycest cost de roialme*. This unusual emphasis on York’s regional significance was intended to support the petition’s request that the charge for admission to the freedom of the city should be increased in accordance with the city’s importance.²⁸ It is perhaps only in a note on the

²⁵York City Archives, D1, fo. 5r.

²⁶*Paston*, I, 654: quoted at length above, ch. 1, p. 42. Cf. also the note of tourism in Henry VI’s letter concerning his progress of 1448: ‘the church of ye province of York and diocesse of Durham be as nobill in doing of divine service, in multitude of ministers, and in sumptuous and glorious building, as anie in our realme’ (*Rites of Durham*, ed. J. T. Fowler, SS 107 (1904), p. 123).

²⁷*e borea vero omnibus ferme majoribus natu undique ad eum [York] catervatim confluentibus: York Memorandum Book*, ed. M. Sellers, 2 vols. SS 120, 125 (1912-5), II, 240.

²⁸York City Archives, D1, fo. 348r-v. Similarly in London in 1326 a proclamation against theft was reinforced by a reference to the city as ‘a mirror to all England’: *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London 1323-1364*, ed. A. H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1936), p. 15, cited in S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London 1300-1500* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1948), p. 1.

city's swords written by common clerk Roger Burton - whose sense of the city's history and status seems to have been particularly acute - that a note of disinterested and spontaneous civic pride is heard, when Burton describes how emperor Sigismund's sword was given to the city 'as the chief place of all the North.'²⁹

A sense of local identity or community could also be focused when the representation or leadership of that community was at issue. At Carlisle in the early fourteenth century, the replacement of the canons' choice of bishop by a papal nominee seems to have produced a sense of local solidarity against a man who was not only an external appointment but identified as a 'homo australis'.³⁰ The election of knights of the shire could provoke similar assertions of solidarity, with the best-known example provided by the Norfolk shire election of 1455, and the objections to John Howard on account of his being a 'straunge man' with no 'lyvelode in the shire'. John Jenney wrote that 'it is a evill precedent for the shire that a straunge man shulde be chosyn... yf the jentilmen of the shire will suffre sech inconvenyens, in good feithe the shire shall noght be called of seche wurshipp as it hathe be.'³¹ Similarly it was election of 1450 which caused the duke of Norfolk to write to John Paston I in the name of 'the welfare of the said shire'.³² There is other evidence - though most of it is equally tendentious - that such occasions were a focus for the definition of the shire community at a popular as well as an elite level.³³

Although such disputed elections may have been particularly important in making groups aware of or attached to the idea of the county, awareness of 'the gentelys of this

²⁹*York Memorandum Book*, ed. J. Percy, SS 186 (1973), pp. 123-4.

³⁰*Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 253 (for the probable origin of this section of the chronicle at the Franciscan friary in Carlisle see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), p. 12).

³¹*Paston II*, 120-1.

³²*Paston II*, 54.

³³Howard wrote an account of the disputed election of 1461 which describes how Paston's supporters assembled a large crowd of 'insufficient' supporters with the proclamation that everyone whatever their condition should vote in the election (in the context of legislation which limited the franchise to 40s. freeholders). See C. H. Williams, 'A Norfolk Parliamentary Election, 1461', *EHR* 40 (1925), 79-86.

shyer' or a sense of the 'worship' or 'welfare' of the shire, at least among the gentry, was more continuous.³⁴ As a number of writers have noted, Jenney's anxiety about 'strangers' becoming involved in shire administration is echoed in fourteenth-century parliamentary petitions demanding that local officials and representatives should be men of local substance, which have been related to a developing sense of county identities and a strengthening of 'the bonds of loyalty to one county'.³⁵ The 'worship of the shire' could also be a more persistent and long-term stimulus for individual action. The best known example, again, is John Paston I's request in 1465 to Margaret to send him some worsted, 'for I wold make my doblet all worsted for worship of Norffolk'.³⁶ This request uses local pride as a vehicle for self-assertion: it is related to moments in which the county is imagined as an area in which one's lineage can be pre-eminent, such as John Paston II's wish for 'a tombe and somwhatt ellys ovyre my fadris grave... þat ther shalle noone be lyke it in Norffolk'.³⁷

It has been argued that attachments to the county were less important outside of lowland England, but this is doubtful. The sixteenth-century antiquarian studies that have been seen as demonstrating the 'strength of county pride' are not confined to this lowland zone: a relatively early example survives from Yorkshire, although it is not well known.³⁸ It is true that the surviving correspondence from late medieval Yorkshire provides little evidence of concern for the 'worship of the shire'. A common lawyer of Stanley near Wakefield stated that he 'wold be as sory...as any man of Yorkshire' if Robert Plumpton were arrested for his debts; but as we have seen above, this is a common formulation, and does not reveal any special personal attachment to the idea of

³⁴Paston II, 43.

³⁵See in particular N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 108-11, 126-7, 162-7 (quote at p. 126); also H. Cam, *The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls: An Outline of Local Government in Medieval England* (London, 1930), pp. 16-7, 59-64.

³⁶Paston I, 140.

³⁷Paston I, 510.

³⁸D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 116-7 (quote at p. 117); BL, MS Lansdowne 119, fos. 109r-22v (for which see ch. 8 below, p. 301); for a 1588 description of Cheshire see T. Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State 1480-1560* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 58.

the county.³⁹

Some awareness of and commitment to communities of the county can, however, be paralleled in other sources, and particularly in testamentary material. Perhaps unsurprisingly, such sources imagine communities of tenants, poor householders, religious and the like rather than of gentry: they are more interested in establishing hierarchies than solidarities. Nevertheless, testamentary evidence does demonstrate that individual identities could be located within a county context.

When charitable bequests were to be distributed over a large geographical area it was usually the framework of counties that was appealed to by both secular and ecclesiastical figures.⁴⁰ Ralph, lord Cromwell asked for masses to be celebrated for him in the counties of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and left the residue of his goods to the repair of roads and bridges, the redemption of merchants, and the relief of his tenants in the same counties.⁴¹ Sir Henry Pierrepoint focussed on ‘v of the porest parishe churches withyne the countie of Notingham’, while Humphrey Stafford arranged for a friar to deliver sermons in every parish church in Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall.⁴² Ecclesiastical frameworks - though not exclusively the province of churchmen - were less common. Thomas Beke, bishop of Lincoln, naturally referred to ‘pauperum religiosum’ of his diocese, but the merchant John Barton also bequeathed to every religious house in the archdeaconry of Nottingham.⁴³

For some Yorkshire testators, the framework of the county worked alongside that of the North, but it seems that the county was the area most often used to distribute both charitable bequests and the division of landed estates. Sir John Depeden, lord of Helagh, left money to every friary and to every anchoress in the county of York, and in 1402, Beatrice, widow of Thomas lord Roos, left a hundred marks for masses at a range of

³⁹*Plumpton Letters and Papers*, ed. J. Kirby, Camden Society 5th ser. 8 (1996), pp. 180-1, 306-7.

⁴⁰Although such gifts are best recorded in wills, they were not only made as testamentary bequests: Humphrey Courtney was said to have made gifts to religious houses throughout the county of Devon on his creation as earl of Devon. (*Monasticon* V, 381).

⁴¹*TE* II, 196-9. (1451)

⁴²*TE* IV, 43-4 (1489; cf. 242-3, of 1506); *Testamenta Vetusta*, ed. N. H. Nicholas, 2 vols (London, 1826), I, 301 (and cf. 236, 353, 371 etc.).

⁴³*TE* I, 26 (1346) (for Beke, see Emden, *BRUO*, I, 154); IV, 61-2 (1490).

religious institutions whose location was specified only as ‘in comitatu Ebor.’⁴⁴ Richard earl of Salisbury likewise made gifts to ‘religiosis cujuslibet domus fratrum et monialum in comitatu Ebor.’, while William Gascoigne left 100 marks to his poor tenants in Yorkshire.⁴⁵ There is usually no way of telling how these bequests were put into effect, and no doubt even coverage of the county was not achieved: the important point is that these testators’ ideals were based on county models. These ideals may have been particularly characteristic of the greater and lesser aristocracy - the wills of York’s civic elite, for example, are dominated by bequests to the poor and religious of the city and its suburbs.⁴⁶ But the distinction should not be drawn too sharply. Robert de Howm, mayor of York in 1368, also left bequests to each friary ‘in comite Ebor. extra civitatem constituto’ and to nunneries in the county, and as well as bequests to the leper-houses of the city he left £10 to be shared by lepers ‘continually residing in the county of York’.⁴⁷ Richard Russell, mayor in 1421 and 1430, made bequests to every order of friars and house of nuns in the county (in addition to money for the repair of bridges and roads within ten leagues of the city).⁴⁸

Frameworks of both the county and the North informed some bequests concerned with the division of landed estates. Robert Thwaite, canon of Southwell and dean of Auckland, appointed executors in the north and south parts, perhaps on the model of royal administration.⁴⁹ It may have been more common, though, for a family’s ‘core’ estates to be imagined in terms of the county even as more peripheral ones were described as northern or southern. In 1420, Richard Scrope of Bolton directed that if any land was to be sold to carry out his will, it was to be either in the bishopric of Durham, or ‘in the South contre’, rather than from Yorkshire.⁵⁰ His grandson, John lord Scrope,

⁴⁴*TE I*, 207 and 376 (of 1414).

⁴⁵*TE I*, 393; *TE II*, 239-41 (1459).

⁴⁶‘York Civic Wills’, *passim*.

⁴⁷‘York Civic Wills’, 28 (1905-6), 844-51.

⁴⁸‘York Civic Wills’, 34 (1917-8), 205-6. John de Gysburne in 1385 left bequests to almost all the friaries and nunneries in the county (‘York Civic Wills’, 28 (1905-6), 828-31).

⁴⁹*North Country Wills, 1383-1558*, ed. J. W. Clay, SS 116 (1908), p. 53; Emden, *BRUO*, III, 1873-4.

⁵⁰*TE IV*, 1-3.

left his moveable good ‘on this syde Trente’ to his wife Anne, but his ‘quyke catall...withynne Yorkshire’ to his son Henry.⁵¹ George Hamerton similarly referred in 1524 to his goods ‘in the South parties’, and distinguished between his land in Yorkshire, which was to go to his wife, and that in Sussex or any other shire which was to descend to his son.⁵² Such bequests suggest that the idea of the county could be a strong influence on the perception of the ‘country’ with which a family’s local identity was so closely bound up.⁵³

Testamentary evidence, then, suggests that the idea of the county provided a meaningful framework for the lay and ecclesiastical aristocracy, and (perhaps to a lesser extent) elements of urban elites, at least at the moments of reflection and assessment that may be assumed to have accompanied the formulation of will and testament. It is much more difficult to assess the extent to which these frameworks were meaningful in other situations, or to assess their importance to other social groups. Antiquarian evidence, however, does suggest that in some circumstances the county also provided a significant framework with which the identities of smaller local communities could be identified. In a well-known passage, Leland recorded a popular tradition concerning the extent of Rutlandshire:

the commune fame in Ruthlelandshire that there was one Rutter, a man of great favor with his prince, that desirid to have of rewarde of hym as much land as he could ryde over in a day apou a horse of woodde, and that he ridde over as much as now is in Ruthlelandshire by arte magike, and that he was after swallowid into the yerthe.⁵⁴

⁵¹*TE IV*, 94-5 (1494).

⁵²*North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 117. For other references to lands or debts ‘in the north cuntre’ see *TE IV*, 262-3 and 268-9.

⁵³For more on aristocratic ‘countries’ see ch. 4 below.

⁵⁴*Itinerary*, IV, 124. The story belongs to a well-known folkloric type: cf S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols. (Copenhagen, 1955-8), H1103.2, and below, ch. 7, p. 287.

Although Leland himself adds ‘this is very like a lye’, the tradition he records shows clearly enough that the physical extent of the county had become important and meaningful to some of its inhabitants far beyond an administrative dimension. However, the story is quite exceptional, and it is likely that Rutland’s institutional novelty (it only became clearly recognized as a county in the late twelfth century) had created a need for an origin myth which was not so pressing elsewhere in England.⁵⁵

Leland also provides evidence, however, that a sense of the county in which a community was located was important elsewhere in England. On one occasion, he described the boundary between Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire as ‘not far beyond Bautre ...toward Dancastre’. Elsewhere, however, he writes of ‘Bawtre... a poore market toune standing yn Yorkshire as the inhabitantes of it told me; so that by this it should seem that Scroby water in sum partes devidith the shires.’⁵⁶ The evidence came from the inhabitants of the town itself, suggesting that the identity of that community could be bound up with its administrative location. It is unlikely that such sentiments were confined to Bawtry, and further investigation of other ‘border communities’ would probably produce similar evidence. A fourteenth-century tithe dispute, for example, shows that the parishioners of Ecclesfield were aware that their parish boundary was also a boundary between Yorkshire and Cheshire.⁵⁷ Leland also recorded a tradition that Oxney, then on the borders of Kent and Sussex, was or had been completely in Sussex, and was called ‘Forsworen Kent’, because its inhabitants had transferred from Sussex to have the privileges of Kent.⁵⁸ Whether such sentiments or traditions were similarly important further away from the boundaries of the county is - perhaps - less likely.

⁵⁵The development of Rutland is discussed by C. Phythian-Adams, ‘Rutland Reconsidered’, in *Mercian Studies*, ed A. Dornier (Leicester, 1977), pp. 62-84.

⁵⁶*Itinerary* IV, 15 and I, 38.

⁵⁷Below, ch. 7, p. 274.

⁵⁸*Itinerary* IV, 63.

The language of petition: local identities and national frameworks

The framework of the county was important from an early date in the construction of petitionary identities. Petitions of behalf of the commonalty of a county (or groups of counties) first become common under Edward II, and have been seen as a sign of ‘the growing political cohesiveness of local communities’.⁵⁹ It is perhaps more plausible that they show interest-groups becoming increasingly adept at couching their appeals in the language of the common good; but in either case, such petitions show the extent to which the idea of the county and its community was becoming an accepted part of political discourse which gave weight to particular complaints. Around 1324, a petition from the commonalty of the counties of Nottingham, Lincoln and York complained of ships being ‘arrested’ on the river Trent; a few years later the commonalty of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire petitioned against increased prices on the ferry over the Humber ‘to the great impoverishment of the people of the said counties’.⁶⁰ A petition of around 1388 from the commonalty (*les communes*) of Yorkshire concerning fishgarths referred to the interest of ‘the said county and all the countries around it’.⁶¹

As well as offering a communal identity through which complaints could be presented, the county provided a framework within which individual institutions could promote their interests through asserting their regional importance. In a petition of around 1401 appealing for a supply of fresh water for the city, Hull described itself as ‘the key of the adjoining country and the whole county of York’; similarly, in 1392 jurors from the city of York had presented against fishgarths in the Ouse, describing the river as a ‘high way’ whose carriage of merchandise was important not only to the king’s city of York but to ‘the whole county of York and other counties, cities and towns in the

⁵⁹J. R. Maddicott, ‘Parliament and the Constituencies, 1272-1377’, in *The English Parliament in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. G. Davies and J. H. Denton (Manchester, 1981), pp. 61-87 (p. 69).

⁶⁰PRO, SC8/165/8226; SC8/64/3164.

⁶¹PRO, SC8/199/9928 (mutilated on its right-hand side); *CPR 1389-92*, p. 272.

north parts of England.’⁶²

As this example suggests, however, the idea of the North offered an alternative, wider - and consequently more attractive - framework within which local institutions could situate their petitionary claims.⁶³ In 1392 it was said that the fishgarths obstructed the river ‘to the damage of the city and the whole county of York’; two ships belonging to John Steer had been lost, to his damage and that of ‘all the north country of England (*ex parte boreali Anglie totius patrie*)’. Hull itself in the 1380s had described itself as ‘la kaye de la north partie pur restenir et sauver toutz les niefs d’Engleterre en bone sauverte’.⁶⁴ Already in 1344 the commons had petitioned for the establishment of a mint at York, ‘for the ease of the people and the merchants of the North’, but the late-fourteenth-century stress on institutional significance within the North may represent a new emphasis in petitionary language: in 1379-80 Tynemouth priory represented itself to the king as ‘un de les forcible forteles de North.’⁶⁵ It also seems likely that Hull’s increasing importance and pretensions sharpened York’s sense of itself as a regional capital, perhaps in combination with an awareness of the city’s actual decline in political significance.⁶⁶

⁶²*Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*, 7 vols. (London, 1916-), VII, 191 (a commission to investigate how the city might be supplied with fresh water, evidently couched in the terms of an earlier petition): *Public Works in Medieval Law*, ed. C. T. Flower, Selden Society 32, 40 (1915-23), II, 258-66 (quotations from pp. 258-9, 260).

⁶³The North also offered a collective petitionary identity, of course: see above, ch. 1, p. 52, and also *RP* II, 287a; IV, 200a (1423 petition of the commons of ‘all the north parts’ (including the counties of Nottingham, Derby and Lincoln) for supervision of coins produced in the York mint).

⁶⁴PRO, SC 8/119/5924, perhaps of 1381-2. Leland described Kent as ‘the key of al Englande’, and his editor notes that the phrase is given to Hubert de Burgh, with reference to Dover castle, by Matthew of Paris (Leland, *Itinerary*, IV, 57; Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum sive...Historia Minor*, ed. F. Madden, 3 vols., RS 44 [London, 1866-9], II, 218).

⁶⁵*RP* II, 149a; Northumberland County History Committee, *A History of Northumberland*, 15 vols. (Newcastle, 1893-1940), VII, 97 n.2, calendared in *Ancient Petitions Relating to Northumberland*, ed. C. M. Fraser, SS 176 (1966), no. 182.

⁶⁶For the latter point, cf. W. M. Ormrod, ‘York and the Crown Under the First Three Edwards’, in *The Government of Medieval York*, ed. S. Rees Jones (York, 1997), pp. 14-34 (p. 31); the increasing quantity of civic records later in the fourteenth century is also important: see S. Rees Jones, ‘York’s Civic Administration’, in *The Government of Medieval York*, ed. Rees Jones, pp. 108-40 (pp. 110-11).

Perhaps the most typical petitionary strategy in appealing to the North, however, was to refer not to its trade and merchandise but - as Hull's representation of itself as 'the key of the north' suggests - to those qualities of militarization and vulnerability with which the region was so firmly associated in late medieval political discourse.⁶⁷ As other areas of the country were less well-defined in political discourse this phenomenon is hard to parallel elsewhere in England, although counties on the Welsh border petitioned with some frequency to complain of damage inflicted by the Welsh.⁶⁸ In the south-west Exeter was able to assert its regional importance in very similar terms to York's presentment concerning fishgarths in the Ouse, asking for financial assistance towards the repair of Exbridge which was not only used by 'the grete part of Engelond' but 'knowen the grettest costlew werke and most of [*i.e. most in need of*] almesded to helpe hit yn alle the west part of Engelond.'⁶⁹ But although Thomas Beckington could describe Exeter as 'the lande of weldernesse' when he was stuck there in 1442, such characteristics of 'the west' were not widely enough diffused in political culture for the town to be able to play on them in petitionary contexts.⁷⁰

In contrast a number of northern institutions were able to use the threat of the Scots, the damage they had wreaked, or a more general appeal to poverty in attempts to acquire financial aid of various kinds from the crown, especially in the context of the Scottish wars of the early fourteenth century. The men of Hull petitioned for permission and assistance to surround the city with a wall, not only on the grounds that the city's commercial activity was of great benefit to *tres-tut le pays environ*, but also that if - as God forbid - the Scots should enter those parts the town, if it were walled, could protect

⁶⁷See in general the material printed in *Ancient Petitions*, ed. Fraser, pp. 157-205; and in *Northern Petitions Illustrative of Life in Berwick, Cumbria and Durham in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. C. M. Fraser, SS 194 (1981), pp. 133-57.

⁶⁸See for example *RP* III, 272b (of 1389), petition of 'poveres liges...adjoignantz a Gales'; III, 308b (of 1392-3); III, 636b (of 1410); III, 663b (of 1411); IV, 68b (of 1415).

⁶⁹*Letters and Papers of John Shillingford, Mayor of Exeter 1447-50*, ed. S. A. Moore, Camden Society n.s. 2 (1871), pp. 141-2.

⁷⁰*Letters of Margaret of Anjou and Bishop Beckington*, ed. C. Monro, Camden Society o.s. 86 (1863), pp. 75, 83, 85.

the Humber so as to prevent supplies from reaching them.⁷¹ Perhaps with less plausibility, the city of York complained in the early fifteenth century of Henry Bowet's failure to repair the stretch of the city walls known as the Old Bailly, through which the city was exposed to the Scots, to its slander and that of the surrounding country.⁷²

In the early fourteenth century the damage caused by Scottish incursions into the north was a more frequent cause of complaint. In 1318-9 the clergy of Richmond and Carlisle petitioned for a reduction in their assessment for taxation 'because they have often been destroyed by the attacks of the Scottish enemies'.⁷³ Likewise the northern clergy complained in 1330 that their goods and possessions had been wasted by thirty-four years of war with Scotland so that they were only able to pay tax at a newly assessed rate.⁷⁴ The damage inflicted by Scottish raids should certainly not be discounted: a number of northern communities were granted relief from secular taxation, and in the summer of 1318 ecclesiastical temporalities were revalued to take account of the damage.⁷⁵ Some deaneries in the diocese of York were assessed at almost half their former value. Kershaw's study of Bolton abbey, however, has shown that the 1318 valuation does not offer a reliable guide to the extent of damage inflicted by the Scots. Kershaw's conclusion is that the Scots 'did no more than add their own contribution to Bolton's woes, which were a direct consequence of the agrarian crisis of the previous two years'.⁷⁶ Equally, the threat of the Scots allowed regional institutions to plead for assistance in terms which distinguished them from other parts of the country and

⁷¹RP II, 385a; dated in RP to the reign of Edward III, but licence was granted for a wall and ditch to be built in 1321 (*VCH: ERY I*, 412).

⁷²SC8/153/7623; the dispute over the Old Bailly had a long history, which is summarized in T. P. Cooper, *York: The Story of its Castles and Walls* (London, 1904), pp. 229-34.

⁷³*Northern Petitions*, ed. Fraser, no. 101.

⁷⁴*Northern Petitions*, ed. Fraser, no. 109; *CCR 1330-3*, pp. 77-8. The clergy were those of Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, the liberties of Allertonshire and Crayke, and the archdeaconries of Cleveland, Richmond, York and the East Riding.

⁷⁵J. F. Willard, 'The Scotch Raids and the Fourteenth Century Taxation of Northern England', *University of Colorado Studies* 5 (1908), 237-42; D. Robinson, *Beneficed Clergy in Cleveland and the East Riding 1306-1340*, Borthwick Paper 37 (York, 1969), pp. 3-4 and map at end.

⁷⁶I. Kershaw, *Bolton Priory: The Economy of a Northern Monastery 1286-1325* (London, 1973), pp. 15, 67, 168; also B. Vale, 'The Scropes of Bolton and of Masham', pp. 56-7.

responded to the current concerns of political culture. Two letters sent from Durham priory in the aftermath of the battle of Neville's Cross show how Scottish attacks could be made to serve different functions in different circumstances. A newsletter to the bishop of Durham describes Scottish inroads in relatively conventional terms, concentrating on the Scots' attacks on Lydel and Corbridge before describing their defeat and the relief of 'incolis partium Borealium'. Writing to the Privy Council for financial relief, on the other hand, the priory chose to describe the 'homicides, arsons and damages' which the Scots had inflicted at Bear Park and other manors of the priory (none of which was mentioned in the earlier letter).⁷⁷

The fact that the Scottish threat continued to provide a resource for petitionary discourse into the fifteenth century and beyond suggests that its persuasiveness was not necessarily closely related to the actual extent of damage and conflict. Petitions of 1415 and 1444 presented Northumberland as a 'frontier on the Scottish marches' and as 'marchyng to the Scottes the kynges enemyes,' while a commission of 1447 found that Newcastle was a 'shield of defence' against the Scots not only for the east Marches but for all England.⁷⁸

Although the Scots are not specifically mentioned, they were probably implicit in the picture of the vulnerable and defensive North with which the city of York presented Henry VII. Writing to the archbishop of York in 1488 concerning the recent tax, the city referred to 'the common opynion of men here' that Henry would 'remit and fully pardon us and other of this northparties...in consideracion of the said poverite, ruyne and decae, as unto eny other his sugettes in these parties.'⁷⁹ In 1465 Edward Hastynges, late sheriff of Yorkshire, had pleaded for a reduction of his official debts on account of 'the grete pouerte and desolacion of the seid Countee and of the commenalte and also of the

⁷⁷*Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers*, ed. J. Raine, RS 61 (1873), pp. 387-9 and 390-2.

⁷⁸*Northern Petitions*, ed. Fraser, no. 120; RP V, 107b-8a; A. J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War and Politics 1450-1500* (Oxford, 1990), p. 15.

⁷⁹*York House Books 1461-1490*, ed. L. Attreed, 2 vols. (Stroud, 1990), II, 618 (and cf. 619).

townes and tounshippes therof.’⁸⁰ Most such petitions are formulaic in their references to the ‘grete hurtes charges and losses’ of the shrievalty, it also seems that they allowed room for reference to the specific situation of individual counties, but Hastyns seems to appeal to ideas about the poverty of the North, relocating them in a county context in the interests of his claims.⁸¹

If Scottish attacks provided an important means of framing declarations of poverty, participation in military service for the defence of the realm enabled communities to emphasize their regional significance as well as their loyalty to the crown.⁸² This could be used to support a number of pleas: the burgesses of Richmond, for example, invoked their military services in a sixteenth-century Chancery petition against the enclosure of moorland adjoining the town, reminding the crown that it had provided 200 men of war ‘in every time of need’ and 250 ‘at the last Scots’ field’.⁸³ Perhaps more typical is Richard, duke of Gloucester’s promise in 1483 to relieve York’s financial burden in consideration of the ‘gret chargez’ that the city had sustained ‘asweile in the defence of this realme ayanst the Scottes as other wyse’.⁸⁴ The city was to emphasize this theme in a particularly interesting bill delivered to Henry VII early in his reign, stressing the city’s military importance in ‘the north’ not only against Scotland but other enemies of the crown. (Henry, of course, had recognized in his pardon of 1487 the importance of the north parts for defence against the Scots.) It was argued that in the reign of Henry VI, York had been ‘ever redie to receve and aid his grace and othre nobles of the north parties, taking his lauffull and true part ayenst othre his adversaries in thoos daies’, and had provided men at the battles of Wakefield, St Albans and Towton. Arguing that their

⁸⁰PRO, E28/89, no. 49 (14 Nov 5E4).

⁸¹For letters referring simply to ‘grete costes’ or similar formula, see for example: PRO, E28/88 no. 3; E28/90, no. 14A and no. 54; E28/92, no. 66 and 68. A comparable petition to that of Hastings survives from the sheriff of Shropshire who referred to ‘grete murthers, robbories, rebelliones and myschevous rule’ in Powysland, Oswestry hundred and the Marches, through which the land was ‘brend, wasted, [and] desolated:’ E28/90 no. 48, of 12 Edward IV. Other ‘petitions for allowance’ are in E199 but these tend to be much more detailed and specific.

⁸²Even in the early fourteenth century references to service against the Scots seem to have become conventional: cf. *Ancient Petitions*, ed. Fraser, nos. 132, 143, 150.

⁸³*Monastic Chancery Proceedings*, ed. J. S. Purvis, YASRS 88 (1934), pp. 34-6 (p. 34).

⁸⁴*York House Books*, ed. Attreed, II, 712.

support for Henry VI earned them the lasting opprobrium of Edward IV, under whom the city was reduced to great poverty, the bill relates the favour shown by Richard III, who

would not the final distruction of the said citie, wherby it shuld not oonly loos the name of a citie bot aswell the north parties of this your realme (by whome your old enneyes the Scottes be comonly resistid in ther malice and pertenicie) shuld be gretely dishonored and hurt, and your said ennemys gretely enjoyed to theme boldnesse to invaed your said realme.⁸⁵

As Attreed has shown, the effects of the city's pleas were limited; but this resulted from the inefficiency of royal bureaucracy rather than from any rejection of its petitionary claims.⁸⁶

The Scottish threat also provided a means for the gentry leadership of the Pilgrimage of Grace to situate the rebellion's demands within the accepted terms of political debate. The Scottish threat seems to have motivated the body of rebels only in Cumberland and Westmorland, where the need was felt to avoid a Scottish attack either by remaining on good terms with Scotland or by securing the defence of the border.⁸⁷ Aske apparently received a letter from Cumberland promising 30,000 men for the defence of the border in addition to 30,000 for the rebellion itself; others planned to resist 'when the thieves or Scots would rob or invade us' and based their grievances around their rulers' failure to protect them.⁸⁸ For Aske, however, the Scots were part of a wider northern identity that could be invoked to defend the Pilgrims' reestablishment of the monasteries. Aske argued that as a result of the greater poverty of the north parts, monasteries were particularly important in sustaining the local economy; after their suppression their revenues were no longer directed locally:

⁸⁵York House Books, ed. Attreed, I, 390-1 (my punctuation).

⁸⁶L. C. Attreed, 'The King's Interest: York's Fee Farms and the Central Government 1482-92', *NH* 17 (1981), 24-43.

⁸⁷M. Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), p. 297.

⁸⁸Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, pp. 301, 335, 369, 373.

By occasion wherof, within short space or yeres, ther should be no money nor tresor in thos partes, nether the tenant to have to pay his rentes to the lord, nor the lord to have money to do the King service with all, for so much as in those partes was nether the presence of his grace, execucion of his lawes, nor yet but little recours of merchaundisse, so that of necessite the said contrey should eyther patyssh with the Skotes, or for of vary pouertie, enforced to make comocions or rebellions.⁸⁹

Conventional, related notions of the north's poverty, its tendency to rebellion and its dangerous proximity to Scotland are combined to present to the Crown the danger of its own policies in immediately recognizable terms.

⁸⁹'The Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. M. Bateson, *EHR* 5 (1890), 330-45, 550-73 (p. 336).

Conflicts and solidarities

In the preceding sections we have described how the frameworks of the county and the North could allow individual and institutional identities to be constructed in terms of both solidarity and hierarchy, in terms of the community of the shire or ‘the key of the North’. In this section, I want to dwell in more detail on the relations between locality and solidarity, and ask how the frameworks of Yorkshire and the North provided opportunities for the absorption of local differences in communal action. I shall begin by considering petitionary material similar to that examined in the previous section, before turning to situations where ideas of locality helped to motivate acts of violence and bloodshed. It will emerge that the idea of the North was overwhelmingly more significant in creating such solidarities: largely, perhaps, because unlike the county it was part of a binary opposition that could easily be imagined in terms of hostility against the South.⁹⁰

Merchants, students and northern solidarities

In 1478, the merchants of York, Hull, Beverley and Scarborough - who had disagreed frequently enough in the past, and would again in the future - acted together in the name of ‘the north parties’ to complain to Edward IV about the treatment suffered by ‘northren merceres’ at the hands of John Pickering in Brabant.⁹¹ The mercers’ identification of their cause with that of the North responded to an administrative fact: the mercantile

⁹⁰Rivalry between counties - at least the formalized rivalry found at cockfights and similar occasions - seems largely to have involved neighbouring areas. See ch. 1 above, p. 43.

⁹¹*The York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers 1356-1917*, ed. M. Sellers, SS 129 (1918), pp. 75-9. (It is unclear whether this bill was actually presented to the king, but it certainly represents one stage of the petitionary process.) Relations between these mercantile towns are currently best followed in the relevant volumes of *VCH*; see also *York Mercers*, ed. Sellers, pp. 118-21.

community in Brabant had two governors, one for the city of London and one ‘frome Trent northwards’, a division which seems to have reflected the terms in which merchants in England itself were grouped.⁹² But the identification with the North was more thorough than administrative convention would seem to warrant. The letter referred to ‘the said northren men’ and the ‘clothe of the north parties’ and claimed that Pickering would lead to ‘the utter undoyng and distruction of the north parties’, and ‘enpoveriche all the partes of this north countree’. The administrative framework at Brabant enabled the mercers to draw on the northern petitionary language that I have explored above, moulding their petitionary identity into a wider regional perspective. Other documents from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century show that the idea of ‘this north parties’ or the area ‘bytwixt Trent and Skotland’ was used to negotiate the mercers’ relationships with Easterlings, Londoners and the abbot of Fountains.⁹³

A comparable series of letters was written at Durham priory in the late fourteenth century.⁹⁴ The correspondence is concerned with very different issues - the duty of Merton College, Oxford, to recruit fellows from dioceses where its benefices were located, and its apparent failure to recruit from the diocese of Durham.⁹⁵ But like the petition of the York mercers, the Durham letters (addressed to Merton College itself and to the bishop of Durham) illustrate how administrative arrangements similar to those at Brabant could structure the articulation of local identities. From at least 1252 until as late as 1576, students at Oxford were organized into nations (*patriae*) of ‘north’ and ‘south’,

⁹²See for example *York Mercers*, ed. Sellers, pp. 124-5, for a letter of 1510-11 to merchants of London on behalf of the ‘north contry felyschyppe’.

⁹³*York Mercers*, ed. Sellers, pp. 107-9, 110-1, 122-3, 124-6. The letter to the abbot of Fountains (pp. 110-1) does not refer explicitly to the north but to ‘merchaunds in thies parties’, but the threat to complain to ‘the King’s counsell in thies parties’ makes it clear that the north is meant. The first letter to London (pp. 122-3) refers to ‘the shyppyng of the comodites of our countrey’, and it is clear from the context and from the second letter (pp. 124-6) that this ‘country’ is the north.

⁹⁴‘Some Oxford Documents from Durham’, in *Formularies Which Bear on the History of Oxford, c. 1204-1420*, ed. H. E. Salter, W. A. Pantin, H. G. Richardson, 2 vols., Oxford Historical Society n.s. 4-5 (Oxford, 1942), I, 219-21, 227-31. The following paragraphs are indebted to A. B. Emden, ‘Northerners and Southerners in the Organization of the University to 1509’, *Oxford Studies Presented to Daniel Callas*, Oxford Historical Society n.s. 16 (Oxford, 1964 for 1959-60), pp. 1-30; H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, *A History of the University of Oxford* (London, 1886); A. Wood, *The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*, ed. J. Gutch, 2 vols. in 3 (Oxford, 1792-6).

⁹⁵‘Oxford Documents’, pp. 220 n. 3, 229.

very possible on the model of the division of England by the Trent in royal administration, although the boundary at Oxford seems to have been the Nene.⁹⁶

This administrative structure explains why the Durham letters - although they appeal to Merton's statutes, were written by a prior of Durham, and seem to have been written on behalf of William de Castell, from the bishopric of Durham - do not articulate their claims in terms of the diocese of Durham.⁹⁷ We hear instead of Merton's possessions *in boreali plaga* and the College's *exclusionem borialium*. The prior refers to *patriam borealem*, to *nostris patrie boreali*; the scholars on whose behalf he pleads are *nostris compatriote*, while Merton's preferences are for *compatriotas vestros, puta australes*. The prior explains the College's behaviour in terms of its *affectu patrie* and appeals to the same feeling in the Bishop of Durham. The College's obligations are not to a specific diocese, but to the much wider entity of the North, a *patria* whose claims do not seem far removed from the larger *patria* of the kingdom. As with the York mercers' letter, the administrative structures at Oxford enabled Durham priory to construct their claims in terms derived not so much from the immediate situation as from wider cultural conceptions of 'the north' and of *patria* or 'country'.

Administrative frameworks based around north and south must have seemed natural and straightforward when created - they may, indeed, have had some basis in preexisting, unofficial regional solidarities. As the letters from York and Durham illustrate, however, the relation of these frameworks to the political divisions of the kingdom allowed them to cement regional identities that might otherwise have been fluid and flexible. It is only an apparent paradox that while there is little evidence elsewhere in medieval England (at least before the mid-fifteenth century) for antagonism between northerners and southerners, friction between the two groups at Oxford was 'deep-seated and continuous', 'a touchstone which needs to be applied in any attempts to explain the causes which underlay every sort of quarrel and controversy between the secular clerks who formed the large majority of the academic population in Oxford before the

⁹⁶Emden, 'Northerners and Southerners', pp. 2, 9. For background see P. Kibre, *The Nations in the Medieval Universities* (Cambridge, MA, 1948) who discusses Oxford pp. 161-7.

⁹⁷ For de Castell see Emden, *BRUO*, I, 369.

Reformation.⁹⁸ The very division of students into nations of north and south gave immediacy to regional frameworks and loyalties that elsewhere remained, for the most part, vague and inchoate; the nations not only formalized any potential regional antipathies, but created a vehicle through which other kinds of conflict and disorder could be fomented.

This emerges clearly in the detailed record of disturbances in 1410-11 produced by an inquisition conducted on behalf of the archbishop of Canterbury at Oriel College in September 1411. Twelve witnesses answered concerning articles against William Symon, Robert Dikes and Thomas Wilton relating, *inter alia*, to the charge that they were *suscitatores & futores brigarum, scismatum & diuisionum inter patrias contra suum iuramentum*.⁹⁹ Dikes, of Carlisle diocese, later returned north to benefices including the rectory of Campsall, Yorks., and the canonry and prebend of the royal free chapel at Pontefract; Wilton was later canon and prebendary of the chapel of St. Mary and the Holy Angels, York, and rector of Sessay and Dunnington, both in Yorkshire; Symon's career remained largely in the south.¹⁰⁰

The causes of the disturbances are not entirely clear.¹⁰¹ Most witnesses, though, regarded regional antipathy as the key factor behind the behaviour of Dikes, Symon and Wilton. One witness says that the 'dissencion and divisions between the north and south parts' began on 18 May 1410 with an armed battle in St Peter's church, but that Wilton had instigated these divisions on many earlier occasions.¹⁰² The three are said by others to have fomented these quarrels in many places and on many occasions; while Symon had used his official powers to discriminate against southerners and had been seen beating a southern scholar the preceding winter.¹⁰³ The inquisition makes it clear that regional

⁹⁸Emden, 'Northerners and Southerners', p. 16.

⁹⁹'An Inquisition at Oriel', in *Snape's Formulary and Other Records*, ed. H. E. Salter, Oxford Historical Society 80 (Oxford, 1924), pp. 194-215 (p. 196). For the oath referred to see Wood, *History of Oxford*, I, 519.

¹⁰⁰ Emden, *BRUO*, I, 616-7; III, 2035; III, 1841.

¹⁰¹'Inquisition', p. 209.

¹⁰²'Inquisition', p. 202.

¹⁰³'Inquisition', pp. 204, 206, 211, 213.

loyalties could outweigh collegiate ones: the southerner Robert Salter was so intimidated by Dikes that he did not dare to stay at Oriel.¹⁰⁴ The strength of regional loyalties is also implied by the northerners' reputed claim *quod veilent stare cum patriotis suis et pro eisdem pugnare usque ad mortem*.¹⁰⁵ Just as the prior of Durham appealed to an *affectus patriae* more usually associated with feelings toward one's kingdom, so Dikes and his supporters align themselves with the idea of *pro patria mori* more often promulgated in state propaganda.¹⁰⁶

We need to remember that it is only when relations between the two nations broke down that they tend to appear in either the record sources or chronicles, and the inquisition itself suggests that animosity between northerners and southerners, while it may have been predictable, was not the normal state of affairs: three witnesses describe the incidents as having taken place 'in the time of division between southerners and northerners' which would have meant little had such conflict been endemic.¹⁰⁷ The factors which did provoke conflict were undoubtedly complex and can rarely be pieced together, but there is some evidence that such outbreaks could be related to national politics. In 1258, a conflict between northerners and southerners reflected the battles between Henry III and his barons, with the northerners taking the side of the barons.¹⁰⁸ Other disturbances seem to be linked to England's relations with Scotland. Incidents in 1385 and 1388, for example, can be related to the renewal of hostilities with Scotland in this period.¹⁰⁹ In 1385 the conflicts apparently began with accusations that certain scholars were Scots, and there is other evidence that even if these conflicts were not sparked by national politics, they were at any rate influenced by the language of national antipathies: in 1441 the southerners called the men of White Hall 'scotes doggys.'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴'Inquisition', p. 203. This seems to be our only record of Salter, Emden, *BRUO*, III, 1653.

¹⁰⁵'Inquisition', p. 205.

¹⁰⁶P. Contamine, 'Mourir pour la patrie, xe-xxe siècle', in *Les Lieux de Mémoire II: La Nation*, ed. P. Nora (Paris, 1986), pp. 12-43; E. H. Kantorowicz, 'Pro patria mori in Medieval Political Thought', *American Historical Review* 56 (1951), 472-92.

¹⁰⁷'Inquisition', pp. 202-3, 213.

¹⁰⁸Kibre, *Nations in Medieval Universities*, pp. 163-4.

¹⁰⁹N. Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, 1997), pp. 144-5.

¹¹⁰*Foedera*, VII, 486 (the abstract in *CPR 1385-9*, p. 65 omits the crucial preamble); 'John Benet's Chronicle', ed. G. L. Harriss and M. A. Harriss, *Camden Miscellany* 24, Camden Society 4th ser. 9

Politics, rebellion and northern solidarities c. 1483 - 1536

The conflicts between northerners and southerners at Oxford are well-documented, but there is no reason to suppose that they were unique. We know of conflicts between northern and southern students in early-fourteenth-century Westminster, for example, and in mid-thirteenth-century Cambridge.¹¹¹ It is only in the late fifteenth century, however, that we can trace northern solidarities with any confidence outside of these hothouse environments, in the sphere of national politics, although there is some suggestive earlier material, such as the libel against archbishop Neville.¹¹² On 15 June 1483, Richard duke of Gloucester wrote to the city of York to ask for military assistance, claiming that his opponents intended not only his destruction and that of ‘the old royall blode of this realme’ but also ‘the finall distruccion and disheryson of you and all odir thenheritourz and men of haner, as weile of the north parties as odir contrees that belongen us.’¹¹³ He clearly expected this appeal to the city’s sense of the North to be effective, and contemporaries commented loudly on the northern presence at Richard’s coronation. Two years later, after the battle of Bosworth, the city noted Gloucester’s death ‘with many othre lordes and nobilles of this north parties’, whom it was planned at one stage to memorialize in a list.¹¹⁴

The proclamation of 1483 combines with other evidence to suggest that the idea of the North became more widely available as a way of constructing solidarities in the later fifteenth century. There is nothing overtly northern about the manifestos associated with the Scrope or Percy rebellions of the early fifteenth century (although, as we have

(1972), 151-233, p. 187. The northern response seems to have been to seize upon the association of Welsh students with the southern faction; according to an inquisition of 1389 they shouted ‘sle the Walsh doggys and her whelpys’. (Wood, *Annals*, I, 520-1)

¹¹¹*Chronicles of Edward I and II*, ed. Stubbs, I, 313; Kibre, *Nations*, p. 167.

¹¹²‘Copy of a Libel Against Archbishop Neville’, ed. W. Illingworth, *Archaeologia* 16 (1812), 80-3

¹¹³*York House Books*, ed. Attreed, II, 713-4; these orders were proclaimed in the city on June 19 (*ibid.*, II, 714).

¹¹⁴Dominic Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard III*, ed. and tr. C. A. J. Armstrong (Oxford, 1969), pp. 132-3; *York House Books*, ed. Attreed, I, 369.

seen above, there are hints that contemporaries understood these movements as regional phenomena). The articles of Robin of Redesdale's rebellion of 1469, although a contemporary says they were written 'to stir up the minds of the county', do not appeal to any specifically local grievances in the manner of Cade's articles of 1450.¹¹⁵

It is only in 1489, with the chance survival of a rebel proclamation incorporated in the Paston correspondence, that we can begin to analyze the impact of the North as an catalyst of rebellion.¹¹⁶ The proclamation is directed 'to all the Northe partys of England to euery lorde, knyght, esquier, gentyleman, and yeman'; but if the recruitment of the rebel army took place at a regional level (whether in imagination or in fact), the expressed aims of the rebels lacked any regional articulation: 'for to geynsstonde suche persons as is abowtward for to dystroyd owre suffereyn lorde the Kynge and the Comowns of Engelond for suche vnlawfull poyntys as Seynt Thomas of Cauntybery dyed for.' This may be compared with the bills circulated at the time of Cade's rebellion.¹¹⁷ In these, standard complaints of misrule at the national level (the king to live from his commons, nobles to be restored to council and men of base birth removed, and so on) are mixed with more local petitions: 'hit is opynly noysyd that Kent shuld be dystroyd with a ryall power and made a wylde fforest'; 'the ministres of the courte of Dovyr in Kent vexe and areste the peple there thorou all the shyre'; 'the grete extorcion of grene wex, that is falsly used to the perpetuall distruccion of the kynges liege men and the comons of Kente with out provision.' A later account of events in a petition to John Paston shows that the rebels were motivated by fears that John Fastolf was planning to destroy the commons of Kent, and the Lincolnshire rebellion of 1470 seems to have

¹¹⁵ The articles are printed in *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camden Society o.s. 10 (1839), pp. 46-51. They appear in the roughly contemporary BL, Add. 48031 A, fols. 140-141v with the following note: 'Tharticles and causis of thassembling of Robyn of Ridisdale and the Commones of Yorkeshire, anno ml iiijc lxix, which articles folowing wer divised made and desired by the duc of Clarence, therle of Warrewik, the lorde Willowby and lorde Wellis, before the felde of Lyncolnshire men, the which duc and erle fled in Fraunce and the seid ij lordis behedid.' Quotation in text from *Abbreviata Chronica ab anno 1377 usque ad annum 1469*, ed. J. J. Smith (*Publications of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society I: 1840-6* (Cambridge, 1846), no. 2), p. 13. Edward IV's signet letter written in the aftermath of the rebellion likewise refers to 'commocions and assembles of our people within our said countie [of York]' (BL, MS Cotton Nero D. III, fo. 238r (pen)).

¹¹⁶ Paston I, 659.

¹¹⁷ Printed in I. M. W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 186-91.

played on similar feelings.¹¹⁸

We know of other movements of protest in Yorkshire and the North at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries.¹¹⁹ Records of these are extremely scanty, however, and it is only with the rebellions of 1536-7 that the surviving documentation becomes full enough to explore the ideological importance of the North at a relatively popular level in any depth. So full is the documentation, in fact, that it appears to allow unprecedented insight into such popular mentalities, and there may be some danger in placing too much weight on the evidence of what was, after all, an exceptional event. Equally, though, it may be that - as has been argued of Kett's rebellion of 1549 - 'such exceptional events...illuminate patterns of everyday behaviour and assumption otherwise only partially and gradually recoverable'.¹²⁰

It can be argued that the Pilgrimage cannot be seen as a northern rebellion: large parts of the North - in southern Yorkshire as well as the border country - remained loyal to the crown, and the grievances of the pilgrims were mostly issues of national concern. This argument has recently been put forward by Bush, a leading authority on the Pilgrimage.¹²¹ But while one cannot quarrel with these facts, their interpretation is misguided and cannot account for some important evidence.

Ideas about the extent of the North were important, if only at what might be called a subliminal level, in both rebel and governmental strategy. The revolt and the attempts to suppress it operated to some extent within a geographical framework in which the Trent formed a major boundary. At the end of October, Norfolk was complaining to the Council about Shrewsbury's decision to press beyond the Trent into 'the most barren country of the realm', while the king assured him that he would not be exposed to peril

¹¹⁸*Paston II*, 314; 'Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire', ed. J. G. Nichols, in *Camden Miscellany I*, Camden Society o.s. 39 (1847). According to this official record of the rebellion (p. 6), 'Robert Wellez, calling hym self grete capteyn of the comons of Linccoln shire, had doo made proclamacions in all the churchez of that shire...to resist the king in comyng down into the seide shire, saying that his comyng thidre was to destroie the comons of the same shire.'

¹¹⁹Above, ch. 1, pp. 71-2.

¹²⁰D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, pp. 12-3.

¹²¹M. L. Bush, 'The Northerness of the Pilgrimage of Grace', given to a conference on 'Regional Identity: Shifting Boundaries and Contested Meanings', Manchester Metropolitan University, 13-14 September 2000.

‘for any dominion on that side Trent’.¹²² Henry also planned, if the rebels pushed past Doncaster, to hold them ‘on that side Trent.’¹²³ On the rebel side, if an agreement had not been reached at Doncaster, the pilgrims were to press onward in three armies, and then unite on the south of the Trent.¹²⁴ Sir Robert Constable, on the return of Ellerker and Bowes from London, wanted not to meet with the King’s commissioners but to make sure the country from Trent northwards.¹²⁵

The Pilgrimage was the first northern rebellion whose aims included specifically regional grievances. It would be misguided to ignore the overall import of the Pilgrims’ demands in their various versions, or to downplay the extent to which different elements of the rebel forces were motivated by different aims. On the other hand, the demands set out at the second meeting at Doncaster make it clear that both local and regional issues mattered greatly to some elements of the force.¹²⁶ These included the restoration of northern sanctuaries and liberties at Durham, Beverley, Ripon and York and the request for a parliament at Nottingham or York. The demand for a court at York for men north of the Trent positioned the pilgrims as representatives of a North defined in terms of official political discourse.

The Pilgrims also identified themselves explicitly in terms of the North. Although there are some references to the commons of Yorkshire, and although smaller bands of rebels identified themselves in more localized ways, the rebel army as a whole characterized itself as ‘the barons and commonalty of the North’, ‘the captain and barons of the commons in the North’, ‘the baronage and commonalty of the north parts’.¹²⁷ A

¹²²*L&P*, XI, 909 and 884.

¹²³*State Papers*, I, 492.

¹²⁴*L&P*, XII/1, 1186.

¹²⁵*L&P*, XII/1, 466.

¹²⁶*L&P* XI, 1246; for the aims of the various pilgrim hosts see Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, *passim*, summarized pp. 410-15.

¹²⁷*L&P* XI, 1079 (15 Nov), 1115 (19 Nov), 1155 (24 Nov); ‘Letters of the Cliffords, Lords Clifford and Earls of Cumberland, c. 1500 - c. 1535’, ed. R. W. Hoyle, *Camden Miscellany* 31, Camden Society 4th ser. 44 (1992), pp. 1-191, p. 79. In a lost letter Robert Aske seems to have written to the Earl of Derby on behalf of ‘all the Comunalty of Yorkshire’; a letter from Captain Poverty was addressed to the commons of Cumberland and Westmorland, instructing them to send a delegation to ‘they of Yorkshire’, and the commons of Westmorland also received a letter from the commons of Yorkshire. (‘Thomas Master’s Narrative of the Pilgrimage of Grace’, ed. R. W. Hoyle, *Northern History* 21 (1985), 53-79, p. 69; Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, pp. 296-7 and p. 301 n. 40.) For more localized identifications see

proclamation in rhymed prose exhorted the rebels to keep to 'your purpose in all this north land'.¹²⁸ Conversely, 'the south parts' were frequently invoked as the area that had not rebelled, a region that appeared both receptive (the official enquiries after the revolt were much concerned with communications between north and south, and rumours that the south was prepared to rise) and alien.¹²⁹ Although the image of a rebel North and a loyal south was hardly accurate, the idea of the North was intended to present an 'imagined community' in which individual differences of origin, status or objective were subsumed in a larger common purpose.

It is evident that the rebel leaders were able to play on feelings of antipathy or fear towards the south, just as the crown played on southern fears of the North. A rebel manifesto produced in the uneasy period of early 1537 claimed that royal forces had made Hull ready to receive ships to destroy all the north parts.¹³⁰ A rhyme composed to incite revolt was addressed to the 'faithfull pepull of the boryalle region'; it claimed that 'the northerne pepull in tyme longe past / hath lytyll beyn regardyde of the awstrall nacione', and called for the 'ouer throwe' of the south. At the inquisition of the friar who composed the rhyme he confessed that, with regard to precisely those lines, he had 'put in as mucche matter as I could invent towarde the setting fforth and adanyation of the said rebelles.'¹³¹

In fact, it is clear that for some of the pilgrims, regional antipathies were more important than the 'official' aims of the rebellion. One witness claimed to have heard men in Beverley talking of bringing home the goods of Cheapside and the south, while Thomas Reynton wrote to Robert Hatchet, who had been his host in Durham:

below, ch. 5.

¹²⁸*L&P* XI, 892; also XII/1, 163/2.

¹²⁹see the questions put to Darcy, Constable and Aske (*L&P* XII/1, 847-9, 900); for southern support e.g. XI, 1111, 1128, 1143; XII/1, 369, 370, 1083, etc.

¹³⁰*L&P* XII/1, 138.

¹³¹'The Rime of John Pickering', ed. G. Anstruther, *Dominican Studies* 2 (1949), 16-29 (pp. 16-17 and 24).

These Sotherone bois says they will bett your Northerone cottes, and thus they make ther pratyng at homme; but when they sholde have commyd heder wardes, then they begain to weippe and cryed out lyke made men...they have a book in print upon you all that be northern men that ye be all traitors to the King.¹³²

Similarly in early 1537 Bigod attempted to raise support by promising that ‘the fatt prestes benefices of the south that were not resident apou the same... shulde finde the poore souldiers that were not able to beare their owne charges.’¹³³

These northern solidarities are built on the traditions of political discourse which we have explored above. The terms in which they are expressed suggest that differences between ‘North’ and ‘South’ were widely internalized and strongly felt by the early sixteenth century, although everyday circumstances might present little opportunity for their expression or record. Reynton contrasts southern effeminacy with an implicit northern prowess, and Pickering’s marching song appeals to the identity of the pilgrims as ‘cheiff bellicous champions by dyvyn providens’.¹³⁴ The rebel army was widely seen as warlike, bold and manly, in accordance with the tradition of the militarized North we have explored above. The comments about the goods or ‘fat priests’ of the south rely on the assumption of a contrasting northern poverty. The idea of the North as religiously backward and superstitious, which had developed during the Henrician Reformation, was at once accepted and rejected by the rebels, who turned reformed orthodoxy into heresy.¹³⁵ Pickering’s song describes the rebellion as a ‘reformation’, and was particularly outspoken on the subject of the ‘sotherne herytykes’; Marmaduke Neville, when asked about ‘the traitors in the north’, had affirmed that ‘if you call us traitors, we will call you heretics’.¹³⁶

¹³²*L&P* XI, 841; *L&P* XII/1, 798. *Made men* presumably=ME *maiden-man* ‘a virgin’, not cited by *MED* after c. 1325 but cf. *maid(e* 2d ‘...a man lacking sexual experience’.

¹³³E. Milner, *Records of the Lumleys of Lumley Castle*, ed. E. Benham (London, 1904), p. 40 (abstracted *L&P* XII/1, 369).

¹³⁴Anstruther, ‘Rime’, p. 16.

¹³⁵Layton, for example, wrote to Cromwell in 1535 of ‘the rude people of the north... more superstitious than virtuous, long accustomed to frantic fantasies and ceremonies, which they regard far more than either God or their prince.’ (*L&P* VII, 955) Later developments of this theme may be traced in J. E. C. Hill, ‘Puritans and the “Dark Corners of the Land”’, *TRHS* 5th ser. 13 (1963), 77-102.

¹³⁶Anstruther, ‘Rime’, p. 17; *L&P* XI, 1319.

It is clear, then, that the discourses of northerness which we have explored above are vital to an understanding of the events of 1536-7. They inform the movements of the rebel and official armies; they shape the rebels' demands and arguments; and they act as a force for cohesion. What is particularly interesting, though, is that the wealth of documentation allows us to see the *variety* of meanings that the idea of the North carried for the pilgrims. Undoubtedly, the complexity and diversity of the North were central to its power in creating solidarities.

Home and away

The majority of this chapter has explored the importance of ideas of Yorkshire and the North for individuals and institutions which perceived themselves as positioned within those frameworks. The exception has been the students at Oxford and elsewhere, who were geographically removed from the North but continued to have their regional origins thrust upon them. In this section, I want to explore the importance of the frameworks of locality for those who had become geographically separated from them, particularly through social and occupational mobility, but were not exposed to direct institutional reminders of their origins. Roger Burton claimed that the canon of St George's, Windsor, who donated Emperor Sigismund's sword to York had acted out of local patriotism: a native of York, he wanted 'to distinguish his own country by such a gift'. In the early sixteenth century, Thomas Selvester wrote to the fourth earl of Shrewsbury from Sheffield asking for a living for his brother, who was serving as a chantry priest 'in Barkshier' but who 'much desireth to come unto hys native contre to be abyder'.¹³⁷ How typical was such awareness of and attachment to one's 'country'? To what extent was the area of one's birth or upbringing, or the area where other family members continued to reside, remembered; was it remembered affectionately or contemptuously; and what were the cultural frameworks and pressures within which such man oeuvres were made?

Wills provide a valuable source for the attitudes of the geographically and socially mobile, and suggest that at the end of life, care was taken to reflect a range of local attachments. Place of birth was particularly important, but bequests could also recall a less specific upbringing or places associated with parents. Female testators who had relocated on marriage were perhaps particularly apt to recall earlier residences; those who married more than once often had additional local connections to remember.¹³⁸ Robert Herryson, merchant of Hull, left five pounds for the repair of St Botolph's 'in Skirbroke in Lincolnshire there I was borne'; Richard Russell, citizen and merchant of

¹³⁷*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Percy, p. 124; J. Hunter, *Hallamshire: The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield* (London, 1819), p. 54.

¹³⁸A striking example is Dame Anne Harling, *TE IV*, 149-54.

York, remembered the ‘sustenance’ he had received at Durham in his youth; and another York merchant left money for the church at Holme ‘ubi fui oriundus’.¹³⁹ Although the specific motivations behind bequests are not usually spelled out so explicitly, it is often easy enough to reconstruct the relationships which lie behind the commemoration of particular localities, which can reflect wider regional attachments as well as memories of particular locations. William Noion, canon of York, directed his bequests toward forty of the poorest parish churches, of which thirteen were to be in the isle of Ely, and others ‘in partibus Sussex’; liturgical vestments were to be distributed in the counties of Sussex, Cambridge and Huntingdon.¹⁴⁰ Richard Rawson, an alderman of London, left money for the repair of ‘high weis in Yorkshire’, while Thomas Thomsone of Durham diocese, formerly master of Christ’s College and vice-chancellor of Cambridge, endowed two fellowships at St John’s Cambridge, requiring that one fellow should be from Yorkshire (preferably from the archdeaconry of Cleveland) and the other from Richmondshire or the bishopric of Durham.¹⁴¹

Such bequests usually reveal - or construct - identities whose local attachments are mixed, identities which belong in a number of locations. Edmund Talbot, for example, requested burial in the Dominican friary near Ludgate, but expressed regional attachments through bequests to the churches of York, Southwell, Beverley and Ripon, and local loyalties in bequests to the church and guilds of East Retford, and twenty shillings ‘to the comen profite of the towne of Retford’.¹⁴² Such mixed identities could even receive monumental expression: Horrox cites the example of a merchant who wanted to be buried in London, but with an inscription explicitly identifying him as a Coventry man.¹⁴³

Burial more commonly made a less ambiguous - albeit still often aspirational - statement of belonging, a statement which was undoubtedly informed by a number of

¹³⁹*North Country Wills*, Clay, p. 99 (of 1520); *TE* II, 55 (of 1435); ‘York Civic Wills’, 34 (1917-8), 204; 28 (1905-6), 844-5 (of 1396).

¹⁴⁰*TE* III, 29-31 (1405).

¹⁴¹*North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 286-7; Emden, *BRUC*, p. 582-3; *TE* IV, 131n (1483); for Rawson see Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 362-3.

¹⁴²*North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 65; and *passim* for other examples.

¹⁴³R. Horrox, ‘The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century’, in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. A. F. Thompson (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 22-44 (p. 22).

cultural and personal pressures. Conscience's instruction in *Piers Plowman* 'that there a man were cristned, by kynde he sholde be buried', may represent one such cultural ideal, although its immediate context is anti-fraternal.¹⁴⁴ A number of wills, though, specify not one but two or more alternative locations for burial, so that the 'mixed identities' evident in the bequests themselves are left open, to be resolved in most cases by divine will as revealed in the location of death. The terms in which these alternatives are articulated often reveal that the crucial area of attachment or family association was perceived to be the county. John Paston III, for example, asked to be buried at the Whitefriars in London, except if he died 'in the counte of Norffolk or there nye aboute' in which case he preferred to be near his father's tomb in Bromholm priory; John Digby wished to be buried at Melton Mowbray if he died in Leicestershire, but wherever his executors thought convenient if he died outside the county.¹⁴⁵ Such bequests are not uncommon among high-ranking testators; but those with northern connections may refer to geographical categories based around the county, the North, or a combination of these. Richard Holme, canon of York, king's clerk and councillor, asked to be buried at Cambridge (where his will was written) if he died outside of York; but if he died 'in civitate Ebor., vel ultra versus partes boreales', he wished to be interred in his parish church of Wermouth.¹⁴⁶ John Prophete, who enjoyed a lengthy career in the service of the crown in addition to his ecclesiastical offices, offered his executors the alternatives of Leighton Buzzard (where he held a prebend from 1405 until his death in 1416) if he died in the province of Canterbury, and York or Pocklington 'si in partibus borealibus ab hac vita decedam'; another ecclesiastic, Martin Collins, requested burial in York Mⁱnster (where he was treasurer) if he died in the north parts.¹⁴⁷

References to counties may be more common, perhaps reflecting the care and

¹⁴⁴ *Piers Plowman*, B, XI, 67 (not in the C-text).

¹⁴⁵ Paston I, 506; *Lincoln Diocese Documents 1450-1544*, ed. A. Clark, EETS o.s. 149 (1914), p. 140 (of 1529); and cf. *Testamenta Vetusta*, ed. Nicholas, I, 222, 303, 362. For John Paston II's burial arrangements, and the tension between Norfolk and London in the family's identity, see now C. Richmond, 'The Pastons and London', in *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, ed. S. Rees Jones, R. Marks and A. Minnis (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 211-26 (esp. 221-2).

¹⁴⁶ TE I, 406; Emden, *BRUC*, pp. 311-2.

¹⁴⁷ TE III, 53-4 (1416) and IV, 277-8 (1508); for Prophete, who was dean of York from 1407 until his death, see Emden, *BRUC*, III, 1521-3 and for Collins see Emden, *BRUC*, p. 152. Another example contemplating death in the north is BIHR, Probate Register 5, fo. 231v.

precision which were expected in funeral arrangements. Archbishop William Booth wanted to be buried at York Minster if he died in Yorkshire, Southwell if he deceased in Nottinghamshire.¹⁴⁸ John, lord Scrope of Bolton distinguished between ‘the abbey of Seynt Agas in Yorkeshire, yf it fortune me to deceasse withynne the forsaied shyre’ and Thetford if he died in Norfolk.¹⁴⁹ Attachment to a particular region may be more evident when only one area of burial as specified, as in Gilbert de Aton’s request of 1350 that he should be buried at Watton if he were to die within Yorkshire, or William Mowbray’s similarly phrased will later in the fourteenth century.¹⁵⁰ John Vavasour, justice of Common Pleas, was torn between the Austin Friars of London (if he died within twenty miles thereof), and Ellerton abbey (‘if case be that it happen me to dye in Yorkshire at Spawdington’) or ‘the next place where yat I deceasse’, ‘yf it happen me to dye in other places than there by the space of xx mile or more.’¹⁵¹ Evidently, such decisions are frequently related to the division of landed estate and the allocation of charitable bequests: such connections are clear in the will of Thomas Harington who asked to be buried at Monkbretton unless he died in Lancashire, and also left 6 s. 8 d. to every friary ‘infra comitatum Lancastriae et Westmorlandiae’.¹⁵²

References to both the county and the North are found in ecclesiastical as well as secular wills, and appear to be spread evenly over the period from which evidence survives. Such references are confined to a relatively small social elite, and even within this elite they appear alongside smaller-scale geographical frameworks: John Pakenham, treasurer of York Minster, specified only that he should be buried within a ten-mile radius of York, and Marmaduke Constable contemplated burial at either Flamborough or Holme (locations associated with his mother and wife respectively.)¹⁵³ Nevertheless, wills present impressive evidence for the importance of both Yorkshire and the North as

¹⁴⁸TE II, 264-5.

¹⁴⁹TE IV, 94-5 (1494).

¹⁵⁰TE I, 62-3 and 158.

¹⁵¹TE IV, 89 (1493/4).

¹⁵²TE II, 249-51 (1459).

¹⁵³TE I, 97 (1376); TE III, 229-30 (1477) cf. I, 358 (diocese of York); and *North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 162. For Pakenham see Emden, *BRUO*, II, 1419-20. Compare also TE I, 94 and *North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, pp. 51-2; ‘Holderness Wills’, ed. W. Brown, *Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society* 10 (1903), pp. 1-18 (p. 3).

frameworks within which individual identities were located at that vital moment, when they would be fixed for posterity.

Only in a very few cases do we have the luxury of being able to relate these death-bed statements to the frameworks and attitudes in which individuals operated during their careers. The Paston correspondence is probably an unrivalled source here, and it provides ample evidence of the county being conceptualized as home, and a locus of important emotional attachments. Margaret Paston writes to John I in 1462, 'Ye wer nevyr so welcome in-to Norfolk as ye schall be when ye come home, I trowe'; John II writes to John III, in 1473 that he is unsure whether he shall go to Calais, Leicester 'or come hom in-to Norffolk'.¹⁵⁴ Being away from Norfolk can be represented as cause of unease and discomfort: Margaret wishes that John III's grandmother 'war her in Norffolk as well at es as evyr I sy hyr'; John III in turn assured her 'I tryst not to be longe owght of Norffolk'.¹⁵⁵ William Worcester's correspondence expresses similar attachments to his (unspecified) country: around 1456 he requests John II 'I pray yow let me not be lete of my voyage yn-to my contree'.¹⁵⁶ Conversely, John Blackley's statement to John I that a servant of Fastolf's had said 'si semel fuerit Londoniis, nunquam wlt videre Norfolchiam' implicitly stigmatizes this abandonment of his home county.¹⁵⁷

Comparable evidence for attachment to ideas of Yorkshire or the North is harder to come by, in the absence of a substantially informal collection of correspondence such as the Pastons, but can be found. In 1478 Richard Cely the younger told his brother George that he had been 'in the Northe contre' and had 'grette scheyr of my nowlde aqweyntans'.¹⁵⁸ Thomas Betanson, writing to Robert Plumpton in 1486, ended a letter with his purpose 'to come into Yorkshire, with Gods grace', to avoid the plague.¹⁵⁹ But

¹⁵⁴Paston I, 281, 457

¹⁵⁵Paston I, 374; 566; and see Richmond, 'Pastons and London'.

¹⁵⁶Paston II, 155.

¹⁵⁷Paston II, 186

¹⁵⁸*Cely Letters*, p. 106; Richard specifically mentions visiting Northampton, Leicester and York.

¹⁵⁹*Plumpton Letters*, ed. Kirby, p. 67.

Betanson's motives do not seem to have been purely pragmatic: earlier in the letter he had described meeting 'a woman was borne in Selby', and requested that Robert send a letter with news of his household. Clearly he set some value on reminiscences of home, and his anticipation of returning to Yorkshire suggests that the county was one way in which he conceived this home.

The Plumpton papers contain only two other letters from Betanson, both of which are devoted to news of politics and the court.¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere, however, the evidence allows us to follow regional attachments over a longer period. In August 1500, Thomas lord Darcy wrote to bishop Fox of Durham concerning his journey to Berwick (where he had been appointed captain) and news at the castle, in a letter which incidently indicates Darcy's awareness of and attachment to the idea of Yorkshire.¹⁶¹ Darcy describes how he was met by 'the most party of gentilmen' of the county as he entered Yorkshire *en route* to Berwick, and spent two weeks hunting with them; more importantly, he speaks of 'cumynge hom into Yorkschir'. (The family's seat was at Templehurst in the West Riding.)

Darcy's other correspondence and his later career suggest that these sentiments were neither casual nor isolated. In 1520 he wrote to Henry Eure of 'coming home' from Greenwich and described serving the king at 'home in my country'.¹⁶² In 1514 he stated to Henry VIII that he would rather be 'at liberty in Yorkshire' than 'shut up in the town' of Berwick.¹⁶³ In 1534 he was to complain of not being allowed home into Yorkshire since 1529 and in 1535 was again seeking leave 'to retire to his country'.¹⁶⁴ Elsewhere, Darcy shows a playful familiarity with stereotypes of the North, reminding his agent that 'Northern purses be thin'.¹⁶⁵ This suggests that Yorkshire lacked such a widely understood set of characteristics, but it does seem to have been the area and community

¹⁶⁰ *Plumptions*, ed. Kirby, nos. 42-3.

¹⁶¹ *Letters of Richard Fox*, ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen (Oxford, 1929), pp. 20-2. For a brief account of Darcy see *DNB* V, 499-503.

¹⁶² *L&P* III, 654; Addenda, 286.

¹⁶³ *L&P* I, 4902 (new edn, 2740).

¹⁶⁴ *DNB* V, 502; *L&P* VIII, 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Letters of Richard Fox*, p. 77. Compare his comment to Chapuys that there were great lords in the North, but they lacked money: *L&P* VII, 1206.

of the county that had most resonance for Darcy. Cuthbert Tunstall (president of the Council of the North from 1530-8, and according to Leland a native of Richmondshire) seems to have had similar feelings, apparently using Henry VIII's northern progress in 1541 to show the king 'the pleasures of Yorkshire' and 'the greatest and the best valley that [was] in all Europe'.¹⁶⁶

Although it is clear from other sources that negative depictions of Norfolk were relatively widespread in later medieval England, there is no trace of such attitudes in the Paston correspondence, where attachment to and pride in the county are much more evident. This cultural self-confidence presents something of a contrast to the late-medieval North, where the negative associations that had developed around the region by the early sixteenth century were adopted - albeit we cannot say with how much sincerity - by the sixth earl of Northumberland. He apologized to an anonymous correspondent that he was unable to attend him in Yorkshire or Northumberland 'to have shown you such rude pleasures as be in those parts', and was similarly deprecatory in his request that the earl of Cumberland would keep Christmas with him at Warkworth 'in these rude partes'.¹⁶⁷ Darcy also adopted this tone - writing to Wolsey to describe how he was recovering from illness and able to eat 'such poor viands as the country serves' - and the contrast with his other correspondence suggests the force of these negative stereotypes.¹⁶⁸

It is tempting to associate such sentiments with an emerging discourse of distaste for provincial society which might be related to the increasing importance of London as

¹⁶⁶C. Sturge, *Cuthbert Tunstall* (London, 1938), p. 234, 1, 148-68. Tunstall's speech is recorded in what seem to be seventeenth-century accounts: the earliest is included in a letter to the antiquarian John Layer (see *DNB*, s.n.), Bodl, MS Rawlinson B. 450, fo. 390. Dodsworth's copies (Bodl., MS Dodsworth 113, fo. 54v; MS Dodsworth 129, fo. 123r-v) derive from this or a very similar copy, as they omit exactly one line.

¹⁶⁷*L&P*, VII, 1351 (1534); 'Letters of the Cliffords', ed. Hoyle, p. 49 (1532). The sixth Earl's courtly distaste for his locality can perhaps be traced to his upbringing in Wolsey's household; but compare Fastolf's letter to John Paston I, informing him that 'myn lady of York be disposed to come to this pore place' (*Paston* II, 149) and also Francis, fifth earl of Shrewsbury's invitation to Henry VIII to see his poor house at Winfield in 1541 (Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 55).

¹⁶⁸*L&P* I, 4652 (new edn, 2576).

a model for fashion and culture.¹⁶⁹ But such an explanation is not wholly satisfactory. Distaste for the provinces can be found significantly earlier: in January 1417, bishop Langley - born in Lancashire - wrote to Henry V from Pontefract 'of tythyngs in yis poure cuntre', and in a comparable later example, Thomas Beckington wrote of Exeter as 'the lande of weldernesse' when he was forced to wait there two days in 1442 *en route* to Bordeaux.¹⁷⁰ These examples suggest that by at least the fifteenth century a convention had emerged in which social mobility, and perhaps especially association with the court, could be expressed through awareness and rejection of areas which appeared poor or backward in comparison, even if they were geographically close to one's origins.

Social and geographical mobility could produce a range of attitudes to the localities where individuals were born, grew up or continued to have interests. The sixth earl of Northumberland's slighting reference to his 'rude partes' and Darcy's fondness for Yorkshire represent extremes between and within which - as Darcy's letter to Wolsey, and the wills discussed above show - identities could shift and compromises could be formulated according to occasion. What needs to be emphasized here is the extent to which such compromises and negotiations took place within the framework of the county and - perhaps to a lesser extent - the North. Although the bulk of the evidence comes from the upper ranks of society - those for whom long-distance travel and relocation were most obviously a part of everyday experience - the plaintive letter of Thomas Betanson suggests that these frameworks of locality could matter also to the increasingly substantial body of people who served those ranks.

¹⁶⁹For London, see F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 311-8.

¹⁷⁰PRO SC 1/57/79; *Letters of Queen Margaret of Anjou*, ed. Monro, pp. 75, 83, 85.

Conclusion

Pollard has recently argued that Yorkshire- in contrast to other areas studied by gentry historians - was not the focus of a cohesive county society, and it may seem that the preceding chapter has not, ultimately, challenged this assertion.¹⁷¹ I have not aimed, however, to contradict such claims by demonstrating the existence of such a 'concrete' community. I have aimed to move the study of what might be called 'political localities' and their impact forward by looking in more detail at the ways in which relations between individuals or institutions, community, and locality are imagined. As I have argued in the introduction, the concept of 'a fully-fledged community of the shire' is something of a blunt instrument for assessing the relationships of locality and identity, even for landed society.¹⁷² In this chapter, I have suggested a set of frameworks which accommodate what I have found to be the most important discursive materials in which local identities are constructed. These frameworks allow us to assess the importance of locality to a range of people and institutions in a variety of circumstances, and to recognize that circumstances affected both the kind of locality, and the degree of its significance. We are left with a more sophisticated and helpful sense of the ways in which local identities were imagined, but it is still possible to suggest general hierarchies and priorities between different frameworks of locality. It is clear that the idea of the county - particularly as a focus for the territory and communities associated with 'home' - cannot simply be dismissed. But in the final analysis, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the idea of the North was more widely and more deeply influential on the articulation of local identities. Its well-established, but nonetheless flexible characteristics offered a number of persuasive petitionary strategies; its inclusivity made it a natural focus for solidarities; its negative characteristics even influenced the self-presentation of regional magnates. As I shall show in the following section, when regional institutions and magnates attempted to define or redefine their own localities, it was often with the idea of the North - so recognizable and authoritative, yet so protean - that they began.

¹⁷¹Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, p. 153.

¹⁷²The quotation is from Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, p. 153.

PART II

‘OLD INHERITORS OF THAT COUNTRY’:
REGIONAL DISCOURSES OF LOCALITY

The first part of this thesis explored national frameworks of locality. The first chapter described the perceptions of the ‘parts’ or ‘countries’ of the kingdom that were shared by the politically conscious classes of late medieval England. The second chapter examined the impact of these frameworks on the articulation of local identities situated within or associated with late-medieval Yorkshire.

The second part of the thesis will explore the construction of locality at a regional level. National frameworks of locality were not purposely created by particular institutions: they emerged from the interactions of a number of discourses, and did not usually serve any particular interests, although they might well later be used to support such interests. Conversely, discourses which were solely or largely concerned with the meaning of locality were produced in some quantity by regional institutions and families. These discourses were aimed at regional audiences of varying size, and were one way in which regional prestige, power or jurisdiction was asserted or justified. They were designed to construct institutions or families as ‘the old inheritours’ of a ‘country’.

These regional discourses took several forms. Some were historical narratives which constructed the past of particular areas or districts in order to demonstrate institutional rights or prestige within those areas. Such narratives survive from the metropolitan church of York, the collegiate church of Beverley, and the hospital of St Leonard’s, York, and the development and circulation of these narratives is discussed in chapter 3. Other narratives were genealogical, produced largely for magnate families to record their associations with a range of regional institutions, and any other achievements which reflected the families’ local power. These genealogical texts, together with the display of the family’s arms, were a way of defining its ‘country’. The other discourses which were concerned with the meaning of locality at a regional level were the miracles attributed to the principal saints of regional ecclesiastical institutions. The locations of

the miracles were usually carefully selected to provide a sense of the core 'country' under a saint's protection. These genealogical, heraldic and miraculous discourses are considered in chapter 4.

A number of figures and institutions attempted to set their stamp on the meaning of locality at different levels between the national and local. The manuscript and artistic evidence alone indicates that their place in the meaning of the region mattered to them. But were these regional institutions also important to other local cultures within the region? Was this importance, if any, a result of institutional discourses, or were there other, independent traditions concerning regional figures which shaped local attitudes and identities? These questions are explored in the final chapter of this part of the thesis.

CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE MEANING OF LOCALITY

This chapter explores the discursive and cultural practices through which certain institutions attempted to define their regional power within and in some cases beyond late-medieval Yorkshire. 'Regional institutions', for the present purposes, are those which asserted claims over locality over substantial areas (from the East Riding to the entirety of England north of the Humber) and which publicly proclaimed and circulated these claims. In practice, however, these institutions' impact on local culture was usually strongest in the core area of their immediate vicinity, so the distinction between 'regional' and 'local' institutions is by no means clear-cut.

These institutions produced and circulated historical discourses which attempted to define institution and locality in reciprocal terms, using past precedent to support contemporary claims to power or privilege. This chapter explores the strategies through which these narratives were given authority, and the textual, visual and other media in which they were disseminated. It is made up of two case studies. The first explores the historical discourses produced by the metropolitan church of York, asking what purposes these served and how they functioned. The second examines how a number of regional institutions supported their territorial or jurisdictional claims through versions of local history which were based in various ways on the tenth-century king Athelstan.

The Church of York and the identity of the North

It is appropriate to begin this chapter with the institution whose jurisdictional claims were the largest and most ambitious. Throughout the later medieval period, the metropolitan church of York attempted to define its jurisdictional power in relation to various areas described in terms of 'the North'. York's claims to jurisdiction over the churches of Scotland were partly asserted through a version of the North derived from Geoffrey of

Monmouth, in which York was the ‘metropolis’ all of Britain beyond the Humber. Its independence from the church of Canterbury, and its jurisdiction over the bishop and prior of Durham, were partly asserted through the depiction of York’s historic power over the independent Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. These ideas of the North gave both authority and familiarity to York’s claims.

As this suggests, the church of York’s attempts to appropriate ideas of the North were a direct result of the jurisdictional disputes which occupied its post-Conquest history. The principal disputes were with the church of Canterbury, with the Scottish churches, and with institutions within the church of York’s own province and diocese. The origin and progress of these disputes, in particular their legal aspects, have been discussed elsewhere and do not require full attention here, but a brief summary will provide a necessary context for what follows.

The disputes were largely concerned with institutional precedence and privilege. After York’s claim to various parts of the diocese of Lincoln had been denied, its dispute with the church of Canterbury focussed on symbolic or ceremonial practices such as the nature of the obedience owed by one primate to the other, and their rights to carry their cross erect in the other’s province.¹ It is easy to share a contemporary assessment of the frivolity of these disputes, but they had a genuine political and cultural impact. Archbishop Wickwane’s attempts to erect his cross in the southern province were allegedly met with violence in the 1280s, and there were repeated difficulties in the 1330s.² A compromise was reached in 1353 by archbishop Thoresby, but although this agreement has been said to mark the end of the dispute, it does not appear to have been completely conclusive. The chronicle of the church of York claimed that Thoresby acted without his chapter’s assent, and a copy of the agreement was made as late as the 1470s in the register of Laurence Booth.³

¹*Hugh the Chanter: The History of the Church of York 1066-1127*, ed. and tr. C. Johnson, rev. M. Brett, C. N. L. Brooke and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1990), pp. xxxiv-xxxv, p. 15 and n. 2; *VCH: Yks*, III, 9-10 and 13-15.

²*Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, RS 36, 4 vols. (London, 1864-9), IV, 260, 281; *Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers*, ed. J. Raine, RS 61 (1873), pp. 59-60, 60-3, 82-4; *Foedera*, IV, 310, 391; R. Brentano, *York Metropolitan Jurisdiction and Papal Judges Delegate 1279-1296* (Berkeley, 1959), pp. 38-9; *VCH: Yks*, III, 18-19, 21, 23, 31.

³*HCY* II, 419; *VCH: Yks*, III, 39.

York's disputes with the bishop and priory of Durham, which focussed on jurisdictional liberties and on archiepiscopal rights to visitation and *sede vacante* administration, likewise involved questions of institutional authority and independence.⁴ Again, however, these issues could have serious ramifications. In 1329 a dispute between archbishop Melton and the bishop of Durham over jurisdiction in Allertonshire led to armed clashes, and the occupation of Allertonshire churches by men from the border counties and *de partibus Scocie*.⁵ Twenty years later, York Minster was invaded by two clerks of the *familia* of the bishop of Durham and others, who indicated their disrespect for their metropolitan church by vandalizing the gates of the choir and loudly breaking wind under an adjacent crucifix.⁶

The churches of Scotland had achieved independence from York by the late twelfth century (with the exception of Whithorn, which remained under York's jurisdiction until 1472), but it is not clear that 'the claims of York were never seriously advanced' after this period.⁷ As we shall see below, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the church invested time and resources in producing and displaying a poem which was largely concerned with York's rights over Scotland. Furthermore, York's claims also seem to have been kept alive by royal interest in buttressing claims to secular overlordship over Scotland. The forged documents presented to Henry VI by John Hardyng, which were intended to support the claims of the English crown, included Scottish acknowledgments of the metropolitan rights of York over the whole kingdom, and a notarial instrument setting out the church of York's claims, drawn up in 1464, was later copied into Richard III's signet book. In 1541 Henry VIII asked archbishop Lee to examine the matter as part

⁴VCH: Yks. III, 31, 33, 37; Brentano, *York Metropolitan Jurisdiction*, *passim*; R. B. Dobson, *Durham Priory 1400-1450*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 3rd ser. 6 (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 214-22; R. L. Storey, *Thomas Langley and the Bishopric of Durham 1406-37* (London, 1961), pp. 206-17.

⁵VCH: Yks. III, 37; *Foedera* IV, 405-6; PRO, SC8/236/11756, 11770 and 11776.

⁶*Letters from Northern Registers*, ed. Raine, pp. 397-9; quoted by B. Dobson, 'The Later Middle Ages, 1215-1500', in *A History of York Minster*, ed. G. E. Aylmer and R. Cant (Oxford, 1977) pp. 44-109 (p. 44).

⁷VCH: Yks. III, 15-16 (at p. 16).

of his own claims to the Scottish crown.⁸

'The metropolis of the north': Scottish jurisdiction and the construction of regional power

The fullest discursive statement of York's rights over the Scottish churches was made in a metrical chronicle of the see, written between 1388 and 1397.⁹ The chronicle brought together a variety of historical evidence to support York's claims. The most striking, and perhaps the most important of these was that with which the poem began and ended, which derived from and elaborated the historical tradition of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*. The poem used Geoffrey's references to the division of Britain into regions by the Humber, and to York's jurisdiction over the northern region, to support York's contemporary claims over the Scottish churches.

The metrical chronicle begins with an account of the foundation of the city of York by Ebraucus, an early king of Britain, which is based on Geoffrey of Monmouth, but is amplified in two ways. In common with other local and regional adaptations of Geoffrey, the poem emphasizes the grandeur and importance of York and its regional importance, describing how 'the famous Ebraucus' built 'a great, illustrious, famous town', fortified it to repel his enemies, and surrounded it with walls, ditches and moats (*flumina*). The city is described as a flourishing centre of trade, shining as if it were adorned with ivory (alluding to an alternative derivation of *Eboracum* from *ebur*), 'the metropolis of the

⁸*Documents and Records Relating to the History of Scotland... volume 1*, ed. F. Palgrave (London, 1837), pp. 368, 374; 'Extracts from the First Version of Hardyng's Chronicle', ed. C. L. Kingsford, *EHR* 27 (1912), 740-52 (p. 742); *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, ed. R. Horrox and P. W. Hammond, 4 vols. (Upminster, 1979-82), III, 76-98; *VCH: Yks.* III, 16. After his victory at Flodden Henry VIII wrote to Pope Leo X to ask him to reduce the see of St Andrew (created 1472) to a bishopric and make it subject to the see of York: *L&P* III, 4502.

⁹The chronicle is said to have been written 'in the time of the fourth Thomas', i.e. Thomas Arundel (*HCY* II, 446). Its authorship is unknown. For a brief notice see A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature 1066-1422* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 293-4.

north'.¹⁰

Metropolis could mean simply 'capital' or 'heed cyte'.¹¹ In this context, however, the term has clear echoes of York's claims to metropolitan jurisdiction over the Scottish churches. The identification of York as the metropolis of the north is thus closely related to the second alteration which the poem makes to the tradition of Geoffrey of Monmouth. This elaboration, which appears to be unique, makes Ebraucus the founder of a temple in the city, explicitly giving the church of York as respectable a pedigree as the city itself.¹² The temple is also described as 'metropolitan'; it is the first and foremost to be venerated, and the seat of an 'archflamen', the equivalent of an archbishop in Geoffrey's British ecclesiastical hierarchy. The church of York, therefore, can be described as the only institution that has retained its religious pre-eminence from the earliest history of the kingdom to the present day: it is metropolis and mother to all.¹³

This authority is confirmed with the conversion of Britain to Christianity under Lucius, when the archflamen is replaced by an archbishop with jurisdiction over the 'extensive province' of Albany.¹⁴ At this point the poem returns to Galfridian tradition to explain that Albany takes its name from Albanactus, a descendent of Aeneas and one of the heirs of Brutus, and extends from the Humber northwards, in a passage in which *Albania* (and in one manuscript a marginal *Scocia*) and *Boreas* are used

¹⁰*HCY* II, 447 (ll. 20-28). For the ivory etymology see *HCY* II, 261; for similar emphasis in other fourteenth-century historical texts from York or Yorkshire, see *The Historical Collections of Walter of Coventry*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols., RS 58 (1872-3), I, 4; *A Book of British Kings 1200 B.C. - 1399 A.D.* ed. A. G. Rigg, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 26 (Toronto, 2000), p. 29; *Castleford's Chronicle or the Book of Brut*, ed. C. D. Eckhardt, 2 vols., EETS 305 and 306 (1996), I, 80-1 (ll. 2993-8, 3026-8).

¹¹*Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum*, ed. A. Way, 3 vols, Camden Society o.s. 25, 54, 89 (1843-65), I, 232.

¹²The later version of Hardyng's chronicle makes Ebraucus the founder of a temple of Diana at York and states that he set an archflamen there (*The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1812), p. 50). This detail is not in the earlier version: it is possible that Hardyng had encountered the York metrical chronicle while revising his text; alternatively the detail may be an independent elaboration of his later argument that British ecclesiastical practice showed that 'the archebissshop of Yorke shulde bene primate and metropolitan of Scolond [*sic*]' (BL, MS Lansdowne 204, fos. 20v-21r, 69v). I am not aware of other chronicles which take this form, but very little is at present known concerning variations between different *Brut* manuscripts, and earlier examples may well exist.

¹³*HCY* II, 447-8 (ll. 31-54).

¹⁴*HCY* II, 448 (ll. 56-71).

interchangeably.¹⁵ Implicitly, York's jurisdiction thus precedes Lucius and can be traced to the situation immediately after Brutus's death.

The chronicle goes on to provide a summary account of the history of the church of York to archbishop Thurstan, including a distinctive account of the Norman Conquest which emphasizes the independence of the *Humbranos* (in contrast to the acquiescent *plagam...meridianam*) and their sufferings at the hands of Normans who *trans Humbrum cuncta rapiunt, et singula tollunt / Ecclesias, clerum, sic populum, patriam*.¹⁶ This represents a further attempt to align the church with the area beyond the Humber and to appeal to the sympathy of a northern audience. The poem returns to Ebraucus in its concluding discussion of 'the province and suffragans of the church of York', listing the king's other foundations in Albany to reinforce York's association with that territory. This section of the poem explicitly carries York's jurisdiction over *Albania* back to the time of Ebraucus: the following section recounts the changing inhabitants and boundaries of *Albania* or *Scocia*, asserting York's continual authority over the area.

In its definition of Albany, the poem follows Geoffrey's *Historia Regum*, in which the country is first described as 'the region which is nowadays called Scotland', but later in the narrative becomes part of a larger kingdom including all of Britain north of the Humber. Geoffrey himself describes York as having jurisdiction over Deira and Albany, both of which were divided by the Humber from Loegria.¹⁷ The York metrical chronicle simply makes more explicit, by some judicious editing, the connection between this jurisdiction and the earlier political division of the kingdom. The chronicle uses established tradition to give authority to York's institutional claims. Its elaboration of Geoffrey establishes the jurisdiction of a northern church, independently of and earlier than any southern competitors, and includes jurisdiction over Scottish churches in the very concept of the northern church.

¹⁵*HCY* II, 448-9 (ll. 74-9).

¹⁶*HCY* II, 458 (ll. 361-2).

¹⁷Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, tr. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1966), ii.1, ii.15, iii.1, iv.19 (pp. 70, 87, 90, 125). It is significant that in the late twelfth century Gervase of Canterbury, in his *Actus Pontificum Cantuariensis Ecclesiae*, felt that Geoffrey's account of British archbishops reflected badly on Canterbury's claims, and required refutation: *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs, RS 73, 2 vols. (1879-80), II, 334.

Comparison with the foundation histories of other ecclesiastical institutions reveals how unusual and ambitious the York metrical chronicle is. When other ecclesiastical foundations are located earlier than the Anglo-Saxon period, they are usually traced not to the early period of British rule but to Lucius, the first Christian king of Britain, and the missionaries (Faganus and Duvianus) who were sent to him by Pope Eleutherius.¹⁸ At Beverley in the early fifteenth century, for example, when the well-authenticated account of the church's foundation by John of Beverley was no longer considered sufficiently distinguished, its first foundation was traced to the time of 'Lucius the most famous king of Britain, the first Christian king of the same'.¹⁹ Few institutions traced their foundations beyond this point, and even Glastonbury's foundation at the hands of Joseph of Arimathea extended back only to king Arviragus.²⁰ Some institutions traced their origins back to pagan temples - Westminster Abbey was said to have been built on the site of a temple of Apollo - but without York's explicit claim to continuous institutional authority.²¹

Furthermore, foundation narratives usually served to assert general antiquity and prestige rather than specific territorial or jurisdictional claims. There are exceptions: in Thomas Rudborne's *Historia Maior de Fundatione et Successione Ecclesiae Wintoniensis* (c. 1454), for example, Lucius was alleged to have given Winchester the specific privilege of freedom from all civil obligations.²² But Glastonbury, probably the first institution to trace its beginnings to Faganus and Duvianus, did not use these prestigious founders to support its extended battle with Bath, nor did Abingdon use its

¹⁸The story derives ultimately from Bede, the names of the missionaries being supplied by Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, iv.19, p. 124.

¹⁹*Memorials of Beverley Minster*, ed. A. F. Leach, 2 vols., Surtees Society 98, 108 (1898-1903), II, 305-6; another copy is in the town's Great Guild Book (Beverley, East Yorkshire Record Office, BC/II/3, fo. 1v). Gloucester Cathedral provides another example of an institution tracing its foundation to the time of Lucius (*Monasticon* I, 563).

²⁰V. M. Lagorio, 'The Evolving Legend of St Joseph of Glastonbury', *Speculum* 46 (1971), 209-31; F. Riddy, 'Glastonbury, Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail in John Hardyng's Chronicle' (1991), reprinted in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, ed. J. P. Carley (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 269-84, esp. 278-9.

²¹*Ricardi de Cirencestria Speculum historiale de gestis regum Anglie*, ed. J. E. B. Mayor, 2 vols., RS 30 (1863-9), I, 92-3.

²²L. Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Late Latin Chroniclers 1300-1500* (Berkeley, 1946), p. 42.

foundation story to support its jurisdictional rights.²³ The appropriation of British figures by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge also hinged on the question of their relative antiquities rather than any specific privileges.²⁴ The same seems to be true of the appropriation of Galfridian figures by secular institutions, such as Bristol's use of Brennius.²⁵ Even the story of Glastonbury's foundation by Joseph of Arimathia, although it was used by the abbot to claim pre-eminence at a national synod, seems to have been more important to English representatives at major church councils of the fifteenth century than it was within the abbey itself.²⁶

The closest parallel to, and likely inspiration for the metrical chronicle is to be found not in other ecclesiastical foundation narratives, but in the citation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* as evidence for English overlordship over Scotland. Geoffrey's narrative was first used by Edward I, but was also recorded in materials drawn up under his successor and used at the beginning of the fifteenth century by Henry IV. In Edward I's letter of 1301 to Pope Boniface, a historical summary of Anglo-Scottish relations from the time of Edward the Elder (compiled earlier) was prefixed by a summary of material from Geoffrey.²⁷ The passage related how Brutus divided Britain between his three sons, associating their portions quite unproblematically with modern kingdoms: Locrinus received 'that part of Britain now called England', Albanactus 'that part [now] known as Scotland', Camber the part 'now called Wales'. Albany reverted to Lochrine after his defeat of king Humber (the argument continues) and later history also shows that Scotland was held from English kings. This material was later included in the notarial roll drawn up by Tange, which became standard for later use, for example in 1401.²⁸

The close analogies between these royal claims and the York metrical chronicle

²³*The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, ed. J. Scott (Woodbridge, 1981), pp. 27-8, 31-2.

²⁴Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Late Latin Chroniclers*, pp. 74-5; H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, *A History of the University of Oxford* (London, 1886), p. 242 and ch. ix.

²⁵For Brennius, see below, ch. 7, p. 288 and ch. 8, p. 309; but note the role of historical discourses in the conflict between the town and cathedral of Exeter: below, p. 163.

²⁶Lagorio, 'Evolving Legend', esp. 220-31.

²⁷*Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174-1328*, ed. E. L. G. Stones (Oxford, 1970), pp. 97-8; Stones shows that the draft for this letter indicates that the material from Geoffrey was added later.

²⁸*Edward I and the Throne of Scotland*, ed. E. L. G. Stones and G. G. Simpson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978), I, 154-8 and II, 298-300.

make it likely that the latter was modelled on the former, and there is some evidence for literary influence. The terms in which the metrical chronicle initially describes the status of Albania - *Ex Albanacto, trinepote potentis Eneae / Dicitur Albania; littera prisca probat* - are taken verbatim from the prophetic poem known as 'Regnum Scottorum', first found in a manuscript of the late thirteenth century.²⁹ This poem alludes to Edward I's victories, and although it seems to present a pre-Scottish viewpoint, it is predominantly found in English manuscripts, and particularly in the context of English claims over Scotland, and must have been understood as supporting these claims. The text was circulating in late fourteenth-century York: it was copied into a historical manuscript belonging to St Mary's abbey, and also included in the fourteenth-century historical collections of Robert Populton, partly compiled in the city.³⁰ More importantly, the poem was included in Walter of Coventry's historical collections (very probably from York Minster itself) immediately following proofs of English lordship over Scotland.³¹ The composer of the York metrical chronicle presumably knew 'Regnum Scottorum' from such a context and used its language to strengthen York's own associations with the discourse of English overlordship.

The chronicle represents an inventive and ambitious reworking of Galfridian tradition, royal propaganda and associated texts, which places the church of York's claims over Scotland in a widely accepted historical and geographical framework. Why these claims were formulated between 1388 and 1397 is unclear. The records of the dean and chapter do not cast light on the poem's production, and the records of Arundel's episcopate are imperfect.³² It is perhaps possible that the renewal of York's claims represented a response to John of Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, written between 1384 and 1387, which presented a refutation of English historical claims to both secular

²⁹ L. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 71-2.

³⁰ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS 4126, fo. 9v (described in J. C. Crick, *A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts, The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth 3* (Cambridge, 1989), no. 164; printed in *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, ed. W. F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1867), pp. 117-8); Leeds, Brotherton Library, MS 29, fos. 18r-19r (a glossed version).

³¹ *Walter of Coventry*, ed. Stubbs, I, 24-6. The evidence that this collection was produced in York Minster comes from its citation of Athelstan's charter *fortuna fallentis seculi* and its abbreviation of the prose history of the archbishops, both of which suggest access to the Minster's library and archives.

³² M. Aston, *Thomas Arundel: A Study of Church Life in the Reign of Richard II* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 285-98.

and ecclesiastical overlordship.³³ The mid-1380s had also seen a return to Anglo-Scottish hostilities, with an English defeat at Otterburn in 1388.³⁴ If the metrical chronicle was produced in response to these circumstances, its connections with the discourses of secular overlordship are strengthened further.

How important was this poem, and how far were its claims meant to be taken seriously? York's jurisdiction over the churches of Scotland was also asserted in a variety of documentary materials, such as papal grants and episcopal submissions, which were gathered from the church's archives. The poem was part of a wider body of material, probably collected at the time the poem was written, which related to Scottish jurisdiction, and both kinds of evidence were intended to support one another. Two of the manuscripts in which the poem is found also preserve this documentary evidence as well as supporting historical material gathered from other chronicles.³⁵ These two manuscripts, furthermore, are derived from the poem's original context, in which most of its readers would have come across it. This was on the central panel of a large folding table formerly displayed in the Minster, the outer panels of which contained ancillary documentary and historical evidence.³⁶ Such tables are known to have existed in a number of other churches, and seem to have been a standard way of disseminating institutional history and privileges.³⁷ Although the poem is in relatively difficult Latin, it is likely that visitors could have been accompanied by a guide capable of explaining the

³³*Johannis de Fordun Chronica gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene, *Historians of Scotland* 1 (Edinburgh, 1874); E. D. Kennedy, 'John Hardyng and the Holy Grail' (1989), reprinted in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, ed. Carley, pp. 249-68 (pp. 254-8).

³⁴Relations had begun to deteriorate from the early 1380s: see N. Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, 1997), pp. 143-4, 198, and 205 for the truce of 13 June 1389.

³⁵BL, MS Harley 1808 and Cotton Cleopatra C. IV, discussed in more detail in nn. 36 and 65 below.

³⁶Now York Minster Library, MS Add 533 (s. xiv/xv); for descriptions of this and a contemporary companion table (MS Add 534) see N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1969-92), IV, 824-6. Add. 534 contains a local and universal chronicle which has been printed from a later fifteenth-century copy: *John de Foxton's Liber cosmographiae (1408)*, ed. J. B. Friedman (Leiden, 1988), pp. 293-310. It has not previously been noticed that BL, MS Harley 1808 contains a copy of the entire contents of Add. 533 as well as a version of the text on Add. 534.

³⁷For tables, see J. Krochalis, 'Magna Tabula: The Glastonbury Tablets (Part 1)', *Arthurian Literature* 15 (1997), 93-183 (esp. pp. 95-100).

table's contents.³⁸

The poem, with its construction of York as 'the metropolis of the north', was bolstered by other historical and documentary evidence, and publicly displayed. Its claims were given added weight by the context in which it was displayed, and it represented a public statement of the church's regional power. We do not know where the table was located, but the contents of the poem, together with the contents of a companion table, are closely related to the sequence of figures in the bottom row of the east window in the *Münster*, where Ebraucus, together with archflamen and protoflamen, comprise three of twelve secular and twelve ecclesiastical figures associated with the church of York.³⁹ The window was produced between 1405 and 1408, and is thus roughly contemporary with the table, slightly later than the actual composition of the poem. The figures are all referred to either in the metrical chronicle or in a brief universal chronicle which was presented on a companion table. Both tables may have been located near the east window and served to explicate its connection with the church, while the window itself gave greater prominence to their contents. Both the poem and the tradition it represents must be seen as central to the church's statement of its institutional identity.

The dispute with Canterbury and the idea of Northumbria

The other idea of the North which the metropolitan church of York used to assert its regional pre-eminence was the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. This can be seen to some extent in the metrical chronicle, which contains a brief account of Paulinus's

³⁸Krochalis, 'Tablets', p. 95. Cf. the author of the Middle English life of St Etheldreda, who read a miracle of the saint 'yn hure story boke' at Ely 'by helpe of þe sexteyne': *Altenglische Legenden: Neue Folge*, ed. C. Horstmann, (Heilbronn, 1881), p. 307; and cf. B. Dobson, 'The Later Middle Ages', p. 108 n. 227.

³⁹Described and reproduced in T. French, *York Minster: The Great East Window*, *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi*, Great Britain, Summary Catalogue 2 (Oxford, 1995) pp. 138-43 (but for 'Pirannus', p. 143, read 'Piramus' (cf. *HCV* II, 450)). However the statement (pp. 10-11) that all the figures in the window appear on the table is incorrect: the figures extend to Edward III, and include St. William, whereas the poem ends with *Thurstan*. (The other figures *do* appear in the chronicle material in MS Add. 534.) The overall statement of the window is thus less restricted to the claims over Scotland and relates more generally to the prestige of the church of York.

conversion of the *gens Northumbrana*, and describes the honour and power wielded by his convert Edwin, *rex Northumbrorum*, which reflects the status of the church which he 'renewed'.⁴⁰ But York's relation to Northumbria is most fully stated in another body of historical material, produced to justify the church's independence from Canterbury.

A contemporary record of the dispute with Canterbury was made from the church of York's perspective by Hugh Sottovagina.⁴¹ Hugh's pointedly institutional text - full of references to *ecclesia nostra* - survives in an early-fourteenth-century copy, now the first item in the *Liber Albus*, the minster's most important collection of grants and privileges. This context emphasizes the continuing - and indeed foundational - importance of this jurisdictional conflict to the church's institutional identity.⁴² Shortly after Hugh's death his work was re-written at York.⁴³ It seems to have been altered for external consumption (the characteristic use of *nos* and *noster* was replaced by more impersonal constructions) and was expanded to begin not at the Norman Conquest but at the foundation of the see of York, here traced back to Paulinus.⁴⁴ This account was itself re-written towards the end of the fourteenth century when the history of the archbishops was brought up to the death of Thoresby.⁴⁵ Most of the manuscripts of the prose chronicle contain this recension, although two contain a still-later version. (The development of the text is summarized in Table 3.1.)

Although the entire chronicle is of considerable interest, we will concentrate here on the first part, covering Paulinus to Thurstan. This forms a well-defined entity concentrating substantially on the position of the church of York and less marked by the episodic biographical style characteristic of later sections. Although the text was written in the twelfth century, the fact that it was not only copied but partly revised in later recensions indicates that it had continuing interest for later audiences. Furthermore, its concerns are closely echoed in stained glass in the minster dating from the early fifteenth

⁴⁰lines 184-228 (pp. 452-4).

⁴¹*Hugh the Chanter*, ed. Johnson *et al*, *passim*.

⁴²York Minster Library, L1/2. The volume also contains notes 'on the carrying of the cross' and on the primacy (*Hugh the Chanter*, ed. Johnson *et al*, p. lv).

⁴³*Hugh the Chanter*, ed. Johnson *et al*, p. lviii; *HCY* II, xxi-ii, 312-87. Authorship at York is suggested by the way in which Hugh's narrative is supplemented by fuller references to documentary evidence of York's privileges (e.g. *HCY* II, 363, 366-7, 371-2 etc.).

⁴⁴this survives only in Bodleian, MS Digby 140, although a heavily abbreviated copy of this version is also included in Walter of Coventry's collections (*Walter of Coventry*, ed. Stubbs, I, 20-3).

⁴⁵*HCY* II, 312-421.

Table 3.1 The evolution of the prose chronicle of the archbishops of York

(Date of composition)		(Surviving manuscripts with date and provenance)
s. xii in.	Hugh the Chanter	York Minster Library MS L1/2 (York, s. xiv ¹)
s. xii	extended and altered version of Hugh's text, from Paulinus to Thurstan.	Bodl., MS Digby 140 (c. 1300) Abbreviated in <i>Walter of Coventry</i> I. 20-3 (York, s. xiv in.)
s. xiv ²	extended to archbishop Thoresby	BL, MS Harley 108 (s. xiv) Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 449 (390) (probably s. xiv ex., at Southwell s. xv) Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 447 (s. xv) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 298 (s. xv in.) York City Archives, MS E20 (York, 1420)
		Bodl., MS Barlow 27 (s. xv) BL, MS Cotton Titus A. XIX (Kirkstall, s. xv ex.) Excerpts, Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446 (s. xvi)
s. xvi ¹	extended to Wolsey	Bodl., MS Barlow 27 (s. xvi) BL, MS Harley 357 (s. xvi)

NOTES

For lists of manuscripts see *HCY* II, xxv-xxvii; Stones and Krochalis, *The Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 149; neither mentions the extracts in Rawlinson B. 446. For details of provenance see below, p. 138.

Bodl., MS Barlow 27 contains two distinct sections: see n. 68.

century.

The intention of the anonymous author was clearly to support Hugh's emphasis on York's independence from Canterbury through an account of the early history of the northern church. In the prologue he stated that he wished to show how the 'tunic of unity and concord' was preserved intact in ecclesiastical life until the Norman Conquest, and how York's profession to Canterbury was contrary to the primitive state of those churches.⁴⁶ He went on to argue that although the church of York was inferior to Canterbury in terms of land and wealth, it was *founded earlier and was equal in dignity*, and received the same power as Canterbury through *papal privilege*. Demonstrating this caused some narrative difficulties, as the foundational document - Pope Gregory's letter of 601 - set up parity between York and London, not York and Canterbury. This did, however, allow the author to notice that York and London were the centres of their respective regions - York is 'the chief city of the whole of northern Britain, the oldest city of all in those parts, extremely famous for overflowing with many things' - while the same could not be said of Canterbury.⁴⁷

The history went on to recount Paulinus's conversion of king Edwin and Northumbria, and his receipt of the pallium from pope Honorius.⁴⁸ From this point on, the emphasis on York's relationship with Canterbury is apt to be lost in accounts of successive archbishops. It is picked up again, though, in the prologue to the abridgement of Hugh the Chanter, which states that as Norman kings changed the condition of the realm after Northumbrian and English kings, so Norman archbishops disturbed the peace which had characterized the church under English archbishops.⁴⁹

The chronicle's attempts to demonstrate the church of York's independence from and equality with Canterbury are closely related to its depiction of York's place in early Northumbrian history. As we have seen, the church's history begins with Paulinus's

⁴⁶HCY II, 312-3.

⁴⁷HCY II, 313-5.

⁴⁸HCY II, 316-9.

⁴⁹HCY II, 354.

conversion of Northumbria, and subsequent sections give relatively detailed accounts of Northumbrian politics and its effect on the church. Much of this, of course, is a result of the chronicle's reliance on Bede and (to a lesser extent) Symeon of Durham.⁵⁰ Some sections, however, cannot be accounted for in this way. There is a relatively lengthy digression, for example, on famous Northumbrian contemporaries of the early archbishops: Hilda, the five bishops who were brought up in her monastery, and Bede himself.⁵¹ Although the content of this is largely derived from Bede, the selection and arrangement are the compiler's responsibility, and reflect an interest in associating York's archbishops with the culture and achievements of the wider Northumbrian church. In later sections of the chronicle, the identification with Northumbrian history and culture is less marked but there is continued awareness of Northumbria: the chronicle describes the revolt of *totis viribus Northumbrorum* against the Normans, as a result of which archbishop Aldred died of grief, fearing of the destruction of his church and desolation of his *patria*.⁵² The desolate state of Northumbria under Thomas I is also described.⁵³ Northumbria is a persistent presence in this section of the chronicle, mentioned not only in the transition to Norman bishops but in the recapitulation at the end of this section, which again suggests the antiquity and independence of the church of York.⁵⁴

As I suggested above, the continued circulation of the prose chronicle from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries suggests continuing interest in the institutional identity and regional rights of the church of York. Indeed, it seems likely that the late-fourteenth-century recension of the chronicle, carrying it to archbishop Thoresby, was partly stimulated by the archbishop's agreement with Canterbury *sine capituli sui*

⁵⁰These parallels are easily seen in Raine's edition in *HCY*.

⁵¹*HCY* II, 331-5; the former derived from *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969), iv.23 (pp. 409-10).

⁵²*HCY*, II, 349 (cf. *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols. RS 75 (London, 1882-5), p. 187).

⁵³*HCY*, II, 356.

⁵⁴*HCY*, II, 354 (describing succession of English bishops from Paulinus to Aldred and of contemporary kings from Edwin, first Christian king of Northumbria to Harold, the last English king) and 387 (the succession of bishops from the beginning of Northumbrian Christianity to Thurstin, gathered from Bede and other sources). The version in Walter of Coventry's collections - entitled *chronica regum Northumbriae et archiepiscoporum Eboracensis ecclesiae* - lists archbishops alongside contemporary kings (for example, *Bosa sub rege Alfrido, Wilfridus junior sub rege Osricho*, etc.): *Walter of Coventry*, ed. Stubbs, I, 20-2.

Eboracensis assensu.⁵⁵ Other evidence indicates that York's historic associations with Northumbria were particularly important around the beginning of the fifteenth century.

A major sequence of glazing in the western choir clerestory portrays a series of Northumbrian kings, archbishops of York, and popes.⁵⁶ It is no longer possible to identify all the figures, but it is clear that early archbishops of York figured prominently in the sequence, perhaps drawn from both the prose and metrical chronicles.⁵⁷ Heraldic evidence suggests that the glass was donated towards the end of the first quarter of the fifteenth century by high-ranking chapter dignitaries.⁵⁸ Some of those involved also donated glass elsewhere in the Minster which pays similar attention to the antiquity and glory of the church of York: Robert Wolveden, for example, whose arms appear in S8, also donated n8 (depicting Paulinus) and S7, in which Wolveden is represented praying to St William.⁵⁹ Window n8 is contemporary with n10, donated by Archbishop Bowet, whose arms appear in N8, N10 and N11.

It seems that an interest in representing the glorious history of the church of York was particularly evident among the early-fifteenth-century canons. This may have been particularly apposite in the early fifteenth century, shortly after an archbishop of York had led a rebellion against the crown. The clerestory glazing may have carried a more precise point, however. All the archbishops represented were closely associated with the minster's own historical traditions. The only exceptions are Oswald and Oswin, represented in N10, who were more closely associated with Durham, although they were mentioned in one of the Minster's historical tables.⁶⁰ On the north side of the choir door

⁵⁵*HCY*, II, 419; above, n. 3.

⁵⁶The glazing was last studied in detail by F. Harrison, 'The West Choir Clerestory Windows in York Minster', *YAJ* 26 (1922), 353-73, who pointed out its concern with the early history of the northern church but did not offer any context for this interest.

⁵⁷There are important early descriptions of the glass in York Minster Library, MS Torre L1/7, pp. 94-107; J. Browne, *A Description of the Representations and Arms on the Glass in the Windows of York Minster*, ed. A. P. Purey-Cust (1859, published Leeds, 1915), pp. 222-47; but it is not described in Bodl., MS Top. Yorks. C. 14. Lucius, Eleutherius, Sampson and perhaps Tadiocus seem to have been represented, as well as figures from Paulinus onwards.

⁵⁸Harrison, 'West Choir Clerestory Windows', esp. pp. 372-3. The heraldry is dated 1408-14 by T. French, 'The Dating of York Minster Choir', *YAJ* 64 (1992), 123-33 (p. 133); T. French, 'The Glazing of the St William Window in York Minster', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 140 (1987), 175-81 (p. 177).

⁵⁹For this and the following sentence see J. Toy, *A Guide and Index to the Windows of York Minster* (York, 1985).

⁶⁰John de Foxton, ed. Friedman, p. 302.

at Durham, Oswald and Oswin were the first of six Northumbrian kings represented as ‘promoters of this church, see and monastery’.⁶¹ Although relations between Bowet and Langley seem to have been good, we know from a Durham historian that Bowet ‘was highly indignant with the monks of Durham for many years’ because only one of them had voted for his election as bishop of Durham in 1406. When he became archbishop of York he questioned (albeit unsuccessfully) the convent’s rights to its Yorkshire churches and spiritual franchises.⁶² The clerestory may represent Bowet and his chapter’s assertion of their institution’s supremacy in its province, through the display of its jurisdiction over the historic area of Northumbria.

The city of York’s position as ‘the metropolis of the north’ or ‘the chief city of the whole of northern Britain’, then, was developed by the metropolitan church in two principal ways. On the one hand, probably influenced by the discourse of English overlordship over Scotland, the church used the construction of locality in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britannie* and a related discourse of political prophecy to position itself as central to an idea of the north that encompassed all of Britain north of the Humber, in order to assert its claims over the Scottish churches. On the other hand, York’s historic centrality to the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria was linked to the church of York’s identity as a metropolitan institution independent from Canterbury and with jurisdiction over the other institutions in its province. Both discourses enabled the church to formulate its claims in the familiar and authoritative regional frameworks of national historiographical tradition. What, though, was the influence of these discourses within the areas they described?

⁶¹*Rites of Durham*, ed. Fowler, p. 138.

⁶²Dobson, *Durham Priory*, p. 215; Storey, *Thomas Langley*, pp. 198, 208.

Dissemination and influence

The manuscripts containing the metrical and prose chronicles are remarkable both in terms of the quantity in which they survive, and their geographical distribution. While it was far from uncommon for institutional histories to be publicly displayed in tabular form, it seems that other copies of such texts were usually confined to the libraries and archives of the institutions which produced them.⁶³ The numerous manuscripts containing late medieval institutional histories of the church of Durham do not seem to have circulated outside the priory.⁶⁴ In contrast, the York metrical chronicle is known in three manuscripts. One of these was at Kirkstall abbey; another is bound with unrelated material and its provenance is unclear.⁶⁵ The third manuscript contains other historical material from or relating to York, but also has associations with Richmondshire: in either case, suggesting a local or regional audience.⁶⁶ This manuscript also includes a copy of the universal history displayed in the *Minster*, a text that circulated quite widely in its own right.⁶⁷

⁶³At Peterborough and Gloucester, for example, foundation histories seem to survive only in institutional registers or chronicles (*Monasticon* I, 375-7, 563-4).

⁶⁴Cf. B. Dobson, 'Contrasting Chronicles: Historical Writing at York and Durham in the Later Middle Ages', in *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to John Taylor*, ed. I. Wood and G. A. Loud (London, 1991), pp. 201-18; A. J. Piper, 'The Historical Interests of the Monks of Durham', in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. D. Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 301-32. As Dobson says of Wessington's work, 'on all the evidence available, ...[it] circulated not at all outside the Durham cloister and perhaps not very widely within it.' ('Contrasting Chronicles', p. 290).

⁶⁵For the association of Cotton Titus A. XIX with Kirkstall, see J. Krochalis, 'History and Legend at Kirkstall in the Fifteenth Century', in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscript, their Scribes and Readers. Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. P. R. Robinson and R. Zim (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 230-56 (pp. 236-46); A. Stones and J. Krochalis, with P. Gerson and A. Shaver-Cradwell, *The Pilgrims' Guide: A Critical Edition I: The Manuscripts* (London, 1998), pp. 127-52. The other manuscript is BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra C. IV, where the metrical chronicle (beginning imperfectly) is accompanied by the bulls and submissions in Harley 1808, fos. 56r-57r, in a hand of the second half of the fifteenth century. J. Weever, *Antient Funerall Monuments* (London, 1631), p. 104, demonstrates that this manuscript was owned by Thomas Talbot, an antiquarian with interests in the north-west and Yorkshire, in the late sixteenth century.

⁶⁶The York contents lead Rigg confidently to associate the manuscript with York (*Book of British Kings*, ed. Rigg, p. 19), but this ignores other items, such as notes on the foundation of Jervaulx, and on Adam Staveley, which are associated with Richmondshire. (See further below, ch. 4, p. 182.) The only mark of ownership is 'john hoppwod' (fo. 8r): a Sir John Hopwoode witnessed the will of Ellen Armerode of South Kirkby, widow, made November 4, 1544 (*TE* VI, 214).

⁶⁷*Foxton*, ed. Friedman, pp. 293-310; J. B. Friedman, 'John Siferwas and the Mythological Illustrations in the Liber cosmographiae of John de Foxton', *Speculum* 58 (1983), 391-418, esp. pp. 398-9 and 413-

Manuscripts of the prose chronicle also seem to have circulated quite extensively at local and regional levels. A text of the chronicle was copied into the memoranda book of York's civic administration by the common clerk Roger Burton; another manuscript is connected with a collegiate church, perhaps York vicars choral.⁶⁸ A late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth-century manuscript containing the chronicle was given to the collegiate church of Southwell by William de Gunthorp.⁶⁹ Another fifteenth-century copy was acquired by Thomas Cranmer: originally part of a larger volume, it is said by Raine to be in the same hand as the Southwell manuscript. The prose chronicle is also contained in Cotton Titus A. XIX, from Kirkstall abbey, and we know that a copy was owned at Meaux abbey.⁷⁰ It is also very likely that the prose chronicle was known and used at Beverley.⁷¹ In comparison to the bulk of other institutional histories, then, the York texts achieved a remarkably wide dissemination, particularly among regional religious houses. Given that the prose chronicle seems to have been deliberately written for external consumption, it is tempting to see the number and distribution of manuscripts as the result of a deliberate policy of self-promotion on the part of the church of York, which was concentrated in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries (when many of the manuscripts, as well as the tables and glass, were produced), but continuing later as well.

These manuscripts can tell us a little about how the prose and metrical histories were understood, both through annotations and through other manuscript contents. The sympathetic fifteenth-century title supplied to Barlow 27, for example - 'cronica archiepiscoporum Eboracens. a tempore Paulinus usque ad tempus Johannis Thoresby et qualiter sit ecclesia Ebor injuriata per Cantuariens. archiepiscopos' - has a clarity frequently lacking from the chronicle itself.⁷² Similarly, annotations in the Kirkstall manuscript draw attention to Ebraucus, and another Kirkstall manuscript contains a note

4.

⁶⁸York City Archives, E20; Bodl., MS Barlow 27. The latter manuscript records a gift to the Bedern. It originally contained the prose chronicle as far as Thoresby (fos. 1-47, quired a-f); another hand supplied the continuation from Neville to Wolsey (fos. 47v-60).

⁶⁹Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 449 (390); William is probably to be associated with the John Gunthorp who was a vicar of Southwell in 1452 (*TE* II, 141).

⁷⁰For the Meaux copy see ch. 5, below, p. 205. The notes on archbishops in Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446, fos. 23-26v, possibly from a Beverley source, also derive from the prose chronicle.

⁷¹Based on textual similarities between the prose chronicle and texts produced at Beverley: see the preceding note, and below, n. 122.

⁷²Bodl., MS Barlow 27, fo. iiv.

that while Roger, archbishop of York was present at the consecration of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury in 1139, 'manum non apposuit'. This suggests a keen and sympathetic interest in York's metropolitan claims.⁷³ The context of the York civic memorandum book, on the other hand, suggests that the chronicle was read in terms of civic as well as ecclesiastical prestige. Annotations in the Southwell manuscript likewise suggest that interest was concentrated on that particular institution.⁷⁴

For the most part, while the manuscripts certainly indicate widespread interest in the history of a major regional institution, the precise quality of that interest is unclear. For most institutions or individuals, ownership of the prose or metrical chronicle implied no more than a natural interest in one of the region's most important institutions. A similar interest is expressed in more abbreviated form in the lists of York archbishops which were added to some manuscripts.⁷⁵ The extent to which this interest was related to, or resulted from York's own representation of itself as *regionally central*, however, remains something of an open question.⁷⁶

⁷³BL, MS Cotton Titus A. XIX, fos. 117v-143r; Krochalis, 'History and Legend at Kirkstall', p. 235.

⁷⁴The annotations in the Southwell manuscript, Gonville and Caius College, MS 449/390 (perhaps the work of its early owner William Gunthorp) draw attention to Kinsius's building work at Beverley, Southwell and Stowe (fo. 126r/112r, cf. *HCY* II, 344), to Aldred's creation of prebends at Southwell (fo. 128r/114r, *HCY* II, 353) and to the privileges obtained by Thomas (fo. 132r/118r, *HCY* II, 372).

⁷⁵Such as Chicago University Library MS 654, from Meaux (S. de Ricci, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts in the United States and Canada*, 2 vols. (New York, 1962), I, 592); Dublin, Trinity College MS 516 (M. Colker, *Trinity College Library Dublin: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts* (Aldershot, 1991), p. 993).

⁷⁶See also ch. 5, and ch. 7, pp. 269-70.

*King Athelstan and the construction
of institutional power in late-medieval Yorkshire*

The preceding section explored the texts and images through which the church of York situated itself at the centre of two ideas of the north. The church's narratives drew on foundational historical frameworks - pre-Conquest England and legendary Britain - to give authority to its contemporary claims. The form these narratives took, and the means and extent to which they were disseminated, owed a great deal to the competing discourses of other institutions. The construction of local authority, and the role of historical narratives in structuring relationships between institutions, can both be seen with equal clarity in a series of institutional narratives based around grants made by the tenth-century king Athelstan in a campaign against Scotland. Both the historicity of the narratives, and the nature of their interrelation and development, are unclear. The emphasis here will be on how the story was used and adapted in its different contexts, and its influence on ecclesiastical culture and perceptions of locality.

Athelstan, Scotland and Beverley: the development of a narrative

Texts from Beverley seem to provide the earliest evidence of this narrative from Yorkshire; they certainly provide the most developed example the narrative being used to support institutional privileges. King Athelstan's defeat of the Scottish king Constantine in the early tenth century was recounted in a number of versions.⁷⁷ In the twelfth century, a number of institutions began to claim that this defeat had been made

⁷⁷For versions without saintly intervention, see *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and tr. G. N. Garmonsway (new ed., London, 1972), A s.a. 937; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. D. Greenway, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1996), p. 310.

possible through the intervention of their patronal saint. Simeon of Durham attributed Athelstan's success to the intercession of St Cuthbert, the Ramsey chronicler to St Odo, and William of Malmesbury to St Aldhelm.⁷⁸ At Beverley, it seems that St John became associated with the campaign some time in the first half of the twelfth century. The earliest narrative in which the saint is involved survives in two identical texts. One is in Ailred of Rievaulx's *Genealogia regum Anglie* (1153-4), and the other in a collection of John's *miracula* which first appears in a manuscript of c. 1175. The *miracula* may be the earlier text.⁷⁹

A second collection of John's *miracula*, c. 1180, provided more detail about Athelstan's visit to Beverley and the endowments he had made to the church. This is the version of events which circulated most widely both in later medieval Beverley and beyond it, and it differed in a number of details from the earlier version. The king's enemies were altered from 'Northumbrians and Scots' to only the Scots, and the river Tweed, as the boundary between Scotland and England, assumed a new importance in the narrative. When the Scots had retreated back into their country, St John appeared to Athelstan in a vision and told him that if he crossed the Tweed he would conquer his enemies. This duly occurred, and a large hole in some overhanging rocks near Dunbar made by Athelstan's sword with the miraculous assistance of St John provided physical evidence for the subjection of the Scots. Finally, the 'many possessions and great liberties' with which the king had thankfully endowed St John's church in Ailred's account were fully specified.

This detailed account of Beverley's privileges first appears in texts associated with the church. So although the first written account of the miracle may not have originated at Beverley, it certainly came to act as a foundation myth, accounting for the existence

⁷⁸*Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols. RS 75 (London, 1882-5), I, 75-6 and 211-2, II, 93; *Chronicon abbatiae Rameseiensis, a saec. X. ad an. circiter 1200*, ed. W. D. Macray, RS 83 (London, 1886), p. 16; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. T. D. Hardy, 2 vols., English Historical Society (London, 1840), I, 207-9 (for William's attitude to Aldhelm, see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), pp. 176, 178).

⁷⁹Ailred of Rievaulx, *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, reprinted from Tywdsen, *Historiae Anglicanae scriptores X*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus... series latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. in 222 (Paris, 1844-64), vol. 195, cols. 711-738 (716-7); HCY II, 263-4. For the dates of John's *miracula*, see R. Morris and E. Cambridge, 'Beverley Minster before the Early Thirteenth Century', in *Medieval Art and Architecture in the East Riding*, ed. C. Wilson, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 9 (Leeds, 1983), pp. 9-32 (p. 29 n. 53.).

of jurisdictions and customs and acting to justify and perpetuate them. The majority of the extant manuscripts of this version of the narrative are associated with the collegiate church of Beverley itself: the account of John's intervention in Athelstan's campaign is included in the *miracula* which follow the saint's *vita* in the Minster's late-fourteenth-century cartulary, and also forms part of the account of *libertates sancti Iohannis de Beverlik* which follows the *miracula* and precedes the collection of charters (the first of which is Athelstan's).⁸⁰ Excerpts from this material also made up the account of 'the liberties and franchises of the collegiate church of St John' which comprised the first item in the vicars' cartulary.⁸¹ But like the York material discussed earlier, albeit perhaps on a slightly more limited scale, this narrative also achieved some regional currency. Meaux abbey, nearby in the East Riding, owned related material and reproduced the account of Athelstan and St John in the abbey's chronicle, in explanation of the payment it owed to the provost of Beverley for the church of Skipsea.⁸² Newburgh abbey also owned a copy and it may be that others have also been lost.

The development of the story of Athelstan and St John at Beverley was from a very early stage associated with the justification of particular customs, and (in contrast to the York traditions discussed above) was used by Beverley in legal and petitionary contexts in support of these customs. These customs were essentially twofold: on the one hand, the right to *hestcorn*, four thraves of corn from each carucate of ploughed land in the East Riding, and on the other hand, various liberties and the right of sanctuary within Beverley itself. I shall consider these claims in turn.

'The thraves of St John': narrative and power in the East Riding

Beverley's jurisdictional rights over the East Riding were a main focus of the church's

⁸⁰BL, MS Additional 61901. The fullest account of this MS is provided in an appendix to Morris and Cambridge, 'Beverley Minster before the Early Thirteenth Century', pp. 20-7.

⁸¹Oxford, University College, MS 82, pp. 7-12. This is now preceded by ordinances of 1462 but the table of contents on p. 6 has *de libertatibus* as the first item.

⁸²*Melsa*, II, 236. For the abbey's ownership of Folcard's life of St John, which may well have contained later *miracula*, see below, ch. 5, p. 206.

historical discourses. These discourses underwrote and arose to support a financial exaction, the claim of four thraves of corn from every carucate of ploughed land in the East Riding, the origins of which are unclear.⁸³ The first royal charter in which the payment of thraves to the church is mentioned is of Henry I, which stated that St John's should have thraves from the royal manors in the East Riding.⁸⁴ The first charter to refer to Athelstan was that of Stephen in 1135, which described the thraves as being taken throughout the East Riding, *even* from royal lands. There were a number of later charters and confirmations.⁸⁵

From the early twelfth century, then, the chapter had attempted to justify its local power with reference to a pre-Conquest grant. The second *miracula* of St John, and the narratives derived from it, described how the inhabitants of the East Riding paid *hestcrasda* - four thraves from each carucate - to Athelstan for his horses, which granted to the church of Beverley.⁸⁶ In the later Middle Ages, these materials continued to circulate, and were augmented by vernacular texts designed to ensure wide dissemination of Beverley's claims. A rhymed Middle English charter was composed which detailed Athelstan's grant of 'al mi hest corne ... / Dia forve þrave bi heuen king / Of ilk a plou of Estreding', and provided quite detailed instructions concerning the treatment of those who withheld this corn.⁸⁷

This charter seems to have been developed towards the close of the thirteenth century. The earliest copy is contained on a mid-fourteenth-century slip of parchment, and late-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth-century copies are in the cartularies of the Minster.⁸⁸ Archbishop Romaine, however, saw an English charter displayed in Beverley

⁸³A thrave was a measure of crops which varied locally but usually contained twelve or twenty-four sheaves: see *MED*, s.v. *threve*; *OED*, s.v. *thrave*, *threave*. The Beverley traditions, together with those of St Leonard's, York (discussed below) have been seen as evidence of 'a comprehensive system of grain renders' in pre-Conquest Yorkshire: W. E. Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and its Transformation 1000-1135* (London, 1979), p. 73. See also Morris and Cambridge, 'Beverley Minster Before the Early Thirteenth Century', p. 12.

⁸⁴*EYC* I, 93.

⁸⁵*EYC* I, 93-4; *Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 15-6; *Calendar of Charter Rolls III, 1300-1326* (London, 1908), pp. 140-2; MS Add. 61901, fos. 74v-76r.

⁸⁶*HCY* I, 298; *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Beverlacensis*, ed. J. Raine, SS 5 (1837), pp. 98-9.

⁸⁷Quoted from Add. 61901, f. 69rb; instructions concerning non-payment continue to f. 69va. For other manuscripts and editions, see P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968), no. 451; *IMEV* 3300.

⁸⁸BL, MS Cotton Charter iv, 18; BL, MS Additional 61901, fo. 69r-v; Oxford, University College, MS 82, p. 7. Dodsworth saw a copy among the records in St Mary's tower, York: Bodl., MS Dodsworth 95,

minster in 1289 which corresponded in its details with the surviving text.⁸⁹ From an early date it seems likely that the charter was displayed as a public statement of the church's claims.⁹⁰ Visual images of Athelstan and St John - which, as we shall see, usually included a representation of a charter, and were accompanied by abbreviated lines from the Middle English charter - could also contain images of bundles of corn, emphasizing the grant of thraves. (Figure 3.2)

The association of Athelstan, St. John, the church of Beverley and the East Riding that emerged from the collection of thraves and the narratives by which it was justified was reinforced by other claims. It was stated that Athelstan had made Beverley the head of the whole East Riding and that on military expeditions the whole army of the East Riding followed the banner of St John. It was similarly claimed that all legal cases involving juries could only be heard at Beverley; and that land disputes were settled by invoking the shrine of St John, which was carried by the elders of the East Riding. The eight men whose hereditary right or duty it was to carry the saint's shrine on other occasions were obliged to do so throughout the East Riding in times of plague.⁹¹ It was even said that the Anglo-Saxon territory of Deira had originally consisted not (as was commonly understood) of the part of Northumbria roughly equivalent to Yorkshire, but only of the East Riding.⁹²

fos. 32v-33r; and cf. Dodsworth MS 116, fo. 116r.

⁸⁹*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 156-7: the charter is described as referring to the king (unnamed) who founded the minster, the seven priests he established, the incomparable liberties with which he endowed it and the penalties listed for non-compliance.

⁹⁰Its production may have been associated with *quo warranto* proceedings, although the tradition of Athelstan's grant was not fully exploited in Beverley's claims: see below, n. 94.

⁹¹The claims are all found in the account of the liberties and privileges of the church in its cartulary, BL, MS Additional 61901, fos. 60v-69r; printed from a later and somewhat corrupt copy in *Sanctuarium Dunelmense*, ed. Raine, pp. 98-107. Material derived from this text is incorporated into the related tracts in Oxford, University College MS 82, pp. 7-12 and Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446, pp. 1-22 (for the latter, see the following note).

⁹²This claim is first found in *HCY I*, 298, where it describes the area from which thraves were granted by Athelstan. A more developed account formed the opening of a later tract on the history and privileges of the church of Beverley, which survives only in sixteenth-century copies (*Leland, Collectanea*, IV, 99-103), p. 99; Bodl., MS Rawlinson B 446, pp. 1-22, p. 1)

Few of the materials referred to above are known to have circulated outside of Beverley, or in some cases outside of the minster itself.⁹³ The extent to which the church's construction of a historic basis for its regional power was accepted by others, or contributed to that power, is a difficult question. The chapter did invoke the historical narrative in legal contexts, instructing their representative to refer to Athelstan's grant and the antiquity of their right to thraves when this was challenged in King's Bench; the grant was also referred to in a petition concerning a conflict within the chapter concerning the provostry.⁹⁴ The historic basis of the claim also seems to have been accepted at Meaux abbey, which had to pay thraves for its church of Skipsea.⁹⁵ The story evidently had some currency and authority, and it would be surprising if the chapter did not take pains to disseminate its historic rights over the area in which it claimed them. But other evidence from local society does not suggest that the chapter's narrative was widely known or cited.

The collection of the thraves, while it was certainly not without its difficulties, does seem to have been a regular and largely trouble-free activity, perhaps particularly where the thraves had been commuted into a money payment. The thraves of Bridlington and Hunmanby were granted to Bridlington priory in return for 13s. 4d. each year and mutual inclusion in funeral services; in 1299, the priory granted the thraves from Hunmanby

to Bardney priory in Lincolnshire in exchange for the tithes of Burton Fleming.⁹⁶ Such exchanges suggest that the thraves provided a regular and reliable source of income.

There is, it is true, considerable evidence of disputes over the payment of thraves.⁹⁷

⁹³Although a brief account of the Beverley's history was copied at Southwell, in a later-fifteenth-century hand, onto the blank leaves at the end of the final quire of the prose history of York archbishops in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 449/390, fos. 141v-42r. The text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 298 (*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 343-5) appears to be a slightly inaccurate copy of the Gonville manuscript.

⁹⁴*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 68; PRO, SC8/173/8639 (cf. *CCR 1377-81*, pp. 431, 442). In the *quo warranto* proceedings of 1293-4 the chapter did not use Athelstan to support their claims to thraves, even though the provost, in 1279-81, had traced his rights in the manor of Dalton to Athelstan: *Yorkshire Hundred and Quo Warranto Rolls 1274-94*, ed. B. English, YASRS 151 (1996), pp. 275-6, 122.

⁹⁵*Melsa*, II, 236.

⁹⁶*Abstracts of the Charters and Other Documents Contained in the Chartulary of the Priory of Bridlington*, ed. W. T. Lancaster (Leeds, 1912), pp. 66-70, 74.

⁹⁷*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 15-6, 36, 87-9, 92-3, 98-9, 108-9, etc.

In the mid-fourteenth century, the abbot of Meaux joined all the rectors of East Riding churches in a refusal to pay.⁹⁸ But although archbishop Melton had stated that the exaction of thraves seemed intolerable, Beverley was supported in its claims by diocesan and royal authority.⁹⁹ In 1357, the official of the court of York instructed the vicars of Santon, Hessle, Watton, Hutton Cranswick, Kilnwick and North Dalton to order their parishioners not to interfere with the tithes due to St John.¹⁰⁰ Protests against payment should perhaps be seen as part of a process of negotiation rather than an outright refusal of Beverley's claims. At any rate, early-sixteenth-century accounts show that the chapter was still receiving significant sums of money - close to £100 - from its rights to thraves.¹⁰¹

Evidence for the collection of thraves, however, indicates that their payment was not popularly associated with Athelstan. As depositions on behalf of the proctors of a canon of Beverley stated, the thraves were 'the thraves of St John' and were assigned from lands of St John.¹⁰² Likewise in other documents the thraves are either called 'the thraves of St John' or described as 'vulgarly called the thraves of the church of St John at Beverley'.¹⁰³ While these terms may suggest some awareness of Athelstan's reputed grant to the church, it seems more likely that they recognize only the customary institutional power of the Minster to levy the thraves. Similar levies at York and Lincoln were popularly known as 'Petercorn' and 'Marycorn', with institutional rights likewise recognized through reference to their patronal saints.¹⁰⁴

In summary, there are some signs that Beverley's narrative claims to authority over the East Riding had local currency, and it would be surprising if these claims had not been circulated amongst the clergy and parishioners who bore the brunt of the payments.

⁹⁸*Melsa*, III, 142.

⁹⁹*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 57 (Melton's comment), 109 (royal support).

¹⁰⁰*Yorkshire Deeds*, ed. W. Brown et al, 10 vols., YASRS 39, 50, 63, 65, 69, 76, 83, 102, 111, 120 (1909-55), IX, 17-18 (see also pp. 16-7 for a letter of 1353 from John Thoresby concerning detention of thraves); and cf. BL, Lansdowne Charter 318 (of 1361-3).

¹⁰¹G. Poulson, *Beverlac, or, The Antiquities and History of the Town of Beverley*, 2 vols. (London, 1829), II, 615 and 640. Cf. the detailed list of the payments due from parishes in Holderness, c. 1450, in Poulson, *Beverlac*, II, 596-600, at pp. 598-9.

¹⁰²BIHR, CP E 268; see below, ch. 7, pp. 277-8.

¹⁰³*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 15-16, 98, 108.

¹⁰⁴For Petercorn, see below, p. 162; for Marycorn, D. Owen, 'The Norman Cathedral at Lincoln', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 6 (1984), 188-99 (pp. 194-5).

However, the narratives only served to legitimize an already-existing claim, and it may well be that it was the claim itself which was responsible for the acceptance of the minster's regional power. In greater proximity to the minster itself, in and around Beverley, however, it seems that the minster's narratives had greater currency and authority. Their importance in local culture is indicated shown by their adoption by other local institutions: they provided the fundamental historical framework in which claims to local authority were formulated.

'The peace of St John': narrative and power in Beverley

The other area in which the chapter of Beverley asserted their institutional power was the town of Beverley itself. The chapter claimed various liberties in the town, and the right of sanctuary, and these claims were also based on Athelstan's founding grant. Both the *miracula* and later tracts described the boundaries established for different degrees of sanctuary, although there was less emphasis on this right in the Middle English charter.¹⁰⁵ These sources also enumerated the other rights Athelstan granted the church, which included various legal privileges.¹⁰⁶

There can be little doubt of the narrative's dissemination and circulation in and around Beverley. The minster's sanctuary was marked by crosses placed at intervals a mile around the town, which seem to have been known as *cruces Alestani*, and whose purpose was still understood when Leland visited in the early sixteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, a couplet from the close of the Middle English charter - 'Sua mikil fredam gif hi þe / Sua hert maþ thenke or eghe se' - circulated independently, largely within Beverley itself.¹⁰⁸

The most immediate reference of this couplet was probably to the liberties claimed

¹⁰⁵HCI, 297-8; *Sanctuarium Dunelmense*, ed. Raine, pp. 99-101; Oxford, University College MS 82, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶*Sanctuarium Dunelmense*, ed. Raine, pp. 101-5; BL, MS Additional 61901, fo. 69v.

¹⁰⁷VCH: ERY VI, 8; *Memorials of the Church of SS Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, ed. J. T. Fowler, 3 vols., SS 74, 78, 81 (1882-8), I, 35; Leland, *Itinerary*, IV, 180.

¹⁰⁸BL, MS Additional 61901, fo. 69vb.

by the chapter: it was inscribed in the *m*inster ‘on the left hand of the middle door of the chancell’, an important boundary marking a high degree of sanctuary.¹⁰⁹ The couplet also served, however, as a kind of mnemonic for Athelstan’s whole endowment and the process of its acquisition. In a cartulary of the *m*inster vicars the Middle English charter is accompanied by an image of Athelstan handing a charter to St John. The north window of the vestry of the town’s parish church of St Mary’s contained a very similar composition, surrounded by the text ‘Else freli gif I ye : als hert [mai] yenke or heye mai se’, and (as we have seen) accompanied by pictures of the thraves.¹¹⁰ (Figures 3.1-2) The statues of St John and Athelstan which adorned the east front of the Minster probably evoked similar associations.¹¹¹

The chapter’s local rights, in common with their regional authority over the East Riding, were supported with references to Athelstan’s grant in legal and petitionary contexts. In 1318 the canons petitioned in parliament for a writ regarding their liberties ‘granted by the lord king Athelstan’.¹¹² Later in the fourteenth century the canons petitioned Richard II to protect their rights against archbishop Neville, describing Athelstan as ‘progenitor noster’.¹¹³ Shortly after this date, the narrative of Athelstan’s grant, and the language associated with it, also became available to the town’s ruling oligarchy. An undated petition copied into the town cartulary refers, amongst other documents of the town’s privileges, to the charter of Athelstan, beginning ‘Als fre make I the as hert may thynke or egh may se.’¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹The couplet was seen in 1710 by alderman Marmaduke Nelson (BL, Lansdowne 896, fol. 81r; cf. *IMEV* 337.5). The Beverley *miracula* decree that anyone daring to violate the peace of the saint *infra arcus supra introitum cancelli positos* should be unable to compensate with a fine but be committed to the judgement of God (*HCYI*, 298); the account of privileges describes the area from the choir entrance to the presbytery as the fifth grade of sanctuary and the area inside the presbytery as the sixth and final (*Sanctuarium*, ed. Raine, p. 99).

¹¹⁰There are pictures in BL, MS Lansdowne 896, fol. 39, and in Bodleian, MS Ashmole 833 f. 46; the latter is reproduced in G. Duckett, ‘Stray Notes in Connection with the Churches of St. John and St. Mary, at Beverley’, *YAJ* 7 (1882), 453-7 (p. 457). (Figure 3.1). The picture in Bodl., MS Top. Yorks. C. 14, fo. 255r, indicates that the charter held by the king identified him as ‘rex Athelstanus.’

¹¹¹Pictured in BL, Lansdowne 896, fo. 39; they are now accompanied by a number of late nineteenth/early twentieth-century figures (N. Pevsner with J. Hutchinson, *York and the East Riding*, The Buildings of England (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 171)

¹¹²*Documents Illustrative of English History in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, ed. H. Cole (London, 1844), p. 13.

¹¹³*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 242-3; below, p. 153.

¹¹⁴Beverley, East Yorkshire Record Office, BC/IV/2, fo. 10v; *HMC: Manuscripts of the Corporation of Beverley* (London, 1900), p. 11.

Figure 3.1

Athelstan and St John. Ashmole's copy of an image in the north window of the vestry of the parish church of St. Mary's, Beverley. Reproduced from G. Duckett, 'Stray Notes in Connection with the Churches of St. John and St. Mary, at Beverley', *YAJ* 7 (1882). 453-7, p. 457.



Figure 3.2

Athelstan and St John. From the cartulary of the vicars of the Minster, Oxford, University College MS 82, fo. 7r. Reproduced from J. J. G. Alexander and E. Temple, *Illuminated Manuscripts in Oxford College Libraries* (Oxford, 1985), plate XXXII, no. 548 (which misidentifies the archbishop as Wulstan).



This petition is part of an altercation between the town and the archbishop. In 1415, the commons in Parliament petitioned on behalf of Henry Bowet. Mentioning the story of Athelstan's victory over Constantine, and his charter beginning with the words 'As free mak I the, as hert may thynk or eygh may see', the archbishop - positioning himself as St John's successor - noted the liberties, rights and profits his predecessors had enjoyed in the town, noted that the king had granted some of these to the governors of Beverley, and requested that this grant should be annulled, and his franchise confirmed, bearing in mind that Henry V's recent victory over the French had been on the day of St John's translation.¹¹⁵ On 6 June 1416 this was duly granted.¹¹⁶ The petition in the town cartulary seems to be an attempt to reclaim Athelstan's grant for the civic community.¹¹⁷

Within Beverley itself, then, the narrative which traced the chapter's jurisdictional privileges and liberties to Athelstan's grant was widely circulated and accepted. It does not, however, seem only to have been associated with the chapter: the town's urban oligarchy also believed it could trace privileges back to the king. In the sixteenth century, Athelstan's grant was even used by one of the town's guilds to assert its regional authority: the 1555 ordinances of the Minstrels' guild claimed that from the time of Athelstan it had been customary for all minstrels between Trent and Tweed to assemble at Beverley on Rogation day to elect an Alderman.¹¹⁸ These appropriations of the story indicate its power and authority in elite urban culture, and they did not offer any challenge to the chapter's own authority. But this was not true of the appropriation of the narrative by successive archbishops of York.

Bowet's petition of 1415 shows how the archbishops' position as successors to

¹¹⁵RP IV, 85; for the original grant see CPR 1413-16, p. 287.

¹¹⁶CPR 1416-1422, p. 31.

¹¹⁷This interpretation differs from that of Horrox, who would place the petition *before* the royal grant which offended Bowet (*VCH: ERY VI*, 15 and 29). However a number of facts point against this reading. The royal grant made no reference to any charter, only to the king's love for St John of Beverley (a phrase which occurs in many relatively routine grants to the town), and the entry in the cartulary is headed as not confirmed in all things by the king. Athelstan's charter seems to have been introduced into the discourse of *archiepiscopal relations with the town by Bowet*, perhaps on the example of Scrope who had alluded to it earlier in the fifteenth century (see below, p. 152). On 15 May 1423, the men and burgesses of Beverley obtained an *inspeximus* of several charters including the letters patent obtained by Scrope (CPR 1422-9, p. 86): this suggests an increasing interest in the charter and its relationship to archbishops of York.

¹¹⁸Wyatt, 'Performance and Ceremonial in Beverley', I, 29 (for discussion, lxxxii-iii).

John of Beverley in the see of York enabled them to use the story of Athelstan's grant to support their own privileges. The couplet from the charter was used by archbishop Scrope, for example, in a petition requesting that officers of the royal household should be prohibited from entering the bounds of the franchise of Beverley.¹¹⁹ These privileges were not always asserted at the expense of the town or chapter of Beverley. The canons' rights were respected and supported by some archbishops. In 1331, for example, archbishop Melton wrote in support of 'liberties granted to God and blessed John of Beverley by king Athelstan' in the case of John Acreman of Bruges who had been carried from the sanctuary by force.¹²⁰ The tract which summarizes many of the chapter's rights also gives considerable prominence to the archbishop of York contemporary with Athelstan, Wulfstan. It is on Wulfstan's advice that Athelstan goes to Beverley; from his hand that he receives the banner of St John; and at his bidding that he grants the 'peace of St John.'¹²¹ Furthermore, the tract has a prologue which suggests that it originally followed material relating to the church of York: this may have been a copy of the prose chronicle of the archbishops.¹²² This evidence suggests cooperation between chapter and metropolitan authority in the formulation of their respective historical claims.

On the other hand, both town and minster came into serious conflict with certain archbishops, and it is clear that historical narrative played an important part in these conflicts. The chapter's disputes with two fourteenth-century archbishops provide a particularly clear demonstration of the function and significance of these narratives, and how unsettled their meaning could be. In the early fourteenth century, in an attempt to remove Aymo de Carto from the provostry of Beverley, archbishop Corbridge wrote to Edward I, noting that 'the franchise of the church of Beverley was given at the beginning

¹¹⁹PRO, SC1/43/92 (misdated in the catalogue); *CPR 1401-5*, p. 395.

¹²⁰*Letters from Northern Registers*, ed. Raine, pp. 361-4 (a similar letter of 1322 is printed pp. 362-3, n. 1.); a petition from 'vostre communalte de Beverlay' on the same subject (PRO, SC8/165/8236) makes no reference to Athelstan (only to general royal ancestors) but appeals instead to the benefits the king has derived in war from the banner of St John of Beverley.

¹²¹*Sanctuarium Dunelmense*, ed. Raine, pp. 98-9. This version corresponds with the principal medieval record of Wulfstan's period of office, Athelstan's charter granting Amunderness to the church of York: *HCY II*, 339; *EYC I*, 1-5.

¹²²*Sanctuarium Dunelmense*, ed. Raine, p. 97. The use of the prose chronicle at Beverley is suggested by the correspondences between the account of archbishop Alured's grant of a fair to Beverley in the Additional 61901 tract and in the prose chronicle of York (*Sanctuarium*, ed. Raine, p. 107 and *HCY II*, 354), and by a number of close similarities between the prose chronicle and the tract in Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446.

by your ancestors, especially by the good king Athelstan.’¹²³ In this version, however, St John was a contemporary of Athelstan, who had gone on to make canons, ordain the Bedern, and appoint a provost. Hence the archbishop claimed the right, as the successor of St John in the archiepiscopate, to appoint to the provostry and to have the right of its visitation.

Alexander Neville’s reaction to the chapter’s use of the story is instructively similar. The canons and vicars of Beverley had appealed to the king against his interference, on the grounds that the church’s *immunitates, libertates et privilegia* were of royal foundation, and that Richard II, as Athelstan’s successor, had a duty to protect them.¹²⁴ Richard agreed with this argument, and called both parties to appear before him at Westminster to settle the case. The copy of the relevant documents in Neville’s register, however, contains the following aggrieved marginalia:

Nota quod non est de fundatione Regis set de fundatione Beati Johannis, quondam Archiepiscopi Eboracensis, in qua quidem ecclesia corpus preciosissimi confessoris Sancti Johannis requiescit humatum, prout patet in antiquis registris et libris dicte ecclesie.¹²⁵

Like Corbridge, Neville is interested in deflecting attention away from Athelstan to St John, and thus to his own powers as that saint’s successor. It is significant that in York Minster, St John is usually represented in an archiepiscopal context: in the West Window donated by William Melton, he is in a series of eight archbishops; in the east window he appears in the bottom row as one of a series of figures associated with the church of York; elsewhere he is associated with St William.¹²⁶ In fact, the appropriation of St John by the archbishopric seems to have created a situation where neither the chapter or corporation of Beverley were able to rely on their own patron for the defence of their liberties. This may account for the development of the cult of Brithun at Beverley. His sole distinction appears to have been that he was its first abbot and free

¹²³*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, xli-ii, translating 187-8.

¹²⁴*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 242-3. For a full account of the conflicts at Beverley in the 1380s, see S. W. Calkin, ‘Alexander Neville, Archbishop of York (1373-1388): A Study of His Career with Emphasis on the Crisis at Beverley in 1381’ (unpublished PhD thesis, History, University of California, Berkeley, 1976), esp. pp. 80-169.

¹²⁵*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 243n.

¹²⁶Toy, *Guide and Index*.

from any associations with the archiepiscopate, and although his cult was only local, it persisted until the suppression, when it was recorded along with several other local cults.¹²⁷

In Beverley itself, then, the narrative of Athelstan's foundational grant to St John was well-known. As well as being proclaimed in a vernacular metrical charter, it was represented visually and recorded monumentally in the crosses which marked the limits of sanctuary. Furthermore, the narrative provided the fundamental historical framework within which discussions of rights and jurisdiction in the town took place, both for ecclesiastical, urban and metropolitan figures. To some extent, though, the details of this narrative and its application were malleable, and it could be used to support the claims of other institutions. A final aspect of this malleability remains to be explored - the process through which the narrative of Athelstan's granted achieved national prominence, and the impact this had within Beverley itself.

The development of a narrative: Athelstan, St John, and the identity of England and the north

In 1291, Edward I requested that monasteries should search their chronicles for material to support the English claim to the throne of Scotland.¹²⁸ Many returns were considered useless. Newburgh, however, provided a verbatim extract from the second of St John's *miracula*, describing Athelstan's defeat of Constantine but omitting the details of Athelstan's grants to Beverley. This was probably the source of the narrative in the Great Rolls of Caen and Tange drawn up to record the English claim.¹²⁹ Caen's roll in turn provided material for Edward's letter of 1301 to pope Boniface.¹³⁰ Since this letter was

¹²⁷ 'Item to Beverley wer restythe the body off the holly archebyshope Seynt John...with allso the bodyes off Seynt Wynwalld and Brythewme, and allso a slayne vyrgyn callyd Seynt Yolffryde': *Yorkshire Monasteries: Suppression Papers*, ed. J. W. Clay, YASRS 48 (1912), p. 14; for these saints see also Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446, p. 4; BL, MS Additional 61901, fo. 29r-v; Leland, *Itinerary* I, 46.

¹²⁸ *Edward I and the Throne of Scotland*, ed. Stones and Simpson, I, 138-62.

¹²⁹ *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland...vol. 1*, ed. F. Palgrave (London, 1837), pp. 115-9; *Foedera*, II, 566-7.

¹³⁰ *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174-1328*, ed. Stones, p. 199.

copied into a large number of chronicles the story achieved an extremely wide circulation.¹³¹ In this version, though, it was no longer a justification for certain privileges attached to the church of Beverley, but of English lordship over Scotland. St John himself became widely associated not with the rights of his institution, but with conflict against the Scots.

The Athelstan narrative may well have been responsible for Edward I's well-documented interest in John of Beverley: Peter Langtoft's account of Edward's reign described his patron saints as John of Beverley, Thomas of Canterbury and Cuthbert.¹³² Edward's interest was continued by his grandson: Edward III visited the shrines of several northern saints, including John of Beverley, before his Scottish campaigns; and the chapter of Beverley sent him the banner of the saint, reminding him of the successes of Athelstan and Edward I.¹³³ The banner was also used by Henry IV, and Henry V caused John's feast day to be elevated to national status in commemoration that the victory at Agincourt had been won on that day.¹³⁴

Rather than contributing significantly to John's status, however, Henry's patronage probably reflected the significance that the saint had already achieved at a national level. William Thorpe was accused in 1407 of preaching that men who went on pilgrimage to Beverley, Bridlington, Walsingham and Canterbury were fools, indicating St John's place in national religious culture by the turn of the fifteenth century at the very latest.¹³⁵ His presence in fourteenth-century liturgical manuscripts without apparent northern connections has the same implications.¹³⁶ A miracle recounted by Walsingham suggests that the saint carried both northern and English meanings: a young man 'in the north parts' whose brain had been removed by a fairy woman was cured by St John, after the

¹³¹For a list of these chronicles, see Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Later Latin Chroniclers*, p. 113 n. 17.

¹³²*Edward I*, ed. Stones and Simpson, II, 308 n. 6; *The chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. T. Wright, RS 47, 2 vols. (1866-8), II, 168-9, 284-5, 310-3.

¹³³*Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 112-3; W. M. Ormrod, 'The Personal Religion of Edward III', *Speculum* 64 (1989), 849-77, p. 859; generally, *VCH: ERY VI*, 7-8.

¹³⁴*The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443*, ed. E. F. Jacob, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1937-47), I, cxliv-v; III, 14, 28-9.

¹³⁵*Two Wycliffite Tracts*, ed. A. Hudson, EETS o.s. 301 (1993), p. 61.

¹³⁶For example L. Freeman Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385*, 2 vols. (London, 1986), II, no. 118. Horrox notes a pilgrimage made to the shrine by a man of Bedfordshire in 1351 (*VCH: ERY VI*, 8).

youth had unsuccessfully sought a cure ‘from many foreign (*transmarinos*) saints’.¹³⁷

Perceptions at a national level of St John’s martial power affected the local meaning of the saint. This could work to the advantage of both church and town: in 1297, for example, Edward I granted the canons a considerable sum to ensure that wax would be burnt before the saint’s altar and standard every Sunday and feast day.¹³⁸ The communalty of Beverley asked Edward III to remember this royal use of this standard when they petitioned him concerning a breach of the town’s right of sanctuary.¹³⁹ In 1301 the communalty of Beverley was pardoned half of the money it owed the king and allowed to pay the other half toward new work on the saint’s shrine.¹⁴⁰ In fact, the fame and popularity of the saint at the beginning of the fourteenth century were such that the chapter were forced to take action against men claiming to collect for his shrine but keeping the money for themselves.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, in his 1415 petition against the governors of Beverley, Bowet was able to invoke the king’s recent victory against the French, on the day of John’s translation.¹⁴²

St John’s transformation into a northern saint seems to have made him attractive as a founder to other institutions. In 1379, University College Oxford (which had strong northern connections) claimed in a petition that the saint was one of their early scholars; a picture of the saint in the college chapel was accompanied by an inscription to the same effect.¹⁴³ The college’s appropriation of the saint even extended to his charter from Athelstan: the words ‘Als fre make I the / As hert may thinke or eye may se’ appeared underneath a picture of King Alfred holding a representation of the college.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷Walsingham, *Historia anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols., RS 28/1 (1863-4), I, 261-2.

¹³⁸*CPR 1292-1301*, p. 255 (replacing an earlier grant of September 1296, p. 204, when a like grant was made to St Cuthbert and Durham). The standard bearer (king’s clerk Gilbert de Grymesby) was rewarded with a benefice in Scotland to the value of 20 marks or pounds (*ibid.*, p. 208). Cf. Poulson, *Beverlac*, I, 83; II, 592-4.

¹³⁹SC8/165/8236; above, n. 120.

¹⁴⁰*CPR 1292-1301*, p. 598.

¹⁴¹*CPR 1301-7*, p. 546; *CPR 1307-13*, p. 322.

¹⁴²See above, p. 150.

¹⁴³RP III, 39a; A. Wood, *The History and Antiquities of the Colleges and Halls in the University of Oxford*, ed. J. Gutch (Oxford, 1786), p. 58 (and see also pp. 37 and 64). In 1320 a fellowship in the college had been instituted for men from Beverley or Holderness: *VCH Oxfordshire, III: The University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1954), p. 62.

¹⁴⁴Wood, *Colleges and Halls*, p. 58. Wood describes the image as having been in a chamber at the east end of the old chapel.

Athelstan at York and Ripon

The narrative of Athelstan and St John produced by the chapter of Beverley, and their attempts to use this narrative to assert territorial power, provide an exceptionally clear and well-documented example of the vicissitudes that such claims could be subject to. Paradoxically, one of the indices of the narrative's success is the extent to which it became attractive to other institutions: at first those with claims within Beverley itself, but later including those whose connections were much less direct. In this section, I shall explore in more detail the other local institutions which founded their local or regional claims on a version of the Athelstan narrative: Ripon minster, the metropolitan church of York, and the hospital of St Leonard's at York. Although it is not always possible to say definitively that these claims were appropriated from Beverley's narrative, there is good evidence that this was the case in some instances. While Beverley's narrative may have had a limited impact in the local society of the East Riding, these other institutional discourses suggest that its impact on regional ecclesiastical culture was considerable.

At Ripon, Athelstan was used to support a claim to sanctuary similar to that claimed at Beverley. A narrative account of the king's grant undoubtedly existed, although it has not survived: Leland cited a *libellus de privilegiis ab Æthelstano rege Ripensi ecclesiae concessis*, in which the king is said to have granted to Ripon sanctuary within a mile of the church. As at Beverley, the narrative was commemorated monumentally and ceremonially. The boundaries of the liberty were marked with stones, one of which was known as *crux Athelstani*, and in 1401 it was ordained that Athelstan's obit should be celebrated annually by all the sanctuary-men, on pain of a fine of twelve pence.¹⁴⁵ As at Beverley, these privileges were also disseminated in the form of a vernacular rhyming charter, and as at Beverley the foundation story was invoked in legal disputes. The earliest copy of Ripon's rhymed charter is in a plea roll in the records of the Duchy of Lancaster; it was cited by the chapter in a case against the sheriff of

¹⁴⁵PN: WRY V, 169; *Memorials of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, IV, 144; for Beverley, see *Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 272.

York and the archbishop's bailiff, who had invaded the franchise.¹⁴⁶ In a *quo warranto* proceeding, the king was said to have granted Ripon the same liberties as Beverley, which were allegedly confirmed by various magnates in 1106.¹⁴⁷

The metropolitan church of York also traced certain privileges back to Athelstan, and it seems likely that these claims were derived from the traditions circulated by Beverley. The prose chronicle referred only to Athelstan's grant of Amounderness to the church, citing the relevant charter; but the later metrical chronicle included an account of his defeat of the Scots *pia vota Johanni*, which was followed by a description of his gift of 'liberties, royal and exalted rights and noble estates' to York.¹⁴⁸ Athelstan's grant to York never seems to have received full narrative exposition, although it was already being used by archbishops in the late thirteenth century. In *quo warranto* proceedings of 1279-81, William Wikewane traced his liberties in Ripon and Beverley back to Athelstan, and cited a charter of Edward the Confessor confirming these liberties 'as free as eyes could see or heart might think'.¹⁴⁹ In 1327, Melton staked his claim to prise at Hull on a charter in which Athelstan had granted all the liberties in the water of Hull *quas cor cogitare posset siue oculus videre*.¹⁵⁰ A letter to the canons of Southwell referring to Athelstan's endowment of the church of York may also date from this period.¹⁵¹ The claims were repeated in exemplifications of royal documents obtained by successive archbishops.¹⁵²

These claims may have had some local currency: when Meaux abbey was troubled in the late fourteenth century by tilers from Beverley taking soil from their lands on the banks of the river Hull, the townsmen of Beverley, its provost, and the archbishop of

¹⁴⁶*Memorials of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, I, 51-63 (a fourteenth-century exemplification of a case from 1228): 90-3; cf. 292 for reference to Athelstan in a letter of recommendation to the chapter of Southwell. For other copies of the charter see *IMEV* 4183 and Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 457, neither of which is exhaustive (another seventeenth-century copy is in BL, MS Harley 6387, fos. 39v-41r).

¹⁴⁷*Memorials of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, I, 33-4; the same document is cited below, n. 151.

¹⁴⁸*HCY*, II, 339 (see *EYC* I, 1-5); *HCY*, II, 455-6.

¹⁴⁹*Yorkshire Hundred and Quo Warranto*, ed. English, pp. 156-7.

¹⁵⁰*Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench*, ed. G. O. Sayles, 7 vols., Selden Society 55, 57, 58, 74, 76, 82, 88 (1936-71), V, 8-12 (p. 8); compare *Foedera*, IV, 272, 299. For details see *VCH: ERY* I, 14-5, 19-20, 44-5, 49-50. Prise was allotted to the king by 1334, and the claim was not repeated by subsequent archbishops.

¹⁵¹*Visitations and Memorials of Southwell Minster*, ed. A. F. Leach, Camden Society n.s. 48 (1891), p. 190.

¹⁵²Probably the fullest is that obtained by Lawrence Booth in 1478, surviving in a seventeenth-century transcript (York Minster Library, M2/4e).

York joined forces to assert the ancient right of the archbishop and his tenants to land covered by the Hull in its fullest flood, although there seems to have been no open reference to Athelstan.¹⁵³ However, the couplet from Athelstan's Middle English charter was also depicted in St Augustine's church, Hedon 'as one passeth through to the south door on the wall on the left hand', with a representation of Athelstan and a bishop.¹⁵⁴ St Augustine's was properly a chapel appended to the church of Preston, and so under the jurisdiction of the sub-dean of York: the image made this clear to anyone entering the church by associating Hedon with Athelstan's historic grant to the church of York.¹⁵⁵

At both York and Ripon, then, there is little evidence for the development of narratives involving Athelstan, but by at least the fourteenth century such narratives seem to have become accepted institutional tradition, freely used to assert local authority. Ripon's claims seem to have been incorporated into the local culture of its vicinity, reflected in the name 'Athelstan's cross'. (The name given to another marker of the sanctuary boundary, 'Sharrow cross' from *scearu*, a boundary, perhaps pre-dates the establishment of the Athelstan tradition.)¹⁵⁶ The claims of the Beverley tilers suggest that York's narrative also had an impact in local culture.

Athelstan also came to support the claim of St Leonard's hospital, York, to a thrave from every plough in those parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumberland and Westmorland which were in the diocese of York.¹⁵⁷ The earliest documentary reference to the thraves seems to be a confirmation of William II of c. 1090-8 preserved in the hospital's

¹⁵³*Melsa* III, 179-81.

¹⁵⁴BL, Lansdowne MS 894, fo. 81v (John Burnsall's history of the East Riding); cf. *IMEV* 337.5. Architectural similarities between St Augustine's and York Minster are pointed out by Pevsner, *York and the East Riding*, p. 244.

¹⁵⁵BL, Lansdowne 894, fo. 20r, *VCH: ERY* V, 182.

¹⁵⁶PN: *WRY*, V, 169.

¹⁵⁷The extent of the land from which the thraves were due is variously described as the province (*archiepiscopeatus*) of York, the diocese (*episcopatus*), the county of York, and the counties of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumberland and Westmorland. (See *EYC* I, 152-3 and 141; *Monasticon* VI/2, 608; *VCH: Yks*, III, 336; *CPR 1334-8*, p. 267.) The definition given in the text seems to represent the ideal at which the hospital aimed (see for example SC8/188/9389; *Monastic Chancery Proceedings*, ed. J. S. Purvis, YASRS 88 (1934), pp. 164-5).

cartulary, and there are a number of mid-twelfth-century instructions to inhabitants of the province of York to pay these thraves, although none of these documents refers to Athelstan.¹⁵⁸ Nor is there any reference to Athelstan in the accounts of the foundation of the hospital which were recited in two thirteenth-century inquisitions, appointed to settle a dispute between the crown and the dean and chapter of York minster over the advowson of the mastership of the hospital. The first inquisition, in 1246, found that the hospital was founded under William I when the clerks of St Peter, called *kalidenses*, were granted land on which they constructed buildings, and were assigned thraves; the advowson, however, belonged to the dean and chapter not to the crown.¹⁵⁹ In 1280, in contrast, the founder was said to be William II, who both built the chapel and endowed it with thraves: the advowson belonged to the crown, although it had been appropriated by the dean and chapter under king John.¹⁶⁰ Finally, the account in the Meaux chronicle of an early-thirteenth-century dispute between St Leonards, and the abbeys of Fountains, Byland, Kirkstall and Meaux over the payment of thraves has no mention of any foundation story, in contrast to the chronicler's explanation of the thraves due to Beverley.¹⁶¹

The earliest document in which the foundation of the hospital and allocation of the thraves is traced to Athelstan is the account of the hospital's foundation near the beginning of its early-fifteenth-century cartulary.¹⁶² Here it was claimed that after Athelstan had visited Beverley he went to York and Durham, promising to endow those churches too if his expedition was successful. After the institution of *hestcorne* at Beverley (which, the account somewhat disingenuously claimed, were taken *pacifice et quiete* to the present day), Athelstan granted to the 'Colidei' (certain ministers in York

¹⁵⁸ BL, MS Cotton Nero D. III, fos. 5r, 6r-8v, and especially 46r-61v (a section entitled 'Littere et munimenta pro travis'); some of these documents are printed in *EYC*, I, 141-2, 148, 152-3, 159, 161-3.

¹⁵⁹*VCH: Yorks.*, III, 336-7, quoting Assize Roll 1045 m. 17d. Copies of the proceedings are in the hospital's cartulary (BL, Cotton Nero D. III, fos. 5v-6r) and on a leaf added to York Minster's Anglo-Saxon gospels (York Minster Library, MS Add. 1, fos. 7v-8r; Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, IV, 785).

¹⁶⁰*CPR 1334-8*, pp. 266-8, copied in BL, MS Cotton Nero D. III, fos. 233v-44v; *VCH: Yorks.*, III, 337.

¹⁶¹*Melsa*, I, 43 1-2 (the thraves were judged to be due from lands acquired by the abbeys after 1215, from which thraves had previously been customary); for documentary records of the settlement see e.g. BL, MS Cotton Nero D. III, fo. 49r-v; BL, MS Egerton 2823, fo. 93r.

¹⁶²BL, MS Cotton Nero D. III, fo. 5r-v (printed in *Monasticon*, VI/2, 608-9). An abbreviated version of this account also appears under the heading 'concessionnes et confirmaciones travarum vocatum Petircorn per totum archiepiscopatum Ebor.', fo. 59r.

minster, who cared for the poor, and the eventual founders of St. Leonard's) a thrave of corn from each carucate of the diocese of York, to help them in their work, in 936 AD. Later the inhabitants of the diocese granted them back to the king, on condition that he destroy a number of wolves which were devastating the country; the thraves were regranted to the hospital by William I in 1069. There is evidently some connection between the *kalidenses* of 1246 and the *colidei* of the cartulary, which may testify to some connection between its narrative and a local tradition not otherwise recorded in the fourteenth century.¹⁶³ But it seems clear that the broad outline of Athelstan's grant is directly modelled on narratives from Beverley. The cartulary narrative aimed to link the hospital's rights to the authority of Athelstan and Beverley's foundation story.

There is some evidence for the dissemination of the St Leonard's version of this story. A metrical history in a fifteenth-century manuscript from Kirkstall (an institution whose payment of thraves to St Leonard's had led to dispute in the thirteenth century) contains a marginal note, not found in other copies of the chronicle, that the hospital of St Leonard's was founded in the time of Athelstan and endowed by him with various possessions.¹⁶⁴ The narrative also seems to have been adapted by another institution. In 1447, the master and aldermen of the hospital of Flixton (around five miles east of Filey) petitioned Henry VI to complain of the threats of his escheators and other officers. They claimed that their evidences had been burned, but that their foundation could be traced to one Acehorn, lord of Hertfordlith. In the time of Athelstan, this lord had founded Flixton for the preservation of the local inhabitants against wolves and other wild beasts, and the king had granted the hospital the same privileges as Beverley.¹⁶⁵ Nothing else is known of this hospital, although in 1822 adjacent land was apparently known as 'Wolfland', suggesting that the narrative had some local currency.¹⁶⁶ The references to Athelstan, to protection against wolves, and to the privileges of Beverley seem to reveal the influence of the St Leonard's narrative, suggesting both its currency and authority in

¹⁶³Both words are related to 'culdee' (*OED*, s.v).

¹⁶⁴BL, MS Cotton Titus A. XIX, fo. 110r; cf. *Book of British Kings*, ed. Rigg, p. 5 n. 11; G. D. Barnes, *Kirkstall Abbey 1147-1534: An Historical Study*, Thoresby Society 58 (1982), p. 75 (citing the agreement of 1225 referred to above, n. 161).

¹⁶⁵*CPR 1446-52*, p. 69, printed in full in *Monasticon VI/2*, 613-4.

¹⁶⁶T. Langdale, *A Topographical Dictionary of Yorkshire*, 2nd edn (Northallerton, 1822), s.v. Flixton; *VCH: Yks*, III, 307-8 is probably right to suggest that the Acehorne of this narrative was prompted by a local place-name, *Aconehorn*. For a reference of 1180 x 1200 to the hospital see *PN: ERY*, p. 117.

regional culture.

Both currency and authority, however, seem to have been limited. It is striking that St Leonard's never seems to have referred to its foundation by Athelstan in the numerous legal proceedings in which it asserted its claim to thraves.¹⁶⁷ In petitions for royal assistance with collection of the thraves, in the royal commissions appointed in response, and in agreements with individuals or institutions, while the royal foundation of the house is often mentioned there is never reference to Athelstan, even in the period after the cartulary was written.¹⁶⁸ A particularly striking example is an exemplification of proceedings before king and council on 21 July 1468, which recited at length the various evidences for the hospital's claim, none of which extended beyond William I.¹⁶⁹ It appears from these and other documents that the thraves were commonly known locally as 'Petirkorne', a name which associated the levy with the regional power of York Minster; they were said to be owed according to 'the general custom (or law) of the shire (or country)' and 'the privileges and charters of the hospital'.¹⁷⁰ As at Beverley, therefore, the exercise of the hospital's claim probably had more impact on local perceptions of its regional power and significance than the historical traditions produced to justify that claim.

Conclusion

The examples which we have cited above show how Athelstan's relatively limited association with the north nonetheless left a permanent mark on the local identities of a

¹⁶⁷In addition to what follows, see PRO, SC8/188/9389, SC8/188/9399, *Monastic Chancery Proceedings*, p. 164 (all c. 1388-91) for the hospital's response to a claim that thraves were not due from the Brus fee; and PRO, E135/3/43 for those failing to pay in 1400 (*VCH: Yorks*, III, 342).

¹⁶⁸In addition to material cited elsewhere, see for example *CPR 1266-72*, p. 43; *1272-81*, pp. 164, 166; *1281-92*, p. 116; *1307-13*, p. 100; *1377-81*, p. 388; *1401-5*, p. 434; *1408-13*, p. 473; *1413-16*, p. 112; *1416-22*, pp. 51, 389; *RP IV*, 249b-250a; *Monastic Chancery Proceedings*, p. 165; PRO, SC8/230/11481; SC8/57/2842; SC8/184/9180; SC8/24/1188.

¹⁶⁹*CPR 1467-77*, pp. 131-2. For the crisis produced by the exaction of thraves in the following year, see *Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. 121; BL, MS Cotton Nero D. III, fo. 238r; *VCH: Yorks*, III, 342.

¹⁷⁰In addition to the above, see *TE IV*, 5n (bequest, 1383/4, by Adam Hopton of Swillington of 2s. to Gilbert Totty for 'petirkorne'); BL, MS Cotton Nero D. III, fos. 46r-61v.

number of institutions. In Athelstan's 'ancestral kingdom' of Wessex, he was an equally important figure. Susan Reynolds has shown how Barnstaple, Malmesbury and Axbridge claimed to have charters from the king.¹⁷¹ In Cornwall, Leland recorded that Padstow 'takith King Adelstane for the chief gevever of privileges onto it' after an etymology of the town's old name of Adelstow as *Athelstani locus*; a similar tradition existed at Bodmin.¹⁷²

In fact, ecclesiastical institutions throughout England - both great and small - situated themselves in relation to localities defined in relation to legendary Galfridian history, or to the Anglo-Saxon past. Within both these historic traditions, certain epochs and figures were favoured - often, but not exclusively, on account of their antiquity. Athelstan's appeal, as Hamilton Thompson suggested long ago, was related his status as (arguably) the first Saxon king of the whole of England.¹⁷³ These claims might be made in a single narrative, or - more usually - in a variety of documentary and other media. At Peterborough, for example, the monastery's foundation by Peada and his brother Wulfere was displayed in stained-glass accompanied by Middle English couplets, as well as being recorded in the abbey's register and histories. Chester's associations with Mercia were commemorated on the shrine of St Werburgh and in her hagiography.¹⁷⁴ Such narratives might aim to justify specific territorial or jurisdictional possessions: Durham, for example, contested York's possession of the see of Carlisle in a brief account of Northumbrian Christianity designed to show that St Cuthbert had exercised pastoral care over that city.¹⁷⁵ More usually, though, these narratives seem to have served to enhance an institution's local prestige by demonstrating its antiquity and the size of its early

¹⁷¹S. Reynolds, 'Space and Time in English Medieval Towns', in ead., *Ideas and Solidarities of the Medieval Laity*, no. 16 (pp. 6-7).

¹⁷²Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 179-80.

¹⁷³*Primus Anglorum monarcha* according to the York prose chronicle (*HCY* II, 339); likewise the metrical chronicle (*HCY* II, 455, lines 271-4); the second *miracula* of John of Beverley (*HCY* I, 294); the tract in BL, MS Additional 61901 (*Sanctuarium*, p. 98); and so on. Compare *VCH: Yks* III, 353.

¹⁷⁴*Monasticon*, I, 375-7; S.-B. McLean, *Chester Art: A Subject List of Extant and Lost Art Including Items Relevant to Early Drama, Early Drama, Art and Music Reference Series 3* (Kalmazoo, 1982), pp. 81-5; *The Life of Saint Werburge of Chester* by Henry Bradshaw, ed. C. Horstmann, EETS o.s. 88 (London, 1887), pp. 15-6, 23, 27, etc.. For comparable examples from Worcester and Malvern, see R. Marks, *Stained Glass in England during the Middle Ages* (London, 1993), pp. 89-90.

¹⁷⁵R. Sharpe, 'Symeon as Pamphleteer', in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. D. Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 214-229. The text dates from the twelfth century but is preserved in two Durham manuscripts, one thirteenth-century and one fourteenth-century. A fifteenth-century tract attempting to demonstrate Durham's rights to Hexham is described in Northumberland County History Committee, *A History of Northumberland*, 15 vols. (Newcastle, 1893-1940), III, 130.

endowments. Increasingly, in the fifteenth century, they were made in the vernacular, although the vernacular charters of Beverley and Ripon remain difficult to parallel: Stone priory (Staffs.) produced a Middle English hagiographical narrative of its foundation which was displayed on a table.¹⁷⁶

Such acts of historical self-definition seem to have been significantly less common in secular institutions, where they frequently developed in relation to pre-existing ecclesiastical claims. In the mid-fifteenth-century dispute between the civic and ecclesiastical authorities at Exeter, the city referred to its past existence as 'Penholtkeyre', one of the most ancient cities of the land, and its invasion by the emperor Vespasian. The cathedral representatives scoffed at this, but were referred to a table in the cathedral itself on which the events were related. Galfridian history (the story derives from the *Historia Regum Britannie*) had initially been appropriated by the ecclesiastical authorities, and in turn entered the vocabulary of urban identity.¹⁷⁷ Towns which were politically and economically dominated by ecclesiastical lords offer a particularly rich field in which the development and competition of such symbolic narratives may be traced.¹⁷⁸

Within this wider cultural context, it is difficult to say how far the case-studies discussed above are typical or representative. It does appear that the historical narratives produced by the church of York were unusually ambitious, and that the material circulated by the chapter of Beverley had an unusual and complex impact on historical culture, not only at the local or regional but at the national level. In the absence of more detailed studies of the formulation and dissemination of claims to historic regional power in other major institutions, however, such assessments must remain premature. But even

¹⁷⁶*Altenglische Legenden: Neue Folge*, ed. Horstmann, pp. 308-14. See also *Manual V*, nos. 14, 35, 68, 78, 80, 111, 294. The only other Middle English charters listed in the *Index of Middle English Verse* are those produced (?by Lydgate) for Bury St Edmund, and found in one of the abbey's cartularies: *IMEV* 1513, printed in *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, ed. T. Arnold, 3 vols., RS 96 (1890-6), III, 215-37.

¹⁷⁷*Letters and Papers of John Shillingsford...1447-50*, ed. S. A. Moore, Camden Society n.s. 2 (1871), pp. 62, 75-9, 95, 105; Geoffrey of Monmouth iv.16 (trans. Thorpe, p. 122), is evidently the source. Rosser's account (G. Rosser, 'Myth, Image and Social Process in the English Medieval Town', *Urban History* 23 (1996), 5-25, p. 12) simplifies the dynamics of this situation and his article as a whole does not recognize the importance of ecclesiastical institutions in creating mythic and historical discourses. For Galfridian figures at Colchester and Bath, see Rosser, 'Myth, Image', pp. 8, 15; Clark, 'Bladud of Bath'. For Bristol, see above.

¹⁷⁸The conflicting narratives concerning King Offa at St Albans are a good example: Walsingham, *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS 28/4, III (1869), 365. For Coventry see Rosser, 'Myth, Image', pp. 15-16.

in the absence of detailed studies, there can be little doubt that institutional discourses in all parts of England played a major part in the development of local cultures and identities.

CHAPTER 4
PATRONS AND DEFENDERS:
MAGNATES, SAINTS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF LOCALITY

The preceding chapter has explored regional discourses of locality, examining the ways in which ecclesiastical institutions used historical discourses to construct power over locality. In this chapter, I will continue this exploration of regional discourses by examining the construction of local power through representations of aristocratic figures and saints. Genealogical narratives and heraldic display provided a means for magnate families to assert their significance over wide territorial areas, largely by commemorating their associations with major local institutions. Collections of *miracula* played a similar function for ecclesiastical institutions, demonstrating the extent of their patrons' local power.

Genealogy, heraldry and the construction of aristocratic local identities

As we have seen above, 'country' was frequently used to describe the area under a magnate's influence.¹ The extent of a lord's country was largely determined by the territorial distribution of his estates, although his control over manpower was also important.² It was uncommon for a magnate to define his country explicitly, although the third duke of Norfolk spoke of 'all this schir [of Norfolk], of whishe we ber our name', where he required 'the princypall rewle and governance...next the kyng our soverayn lord.'³ But local power and influence would usually be recognized, for example in appointments to commissions of the peace in the counties where this power was

¹See above, introduction, pp. 10-1; for other examples see 'Letters of the Cliffords, Lords Clifford and Earls of Cumberland, c. 1500 - c. 1535', ed. R. W. Hoyle, *Camden Miscellany* 31, Camden Society 4th ser. 44 (1992), pp. 1-191 (pp. 62, 75, 115); *Paston I*, 84; *RP III*, 180b.

²J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 64-5, 70-1; C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-99* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 347.

³Quoted in Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, p. 64.

concentrated: Hardyng praised Sir Robert Umfraville as ‘a trew justyse of pese in his cuntre’.⁴

The processes of territorial acquisition and recruitment through which magnates built up their countries have been intensively studied.⁵ In this section, I shall argue that there was also a cultural dimension to the definition of countries that has been largely neglected.⁶ Local power was not only a matter of territory or manpower, but of narratives and symbols - whether proclamations such as the duke of Norfolk’s, family histories and genealogical narratives, or heraldic display. It is these narratives and symbols that I shall explore here.

While this kind of material was not the only, or perhaps the most important means by which the place of a family or individual within local society was asserted, its significance should not be dismissed.⁷ A document formerly among the Paston papers, apparently an extract from a royal certificate detailing Edward IV’s acceptance of the family as ‘gentlemen discended lineally of worshipfull blood sithen the Conquest’, indicates very well how position in local society could be constructed through a narrative pedigree.⁸ The document described how William and Clement Paston had used a variety of evidence

⁴‘Extracts from the First Version of Hardyng’s Chronicle’, ed. C. L. Kingsford, *EHR* 27 (1912), 740-52 (p. 746).

⁵See for example S. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity 1361-99* (Oxford, 1990); C. Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth Century Political Community* (London, 1987), esp. pp. 160-79.

⁶Although see E. Mason, ‘Legends of the Beauchamps’ Ancestors: The Use of Baronial Propaganda in Medieval England’, *Journal of Medieval History* 10 (1984), 25-40; M. James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986). However, as the notes to the following discussion will make clear, many scholars have made important contributions to a broader understanding of these cultural phenomena in the course of studies whose main emphasis has been on other subjects.

⁷On genealogies in medieval English culture, see A. Wagner, *English Genealogy* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 305-10; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 245-6. Also useful is J. H. Round, *Peerage and Pedigree*, 2 vols. (London, 1910), esp. I, 284-323 and II, 1-133. More generally, R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, pp. 79-81; L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies*, *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental* 15 (Turnhout, 1975). For genealogical material in lawsuits, see G. Wrottesley, *Pedigrees from the Plea Rolls...AD 1200 to 1500* (n.d.).

⁸*Paston*, I, 551-2; original lost, printed from a copy of 1674.

to assert the family's possession of a 'court and seniority' in Paston and of 'livelode', and to show that their ancestors had 'given lyveltyhood to howses of religion' and had 'married with worshipfull gentlemen'. Most importantly, it told how they were related to 'many of the worshipfullest of the country' and also to 'many and sundry great estates and lords of this realme.' These claims were followed by a 'lineall discent' from one Wulstan, founder of Bromholme priory. Clement and William's primary aim was to establish Sir John Paston's restitution to Caistor. But this was inseparable from a number of other claims, some connected with the family's ancient associations with the location from which they took their name, others concerned with establishing that the family was not only ancient but a powerful local player.

The close association between genealogical discourses and a family's place in locality - 'worship' in its 'country' - is also apparent in a less exalted pedigree of the Pastons.⁹ This traces the family back to a more recent and less illustrious ancestor, Clement, 'a good pleyn husbond' portrayed in some detail ploughing his land and grinding his corn: it emphasizes the small area and poor quality of his lands and his marriage to a bond woman. By borrowing money Clement is able to send his son William to school, and William and his son John are able to purchase land and 'untrewly' increase their local position. Although the original document does not survive, the language of the copy indicates that the document was produced in Norfolk, evidently by one of the family's many enemies, perhaps to be circulated as some kind of bill. Just as the assertion of local prestige was bound up with ancestral achievements, so the impugning of a family's pedigree aimed to undermine their status and influence.

Similar materials, impugning the origins of powerful local families, were obtained from local informants by Humphrey Newton of Cheshire in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, and copied into his commonplace book. As Deborah Marsh comments, 'local power was generally proportional to the length of time a family had lived in an area. How attractive therefore were those versions which declared that supposedly ancient households had less than auspicious beginnings.'¹⁰ It is no surprise that heraldic

⁹*Paston I*, xli-ii.

¹⁰D. Marsh, '“I see by Sigz of Evidence”: Information Gathering in Late Medieval Cheshire', in *Courts, Counties and the Capital*, ed. D. Dunn (Stroud, 1996), pp. 71-92 (p. 84).

inquiries into a family's past could provoke haughty assertions of local prestige: in the early sixteenth century, Sir John Townley 'would have no noate taken of hym, saying that ther was no more gentilmen in Lancashire but my lord of Derbye and Mountegle'.¹¹

This evidence from Norfolk and the north-west shows the significance that could be attached to genealogical narratives - whether as formal, written texts or as gossip - in the definition of family and locality, and also suggests how they might circulate within the locality. The place of such narratives in popular or oral culture is naturally hard to recapture but even in elite, literate contexts their significance is easy to underestimate.

Genealogies of the Percy family

The genealogical texts produced for successive generations of the Percy family provide a convenient place to begin an exploration of the function of such texts in the local cultures of late-medieval Yorkshire. It will not be possible to examine all the Percy texts in the detail they deserve, but they will illustrate the variety of texts that could be based around a single family, the variety of forms that could be taken by a single text, and the variety of functions that these texts could have.

The most developed of these texts is a genealogical chronicle of the family written for the fifth earl of Northumberland by his secretary, William Peeris. This chronicle survives in two versions. The first may have been addressed to the earl in his youth: it closes with three stanzas of moral advice and exhortation.¹² The second version is heavily revised. Most notably, it omits the legendary account in which the family had been traced to 'Brutys bloide of Troye', the family's name to battles fought in 'Perse' (Persia), and its badge of a crescent to a miracle when a moon had appeared in their shield during a

¹¹*The Visitation of Lancashire and a Part of Cheshire made in ... 1533*, ed. W. Langton, 2 vols., Chetham Society 98, 110 (1876-82), I, 43.

¹²Alnwick Castle, MS 79, m. 4. In quotations I have regularized the idiosyncratic use of þ and y in this manuscript in accordance with the function of the letters in standard Middle English. The genealogical manuscripts at Alnwick are described in *HMC: Third Report* (London, 1872), Appendix, p. 108.

night battle, enabling their enemies to be defeated.¹³ This is replaced with a sober account of the family's Norman ancestry referenced to the second book of William of Malmesbury. This second version is also considerably longer and more detailed. It survives in two slightly different texts: one, extant only in an antiquarian copy, lacks a stanza referring to the marriage of the fifth earl's daughter Margaret to Henry Clifford (between 1516 and 1523), and an envoy of one stanza.¹⁴ These stanzas appear in the copy made in the earl's manuscript of Lydgate and in a separate paper copy.¹⁵

Peeris drew on a number of sources in compiling his chronicle. The description of William Percy III's vision of an angel is referred to 'the bookis of Whitby wheryn the names of abbottis of Whitby regestrede be', while the account of Henry IV's oath to the first earl at Doncaster Whitefriars after his landing at Ravenspur is shared with Hardyng, and probably derives likewise from the family's reinvention under Edward IV of its fifteenth-century past.¹⁶ The most important of Peeris's sources, however, was a Latin genealogical text attributed by some later bibliographers to Thomas Pickering, a monk of Whitby.¹⁷ This survives in two late-medieval versions as well as a number of later copies.¹⁸ It also formed a source for a genealogical roll (c. 1490) in which the descent of

¹³Alnwick Castle MS 79, m. 1.

¹⁴This text has been printed: *Reprints of Rare Tracts and Imprints of Antient Manuscripts*, 7 vols. (Newcastle, 1843-9), V (Biographical, I), 7-43. Dodsworth's copy contains a number of misreadings and (erratic though Peeris's versification is) also confuses the lineation and stanza-divisions on a large number of occasions. Furthermore, there is a substantial lacuna of twenty stanzas. When I cite the second version of the chronicle, I have - with the exception of the omitted passages - quoted from the printed text for ease of reference but I have silently corrected both the text and layout against the text in the Royal MS where serious misreadings seem to have occurred.

¹⁵BL, MS Royal 18 D. II; Alnwick Castle, MS 82.

¹⁶BL, MS Royal 18 D. ii, fo. 189v, *Reprints*, pp. 33-4 and Royal 18 D. ii, fo. 192v; *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1812), p. 351. Neither is in the first version of Peeris's chronicle. For the story of the oath at Doncaster see J. M. W. Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', *History* n.s. 44 (1959), 212-27 (pp. 216-9).

¹⁷T. Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannica-Hibernica* (London, 1748), p. 599; *DNB*, s.n. Pickering, Thomas; *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, ed. J. B. Severs and A. E. Hartung, 10 vols. (New Haven, 1967-), VIII, 2677-8, 2890-1.

¹⁸Alnwick Castle, MS 78, fos. 6r-9v, s. xv /xvi; Alnwick Castle, MS 80, s. xv. These two versions are not identical: MS 80, which is a genealogical roll, is fuller than MS 78, a quarto paper book. There are a number of later copies: e.g. BL, MS Harley 3648, fos. 3-4v; Bodl., MS Ashmole 846, fos. 137r-138v; Bodl., MS Dodsworth MS 159, fo. 114r (*Cartularium Abbathiae de Whiteby*, ed. J. C. Atkinson, 2 vols. SS 69, 72 (1879-81), II, 687-8, incomplete); Bodl., MS Dodsworth 118, fos. 125vr-6v (also incomplete);

the Percys to the fifth earl was combined with that of the Mortimers and the English royal family.¹⁹

The earlier Latin genealogy extended to the third earl of Northumberland, listing four children: Henry, Alianor, Margaret and Elizabeth. This text began with William the Conqueror's grant to William Percy I of 'a great part of Yorkshire' (*maximam partem provincie... Eboracum*), and listed the family's local and non-local religious foundations, with particular emphasis on gifts to and burials in Whitby monastery, and the acquisition of Hilda's bones from Glastonbury. It ended with the death of the second earl at the first battle of St Albans in 1455; the text may have been produced on the third earl's accession to the earldom.²⁰ The Middle English version adds to, transposes and abbreviates this, giving more attention in general to religious gifts and foundations and in particular to the family's associations with Whitby.

These were not the earliest genealogies associated with the Percy family, however: an earlier text ended with the birth of the first earl of Northumberland in 1341 and of his brother Thomas. The earliest copy of this pedigree appears in the cartulary assembled by the first earl after his accession to the earldom, but it was probably written before this since it mentions neither this earldom nor Thomas's creation as earl of Worcester.²¹ A copy was also kept at Sallay, and the genealogy was probably composed there: it is chiefly interested in the family's involvement with the abbey, although it also

and cf. also *HMC: Manuscripts of the Duke of Beaufort...and others*, 12th Report, Appendix 9 (London, 1891), pp. 156-7. These seem to follow the version in Alnwick Castle MS 78. I quote this text from Harley 3648.

¹⁹Bodl., MS Bodley Rolls 5. A closely similar text was seen in 'a fayre rowle conteyning a pedegree of the kings, and of other noble menn' which the transcriber attributed to a monk of Whitby and which had come into the possession of John Stow. It is not clear if this is the same manuscript as Bodley Rolls 5, which was formerly in the collection of Henry Savile of Banke: there are textual differences, and although Banke received one manuscript from Stowe the bulk of his collection seems to have been acquired directly from local religious houses. See *Cartularium de Whiteby*, ed. Atkinson, II, 690-6, and below, ch. 7, p. 267.

²⁰This text was used by W. Dugdale, *The Baronage of England*, 3 vols. (London, 1675-6), I, 269-86.

²¹*Monasticon* V, 515 (reprinted in *Cartularium de Whiteby*, ed. Atkinson, II, 682-7); *The Percy Cartulary*, ed. M. T. Martin, SS 117 (1911), no. 1106.

mentions burials at Whitby and Fountains. A text which is closely similar in some respects was copied into an early-sixteenth-century register at Fountains.²²

Even from this relatively cursory account, it is clear that genealogical accounts of the Percy family played a number of functions. Peeris's texts are largely concerned with the prestige of the family itself. The first version asserts that the family's progenitors flowered 'afor the grete conquest revolued many yere3' and were 'doutles... of grett progeny and kynd'; it closes with the descent of the fifth earl from 'the grettest blode... / Off þe Merches, Loncastr', Westmorland and Arundell', and also describes the family's early association with 'the boriall partes'.²³ The second version also demonstrates the family's right to be constables of Berwick.²⁴

These texts can be closely related to the circumstances of the fifth earl, whose local influence had waned during his minority, and who felt excluded from what he considered his family's rightful place in the North and its administration.²⁵ He was reported to have threatened that if he 'had not room in the north as his father had before him, it should not long be well', and to have expressed a desire to 'rule all from Trent north'.²⁶ In addition to Peeris, the earl's Lydgate manuscript also contained Skelton's

²²BL, MS Additional 18276, fo. 256v. There are late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth-century notes on the Percies in another Fountains cartulary, Oxford, University College MS 170, fo. 65r, but these are not related to other surviving genealogical narratives. I have not examined the pedigree described in *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains*, ed. J. R. Walbran, 3 vols., SS 42, 67, 130 (1862-1918), p. 134 n. 1.

²³Alnwick Castle, MS 79, mm. 1, 2, 4.

²⁴BL, MS Royal 18 D. ii, fo. 192r.

²⁵The following paragraph draws on the discussions of the earl's career in M. James, 'A Tudor Magnate and the Tudor State: Henry Fifth Earl of Northumberland', in id., *Society, Politics and Culture*, pp. 48-90, and R. W. Hoyle, 'The Earl, the Archbishop and the Council: The Affray at Fulford, May 1504', in *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England: Essays Presented to Gerald Harriss*, ed. R. E. Archer and S. Walker (London, 1995), pp. 239-56. Cf. James, p. 85: 'the local and family orientation of so much of the earl's expenditure on the arts suggests again the concern for prestige and power in his own 'country' which also marked his political approach.'

²⁶*Letters of Richard Fox*, ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen (Oxford, 1929), pp. 43-4.

elegy on his father the fourth earl, which described the fifth earl as ‘bearing the ancestral rights of the Northumbrians’, and his father as ‘the noblenes of the northe.’²⁷

The texts from Whitby and Sallay, conversely, are less interested in the family’s nobility or ancestral rights than in its involvement with their respective institutions: their religious foundations and endowments, and places of burial.²⁸ The impact of institutional interests can be seen particularly clearly in the early-sixteenth-century Fountains text, which describes how Richard, the son of Agnes Percy, ‘dedit nobis villam de Lytton cum valle’.²⁹ This Richard had only received passing mention in the genealogy ending in 1455, but the revision of this text at Whitby had added that an earlier Richard (father of William Percy III) ‘gave no thing nor confermed to þe servauntes of God nor to þe chirche.’³⁰ This Whitby revision, in fact, is characterized by a number of institutional additions, providing more detail about William I’s endowments and about later family burials in the abbey.

The variations between these different versions, however, should not obscure the degree to which their emphases and values are shared. None of these genealogies is restricted to the interests of a single institution. The Sallay genealogy also notes burials at Whitby and Fountains, while the Whitby revision - for all the additions described above - also contains additional comments on burials at other institutions, the family’s right to the dukedom of Brabant, and the rebuilding of Alnwick castle.³¹ Conversely, in Peeris’s poem the family’s accomplishments and regional power are closely related to their religious patronage. Peeris comments ‘not onely by martiall acts floured the Pearce name

²⁷ *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, ed. V. J. Scattergood (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 29-35 (prologue, l. 2; poem, l. 85).

²⁸ The family’s religious foundations receive visual emphasis in Alnwick Castle, MS 79, which contains emblematic pictures of Whitby (m. 1), Sallay and Handale (m. 2); there are less well-executed pictures in Alnwick Castle, MS 80.

²⁹ BL, MS Additional 18276, fo. 256v.

³⁰ Bodl., MS Bodley Rolls 5, m. 11; cf. BL, MS Harley 3648, fo. 3r.

³¹ Bodl., MS Bodley Rolls 5, m. 12; cf. BL, MS Harley 3648, fo. 3r-v.

/ but alsoe the bloud of them were fathers of Christs Church'³², and the first version ends with the following summary:

In province of Yorkeschire they have bein full graciūs
 Als well to cathedrall chirch as placeꝝ religiuse
 Os to saint William of Yorke, Rypon and Beverley
 To Fontance and mony moo, trewth can not say nay.³³

The genealogy ending in 1455 has similar concerns with religious endowments and with the construction of secular buildings. This version and Peeris also share a concern with the family's military achievements, describing their role at the battle of Neville's Cross and Hotspur's 'actus triumphales'.³⁴

Despite their individual differences, then, these texts share a basic framework of values. All are interested in establishing a general sense of the family's regional power and attachments, in addition to any specific institutional claims. Religious institutions seem to have felt that their own prestige in their 'country' could be increased not only through the record of the illustrious men buried on their ground, but by their patrons' associations with other regional institutions.³⁵ For the family itself, local prestige was evidently closely related to the number, value and range of its religious endowments. All parties were interested in establishing the family's local significance in other ways - through assertion of the longevity of their landholding or through descriptions of their military endeavours or office-holding. Finally, it was not only the family's local exploits that were recorded: although these occupy the bulk of the texts, foundations or accomplishments also were also recorded if these reflected particularly well on the family. Peeris was particularly concerned to emphasize the breadth of the family's involvements:

³²*Ancient Tracts*, p. 17; BL, MS Royal 18 D. ii, fo. 187v. The earlier version reads 'Not onoly be marcyall actes flowred þe Perse nayme / Bot by faders of Crysteꝝ chirch increscyð a vertuous fame.'

³³Alnwick Castle, MS 79, m. 4.

³⁴BL, MS Harley 3648, fo. 3v and 4r; *Ancient Tracts*, p. 27; BL, MS Royal 18 D. ii, fo. 191v.

³⁵For the significance attached by religious houses to magnates buried with them, see for example *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Beverlacensis*, ed. J. Raine, SS 5 (1837), p. 105; *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of Willaim of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* John Scott, (Woodbridge, 1981), pp. 82-3.

the first version of his poem described how William I gave the Percies land ‘some in the sowth parte³ and some beyond Trent’, and the second described the family as religious patrons ‘as well in the South as in the North’.³⁶

Antiquity, patronage and protection: genealogical topoi and the construction of locality

The Percy genealogies are typical of such texts, in the number of versions in which they survive as well as in their values and emphases. Other regional families used similar texts to memorialize their local power. These texts trace the evolution of a family’s landed power, tracing it back if possible to a foundational period, usually the Norman Conquest or shortly before. They record relationships to other families of regional or national importance. Typically, they trace not only the acquisition of estates, but the acts that made families significant at a regional (or wider) level: acts of foundation, construction or endowment; and acts of protection.

A detailed genealogy of the Neville family, which seems to have originally ended with the first earl of Westmorland but was later extended to Richard earl of Salisbury, is typical.³⁷ In its fullest form, the pedigree traces the descent of the principal Neville lordships of Raby, Braucepeth, Sheriff Hutton and Middleham to Conquest or pre-Conquest origins. (Raby is traced through a succession of earls of Northumbria to ‘Octredus’, and Middleham to Ribaldus, the first lord of Middleham after the Conquest

³⁶*Ancient Tracts*, p. 25; Royal 18 D. ii, fo. 191r; Alnwick Castle, MS 79, m. 1.

³⁷The shorter version was used by the herald responsible for the late-fifteenth-century visitation, and also copied (in a rather different version) by Dodsworth ‘out of my antient rolle of petegrees’ (both printed in *Visitation of the North c. 1480-1500*, ed. C. Hunter Blair, Visitations of the North 3, SS 144 (1930), pp. 23-28). Somewhat different texts again are in the early-sixteenth-century heraldic collection BL, MS Harley 1499, fo. 11v (incomplete) and in BL, MS Harley 3882, fos. 18-20. A similar version was seen in ‘a roulle of the genealogie of the Erles of Westmerland’ by Leland (*Itinerary*, I, 314). All these texts end or change style after Ralph, first earl of Westmorland, and there is also a rough copy of a Neville genealogy from Siward, earl of Northumberland to Ralph, earl of Westmorland in Bodl., MS Dodsworth 117 f. 30r. The version extending to the earl of Salisbury is found in a mid-fifteenth-century roll which belonged in 1886 to Major William Martin (printed in ‘Original Pedigree of Tailbois and Neville’, ed. H. C. Fitz Herbert, *The Genealogist* n.s. 3 (1886), 31-5 and 107-11).

by grant from Alan, count of Brittany.) The narrative text details the family's associations with these lordships. It describes the construction of Middleham castle, the foundation of abbeys at Swainby and Coverham, and of the minorite friary at Richmond, in addition to chantries at Sheriff Hutton, and the collegiate church at Staindrop. It also gives attention to military exploits and royal service, particularly at a regional level: it mentions Robert Neville's reputation as 'le Pacoke de North' and his brother Ralph's achievements as 'miles strenuus in guerris regis Edwardi contra Scottos' and his role as captain, alongside lord Percy, at Neville's cross. Likewise it stresses the first earl of Westmorland's position as warden of the west march, as earl of Richmond, and (in one text) his resistance to Percy's rebellions against Henry IV.

Similar material appears in a genealogy of the Fitzhugh family from between 1431 and 1436.³⁸ Again, the various branches of the Fitzhugh line are traced back to Conquest or pre-Conquest origins: through the Staveley family to 'Aykefrith of Dent and a Dane', and through the Fitzhughs themselves to 'Bodyn' and 'Bardolf'. The text includes a list of the lands held in Richmondshire by Bodin under William the Conqueror, an account of endowments of St Mary's, York, and a description of the family's role in the foundation of Jervaulx, and its later burials there. Another branch traced the ancestry of the Fourneux family, into which the Fitzhughs had married, back to Thoraldus de Chevrolcourt, with a note on his son Ralph's foundation of a nunnery at Carlton.³⁹

The genealogy of the Earls of Richmond likewise gave their honour of Richmondshire both antiquity and prestige by portraying it as being granted by a charter of William I during the siege of York. The family's impact on its locality was recorded through the construction of Richmond castle and of a 'great tower' within it as well as the foundation of Jervaulx and of St Mary's, York.⁴⁰ The *Historia Lacieorum* again

³⁸*Registrum Honoris de Richmond*, ed. R. Gale (London, 1722), appendix no. 9; for the origins of this text see *GEC* V, 416. An abbreviated English version derived from this is in BL, MS Harley 1499, fos. 95-7. Cf. Dugdale, *Baronage of England*, I, 202.

³⁹This genealogy also appears separately in the manuscripts of the register of the Honour of Richmond: see A. de la Mare, *Catalogue of the Collection of Medieval Manuscripts Bequeathed to the Bodleian Library Oxford by James P. R. Lyell* (Oxford, 1971), p. 48. (I have consulted the text in Bodl., MS Lyell 22, fo. 80v.) A slightly different version is in Bodl., MS Dodsworth 95, fo. 77v, 'in myne old vellum petegre of the barons Fitzhugh of Ravenswath inter alia'.

⁴⁰*Monasticon* V, 574-5. The manuscripts of the register are discussed by de la Mare, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Bequeathed by Lyell*, p. 48.

traced the family to the Conquest, referring to Ilbert's construction of a castle and chapel at Pontefract and Nicholas Lacy's foundation of a monastery there, and detailing Henry Lacy's foundation of Kirkstall. There are also accounts of the construction of Clitheroe castle in Blackburnshire and the monastery of Stanlaw; and of the family's victories over the Welsh as constables of Chester.⁴¹

In some texts, emphases on foundation or protection are particularly clear. A genealogy of the Roos family seems to have begun as an account of the foundation of Kirkham priory, although this was extended to include the construction of Helmsley and Wark castles.⁴² An account of the family of Ughtred of Kexby (ERY) traced the family to the pre-Conquest earl of Northumbria of the same name, explicitly noting that 'yis nam Ugthred hys fon in cronikyls before ye commynng of Normannys be fowrscor and ix 3er and xv wekkes'. It was particularly interested, though, in how this Ughtred had 'manly deffendyd' the city of York when Northumbria was attacked by the Danish king Swayn. After helping Edmund Ironside defeat Knut, Ughtred's lands were destroyed in revenge, and the earl was treacherously killed by the king.⁴³

Less typical - although equally characteristic in its way - is the account of the Mowbray family preserved in the archives of Newburgh.⁴⁴ In contrast to other accounts of the family, which began with Nele (or Nigellus) d'Aubigny, this text emphasized continuity by commencing with Robert de Mowbray, earl of Northumberland after the Conquest, praising his rebellion against William Rufus

⁴¹*Monasticon* V, 533-4; the date of this text is unclear, as the earliest copy (fifteenth-century) is incomplete; a *terminus a quo* is provided by the reference to 'hospital sancti Nicholai constructum in locum ubi corpus gloriosi Thomae Lancastrensis jam humatum'. For manuscripts see below, n. 59.

⁴²For versions of this text, see *Cartularium Abbathiae de Rievallie*, ed. J. C. Atkinson, SS 83 (1869), pp. 263-5, 359-62 and notes; Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 90-3; *Melsa* II, 146 (ending with Sir Robert de Ros, d. 1285 [*GEC* XI, 96], and much abbreviated, but evidently from a similar source).

⁴³Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 329, fo. 107r-v.

⁴⁴For what follows, see *Monasticon*, VI/1, 320-1; taken from BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra C.III, a composite manuscript assembled by the antiquarian Francis Thynne, where it is headed *extractus ex abbatie de Newburgh*. For other copies, see below, n. 55.

pro justa querela matris nostrae ecclesiae, although it was only through his subsequent forfeiture that d'Aubigny was able to acquire the Mowbray estates and name.⁴⁵ Familial continuity was emphasized by the account of John Mowbray, executed *pro justa querela Sancti Thomas comitis Lancastriae, et pro defensione legum Anglie, et matris nostrae ecclesiae*. The text also included more typical accounts of ecclesiastical patronage, noting that Roger 'founded the abbey of Byland... and Newburgh... and many other places of monks canons and nuns, to the number of thirty-five'.

These motifs are paralleled in genealogical texts produced for magnate families in other parts of England.⁴⁶ The genealogical roll of benefactors and earls of Warwick compiled around 1483 by John Rous provides a well-known and detailed example. Rous frequently praises both early British kings and their later successors as 'grete bylder[s]', and records how the Danes were resisted both by Elfreda and Guy of Warwick.⁴⁷ With later earls there is an emphasis on service to the crown, on 'manly' martial deeds, and again on building works in Warwick or its vicinity.⁴⁸ Details of foundations and achievements elsewhere in England are recorded for the prestige they reflect back on Warwick.

The account of the Courtenay family preserved at the abbey of Ford (Devonshire) has a more narrowly institutional focus, but comparable emphases on members of the family who had been 'patronus verus protector et defensor praecipuus', on their positions as

⁴⁵For another account of the family see *Monasticon* V, 346-7, of which an early-fourteenth-century copy, with a few minor variants, is in a Fountains cartulary, Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 449, fo. 152r-v.

⁴⁶Cf. the emphasis - visual as well as verbal - on the foundation of Bisham priory in the Salisbury roll of arms: *Medieval Pageant: Writhe's Garter Book, The Ceremony of the Bath and the Earldom of Salisbury Roll*, ed. A. Wagner, N. Barker and A. Payne, Roxburgh Club (London, 1993), p. 17 and plates 34-5, 37-40, 59-60, 65-8. An elaborate genealogy of the Mortimer family is described by M. E. Griffin, 'Cadwalader, Arthur and Brutus in the Wigmore Manuscript', *Speculum* 16 (1941), 109-20. I have not consulted Rous's collection of genealogies, mentioned by Wagner, *English Genealogy*, p. 308.

⁴⁷John Rous, *The Rous Roll*, intro. C. Ross (Gloucester, 1980), chs. 1-2, 16; chs. 11 and 22.

⁴⁸Rous, *Rous Roll*, chs. 35, 42, 47-8, 57, 59 etc.

sheriff of Devon and constable of Exeter castle, and a note of Hugh's death with Thomas of Lancaster 'propter querelam communis justicie Angliae'.⁴⁹

While individual texts, and even versions of the same text, varied considerably from one another, genealogical narratives shared broadly similar aims and values. They aimed to demonstrate a family's regional importance and power by showing the antiquity and continuity of its possessions in the area, the range and extent of their religious patronage, and other family achievements which demonstrated attachment to, or power in the locality. Other contemporary evidence confirms the importance of these aspects of aristocratic identity. The Wycliffite *De papa*, for example, described how acts of foundation moved men to pride, 'and seip þey ben comun of grete men, þat han foundid perpetuel abbeys in so myche multitude'.⁵⁰ An incident recorded in the Meaux chronicle also suggests that recognition as an institution's founder was important to local prestige and power. A monk of the abbey had carelessly told archbishop Arundel that he was its founder as a result of the gift of a previous archbishop. When Thomas, duke of Gloucester obtained the lordship of Holderness, Arundel seems to have teased him by boasting of his patronage of an institution within his lordship, provoking Gloucester to take steps to ensure that he became certified as the abbey's 'fundator' and 'patronus'.⁵¹

Genealogical texts worked within these frameworks to construct a family's local and regional power. Their attention was concentrated on, although it frequently extended beyond, a particular 'country'. They constructed a version of locality based around the antiquity and patronage of local families. This is true not only of the pedigrees of magnate families, but (albeit often on a smaller scale) of the gentry too. In the early sixteenth century notes were compiled on five members of the Burgh family. The notes, which end in 1508, record dates of individuals' deaths and the location of their burial in Catterick church. The series begins with John Burgh, whose widow rebuilt the church, and is written on the dorse of the indenture which formed the contract for this

⁴⁹*Monasticon* V, 377-82, quotations at 379 and 381; for other copies see *The British Library Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts 1956-65* (London, 2000), p. 59, describing BL, MS Additional 49359. For further examples see S. Wood, *English Monasteries and their Patrons in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1955), pp.123-6.

⁵⁰*The English Works of Wyclif Hitherto Unprinted*, ed. F. D. Mathew, EETS 74 (1880), p. 477.

⁵¹*Melsa* III, 219-22.

rebuilding.⁵² Exactly as the pedigrees we have been discussing, if on a smaller scale, these notes make a statement about the family's shaping of, and attachment to, its locality.⁵³

Genealogies and aristocratic cultures of locality

The notes on the Burgh family testify to the currency of genealogical narrative among both lesser and greater aristocracy, although it seems unlikely that they were designed for public display or circulation, as a number of magnate genealogies appear to have been. There has been relatively little study of the significance of such genealogical narratives in aristocratic culture. The importance of genealogical materials in legal disputes is relatively well known: William Worcester was employed by Fastolf on a number of occasions to enquire into the titles and pedigrees of Sir John's opponents and John Paston I had reference to de la Pole pedigrees.⁵⁴ Evidence for a less narrowly utilitarian interest in the genealogical narratives is perhaps not so abundant: leisure is apt to produce fewer records than business. But it would be wrong to conclude that such an interest did not exist. In what follows, I shall begin by asking what conclusions can be drawn from the surviving manuscript evidence, before considering other evidence for what might be called 'genealogical culture', and its significance for contemporary perceptions of locality.

Many genealogies appear to have had relatively wide dissemination within a region or locality. The Mowbray pedigree at Newburgh was also copied, in slightly

⁵²Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZRL 1/23. 'A Fifteenth-Century Pedigree', ed. A. Vere Woodman, *Records of Buckinghamshire* 16 (1953-60), 43-7, is similar.

⁵³The sense of local and dynastic continuity that the notes reveal was prompted by the death of William IV in 1508 without legitimate issue: cf. A. Pollard, 'The Burghs of Brough Hall, c. 1270-1574', *North Yorkshire County Record Office Journal* 6 (1987), 6-24 (p. 19).

⁵⁴K. B. McFarlane, 'William Worcester', in id., *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays* (London, 1981), pp. 199-224 (p. 207); Paston I, 135. See also P. S. Lewis, 'Fastolf's Lawsuit over Titchmarsh, 1448-55', *Historical Journal* 1 (1958), 1-20.

different versions, at Selby and Fountains.⁵⁵ A related text which belonged to Byland abbey was also preserved at Fountains.⁵⁶ Material relating to the Lacys was preserved at Stanlaw and Whalley, Kirkstall and probably Pontefract, as well as in the archives of the family itself.⁵⁷ As we have seen, Percy genealogies - albeit of rather various kinds - were either composed or preserved at Whitby, Sallay and Fountains; the Neville genealogy seems to have been adapted at Coverham with particular emphasis on grants to the abbey.⁵⁸ The variation between the different copies of these texts, which are usually amplified or abbreviated to some extent, show that the houses took an active interest in the contents of the material they were preserving. But the similarities between texts such as the *De Statu de Blagborneshire* from Whalley, the *Historia Laceiorum* which seems to have been owned by the family itself and at Pontefract, and material from Kirkstall abbey are equally striking.⁵⁹

The dissemination of these texts reflects the fact that a single pedigree could serve a variety of interests and depict the title and prestige of several families or institutions. This is particularly well illustrated by surviving pedigrees of the Vescy family. The

⁵⁵BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra D. III, fos. 191r-92r (ending in 1380, and omitting the passages cited above concerning the family's defence of the church); BL, MS Additional 18276, fo. 256r-v (ending in 1368, omitting the paragraph on Robert de Mowbray, and adding notes of the family's gifts to 'nobis', i.e. Fountains).

⁵⁶*Monasticon*, V, 346, *ex vetusta Membrana in Turri Beati Mariae Ebor.* printed among the records of Byland; the pedigree in *Visitation of the North*, ed. Hunter Blair, pp. 86-8 is probably also derived from a narrative source.

⁵⁷See below, n. 59. Kirkstall also had a copy of a history of the constables of Chester which concerned the Lacy family: *The Coucher Book of the Cistercian Abbey of Kirkstall*, ed. W. T. Lancaster and W. P. Baildon, Thoresby Society 8 (1904), pp. 237-43; *Monasticon*, VI/1, 315-7.

⁵⁸*Monasticon* VI/1/920-1 (from a roll in St Mary's tower).

⁵⁹*De Statu de Blagborneshire* printed *Monasticon*, V, 642-4 from a manuscript owned by Ralph Asheton (of Whalley: cf. Dodsworth MS 157, f. 10r); *Historia Laceiorum* printed *Monasticon*, V, 533-4, from Dodsworth MS 159, itself from a manuscript owned by Richard Lacy; an incomplete fifteenth-century copy is in Dodsworth MS 157, ff. 1r-3v: this was given to Dodsworth by John Stanhope esq.. Very similar is Dodsworth MS 157, f. 14v, 'in a transcript of a small chronicle of the Lacys, in the custody of H. Roos keeper of the records in Pontefract Castle.' At Kirkstall, material partly deriving from the *Historia* was copied into Laud Misc. 722 and Cotton Titus A.XIX by a sixteenth-century scribe (J. Krochalis, 'History and Legend at Kirkstall in the Fifteenth Century', in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscript, their Scribes and Readers. Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. P. R. Robinson and R. Zim (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 230-56, p. 23). For other textual contact between Kirkstall and Whalley, see C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1913), p. 279.

earliest genealogy, which extends back to the Conquest, seems to have been produced during the dispute over the Vescy title after the failure of the family in the direct male line early in the fourteenth century.⁶⁰ Records concerning the dispute were copied at Malton, and a pedigree was copied at Alnwick, both houses under the family's patronage.⁶¹ Probably in the mid-fifteenth century (perhaps after Henry Brounflete's creation as lord Vescy in 1449) a more elaborate genealogy was produced, which survives in several versions. Two texts appear alongside Percy genealogies in manuscripts probably owned by the family: the Percies had acquired the lordship of Alnwick from Antony Bek, who had in turn acquired it from William lord Vescy. This pedigree inserts William Percy among the lords who accompanied Ivo de Vescy with William the Conqueror.⁶² An abbreviated text, written for Ralph Eure in 1458, seems to have circulated as a separate roll: Ralph, like Henry Brounflete, was descended from a daughter of William de Aton.⁶³

The antiquity and local prestige constructed in this pedigree were attractive to a number of families associated with the Vescy line. The pedigree was also preserved, though, at Bridlington priory, from where Francis Thynne's copy was derived in the sixteenth century.⁶⁴ The priory was also used as an archive by other families. The account of the Ughtred family, in addition to the surviving copy in a cartulary compiled by Thomas Anlaby (a relative of the family) had also been 'in remembrans at Brydyllyngton wretyne.'⁶⁵ No such material survives from Bridlington, however, and it is likely that similar genealogical material, which was deposited or copied at other

⁶⁰For the family, see *GEC* XII/2, 269-85; for the inquisition, *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, 19 vols. (London, 1898-1992), V, no. 534; excerpts are printed in *Monasticon* VI/2, 868 and 956-7. Cf. the genealogies produced during a suit concerning the honour of Cockermouth, 1275-1316: *VCH: Cumberland*, ed. J. Wilson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1901-5), I, 297-8; *Register of the Priory of St Bees*, ed. J. Wilson, SS 126 (1915), 491-6, 530-3.

⁶¹*Monasticon* VI/2, 972-3; 'Cronica Monasterii de Alnewyke', ed. W. Dickson, *Archaeologia Aeliana* 3 (1844), 33-44.

⁶²Alnwick Castle, MS 78, fos. 1-5; Alnwick Castle, MS 80. Leland quotes this genealogy alongside the 1455 Percy genealogy: *Itinerary* V, 124-5.

⁶³There are later copies in BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra C. III, 318r-v; MS Harley 3648, fo. 5r, Bodl., MS Dodsworth 118, fos. 125r-26v; and cf. *HMC: Manuscripts of the Duke of Beaufort*, pp. 156-7.

⁶⁴Thynne's copy is in BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra C.III fo. 318r-v. In the index to the volume it is described as 'e chron. de Bridlinton (per Thomam Pickering.)' (fo. 355r).

⁶⁵Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 329, f. 107r.

religious houses, has also been lost. In the depositions in the Court of Chivalry in the case between Richard Scrope and Robert Grosvenor (1385-90), the canons of Bridlington referred to the descent of the Scropes in 'lour cronyk de bien faisours a lour dit priore depuis le Conquest', and Watton priory had a 'cronyk' concerning the times of the Conqueror and the lords who came with him.⁶⁶

Causing a copy of a family pedigree to be enrolled in a local religious institution was as much a pragmatic act as acquiring a copy of the pedigree of a related family. Some manuscript evidence, though, suggests a broader and less utilitarian interest in local genealogy. A Fountains cartulary, for example, contains genealogical notes relating to Jervaulx; another Yorkshire manuscript (probably from Richmondshire) includes notes on Jervaulx and on the genealogies of the earls of Brittany, Leicester, Lancaster and Chester, as well as notes on Adam de Staveley derived from the Fitzhugh pedigree.⁶⁷ However, most of the manuscript evidence suggests that pedigrees were largely copied and read by those with immediate connections to the family involved. Nevertheless, as we have seen, this should not lead us to underestimate the circulation of genealogical material in elite lay and ecclesiastical society. Intermarriage among local or regional aristocracy may have made acquaintance with two or three narrative pedigrees desirable in some circumstances, quite apart from interest in the title of local rivals. Religious houses with endowments from a number of families might be interested in an even wider range of genealogies: the Meaux chronicle provides a full example of such interest, with its genealogies apparently based both on original research and on existing texts.⁶⁸

Furthermore, antiquarian and heraldic materials demonstrate both that surviving genealogies circulated more widely, and that genealogical materials existed which do not

⁶⁶*Scrope and Grosvenor* I, 102, 103.

⁶⁷BL, MS Egerton 3053, fos. 20v-21r; BL, MS Harley 1808, fos. 18v (Brittany and Staveley), 20r (Jervaulx), 20v-23v. The pedigrees recorded by Newton were also of this kind, although of course they served the practical purpose of flattering his ego.

⁶⁸*Melsa* II, 146, based on the Roos genealogy described above; I, 89-93, on the earls of Albemarle and the De Fors family is related to material in Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 449, fo. 19v and BL, MS Additional 18276, fo. 256r. For genealogical material in the chronicle generally, see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), p. 370.

now survive independently.⁶⁹ William Worcestre, in addition to obtaining information about Percy and Neville castles from oral sources, had access to a Percy genealogy very similar to the surviving Latin versions.⁷⁰ Leland took notes from a pedigree of the lords Scrope which does not appear to survive.⁷¹ Nor should we assume that the surviving textual material fully represents the way in which such genealogical materials would have circulated. There is evidence from religious houses elsewhere in England of tabular material being used to record benefactors and to offer a guide to their tombs, and undoubtedly much visual and monumental material has been lost.⁷²

The wide diffusion of a variety of texts with broadly the same central ethos among the documentary collections of secular and ecclesiastical landowners suggests that genealogical narratives of the kind we have been considering formed the basis of a shared aristocratic culture of locality. This is also suggested by the influence of some genealogical texts on others. The Fitzhugh genealogy, for example, seems to refer to the Neville genealogy, describing how Bodin, in his old age, wished to forsake the world, and became a monk at St Mary's York, together with Ribald, first lord of Middleham. The first paragraph of the Neville text had described how Ribald became a monk at St Mary's after the death of his wife. The Fitzhugh genealogy also contains Ughtred, Dolphyn and Cospatrick, who appear in the Neville text.⁷³ If the former derives from the latter, as

⁶⁹The late-fifteenth-century northern visitation, for example, includes an unusual pedigree of the Markington family, from the vicinity of Ripon, listing the heirs of the family from 'Lulphus de Markington tempore Herauldi et Willelmi conquestoris,' and a genealogy of the Fitzwilliams from William the Conqueror, both probably derived from narrative material: *Visitation of the North*, ed. Hunter Blair, pp. 74-6, 135. Leland was shown 'an auncient booke of the Erles of Richmond and the Marmions' at West Tanfield (*Itinerary* I, 83).

⁷⁰William Worcestre, *Itineraries*, ed. J. Harvey (Oxford, 1969), pp. 342-4, 352

⁷¹Leland, *Itinerary*, V, 133-4, 137-8.

⁷²IMEV 4071, printed in *Monasticon* VI/1, 122-4.

⁷³*Registrum Honoris de Richmond*, ed. Gale, appendix ix, tab. I and p. 58; 'Original Pedigree of Talbot and Neville', ed. Fitz Herbert, p. 31; *Visitation of the North*, ed. Hunter Blair, pp. 23-4. These figures also appear in genealogies concerning the descent of Cockermouth; for references see above. n. 60.

seems likely, it suggests the authority that a genealogical narrative might acquire in local society.⁷⁴

I have spent some time describing the nature and circulation of genealogical texts in late-medieval Yorkshire because manuscript and other evidence suggests that they were of real importance in shaping aristocratic local cultures. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that such cultures were restricted to the narrative texts described above.

Genealogical information would also have been displayed in the residences of these families and the churches they patronized. Leland recorded a Percy genealogy at Leconfield, and the pedigree of the Nevilles ‘in windows of colerid glasse’ at Raby, as well as similar material elsewhere in the country, while Ecclesfield church contained a genealogy of the Rokeby family.⁷⁵ The genealogy of the Lumleys (co. Durham) contained in the family’s Red Velvet Book was also displayed on the walls of their castle.⁷⁶ Similar genealogies survive more or less intact at Wensley (NRY) and Swine (ERY). The choir screen in Wensley, formerly marking out the Scrope chantry at Easby abbey, was donated by Henry, lord Scrope around 1510: an inscription around the cornice commemorates the burials of Henry, his father, and their wives, while the compartments of the screen contain armorial shields with English inscriptions identifying their bearers.⁷⁷ The screen at Swine, which separated ‘the lords chappell’ from the north aisle, dated from 1531 and contained a series of arms which were identified in an inscription as ‘arma domini Thomae domini de Darcie et heredum suorum’.⁷⁸

⁷⁴At a wider level, Peeris’s original account of the origin of the Percy arms is very close to a story told of the de Veres: cf. R. Hanna III and A. S. G. Edwards, ‘Rotheley, the De Vere Circle, and the Ellesmere Chaucer’, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 58 (1996), 11-35 (pp. 23-4, 34-5).

⁷⁵Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 46, 75, 138; T. D. Whitaker, *The History of Richmondshire*, 2 vols. (London, 1823), I, 169-70.

⁷⁶Milner, *Records of the Lumleys*, p. 325; the Red Velvet Book was compiled in the late sixteenth century (p. 324). Cf. *GEC* VIII, 266-76.

⁷⁷H. B. McCall, *Richmondshire Churches* (London, 1910), pp. 166-70.

⁷⁸BL, MS Lansdowne 894, fos. 42r-43r.

Heraldic display and local identities: the legal evidence

With the screens at Swine and Wensley, we move from detailed textual genealogies to the assertion of familial continuity and local power through heraldic display, a subject whose importance has been recognized by a number of historians although it has yet to be studied in detail.⁷⁹ Particularly valuable evidence of the significance of heraldic display to the upper echelons of late medieval society, and the ways in which it was understood, is offered by the depositions taken in the Scrope/Grosvenor controversy, which form the basis of the following discussion.

The most important frame of reference for deponents was undoubtedly the talk of the armigerous classes and the institutions they patronized, concerning the reputation and achievements of their peers. These achievements were often placed in a local or regional context, and closely associated with a family's armorial bearings. Some deponents referred to members of the family 'doing honour' to their arms; for others, knowledge of the arms was associated with local knowledge of the family. The abbot of Rievaulx had heard about the Scrope arms from ancient lords, barons, bannerets, knights and esquires 'du païis'; the abbot of Jervaulx had heard about the arms throughout his country.⁸⁰ M. Gerard de Lound's knowledge was derived from 'old men and the oldest knights and esquires in the north parts, and especially his ancestors'; William Murrers also used this phrase, while William Malory had spoken to the oldest knights and esquires of the north.⁸¹ Very many deponents refer simply to the 'commune fame' or 'publike vois' of their country. Of course, such testimony is expressed in formulaic legal language recognized by the court, but there can be no doubt that it reflects widespread practices

⁷⁹Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 253-4, argues that heraldry could be seen as the most important way in which the late medieval gentry conceptualized their lineage. Heraldry as 'the ritual language of power' for the county community of sixteenth-century Suffolk is discussed by D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 118-21. See also references cited below, nn. 97-100.

⁸⁰*Scrope and Grosvenor*, pp. 93 and 94.

⁸¹*Scrope and Grosvenor*, pp. 109, 135, 124.

of semi-formal instruction and less formal gossip through which the antiquity, achievements and importance of major regional families were discussed and circulated, frequently if not exclusively in reference to their heraldry. Very often such discussion seems to have revolved around a family's regional importance: not only were the Scropes the talk of Richmondshire, Yorkshire or the North, but they were reputed 'lez plus fortes du paais de North' and William Scrope was reputed in his time 'le plus fort tourneour de tout nostre paais'.⁸² (In contrast, Henry Percy claimed that no-one in the north had any awareness of the Grosvenors, their ancestry, or consequently their heraldry.)⁸³

Deponents also referred frequently to armorial or heraldic representations in both public and private locations, and their comments suggest that both the range and context of heraldic display were seen as indicative of a family's position in local society. William de Neville recalled seeing Scrope arms painted in 'abbeys, priories, cathedral and parish churches, in chapels, in the halls of great lords and in many other places in the counties of York and Richmond and outside, and also in windows in churches throughout the said counties.'⁸⁴ Likewise Nicholas de Middleton had seen the arms in the counties of York, Richmond, Appleby, Carlisle and at Bolton in Craven and had been told to whom they belonged by the churchwardens; Thomas fitz Henry had seen Scrope arms in Croft church and in other churches in Yorkshire.⁸⁵ Such testimony is intended to show the notoriety of the Scrope claim, but it also suggests how the range of heraldic display could be seen as an index of a family's local power.

The context in which the family's arms appeared was equally important. The abbot of Selby described Scrope arms between those of Percy and Mowbray in the chapel in the infirmary and between those of Mowbray and Neville painted in an old room; in John Warde's manor of Givendale (near Ripon) the arms accompanied those of Neville, Percy and Clifford.⁸⁶ The parson of Wensley church, under Scrope patronage, suggested

⁸²*Scrope and Grosvenor*, pp. 163, 142. For the regional frames of reference used by the deponents. see also ch. 6 below, p. 238.

⁸³*Scrope and Grosvenor*, p. 200.

⁸⁴*Scrope and Grosvenor*, p. 154.

⁸⁵*Scrope and Grosvenor*, p. 122-3.

⁸⁶*Scrope and Grosvenor*, pp. 92 and 118.

how such juxtapositions might be understood when he described the family's arms as being portrayed between those of 'great lords' such as the king, the earl of Northumberland, the lord Neville and the earl of Warenne.⁸⁷ The fact that the family's arms were accompanied by those of regional magnates was a sign of the family's own status and importance. Naturally, the assertion of local power was not the only motivation for heraldic display: it might also celebrate bonds of friendship and association.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the focus of the majority of depositions is on the evidence provided by heraldic display for the regional fame of the family and its arms.

Heraldic display and local identities: surviving and antiquarian evidence

A list of institutions in the archdeaconry of Richmond where the Scrope arms were depicted was compiled on the basis of personal observation as evidence in the Scrope/Grosvenor controversy, and suggests that the range of the family's heraldic display may not have been as extensive as their deponents suggested. From a comparison of this list with the account of churches and advowsons in the *Victoria County History* it appears that roughly a third of the 'monasteries, churches, chapels, hospitals and oratories' in Richmondshire contained some representation of the Scrope arms.⁸⁹ Depictions were concentrated in Richmond (where the parish church, Minorite friary, Trinity chapel and hospital of St Nicholas all contained the arms) and around the family's main estates at Bolton-in-Wensleydale and Masham; conversely, significant areas of Richmondshire contained no such depictions. The geographical range over which the Scrope arms were depicted was thus in many ways closely related to the centres of Scrope property and power in the fourteenth century, and particularly to the lands

⁸⁷*Scrope and Grosvenor*, p. 129.

⁸⁸See for example *Scrope and Grosvenor*, pp. 146, 139.

⁸⁹*Scrope and Grosvenor*, pp. 220-6 (quotation from p. 221); *VCH: NRY I*, 1-396; complete precision is not possible, as the existence of chapels is not always recorded or exactly dated: the chapels at Snape and Clifton-on-Ure mentioned in the Scrope/Grosvenor testimony, for example, are not noted in *VCH*.

acquired by Henry and Geoffrey Scrope in the earlier part of the century.⁹⁰ (A significant cluster of estates immediately south of the Tees does not seem to have reflected in heraldic display.)⁹¹

The concentration of Scrope arms in Richmond probably reflects not only the family's landed interests there but the importance of the town itself as a regional centre.⁹² Along with the Nevilles, the family also patronized the friary, as a member of the convent recalled during the Scrope/Grosvenor proceedings, and Scrope arms were also found in other ecclesiastical buildings in the town.⁹³ Elsewhere in Richmondshire, Scrope arms appeared in churches or castles associated with the families of Marmion, Lascelles, Fitzhugh, and the lords of Middleham or Richmond. These may have reflected bonds of fellowship and amity; they may also have been intended to reflect the family's place among regional magnates.⁹⁴

For most other families, the lack of surviving remains and the inadequacies of antiquarian descriptions make even a tentative assessment of the range and function of heraldic display much more difficult. It seems likely, though, that the pattern suggested by the display of Scrope heraldry - concentration around the centres of the family's landed power and in major local or regional ecclesiastical institutions - was more or less typical. In the early seventeenth century, Dodsworth recorded the arms of Robert Waterton not only at his principal estate of Methley, where he was buried, but in the nearby parish churches of Castleford and Wakefield, and also in the most important local religious house, Selby abbey.⁹⁵ Dodsworth also suggests how heraldic display could have

⁹⁰The extent and acquisition of the Scrope of Bolton estates are detailed (using the Scrope of Bolton cartulary) in B. Vale, 'The Scropes of Bolton and of Masham, c. 1300 - c. 1450: A Study of a Northern Noble Family with a Calendar of the Scrope of Bolton Cartulary', unpublished DPhil thesis, History, University of York, 1987, ch. 4 (esp. pp. 108-18); *VCH: NRY* provides details of individual manors.

⁹¹Vale, 'Scropes of Bolton and of Masham', map at pp. 109-10,

⁹²*VCH: NRY* I, 236.

⁹³*Scrope and Grosvenor*, p. 225.

⁹⁴Cf. *VCH: NRY* I, 46-8, 176-80, 350-1, 388.

⁹⁵The arms were also noted at Darfield, further to the south: *Yorkshire Church Notes 1619-31* by Roger Dodsworth, ed. J. W. Clay, YASRS 34 (1904), pp. 51, 105, 111, 245; see also J. W. Walker, 'The Burghs of Cambridgeshire and Yorkshire and the Watertons of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire', *YAJ* 30 (1931), 311-419, esp. pp. 417-8.

a marked impact on local attitudes to magnates. Archbishop Kempe's arms were displayed in the north choir of Selby abbey, to which he had been a generous patron, but according to Dodsworth, local tradition held him not only to be 'the builder of that quyer' but to be 'buried there, as they say.' Kempe was actually buried at Canterbury, but the insistent presence of his heraldry seems to have created a belief that he must have been a figure more closely associated with the locality.⁹⁶

Surviving evidence and antiquarian records offer more scope for exploring the function of heraldic assemblages within individual buildings, whether at the level of the parish church or in larger institutions.⁹⁷ Evidence from elsewhere in England suggests that heraldic assemblages offered an important medium through which aristocratic local identities could be constructed. A well-known example is the window erected by Thomas Erpingham in the Augustinian friary at Norwich, containing the arms of Norfolk families dead without issue male since the accession of Edward III. As Walker says, this is a striking demonstration of knowledge of and interest in county society; it is a construction of an imagined elite local community placed in one of the region's most important churches.⁹⁸ Closely comparable was the mid-fifteenth-century heraldic decoration in the great hall of the archbishop's palace at Southwell, which included the arms of the twelve families identifiable from taxation returns as a 'county elite' and those of two other wealthy families.⁹⁹ At a parochial level, the glazing of Nettlestead church in Kent contains the arms of thirty-five mostly local families, a sequence which has been

⁹⁶*Yorkshire Church Notes*, ed. Clay, p. 82; *DNB X*, 1276.

⁹⁷For comments on heraldic glazing schemes see R. Marks, *Stained Glass in England during the Middle Ages* (London, 1993), pp. 87-8.

⁹⁸K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England: The Ford Lectures for 1953 and Related Studies* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 145-6; Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 194.

⁹⁹S. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991), p. 16.

described as a memorial ‘of family alliance, friendship, neighbourhood, and association in government business.’¹⁰⁰

It is probably more common for heraldic display at a parochial level to reflect tenurial structures and the alliances of the local gentry or nobility, but even within these limits there remained considerable room for the advertisement of impressive relationships and the suppression of less advantageous ones, in the same way that the Warwickshire gentry residences described by Carpenter might contain the heraldry of previous owners, ancestors or patrons ‘if they were great enough for the family to wish to advertise the connection.’¹⁰¹ In a number of cases the association of various coats cannot be explained through tenurial or family connections and suggests the assertion of - or aspiration to - local solidarities. Catterick church was rebuilt between 1412 and 1415 at the expense of Katherine, widow of John Brough and daughter of Roger Aske, and her son William who had married a daughter of the Lascelles family of Sowerby. The south porch contained the arms of Brough, Aske and Lascelles, which were also represented in the east window of the church.¹⁰² However the font, which is decorated with the arms and initials of William Burgh, also contains the arms of Fitzhugh, Scrope of Masham, D’Arcy of Colburn and others: the emphasis here seems to be on William (or his family)’s place among the more important families of the locality.

Similar heraldic groupings were put together by high-ranking ecclesiastics. The window in York Minster donated in the early fourteenth century by canon Peter de Dene, contains the surcoats of the earls of Lancaster, Gloucester, Surrey and Warwick together with members of the Ros, Mowbray, Clifford and Percy families. It has been suggested that de Dene ‘looked back to the courtly world with which he had been associated and wished to be permanently associated with it:’ if this is so, he seems to have placed particular emphasis on northern magnates he met there.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰W. E. Ball, ‘The Stained-Glass Windows of Nettleshead Church’, *Archaeologia Cantiana* 28 (1909), 157-249 (p. 240); Payling, *Political Society*, p. 218 n. 5.

¹⁰¹Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p. 200.

¹⁰²McCall, *Richmondshire Churches*, pp. 18, 23-4; Whitaker, *History of Richmondshire* II, 31-2.

¹⁰³D. E. O’Connor and J. Haselock, ‘The Stained and Painted Glass’, in *A History of York Minster*, ed. G. E. Aylmer and R. Cant (Oxford, 1977), ch. 8 (pp. 349-350, at p. 350).

Major ecclesiastical institutions such as York Minster were undoubtedly regarded as highly important contexts for heraldic display whether individual or collective. The early-fourteenth-century heraldic windows in the nave clerestory of the minster clearly represent a major assemblage of northern magnates, although the exact nature of the grouping has yet to be ascertained. Other major religious institutions provided scarcely less inviting opportunities: it is apparent from antiquarian descriptions that the glazing of Selby abbey represented a large number of local and regional families. Likewise the west window of Beverley minster (1388 x 1396) contained a sequence of eighteen shields, two in each light, which has been described as ‘an impressive display of the arms of the royal family and local magnates’.¹⁰⁴

Defining countries: locality and focality

In the preceding sections we have explored in some detail the ways in which aristocratic families attempted to define their ‘country’ through genealogical discourses and heraldic display. What both these forms of representation have in common, I have implied, is their construction of a family as important in a broad locality, through the assertion of its association with a number of individual sites within that locality.

Genealogical materials do show an interest in wider regional units - the Percy materials refer to Yorkshire and the North, for example - and they are also interested in politics beyond the region, in the prestige and authority conferred by service to the crown, particularly by military service and the defence of the realm. Their main interest, however, is in the family’s connections with particular institutions - sometimes secular, more often religious. The range and quality of these institutions is indicative of the family’s position within its ‘country’ and the range of this country. As other historians have noted, it would be mistaken to think of genealogical texts or heraldic display as

¹⁰⁴*Yorkshire Church Notes*, ed. Clay, pp. 244-50; D. O’Connor, ‘The Medieval Stained Glass of Beverley Minster’, in *Medieval Art and Architecture in the East Riding of Yorkshire*, ed. C. Wilson, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 9 (Leeds, 1983), pp. 62-90 (pp. 72-3, quotation at p. 73).

'rigidly regional' practices, just as a family's landed interests were rarely restricted to a clearly defined area.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, most genealogical texts do have a clear regional focus. Likewise the heraldic display of a family's arms tended to be concentrated around the centres of a family's local power on the one hand, and in major regional ecclesiastical institutions on the other. These aristocratic local cultures were not conceived to any large extent in terms of the broad territorial units characteristic of the political and historical languages we have explored elsewhere, but as an aggregate of individual localities.

The material we have examined above is predominantly concerned with the assertion of secular territorial power. But its production of locality in relation to a number of individual sites makes for interesting comparison with an equally widespread, although apparently very different, genre: the miracle-collection. Like genealogies, collections of miracles appear to serve a straightforward purpose and one that is not obviously related to the definition of locality: the demonstration of a saint's intercessory and curative power. But we have seen above how the apparent primary purpose of the genealogical texts - what Genicot calls 'filiation' - regularly leads to more or less detailed accounts of the family's place in locality and region. Similarly, the primary function of *miracula* very often entails an assertion of the territorial extent of a saint's power, usually centred in an area around the shrine, but extending widely beyond it. Miracle collections assert their saints' patronage of a range of particular locations, usually chosen with some care, through which a sense of the saints' 'country' is built up, and the power and prestige of the institution associated with the saint is asserted.

¹⁰⁵Cf. M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 227.

Miracles, locality and institutional power

The great majority of miracles recorded in miracle-collections are curative.¹⁰⁶ But in addition to asserting saintly power over the unpredictable and uncontrollable forces of nature, most collections of miracles are designed to display the geographical extent of this power.¹⁰⁷ This often becomes especially clear in the selection and arrangement of miracle accounts in collections of *miracula*. As Diana Webb has pointed out with reference to medieval Italian material,

Many collections of miracle stories go to great lengths to show how solicitous saints were for those who lived in the immediate catchment area of their shrines. Equally, it was a topos that a saint would often perform cures on behalf of suppliants, sometimes from implausibly far away, who had failed elsewhere, even at the greatest of shrines.¹⁰⁸

This holds true of all the principal miracle-collections produced in the Yorkshire area. (These are listed in Table 4.1) St John of Beverley's *miracula* include the cure of a blind man from Ely, who visited without success the shrines of other saints throughout the kingdom (*totam...regionem*), until he was inspired by God to seek the patronage of St

¹⁰⁶R. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977), *passim*.

¹⁰⁷Miracles are attributed to these saints in other sources, particularly historical writings: I do not consider these here as they do not reflect institutional attempts to define and promote cults. Finucane's book analyses the geography of miracle collections in an attempt to draw conclusions about changes in the actual clientele that cults attracted. His conclusions (for example, that the geographical range of cults tended to increase with time, as local enthusiasm declined) are suggestive, but his approach may well be suited to some miracle-collections more than others. It does not consider the way in which places are described in texts; nor does it account for the possibility of fictive elements in these collections, the probability of selectiveness in their contents, or the arrangement of such contents for particular ends. All these factors are evident, for example, in John of Beverley's various *miracula*.

¹⁰⁸D. Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-States* (London, 1996), p. 17. I can do little more than refer in passing to the vast literature on saints and their cults, most of which is not concerned with the issues I am trying to address. A full bibliography (to 1987) may be found in A. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1997).

John.¹⁰⁹ St William cured a man from Beccles in Suffolk, and a youth from Sedgefield in County Durham; while Richard Rolle's successes included a woman *de Leycestria* and a man from Durham. The terms in which such acts are described clearly emphasize the distance of such places from the cult's centre, suggesting both its naturally local nature and the potential extent of the saint's power. Leicester and Durham are both *loci remoti*, while Sedgefield is *trans Teyse* and Beccles is *de partibus Angliae australibus*.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹*HCY* II, 335-7.

¹¹⁰*Officium de S. Ricardo de Hampole*, in *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie Eboracensis*, ed. S. W. Lawley, 2 vols., SS 71, 75 (1880-3), II, 785-820 (813 and 818); *HCY*, II, 534 and 538.

Table 4.1 Miracle-collections of saints associated with Yorkshire.

The most substantial are:

(1) **four *miracula* of St John of Beverley** I discuss these as a whole, since they circulated together in the surviving manuscript (BL, MS Add. 61901, s. xiv ex.) and a lost manuscript printed by the Bollandists. The first *miracula* also appears independently, after Folcard's life of the saint, in BL, MS Cotton Faustina B. IV (c. 1175). Printed in *HCY* I, 260-347, but further unprinted miracles are contained in BL, MS Add. 61901.

(2) ***miracula* of St William** Copied by Dodsworth from a table in the vestry of York minster, and printed from his copy in *HCY* II, 531-43. Probably originally put together in this form soon after 1319.

(3) ***miracula* of Richard Rolle** Extant in four manuscripts. Printed in *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie Eboracensis*, ed. S. W. Lawley, 2 vols., SS 71, 75 (1880-3), II, 785-820.

Less substantial *miracula* appear in the following:

(4) **the *vita* of Thomas of Lancaster** Printed from a manuscript at Brussels in *Anecdota ex codicibus Iohannis Gielemans*, ed. Hagiographi Bollandiani, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 3 (Brussels, 1895), pp. 80-100.

(5) (a) **the Latin *vitae* of John of Bridlington** There are two main lives. The earlier was printed by the Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, October, V (Paris, 1868), 137-44. The latter (ascribed by Bale to George Ripley, of St Botolph's, Boston) was included in the revision of John of Tynemouth's collection of English saints' lives: *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. C. Horstmann, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1901) II, 64-78).

(5) (b) ***miracula* of the same saint** Recorded by a canon of Bridlington early in the sixteenth century in Durham University Library, MS Cosin V. v. 19. P. Grosjean, 'De S. Iohanne Bridlingtoniensi Collectanea', *Analecta Bollandiana* 53 (1935), 101-29, esp. pp. 121-5).

(6) **collections concerning Robert of Knaresborough** In BL, MS Harley 3143, late fifteenth century. Large portions are printed in *The Metrical Life of Robert of Knaresborough*, ed. J. Bazire, EETS o.s. 228 (1953); 'Vitae S. Roberti Knaresburgensis', ed. P. Grosjean, *Analecta Bollandiana* 57 (1939), 364-400).

(7) ***miracula* of Robert of Newminster** Cap. 11-14 of the life written at Newminster but preserved in the fourteenth-century collection of English *vitae* from Romsey abbey, BL MS Lansdowne 436 ('Vita S. Roberti Novi Monasterii in Anglia Abbatis', ed. P. Grosjean, *Analecta Bollandiana* 56 (1938), 33-60).

The *miracula* of William, John and Richard balance the geographical appeal of their saints with some care between the local, regional and national. (Plotting the locations on a map, as some historians have done, fails to capture the significance of the terms in which the locations are described.)¹¹¹ Of Rolle's twenty-six recorded miracles, fifteen of the healed are located; of these, four are from the vicinity of Hampole (*Wrangbroke prope Hampole*, *Sutton prope Hampole*, and two at Hampole itself) and four from York. Four others are from south Yorkshire, in the relative vicinity of Hampole, although two are located within the diocese rather than locally (*Morehows Eboracensis diocesis*, *Fyselake Eboracensis diocesis*, *Auston* and *Sprotburgh*).

There is a similar emphasis in St William's *miracula*. The vast majority of the beneficiaries of the thirty-three miracles recorded of William in 1177 are from Yorkshire: many are from York and its neighbourhood, but others come from Leeds, Pickering, Helmsley, Guisborough, and Warter. References to other districts - *Middleton in Tyisdale* and *shira de Richmond* - suggest the outer limits of the saint's associations. The description of Sedgefield as *trans Teyse* emphasizes the boundary of both the county and diocese of York. At Durham, miracles which displayed Cuthbert's power north of the Tees performed a comparable function.¹¹²

John of Beverley's *miracula* place greater emphasis on his national, and indeed international appeal, describing cures of a blind boy *de pago Haugulstaldensi*, a Scotsman and an Irishman, and *quidam rusticus ...in provincia Norwicensi*. Regionally, the saint's pull is focussed around York on the one hand and Lincolnshire, particularly north Lincolnshire, on the other. (Lindsey is described in more familiar, and Kesteven in less familiar terms - *in Lindisseya provincia* or *in Lindiseya* as opposed to *in episcopatu Lincolnensi*, *de provincia quae Kestevena vocitatur*.) In addition, there are a large number of cures from the area of Beverley itself.¹¹³ All these collections glance at their

¹¹¹Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*.

¹¹²*The Life of St Cuthbert in English Verse*, ed. J. T. Fowler, SS 87 (1891), pp. 164, 180, 184; this is a fifteenth-century translation of various earlier materials, drawing at p. 164 on Symeon of Durham's *De miraculis et translationibus*, cap. xiv.

¹¹³*HCY I*, 272, 274, 278-9, 309; 284, 287, 310, 312, 313, 314, 315. The miracles in the third *miracula* (*HCY I*, 321-5) are all local to Beverley; as, mostly, are those in the fourth (*HCY I*, 327-47). The unpublished miracles in BL, MS Additional 61901 are located as follows: North Ferriby (fo. 38r); Beverley (39r); 'Goulhil [Goxhill] in Lindissa' (39r); Nunkeeling (39v); Beverley (40r); Sherburn-in-

saints' wider powers while contriving to place most emphasis on the local foci of their power and their regional catchment. Likewise one miracle of John of Bridlington is located in Bridlington itself, another in Hartlepool (some fifty miles north along the coast) and a priest who travelled 160 miles is also mentioned.¹¹⁴

As well as emerging from the overall structure of these collections, the combination of local and wider power is deliberately emphasized in some individual miracle accounts. One woman from Beverley fell ill between London and Bury St Edmunds, but recalling her parents and homeland (*patria*) she prayed to St John to allow her to return home (*repatriare*) and was cured, although she was in *remoti provincia*.¹¹⁵ In other miracle accounts, the attraction of sufferers from particular localities is more pointedly related to institutional power. Another miracle attributed to John of Beverley involved the healing of a dumb boy from Walkington. At the outset of the narration we are informed that the town belongs partly to the monastery of St John, and partly to St Cuthbert. The miracle thus asserts the saint's patronage of those connected even indirectly with his jurisdiction, and perhaps also his preeminence over St Cuthbert.

Other kinds of non-curative miracle are also designed to demonstrate a saint's patronage of a local or regional area. On one occasion, for example, the procession of John of Beverley's relics around the church brought an end to a drought which had afflicted people at least as far away as York.¹¹⁶ At an even wider level, the saint was alleged to have a peace-keeping function throughout the north: the nobles of the East Riding, North Riding, West Riding, York, and Northumbria forgot their natural pride and hostility when they visited Beverley.¹¹⁷ At a more local level, a common topos of miracle collections is the saint's protection of lands or privileges with which he is associated. In John of Beverley's second *miracula*, the grant of king Athelstan is followed by an account of how, when archbishop Girard was celebrating mass on his

Elmet (40v-41r).

¹¹⁴J. S. Purvis, *St John of Bridlington*, *Journal of the Bridlington Augustinian Society* 2 (1924), pp. 19-24; *Acta Sanctorum*, October, V, 142-4; Grosjean, 'Collectanea', p. 121.

¹¹⁵HCY I, 316.

¹¹⁶HCY I, 269-71.

¹¹⁷*Sanctuarium*, p. 106; cf. Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446, p. 10.

first visit to Beverley, a deaf and dumb servant of his was cured. When the archbishop began to lecture the congregation on this subject, an Englishman of noble birth told him that miraculous events of this kind were common at Beverley, and that consequently the archbishop should be careful:

not to rashly presume against the business of those, who on account of love and veneration for [St John], and also for the sake of peace and security, flee to his altars, and take lodging here.¹¹⁸

The archbishop did not deign to follow this advice, and eventually died disliked by both clergy and laity. Likewise, in the earlier collection of miracles there is a story, derived from Alfred of Beverley, about William I's harrying of the north - again significantly placed just after Athelstan's grants. One of William's knights violated the sanctuary of the minster and in retribution was made to fall from his horse, becoming horribly deformed. When William heard of the miracle he confirmed and increased the rights and possessions of the church.¹¹⁹ Similar stories are told in other *miracula* set in the time of king John, and can be easily paralleled at other institutions which claimed significant territorial liberties.¹²⁰

There can be little doubt as to the care taken by ecclesiastical authorities in the selection and arrangement of *miracula* to create a delicately nuanced sense of the extent of their saints' influence. Like the genealogical and heraldic material considered above, these texts are by no means 'rigidly' regional or local in their emphases. Nevertheless, these texts commonly share a dual interest in events clustered around the cultic centre on the one hand, and those located in major regional centres on the other. York clearly serves as such a centre in the *miracula* both of Richard Rolle and John of Beverley, for example. This dual interest may be compared with the pattern of heraldic display - focussed around the *caput* of the family's estates and in major regional institutions -

¹¹⁸*HCY* I, 299-300.

¹¹⁹*HCY* I, 264-9.

¹²⁰*HCY* II, 337-42; and cf. 302-7, in the reign of Stephen.

explored earlier in this chapter. An obvious difference is that, as far as we know, there were no records or representations of miraculous events at the sites from where the sick travelled to be cured: the representation of saintly power over locality was not diffused, but fixed at the shrine from which saintly power emanated.

A table of William's miracles was displayed in the Minster and in the fifteenth century a stained-glass window was produced in which William's life and miracles were recorded.¹²¹ Although nothing comparable survives from Beverley, it seems likely that similar material would have been available there for the edification and instruction of visitors, and likewise at other institutions which housed regionally significant saints. The *vita* of Robert of Newminster refers to two books of hagiographical material preserved at Newminster and accounts of John of Bridlington were available at Bridlington.¹²² It seems to have been less common for miracles to be disseminated outside an institution, although Beverley chapter did circulate some of St John's miracles.¹²³ The accounts of miracles which were incorporated in liturgical material were usually abbreviated and did not contain references to particular localities.¹²⁴

Arguably, institutional saints had the greatest impact on local identities within the immediate vicinity of the shrine, where a saint's local patronage could be regularly commemorated in ceremonial and other activities. In late-medieval Beverley, St John's relics were the focal point of a major urban ceremony. On Rogation Monday (the Monday before Ascension day, and a period associated in most parts of England with the processional blessing and definition of boundary markers) the shrine containing the relics

¹²¹*HCY* II, 531-43. For the window, see J. Fowler, 'On a Window Representing the Life and Miracles of S. William of York', *YAJ* 3 (1875), 198-348; T. French, 'The Glazing of the St William Window in York Minster', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 140 (1987), 175-81; B. Nilson, 'A Reinterpretation of the St William Window in York Minster', *YAJ* 68 (1996), 157-79.

¹²²*Vita S. Roberti*, ed. Grosjean, pp. 342-3; papal bull of canonization, in Purvis, *St John of Bridlington*, pp. 31-7; cf. *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. Horstmann, II, 77-8.

¹²³*Memorials of Beverley Minster*, ed. A. F. Leach, 2 vols., Surtees Society 98, 108 (1898-1903), II, 26, 32-3; cf. a miracle of St William recorded in the York chapter acts in 1290 (W. Dixon, *Fasti Eboracenses* (London, 1863), p. 227 n.).

¹²⁴See for example the miracles of St William, in *Breviarium Eboracensis*, ed. Lawley, I, 695-7.

was carried from Beverley *m*inster to the parish church of St Mary's. The town guilds erected 'castles' along the route followed by the relics, in which those members who could afford the guild's livery would sit. Later in the day all the guilds joined in a mounted procession in which their order and precedence were carefully set out. In the guild ordinances, the castles and the livery are often described as erected 'in the honor of gode and the glorious confessor saynt John'.¹²⁵ Over the next two days the shrine was carried round the bounds of the liberty and returned to the *m*inster on Ascension day, and offerings were made at the shrine.¹²⁶

Something of the value placed by individuals on participation at such interfaces between the local community and its patron saint can be seen in two documents in which, *inter alia*, the right to carry the saint's shrine was granted. In 1362 Thomas Fairfax granted to Thomas Gervays of Beverley seisin in lands which he had by hereditary right through the death of his brother Robert, 'una cum portagium feretri beati Johannis Beverlac ad dictum ius pertinentium', while in 1470 John Ferriby esquire granted 'all my services and office³ att do to saynt John' for the not inconsiderable sum of twenty pounds.¹²⁷ The high premium placed on these 'services' suggests that they entailed visible and public duties which would confer an appropriate degree of local standing, indicating the continued importance of the saint in his community.

St William's patronage of York was ceremonially celebrated at the feast of Whitsun, as well as at his deposition and translation: payments made by the chamberlain of the dean and chapter, as well as an image in the St William window, suggest that the saint's head was carried from the *m*inster in a portable shrine, at least as far as the site of his famous miracle on Ouse Bridge.¹²⁸ In January 1463 the dean and chapter decreed that fines should be imposed on those who refused to take part in processions with St

¹²⁵Wyatt, 'Performance and Ceremonial', I, lxxviii-lxxii I, 4, 34, and *passim*.

¹²⁶*VCH: ERY VI*, 10; *Memorials of Beverley*, ed. Leach, II, 60; *Sanctuarium*, ed. Raine, p. 105; Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446, pp. 9-10; G. Poulson, *Beverlac, or, The Antiquities and History of the Town of Beverley*, 2 vols. (London, 1829), II, 635-6.

¹²⁷BL, Lansdowne Charter 315 (also cited in *VCH: ERY VI*, 11); *TE III*, 180 (corrected against original). Ferriby associated with others specially devoted to John of Beverley, such as Edmund Portington (BIHR, Probate Register 4, fo. 595; *TE III*, 179n).

¹²⁸For the miracle see *HCY II*, 275-6, 396-7, 479, 539; *Melsa*, II, 116; *Breviarium Eboracensis*, ed Lawley, II, 302; *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. Horstmann, II, 456.

William's shrine.¹²⁹ Although lay involvement in this procession is not as fully documented as at Beverley, some interest is suggested by John Dautre's bequest in 1458 of a jewel to St William that could be fixed to his smaller shrine when it was carried through the city (*quod geritur in civitate*) with his relics.¹³⁰

SS William of York and John of Beverley, then, were most powerfully present as 'patrons and defenders' in the immediate vicinity of the institutions which housed their shrines, and the same may well have been true of other regional saints such as Wilfrid at Ripon or John at Bridlington. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the local concentration of their presence inhibited their role in wider regional culture. It is, as Dobson has said, a 'familiar paradox that the power and impact of a medieval saint depended on his association with a comparatively small geographical area.'¹³¹ It may be more accurate to see these figures as enjoying distinct but related functions both as 'local' and as 'regional' icons. The distinction is difficult to formulate, and was not explicitly expressed by contemporaries, but it does seem to be borne out by the different contexts in which these saints appear in wills and in liturgical or devotional manuscripts. It is explored more fully in the following chapter.

¹²⁹N. K. Tringham, 'The Whitsuntide Commemoration of St William of York: A Note', *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter* 14/2 (1989), 10-12; YML, M2/1f, fos. 70r-72r.

¹³⁰*TE* II, 233.

¹³¹R. B. Dobson, *Durham Priory 1400-1450* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 18.

Conclusions

Perhaps the most striking conclusion to be drawn from the preceding chapters is the extent to which ecclesiastical institutions could act as focal points where several discourses of locality could meet. In York *m*inster, for example, a fifteenth-century visitor brought by devotion or business could have consulted historical materials explaining the church's position as 'the metropolis of the north'; could have admired pictorial and heraldic representations of the local magnates, past and present, who were associated with the church; and would probably have been directed to the shrine of Scrope or St William, and to further textual and visual material where the power and significance of these figures was demonstrated. At Beverley *m*inster, similarly, textual, visual and monumental materials relating to St John and the rights of his church were accompanied by the heraldry of local and regional magnates, and a number of tombs of members of the Percy family.

The concentration of discourses of locality was not always so intense, of course, but it could probably be paralleled to some extent at most major religious institutions and even at more minor ones. It reflects the importance that such institutions held, in varying degrees, as focal points for different levels of locality. In contemporary parlance, they were 'head' or 'chief' places, or 'mother churches', and any serious claim to local power or prestige required some association with them.¹³²

¹³²The language of 'head places' is explored more fully in ch. 7 below.

CHAPTER 5

REGIONAL FIGURES AND LOCAL IDENTITIES

The preceding chapters explored the ways in which powerful institutions or families attempted to construct their 'countries' - to portray themselves as central to the meaning of locality over what can most conveniently be called regional levels. The narratives they produced often focussed around particular individuals who through acts of foundation, endowment or protection had established regional power or jurisdiction. In each case the aim was to establish obligations, or at least deference, to families or institutions over a wide area, which could be specified with greater or lesser precision.

I have argued above that major landowning families and institutions had something of a shared genealogical and historical culture, evident in the similarities between the texts, narratives and images they produced. I have also tried to assess the impact of this culture on local identities outside of aristocratic or ecclesiastical elites. In this chapter, I want to look at the related but distinct problem of how institutions and families were considered representative or emblematic of particular 'countries' in wider local society. How important were such representatives in the articulation of local identities broadly considered? Were attitudes to these families and institutions shaped by the propaganda they produced, or were other factors more important; and what might such factors have been?

The sources from which these questions can be approached are rather limited, and tend to emphasize regional religious figures, particularly saints. A certain amount can be gleaned from onomastic and antiquarian evidence, although this tends to be slanted towards the immediate surroundings of a local community, and is considered in more detail in the final part of the thesis. Historical writing may contain important materials, and legal records can be a useful source for attitudes to secular families. More generally, the evidence of jottings or additions in manuscripts is most likely to reveal attitudes to regional saints, as is testamentary evidence. In the latter case, however, the emphasis may reflect not only the character of the evidence, but genuine modulations in the character

of local attachments: William Stowe, who bequeathed his livery of a Percy crescent to St Wilfrid's shrine, demonstrates how secular loyalties could be transformed into local religious allegiance when the former ceased to be useful.¹

The structure of this chapter reflects both the limitations of the sources and the sequence of the preceding chapters. The first section uses historical writing and onomastic and antiquarian evidence to explore the place of the metropolitan church and its founders in local society. The second section looks at some evidence from the Pilgrimage of Grace which casts light on popular perceptions of the Percy family in the early sixteenth century. The third section uses testamentary and manuscript evidence to examine the place of regional saints in devotional culture.

I argue that emblematic or iconic figures and institutions had an important place in local culture. To some extent, they provided a focus around which local and regional solidarities could be formulated. More importantly, they provided a loose and flexible framework through which individual or institutional identities could be related to a range of wider regional attachments. Many of these emblematic figures, though, had a variety of meanings within regional society: in particular, many served as 'local' as well as 'regional' icons, their personal associations with a particular locale giving them unique significance in its culture. The meaning of these iconic figures or institutions was determined both by the institutional discourses examined in the preceding chapters (which often exerted their strongest influence at an immediately local level), and by a variety of other traditions and associations. In the final section of the chapter, I illustrate the variety of these traditions by exploring the accounts of the metropolitan church of York, the hospital of St Leonard, and Athelstan's campaign against Scotland in the fourteenth-century *Castleford's Chronicle*.

¹TE II, 13 (1430).

Institutional authority, regional history, and local identity

The metropolitan church of York was probably the regional institution which was most important to the identities of individuals and institutions within the county and diocese. Its importance is felt in the wide circulation of its official historical material and in unofficial interest in the succession of its prelates; in its wide-spread recognition as the 'mother church' of the diocese, and in the large number of bequests it attracted to its fabric.² This section will look in more detail at the nature of local interest in the church's archbishops, first by discussing a chronicle which borrows directly from the prose chronicle of the archbishops of York, and second by examining the attitudes to Paulinus, the church's first archbishop, in a number of local cultures.

The chronicle of Meaux abbey, produced at the turn of the fifteenth century, provides a good illustration of how local interest in a regional institution could be heavily influenced the official texts of that institution.³ From its outset the chronicle is remarkable for including abbreviated biographies of contemporary archbishops of York derived from the prose chronicle of the see, of which the abbey owned a copy.⁴ The Meaux chronicle is the only text outside of York known to have made substantial use of the prose chronicle, and the very inclusion of archiepiscopal history suggests that the church of York was important to the abbey's institutional identity.⁵ The organization of the chronicle confirms this impression. An account of each abbot's term of office is followed by an epitome of contemporaneous wider history, which usually begins with the see of York, moves to papal and European history, and then turns to English politics. In the shorter version of the chronicle, notices of archbishops appear at the end of accounts of

²Above, ch. 3, pp. 137-9; below, ch. 7, pp. 269-70.

³For a discussion of the chronicle see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), 355-71.

⁴*The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines and Premonstratensians*, ed. D. N. Bell, *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues* 3 (London, 1992), Z14 no. 176.

⁵For the use of the prose chronicle in the history ascribed to Walter of Coventry and perhaps to more limited extent at Beverley, see ch. 3 above, p. 138 and table 3.1.

abbots; both arrangements associate the history of the abbey with that of the regional church.

The relation between the histories of the two institutions, however, is not entirely one of subservience, and the nature of the abbey's interest in the church of York becomes clearer if the excerpts in its chronicle are compared with the original texts. Extracts from the lives of earlier archbishops are characterized by partisan additions: the account of Henry Murdac adds that he was abbot of Fountains (the mother house of Meaux), which was burnt by the allies of his predecessor William Fitzherbert (the later St William).⁶ Archbishop Roger, who had requisitioned the abbey's lands in Wawne, is the subject of a number of negative additions.⁷ In the lives of later archbishops, many of the additions or omissions are of little consequence, but the account of William Melton is suggestive: a passage describing his ordination of a large number of priests is omitted, even though it mentions Melton's *patria* in nearby Beverley; on the other hand, details of Melton's work on the Münster fabric, the tomb of St William, and the Old Bailey section of York's defences are included.⁸

It is also revealing that St William is the only local saint to whom the chronicle gives attention.⁹ The chronicle's lack of interest in St John of Beverley is particularly telling, especially since the abbey owned the saint's *vita* and (probably) *miracula*.¹⁰ The explanation for this is probably provided by the one passage which deals at length with St John: this, as we have seen, is an explanation of the abbey's payment of thraves to Beverley chapter.¹¹ There are accounts elsewhere in the abbey's chronicle of its disputes with Beverley, and the chronicle's suppression of material reflecting well on Beverley and its concentration on York and its saint are probably related. The church of York, particularly through its prose chronicle, offered Meaux a way of locating itself in relation

⁶*Melsa* I, 114-5; *HCY* II, 388-95.

⁷*Melsa* I, 189-90, 183.

⁸*Melsa* II, 314; *HCY* II, 415-7.

⁹*Melsa* I, 108, 116-7; II, 181-2.

¹⁰*Libraries of the Cistercians*, ed. Bell, Z14 no. 204b.

¹¹Above, ch. 3, p. 145.

to a prominent regional institution other than its troublesome neighbour.

The institutional history produced by the church of York exerted a strong influence over the way in which regional history was conceptualized at Meaux, but this influence coincided with the abbey's own interests, interests which themselves shaped the understanding of institutional discourses.

Commemorations of Paulinus in local culture also suggest how the authority of regional institutional discourses could interact with the ambitions and perspectives of local culture. In York and its vicinity, Paulinus seems to have been closely associated with the history of the church of York. Unsurprisingly, this is the context in which the saint was represented in York minster.¹² The other known depiction of Paulinus in York was formerly in the east window (dating from 1471) of Holy Trinity Goodramgate.¹³ A drawing of 1670 shows that Paulinus was the first figure in the bottommost row of a large and complex window which also represented SS Christopher and George, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, and God the Father holding the body of his dead son; the Trinity and the Holy Family; and the Virgin Mary. A representation of St William, currently in another window in the church, is known from other antiquarian evidence to have been associated with Paulinus. The principal figure behind the window appears to have been John Walker, rector of Holy Trinity between 1471 and his death in 1481, who is represented in the central panel of the topmost row of figures.

The bottom row of the window, which must have represented important figures from the archiepiscopal history of York, is plausibly ascribed to Walker, who had been presented to his living by archbishop George Neville, and had previously been chaplain in Bolton Percy, another parish church in the patronage of the church of York. The east window of Bolton Percy itself contains representations of archbishops from Richard

¹²W1, N11, n8; Davidson and O'Connor, *York Art*, p. 171.

¹³P. E. S. Routh, 'A Gift and its Giver: John Walker and the East Window of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, York', *YAJ* 58 (1986), 109-21, for the following paragraph.

Scrope to George Neville.¹⁴ Neville's epitaph, as recorded in the prose chronicle of the archbishops, celebrated his death on the 8th of June, the day on which St William and archbishop Scrope had also died, and identified Neville - like William and Scrope - as a father to the *plebs Boreae*.¹⁵ The window at Holy Trinity, although less directly related to Neville than that at Bolton Percy, probably also reflects his interest in locating himself in relation to his historic and illustrious predecessors. Neville's arms occupy the central position in the window's tracery.

These examples indicate that in York and its vicinity Paulinus was emblematic of the institutional identity and continuity of the church of York. However, Paulinus was also represented in a fifteenth-century window at Methley. Although the glass when recorded was in a confused state and the original design cannot be reconstructed, it is clear that SS Paulinus, Wilfrid and Cuthbert formed part of the original window together with various other saints such as the four doctors of the church.¹⁶ The church, and particularly the south chapel, was associated with the Waterton family. Money was left for the construction of the chapel in 1424, although it was not completed until c. 1483-4, from when the glass probably dates.¹⁷ It is unlikely that Paulinus's presence in the Methley glass indicates any direct connections with or interest in the institutional continuity of the church of York: the other northern saints do not have exclusive or marked York connections. Camden reported that a cross had formerly stood at Dewsbury bearing the inscription 'Paulinus hic praedicavit et celebravit', and it seems likely that the saint's meaning at Methley (around seven miles from Dewsbury) derived from this local association.¹⁸

Paulinus seems to have had a similar importance in other parts of Yorkshire. The hundred rolls for Easingwold and Huby refer to 'a meadow called Paulinus's meadow' and 'Paulinus's cross', place-names whose meaning is unclear but which presumably

¹⁴This glass has not been adequately described, but see *VCH: Yks.* III, 41.

¹⁵*HCY* II, 437-8.

¹⁶J. Fowler, 'On the Painted Glass at Methley', *YAJ* 2 (1871), 225-45. The glass is no longer extant.

¹⁷Fowler, 'Painted Glass at Methley', pp. 243-5; N. Pevsner, *Yorkshire: The West Riding*, The Buildings of England (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 364.

¹⁸William Camden, *Britannia*, ed. and tr. R. Gough, 3 vols. (London, 1789), III, 237.

preserve local traditions of the archbishop's personal association with those places.¹⁹ A number of local communities could have independent traditions of their association with a regionally significant figure that probably owed very little to any institutional discourses.

The Percy family in local culture

Attitudes to regional secular figures in local society may have demonstrated a similar independence from 'official' discourses. This, at least, is suggested by the role of the Percy family in the progress of the Pilgrimage of Grace. George Lumley stated that Sir Thomas Percy had been the 'locke keys and warde' of the second rising of 1537, and that 'at the first insurrection the people were more glad to rise with hym than with any other, and there proclaymed hym twyes a Lord Percy.' He also suggested that the commons' affection for Thomas resulted from the fact that he was the last surviving Percy, with the exception of the *earl*.²⁰ We hear elsewhere that the leaders of the commons in 1537 hoped that a Percy might support them.²¹ William Stapleton claimed that 'it was openlye spoken of the feeld "strike of the hedde of the Erle and make Sir Thomas Erle"'.²² Thomas himself under examination acknowledged that the commons had called him 'Lord Percy', but claimed that he had resisted the style. He declared that Aske had been at Wressle and Howden stirring up the commons, and had cried at the gates of Wressle 'Thousands for a Percy'.²³ Whether or not it was as a direct result of Aske's

¹⁹*Yorkshire Hundred and Quo Warranto Rolls 1274-94*, ed. B. English, YASRS 151 (1996), p. 82.

²⁰E. Milner, *Records of the Lumleys of Lumley Castle*, ed. E. Benham (London, 1904), p. 44; E. B. de Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*, vol. 1 (London, 1887), p. 461.

²¹*L&P* XII/1, 520.

²²'William Stapleton and the Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. J. C. Cox, *Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society* 10 (1902), 80-106, p. 102.

²³*L&P* XII/1, 393 (printed in full in Fonblanque, *Annals*, p. 448).

encouragement, the commons took great pains to capture Thomas and swear him as a captain.

These depositions, which corroborate one another in various respects, are perhaps most interesting for the popular attitudes to the house of Percy and its representatives that they reveal. The commons evidently did not regard the sixth earl as a true representative of his family and found his younger brother more in keeping with their expectations; equally, for all Thomas's apparent personal popularity the commons wanted to understand him not as an individual but a representative of his house. (It is significant that Aske's appeal was made in the East Riding, where the family had had its principal residence since the time of the fifth earl: Thomas's main connections seem to have been in the eastern Marches.)²⁴ What the commons seem to have expected from the family was the leadership of local society against the crown. These expectations - not easily paralleled with respect to other northern families during the Pilgrimage - do not derive from 'official' family histories or genealogies, although they imply a similar sense of the family's position as patrons and defenders of the north. Their source probably lies in rumour and local memory, perhaps especially of the family's early-fifteenth-century rebellions.²⁵ The family's regional power and preeminence was an important element around which the commons tried to build local solidarity, but the perception of the family's regional role was a subversive and ultimately destructive one, that was at least partly to blame for the later execution of Thomas and the eventual descent of the family's title and estates to the crown.

Regional saints and local identities

²⁴M. James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 63.

²⁵For a jingle on Hotspur that may be part of such tradition, see R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London, 1952), p. 203.

The iconic regional figures whose place in local cultures and identities we can assess in most detail are saints. The evidence of wills and liturgical manuscripts, while not without its difficulties, is extensive enough to give us some idea of the areas and groups in which devotion to particular saints was concentrated. The discussion that follows does not fully exploit that evidence: it is largely based on printed sources, and makes no claims to being anything more than a preliminary study. It offers a broad outline of the different roles of regional saints in the articulation of local identities in the devotional culture of late-medieval Yorkshire, which future research may challenge or modify.²⁶

In common with Paulinus, saints were 'local' as well as 'regional' figures: some of their associations were with the devotional culture of the county or diocese, but others were limited to particular locales or institutions. John of Beverley, for example, had an importance as a local patron in his own town that was distinct, although perhaps not entirely separable, from his role in regional culture. He represented the town's identity and authority on its seals, and there were two town guilds dedicated to him.²⁷ He was frequently referred to in the preambles to fifteenth-century guild ordinances, a practice difficult to parallel in other towns.²⁸ These references, together with the apparently enthusiastic participation of the guilds and governors in the Rogationtide procession of

²⁶The following analysis is based on the printed materials in *TE, North Country Wills*, 'York Civic Wills', and other collections of testamentary material (*Knaresborough Wills vol. 1*, ed. F. Collins, SS 104 (1902); *Wills and Inventories from the Register of the Archdeaconry of Richmond*, ed. J. Raine, SS 26 (1853)); and on surviving wills from Beverley, Bridlington and Ripon contained in the probate registers or archbishops' registers in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, which were identified using a searchable database of testators produced by the Institute. Accounts of liturgical manuscripts are largely based on printed descriptions: I have consulted a wide variety of library catalogues, but have found N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1969-92) to be particularly useful.

²⁷W. de Grey Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 6 vols. (London, 1887-1900), II, nos. 4625-6 (1425 and 1501x1507 respectively, but in a thirteenth-century style). For comparable examples see nos. 4782 (Canterbury, with verses on St Thomas's protection of the city), 4939 (Folkestone, with St Eanswyth), 4976-8 (Hartlepool, with St Hilda), etc. For the guilds, Wyatt, 'Performance and Ceremonial', I, xxxiii.

²⁸D. J. K. Wyatt, 'Performance and Ceremonial in Beverley Before 1642: An Annotated Edition of Local Archive Materials', 2 vols., unpublished DPhil dissertation, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, 1983., I, 34, 42, 53, 149, etc; *HMC: Manuscripts of the Corporation of Beverley* (London, 1900), p. 93, etc.

the saint's shrine, suggest that the corporate identity of the town was largely based around St John.

Testamentary bequests also suggest that St John's significance was concentrated in Beverley itself, although it should be said that the vast majority of testators from fifteenth-century Beverley did not make any reference to the town's saint. Hugh Holme of Beverley left forty pieces of gold for the shrine of St John in 1471, and another Beverley merchant left his soul to John, together with John of Bridlington and many other saints. William Drifffield, canon of York, Beverley, and Southwell owned 'costers' stained with images of SS John Evangelist and John of Beverley.²⁹ Other bequests, however, indicate that St John's importance was not restricted to Beverley. John Carre, formerly mayor of York, left his soul to SS Sampson, John of Beverley, Mary Magdalene and all saints (St Sampson's being the parish church in which he wished to be buried).³⁰ The saint's importance to the identity of the church of York, which we explored in the preceding chapter, is reflected in his appearance in the wills of a number of archbishops. Henry Bowet referred in his will of 1421 to SS John of Beverley and Wilfrid, Laurence Booth left his soul to SS William, John, Wilfrid and Cuthbert in 1479, while Thomas Rotherham invoked William, John and Wilfrid among a number of other confessors and saints.³¹ In these wills, John's local associations have become less important than his institutional meaning, and it was perhaps this meaning which gave him regional significance for those laymen who added his feast to their liturgical books.³²

The institutional identity of the church of York was also articulated through the cult of St William, which seems to have been especially important to York clergy and especially *Minster* dignitaries. The notebook (c. 1471-2) of a York priest called Robert Burton includes a copy of the commemoration of St William, and a book belonging to

²⁹TE III, 135 and 192; TE II, 97.

³⁰TE IV, 26-7.

³¹TE I, 399; III, 248; IV, 139.

³²See below, p. 219. For the combination of John, William and Wilfrid as patrons of the church of York, see *Memorials of the Church of SS Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, ed. J. T. Fowler, 3 vols., SS 74, 78, 81 (1882-8), II, 152, 158; and also what Purvis calls 'the usual pilgrimage penance' imposed by the dean and chapter of York in their peculiar court, to the same saints and their institutions (*A Medieval Act Book, With Some Account of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction at York*, ed. J. S. Purvis [York, n.d.], p. 34; and below, ch. 7, p. 269-70).

William Marschall, chaplain of Peasholme, contains a poem recording Henry VI's visit to St William's shrine in 1444.³³ A number of *m*inster dignitaries wished to be buried near William's tomb. William Moreton, chancellor, requested burial on the north side of the tomb in 1466; Thomas Pereson, sub-dean, asked to be buried near the tomb in 1490, and also left a cloth to hang next to St William's head in the choir. A later sub-dean again wanted his tomb near that of the minster's saint. In 1495, the precentor John Hert asked to be buried 'juxta locum sepulturae sanctissimi patris Willelmi'.³⁴ John Clifford, treasurer, requested burial next to the east end of the tomb if he happened to die in the diocese of York, and left money for wax to be burned there. Other treasurers were buried around the tomb and the will of John Bernyngam reveals that a location to the south of the tomb was customary those who had held this office.³⁵ As the lections in breviaries of the York use recalled, William had himself served as treasurer, but a desire to identify with the saint as a more inclusive representative of the church's identity seems to have been widespread within the upper echelons of its administration.³⁶

William had a similar, although perhaps less pronounced importance to York's civic administration. The chapel on Ouse Bridge dedicated to William was an important focus of civic culture.³⁷ It was a regular place of assembly for the council, 'vulgarly called the mayor's chamber'; a number of chantries were founded there for citizens; and it was also an element of some guild ordinances that members should hear mass there.³⁸ According to a letter of 1555, it was also a custom of the city that the mayor would feast

³³Bodl., MS Wood empt. 20 ('A York Priest's Notebook', in R. M. Haines, *Ecclesia anglicana: Studies in the English Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1989), pp. 156-179); Bodl., MS Bodley 857, fol. Iv (printed in *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. A. F. Johnston and M. Rogerson, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1979), I, 73).

³⁴TE IV, 51-3, 226 (1504), 113.

³⁵TE I, 167; IV, 278 (cf. *North Country Wills, 1383-1558*, ed. J. W. Clay, SS 116 (1908), p. 32-4); II, 204 (burial *ex parte australi predictae tumbae prope predecessores meos thesaurarius*).

³⁶*Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie Eboracensis*, ed. S. W. Lawley, 2 vols., SS 71, 75 (1880-3), II, 297-8.

³⁷It contained an image of St William, to which pilgrimage was specified as penance in 1457 (*Mediaeval Act Book*, ed. Purvis, p. 33).

³⁸VCH: York, pp. 515-6; YMB, II, 17, 51-2, 53, 134-5, 274, 178, 181 are some of the many references to the chapel and its uses.

his fellow aldermen on St William's day.³⁹ Offerings to William's shrine seem to have been most common in the vicinity of York itself. Joan Hesilrigg bequeathed an 'ouch' to St William's head, and William Revetour left a ring to the shrine.⁴⁰ Joan Chamberleyn of York left in 1501/2 a pair of bedes to St William's head, while Margaret Norton of Bilbrough (around five miles south-west of York) in 1506 left 'j cathedram quae fuit cathedra S. Willielmi Ebor. archiepiscopi'.⁴¹ Like St John of Beverley, however, St William also attracted bequests from beyond his immediate vicinity, which suggest he functioned as a regional icon to a wide cross-section of society. Matilda, wife of Peter Mauley and daughter of the first earl of Westmorland, left a gold ring and collar to St William's head, while in 1390 John de Whettlay, woolman, apparently from Rainton (around twenty miles north-west of York) left a gold ring with a ruby to St William's tomb, as well as 8d. for a man to hang it there.⁴²

Like that of St William, the cult of Richard Scrope also had a distinctive form within York itself.⁴³ For some, it was bound up with personal or familial memories of the saint transmitted through objects associated with him, such as his ring or book.⁴⁴ For others, Scrope's cult was connected to that of St William and the church of York. Isabel, widow of Robert Bruce, asked in 1477 to be buried in the cloister of St Clements next to her sister, under images of the Virgin Mary and St William, and left a ring with a diamond to the head of Richard Scrope.⁴⁵ M Thomas Welleworth, residentiary canon of the Minster, asked to be buried near Scrope's tomb.⁴⁶ Stephen Scrope, archdeacon of Richmond, in 1418 bequeathed his soul to St William (among others) and asked to be

³⁹'Letters of the Cliffords, Lords Clifford and Earls of Cumberland, c. 1500 - c. 1535', ed. R. W. Hoyle, *Camden Miscellany* 31, Camden Society 4th ser. 44 (1992), pp. 1-191 (pp. 132-3).

⁴⁰*TE* I, 267 and II, 118 (1446).

⁴¹*TE* IV, 201, 92n.

⁴²*TE* II, 68; *TE* I, 134.

⁴³For Scrope's cult see J. Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 305-15.

⁴⁴*TE* II, 61, 66, 259.

⁴⁵*TE* III, 231-2.

⁴⁶*TE* I, 353.

buried near Scrope, while John Dautre bequeathed to both William and Scrope. Katherine, widow of John de Craven, mayor of York in 1411, left girdles to the shrines of William and Scrope.⁴⁷

Such bequests reflect the efforts taken by the minster to associate Scrope's cult with that of William and with the institutional identity of the minster itself.⁴⁸ The Latin verses commemorating Richard's execution noted that it took place on the *felix festivitas* of St William.⁴⁹ In the minster, Scrope was represented as a saint opposite a depiction of St William: the scroll in which the donor Stephen Scrope addressed him - *O Ricarde pastor bone* - was modelled on a common prayer to St William.⁵⁰ As early as 1406 offerings to Scrope were being diverted to St William's shrine. In January 1463 the dean and chapter received a royal mandate concerning the canonization of Scrope, but in August of that year it was decided rather that the feast of the dedication of the minster should be promulgated throughout the province, and that fines should be imposed on those who refused to take part in processions with St William's shrine.⁵¹

Manuscripts containing prayers to Scrope, however, were produced in the early fifteenth century for a regional as well as a local market. One was owned by Richard Redman of Kirkby Overblow, a few miles west of Wetherby, in the early sixteenth century; another was probably used in All Saints' Pavement, York; a third was probably also commissioned by a York family; a fourth may be from Carlisle and a fifth is of uncertain provenance.⁵² This last manuscript contains a hymn celebrating Scrope's

⁴⁷TE I, 385 and II, 233; 'York Civic Wills', 32/1 (1913), pp. 316-7.

⁴⁸S. Walker, 'Political Saints in Later Medieval England', in *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society*, ed. R. H. Britnell and A. J. Pollard (Stroud, 1995), pp. 77-106 (p. 94).

⁴⁹*Political Poems and Songs*, ed. T. Wright, RS 14, 2 vols. (1859-61), II, 114-8. A vernacular life of Scrope seen by Thomas Talbot in the sixteenth century does not appear to survive: A. G. Watson, *The Manuscripts of Henry Savile of Banke*, p. 79.

⁵⁰S6 and S7: see J. Toy, *A Guide and Index to the Windows of York Minster* (York, 1985).

⁵¹York Minster Library, M2/1f, fos. 70r-72r. The latter ordinance provides further details of St William's procession: fines are specified against anyone refusing to carry the shrine on his shoulders, 'illis temporibus quibus ad laudem dei et reverenciam dicti sancti solet publice per ecclesiam sive civitatem deferri', or to carry the cross before the shrine.

⁵²York Minster Library, MSS Add. 67, XVI.K.6, Add. 2; Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College MS 62; Cambridge, St John's College MS 129. For descriptions, see Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, IV, 811-3, 727-30, 786-91; M. R. James, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Sidney*

association with York - 'Ave decus sanctitatis Eboraci civitatis' - which was also added to a book of hours owned by the Mountenay family from near Doncaster.⁵³

Perhaps the only saint whose importance as a regional icon seems to have surpassed his local significance was John of Bridlington. Very few wills from Bridlington itself contain specific bequests to St John, although this may not be an accurate reflection of his local popularity, which was attested by Henry VIII's commissioners in the 1530s.⁵⁴ Bequests from York in the early fifteenth century indicate the saint's wider meaning, and Roger de Wandesford in 1400 arranged for pilgrimage to be made to Beverley and Bridlington 'to visit the glorious confessors lying in those places' to whom he had made a solemn vow when he nearly drowned at sea between Ireland and Norway.⁵⁵ By this date, indeed, John had become a figure of national as well as local importance: in 1466 William Boston of Newark, arranged for a priest to go on pilgrimage to Walsingham, Canterbury and Hayles in addition to Bridlington.⁵⁶

Testamentary evidence, then, suggests that most of the saints who were perceived as regionally emblematic figures had a variety of other meanings in local culture, particularly in the vicinity of their shrines. The same doubtless held true of the other saints - Wilfrid, Hilda, Robert of Knaresborough, Thomas of Lancaster and so on - who seem to have been lesser but still important regional icons. Perceptions of these saints as regional icons are perhaps most striking when they appear in wills and in devotional manuscripts as part of larger groups.

When manuscripts produced in accordance with the Sarum rite came into the

Sussex College, Cambridge (Cambridge, 1895), pp. 4-5; M. R. James, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts of St John's College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 162-5. For the Scrope material, see *Horae Eboracenses*, ed. C. Wordsworth, SS 132 (1920), pp. 181-3.

⁵³York Minster Library MS Add. 54; see below, n. 58.

⁵⁴*Yorkshire Monasteries: Suppression Papers*, ed. J. W. Clay, YASRS 48 (1912), pp. 17, 47. In the vicinity of Bridlington Thomas Ardern of Marton, esquire, left his soul to St John in 1453: *TE* II, 195.

⁵⁵*TE* I, 331 and 256; 'York Civic Wills', 32/1 (1913), pp. 316-7.

⁵⁶*TE* II, 283.

possession of families from the county or diocese it was common for a number of saints from the region to be added to their calendars: as often, the distinctive elements of local identities appear most clearly when circumstances require them to be asserted rather than allowing them to operate invisibly. A particularly interesting example is the substantial mid-fifteenth-century breviary belonging to the parish church of Wollaton (Notts.). Additions to the calendar include 'Sancti Willelmi Epi and confessoris non Sar. sed Ebor.', 'Sancti Iohannis Brydyngt.' and 'Sancti Wilfridi Epi and confessoris'.⁵⁷ A double feast for St William is also a marginal addition to the sanctoral, and the office for John of Bridlington was added on three folios at the end of the volume. Arms in this exceptionally impressive and expensive volume's decoration indicate that it was produced for Sir Thomas Chaworth of Wiverton (Notts.): after his death it was purchased for the church of Wollaton by the executors of William Husse. Husse's obit appears in the calendar with other rectors of Wollaton and members of the Willoughby family (1460-1528). It seems likely that the Yorkshire saints were added to the calendar at this period: they suggest that a manuscript whose regional associations, if any, were originally toward eastern England, was reconfigured in relation to the diocese of York when it passed into clerical ownership.

Another example is provided by a late-fourteenth-century Sarum book of hours to which the three historic saints of the diocese of York - Wilfrid, John of Beverley and William - have been added, together with an office for Scrope. Again, obits supply evidence of ownership, recording the death of Isabel Hilton in 1391 and the births of sons of John Mountney in 1395-6: the Hiltons were a Holderness family, and the seat of the Mounteneys was at Wheatley near Doncaster.⁵⁸ Occasionally, such regionally inflected piety can be seen in manuscripts commissioned by local families: a well known example is the 'Bolton Hours' (c. 1405-15) from York with its illustrations of (amongst a number

⁵⁷Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, IV, 667-8; see also K. L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490*, 2 vols. (London, 1996), II, no. 69 (with further references). John of Beverley and Oswald are included in the original calendar.

⁵⁸York Minster Library, MS Add. 54; Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, IV, 809-11. For the saints, above, n. 32.

of others) SS William, Cuthbert, Richard Scrope and John of Beverley.⁵⁹

Several wills contain bequests to comparable groups of saints which situate individual piety within a range of regional frameworks. Hugh de Speton of Beverley, merchant, left money to the shrines of Richard Scrope, St John of Bridlington, St John of Beverley, St Hilda of Whitby and St Ninian in Scotland. More comprehensively, M. William Ecopp, rector of Heserlton, arranged for pilgrims to go (in addition to major national shrines at Canterbury, Walsingham and St Paul's, and to Ely and Lincoln) to shrines at Doncaster, Pontefract, Newburgh, Scarborough, Hackness, Thorpe Basset, Guisborough, Beverley, Bridlington, York, Jesmount, Carlisle, Whithorn, and Galway.⁶⁰

As these wills suggest, it would be quite wrong to suggest that regional devotional attachments were always expressed in relation to saints from the county or diocese, and there is considerable evidence for the importance of other northern saints to devotional culture in late-medieval Yorkshire. Wax was bequeathed in 1497 to burn in Stokesley church (NRY) before SS Peter and Ninian, and the latter's name was chosen by Sir Thomas Markenfield for his son.⁶¹ The most important northern saint from beyond the county or diocese, however, was undoubtedly Cuthbert of Durham. Cuthbert was represented in stained glass and devotional manuscripts; chapels and chantries were dedicated to him at Beverley, Hornby and elsewhere.⁶² He also suggested names for the sons of several families, perhaps especially in north Yorkshire. A Cuthbert Lightfote was rector of Rudby, presented by Sir John Conyers; one of the sons of the first earl of Westmorland also bore this name, as did a son of William Musgrave, while George Conyers married a daughter of one Cuthbert Frank.⁶³ Perhaps most tellingly, the banner used by the Pilgrims to represent their cause in 1536-7 was that of Cuthbert, implicitly

⁵⁹York Minster Library MS Add. 2; Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts* II, no. 33, pp. 119-121; Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, IV, 786-91.

⁶⁰BIHR, Reg. 18 fo. 360r (also with a bequest to St Thomas of Canterbury); *TE* III, 200-1.

⁶¹*TE* IV, 129 and 124. For more detailed discussion of Ninian's cult, see A. J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War and Politics 1450-1500* (Oxford, 1990), p. 190; A. F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, *The Hours of Richard III* (Stroud, 1990), pp. 40-4.

⁶²*TE* IV, 7-8 and 41-2.

⁶³*TE* IV, 110-1 and n.; *Visitation of the North c. 1480-1500*, ed. C. Hunter Blair, *Visitations of the North* 3, SS 144 (1930), pp. 15, 36, 29, 93.

recognized as the preeminent northern saint.⁶⁴ When local devotional cultures (or, more rarely, solidarities) drew on regional figures, they were not restricted to those associated with the county or diocese.

In my discussion of devotion to regional saints I have emphasized the variety of ways in which these figures structured local and institutional identities, and as the discussion has been based on a relatively narrow sample of the available evidence, it seems likely that this variety will become more striking and significant as more evidence is explored. Attitudes to these saints at both the local and the regional level were sometimes shaped by institutional discourses. SS William and Richard Scrope were closely associated in the pious culture of York and its surrounding area, reflecting the visual and textual materials in which Scrope's cult was promoted. The association of SS William, Wilfrid and John of Beverley in wills and liturgical manuscripts from the diocese also echoes these saints' position as historic patrons of the church of York, and their close identity with the 'mother churches' of the diocese.⁶⁵ But other saints also served this representative function: if the most common pilgrimage imposed as penance by the dean and chapter was to York, Beverley and Ripon, penances also stipulated offerings at the shrines of John of Bridlington and Richard Scrope.⁶⁶ Equally, it is clear that the meaning attributed to these and other saints, both individually and in combination, was also influenced by a variety of other factors ranging from geographical location to personal idiosyncrasy. Similarly, saints who were understood in some contexts in terms of their local or regional associations could also carry a number of other meanings. St John of Bridlington, for example, was also revered for his status as an Augustinian canon, while Richard Scrope

⁶⁴for the banner, see M. Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 136, 160, 182, 376, 380.

⁶⁵See below, ch. 7, pp. 269-70.

⁶⁶*Mediaeval Act Book*, ed. Purvis, pp. 20, 25, 32, 36, 49.

came to be venerated as a martyr for the house of York.⁶⁷ Their local associations were only one part of these figures' identities, and not always the most important part.

The final section of this chapter explores in more detail how attitudes to regional figures and institutions were shaped by institutional discourses or by local traditions or idiosyncrasies, through examining three passages from a fourteenth-century chronicle.

Institutional authority and regional history: the case of Castleford's Chronicle

The fourteenth-century vernacular history known as *Castleford's Chronicle* illustrates particularly well the alternative traditions that circulated regarding regional figures or institutions, and their elusive and fugitive character. Little is known for certain about the chronicle's origins or sources, although the surviving manuscript is associated with Monk Bretton, and later bibliographers connected the text with Pontefract.⁶⁸ The chronicle's accounts of the dispute between York and Canterbury, of Athelstan's visit to St John of Beverley, and of the foundation of St Leonard's, York all demonstrate the importance of regional institutions to the chronicler's sense of the past, and the variety of materials on which he drew.

The account of the see of York occurs in the course of a description of England which interrupts the account of Athelstan's reign.⁶⁹ It emphasizes the size and dignity of the see, and shows some sympathy for its cause against Canterbury: its chapter headings, for example, state 'Her Yorke's degre of þe primate / Was even vnto Canterbery state',

⁶⁷In 1429 St John was invoked in a petition by Augustinian canons (*RP IV*, 159); he appears in a number of Augustinian calendars (J. A. Twemlow, 'The Liturgical Credentials of a Forgotten English Saint', in *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à M. Charles Bémont* (Paris, 1913), pp. 365-71). For Scrope, see J. W. McKenna, 'Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda: The Cult of Archbishop Scrope', *Speculum* 45 (1970), 608-23 (pp. 618-22).

⁶⁸See *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, ed. J. B. Severs and A. E. Hartung, 10 vols. (New Haven, 1967-), VIII, 2624-5.

⁶⁹*Castleford's Chronicle or the Book of Brut*, ed. C. D. Eckhardt, EETS 305 and 306, 2 vols. (1996), II, 747-68.

and ‘þe worschip of Yorkes dignite / Had gret worschipe in his se’.⁷⁰ There is also support for York’s jurisdiction over Scotland: York is said to be primate ‘Fra Vmbre north, men knawes and wate, / Fra Vmbre north, alle Schotland ouer’.⁷¹ Whether this passage has been influenced by the chronicles examined in chapter 3, however, is unclear. The description of York’s jurisdiction ‘fra Vmbre unto Catenesse’ (l. 27898) probably comes directly from Geoffrey of Monmouth or a related Brut chronicle, and other passages closely follow Bede or a derivative account.⁷² On the other hand, Castleford, like the prose chronicle of the archbishops, mentions Gregory’s erection of London into a see at the expense of Canterbury, with the comment that Gregory ‘made in þis composicion / Of Cantorbirs na mencion’. (Compare the prose chronicle’s ‘nullam fecit de Cantuarensi mentionem.’)⁷³

Other passages, however, seem to be close to materials produced not by York but by Canterbury, in particular archbishop Ralph’s letter to Pope Calixtus II. (Two parallel passages are set out in table 5.1) Ralph’s letter is said to survive only in Canterbury manuscripts, but may have reached the Castleford compiler in pamphlet form or incorporated into other materials.⁷⁴ Again, though, if the Castleford chronicler did use this source, he added details from elsewhere and

⁷⁰Lines 27949-50, 28075-6.

⁷¹Lines 27794-5 and cf. II, 752.

⁷²Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, tr. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1966), ii. 15 and iii.1 (pp. 87, 90),

⁷³Castleford, II, 755, ll. 27947-8; *HCY* II, 314.

⁷⁴There are two manuscripts, BL, MS Cotton Claudius E. V and Cotton Domitian V (T. D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials Relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols. in 4, RS 26, (London, 1862-71), II, 147); the letter is not found in Eadmer’s *Historia Novorum* or Gervase of Canterbury’s *Actus pontificum Cantuariensis ecclesiae*. Canterbury sources were known in the north: the *Historia Regum* from Durham used Eadmer’s *Historia Novorum* (Gransden, *Historical Writing*, I, 149, 150-1).

Table 5.1 Parallel passages from Ralph, archbishop of Canterbury's letter to Pope Calixtus II, and *Castleford's Chronicle*.

'at vero neque Augustinus,
neque Laurentius,
neque tertius ab Augustino Mellitus

aliquem ad Eboracem destinavit
ordinandum episcopum' (*HCY* II, 233; no such
emphasis in Bede)

'Igitur tam rex Cantuariorum quam rex
Northanhimbrorum, ... Britanniam tamen
totam a nuper accepta Christiana religione
vacillare timentes,
quia Cantuaria archiepiscopum non haberet,
pari consensu

electum quendam presbyterum, nomine
Wighardum,

ad Apostolicam sedem consecrandum
direxerunt. Qui apud Vitalianum papam
optime susceptus,

superveniente pestilentia ibidem obiit
peregrinus' (*HCY* II, 236, loosely after Bede,
iii.29 and iv.1)

'Bot neuer Augustine, so men sais.
Ne Laurence ek, after his daies,
Ne ek þe thridde primate, Mellite.
Com aftre Augustine obite.
To Eborwik prouince sent
Bischope sacrede þoru þe mandement'.
(*Castleford* 28005-10)

'Kynges of Northumbre and of Kent
Same þai were of ane assent,
And gretelie anens þam þai dredde
Cristen folk be in trow misseledde,
For Cantorbirs religion
So lang was voide of pallion;
Dout þai hade so lang to thole,
Voide be Kentish metropole.
Lo, þai in þe worschipe of Criste
Ches ane, to name Wigharde preste.
Als for þe state chosen þe beste,
To þe papes see þai him adreste -
Resaifede of þe pape Vitalaine,
Bot or he hade þe dignite tane,
þar, þoru an comande pestilens.
He died, in þe papes presens.'
(*Castleford* 28171-86)

omitted the majority of Canterbury's polemic.⁷⁵ The chronicler's final judgement condemned the pride and hautesse of both parties (28372-6).⁷⁶

The chronicler's inclusion of a substantial section devoted to the church of York indicates the significance he attributed to the history and status of this major regional institution. I do not know of a comparable passage in any other chronicle, and it seems likely that the Castleford passage was compiled independently, at some effort. Whether or not the compiler had access to the historical material produced by the metropolitan church itself must remain an open question. In any case, what is most striking about the passage is the way in which a number of sources, perhaps of quite distinct origins and perspectives, have been consulted and combined to produce this account. Recognition of an institution's regional importance does not entail whole-hearted sympathy with its actions or aims.

The chronicle's account of the foundation of St Leonard's is equally revealing. Again, the fact that the foundation is noted at all indicates the chronicler's interest in regional institutions. But the details given of the foundation are distinct from any of the traditions examined in chapter 3. In particular, the foundation is placed in the reign of Stephen rather than William I or II. On the other hand, the site of the hospital is specified as west of the city gate, which echoes the references in the inquisition of 1246 to land west of the minster gate. The contemporary mayor of York is named as Nigel.⁷⁷ The chronicler's sources here are far from clear. They may well reflect a tradition current in York which was not recorded in either of the thirteenth-century inquisitions.⁷⁸

Castleford's account of Athelstan's campaign against Scotland is equally

⁷⁵For example: names of the bishops who followed Aidan (28115-20), not in *HCY* II, 234; *HCY* II, 234-6 (disquisition on why the Scottish are subject to Canterbury) omitted in Castleford which moves straight from the account of Oswald and Aidan to the story of Deusdedit and Chad. (II, 760; cf. *HCY* II 234, 236); *HCY* II, 237-8 ('whence this presumption of the York people?') not in Castleford.

⁷⁶Compare the opinion of William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicanum*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, RS 82, 4 vols. (1884-9), II, 443-5; Grandsen I, 266.

⁷⁷*Castleford*, II, 894-5. According (uniquely?) to this chronicle, the thraves with which the hospital had been endowed had been imposed by William Rufus, to feed his hounds (II, 876).

⁷⁸Dodsworth records a similar tradition, which he attributes to 'Stow augmented by How' (Bodl., Dodsworth MS 129, fos. 208v-9v, cf. 103v; MS 116, fo. 118v).

baffling.⁷⁹ Some of its details suggest familiarity with the Beverley texts and traditions examined in chapter 3. The claim that Perth was called ‘St John’s town’ because Athelstan had won it with John of Beverley’s assistance, for example, is shared with a Beverley text.⁸⁰ The account of Athelstan’s visit to Beverley is substantially equivalent to that in the Beverley *miracula*, with the exception that men returning from Beverley are met in Lindsey (as in Ailred of Rievaulx) rather than the *provinciam Lincolniae* of later versions.⁸¹ (This makes it unlikely that the chronicler was using the version of events prepared for Edward I and subsequently distributed.) After Athelstan has offered to St John at Beverley, however, the account diverges radically from all other known versions. St John appears to the king while he is still in Yorkshire, to urge him to carry the saint’s banner before him. Athelstan uses the banner to drive the Scots from ‘Yorkes walde’ northwards, defeating them near ‘Streuelinges watre’. The Castleford version also seems to be unique in naming the Scottish king as ‘Girge’ rather than Constantine. Again, the sources for this section are unclear. It is possible that attacks on Yorkswold and a battle at Stirling are intended to reflect early-fourteenth-century Anglo-Scottish relations, with the implication that the English had not always fared so badly. But it is equally possible that Castleford reflects a local historical tradition unrecorded elsewhere, comparable to the tradition of a battle fought on Yorkswold against Sweyn and Knut.⁸²

These passages from Castleford’s Chronicle provide an appropriate summary to the argument of this chapter. Each demonstrates the interest of the chronicler (and presumably his audience) in figures and institutions which had played an important role in regional history. So far as we know, these figures or institutions had no immediate local resonance for the chronicler; nor were they of national significance, either for this chronicler or for writers elsewhere in the kingdom. They reflect the significance of institutions and figures who existed at a level between the local and national (the

⁷⁹Castleford, II, 799-802.

⁸⁰Castleford, II, 802, ll. 29666-71; Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446, p. 6. I do not know of other examples of this claim.

⁸¹And the York breviary: *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie Eboracensis*, ed. S. W. Lawley, 2 vols., SS 71, 75 (1880-3), II, 640.

⁸²See below, ch. 8, p. 307.

regional) in local cultures and identities. They confirm the earlier argument that such institutions and figures were understood not only in terms of their own propaganda but through a variety of other traditions. This presents a significant contrast to the national frameworks of locality explored in the first part of this thesis, whose function in local identities seems to have been closely related to their wider meanings. In the final part of the thesis, I shall explore the characteristics of local traditions more fully.

PART III
'OUR COUNTRY ABOUT US'

The first and second parts of this thesis have examined the construction of locality in public discourses directed at national and regional audiences, and disseminated at national and regional levels. I have explored the ways in which such discourses borrowed from and fed into one another, and how they shaped or created opportunities for the articulation of individual, institutional or communal identities in relation to regional or national frameworks of locality. The final part of the thesis considers the relation of identities and localities at more restricted territorial levels. It asks how locality was understood outside of the national and regional discourses which have been the subject of preceding chapters, exploring the frameworks through which local societies positioned themselves in relation to neighbouring communities and to the surrounding landscape.

This investigation continues the earlier interest in historical culture, but turns to material which circulated at local levels. The chronicle of Meaux abbey or the collections of Thomas Anlaby take precedence over the history of the archbishops of York or genealogical literature. The structures of central administration remain significant, but at the level of the wapentake or district, deanery or parish, rather than the county, diocese or the North. Institutional, individual and antiquarian records will be read from a local, rather than a regional or national perspective.

The quantity of evidence is daunting, and I am indebted to earlier studies which have provided a guide to it, in particular the Victoria County History and the English Place Name Society. As throughout the thesis, I have not tried to produce an exhaustive account, but to identify the fundamental idioms and mentalities through which locality was articulated and made meaningful at different social levels. Although there is a large body of material that I have not been able to explore, I hope that I have been able to outline the more important frameworks in terms of which local identities were related to regional districts, to topography and landscape, and to ideas of neighbourhood and country.

The section is divided into three chapters. The first explores the nature and significance of the districts into which the county was divided, to some extent for those beyond it but more fundamentally for those within or around it. What kinds of area did such districts denote and what were their origins; how were they perceived in the late Middle Ages and what was their significance to local identities? The final chapters move on to examine the culture of locality in relation to still more restricted geographical areas, arguing that the meaning of locality becomes increasingly focussed on territorial and topographical features. The second chapter considers the significance of centres and peripheries, boundaries and 'head places'; and the third chapter explores the relation of the local community to the surrounding landscape and landmarks.

CHAPTER 6

YORKSHIRE AND ITS DISTRICTS

Laurence Nowell's map of Britain, c. 1564, presents a striking contrast between the representation of northern and southern England. South of a line roughly between the Ribble and the Wash, territory is generally described in terms of counties. North of this line, counties also appear but they are accompanied by a profusion of district names: *Riddesdale, Tindale, Gilslande, Copeland, Kendal, Bowland; Swaldale, Clevelande, Blackamore, Holderness, Craven; Werall; Axholme, Holand*. Only a handful of districts - such as *Deane forest* or *Cotswold* - are identified elsewhere in England. Nowell's map suggests that northern England was distinctive because it was perceived not only in terms of the county framework that covered other parts of the kingdom, but also in terms of a number of smaller units. The contrast is less dramatic on the mid-fourteenth-century Gough map, on which only eight county-names are provided, but the prominence of districts in the area of Yorkshire - *Holdernes, Yorkwold, Blakemore, and Staynesmore* - is still striking.¹ This chapter asks whether the prominence of districts in the representation of the area of Yorkshire in these two maps was typical. What districts was Yorkshire commonly articulated through, what were their origins, and what was their impact on local identities within the shire? To what extent was the area of 'Yorkshire' perceived by contemporaries not as a coherent whole but in terms of a number of smaller units?

It will be helpful to anticipate the more detailed discussion that follows by listing the principal districts into which Yorkshire was divided in the later Middle Ages, some of which do not figure on Nowell's map. In the East Riding, the areas mentioned frequently are the Wolds ('Yorke's wold' on Saxton's map of 1577) and Holderness. Camden accurately stated that the North Riding 'may not improperly be divided into the

¹Nowell's map is reproduced on the jacket of P. D. A. Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London, 1993); for the Gough map see E. J. S. Parsons, *The Map of Great Britain circa A. D. 1360 known as the Gough Map: An Introduction to the Facsimile* (repr. Oxford, 1996), *passim* and p. 26 for places represented in Yorkshire.

following parts: *Blakemore, Cliveland, Northallertonshire, and Richmondshire*’; although Richmondshire itself contained smaller districts such as Swaledale and Wensleydale.² In the West Riding, the major districts were Craven in the west (again incorporating smaller areas such as Wharfedale, Ribblesdale and Airedale), Nidderdale, Hallamshire around Sheffield in the south and Marshland in the east. Although this list is not comprehensive, it should, together with the map of these and adjoining districts, provide some orientation for the following discussion. (Figure 6.1)

The names of the principal districts fall into two broad classes. Many are topographical - most obviously those formed from the element ‘-dale’, but also Cleveland (‘cliff land’), Holderness (the -ness element indicates a promontory), Marshland, Yorkswold, and Blackamoor. Craven likewise probably means ‘scratched land’.³ Although some of these districts only seem to emerge in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries, others are of considerable antiquity. Holderness and Craven both have pre-Conquest origins.⁴ Early references to ‘dales’ in Cumbria and Lancashire suggest that some of the ‘geographical’ districts which mostly first appear in Yorkshire in the twelfth century may also have enjoyed some pre-Conquest identity and cohesion.⁵

The other class of district names is formed with the element ‘-shire’. Hallamshire is first mentioned in 1161, but has been identified - like Howdenshire and Allertonshire - as an Anglo-Saxon ‘multiple estate’ in origin.⁶ It has also been suggested that some of the territorially compact lordships which have traditionally been seen as Norman creations - most famously perhaps Richmondshire or the lordship of Richmond - may

²William Camden, *Britannia*, ed. and tr. R. Gough, 3 vols. (London, 1789), III, 250. *PN: NRY*, pp. 94, 197, is wrong to distinguish the present-day ‘Blakey Moor’ from medieval Blackamoor: the spellings of both names follow the same historical development, and comparison of Nowell’s and Saxton’s maps shows that the former’s ‘Blackamore’ and the latter’s ‘Blakay More’ are both intended to denote not a particular place but a district south of Cleveland.

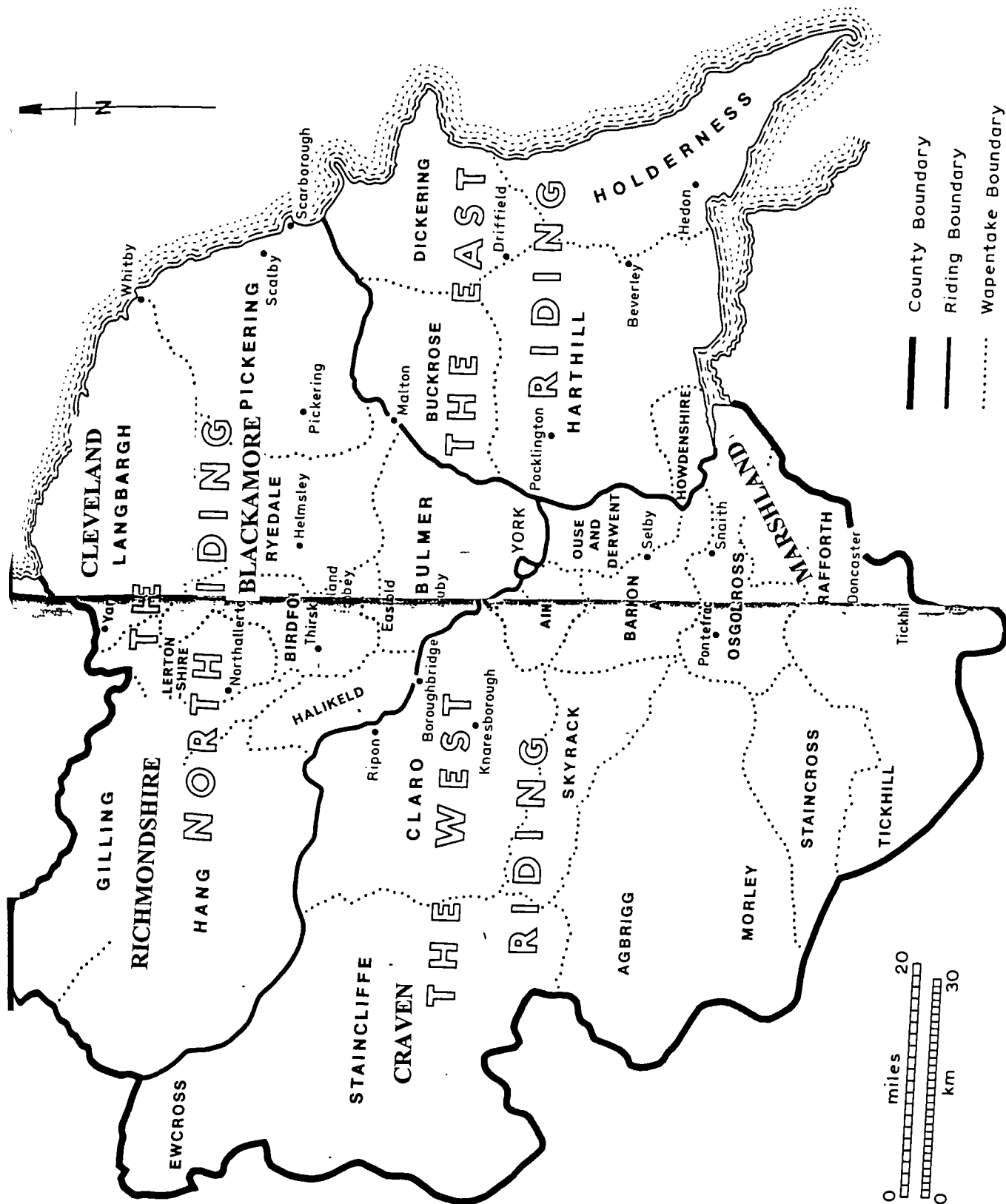
³P. N. Wood, ‘On the Little British Kingdom of Craven’, *Northern History* 32 (1996), 1-20 (pp. 1-3).

⁴Wood, ‘On the Kingdom of Craven’, *passim*; B. English, *The Lords of Holderness 1080-1280: A Study in Feudal Society* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 109-10; *VCH: ERY* V, 2.

⁵A. J. L. Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 14-5. Lonsdale is also mentioned in Domesday: *PN: WRY* VI, 218.

⁶G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1971), pp. 19-21, 25 and 64; D. Hey, *The Making of South Yorkshire* (Ashbourne, 1979), pp. 26-9.

Figure 6.1 Yorkshire, wapentakes and principal districts. The base map is from *Yorkshire Hundred and Quo Warranto Rolls*, ed. English, endleaves. Districts, whose location is approximate, are after Saxton's map of 1577 and Speed's map of 1610.



likewise have been in existence in largely similar form before 1066.⁷ It is not clear whether areas like Mashamshire and Kirkbyshire had similarly antique origins, or whether the -shire element was applied with some freedom in the later Middle Ages to describe a variety of administrative areas.

Despite this broad distinction of nomenclature, there was no sharp division between 'topographical' and 'administrative' districts. Holderness and Craven were both administrative areas and - like Howdenshire, Allertonshire and Richmondshire - influenced the later organization of the shire into wapentakes. In addition, Craven, Cleveland and Holderness were the names of ecclesiastical deaneries and archdeaconries.⁸ Administrative units also had an existence outside of their official contexts and were used informally to describe local districts. From an early date, in fact, all kinds of districts served, in official or learned as well as popular milieux, as frameworks of varying precision for delimiting locality. These frameworks were useful both within and beyond the shire, but it was largely within the shire that they came to acquire historical and cultural resonance. In wider regional culture, districts provided a means for imagining other parts of the shire and sometimes for characterizing them, usually in negative terms. For those within them, they offered a framework in which communal identities could be articulated, the landscape organized and the past understood.

Yorkshire and its districts in the late Middle Ages

These units had, then, what might be broadly be distinguished as 'wider' and 'local' meanings, although as so often the distinction is not absolute or clear-cut. I shall begin by examining the meaning that these districts had for the wider community of the realm (and more particularly of the region), before turning to the more specialized significance they carried for more local communities.

⁷P. Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship: Yorkshire 1066-1154* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 73-4 and references there given.

⁸*VCH: Yks.*, III, 80-8.

Districts and central administration

The districts discussed in this section were not the primary areas through which the royal administration of Yorkshire was conducted - whether for the raising of taxation, the levying of military service, or the operation of justice, it was the structure of the county and its ridings and wapentakes that usually determined administrative organization.⁹ On a number of occasions in the early fourteenth century, however, this structure was complemented or replaced by reference to one or more districts. In 1301, for example, 1100 soldiers were to be selected from Yorkshire, 300 from Blackburnshire, 300 from Hallamshire, 300 from Pickering and Blackamore, 100 from Richmondshire and 100 from Holderness.¹⁰ In 1311 separate commissioners were appointed to levy men from Richmondshire and Craven, and from the rest of Yorkshire.¹¹ Similarly, in 1311 keepers of the peace were appointed for the bishopric of Durham, the parts of Richmond, and the parts of the moor of Blackhou.¹² Again in 1314 Nicholas de Meignyll was 'custos pacis' in 'partibus de Clyveland et de mora de Blakhou', in addition to the wapentakes of Bulmer, Ryedale and Birdforth.¹³

I have not been able to find comparable practices later in the period, and it seems likely that areas such as Blackamore became less important to central administration as the organization of commissions of array became more developed and standardized.

⁹From the large body of literature on the workings of royal government, see in particular A. L. Brown. *The Governance of Late Medieval England 1272-1461* (London, 1989); *The English Government at Work 1327-1336*, ed. J. F. Willard et al., 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1940-50); H. Cam, *The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls: An Outline of Local Government in Medieval England* (London, 1930). The following discussion makes no claim to exhaustiveness: it is based on a sample of the major printed and calendared public records over the period, with particular attention to its beginning and close, and it is reliant on the indices to these volumes, which in many cases are deficient.

¹⁰*CPR 1301-7*, pp. 1, 24; it was later decided that in the interests of speed men could be levied from any part of the county (p. 6). For the more usual organization of numbers by ridings or by wapentakes and liberties, see e.g. pp. 132, 529; and cf. A. E. Prince, 'The Army and Navy', in *English Government at Work*, I, 332-93, pp. 356-7.

¹¹*Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in domo capitulari Westmonasteriensi asservati*, ed. D. Macpherson, J. Caley, and W. Illingworth, 2 vols. (London, 1814-9), I, 101, 104.

¹²*CPR 1307-13*, p. 428.

¹³*Rotuli Scotiae*, I, 130.

Coroners were not appointed with reference to districts, although in the East Riding, where three coroners operated, districts may well have influenced their spheres of activity.¹⁴ However, districts did continue to be an important point of reference for more *ad hoc* decisions of the central administration. In 1337, for example, merchants were appointed to purchase 6000 sacks of wool in Yorkshire at a price of 9 marks a sack for the better wool, but the parts of Craven were excepted and required to provide only 200 sacks at 5 ½ marks a sack.¹⁵ The commons in 1351 aimed to forbid labourers from travelling in summer to find higher-paid work, but ‘gentz de Cravene’ were among those who were to be excepted.¹⁶ In the later fifteenth century the mayor and bailiffs of Newcastle were licensed to export wool from the four northern counties, but also from Northallertonshire and Richmondshire.¹⁷ In 1472 it was complained that wool from ‘Yorkeswold’ was among that being fraudulently exported through Newcastle under colour of this licence.¹⁸

The one area of central administration which was closely related to the formation and identity of a district in the shire was the maintenance of sewers through commissions *de walliis et fossatis*. There were a number of ways in which such commissions could be organized: in reference to ‘parts’ of a county, such as the east parts of Kent; in reference to sections of the coast; in reference to rivers and their adjacent parts; or in reference to hundreds or wapentakes.¹⁹ Commissions for the East Riding, for example, often refer to the liberty of Holderness and the wapentakes of Buckrose, Dickering and Harthill.²⁰ However the district known as ‘Marshland’ in the south-east of the West Riding - unsurprisingly, given its name - also figures prominently in such commissions throughout the late medieval period. In 1315 a commission was issued for ‘Marshland on the river

¹⁴R. F. Hunnisett, *The Medieval Coroner* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 134-5, 137.

¹⁵*CPR 1334-8*, p. 480-2.

¹⁶*RP II*, 234a; *The Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London, 1810-1828), I, 312.

¹⁷*RP V*, 503a, 564a, 616b; VI, 59b, 157b, 164a-b; *Statutes of the Realm II*, 392, 409, 437, 449-51; *CPR 1476-85*, pp. 159-60; *1494-1509*, pp. 346, 485.

¹⁸*RP V*, 157b, 164a-b; *Statutes of the Realm II*, 437, 449-51.

¹⁹See for example *CPR 1307-13*, pp. 166, 307, 308, 310.

²⁰E.g. *CPR 1441-6*, pp. 368, 464-5.

Don' - one of the earliest references to the district - as a result of a petition from the men and tenants of those parts.²¹ Similar commissions continued to be issued into the sixteenth century, with some fluctuation in the area implied. Commissions of 1477 and 1507, for example, spoke of Marshland as an area in both Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, delimited by the rivers Ouse, Don, Aire, Went, Mardike and Trent.²² In fact, the district seems to have been largely defined by its vulnerability to flooding and the efforts required to maintain its defences. In 1331 the men of Marshland complained that a causeway called 'Foxhole dyke' had been breached so that their corn had been destroyed.²³ In 1362 it was complained that the prior of Holy Trinity, York had failed to repair the banks where the priory's land abutted the Ouse, causing flooding *in partibus Merskland*, and in 1378 the 'true men of the country of Marshland' were granted relief and aid due to the flooding of Humber, Ouse and Trent.²⁴ Marshland was probably the district of Yorkshire whose identity was most closely bound up with the workings of central administration.

Districts and wapentakes

To some extent, then, local districts did impinge on the organization of central administration and were in turn shaped by that administration. The relationship between local districts and central administration is further complicated by the fact that some wapentakes seem to have become particularly significant locally, and because these administrative units may themselves have been based - as mentioned above - on pre-existing local structures. Which units were these and how were they distinctive?²⁵

²¹CPR 1313-7, p. 305.

²²CPR 1476-85, p. 51; 1494-1509, p. 579. Compare CPR 1327-30, p. 476; 1441-6, p. 368.

²³CPR 1330-4, p. 130.

²⁴*Public Works in Medieval Law*, ed. C. T. Flower, Selden Society 32, 40 (1915-23), II, 330-33; CCR 1377-81, p. 146. Cf. *The Coucher Book of Selby*, ed. J. T. Fowler, 2 vols., YASRS 10 and 13 (1891-3), II, 372-3, and 48-51, 398-9.

²⁵The following discussion concentrates on governmental administration. It should nonetheless be noted that the ecclesiastical deaneries in the East Riding, and those of Craven and Cleveland, were very similar

Bennett's study of the palatinate counties of Cheshire and Lancashire recognized the significance of the hundred, which enjoyed an unusual administrative importance in these counties. In 1639, for John Smyth of Nibley it was the hundred of Berkeley, and the experience of its 'hundreders', which provided the essential focus for the account of his locality which he prepared for his son.²⁶ However, the importance of hundreds or wapentakes in structuring locality elsewhere in England remains largely an unknown quantity.

In late-medieval Yorkshire, the administrative structure of wapentakes, although it was mostly established from an early date, was not locally significant in all parts of the county. The wapentake of Staincliff, for example, was closely related to the district of Craven - a 1539 muster roll refers to 'the wapentake of Staynclif comonlie called Craven', but this suggests that local identities continued to be articulated in terms of district rather than wapentake.²⁷ It also seems that the district of Cleveland and the wapentake of Langbargh were connected, but again only the district was widely referred to locally.²⁸ In both cases it seems likely that the organization of wapentakes was influenced by the disposition of earlier districts, and came in turn to influence how the districts themselves were perceived. In other areas, there was a clear discrepancy between central administrative units and local perceptions of districts. Lonsdale, for example, was a hundred in Lancashire but Burton and Thornton in the wapentake of Ewcross were colloquially described as 'in Lonsdale'. The Durham sanctuary records likewise refer to 'Thomas Wadeson nuper de Sedber in Lonysdale in com. Ebor'.²⁹

In the East Riding the fit between local identities and central administration seems to have been closer. As Nowell's and Saxton's maps suggest, Holderness (together with

in area to their secular equivalents. See *VCH: Yks.*, III, map facing p. 1 and pp. 80-88.

²⁶M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 41-45; D. Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London, 1992), pp. 67-83.

²⁷J. W. Morkill, *The Parish of Kirkby Malhamdale* (Gloucester, 1933), p. 318; *L&P XIV/1*, p. 317. In 1485 John Talbot was described as bailiff of Craven, probably meaning the wapentake of Staincliff which had been granted to Edmund and Richard Talbot in 1484 (*RP VI*, 357a; *CPR 1476-85*, p. 475). But for a petition from Staincliff wapentake see *PRO*, SC8/156/7768.

²⁸*Cf. VCH: NRY II*, 217 and below, n. 137.

²⁹*PN: WRY VI*, 218; *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Beverlacensis*, ed. J. Raine, SS 5 (1837), p. 4.

Yorkswold) was the most prominent district in this area of the county.³⁰ It is true that Holderness was not a typical wapentake, if such an entity exists. Under William I the various estates in the district were granted *en masse* to Drogo de la Beuvrière, probably to establish a strong defence against foreign attack along the Humber. (The northern boundary of the district was known since the twelfth century as the 'Earl's dike'.) First mentioned as a wapentake in 1166, the area was an important liberty, which has been described as 'one of the greater liberties in England', 'at the top of the second rank of immunities' and 'little less than a county palatine'.³¹ These jurisdictional privileges may well have contributed to an awareness of the district as an area with its distinct identity; the physical identity of the area, mostly delineated by the sea or the river Hull (the Meaux chronicle described the district as an 'island'), may also have been important and we have seen above that the district could boast considerable antiquity.

However there are some indications - explored more fully below - that other wapentakes were locally important in this area of Yorkshire. Leland has notes on the wapentakes of Ainsty, Buckrose, Harthill, Pickering Lithe, and Ryedale, all in or around the East Riding.³² The Pilgrimage of Grace in this area was both described and organized in terms of wapentakes, rather than the districts used in other parts of the county. Collective petitionary identities articulated in other parts of the shire in terms of *Cleveland* or *Wharfedale* are also expressed through the wapentakes of Pickering Lithe, Buckrose, Ouse and Derwent, Harthill, Dickering, Howdenshire and Holderness.³³

For whatever reason - whether as a result of pre-Conquest administrative arrangements, or because of the area's more homogeneous topography - it seems that there was a close fit between local districts and the state's administrative units in and around the East Riding. But although I have argued that wapentakes were not equally important elsewhere in the shire, it would be wrong to suggest that they were not recognized at all in local culture. In north-west Yorkshire, Gilling and Ewcross

³⁰See above: this impression is confirmed by the use of these districts in place-name affixes. See *P.V. ERY*, *passim*.

³¹English, *Lords of Holderness*, p. 109; for the preceding see pp. 100-1; *VCH: ERY* V, 1-2.

³²Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 45, 51, 59, 62, 64, 68.

³³*Index of Ancient Petitions*, PRO Lists and Indexes I, *passim*. For Buckrose see *CPR 1364-7*, pp. 141-2.

wapentake courts were familiar enough to be known locally in the fifteenth century as *Frendleswapentac*, presumably a designation which drew its force from perceptions of the desolate qualities of the wapentakes themselves.³⁴ There is no absolute distinction between units which were significant to local identities and those which were used by the central administration. Equally, we should be careful not to underestimate the extent to which local districts were shaped by central administration, recognizing that this influence may be hidden by differences in nomenclature. Nevertheless, it is clear that the districts we have discussed above were primarily important not to governmental or ecclesiastical administration, but to local cultures and identities.

Districts in national and regional culture

In the wider political culture of late medieval England, Yorkshire's districts also had at best only temporary importance, for example if a particularly important event needed to be more closely localized than was possible through the framework of counties or the north. It is true that the division between district and county was not always clear-cut. Gervase of Canterbury's *Mappa Mundi* (written in the late-twelfth-century but still circulating in the fifteenth), which contains a list of religious houses organized by county, lists Richmondshire as a separate area, and there are a number of later references to 'the county of Richmond' which have similar implications.³⁵ Leland's early-sixteenth-century account of Yorkshire seems confused about the status of Hallamshire, and Henry Savill mentioned Hallamshire alongside Lancashire and Derbyshire as though it too were a county.³⁶ Nevertheless, it is generally true that the districts of Yorkshire, in common with

³⁴*VCH: NRY*, II, 31. No reference is given, but wapentake fines were paid by the Fitzhughs 'de wapentagio Frendelesse vocato' (*Registrum Honoris de Richmond*, ed. R. Gale (London, 1722), p. 88); and see also *RP III*, 657 and *CPR 1485-94*, p. 465.

³⁵*The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs, RS 73, 2 vols. (1879-80), II, 441; a fifteenth-century copy is Bodl., MS Bodley Rolls 6.

³⁶*Itinerary IV*, 25 ('al Halamshire go to the sessions of York, and is countid as a membre of Yorkshire'); *Plumpton Letters and Papers*, ed. J. Kirby, Camden Society 5th ser. 8 (1996), p. 221. Leland's interest in Howdenshire and Allertonshire (*Itinerary I*, 52, 68) suggests he thought of these areas as counties; see further below n. 138.

the subdivisions of most other counties, were not part of the shared frameworks of locality through which national political culture operated.

Conversely, the significance of these districts increased with proximity to Yorkshire itself. The mid-fifteenth-century armorial in British Library, MS Harley 2169 contains the arms of a large number of knights, mostly described as being of a given county. But in addition to knights 'of Yorkechyre', the armorial refers to men of Craven, Holderness, Howdenshire, Richmondshire and Allertonshire.³⁷ The provenance of this manuscript has not been established, but its contents suggest a northern origin. It contains the arms of Saints Cuthbert, Oswald, William of York and Richard Scrope, and came into Harley's collections from one of the Randle Holmes, the Cheshire antiquarians.³⁸ In any case, the manuscript was probably already in Cheshire in the fifteenth century. The sixteenth-century owner 'Phellepe Bowthe' may have been a member of the famous Cheshire family of this name, although I have not been able to trace him in the county histories. More importantly, a poem addressed to Lady Fortune written (probably in the second half of the fifteenth century) upside-down on the verso of the final leaf is partly in distinctively north-western language.³⁹ Whether the armorial was written in Cheshire, or travelled there from another northerly location, its familiarity with Yorkshire's districts seems to be a result of its production in the vicinity of the county.

The evidence of the Scrope/Grosvenor controversy suggests that the prominence of districts may even have been affected by impermanent changes in location: Richmondshire was more frequently referred to in depositions taken at York than at Westminster, which were more likely to refer to the North.⁴⁰ However, the increased

³⁷ 'A Fifteenth Century Book of Arms', *The Ancestor* 3 (1902), 185-213; 4 (1903), 225-50; 5 (1903), 175-90; 7 (1903), 184-215; 9 (1904), 159-80, *passim*.

³⁸ A. R. Wagner, *A Catalogue of English Medieval Rolls of Arms*, *Aspilogia* 1 (London, 1950), pp. 101-2, 140, 145-6; *DNB* IX, 1080-2. Wagner suggested that it was written by David Griffith, Warwick herald c. 1464-80.

³⁹ 'Partly': the same stanza is written three times in hands of increasing formality and in increasingly colourless language. The version in the least formal hand contains the north-westerly spellings *qwo* 'who', *qwy* 'why', *qwatt* 'what', *mony* 'many'. See A. McIntosh et al, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986), I, dot maps 91 and 272.

⁴⁰ *Scrope and Grosvenor*, *passim*. The North was referred to in 17 depositions, of which 11 were taken at Westminster (eight of these refer to the North on several occasions); Richmondshire was mentioned in 7, 2 at Westminster; and Yorkshire in 11, 4 at Westminster. The place of deposition seems to have been more significant than age or status in determining the area referred to.

prominence of Yorkshire's districts within and around the areas they describe is probably best illustrated in historical writings. We saw in chapter 1 that Scottish attacks of the early fourteenth century were commonly understood in English political culture through the framework of the 'north parts', and we also saw that this framework powerfully influenced writings produced in the north itself. Nevertheless, a more precise sense of Scottish targets and manoeuvres could be articulated in terms of regional districts. The Meaux chronicle - a particularly good example - described Scottish attacks in 1316 as affecting 'Comberland, Westmerland, Tyndale, Swaldale, Kendale, ... Fownaysfelles... et Rychemonschyre'. In 1318 the Scots were described as returning home 'per Cravene'; in 1319 'per Ayrdale et Querfdale et Cravene'. (The Bridlington chronicle likewise has 'per Ayerdale et Wherfdale'.)⁴¹ In 1322 Scottish attacks were directed at 'morae de Blakhowe' and 'totamque Waldam fere usque Beverlacum', while in the summary of Edward II's reign, Scottish incursions were recalled as reaching as far as 'Humbriam, Pontemfractum, Cravene et Fownaysfels'. Under his successor, raids in 1328 and 1333 affected 'gentes de episcopatu Dunelmiae, comitatu Carliolensi, Rychemondschyre, Cleveland, Westmerland', and 'totam terram de Gyllesland'.⁴² The most precise of these references to districts - as might be expected, given the abbey's location - is that to 'the Wolds almost as far as Beverley'. Other districts are intended to provide only a relatively precise sense of location, and the references to Swaledale and Richmondshire under 1316 may indicate a confused sense of their position.

Several chroniclers elsewhere in England had a relatively precise sense of the events of 1322 - even the somewhat parochial Louth Park annals refer to attacks on 'moram de Blachowe et totam patriam circa eam' - but this reflects widespread interest in the personal presence of the king on this occasion.⁴³ Higden's comment that in Edward II's reign, 'per continuos xii annos... partes Angliae boriales per Scottos sunt contritae' is much more typical.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Meaux chronicle does not allow us to

⁴¹*Melsa* II, 333, 335, 337; *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols., RS 76 (1882-3), II, 58.

⁴²*Melsa* II, 345-6, 355-6, 357, 368-9.

⁴³*Chronicon Abbatie de Parco Lude*, ed. E. Venables, tr. A. R. Maddison, Lincolnshire Record Society 1 (1891), p. 28; cf., for example, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, 9 vols., RS 41 (1865-91), VIII, 316-7 (describing Edward's near-capture at 'monasterium de Bella Landa super Blakehoumoor').

⁴⁴*Polychronicon*, ed. Babington and Lumby, VIII, 306.

distinguish absolutely between 'national' and 'regional' perspectives. Its account appears to be based on a lost source which also lies behind a chronicle probably from Woburn abbey.⁴⁵ The lost source is almost certainly of northern origin, but it is significant that the Woburn chronicler retained his source's references to northern districts in as full a form as the Meaux writer.⁴⁶ He seems to have found them useful and meaningful and expected that other readers of the manuscript would do likewise.

Similar conclusions are prompted by the romance of *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*, which begins by describing Danish invasions of northern England in what appears to be a pre-Conquest period, with England divided into kingdoms south and north of the Humber. The Danes are described as attacking 'Clifland bi Teseside' where they are encountered and defeated by English forces who have mustered at 'Alerton More'. The Northumbrian King Hatholf celebrates his victory by hunting on 'Blakeowe More'. Subsequently however Hatholf is attacked by Irish invaders and after a long battle 'on Staines More' he is slain.⁴⁷ In addition to these references to Yorkshire districts it is said that the bones of the defeated Danes may still be seen 'bi Seyn Sibiles Kirk', which has been plausibly identified with a chapel on the mouth of the Tees.⁴⁸ These references make it almost certain that the romance was a local production. This inference receives some support from the poem's language, but much more from the existence of a tradition in sixteenth-century Cleveland that the area had been attacked by Danes whose bones were visible precisely by a chapel at the mouth of the Tees.⁴⁹ *Horn Childe* is probably best seen as a version of the relatively widely-diffused King Horn story which has been adapted, particularly at its beginning, to reflect the historical traditions and regional frameworks of a local audience.⁵⁰ But the poem survives only in the Auchinleck

⁴⁵BL, MS Cotton Domitian A. XII, fos. 1-56; see *Melsa* II, xxxiv-xl.

⁴⁶Compare the following passages: Cotton Domitian A. XII, fo. 41v/*Melsa* II, 333; fo. 42v/*Melsa* II, 335; fo. 43v/*Melsa* II, 337. A passage on fo. 43v (s.a. 1321) on a ransom paid to the Scots by men 'de comitatu Rychemund' is not in Meaux.

⁴⁷*Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*, ed. M. Mills, Middle English Texts 20 (Heidelberg, 1988), lines 49-240.

⁴⁸*Horn Childe*, ed. Mills, l.84 and n.

⁴⁹'A Description of Cleveland: In a Letter Addressed by H. Tr. to Sir Thomas Challoner'. *The Topographer and Genealogist* 2 (1853), 403-32, p. 411-2. See further ch. 8 below, p. 301. The connection with *Horn Childe* has not previously been noticed, but for the implications of the poem's topography and language see *Horn Childe*, ed. Mills, esp. p. 40.

⁵⁰For the main versions of the Horn story see *Horn Childe*, ed. Mills, pp. 44-68; W. H. Schofield, 'The Story of Horn and Rimenhild', *Proceeding of the Modern Languages Association of America* 18 (1903), 1-83, esp. pp. 66-77.

manuscript, produced in London bookshop around the second quarter of the fourteenth century.⁵¹ Although it remains true that districts such as Craven or Cleveland were primarily important to regional understandings of locality, local traditions, and the frameworks through which they were expressed, could evidently be meaningful for an audience much further afield.

It is important to recognize that districts do not seem to have been organized in terms of the counties in which they were located. The Meaux chronicle, like its lost source, refers naturally to Furness Fells as well as Craven, and Kendal alongside Swaledale. Similarly the contemporary Franciscan chronicler at Carlisle, in addition to recounting the effect of Scottish attacks on Coupland, Allerdale and other parts of Cumbria, described raids in ‘comitatum Richemundiae’, ‘Swaldale’, ‘Staynesmor’, and ‘partes Clivelandiae’. There is an account as detailed as that of Meaux of the raids of 1322 on ‘Blakehoumoor’ (which, it is said, had been free from attack before due to its difficulty of access) and ‘le Wald’.⁵² Conceptions of locality in terms of a number of smaller districts enabled chroniclers and others to think in terms of groups of districts extending over county boundaries, groups that could acquire their own coherence and identity. We shall see later that such groups of districts could also be important in the construction of local ‘district identities’.

Historical writing provides some of the fullest examples of how districts structured perceptions of locality in regional culture, but accounts, wills and inventories offer equally important insights into the ways in which travel, trade, family connections and landed wealth within the Yorkshire region could all be conceptualized in similar terms. The toll collected at the north end of Boroughbridge was known as ‘Richmondshire tolle’: the town was adjacent to Richmondshire, on the south of the Ure, and its jurisdiction over traffic along the river was frequently in dispute.⁵³ The Selby Abbey

⁵¹R. Hanna, ‘Reconsidering the Auchinleck Manuscript’, in *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies: Essays from the 1998 Harvard Conference*, ed. D. Pearsall (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 91-102, and references therein.

⁵²*Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. 229, 240, 242, 247-8.

⁵³*CPR 1476-85*, p. 535.

account rolls record expenses for travelling to Craven to buy sheep; presumably such sheep supplied the distinctive characteristics of the *pannis lineis*... *Crawyn* recorded (from a local perspective as 'western cloths') in a York tailor's inventory of 1485.⁵⁴ In his will of 1435, the York merchant Richard Russell remembered the inhabitants of 'Yorke Walde' from whom he had bought wool, and the city of York was concerned about its liberty to buy and sell well 'within Yorks wold' in 1524. Lead sold in the city in the early sixteenth century was described as coming from Swaledale, Wensleydale, Craven and Richmondshire, and a record of 1509 refers to Robert Huchonson 'and other of Swaldale'.⁵⁵ The Meaux chronicle describes a grant by Walter de Falconberge of land 'in Cravenna' and refers to the abbey's carucates 'in Walda'.⁵⁶

Districts were an important influence on the organization of both ecclesiastical and secular estates. Thus, an account roll of 1434 suggests that the Honour of Skipton was divided into bailiwicks of Airedale, Malhamdale and Kettlewell Dale.⁵⁷ The Cliffords also employed a master forester of Craven, presumably with authority over the foresters of Barden and Skipton.⁵⁸ After the lordship of Middleham passed to the crown in 1471, royal grants and appointments suggest that its administration was also organized in terms of districts. Brian and Humphrey Metcalf, for example, were described as collecting the king's rents in the lordship of Middleham, especially in Wensleydale and Bisshopdale.⁵⁹ There are references to master foresters of the liberty of Richmond and of Wensleydale and Bishopdale.⁶⁰

Local districts also influenced the organization of ecclesiastical estates. The Byland cartulary has a section concerning property in Nidderdale, and the Bridlington cartulary contains pages on Swaledale.⁶¹ The lease book of Fountains Abbey has many references to locations 'in Nidderdail', and a couple to Littondale, Ribblesdale and Borrowdale; the abbey also employed a bailiff for Nidderdale, and paid the vicar of

⁵⁴ *Monastery and Society in the Late Middle Ages: Selected Account Rolls from Selby Abbey, Yorkshire, 1398-1537*, ed. J. H. Tillotson (Woodbridge, 1988), p. 160; *TE* III, 301

⁵⁵ *TE* II, 56; *YCR* II, 144; III, 23, 30-1, 92-3.

⁵⁶ *Melsa* I, 303 and 99

⁵⁷ Whitaker, *Craven*, p. 302.

⁵⁸ Whitaker, *Craven*, pp. 306-7.

⁵⁹ *CPR 1485-94*, p. 209; *1494-1509*, p. 537.

⁶⁰ *CPR 1476-85*, p. 456; *1485-94*, p. 84.

⁶¹ BL, MS Egerton 2823, fos. 77r-78v; *Abstracts of the Charters and Other Documents Contained in the Cartulary of the Priory of Bridlington* (Leeds, 1912), pp. 254-6.

Kirkby Malzeard for 'the tithes of Nidderdale', while various early-sixteenth-century indentures refer to customs 'usid and had emongs the loigers in Nidredaill'.⁶² Rievaulx abbey may have used Swaledale as an administrative unit: at any rate 'the office of the ferme gathering in Swawdall' was leased out in 1538.⁶³ St Mary's abbey, York, employed officials to administer its lands 'in Marsland' and St Leonard's Hospital employed a bailiff in Cleveland.⁶⁴ Bolton priory had rentals and a cartulary restricted to the area of Craven, and Fountains abbey also had collections of documents relating to the district.⁶⁵ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* lists some Fountains abbey lands under 'Craven', and fees for a bailiff of Craven; a memorandum in the house's cartulary suggests that a 'senescallus in Craven' was employed by the abbey from an early date. The accounts of the receiver of Richard Gresham, who acquired the estates after the Dissolution, are similarly divided and include expenses 'at the collection in Craven.'⁶⁶

Several wills indicate that family relationships and landed estates could also be located in terms of districts. Thomas Vicars of Strensall left £1 in 1451 to 'his relative Johanna formerly the wife of the deceased in Wensladale'.⁶⁷ In 1480 William Lambert (vicar of Gainford, and master of the college of Staindrop) left 13 s. 4 d. to Agnes, his niece 'in Cliveland', illustrating the significance of Yorkshire districts to those in neighbouring counties.⁶⁸ Robert Morley, citizen and draper of London, left twenty nobles in 1505 to the marriage of poor maidens who were his kin in Cleveland, showing that districts remained significant to those who had left the region.⁶⁹ Alice Thwaites

⁶²*Fountains Abbey Lease Book*, ed. D. J. H. Michelmore, YASRS 140 (1981), index, *passim*; *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains*, ed. J. R. Walbran, 3 vols., SS 42, 67, 130 (1862-1918), I, 259, 233, 276 and 321n; III, 12, 47, 90. On some occasions Nidderdale seems simply to have been referred to as *vallis*: *ibid.*, III, 134n, 104, 55.

⁶³*Cartularium Abbatiae de Rievallie*, ed. J. C. Atkinson, SS 83 (1869), pp. 353-4.

⁶⁴*Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henr. VIII*, 6 vols. (London, 1810-43), V, 7, 17.

⁶⁵*Bolton Priory Rentals and Ministers' Accounts 1473-1539*, ed. I. Kershaw, YASRS 132 (1970), pp. vii-viii, xi-xii. (The other areas were Malhamdale, Airedale, Harewood parish and *adhuc firme terrarum*, and the same areas appear in *The Bolton Priory Compotus*, ed. Kershaw and Smith, p. 227 and *passim*.) For Fountains see Oxford, University College MS 170, and *Memorials of Fountains*, ed. Walbran, II, 86-7.

⁶⁶*Memorials of Fountains Abbey*, ed. Walbran, I, 256, 259, 397, 407; *Abstracts of the Chartulary of Fountains*, ed. Lancaster, II, 476. Cf. *Memorials of Fountains*, ed. Walbran, III, 10, 14, 29, etc. for payments 'in Craven'; 35, 134 for payments to 'ballivo de Craven'; 5, 42, 82 for rents from lands listed as in Craven.

⁶⁷*Probate Inventories of the York Diocese 1350-1500*, ed. P. M. Stell and L. Hampson (York, n.d.), p. 104.

⁶⁸*TE* III, 255.

⁶⁹*North Country Wills, 1383-1558*, ed. J. W. Clay, SS 116 (1908), p. 270.

distinguished her inheritance 'within Howdenshire', and Robert Marler his 'liflode in Marcheland'.⁷⁰ John Lepton distinguished between 'the evidence of my land in Cleveland', which was to be kept by his brother, and his other evidence which was to be locked in a chest at Kirkham abbey.⁷¹ Even among the clergy, there is little evidence that ecclesiastical districts were a major influence on testamentary arrangements: Thomas Thompson's endowment of fellowships at St John's, Cambridge stipulated that one should be from from archdeaconry of Cleveland, and the other from 'Richemondshire or bisshopricke'.⁷²

The role of these districts in defining neighbouring areas is evident from descriptions of roads and expenses for travel. In the early fourteenth century roads were described heading from Hull 'versus Waldas', while roads 'to Craven' are mentioned in charters of the twelfth- and mid-fourteenth centuries.⁷³ Whitby Abbey paid 13s 4d in expenses of the abbot *versus Clifland*, and in 1510 Henry, lord Clifford paid 12 d. to Christopher Federston 'for his coste into Nytherdale'.⁷⁴ Selby abbey held views of its manors in *Mershlant*; paid for expenses for travel to York, Marshland, and elsewhere; and paid 'divers workmen and servants in Marshland'.⁷⁵ References to neighbouring districts in other counties include the expenses of the prior of Bolton in 1317 'in Blackburnshire'.⁷⁶

The extent to which districts influenced the perception of the county in local society is perhaps best encapsulated in the records of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Royal letters responding to the rising refer mainly to the commons of Yorkshire, the borders of

⁷⁰*TE IV*, 11: III, 287.

⁷¹*TE IV*, 130.

⁷²*North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 287.

⁷³*Yorkshire Inquisitions*, ed. W. Brown, 4 vols. YASRS 12, 23, 31, 37 (1892-1906), IV, 49-50; *Abstracts of the Charters and Other Documents Contained in the Cartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Fountains*, ed. W. T. Lancaster, 2 vols. (Leeds, 1915), I, 42, 209.

⁷⁴H. Speight, *Upper Wharfedale* (London, 1900), p. 353; *Cartularium Abbatiae de Whiteby*, ed. J. C. Atkinson, 2 vols. SS 69, 72 (1879-81), II, 609.

⁷⁵*Monastery and Society*, ed. Tillotson, pp. 123, 169; W. W. Morrell, *The History and Antiquities of Selby* (Selby, 1867), p. 97.

⁷⁶*The Bolton Priory Comptus 1286-1325*, ed. I. Kershaw and D. M. Smith, YASRS 154 (2000), p. 445.

Yorkshire, or the north, and sometimes to those of Holderness.⁷⁷ Accounts from within or around Yorkshire, however, whether in contemporary letters or later depositions, are more commonly structured in terms of smaller regional districts. Darcy wrote to the mayor of York warning that the commons of Marshland, Howdenshire, Beverley and the East Riding were planning to invade the city; Sir Brian Hastings wrote to Darcy of *insurrections in Howdenshire and Marshland*.⁷⁸ John lord Scrope wrote to the earl of Cumberland describing risings of the commons of Mashamshire and Nidderdale.⁷⁹ The city of York told the king it was besieged by the commons of Howdenshire, Marshland, Richmondshire and others.⁸⁰ Other letters and depositions tell the same story: John lord Latimer's house was entered by the commons of Richmondshire; Richard Bowier's deposition referred to the commons of Holderness and Yorkswold; while John Dakyn, the vicar of Kirkby Ravenswath, claimed that Mashamshire was the chief mover in the rebellion, preceding Richmondshire.⁸¹ The abbot of Jervaulx described how his abbey was attacked by the commons of Mashamshire and Kirkbyshire.⁸²

A series of letters to Henry VIII, describing areas in revolt, provide perhaps the fullest available enumerations of the districts into which the county was commonly divided. Darcy's list of October 13 distinguished between the East Riding; Marshland, Snaith and other parts of the West Riding; and Dent, Sedbergh, Richmondshire, Wensleydale, Mashamshire and other parts of the North Riding.⁸³ A fuller list of 17 October describes risings in Marshland, Howdenshire, Holderness, Yorkswold, Wensleydale, Coverdale, Swaledale, Nidderdale, Kirkbyshire, Mashamshire, Langstroth, Craven, Cleveland, Dent, Sedbar and all Richmondshire and Yorkshire.⁸⁴ As I have intimated earlier, these districts were often assembled in groups that crossed county boundaries: writing to Shrewsbury, Darcy grouped the 'wild countries' of Craven, Dent, Sedbar, Furness, Kendal, Cumberland and Westmerland, while it was said that if Lancashire mustered for the king, so would Craven, Dent, Sedbergh, Kendal, Lonsdale

⁷⁷ *L&P XI*, 687, 712, 715, 717, 737, 747, 764-6 etc.

⁷⁸ *L&P XI*, 627, 646, and cf. 664.

⁷⁹ *L&P XI*, 677.

⁸⁰ *L&P XI*, 704.

⁸¹ *L&P XIII/1*, 173, 306, 786-7.

⁸² *Memorials of Fountains*, ed Walbran, I, 270n.

⁸³ *L&P XI*, 692/8.

⁸⁴ *L&P XI*, 760/2,

and Furness.⁸⁵ The references to Dent and Sedbergh provide a revealing illustration of how areas without districts were conceptualized: both were in the wapentake of Ewecross but were more widely understood as separate entities.

Darcy's view of the rebellion was both unusually detailed and full, but for all levels of those in or around Yorkshire affected by the revolt, it was most readily conceptualized in terms of the 'unofficial' districts discussed above. To some extent, as I shall show later, this was the result of the organization of the rebel troops; but it is equally the result of the importance of local districts in structuring the perception of locality.

High and wild parts

The records produced during and after the Pilgrimage of Grace, in addition to offering perhaps the fullest enumeration of the districts in terms of which Yorkshire was conceptualized in local society, also provide some of the most detailed evidence of how certain of these districts - in particular the upland districts in the north and west of the county - could become characterized. There is relatively little other evidence that characterizations of the inhabitants of particular districts circulated in local society. Leland has a cryptic parenthetical reference to 'Venones men of Wensedale', presumably a local jingle based on wordplay.⁸⁶ The records of the Pilgrimage give at once a fuller and a less specific sense of the identities that districts like Wensleydale had for certain elements of local society, an identity that was based around ideas of wildness.

In other contexts, the language of wildness is often important in petitionary contexts, where it is a variant of the plea by which an offender is said to be beyond justice owing to his inaccessible or lawless location. The gang which attacked the property of Alexander Neville around 1380, for example, had fled into the woods beyond the reach of justice; in 1420 a proclamation was to be directed against Henry Richardson and

⁸⁵L&P XI, 928, 1135,

⁸⁶Leland, *Itinerary*, IV, 28. *Venenous* is a Middle English equivalent of (although it is to be distinguished from) *venimous* (*MED*, s.v.)

others of Sedburgh who to avoid the law had 'retreiez et suez as bois, et autres lieux solitaires.'⁸⁷ This trope could be adapted to the topography of parts of Yorkshire through reference to 'wild dales'. The abbot of Fountains was proceeding in Chancery, at an uncertain date, against men who attacked his servants and fled to 'dales and fells' to avoid the common law; between 1504-15 the abbot of Sallay abbey brought proceedings against a 'lawless man' who had occupied some of the abbey's lands in the forest of Gisburn, against whom normal legal proceedings would fail 'because he dwelleth in so wild a country, not fearing any process of law.'⁸⁸

From very early on in the Pilgrimage of Grace, the distinction between 'high and wild parts' and other areas under his rule was pervasive in Darcy's correspondence. On October 6, 1536 he wrote to Henry VIII asserting in response to the rumours that had reached the king, that the North and West Ridings were peaceful 'saving certain dales and countries': a contemporaneous letter to the Earl of Cumberland suggests that 'the countries of Dent, Sedbar and Wensleydale' are meant.⁸⁹ At the end of the month, Darcy wrote to Shrewsbury of 'the wild countries of Cumberland, Westmoreland, Kendal, Furness, Dent, Sedbar, Craven and others like countries.'⁹⁰ Again, after the council of pilgrims at York, Darcy wrote of 'the wild countries adjoining Lancashire'; in December, he distinguished between 'the people here' who paid their rent and other 'high and wild countries', perhaps Northumberland, Cumberland, Kendal and the bishopric.⁹¹ Finally, during the outbreak of Bigod's rebellion he assured Aske and Constable that 'there has yet been no stir in my rooms and lands, but what was caused by other wild countries and dales.'⁹²

'Wild' behaviour during the Pilgrimage was not exclusively associated with upland regions - the adjective is common in William Stapleton's attempt to justify his

⁸⁷PRO, SC 8/153/7632 (compare 7604, on the same subject); *RP* IV, 124-5; compare the well-known petition concerning Piers Venables and his associates who 'in manere of insurrection, wente into the wodes in that contre, like as it had be Robyn Hode and his meyne...and so they kepen the wodes and strange contrays' (*RP* V, 16); and also a petition against Welsh rebels complaining that they take men from the English marches and hold them to ransom 'en boys et disertes' (*RP* III, 663-4, of 1411).

⁸⁸*Monastic Chancery Proceedings*, ed. J. S. Purvis, YASRS 88 (1934), pp. 44, 130.

⁸⁹*L&P* XI, 563-4.

⁹⁰*L&P* XI, 928.

⁹¹*L&P* XI, 1140, 1337.

⁹²*L&P* XII/1, 115. 17 Jan 1537.

behaviour during the rebellion, which deals mainly with the East Riding.⁹³ Nor was upland topography exclusively associated with wildness - it could also be interpreted in terms of barrenness and poverty, as in Aske's reference to Sallay abbey as 'the charitable relief of those partes, and standing in a montagne contrey and emonges thre forests'.⁹⁴ However, Aske's statement elsewhere that many of the suppressed abbeys provided a civilizing as well as an economic function 'in the montaignes and desert places, wher the peple be rud of condyccions' suggests the connections that could be made between barrenness, poverty and violence.⁹⁵ It was such connections that enabled Darcy to excuse himself by associating the misgoverned behaviour of areas nominally under his command not with any failure - much less encouragement - on his part, but on a natural 'wildness' associated with the mountainous regional topography. It seems likely that this framework for characterizing the upland districts of the shire was widely diffused among the upper levels of regional society.

The local significance of districts

For those within and around late medieval Yorkshire, then, districts such as Craven and Cleveland provided frameworks through which the territory and community of the shire could be subdivided and, to some extent, characterized, much as the shires themselves offered a way of dividing and characterizing parts of the kingdom in national culture. But - as I showed in chapter 2 - the meaning of the shire for those 'within' it could be significantly different to its meaning for those 'beyond' it. The same holds true of the districts into which the shire could be divided. For those outside them, they tended to be areas of indeterminate extent and imprecise location; for those within them, the sense of a district's boundaries and central points could be much more important, and rather than

⁹³'William Stapleton and the Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. J. C. Cox, *Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society* 10 (1902), 80-106 (pp. 85-6, 89 etc.).

⁹⁴'The Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. M. Bateson, *EHR* 5 (1890), 330-45, 550-73 (p. 338).

⁹⁵'Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. Bateson, p. 561.

being simply part of a larger unit, the district itself could come to be the focus of historical tradition and local culture.

There is ample evidence that individuals of varying status located themselves in terms of districts in addition to, or instead of, towns or counties. While men of knightly status were often identified simply in terms of counties, this was by no means invariable, and men of lower rank could be located in terms of districts as well as individual locations. The Yorkshire men selected to swear an oath not to maintain peace-breakers in 1434 included esquires from Cleveland, Lonsdale, and Wensleydale, and yeomen from Richmondshire and Craven.⁹⁶ The pardon rolls contain many references to individuals identified in terms of districts, such as Robert Key of Craven, Robert de Cotum of Cleveland, John Gille of Nidderdale, Richard Bachelor of Wensleydale, John Wilson of Swaledale, or Michael Wherton *alias* late of Coverdale.⁹⁷ In the *Gest of Robyn Hode*, Little John described himself as born 'in Holdernes'.⁹⁸ In the absence of a surname, identification with the district appears still fuller: one John of Craven received a quarter of rye from Beatrice Clerk in 1424, while the rebellion of 1469 was led by one 'Robin of Holderness'.⁹⁹ As Michael Wherton's *alias* indicates, identification with a district - as with other kinds of identification - was not necessarily exclusive or permanent. In the early fifteenth century, Sir John Constable described himself variously as of Halsham and of Holderness.¹⁰⁰ Such alternative local identifications call for more detailed attention: like the alternative status designations explored by Morgan, they 'may bear on a peculiarly intricate situation of social identities'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶*CPR 1429-36*, pp. 378-9. (For the context, see R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority 1422-1461* (London, 1981), pp. 144-8.) With very few exceptions, the men located in districts in the armorial in BL, MS Harley 2169 are likewise below knightly status.

⁹⁷*CPR 1282-81*, p. 453; *1327-30*, p. 56, 111; *1416-22*, p. 345; *1485-94*, p. 93.

⁹⁸*Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw*, ed. R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor, rev. edn (Stroud, 1997), p. 90, st. 149.

⁹⁹*Probate Inventories*, ed. Stell and Hampson, p. 72; K. R. Dockray, 'The Yorkshire Rebellions of 1469', *The Ricardian* 83 (1983), 246-57 (pp. 249-52).

¹⁰⁰*CPR 1429-36*, pp. 275, 627; *The Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire I: 1258-1832*, ed. A. Gooder, *YASRS* 91 (1935), pp. 194-5.

¹⁰¹D. A. L. Morgan, 'The Individual Style of the English Gentleman', in *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Jones (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 15-35 (p. 24).

A range of sources suggests that districts offered a natural framework in which individual and institutional identities could be located. William de Holme stipulated that he should be buried in St Wilfrid's, Ottringham, 'si infra Holdyrnesiam me contigerit obire,' while Philip of Beverley, rector of Keyingham, established a fellowship at University College Oxford for scholars from Holderness as well as Beverley.¹⁰² The chronicle of Meaux abbey reveals a strong awareness of the district within which the abbey was located. The chronicle refers to *hiis partibus Holdernesiae*, describing the area as a physical entity (*insulam de Holdernesse...valde sterilis et infructuosa*).¹⁰³ It also contains a detailed account of the changing boundaries of the *patriae* of Holderness and Harthill caused by changes in the course of the river Hull (noted because they affected the location of the abbey's lands in Wyk), and an account of a rebellion in Holderness which the abbey helped to settle, with the result that 'the whole area (*universa patria*) of Holderness is rightly considered forever indebted to the abbey'.¹⁰⁴

The sense of an institution's place within its district could be sharpened by competition or rivalry: when a dispute arose between Stanlaw and Salley monasteries after the former was translated to Whalley in the late thirteenth century, Salley complained that the monks of Whalley and their servants were going about 'infra patriam de Craven', buying the corn that Salley was accustomed to buy and then selling it more dearly 'infra Craven'.¹⁰⁵ Craven is constructed as the Salley's natural area of influence and activity, its 'country'. Similarly, it was the establishment of rival regional markets that led the town of Richmond to complain in 1441 that its catchment from a number of districts - Lancashire, Westmoreland, Cumberland and the neighbourhood of Lonsdale, Craven, Dent and Sedbar - had suffered.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²'Holderness Wills', ed. W. Brown, *Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society* 10 (1903), 1-10 (p. 3); *VCH: Oxfordshire III: University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1954), p. 62.

¹⁰³*Melsa*, I, 78, 89-90.

¹⁰⁴*Melsa*, I, 168-9; II, 107-8 (quote at 108).

¹⁰⁵T. D. Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven*, 3rd edn, ed. A. W. Morant, 2 vols. (Leeds, 1878), p. 6.

¹⁰⁶*CPR 1436-41*, pp. 509-10.

Historical discourses were also used to give resonance to particular districts or to increase their associations with particular institutions. The church of Beverley created an etymology and history for its *patria* of Holderness which associated the district with the historic area of Deira.¹⁰⁷ Whitby abbey also took pains to give its liberty of Whitby Strand more than a jurisdictional meaning, claiming that the boundaries of the liberty had originally been established by St Hilda around 660 A.D. This claim was repeated in depositions on behalf of the abbey in a dispute of 1283 over the boundaries of the liberty and supported by reference to ditches still known as ‘St Hilda’s dykes’.¹⁰⁸ In the sixteenth century and possibly earlier, the distinctiveness of Whitby Strand was also strengthened by the story that no wild geese could fly over it.¹⁰⁹ This story originated in a miracle first ascribed to St Hilda in two independent fourteenth-century lives, in which she confined geese that were destroying her abbey’s crops in a pen before ordering them to fly off and never return.¹¹⁰ The extension of the miracle to Whitby Strand was probably an indirect means by which the abbey asserted its claim over the district.

Genealogical literature, similarly, located families’ ancestral possessions in particular districts. The Neville genealogy described Conan earl of Richmond’s grant of the forest of Wensleydale to Robert lord of Middleham, and a genealogy of the Fitzhugh family compiled in the fifteenth century described the first lord of Ravenswath’s ‘many manors landis and possessions in Richmondshire’.¹¹¹ The register of the honour of Richmond began with a verbal and visual representation of the district’s origin. An illustration depicts William the Conqueror granting the district - the lands ‘in Eboracshira’ that had been earl Edwin’s - to Alan, the first earl, during the siege of York. The genealogy which precedes the illustration does not record the occasion of the

¹⁰⁷Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 446, p. 1; *Johannis Lelandi antiquarii De rebus britannicis collectanea*, ed. T. Hearne, 6 vols. (London, 1774), IV, 99. For these texts see above, ch. 3, nn. 91-2.

¹⁰⁸L. Charlton, *The History of Whitby and of Whitby Abbey* (York, 1779), pp. 226-7; cf. ch. 7, pp. 287-8.

¹⁰⁹‘Description of Cleveland’, p. 419.

¹¹⁰The miracle is also recounted in the metrical life in a fifteenth-century Glastonbury miscellany: *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. C. Horstmann, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1901), II, 31-2; A. G. Rigg, ‘A Latin Poem on St. Hilda and Whitby Abbey’, *Journal of Medieval Latin* 6 (1996), 12-43 (pp. 14, 37-8). It is strikingly similar to a miracle attributed to St Werburgh in Goscelin’s eleventh-century life (*The Life of Saint Werburgh by Henry Bradshaw*, ed. C. Horstmann, EETS o.s. 88 (1887), pp. xxii-xxiii, 96-9; and compare *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. D. H. Farmer, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1992), p. 491).

¹¹¹*Visitation of the North c. 1480-1500*, ed. C. Hunter Blair, *Visitations of the North* 3, SS 144 (1930), p. 23; ‘Original Pedigree of Tailbois and Neville’, ed. H. C. Fitz Herbert, *The Genealogist* n.s. 3 (1886), 31-5 and 107-11 (p. 32); BL, MS Harley 1499, fo. 96r.

grant but says that it comprised ‘honorem et comitatum comitis Edwini in Eborakshira (qui modo vocatur Richmondshire)’, and that it was previously geldable but made into a liberty.¹¹²

Naming patterns also deserve attention. The personal name Conan, which enjoyed some currency among the gentry of late medieval Richmondshire, probably served to identify families with the historic past of the district through reminiscence of its twelfth-century earl Conan. Joan Boynton, married to William Neville of Thornton Bridge, had a son called Conan; the Boyntons’ seat was at Sadbury in Gilling West, and the family was connected by marriage with the families of Strangways and Scrope.¹¹³ A son of Christopher Conyers by his second wife also bore the name.¹¹⁴ The Conyers family was connected by marriage with the family of Aske, several of whose heirs were called Conan.¹¹⁵ Members of all three families associated together in the witnessing of deeds.¹¹⁶ Another Conan, the brother of Richard and Roger Lascelles of Sowerby, probably owed the name to the Richmondshire connections of his mother Elizabeth; Conan Barton owed his name to his father’s marriage to Christiana Aske.¹¹⁷ For the Aske family, the name recalled an early member of their family as well as their historic association with the honour. The manor of Aske was associated with the stewardship of the honour of Richmond, and Conan de Ask (steward in 1183-4) was related to earl Conan. The name was revived in the late fourteenth century by Conan, lord 1373-91, and the name passed to his grandson.¹¹⁸ For all these families, the name provided a way of associating themselves - whether seriously, halfheartedly or aspirationally - with Richmondshire.

Testamentary bequests were another way of defining a district as a lord’s ‘country’. The first earl of Cumberland’s will contained provisions for ‘highways in Craven’ and Westmoreland, and masses to be said by every curate ‘within Westermoreland and the deanery of Craven, and elsewhere wher I have any land in

¹¹²BL, MS Cotton Faustina B. VII, fo. 72r-v; cf. *Monasticon* V, 574-5.

¹¹³*Visitation of the North*, ed. Hunter Blair, p. 114; *TE* IV, 14.

¹¹⁴*TE* IV, 128; *Visitation of the North*, ed. Hunter Blair, pp. 92-4.

¹¹⁵See A. J. Pollard, ‘The Richmondshire Community of Gentry During the Wars of the Roses’ in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. C. D. Ross (Gloucester, 1979), pp. 37-59.

¹¹⁶Pollard, ‘Richmondshire Community’, p. 49.

¹¹⁷*TE* III, 197-8 and nn; *Visitation of the North*, ed. Hunter Blair, p. 89 and *TE* II, 215-6 and nn.

¹¹⁸*VCH: NRY*, I, 60; cf. *Scrope and Grosvenor*, p. 131.

England'.¹¹⁹ Similarly the will of Richard Scrope of Bolton included bequests to all churches where he was parishioner 'infra Richmondshir' and all his tenants in Richmondshire.¹²⁰

As well as providing spaces within which individual and institutional identities could be situated, districts also acted as a focus for collective identities. We have already seen how the men of Marshland assumed a collective petitionary identity from an early date as a result of their vulnerability to natural forces and need to persuade the central administration to maintain local defences against flooding. External pressure or interference seems to have sharpened the collective identities of other districts. The extortions of Adam de Clitheroe provoked a petition from the 'poor tenants and commonalty of Bowland in the counties of Lancaster and York'.¹²¹ In response to a visitation of 1510, the parishioners of Nidderdale 'command togeyer' to fail to present any complaints.¹²²

Perhaps the most impressive evidence for communal identities and actions based around districts, however, comes from the organization of the rebel troops during the Pilgrimage of Grace. We have already noted the extent to which the pilgrimage was perceived in terms of its component districts, and this reflects not only the frameworks through which the region was customarily subdivided, but the organization of the rebels themselves.

In the East Riding and adjacent areas to the north and west, musters were largely arranged in terms of wapentakes, with the addition of men from Yorkswold, but Marshland was raised as a separate district. William Stapleton described how Aske raised Howdenshire and Marshland, and later 'betwixt the ryvers of Owsse and Derwent', and how Beverley was besieged by forces from Yorkswold and Holderness. He provided the names of the captains of Holderness and the names of those who raised Ainsty 'betwixt

¹¹⁹Cited in Whitaker, *Craven*, p. 336.

¹²⁰*TE* I, 274.

¹²¹*RP* II, 390.

¹²²*The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, ed. J. Raine, SS 35 (1859), p. 264.

the revers of Owse Nidd and Wharfe', and stated that Ralph Ellerker was 'sore afrayed of the comons and specially of Holdernes'. Pickering Lithe and Ryedale were to be raised by a friar of Knaresborough.¹²³ George Lumley's deposition describes how he mustered Dickering wapentake and also refers to musters of Pickering Lithe and Yorkswold; Aske refers to the host of Holderness and Yorkswold.¹²⁴ Another list of the 'captains of Holderness' survives, the parson of Loftus was named as a captain in Howdenshire, and there are a number of references to the role played by the gentlemen of Marshland.¹²⁵

In other parts of the county, districts seem to have been more important for the commons' organization. Aske referred to hosts from Blackamoor as well as Pickering Lithe, and later to men from Cleveland and Richmondshire; from Wensleydale, Nidderdale, Kirkbyshire, Mashamshire and the liberty of Ripon; and from Craven, Dent, Sedburgh, Kendall, Furness, Bowland and part of the duchy of Lancaster.¹²⁶ The surviving evidence suggests that for the rebels themselves the districts of Richmondshire, Craven and Cleveland were particularly important. (In contrast the men of Dent mustered separately, with 'iij. other parishes thereabout'.)¹²⁷ Bills were produced by the commons of Craven ordering a muster of the parishioners of Gargrave at Rylstone (north of Skipton), and later ordering a meeting at 'Neales yng'.¹²⁸ The commons of Richmondshire wrote to the country of Cleveland calling them to meet with their neighbours; similarly, the vicar of Burgh-under-Stainmore referred to a letter sent to the commons of Westmoreland and Cumberland from the commons of Yorkshire, Richmondshire and the Bishopric, and the deposition of Barnaby Towneley stated that the insurrection in the NW was caused by the vicar reading a letter from the commons of Richmondshire.¹²⁹ Aske himself sent letters to Craven and Richmondshire in addition to Yorkswold.¹³⁰

¹²³'William Stapleton', ed. Cox, pp. 88, 91, 94-5, 98, 100.

¹²⁴E. Milner, *Records of the Lumleys of Lumley Castle*, ed. E. Benham (London, 1904), pp. 32-3, 39; 'Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. Bateson, p. 334.

¹²⁵*L&P* XI, 704, 818, 1077, 1120; XII/1, 306, 1085; 'Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. Bateson, p. 334.

¹²⁶'Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. Bateson, pp. 336-8.

¹²⁷*L&P* XI, 841.

¹²⁸*L&P*, XI, 1299/2; XII/1, 1034.

¹²⁹*L&P* XII/1, 789, 687.

¹³⁰'Pilgrimage of Grace', ed. Bateson, p. 569.

It is clear, then, that districts provided a framework through which local communities, and individuals and institutions of all ranks and kinds envisaged their 'countries'. The style in which such identifications were made was largely a matter of wealth and power, but attachment to districts cannot be confined to any restricted sections of regional society. There are some indications that lower-status identities might more readily be attached to larger districts such as Richmondshire, and higher-status ones to smaller areas such as Wensleydale. The organization of the commons in the Pilgrimage of Grace offers a suggestive analogy to the distinctions between the esquires and yeoman who took the oath of 1434. These can be no more than suggestions, however, and the whole subject invites further research.

In the sources we have examined so far, the forms of such attachments seem broadly comparable to the identifications with Yorkshire or the North explored in chapter 2. However, the place of districts in local culture differed from that of larger regional units in one significant way. Districts, as well as being imagined communities and historical entities, were firmly territorial units, with boundaries that were (with some flexibility) an established part of local culture. In the final sections of this chapter, I shall explore the territorial aspect of districts, asking how it was moulded by local administration, and how it provided a focus for collective identities.

The shape of districts

The boundaries of at least some districts were an established and enduring element in local culture. The boundaries of Craven, for example, are mentioned as early as the twelfth century, and a 'Craven cross', which was presumably a boundary marker, was recalled (although no longer in existence) in an account of the metes of Knaresborough forest in 1576.¹³¹ The boundaries of Craven and its adjacent districts were also referred

¹³¹*Charters of the Honour of Mowbray 1107-91*, ed. D. E. Greenway, *Records of Social and Economic History* n.s. 1 (London, 1972) pp. 44, 92; W. Wheater, *Knaresburgh and its Rulers* (Leeds, 1907), p. 59. For earlier references see *A History of Nidderdale*, ed. B. Jennings (Huddersfield, 1967), p. 80; *PN: WRY*

to in relation to the boundaries of Nidderdale and its chase. The rights of Byland within Nidderdale were set out in 1249 as they extended from the bounds of Craven in terms which correspond to a charter of 1173 x 80.¹³² According to an inquisition of 1307, the metes of the chase of Nidderdale followed the boundaries of Mashamshire between *Yore*, *Manslaghtre* and *Mouskeld*, the boundaries of Coverdale to the top of *Whernside*, and the boundaries of Craven from *Whernside* to *Mukowe* and Craven Keld.¹³³ An early-sixteenth-century inquisition as to the boundaries of Nidderdale, Appletreewick and the forest of Knaresborough follows these boundaries exactly.¹³⁴ A charter of 1251 also describes the boundaries of Craven at Whernside, and the bounds of Coverdale are referred to again in a 1551 description of the bounds of Mashamshire, which is based partly on Alan earl of Richmond's twelfth-century grant to Roger Mowbray.¹³⁵

These varied sources indicate that the boundaries of Craven, Nidderdale and other districts in the area were locally established. A number of other place-names on or near the edges of the district contain the element *Craven* (in addition to the cross and well (*keld*) mentioned above, there are early references to *Cravenegate* and *Craveneshalsewath*), suggesting local awareness of the extent of the district.¹³⁶ Similar references to the bounds of Cleveland suggest that these too were an enduring element of local culture.¹³⁷ In common with other boundaries, the territorial extent of districts seems to have been memorialized through a combination of documentary evidence and what can only vaguely be described as 'local tradition', both probably dependent on physical marks and landmarks such as Craven Cross or Whernside. Administrative practice may also have had an influence, as the boundary of Staincliff wapentake in Speed's map also traverses Whernside.

VI, 78.

¹³²*Feet of Fines for the County of York from 1246 to 1272*, ed. J. Parker, YASRS 82 (1932), pp. 11-12; *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*, ed. Greenway, p. 44.

¹³³*Yorkshire Inquisitions*, ed. Brown, IV, YASRS 37 (1906), pp. 148-50 (p. 149).

¹³⁴PRO, DL 39/4/4.

¹³⁵T. S. Gowland, 'The Honour of Kirkby Malzeard and the Chace of Nidderdale', *YAJ* 33 (1936-8), 349-96 (p. 389); J. Fisher, *The History and Antiquities of Masham and Mashamshire* (London, 1865), pp. 525-9; *CPR 1441-6*, p. 72.

¹³⁶PN: WRY VI, 1-2, 78, 170, 248.

¹³⁷Cf. *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*, ed. Greenway, pp. 170, p. 205; *EYC* III, 453-4; *Calendar of Charter Rolls I, 1226-1257* (London, 1903), pp. 445-6 (of 1255). In several of these the bounds of Cleveland seem to be related to those of the wapentake of Langbargh on Speed's map of 1610.

The place of district boundaries in local culture also emerges from Leland's early-sixteenth-century notes. Leland was interested throughout his travels in placing administrative boundaries, mostly divisions between counties, but in Yorkshire he also recorded the boundaries of smaller districts. In most cases it appears that he acquired such information from local informants, so his notes provide a guide to local interest in and knowledge of the boundaries by which the shire was subdivided. Leland gave particular attention to Richmondshire and Hallamshire, quite possibly because their names suggested to him that they were counties in their own right.¹³⁸ But his inquiries revealed the existence of other districts: that 'Richemontshire liith harde apone the borders of Craven-land', that 'Bysshops-Dale lyeth joyninge to the quarters of Craven', or that 'Wiske Bridge, a iii. miles *a ripa citer* of Tese, devidith Richemontshire from Cliveland'. These and similar comments suggest a sense of district boundaries that focussed on particular markers and remained vague where these were not available. Leland also heard, for example, that Richmondshire reached in one direction to 'the very north bridge on Ure by Ripon' and in the other to Boroughbridge' and that Maiden Castle was 'a limes betwixt Richemontshire and Westmerlande.'¹³⁹ Similarly Hallamshire 'goith one way a vi. or vii. miles above Sheffilde by west, yet, as I here say, a nother way the next village to Sheffild is in Darbyshire.'¹⁴⁰

Leland's notes on wapentakes also suggest a rather approximate and potentially varied sense of district boundaries, offering further support to the earlier hypothesis concerning the local significance of wapentakes, in conjunction with the Wolds, in and around the East Riding. Two of his comments can be quoted in full:

I lernid that al this past of the Est Ryding ys yn a hundred or wapentake caullid Herthil. And sum say that it cummith one way to Wresill, and of other partes touchith much on the boundes of the Wold, but the Wold self is no part of Herthil.

¹³⁸*Itinerary* IV, 25; above, n. 36; although Leland does note that 'the hole contery of Richemont in describunge of Yorkeshire is countid in the Northe-Rydyng' (V, 138).

¹³⁹*Itinerary* I, 84; IV, 31-2; V, 138.

¹⁴⁰*Itinerary* IV, 14. Rivers, of course, provided extended boundaries: 'Tese...devidith Richemontshire from the bisshoprike.' (*Itinerary* IV, 31). Ryther's later notes give only a rough sense of the respective locations of districts: see for example BL, Lansdowne MS 119, fos. 119v, 120r, 121v.

And there I lernid of Mr Conestable, that the cuntery lying on the north est side of Darwent from Shirburne paroch to Stanford bridg on Darwent is of an hunderith, bering the name Hercrosse [*recte* Buckrose], and lyith bytwixt the woold and Ridale.¹⁴¹

The shape of districts could be closely bound up with local identities, not only through cultural traditions but through the need to define the extent of taxes, assessments or other charges on local society. Scottish attacks in 1322 prompted the 'gentz du vaal de Pykeringe' to hand over three men in ransom for the sum of 400 l.; on complaint that this had not been paid, an inquisition was ordered, to be followed by a levy of the sum from the men of the valley according to their relative wealth.¹⁴² The inquisition of 1325 found that the ransom had been paid for the safety of the vale of Pickering 'from the water of Syven westwards to the sea eastwards,' the boundary (which corresponded to a limit of the forest and wapentake of Pickering) serving to define the later levy.¹⁴³

The Pickering petition and inquisition suggest how identities focussed on districts were more likely to be tied up with questions of territorial area than identities based around the county or the North. In the early fourteenth century, as a result of new perambulations imposed by political circumstance, the extent of forest and chase was a frequent cause of collective action or complaint.¹⁴⁴ In 1315 men of the forest of Galtres carried out an unauthorized perambulation and proclaimed in York that foresters entering the forest would lose their heads.¹⁴⁵ In 1328, the *tenantz et homes du...pais de Wheruedale* petitioned to complain of being charged for *puture* as if they were part of the forest of Knaresborough, when Wharfedale had been disafforested by king John:

¹⁴¹Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 45, 64. Stamford Bridge is in Harthill in Speed's map of 1610; in *Kirkby's Inquest* of 1284-5, the *Nomina Villarum* of 1316 and the lay subsidy of 1334 it was divided between Harthill and Ouse and Derwent (*Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids*, VI (London, 1921), pp. 32-3, 47, 168, 173; *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, ed. R. E. Glasscock (London, 1975), pp. 361, 364).

¹⁴²RP I, 422; *Calendar of Miscellaneous Inquisitions*, II, no. 891.

¹⁴³For the forest see *Cartularium de Whiteby*, ed. Atkinson, II, 337-40; for the wapentake see Speed's map of 1610.

¹⁴⁴C. R. Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England* (Leicester, 1979), ch. 7.

¹⁴⁵CCR 1313-8, p. 225; Young, *Royal Forests*, p. 144.

similar complaints were raised in 1344 and 1376.¹⁴⁶ In 1330 the ‘liges gentz du vale de Pikering’ protested that the forest of the vale of Pickering had not been ridden and *purlieu* assigned, as had been done in other royal forests.¹⁴⁷ It was probably around this time that the ‘poeres gentz qe furent dedenz le purale de la foreste de Galtres’ complained of reforestation by justice Henry le Scrope.¹⁴⁸ But boundaries could remain important throughout the period, as in 1483, when a commission was appointed to enquire into discords between the men of forest of Knaresborough and those of the chase of Nidderdale resulting from disagreement over the bounds of forest and chase, apparently due to the enclosure of an area called ‘le Fulshawe’.¹⁴⁹

Leland’s notes, examined above, do not only show that the boundaries of certain districts formed part of local cultural traditions. Leland also shows that district identities could focus on central or focal points in the landscape. His comment that Penhill ‘is countid the hiest hille of Richemontshire’, implies a local perception of the district as a coherent unit, the framework within which local topography is ordered and classified.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, in the late sixteenth century an observer recorded the rhyme ‘When Roseberrye Toppinge weares a cappe / Let Clevelande then beware a clappe’.¹⁵¹ Again, the district provides the framework through which the landscape is interpreted, as if it were an area with its own discrete weather-system. There are likely to have been many other such tags and jingles through which local culture took shape around districts, which escaped the antiquarian record.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶*RP*, II, 24 (but misreading the name): SC8/257/12832, 12835; *CCR 1327-30*, pp. 146-7; *Abstracts of the Chartulary of Fountains*, ed. Lancaster, II, 689-90. *Puture*: ‘an allotment of food paid by inhabitants of the forest to the forester for maintenance of himself and his attendants, dogs and horses: later converted to a money payment.’ (*MED*, s.v.)

¹⁴⁷*RP* II, 50.

¹⁴⁸*RP* II, 385a.

¹⁴⁹*CPR 1476-85*, p. 345; Gowland, ‘Honour of Kirkby Malzeard’, p. 381n. Similar commissions were issued in 1495-6: *CPR 1494-1509*, pp. 52, 88.

¹⁵⁰Leland, *Itinerary*, IV, 25.

¹⁵¹‘Description of Cleveland’, p. 409.

¹⁵²Compare the jingles recorded by Harrison in the sixteenth century: *Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, vol. 1 (London, 1807), pp. 53, 143.

Conclusions

Pollard has argued that in late medieval Yorkshire, 'to a considerable degree the old feudal honours continued to act as an alternative focus to the county...Landed society tended to identify itself with the 'counties' within the county, such as Cleveland, Richmondshire, Craven, or, further to the south, Hallamshire, each dominated by a great lord.'¹⁵³ His argument captures an important truth about the nature of local identities in the shire, but it needs to be both qualified and extended. As I showed in chapter 2, the county undoubtedly was important to local identities at a range of levels. On the other hand, the significance of districts within the county extends beyond those outlined by Pollard, and beyond the social groups on which he concentrates.

As I noted above, Yorkshire was unusual in that (with the partial exception of the East Riding and its vicinity) the divisions which mattered most to those within the county did not correspond with those used by royal administration. In contrast the division of Lincolnshire into Holland, Lindsey and Kesteven structured the workings of central government in addition to local identities. The commonalty of Kesteven petitioned the crown in 1334, for example, and again in the late fourteenth century it petitioned that the bounds between Holland and Kesteven should be determined.¹⁵⁴ The annals of Louth Park abbey describe 'tempore destrucionis Lyndeseie', while the Celys traded in 'Kesten wull', wool from Kesteven; 'Holland, full of dikes' is described in the poem on 'The Shires.'¹⁵⁵

Similarly in Cumberland and Westmorland, the districts which formed the basis for ecclesiastical administration and baronial lordship, and which seem to have been important in structuring local identities, were also the basis for the wards of royal administration.¹⁵⁶ Gilsland, Coupland, and Allerdale are referred to in the chronicle of St

¹⁵³A. J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War and Politics 1450-1500* (Oxford, 1990), p. 153.

¹⁵⁴*RP* II, 71; III, 95; the latter petition was repeated in 1389 (III, 272). Note also the fourteenth-century account of 'graunt dissencoin par entre Lyndesey, Holand et Kesteven.' (*RP* II, 403)

¹⁵⁵*Chronicon Abbatie de Parco Lude*, ed. Venables, p. 24; *The Cely Letters 1472-1488*, ed. A. Hanham, EETS os 273 (London, 1975), p. 191; *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. C. and K. Sisam (Oxford, 1970), p. 499.

¹⁵⁶Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria*, p. 14.

Mary's abbey, York; and the Franciscan chronicle written at Carlisle describes how the Scots extorted tribute from 'Allerdalia, et Couplandia, et Westmorlandia' in 1315, devastated 'Staynmore et Gilleslande' in 1319, and received ransom for 'patria de Furneys' in 1322.¹⁵⁷ In Lancashire, likewise, the historic unit of Blackburnshire, whose history was reinvented by Whalley abbey, was incorporated into hundredal administration.¹⁵⁸

While Yorkshire may have been unusual in the independence of its districts from royal administration, the significance of districts in shaping local identities within the county can be paralleled in several other parts of England. In the south the Cotswolds provide perhaps the best example, first mentioned by Gerald of Wales in the twelfth century and by the fifteenth century a familiar district to wool merchants: the Celys travelled frequently 'in Cottyswolde', paid 'men of Cottyswolde', and had an abbreviated term, 'Cottys', for wool from the area.¹⁵⁹ The role of districts in structuring local identities is undoubtedly a subject that needs to be explored further across a range of localities.

I have argued in this chapter that Yorkshire's districts performed a number of functions in local culture. On the one hand they were, as Pollard suggests, 'county-like' units through which locality was subdivided and characterized, and which served as sites of individual and collective identification. On the other hand, they were firmly territorial areas, whose place in local culture was defined through their boundaries and central places. They occupy a level between the areas explored in the first part of this thesis, and the more restricted localities that are the subject of the following chapters.

¹⁵⁷*The Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey York, from Bodley MS. 39*, ed. H. H. E. Craster and M. E. Thornton, SS 148 (1934), pp. 46, 50, 54, 73 (evidently based on material from the abbey's cells at St Bees and Wetherall); *Lanercost*, ed. Stevenson, pp. 230, 240, 246.

¹⁵⁸See generally D. Kenyon, *The Origins of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1991), ch. 6.

¹⁵⁹A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Gloucestershire*, 4 vols., EPNS 38-41 (Cambridge, 1964-5), I, 2: *Cely Letters*, ed. Hanham, pp. 23, 48, 83; for other references see Index s.v. Cotswolds and Glossary s.v. Cot(t)ys and Cottyswold(e).

CHAPTER 7
THE SHAPE OF LOCALITY:
'CHIEF PLACES', BOUNDARIES, AND LOCAL IDENTITIES

This chapter and the following are largely concerned with the meanings of locality at the level of the manor, town or parish - those elements of local culture that were rooted in specific territorial circumstances. The present chapter is concerned with the spatial organization of locality, and has two principal sections, both of which build on the earlier discussion of districts. The first explores ideas of central places, how these were perceived and debated, and how they were used to construct communal local identities or negotiate relationships between local communities. The second looks at the making and memorialization of boundaries in manorial, parish and urban culture, arguing that boundaries were particularly important to the identities of these local societies. There has been scholarly interest in both subjects. Studies of boundaries, however, have generally been interested in exploring the continuity of territorial divisions over substantial periods, and more recent work on central places has been conducted along similar lines.¹ There has been relatively little interest in how boundaries or central places were perceived, the ways in which they were memorialized and negotiated, or their significance to local cultures and identities. These are the issues around which the following discussion centres.

¹Recent examples, with references to earlier works, include C. Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians: A Study in British Provincial Origins A.D. 400-1120* (Aldershot, 1996); D. Kenyon, *The Origins of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1991); A. J. L. Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1987). Compare the discussion of the 'informal bonds' which shaped the 'social geography' of the north-west in M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 45-6.

Head places and mother churches: central and peripheral places

Central or focal places were identified in Middle English through two main terms. The first was the concept of the ‘head’ or ‘chief’ place. These terms could refer to the capital of a kingdom or region, as an equivalent for *metropolis*; they could denote the *caput* of a manor or honour; and were also used to describe ecclesiastical centres.² (‘Capital’ was very rarely used in these senses in the fifteenth century, and came to assume them over the sixteenth and seventeenth.)³ However, ecclesiastical centres were more commonly described in terms of ‘mother’ churches, the terminology of ‘mother’ being less commonly applied to secular centres.⁴

‘Head’ and ‘mother’ carried connotations of authority and antiquity. They were used to identify locations with real jurisdiction over other regional or local institutions, or with more historic or symbolic claims. Historical traditions could be an important frame of reference for identifying head places, but could be countered by arguments based on perceptions of geographical distance and centrality. Perceptions of, and debates over, focal places in late-medieval England were thus conducted along two distinct but related lines of argument. On the one hand, historical discourses were used to assert the traditional authority and dominance of particular sites; on the other hand, geographical concepts of central and peripheral locations were also important.

Historical and geographical arguments occasionally appear together, but it is more common for perceptions of distance to be used to protest against existing or traditional administrative arrangements. The rebels of 1450 complained about the location of the sessions of the peace in Kent: the people of Kent were said to be ‘sore vexid’ on account of the five-day journey ‘from the ferthest parts of the West in to the

²*MED*, s.v. *hede*, n. (1), 5a and b; *chef* (adj.), 2.

³*MED*, s.v. *capital* (adj.); *OED*, s.v. *capital* (n.), B.2. and adj.

⁴*MED*, s.v. *mother* 8b-c.

East', and it was asked that the sessions be held in two places.⁵ In 1274 it was said that Richard of Cornwall had 'attracted' the county court of Sussex from Lewes to Chichester, to the damage of the shire. When it was granted in 1503-4 that the court should be held alternately at the respective towns, the terms of the statute reflected the local complaint that Chichester was 'in the extreme partie of the same shyre, the same shyre beyng lxx myles in lengthe' whereas Lewes was 'in the middes of that shyre'.⁶ Unsurprisingly, rivalry between local institutions could be expressed in terms of the common good afforded by geographical location: in 1314-15 the men of Lostwithiel in Cornwall petitioned that their privileges (which included holding the county court) should be maintained against Bodmin, and one of their arguments was that Lostwithiel was 'en mylieu du pais'.⁷

Petitions for the replacement of certain state officials also invoked ideas of central and peripheral places, although again it is usually impossible to say how far such arguments conceal other objections. Such petitions applied with particular force to coroners, who were required to move quickly round a wide area to deal with the disposal of bodies. Hunnisett found that five Yorkshire coroners between 1327 and 1399 were dismissed on grounds of their residence: two were said to live in the remotest parts of the county; two dwelt in other counties rather than Yorkshire; and one lived outside the North Riding, the area in which he was supposed to serve.⁸ References to the 'uttermost parts' of the county show that ideas of centre and periphery could be conceived in absolute terms, although there were also more specific references to coroners who were remote from the county court.⁹

⁵I. M. W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991), p. 150.

⁶*The Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London, 1810-1828), II, 665; H. M. Cam, *The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls: An Outline of Local Government in Medieval England* (London, 1930), pp. 107-8, with comparable examples.

⁷RP I, 296.

⁸R. F. Hunnisett, *The Medieval Coroner* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 172, and see also p. 129. (In contrast twelve were replaced because they had no lands in the county.) Thomas de Reresby was dismissed in 1377 because he 'has his abode in the uttermost parts of the county so that he may not have leisure to exercise the office of coroner' (CCR 1374-7, p. 423).

⁹Hunnisett, *Medieval Coroner*, p. 97 (citing CCR 1435-41, p. 416), and pp. 176-7: '“Uttermost parts” therefore did not necessarily mean the borders of the county: it might mean far from the district in which

Geographical distance was not only invoked in the context of the county and its central places. In 1324-5 the people of Scarborough petitioned that a *trone* to weigh wool should be established at the town. They claimed that the staple at Hull was too far distant for wools from *la mure de Blakhowe* to be transported there, with the result that such wool was sent to Flanders without passing through the customs. Scarborough would provide an alternative centre where wools from these places could be customed - as it was said, *al d'ese du pays*.¹⁰ Such references to the 'ease of the country', or conversely to its damage, were used to portray a wide range of locations as central to a variety of areas. The phrase also occurs frequently in complaints over the repair of bridges and roads.¹¹ Indeed the formula is so common in petitionary contexts that it can seem drained of any real meaning, but its very frequency demonstrates the extent to which locality - 'country' - was naturally understood as looking towards or centred on individual areas or features.

As well as presenting locations as central to the county or to a less definite 'country', petitions also created central places for larger regions. In 1344 the commons in parliament petitioned for the establishment of a mint at York, 'for the ease of the people and the merchants of the North'; in 1423 the commons of 'all the north parts' (which included Nottingham, Derby and Lincoln), requested the king that the master of the mint in the Tower of London should be sent to York to produce coins of the correct weight, 'for your profit, and the ease of all the country around.'¹² The requests of the Pilgrimage of Grace in December 1536 included the demands that a parliament be held immediately at Nottingham or York, and that a court be established at York for those north of the Trent.¹³ All of these complaints imply that the structures of governmental administration neglected the 'north parts', and that redress would be best provided by the modifying of administrative structures to incorporate York as the 'head place' of the

the coroner was supposed to act, far from a gaol, or ... far from the county court.'

¹⁰RP I, 423a.

¹¹See *Public Works in Medieval Law*, ed. C. T. Flower, Selden Society 32, 40 (1915-23), II, 246, 250-1, 273, 278, etc. and *passim*.

¹²RP II, 149a; IV, 200a; cf. *VCH: York*, p. 67.

¹³L&P XI, 1246.

north.¹⁴

There is an apparent fit here between shared regional perspectives and the claims of York itself to be the chief place of the North, which were explored in ch. 2 above. Regional historical culture seems also to have accepted that York was the ‘chef cety and hed’ of Northumbria, as an account of Uctred, earl of Northumbria put it.¹⁵ In 1536 Darcy still wrote to the mayor as the leader of the second city of the realm, and when Hull positioned itself in relation to the North it was not as its head, but (in a term which emphasized the importance of the town’s marginal location) as its key.¹⁶

Nevertheless, shifts (whether real or perceived) in the relative importance of regional communities meant that York’s status as the region’s ‘hede town’ could not be guaranteed and was subject to challenge. In 1532, when Hull was granted toll on all goods sold there, York thought it necessary to assert its regional preeminence in a petition to the king requesting that its rights in Hull be preserved ‘for somyche as the sayd town of Hull is and evermore was but port toune to the said City of York for to charge and discharge.’¹⁷ The scales were tipped in the opposite direction in 1558, when Hull suggested that York should be considered one of its members.¹⁸

York’s claim against Hull, with its evocation of historical precedent (‘and evermore was’), makes it clear that ‘head places’ were constructed not only on the basis of geographical frameworks, but in accordance with ideas of antiquity and historical status. As we have seen, the account of rights and privileges produced by the church of Beverley included the claim that Athelstan established Beverley as ‘caput totius

¹⁴Compare the petition of the commonalty of Sussex that a gaol should be established at Chichester or Lewes, as the current gaol at Guildford in Surrey was ‘ferre from somme parties of the said shire’. (*RP* II. 194a and VI, 388).

¹⁵Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 329, fo. 107r. The text is part of a history ‘of ye worthy and nobill stoke of ye progenitours of Ughtrede’ copied into Thomas Anlaby’s cartulary, probably translated from a Latin original.

¹⁶*L&P* XI, 627; above, ch. 2, p. 89.

¹⁷*York Civic Records*, ed. A. Raine et al., 9 vols., YASRS 98, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119, 138 (1939-78), III, 146 (the city’s letter to Hull is printed p. 147).

¹⁸*York Civic Records*, ed. Raine et al., V, 168-9, with York’s indignant reply that ‘it is a Citie of itself and no membre’.

Austriding.¹⁹ Although such traditions could be widely shared, they were also - like the other historical texts we have examined in this thesis - susceptible to editing or rewriting at the local level, and do seem to have been important institutional identities.

An account of the foundation of Doncaster, which seems to have developed in the late fifteenth century, illustrates very clearly the relation of historical tradition to regional importance. A genealogical roll claims that the town was founded by Gwendolen, wife of the legendary king Lochrine, and called 'þe cite of Gwenlyn' or alternatively 'þe cite of Maddan' after her son's name.²⁰ Maddan is Ebraucus's grandfather in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, and as we have seen above, Ebraucus was known as the founder of York.²¹ The provenance of the roll is not entirely clear, but it has strong Yorkshire and Percy connections, although it may have been copied elsewhere in England.²² The claim regarding the foundation of Doncaster is not made in other versions of the Brut story, and most probably originated in the town itself, which had tenurial connections with the Percies.²³ The tradition seems to be an attempt to supplant York's claim to be the second city of the realm and the chief

¹⁹*Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Beverlacensis*, ed. J. Raine, SS 5 (1837), pp. 104-5.

²⁰Bodleian, MS Bodley Rolls 5, m. 3.

²¹Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, tr. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1966) ii. 4-7 (pp. 76-9).

²²See above, ch. 4, pp. 169-70. The roll is unlikely to have been owned by the Percies themselves; one would expect it to have remained with the family's other genealogical manuscripts at Alnwick. It most likely belonged to a house under Percy patronage, Whitby being perhaps the most plausible candidate. Many of Banke's manuscripts came from local religious houses (A. G. Watson, *The Manuscripts of Henry Savile of Banke* (London, 1969), p. 9). The roll is an elaborate manuscript, however, and may well have been produced elsewhere: the reading 'Saltres' for 'Galtres', on m. 5, may suggest a southern scribe, as may the language of the roll.

²³John Stow, *The Chronicles of England* (London, 1580; STC 23333), p. 19, notes 'one olde pedigree saith, he [Madan] builded the city of Madan, now of the river *Don* called *Doncaster*;' this passage is not found in Stow's earlier *A Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* (London, 1565; STC 23319). Bodley Rolls 5 may well be the pedigree to which Stow refers: it came to the Bodleian from Henry Savile of Banke: Banke is known to have had contact with Stow and may either have acquired the manuscript from him or have communicated relevant information to him (Watson, *Manuscripts of Henry Savile*, p. 9 and no. 293). Stow himself may have been the source for Holinshed's statement that Madan 'builded (as is reported) Madancaister, now Dancastre, which reteineth still the later part of his name' (*Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, vol. 1* (London, 1807), I, 445).

city of the north by rewriting the historical tradition that buttressed this claim.²⁴ Doncaster had received a royal charter of incorporation in 1467 - perhaps the most significant grant the town had received in over a hundred years - and the town's sense of its significance must have been particularly strong around this time.²⁵ (Doncaster's major urban competitor in the West Riding, Pontefract, was not incorporated until 1484.)²⁶ The town was still a long way from being the chief city of the north, but the rewriting of historical tradition offered an elevated origin commensurate with new aspirations. Conversely the wishful story at Hedon reported by Leland - 'sum say that the staple of woulle of the north partes was ons there' - probably did not reflect growing self-consciousness but compensated for the decline which the town had suffered from the fourteenth century.²⁷

Most of the material discussed above purports to express communal or institutional perspectives. It is not immediately obvious how far perceptions of central or focal places were important to individual identities, although some of the historical texts referred to were in private hands. Individuals certainly complained about their distance from particular courts, but this was usually in an attempt to be released from attendance rather than to have the court relocated to a more central position.²⁸ Where individuals were aware of 'head places', this could reflect particular institutional or wider regional loyalties: either could be the implication of Hugh atte Fenne's letter to John Paston II

²⁴As in the York Minster history tables: Ebraucus founded York 'que post London tenet adhuc inter civitates regni locum secundum' (*John de Foxton's Liber cosmographiae (1408)*, ed. J. B. Friedman (Leiden, 1988), p. 298).

²⁵G. H. Martin et al, *Doncaster: A Borough and its Charters* (Doncaster, 1994), *passim*.

²⁶R. B. Dobson, 'Yorkshire Towns in the Late Fourteenth Century', *Thoresby Society* 59 (*Miscellany* 18, 1983), 1-21, esp. pp. 7-8.

²⁷Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 62; for Hedon see *VCH: ERY* V, 168-86.

²⁸*Monastic Chancery Proceedings*, ed. J. S. Purvis, YASRS 88 (1934), p. 43 (the abbot of Fountains complains of being vexed in wapentake courts of Staincliff, Skipton and Gisburn); *RP* III, 657 (similar plea from the abbot of Furness).

‘wreten at þe hede toun of Norffolk’.²⁹

Testamentary bequests are an important source for individual attitudes to central or focal places, although for obvious reasons they are largely concerned with religious rather than secular centres. Even relatively humble testators were keen to establish connections with a number of regional centres in addition to the immediate locality around which bequests usually centre. Particularly striking is the number and range of bequests to the fabric of York *Münster*, or ‘peterwork’, as it was colloquially known. These occur in wills from all parts of the region and from all sectors of society, often in small sums, and there can be little doubt that (as Dobson has suggested) they reflect a widespread sense of the church’s regional power and significance, although this was rarely explicitly articulated.³⁰

The *Münster* was, however, one of the few religious institutions whose regional importance was recognized in its description as a ‘mother church’. A will of 1519 refers to the ‘moder church’ of Lincoln and of York, and there were bequests in 1532 to ‘the mother church of Yorke’ and ‘the metropolitan church of Yorke’.³¹ The same language could be used to denote the other collegiate churches in the diocese with which the church of York was associated. Joyce Percy’s will of 1519 left 11 d. to ‘the iiij mother churches of Yorke yche oon.’³² These are probably the same ‘four moder churches’ mentioned by Edward Stanley in 1523 and specified as ‘Saint Peter of York, our lady of Southwell, Saint John at Beverley, and Saint Wylfride of Ripon.’³³ It is striking that all these references come from wills registered outside the diocese. It may be that awareness of the diocese’s ecclesiastical centres could be heightened amongst those that had left the region, although a number of wills registered at York also include bequests to these four

²⁹*Paston*, II, 385 (of 1468).

³⁰B. Dobson, ‘The Later Middle Ages 1215-1500’, in *A History of York Minster*, ed. G. E. Aylmer and R. Cant (Oxford, 1977), pp. 44-109 (p. 108).

³¹*North Country Wills, 1383-1558*, ed. J. W. Clay, SS 116 (1908), pp. 97, 132-3.

³²*North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 105.

³³*North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 113.

institutions without explicitly identifying them as ‘mother churches’.³⁴ As I suggested in an for some testators, and apparently for the dean and chapter, the regionally central and representative character of these institutions was also closely associated with the saints whose shrines they contained.³⁵

‘Mother church’ was also commonly used to distinguish a parish church from its chapels of ease.³⁶ The will of Christopher Horbury specified that he was to be buried ‘in my moder chirche of Wakefeld’, while the jurors of Langbargh wapentake complained in 1274-5 that the common way ‘by which the people from the vill of Trenholme pass to their mother church of Whorlton’ had been obstructed.³⁷ As these examples suggest, the term was often used to emphasize the significance of the parish church and the duties owed to it by parishioners, even those served by dependent chapels. The emphasis on authority and dependence that frequently emerges in such situations reflects the fact that parochial duties were often resented and avoided or challenged. As with secular head places, protests against ecclesiastical organization opposed the claims of geographical distance to those of historical authority. Such distance could be a matter more for complaint than real action. At the town of Hook, which was divided from the parish church at Snaith by a river, the following rhyme was recorded in 1588 (there is no reason to think that was not current considerably earlier):

Yf thou dye at Howk, to Snath mun thy bowk;
In an olde cogge mun thy bones rogge;

³⁴*TE* II, 181 (the vicar of Bossall, leaving 5 s. to York Minster fabric and 3 s. 4 d. to Southwell, Beverley and Ripon); *TE* IV, 79 (will of a resident canon of York Minster, with bequests to churches of York, Beverley and Ripon), 100 (the will of a Holderness knight, leaving 6 s. 8 d. to York and Beverley, 3 s. 4 d. to Ripon and Southwell, and 6 s. 8 d. to Lincoln); *North Country Wills*, ed. Clay, p. 66. Thomas Mering of Newark referred only to ‘ye modir chirche ot (*sic*) Southewell’ (*TE* IV, 180).

³⁵See above, ch. 5, p. 219. Penance pilgrimages assigned by the dean and chapter sometimes specify visits and offerings to the shrines at York, Beverley and Ripon, sometimes to the institutions and their fabrics: cf. *A Mediaeval Act Book, With Some Account of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction at York*, ed. J. S. Purvis (York, n.d.), pp. 20 (referring to St William of York), 25 (referring to St Peter of York), 31-2, 49, and note pilgrimage to Southwell, pp. 34-5.

³⁶Cf. D. M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1971), p. 5.

³⁷*TE* III, 259; *Yorkshire Hundred and Quo Warranto Rolls 1274-94*, ed. B. English, YASRS 151 (1996), p. 99.

Be thou never so wood, thou mun byde the flood.³⁸

Local culture here had developed around resentment at the dependence of one community on another, and this was probably not uncommon.³⁹ Comparable evidence from another parish in the Marshland area illustrates particularly well the relation between historical and geographical arguments.

In 1320, after complaining to archbishop Melton of its distance from Hatfield, the community of Thorne had been granted permission for the performance of the sacraments in its chapel.⁴⁰ However, this fell short of the parochial status the community had requested, and after rebuilding of its local church, Thorne seems to have assumed parochial rights regardless, and ceased contribution to the upkeep of the parish church of Hatfield. In 1365-6, the inhabitants of Hatfield, Stainford, Woodhouse and Donscoft (all in the parish of Hatfield) initiated legal proceedings in an attempt to force the inhabitants of Thorne to make these contributions. The arguments brought forward by the parish of Hatfield provide an excellent example of how historical traditions were used to perpetuate relations of centrality and dominance.

In addition to claiming that the rights of administering the sacrament and burying the dead had been conceded to Thorne only on condition that it remain part of the parish of Hatfield, a broader argument was made which asserted Hatfield's greater antiquity and even moral superiority to Thorne. When the church of Hatfield was built and made parochial, it was claimed, the lands where Thorne now lies were still barren (*vasta et sterilia*) and wholly uncultivated. The village originated with the arrival of two or three fishermen who put up houses there because it was convenient for fishing, and it was only with the later arrival of other strangers (*advenas*) and their apparently prodigious

³⁸BL, MS Lansdowne 119, f. 116v. Ryder provides the following gloss: 'cogg: a bote, bowk: a body, the poet a nody'. He heard the poem 'in passenge over a ryver that devideth a towen called Howk from ther parish church called Snathe': 'ther' suggests the perspective is that of Hook. For Hook's dependency on Snaith, see *The Coucher Book of Selby*, ed. J. T. Fowler, 2 vols., YASRS 10 and 13 (1891-3), II, 114 (of 1318) and 353 (of 1540).

³⁹Compare the attempt of the men of Carlton to make their chapel into a parish church independent of Snaith in 1393, and Snaith's petition that Carlton's dependence should be restored 'come ad este use et custome du temps dont memore ne court': BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra D. III, fos. 198r-99r, at 198r.

⁴⁰J. Hunter, *South Yorkshire: The History and Topography of the Deanery of Doncaster in the Diocese and County of York*, 2 vols. (London, 1828-31), I, 194-5.

procreation (the document is damaged at this point, so we cannot be entirely clear) that the lands were assarted and cultivated. 'And these fishermen and the other inhabitants of the vill of Thorne from that time... received the sacraments and buried their dead at the parish church of Hatfield.'⁴¹

As at Snaith and Hook, local culture at Hatfield had developed around its historic centrality to the local area, but an added impetus was provided in this case by shifts in the actual wealth and standing of the two communities. In the earlier fourteenth century Thorne does seem to have been a smaller and less wealthy vill than Hatfield: in 1334 the former was assessed at 18 s. and the latter at £1 16s. But later in the century Thorne's population and prosperity were to increase significantly: in 1379, around thirteen years after the case we are considering, it had a taxable population of 160 worth 31 s. 6 d., compared to Hatfield's 123 inhabitants worth 23 s.⁴² The story of Thorne's origins which seems to have been current around Hatfield - with its emphasis on the vill's unpromising situation, lowly origins, late development and unseemly growth - presumably responded to the changes which had taken place over the last two or three generations. The story, and the legal proceeding in which it is contained, provided a means for the community of Hatfield to come to terms with its decline and to retain such importance as it could.

The materials from Hook and Thorne, which were fortunate enough to be preserved in antiquarian and legal records respectively, provide a vivid insight into local identities based around communities' position and standing in their neighbourhoods.⁴³ It seems likely that such traditions were common rather than exceptional, even if this is hidden by

⁴¹BIHR, CP E 90, art. 2.

⁴²*The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, ed. R. E. Glasscock (London, 1975), p. 393; 'Rotuli collectorum subsidii regi a laicis anno secundo concessi in Westrythyngo in comitatu Eboraci: wapentagium de Strafford', *YAJ* 5 (1877-8), 1-51 (pp. 12-13); 'Rotuli collectorum... wapentagium de Osgodcrosse', *YAJ* 6 (1879-80), 1-44 (pp. 13-14). There seems no reason to doubt that the figures offer a reliable guide to the relative size and wealth of the two communities, as it is hard to see why evasion or under-enumeration should have varied greatly between them.

⁴³A tradition explaining why the chapel of Mirfield became elevated to a parish church deserves fuller exploration in this respect: Bodl., MS Dodsworth 116, fos. 36v-37v.

the scarcity of the evidence, and that perceptions of or attitudes to ‘chief places’ were an important part of local identities at all levels from small rural settlements to major urban communities.⁴⁴

We need to recognize that such attitudes- perhaps more than those relating to other aspects of locality - may not always have been explicitly articulated. There is probably much that could be learnt about changing perceptions of ‘head places’ from examination of the organization of local administration or social life: from the locations chosen for delivery of royal proclamations and for holding sessions of the peace, as well as from a more intensive study of wills.⁴⁵ The geography of popular rebellion may also have something to tell us, whether it is in the locations where rebels posted their communications, the sites where they mustered and assembled, or their targets.⁴⁶ Bennett noted assemblies of men of Cheshire and Blackburnshire at Sandiway and Billinge Hill respectively, although he was unable to explain the significance of these sites.⁴⁷ Whatever further information may emerge concerning differing perceptions of focal places and their importance to local identities, however, it is likely that the geographical and historical ideas outlined above will prove central to their explanation.

⁴⁴Anthropological accounts of twentieth-century Andalusia and Essex, where rhymes, jingles or traditions concerning the history or character of nearby settlements were widespread and often involved relations of dominance or subordination, are suggestive in this respect: cf. J. A. Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra*, second edn (Chicago, 1971), ch. 1, esp. pp. 9-12; M. Strathern, *Kinship at the Core: An Anthropology of Elmdon, a Village in North-West Essex in the Nineteen-Sixties* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 7-8, etc; later local jingles are recorded by Dodsworth, eg. Bodl., MS Dodsworth 121, fo. 172r.

⁴⁵For proclamations, see e.g. J. R. Maddicott, ‘The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England’, *TRHS* 5th ser. 28 (1978), 27-43 (pp. 34-6).

⁴⁶Cf. N. Brooks, ‘The Organization and Achievements of the Peasants of Kent and Essex in 1381’, in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. H. Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (London, 1985), pp. 247-70.

⁴⁷Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, p. 46.

Boundaries: landscape, memory and local identities

Places imagined as central to locality were constructed in terms of geography and physical territory, or in terms of historic powers or privileges. The definition of boundaries involved a similar combination of spatial organization and historical claims. We have seen in the preceding chapters that awareness of the boundaries of larger districts and administrative units could be a part of local culture, but that such boundaries often reflected divisions between estates or lordships.⁴⁸ The parishioners of Penistone were aware of the boundary between Yorkshire and Cheshire only because it corresponded with the limits of their parish.⁴⁹

Boundaries were a significantly more important part of the culture of locality at such restricted and 'local' levels. This is reflected in the survival of English medieval maps: there are many more local maps than national ones, and the majority of local maps are concerned with establishing boundaries.⁵⁰ (When the boundaries of administrative areas came to be depicted on maps - in Saxton's county maps of the 1570s and Speed's of the 1610s - it was on maps designed for public audiences rather than as private and local evidences.)⁵¹ Furthermore, it was only at the more local level that the collective ritual activities through which boundaries were memorialized among local society were feasible.

The definition of boundaries was important in determining individual or communal resources as well as local standing; when established, boundaries were also liable to decay, change or alteration. Consequently the delineation of boundaries was a central part of the documentary culture of medieval landowners, and records of dispute

⁴⁸See above, ch. 6, pp. 255-6. Boundaries between Richmondshire and Westmorland coincided with estate boundaries: *CPR 1272-81*, p. 471; *RP II*, 96; *CCR 1337-9*, pp. 326, 384. And cf. D. Hey, 'Yorkshire's Southern Boundary', *Northern History* 37 (2000), 31-47.

⁴⁹BIHR, CP E 81.

⁵⁰See P. D. A. Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London, 1993), p. 79; *Local Maps and Plans from Medieval England*, ed. R. A. Skelton and P. D. A. Harvey (Oxford, 1986), p. 7 and *passim*.

⁵¹For a brief account of Saxton see Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England*, pp. 54-65.

over boundaries are also relatively common. These sources allow us to explore in detail the interplay of documentary evidence, local knowledge, ceremony and physical topography in forming local identities.⁵²

The documentary collections of landowning institutions and individuals were largely made up of title deeds, memoranda and legal records, through which the precise extent of institutional claims on locality was recorded. Descriptions of boundaries are a common element in such collections; they might be specially produced, or a memorandum or endorsement could draw attention to earlier boundary definitions in a deed or charter. At York, there are no fewer than three descriptions of the city boundaries in the memoranda books, describing the extent of the city's common lands.⁵³ The coucher book of Kirkstall abbey contains an early-fourteenth-century memorandum on the bounds between *Gradale* and *Crosdale*, and a record of a lengthy dispute over the boundaries of the forest of Blackburnshire.⁵⁴ A deed relating to Marske received an endorsement noting that it 'setteth out ye bounder therof ante conquestum'.⁵⁵ A description of the boundaries of the liberty of Ripon is only preserved in a later copy, and many similar documents have probably been lost.⁵⁶

In addition to the extent of institutional or personal property, these documentary collections contain information on neighbouring jurisdictions: the Whitby cartulary, for

⁵²For early discussions see S. A. Moorhouse, 'Boundaries', in *West Yorkshire: An Archaeological Survey to 1500*, ed. M. A. Faull and S. A. Moorhouse, 4 vols. (Wakefield, 1981), II, 265-89; more generally, in *Yorkshire Boundaries*, ed. H. E. Jean le Patourel, M. H. Long, and M. F. Pickles (Leeds, 1993).

⁵³*York Memorandum Book*, ed. M. Sellers, 2 vols. SS 120, 125 (1912-5), I, 20-2 (1374-5); *York Memorandum Book*, ed. J. Percy, SS 186 (1973), 131-2 (1442), 230-1 (1507); *VCH: York*, pp. 311-8.

⁵⁴*The Coucher Book of the Cistercian Abbey of Kirkstall*, ed. W. T. Lancaster and W. P. Baildon, Thoresby Society 8 (1904), p. 352; pp. 321-39, 354-64. Cf. a Fountains volume containing a record of 'the bundes off our lordchipe of Pott', BL, MS Additional 18276, fo. 260v.

⁵⁵Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZAZ (microfilm 1327, frame 245).

⁵⁶*Acts of Chapter of the Collegiate Church of SS Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon, from A. D. 1452 to A. D. 1506*, ed. J. T. Fowler, SS 64 (1875), pp. 337-48; a sixteenth-century copy is on six paper leaves inserted at the end of BL, MS Additional 37770.

example, contains a record of the bounds of Pickering forest, and a note on the boundaries between the Percy and Skipton fees was added to a Fountains volume.⁵⁷ York's civic memorandum book contains a record of proceedings concerning the boundaries of Richmondshire: the area in dispute lay between *Mildebylending* and Boroughbridge, where goods conveyed between York and Richmondshire were unloaded and on which toll had been claimed at Boroughbridge.⁵⁸

Few if any boundary descriptions are intelligible without reference to the physical evidence of the landscape or marks placed upon it. Documentary evidence had its own value, but depended on physical traces, which were themselves regarded as a form of 'evidence'. At York, for example, the boundaries of a common way near Bootham were marked out 'pro evidencia in futurum'.⁵⁹ The boundary between the forest belonging to Fountains abbey and the pasture of Sallay was marked by crosses but adjudicators between the two parties ordered that the crosses should be replaced with 'great stones...in perpetual evidence of this division'.⁶⁰ A 1409 description of the bounds between the lands of the two abbeys referred to a spot 'ubi antiquitus erant cruces in terra defosse ob memoria prioris concordie' - whether or not this refers to the earlier dispute, it shows how physical features had successfully become a part of local knowledge.⁶¹

The interactions between physical evidence, local memory and documentary culture are equally well illustrated in the endorsement made at Byland to a twelfth-century deed, providing further detail about a 'hogum' mentioned in the text and a

⁵⁷*Cartularium Abbathiae de Whiteby*, ed. J. C. Atkinson, 2 vols. SS 69, 72 (1879-81), II, 337-40; Bodl., MS Rawlinson B. 449, fo. 1r.

⁵⁸*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, I, 37-8, and cf. KB 9/144 m. 57.

⁵⁹*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, II, 109 (of 1423/4).

⁶⁰*Abstracts of the Charters and Other Documents Contained in the Chartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Fountains*, ed. W. T. Lancaster, 2 vols. (Leeds, 1915), I, 321-2.

⁶¹T. D. Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven*, 3rd edn, ed. A. W. Morant, 2 vols. (Leeds, 1878), I, 265.

further note on the significance of local markers: 'rogum et hogum appellabant seniores Cossehyll' [sic], quia ibidem stetit crux antiquitus pro meta et divisa. Item in le Cousehyll' ponuntur lapides pro divisas.⁶²

Physical boundaries, documentary evidence and memory did not always correspond, however, and uncertainty over the course of a boundary could easily arise, or be claimed to. Easby abbey had repeated difficulties over its land in Barden: in the late thirteenth century, Robert de Egglysclyf was found to have disseised the abbey of sixty acres which Robert had said to be in Barden but which a jury found to be in Hudswell. Robert's son Walter continued the dispute, and in 1311 Walter's son Robert quitclaimed twenty-eight acres in Barden to the abbey, referring to 'controversy' of the bounds between Hauxwell and Barden and stating that he had ploughed the bounds and caused large stones to be set in them.⁶³ Other cases show how boundary markers could be altered, making the documentary record inadequate. In such instances the meaning of physical evidence became dependent on the testimony of a local jury. A late-thirteenth-century jury, for example, attested that Bridlington priory had been deprived of half an acre of land in 'Ryth' when Gilbert de Gaunt diverted the water-course which was used as a boundary.⁶⁴

Tithe disputes provide perhaps the most explicit evidence of how boundaries were remembered in local society. Between 1355 and 1360 a case was brought by Henry de Graystock, rector of Rowley (south-west of Beverley) against various men of Beverley who had taken tithes from the lands of John de Bella Aqua claiming that they were due as part of the 'thraives of St John'.⁶⁵ John's lands were in the south field of the vill of

⁶²*Yorkshire Deeds*, II, ed. W. Brown, YASRS 50 (1914), pp. 13-14; for the stones by *le Couhoushill* see p. 15. The deeds printed in this section of the volume are now BL, Egerton Charters 2133-74: see 'Yorkshire Charters', *British Museum Quarterly* 7 (1932-3), 118-9.

⁶³BL, MS Egerton 2827, fos. 239r-40r, 335v-6r.

⁶⁴*Bridlington Chartulary*, ed. Lancaster, pp. 255-6. Compare boundaries said to run according to the 'ancient course' of a river. The boundaries of Galtres were said to follow the 'anticum cursum' of the Foss in 1300 (Bodl., MS Dodsworth 121, fo. 72r), and around 1351, a commission was appointed, following a petition from the men of Marshland, to remove impediments from the river Don and restore it to its ancient course as the boundary between Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (*Selby Coucher Book*, ed. Fowler, II, 372-3).

⁶⁵BIHR, CP E 268. For the thraives, see above, ch. 3, pp. 142-7. I have focused on the fourteenth-century cases because they are the only ones to have been catalogued: D. M. Smith, *Ecclesiastical Cause Papers*

Bentley and Graystock was required to prove that the vill lay within the tithable limits of Rowley parish. The bounds of Rowley were roughly given by John de Wateby, who as a collector of tithes for two years could be considered an expert witness; but his description is frequently vague, and (with the possible exception of 'Jennywood Lane' which still separates Rowley from Cottingham Park in Skidby parish) cannot be followed on a modern map.⁶⁶ Thomas de Rowley, chaplain, stated that he 'knew partly the bounds and limits of the parish of Rowley from the relation of others, but was unable to declare them properly.'⁶⁷

Even among clerics, then, parish boundaries might not be exactly known. Wateby's testimony suggests that local memory or tradition were thoroughly dependent on physical boundary markers. Comparable evidence emerges from disputes over manorial boundaries. When Mr W. Dale, vicar of Barrington, who was born in Brakenbargh and dwelt there many years, was called on to describe the boundaries between Sand Hutton and Brakenbargh near Kirby Wiske, he was able to be more precise than the other witnesses we have discussed but still relied for much of his description on physical features such as 'ye syke that rennys esteward' or 'an old dyke'.⁶⁸

Physical marks were imprinted on local memory and identities in the ritual processional activities through which most local boundaries were maintained. The parish boundaries were the focus of what Duffy has described as 'with the exception of the annual Easter communion, the most explicitly parochial ritual events of the year', the Rogationtide

at York: *The Court of York 1301-99*, Borthwick Texts and Calendars 14 (York, 1988).

⁶⁶BIHR, CP E 268, art. 9. to be 'to the east, the vill of Bentley and the fields of the same; to the east, a park called Cotyngham park - where there is a street which is reputed to be the end and limit of the said parish, dividing it from the parish of Sketeby. To the north is a boundary, separating the said parish from the parish of Walkington; and to the west and south are fields and streets which are reputed the bounds and limits toward those parts dividing the parish of Rowley from the parishes of Southcave, Northcave and other parishes there.'

⁶⁷BIHR, CP E 268, art. 9.

⁶⁸'Some Lascelles Deeds and Evidences', ed. W. Greenwell, *YAJ* 2 (1871-2), 87-96 (pp. 91-2).

processions.⁶⁹ Although there is substantial later evidence for the extent and form of Rogationtide processions, it is difficult to estimate their extent in late-medieval England. Related payments appear in very few churchwardens' accounts, although they are found in two of the earliest Yorkshire accounts, from Ripon and St Augustine's, Hedon.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the balance of evidence suggests that the ceremony was widespread.⁷¹

The Rogationtide processions were not exclusively concerned with 'beating the bounds' - they were associated with the creation of the parish as a neighbourly community and ensuring the fertility of its lands. Nevertheless, the route of the procession followed the parish boundaries, and it was common for particular markers to be impressed on the memory through beatings, feasting or other memorable activities. Duffy has also described how some parishioners incorporated themselves into the physical structure and communal life of the parish by providing bequests for such markers: this may have been the purpose of Robert Dale's bequest to *fabricae de le Kirk Bank infra parochiam de Kirkby Fletham*.⁷² Such bequests are an index of the significance attributed to the processions.

The processions at Ripon are unusually well-documented. The chamberlains' accounts record payments to minstrels and to a man carrying a dragon in the procession, and the fabric rolls show that a 'tent' was set up, although its purpose was unclear: it may have been connected to the quite substantial offerings that the church received during the period.⁷³ Furthermore, it was the duty of all those who had taken sanctuary

⁶⁹The following discussion draws on E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 136-9; Owen, *Church and Society*, pp. 108-9; R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 34-5. For better-documented examples from later periods see B. Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (London, 1982), pp. 81-8, and for suggestive comments on the function of ritual in sustaining social memory, see P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, 1989), esp. ch. 2.

⁷⁰J. R. Boyle, *The Early History of the Town and Port of Hedon* (Hull, 1895), p. cxix; *Memorials of the Church of SS Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, ed. J. T. Fowler, 3 vols., SS 74, 78, 81 (1882-8), III, 233-4, 239, 259. The bulk of surviving churchwardens' accounts are listed in Hutton, *Merry England*, pp. 263-93.

⁷¹Here I follow Hutton, *Merry England*, p. 35.

⁷²*Wills and Inventories from the Register of the Archdeaconry of Richmond*, ed. J. Raine, SS 26 (1853), p. 9.

⁷³The tent is described as erected 'in campis' (*Memorials*, ed. Fowler, III, xxiv, 120, 234 etc.). Oblations 'per iij. dies Rogacionum' are recorded throughout the Fabric Rolls: in 1354-5 they are described as

at the church to carry rods and banners before the Rogation processions and those who failed to do so were disciplined by the chapter.⁷⁴ There is also some evidence that Wilfrid's shrine was taken out of the church and carried around, and a payment of 1505 for the construction of a 'castle' at this time may suggest an analogy with arrangements at Beverley.⁷⁵ At Ripon, then - although it was obviously not entirely typical - the Rogationtide ceremonies combined the physical delineation of the parish community with the expression of the church's corporate identity and, probably, an assertion of the historic power of its patronal saint. More broadly, though, Rogationtide ceremonial suggests that the collective identity of the parish could be tightly bound up with its territorial space.

It was not only parish boundaries which were locally memorialized by collective ceremonial activity. The boundaries between different manors, and indeed between particular holdings within the manor, were likewise perambulated as well as marked. In early-sixteenth-century Winterbourne Stoke, a procession took place in Rogation Week, 'to repair the bounds of the lordship', with bread and beer provided.⁷⁶ At Methley in 1500 three tenants were ordered to replace a boundary stone in its correct place; on February 25, 1511 the tenants were called to assemble at Methley church to perambulate the boundaries of the lordship, and check the repair of hedges and fences.⁷⁷ Perambulations were also an important part of urban life, albeit involving a more restricted section of the community. At York in March 1485, for example, the mayor was to be accompanied by two or four of every craft, two old and two young or one old

made when Wilfrid's shrine was carried round the church (p. 88), while in 1379-80 they are called 'in campis' (p. 97).

⁷⁴*Acts of Chapter of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, pp. 7, 72-3, 314-5.

⁷⁵For Beverley, see above, ch. 4, pp. 199-200. The chamberlains' accounts also contain payments to 'ministres villae Ripon deservientibus feretro', although it is possible that this refers to ceremonies on Ascension day and not Rogationtide (pp. 234, 239, 259). As at Beverley, it seems that the office of carrying the shrine was related to the tenure of particular property: see *Acts of Chapter of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, p. 244.

⁷⁶W. O. Ault, *Open-Field Husbandry and the Village Community: A Study of Agrarian By-Laws in Medieval England*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society n.s. 55/7 (Philadelphia, 1965), pp. 35-7, quote at p. 37.

⁷⁷I have used the abstract of the Methley court rolls in H. S. Darbyshire and G. D. Lumb, *History of Methley*, Thoresby Society 35 (1937), pp. 191, 194.

and one young, perhaps a representative rather than communal perambulation.⁷⁸ Another record from York provides a rare instance of the difficulties that probably affected a number of perambulations: in 1500 there was disagreement over the route, and 'it was said by several present that they were going beyond the bounds of the city of York'.⁷⁹ At Hedon, the town's chamberlains' accounts contain fifteenth-century payments 'for the repair of the cross by Magdalene street at Westbryge on the Rogation days.'⁸⁰

An undated set of Hedon chamberlains' accounts of before 1436 provides particularly interesting evidence of the role that ceremonial processions could play in the definition and negotiation of local boundaries and identities.⁸¹ The accounts reveal that the mayor had been occupied by 'materia inter Hedon et Preston' (a neighbouring town), and the details of payments allow us to piece together something of the causes and chronology of this 'matter'. In October the town had been visited by John Constable and others to have its sewers viewed, a visit which prompted a programme of cleaning and repair. This may explain the payments made at an uncertain date to three men for remaking the ditch 'juxta le Westland hate' and planting it with two rows of cuttings (*cum virgultis in duobus cursibus*). But the ditch which skirted the 'Westlands' at the town's edge functioned for at least some of its length as the boundary between Hedon and Preston. The corporation received rents from 'the west bank of the town ditch as far as the chain', this being the chain across Hedon haven whose maintenance in 1392 had

⁷⁸*YHB* I, 355; cf. I, 281. Compare early-sixteenth-century Coventry, where the inspection of the 'bounds of the countie' or the city's franchise seems to have been the responsibility of 'maister meire and his brethern' (*Coventry Leet Book*, ed. M. D. Harris, 4 vols., EETS o.s. 134-6, 146 (1907-13), III, 622 and 628).

⁷⁹*York Civic Records*, ed. Raine et al, II, 163-5, at 164.

⁸⁰Boyle, *Early History of Hedon*, p. lix; for the crosses which were said to mark the boundaries of the town in 1630, see *VCH: ERY* V, 169 and Boyle, *Early History*, p. 82, and also the plan opposite p. 178.

⁸¹Boyle, *Early History of Hedon*, pp. lv-lvii. The accounts refer to 'John Constable esquire'. Although there were several figures of this name and rank in the East Riding in the 1430s (see especially *CPR 1429-36*, p. 275), the reference is almost certainly to John Constable of Halsham and Holderness, who served on a number of commissions *de walliis et fossatis*. (*The Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire I: 1258-1832*, ed. A. Gooder, YASRS 91 (1935), pp. 194-5) The accounts must be earlier than 1436 when Constable was knighted. Although he was most actively involved in local commissions after c. 1430, the most likely period is perhaps 1427-8: Constable visited the town in October, and was appointed to a commission *de walliis* for the East Riding on 26 August 1427; commissions in 1433-4 and 1436 were appointed earlier in the year. (*CPR 1422-9*, p. 424; *1429-36*, pp. 280, 469, 524).

been shared between Hedon and Preston.⁸²

The precise implications of the ‘remaking’ of the ditch, or how it related to any previous boundary disputes between the two towns, are unclear, although it is likely that the west bank of Hedon’s ditch was at issue.⁸³ What is beyond doubt is that its construction was contentious and precipitated ‘the matter between Hedon and Preston’, on account of which Hedon requested the presence of a legal adviser in the first week of Lent. Relations between the towns seem to have deteriorated, as (at an unspecified date) John Constable sent a message to the mayor commanding the townsmen to keep the peace. The town sought more advice, and gave beer to Constable and others in the fourth week of Lent, and a gift to Constable’s valet in Easter Week.

The ultimate outcome of these payments and negotiations is unclear, as dates assigned for both parties to present their evidence were adjourned or not kept. What I want to stress here is that the men of Preston tried to assert their territorial claim in ritual as well as legal fashion, using the Rogationtide procession as their vehicle. They planned to take the route of their procession ‘super ripam occidentalem dicte ville’ - on or over Hedon’s western boundary - claiming for themselves the space which was disputed between the two towns. They were only dissuaded by the intervention of Brian Constable and other gentlemen, whom Hedon duly rewarded. The quarrel between the two communities may have died down after this, but it was certainly not extinguished: in 1481, the men of Preston were complaining that the route of their Rogationtide procession ‘per calcetum vocatum Maldleynally, et per precinctum camporum ad villam de Preston pertinencium’ had been forcibly blocked by the inhabitants of Hedon.⁸⁴

The records at Hedon allow us to see Rogationtide ceremonial in its local context. The full significance of such ceremonial practices emerges when they can be seen as one of a number of strategies through which local communities negotiated their boundaries. The perambulation performed by the townsmen of St Albans in 1381, ‘for greater memory and evidence to their successors and neighbours of their acquisition of the liberties’, after they had extorted a new charter of liberties from the abbot, was

⁸²VCH: ERY, V, 169.

⁸³This is suggested by the proposed route of the Preston Rogationtide procession described below.

⁸⁴Visitation document, printed in *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, ed. J. Raine, SS 35 (1859), p. 260.

fraught with the long history of conflict between abbey and town.⁸⁵ Processional activities were only one way in which local identities were defined, and can only be fully understood in the wider context of these identities.

It may be that perambulations were less important as ways of memorializing boundaries over the long term than as a means of collectively pressing particular claims in the short term. The periodic disputes between inhabitants of Galtres forest, and both the city of York and the abbey of St Mary's, were certainly fanned through the use of perambulations to assert particular territorial claims. In 1316 the boundaries of the forest were said to follow the York city walls from Layerthorp to Bootham Bar and to the water of Ouse, potentially conflicting with the claims both of the city and the abbey.⁸⁶ In 1482 the city complained that sixty men from Galtres came to make their perambulation in harvest time, breaking the city gates if they were not open. The council considered this a violation of the town's liberties, and planned to labour the king 'the said forestyrers her affir newyr to have such interest within the libertys of the said cite.'⁸⁷ It seems that disputes contained to flare up in the contested areas, particularly around Bootham. In May 1485 a citizen of York was attacked in Bootham by 'oone of the forest' who was rescued by others 'of the said forest'.⁸⁸ Again in 1536 a riot had been caused by the foresters riding their perambulations, claiming only to maintain the king's rights.⁸⁹ Earlier in the century, in 1433 the 'commons of the forest of Galtres' cut down the boundaries of land belonging to St Mary's abbey in the area of Bootham Bar, enclosing it as the

⁸⁵Walsingham, *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS 28/4, III (1869), p. 320; cf. S. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994), p. 171.

⁸⁶T. Gill, *Vallis Eboracensis: Comprising the History and Antiquities of Easingwold and its Neighbourhood* (London, 1852), pp. 47-9.

⁸⁷*York House Books 1461-1490*, ed. L. Attreed, 2 vols. (Stroud, 1990), I, 268.

⁸⁸*York House Books*, ed. Attreed, I, 361.

⁸⁹*L&P X*, 733, cf. 77.

common of the forest, and enclosed other lands of the abbey in similar fashion.⁹⁰

The confrontations which arose over boundaries at Hedon, York and elsewhere suggest that in addition to purely territorial claims, questions of local status, power and self-assertion were also involved. This was equally true of conflicts among the late-medieval gentry. The ramifications which could accompany disputes over boundaries are well illustrated by a dispute between Richard Clervaux and Roland Playce over lands in Croft which came under the arbitration of Richard, duke of Gloucester in 1478. The prologue to the agreement, which states that it was conducted ‘tendirryng the peas and welle of the contre where the saide parties done inhabite’ is partly a matter of convention, but also suggests - as do the details of the award itself - how competition for territory could be bound up with rivalries in other spheres of local society. As part of the agreement Clervaux and Playce were told to be ‘of gude beryng and demenyng’, to hold them content with their lands, and to fence their boundaries. But they were also forbidden from retaining each’s other’s tenants, or hunting on each other’s land. Clervaux and his wife were also to ‘holde yame content to sitt in yere parishe churche chaunsell ouer the southside in such places as he and hys ancestres and yeire wyffys hertofoer have allweys used to sit’.⁹¹ Just as the dispute was located within the public and focal spaces of the locality, so its resolution was inscribed in that space. The arms and initials of the two men appear on the south face of the south-west tower of the parish church of Croft, which seems to have been built as a memorial of the settlement of their quarrel.⁹²

For those institutions whose boundaries defined not only territorial rights but a range of other liberties or franchises, the maintenance and protection of those boundaries was bound up equally closely with prestige and ‘worship’. York’s civic records demonstrate that its oligarchy was active in defending incursions on the city’s boundaries and liberties. It was recorded that in 1397 a man arrested ‘infra limites, bundas et procinctum libertatis civitatis Ebor.’ was humbly restored to the mayor and council, and

⁹⁰RP IV,458-9; no date for the foresters’ activities is given.

⁹¹Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZQH 1 (Clervaux cartulary), fos. 155r-56r; abstract in W. H. D. Longstaffe, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Darlington* (Darlington, 1854), p. lxxix, note ++.

⁹²VCH: NRY, I, 170.

a similar incident in 1433 was also noted in the civic records. Again in 1478 a dispute arose as to whether an outlaw had been arrested within the limits of the city or the castle.⁹³ In 1397, the city complained that Bootham had been assessed with the North Riding when it was in fact 'suburbium huius civitatis'.⁹⁴

The taxation of 1397 echoes the city's earlier dispute with St Mary's abbey over the area of Bootham, which the city claimed as its 'suburb' but which the abbot called his 'burgh'.⁹⁵ An agreement on this issue was reached in 1354, but the problem arose again in 1378. Subsequent territorial disputes between city and monastery provide further evidence of the symbolic significance of boundary markers and of the importance of perambulations to collective identities. In 1436 some citizens of York took advantage of the abbot's absence at the council of Basle to erect 'a crosse called by yam yaire franchise crosse' within (as the abbot claimed) the liberties of the abbey.⁹⁶ In the 1480s the city and abbey were in dispute over common lands, and in 1483 a plough was used to draw boundaries between common pasture of the city and St Mary's. The collective civic nature of the occasion is indicated by the presence were the mayor and one or two of 'the most honest comoners' of every craft.⁹⁷

The city also jealously guarded its jurisdiction over the Ainsty, formally granted in 1449 although assumed a good deal earlier. This meant that the city's franchise extended 'to the very bridge of Tadcaster upon Warfe', as Leland was told and evidently admired.⁹⁸ The city's jurisdiction over the area was ceremonially reaffirmed on occasions such as Henry VII's royal progress in 1486 and Queen Margaret's progress of 1503, when the sheriffs of the city met the royal entourage at Tadcaster bridge 'being

⁹³*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, I, 216; II, 6, 216-7.

⁹⁴*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers I, 179; II, 73. For a parallel case of civic identity asserted or challenged through the taxation of particular districts, see *Letters and Papers of John Shillingford, Mayor of Exeter 1447-50*, ed. S. A. Moore, Camden Society n.s. 2 (1871), pp. 80-2 (the city's complaint that tenants of the bishop of Exeter were not assessed with the city but 'as a cite or burgh by hym self').

⁹⁵PRO, SC8/178/8867; *VCH: York*, pp. 39-40, 68-9.

⁹⁶PRO, E28/56, no. 42.

⁹⁷*York House Books*, ed. Attreed, I, 281.

⁹⁸Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 56

thextremetie of their franchise' and 'the end of theyr shyre'.⁹⁹

Queen Margaret's visit, however, proved unexpectedly eventful. As planned, the sheriffs (accompanied by a hundred others on horseback) met the Queen at Tadcaster bridge and welcomed her 'in to the countie and libertez of this citie'. Things ran smoothly until the Queen left the city the following day. The civic officials accompanied her 'unto they come to the farrest of the libertez of this citie at Mawdeleyn Chapell toward Clifton', but as soon as the company had passed Marygate from Bootham the sheriff of Yorkshire, Sir William Conyers, began to bear up his rod of office. An altercation between him and the mayor was defused by the lord Treasurer, who instructed William to lower his rod until the party had left the liberties of the city.¹⁰⁰ The case suggests the importance of ceremonial practices in preserving jurisdictional rights, the significance that could be placed on such practices, and the role of documentary record in making the incident permanently available to local identities.

Religious institutions were similarly active in guarding and ceremonially affirming their liberties. The archbishop of York defended his liberties at Beverley and Ripon against the encroachment of royal officials; the dean and chapter at York and Ripon also frequently imposed penance for violations of their liberties.¹⁰¹ At Ripon the common punishment for the offenders was to process with bare feet and head to the relics of St Wilfrid, and offer half a pound of wax and a drawn sword, ceremonially reaffirming the saint's authority and his relation to the church's territorial jurisdiction.¹⁰² The historical claims implicit in this ceremony also emerge from other sources. The limits of the liberty of Ripon were

⁹⁹*York House Books*, ed. Attreed, II, 482; *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. A. F. Johnston and M. Rogerson, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1979), p. 193-4.

¹⁰⁰*Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. Johnston and Rogerson, pp. 193-8.

¹⁰¹For the archbishop, see for example York Minster Library, M2/4e and *Melsa* II, 153-5; for Ripon see the following note; for York dean and chapter see for example York Minster Library, L2/3a, fos. 10v-11r (extent of jurisdiction), York Minster Library, H2/2, fos. 14a-15a (penance for violation), and cf. Dobson, 'The Later Middle Ages', pp. 102-3. The Beverley chapter act books do not contain such material.

¹⁰²*Acts of Chapter of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, pp. 1-2, 6-7, 10-11, etc.

marked by a 'Saint Wilfrid stone', and it was claimed in the record of a 1481 perambulation of the liberty that its bounds had been anciently established and used since the time of Oswiu, Alfrith and Wilfrid.¹⁰³ The implication is that the limits of the liberty were established by Wilfrid himself. In another tradition, as we have seen, Athelstan was said to have given Ripon sanctuary within a mile of the church: the boundaries were marked by stones, at least one of which was known as *crux Athelstani*.¹⁰⁴

In addition to legal and ceremonial procedures, then, the territorial extent of religious liberties was also asserted and fixed through historical tradition. In one version of Robert of Knaresborough's life, some of the lands associated with the saint were miraculously acquired. In late-fifteenth-century glass from Dale abbey, Derbyshire, Robert is depicted shooting deer which eat his corn. King John then gives the saint permission to yoke the deer 'and take ye ground that ye plooe'.¹⁰⁵ This episode is a conflation of two separate incidents from written accounts of Robert's life: in the first, he is able to tame and yoke the deer of a local lord which are destroying his corn; in the second, King John grants him as much land as he can cultivate with one plough.¹⁰⁶ The conflation - although its origins and circulation are unclear - turns a relatively unexceptionable grant of land into one sanctioned by divine power.

The boundaries of the liberty of Whitby were also given antiquity and authority through association with the abbey's patron saint. Early charters of the abbey refer to a spring and well of St Hilda which were part of its boundaries.¹⁰⁷ By the late thirteenth century, however, the saint's role in establishing local territorial divisions had expanded and apparently been locally disseminated. In a dispute of 1280-3 between Peter de Maulay and the abbot and convent of Whitby over the bounds of Whitby parish, the abbey's witnesses refuted Maulay's claims with the statement that the limits of Whitby

¹⁰³*Acts of Chapter of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, pp. 337-48 (p. 338).

¹⁰⁴*Memorials of Ripon*, ed. Fowler, I, 33-5; above, ch. 3, p. 156.

¹⁰⁵H. M. Colvin, 'Medieval Glass from Dale Abbey', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 60 (n.s. 13, 1939), 129-41 (138-40).

¹⁰⁶'*Vitae S. Roberti Knaresburgensis*', ed. P. Grosjean, *Analecta Bollandiana* 57 (1939), 364-400 (pp. 390-1) (the earlier and now incomplete life of Robert does not contain this material); *The Metrical Life of Robert of Knaresborough*, ed. J. Bazire. EETS o.s. 228 (1953), pp. 61, 64.

¹⁰⁷*Cartularium Abbathiae de Whiteby*, ed. Atkinson, I, 33-5, 149-50, 152-3, 155-7, 157-8.

trand had been set out by Hilda in A.D. 660, and had marked them by ditches which were still known as St Hilda's dykes.¹⁰⁸ At both Whitby and Ripon these boundary traditions seem to have seeped out of their institutional origins and become a valued part of wider local culture and identity, and local historical tradition centred around the shape of locality. Traditions concerning the antiquity of boundaries do appear to be predominantly associated with religious institutions, despite the well-known story of Hengist's foundation of 'Thongcaster'.¹⁰⁹ At Bristol, though, there was an attempt to give antiquity to the layout of the town, if not its precise boundaries: it was said the town had been founded by the British king Brennius, between the four main gates of the late-medieval city.¹¹⁰

Conclusions

At the end of the previous chapter, I suggested that the meaning of Yorkshire's districts in local society differed from the frameworks of locality examined earlier in the thesis, in that it involved a relatively detailed awareness of the physical and spatial aspects of districts, not only in terms of their boundaries but in terms of their central landmarks. This chapter has explored more fully the physical and spatial dimensions of local cultures. I have argued that the concept of 'head places' was important to the meaning and organization of a wide range of localities, from the north to the parish; but that detailed awareness of the boundaries of locality was important only at geographically restricted

¹⁰⁸Charlton, *History of Whitby*, pp. 226-7; *VCH: NRY II*, 502.

¹⁰⁹*The Brut, or the Chronicles of England*, ed. F. W. De Brie, EETS o.s. 131 and 136 (1906-8), I, 50-1: according to Hardyng, this place was 'Caste on þe Walde in Lincolne shire' (BL, MS Lansdowne 204, fo. 57v). Cf. the legend concerning the boundaries of Rutland, cited above, ch. 2, pp. 87-8. No urban traditions concerning the establishment of boundaries are discussed in G. Rosser, 'Myth, Image and Social Process in the English Medieval Town', *Urban History* 23 (1996), 5-25. For another ecclesiastical example (St Augustine's, Canterbury), see A. Hiatt, 'The Cartographic Imagination of Thomas Elmham', *Speculum* 75 (2000), 859-86 (pp. 878-80).

¹¹⁰*The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. L. T. Smith, Camden Society n.s. 5 (1872), p. 10; for Brennius at Bristol, see D. H. Sacks, 'Celebrating Authority in Bristol, 1475-1640', in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. S. Zimmerman and R. F. E. Weissman (London, 1989), pp. 196-7.

areas.

The texts and traditions explored in this chapter are distinguished by their attention to the shape of locality. Attitudes to central places were conditioned by perceptions - potentially detailed and exact - of geographical distance; and the physical, textual and ceremonial practices through which boundaries were established were all concerned with the exact contours of local territory. The historical traditions which grew up to explain or justify the spatial organization of locality, the ritual activities through which such traditions were commemorated, and the local identities that were constructed as a result, were anchored to specific geographical or topographical characteristics. As we shall see in the following chapter, attention to the specificity of local topography was also characteristic of the ways in which local societies gave meaning to their surroundings and imagined their past.

CHAPTER 8

HISTORY, LANDSCAPE, AND LOCAL IDENTITIES

The preceding chapters explored the articulation of locality at restricted levels within the Yorkshire region. First, I outlined the larger topographical and administrative units in terms of which the region was understood, sometimes by the wider political classes of the kingdom but most often and most importantly by those situated within the area itself. Second, I explored the organization of space at a more restricted and local level, in terms of edges and centres, through the drawing of boundaries and the construction of focal or central locations. I argued that at these local levels, the shape of locality was a major part of local culture, memorialized both in historical traditions and collective ceremonial activity.

The present chapter continues to explore the ways in which landscape and landmarks were made meaningful by local societies or institutions, and the mental frameworks that lay behind such meanings. It explores both the written, learned narratives and the oral traditions through which the particular topographical characteristics of locality were made significant and related to local identities, and asks how the 'learned' and the 'popular' were connected or related.¹ It begins with the foundation narratives preserved by a number of religious houses, goes on to examine the appropriation of locality among the gentry, and ends with a consideration of what I call the 'popular culture of locality'.

¹I do not intend to draw a firm distinction between 'oral' and 'literate', preferring to organize my analysis according to the content, structure and provenance of local traditions. I have been influenced by the argument that 'no society is an entirely literate culture... and shared memory, whatever its sources, tends to be communicated above all in the arena of the oral, ' and that it is more useful to distinguish between stable/formal and informal varieties of narration: J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992), p. 97.

Place and providence: religious houses and the interpretation of locality

Many religious houses, in Yorkshire as in other parts of England, were concerned to demonstrate that their institution belonged to a distinctive and providentially chosen place. Such a sense of place was mediated through the language of biblical revelation in the foundation narratives which survive from a number of such institutions. The bulk of these narratives were composed in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries but many survive in later medieval manuscripts, indicating the significance that institutions continued to ascribe to such texts. Not only is it significant that they were copied at all, but they are most often found at or near the beginning of important documentary collections, suggesting that they were seen as cornerstones of institutional identity and continuity.² The importance of these narratives is also shown by the fact that they continued to be written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, most notably at Meaux and Nostell.

These narratives share a number of preoccupations, of which perhaps the most important is to record the early endowments which the various institutions *received*. *But* the local identity of a religious house, as constructed in its foundation narrative, was also related to the site occupied by the house itself. Both the structure and the style of these foundation narratives are designed to give significance to such locations. The narratives frequently refer to the larger regional units we have explored earlier in the thesis - ranging from the north or the county, to the 'dales' and 'shires' considered in the previous chapter. Their primary concern, though, is with their institution's association with a particular locale. The choice of a site - often after one or more false starts - is the result of divine revelation or agency, and its topographical characteristics are a sign of its providential significance.

Broadly speaking, monastic sites were represented through two main

²The most useful survey of these narratives is J. Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire 1069-1215* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 12-19. The book as a whole offers the best recent account of the religious institutions of the region in the period in which the bulk of the narratives under consideration were produced. The only narrative which does not survive in a late-medieval manuscript is the foundation history of Selby abbey; the only surviving copy is late-twelfth-century. (P. Janin, 'Note sur le manuscrit latin 10940 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris contenant l'*Historia Selebiensis Monasterii* et les *Gesta abbatum Sancti Germani Autissiodorensis*', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 127 (1969), 216-24.)

frameworks. One version can be traced back at least to Bede and also appeared in the influential accounts of the origin of the Cistercian order.³ Here, it is precisely the unpromising nature of the site which marks it out as especially suitable. It may be described as fitter for robbers or beast than for men; in Cistercian texts, it is often called ‘locus horroris et vastae solitudinis’ .. This phrase appears in the prologue to the narration of Fountains abbey, for example, and also in the history of the Cistercian foundation of Kirkstead in Lincolnshire.⁴ The words are taken from Deuteronomy 32. 10, where they describe the ‘desert land’ in which God found and guided the Israelites. The allusion does not only identify the remote sites favoured by the Cistercians - ‘not in cities, castles or towns, but in places remote from the concourse of people’ - but implies that such ‘waste wilderness’ holds the promise of divine election and favour.⁵

Similar implications are present even when this specific Biblical allusion is not used. A later section of the Fountains foundation narrative describes a place ‘a cunctis retro seculis inhabitum, spinis consitum, et inter convexa montium et scopulos hinc inde prominentes’, which is also ‘ferarum latebris quam humanis usibus...magis accomodum.’⁶ The account of the foundation of Jervaulx monastery, preserved in the Byland cartulary, describes how the first abbot received a vision as he and his brethren were resting *en route* to their new foundation, in which the child of a young woman took a branch from a tree in the cloister of Byland abbey. When the monks became trapped in a forest and recited their hours, the woman and child reappeared, leading them to ‘quendam locum horridum nimis et incultum’: the branch was planted here and immediately grew into a

³See L. G. D. Baker, ‘The Genesis of English Cistercian Chronicles: The Foundation History of Fountains Abbey I’, *Analecta Cisterciensa* 25 (1969), 14-41 (pp. 21-2); Burton, *Monastic Order*, pp. 290-1.

⁴*Memorials of the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains*, ed. J. R. Walbran, 3 vols., SS 42, 67, 130 (1862-1918), I, 2; *Monasticon* V, 418 (noted by Walbran); Baker, ‘Genesis’, pp. 21-2 notes that the phrase was also applied to Louth Park abbey.

⁵The Cistercian *Exordium Parvum*, cited in Burton, *Monastic Order*, p. 98.

⁶*Memorials of Fountains*, ed. Walbran, I, 32. Compare also the account of the foundation of St Mary’s, York, which describes an earlier foundation by Renfrid, abbot of Whitby, as ‘a habitation of birds and beasts’ (*Monasticon* III, 515); and the description of Robert of Knaresborough’s hermitage in his fourteenth-century life (‘*Vitae S. Roberti Knaresburgensis*’, ed. P. Grosjean, *Analecta Bollandiana* 57 [1939], 364-400, p. 369), both showing that Cistercian institutions were not unique in using this language.

great tree.⁷ The relation between divine guidance, ‘desert places’ and eventual flourishing is particularly clear here.

The aptness of a particular location may also be made manifest through its virtues, however. In the foundation narrative of Kirkstall abbey, preserved in an early-fifteenth-century manuscript from the abbey, it was the pleasantness of a site (*loci amenitate*) in Airedale, full of shaded glades (*nemorosam et umbrosam*), that initially struck the abbot when problems with parishioners and bandits were making the original foundation at Barnoldswick (the choice of Henry de Lacy) unsuitable.⁸ The abbot’s subsequent interrogation of a number of men apparently engaged in religious activities established that one, born ‘in the south part of this kingdom’, had been called to the place by the command of the Virgin Mary.⁹ Considering again the agreeability of the valley and the water flowing through it, and the woods lying around, the abbot relocated his abbey to this new site and incorporated some of the hermits into it.¹⁰ Biblical allusion is used to stress the divine guidance behind the discovery of the site: the hermit had been instructed by the Virgin Mary *surge...et vade*, echoing a number of Biblical passages such as the words of God to David, or of the angel instructing Joseph to return to Israel (1 Samuel 23. 4; Matthew 2. 20).

The Kirkstall narrative (which was written by the same author as the Fountains account) shows that, while the language of austerity may have been particular common in Cistercian texts, it was not the only vocabulary on which they drew. In the account of the foundation of Meaux abbey, it is likewise the pleasant qualities of the site (*locum nemoribus et fructibus consitum, aquis et paludibus cinctum*) to which attention is drawn. William of Aumale had already been struck by the site and planned to make it into a park. The abbot was forced to assert his choice of site, which seemed to have been

⁷*Monasticon* V, 573-4 (p. 574).

⁸‘The Foundation of Kirkstall Abbey’, *Thoresby Society* 4 (1895), 169-208; from Bodl., MS Laud Misc 722, for which see J. Krochalis, ‘History and Legend at Kirkstall in the Fifteenth Century’, in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscript, their Scribes and Readers. Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. P. R. Robinson and R. Zim (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 230-56 (p. 237).

⁹‘Foundation of Kirkstall’, p. 176.

¹⁰‘Foundation of Kirkstall’, pp. 177-8.

confirmed by the presence of a hill there called 'the hill of Our Lady'.¹¹

The foundation story of Selby combines similar motifs of local fertility and divine guidance. Benedict, the founder of Selby, had been commanded by St Germanus to find a place called Selby, not far from York on the river Ouse.¹² Selby being then unheard-of, Benedict arrived at Salisbury and was only put right by another appearance of St Germanus, in which he was granted a vision of the very soil of Selby, emphasizing the extent to which place is understood in terms of physical particularity in these accounts. There follows a lengthy description of the virtues of this site, 'set with so many groves (*tam frequenti nemore consitum*) and crowned with such a various abundance of streams, as if it was an earthly paradise'.¹³ Again, there is significant use of Biblical allusion, with Benedict told by Germanus *Egredi de terra tua, et de cognatione tue et de hac domo patris tui, et veni in terram quam monstrauero tibi*. This echoes God's words to Abraham, and implicitly his following promise to make of him a great nation, and magnify his name (Genesis 12. 1-2).

Providential significance can also be suggested through other characteristics of a site. The account of the foundation of Kirkham priory traces it (with those of Rievaulx and Warden) to Walter Espec's grief over the death of his son.¹⁴ This death was the result of a riding accident when the son's horse tripped at 'a little stone cross near Frythby' (near Kirkham). The presence of the stone suggests an earlier Christian presence at its site, marking it as suitable for a future foundation and giving some purpose to the boy's death. Earlier place-names can be used in similar ways to suggest the aptness of a religious foundation - the 'hill of St Mary' which is said to have existed on the site of Meaux is one example, while at Kirkstead in Lincolnshire it was said that the name had been used of old by locals, 'in futurae religionis presagio'.¹⁵ In the account of the

¹¹*Melsa*, I, 77.

¹²'*Historia Selebiensis Monasterii*', in *The Coucher Book of Selby*, ed. J. T. Fowler, 2 vols., YASRS 10 and 13 (1891-3), I, [1]-[54].

¹³'*Historia*', p. [13].

¹⁴*Cartularium Abbathiae de Rievaille*, ed. J. C. Atkinson, SS 83 (1869), pp. 263-5 (p. 263); cf. *Monasticon*, V, 280-1, Leland, *Itinerary* I, 90-3.

¹⁵For Meaux, see above; *Monasticon*, V, 418.

foundation of Nostell priory (written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century) divine guidance is expressed through the common story of a discovery made while hunting. It describes how one Ralph Adlave, a chaplain of Henry I, fell sick at Pontefract *en route* to Scotland. While hunting he was led by divine grace (*ex instinctu spiritus sanctii*) to a chapel in the woods - called *le Nostell* - inhabited by a hermit, where Ralph was to establish a convent of Augustinian canons.¹⁶

These stories express a distinctive relationship to place in comparison with the ecclesiastical texts I examined earlier in the thesis. The narratives examined in ch. 3 are generally concerned with large regional areas, and the specific location of an institution is largely of interest for its associations of regional power - York's *place as the metropolis of the north*, or Beverley's as the head of the East Riding. The language and arguments of these texts centre on ancient privileges and their confirmation; the frameworks of secular historical writing are at least as important as those of Biblical texts. The narratives I have examined here are very different. They are concerned only with the site of a particular institution and its immediate environs, and the physical particularity of this site is unusually important. The earlier history of the *site is only* important insofar as it prefigures the establishment of a *religious community*, and thus confirms the main interest of these texts, which is to demonstrate that institutions and their localities are associated by divine providence.

The explanation of the different emphases of these two kinds of narratives is partly provided by ideological differences, and particularly the impact of Cistercian values. Equally important, however, was the nature of the various foundations. The stories examined in this chapter were all produced in post-Conquest institutions, most founded in the twelfth century. The Cistercian and Benedictine monks who composed

¹⁶Leeds, West Yorkshire Archive Service, NP C1/1/1 (Nostell priory act book, late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth-century), f. 42v; for a discussion of the story, see T. N. Burrows, 'The Foundation of Nostell Priory', *YAJ* 53 (1981), 31-5.

the bulk of these texts were recent arrivals in their locality.¹⁷ It may have been precisely this belatedness that inspired such close attention to the exact location and characteristics of the sites. An appeal to history would be inappropriate, except in so far as it was the history of an absence.¹⁸

The foundation narratives I have examined are, as I have implied, very much institutional texts. Not only are they associated with records of institutional property, but they are usually written in the first person: the Fountains narrative, for example refers to the abbey as 'mater nostra', and the Byland narrative to 'ecclesiae nostrae de Bellalanda'.¹⁹ It would probably be mistaken, however, to conclude that the representation of locality which they contain was limited to the houses themselves. Stories about an institution's foundation would undoubtedly have been familiar to its original patrons and their successors. The foundation narrative of Kirkham priory was preserved as part of a Roos genealogy, which Leland saw in the possession of the earl of Rutland, the successor of the family and its ecclesiastical patronage. It also seems likely that these narratives would have circulated in some form in the immediate vicinity of an institution and perhaps among its other tenants, although the emphasis of the narratives may have changed with their transmission. The elm under which the monks of Fountains first sheltered, according to the abbey's *narratio*, was still there when Leland visited.²⁰ Leland's identification presumably relied on local informants for its identification, but it may be that these informants only preserved those elements of the *narratio* which could be tied in this way to the local landscape.

¹⁷The chronology of eleventh- and twelfth-century foundations is conveniently set out in Burton, *Monastic Order*, pp. xvii-xix. This table also reveals the extent to which foundation narratives were the product of Cistercian and Benedictine institutions, Kirkham and Nostell being the only houses of canons to produce such texts. In the early sixteenth century a canon of Bridlington made brief notes on the foundation of his house, but they contain little more than its date and the name of the founder. (J. S. P[urvis], 'The Foundation of Bridlington Priory', *YAJ* 29 (1927-9), 241-2.)

¹⁸The history of Blackburnshire produced by Whalley abbey, which extends back to St Augustine, has more in common with the narratives examined in ch. 3, as it was intended to demonstrate that the advowson of Whalley did not belong to Pontefract priory. (*Monasticon* V, 642-4; R. B. Smith, *Blackburnshire: A Study in Early Lancashire History*, Department of English Local History Occasional Papers no. 15 (Leicester, 1961), pp. 38-9.)

¹⁹*Memorials of Fountains*, ed. Walbran, I, 34; *Monasticon* V, 352.

²⁰*Memorials of Fountains*, ed. Walbran, I, 34; *Johannis Lelandi antiquarii De rebus britannicis collectanea*, ed. T. Hearne, 6 vols. (London, 1774), III, 108.

Etymologies, topography, and gentry identities

The narratives used by religious institutions to give divine sanction to their place in the locality survive in numbers which reflect the importance of historical culture to such institutions and the relatively high chances of institutional texts being preserved. Although the evidence is less plentiful, similar narratives were equally important to those late-medieval gentry who were concerned to demonstrate that their families and their central estates were associated at a level more ancient and fundamental than deed of title. To demonstrate such associations, the gentry typically used strategies similar to those employed by religious houses: they concentrated on a particular location, often described in some topographical detail. Often, as in the religious narratives, etymological reasoning was used to strengthen the association between family and place. The historical vocabulary on which gentry narratives drew, however, was quite different. Authority was provided not by the language and persona of sacred history, but by the shared benchmarks of the English political classes, in particular the Norman conquest or the pre-Conquest kings of all England.

These characteristics are evident in the cartulary assembled around the middle of the fifteenth century for Edmund Rede, a knight (after 1465) and office-holder in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The family's principal seat was at Boarstall, Buckinghamshire, and the cartulary includes a map of the village of Boarstall and its immediate surroundings which was perhaps originally its first item. As well as portraying the major architectural landmarks of the village and other topographical features, the map includes a drawing of a man offering a freshly severed boar's head to a king, who presents to him in return a shield carrying the arms of the Fitz-Nigels. The king also carries a horn on his arm. (Figure 8.1)

Following the map, and preceding the collection of deeds relating to Boarstall, is a brief note on its early tenurial history, recording that 'a certain William fitz-Nigel' was seised in hereditary possession of a hide of land in Boarstall called *Derehyde* and a wood called *Hulwode* with custody of the forest of *Bernewode*, Buckinghamshire, which

his ancestors had held from before the Conquest, by virtue of a horn, 'which is the charter of the foresaid forest'. *Derehide* and *Hullwod*' are identified on the map, but a full understanding of the map is only supplied by the information of a seventeenth-century antiquarian, who noted that *Derehyde* and *Hulwode* were first granted to one Nigel by Edward the Confessor, as a reward for his destruction of a boar which had infested the forest.²¹

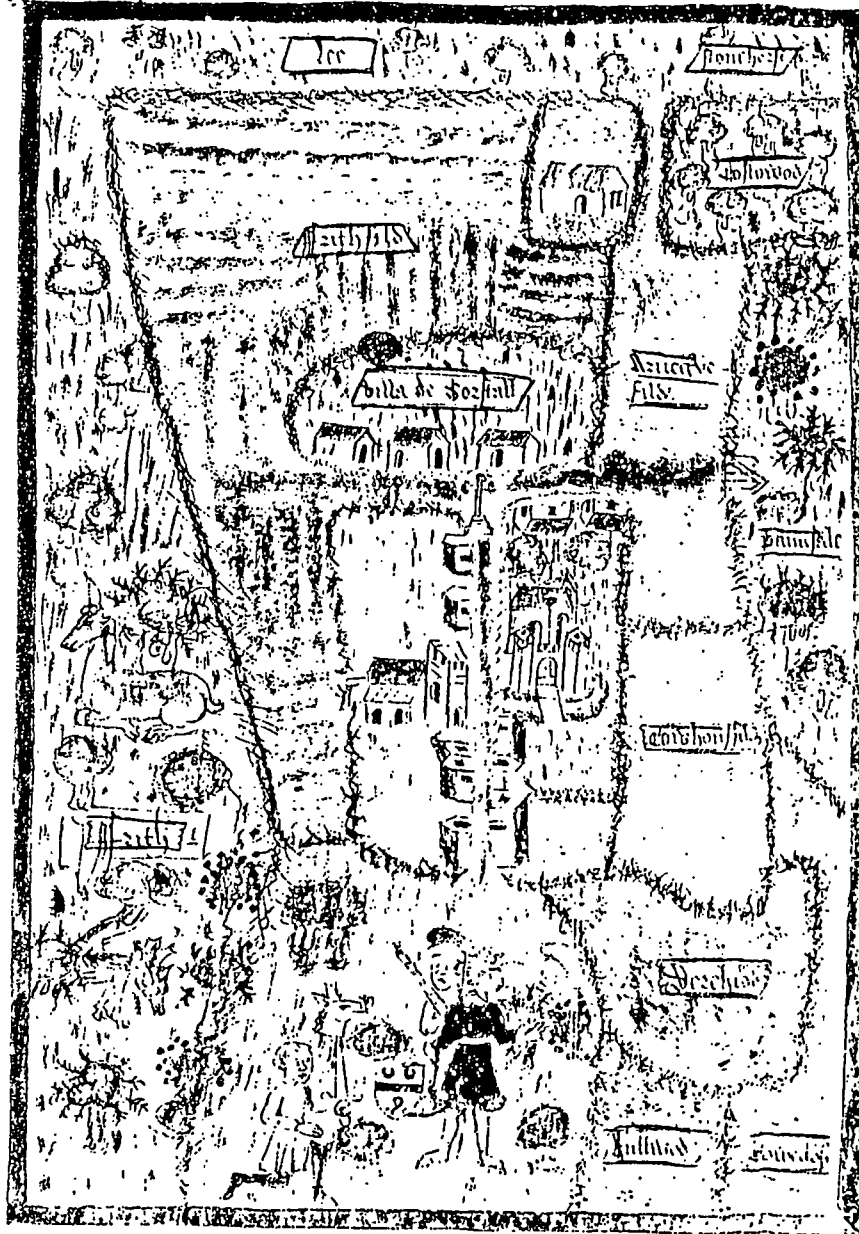
This legend is not found in written form in the cartulary, but the written account of 'William fitz-Nigel' immediately follows the map. The map seems to portray Nigel presenting the boar's head to Edward the Confessor; the name Nigel was evidently appropriate for the ancestor of the fitz-Nigels. The map should not be seen as 'primarily ornamental', or a 'title-page' for the collection of Boarstall deeds, but as the first of those deeds: a visual representation of a founding grant that by its very nature could not take written form.²² (The horn itself is preserved with the cartulary among the family muniments, and the two may have been associated in Edmund's day.)²³ The story of the boar provides an etymology of the name 'Boarstall' through a narrative which makes the place's existence inseparable from its grant to the family. The exceptional production of the map-cum-drawing allows the delineation of the topographical particularities of the family's seat (perhaps to be used as a guide to the following charters) to be combined

²¹*Local Maps and Plans from Medieval England*, ed. R. A. Skelton and P. D. A. Harvey (Oxford, 1986), no. 18, pp. 211-9 (the map is reproduced p. 212); *The Boarstall Cartulary*, ed. H. E. Salter with A. H. Cooke, Oxford Historical Society 88 (Oxford, 1930), pp. 75-6.

²²The comments are Harvey's (p. 219). A comparable example of a 'map' which is concerned to demonstrate title to land, and thus has some features of a 'charter', is Thomas Elmham's map of Thanet, which incorporates the legend of Domniva's deer, which supposedly traced the course of the boundaries of St Augustine's: see A. Hiatt, 'The Cartographic Imagination of Thomas Elmham', *Speculum* 75 (2000), 859-86, esp. pp. 863-4, 868, 878-80.

²³Harvey, p. 215,

Figure 2.1 Map of Boarstall, Buckinghamshire, 1441 x 1446, from the cartulary of Edmund Rede. Reproduced from *Local Maps and Plans from Medieval England*, ed. R. A. Skelton and P. D. A. Harvey (Oxford, 1986), p. 212



with the demonstration of its association with the family.

The cartulary compiled around 1450 by Thomas Anlaby, of Anlaby near Hull, does not contain a comparable visual display, but the account of the origin of the family's name does give detailed attention to local topography. Unlike the genealogical narratives we explored in chapter 4, this text was not designed for wider circulation. The cartulary was very much a family compilation: a note at the end cautions future readers, who are imagined as 'all ye heyres of Anlaby stok folowyng and succeedyng efter us', against leaving the book in 'necligent playsys nor handys' or showing it to 'suspekyd persons yat wyll tyll hur consyll'.²⁴

The narrative describes how Charles, the first member of the family, was given land in Anlaby by William the Conqueror. Charles, 'consideryng ye plentynes of water yat sprang hout of ye spryng well in Anlaby yat tym' built a manor by the well, causing a stream from the well to round about the manor, into a moat, and into 'Sar Cryke and to Wyke yat now ys callyd Hull Water' and eventually to 'Suth Humber'.²⁵ Anlaby is thus interpreted as 'by an (i.e. one) lake'. (Its actual etymology is 'Anlaf's village or homestead'.) Thomas's account successfully traces his family, and his family's possession of the manor, back to the Conquest. The topographical detail of the account ties the name of the manor to the shape of its locality, a shape which itself derives from the family. The physical characteristics of the site, as well as its name, are made to speak of the family's title.

Histories and legends: popular cultures of locality

The preceding sections have explored the narrative strategies through which certain religious houses and members of the gentry anchored their identities to particular localities. In this section I shall ask whether similar strategies can also be found in the local cultures of the manor, parish or vill; or whether these cultures, which I tentatively

²⁴Fitzwilliam MS 329, fo. 148v.

²⁵Fitzwilliam MS 329, fo. 2.

characterize as ‘oral’ and ‘popular’, had other ways of giving meaning to the surrounding environment.²⁶ The materials through which this question can be approached are less abundant and more problematic, as communities of manor or parish were much less likely than the religious or the gentry to commit their histories of locality to writing. Even in the seventeenth century, the description and recreation of popular cultures of locality in the ‘Description of the Hundred of Berkeley in the County of Gloucester and its Inhabitants’ which John Smyth, steward to the hundred and barony of Berkeley, compiled for his son in 1639, is exceptional.²⁷

In loving detail, Smyth recorded the linguistic characteristics of the Vale of Berkeley, the proverbial expressions through which its inhabitants located themselves in relation to the surrounding landscape, and their memories of local history, and the attitudes to locals and strangers that these embodied. Although no late medieval source can offer such richness, some reconstruction of popular cultures and attitudes is possible. Many traditions of manor, parish or town came to the notice of early antiquarians; others were recorded in the names given to local landmarks; and others appear as evidence in legal proceedings. A combination of antiquarian, onomastic and legal evidence enables us to explore ‘popular cultures of locality’ in some depth and detail.²⁸

Such cultures could be explored at a number of levels. The minor place-names through which communities described surrounding lands and properties, for example, were a mundane and ubiquitous, but nonetheless important element of such culture.²⁹ Names such as *Northfield* or *Chauntrefeld* illustrate the extent to which communities

²⁶I use manor, parish or vill to refer loosely to restricted local societies; the relations between manors, townships and parishes in late-medieval Yorkshire is a large and complex subject which is not immediately relevant here.

²⁷D. Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London, 1992), pp. 67-83.

²⁸Several studies have explored these themes in later periods: particularly useful are D. R. Woolf, ‘The “Common Voice”: History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present* 120 (1988), 26-52; D. Woolf, ‘Of Danes and Giants: Popular Beliefs about the Past in Early Modern England’, *Dalhousie Review* 71 (1991), 166-209; J. Simpson, ‘The Local Legend: A Product of Popular Culture’, *Rural History* 2 (1991), 25-35; A. Fox, ‘Remembering the Past in Early Modern England: Oral and Written Tradition’, *TRHS* 6th ser. 9 (1999), 233-56.

²⁹For a brief discussion see C. Clark, ‘Onomastics’, in *The Cambridge History of the English Language II: 1066-1476*, ed. N. Blake (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 542-606 (pp. 595-600).

orientated themselves in terms of compass-points, and the ways in which the ownership or use of land were remembered.³⁰ I shall concentrate here, however, on the more developed and extended narrative traditions through which communities made sense of their surroundings in ways that also increased the community's prestige by associating it with the famous or extraordinary.

Such traditions are known to folklorists as *legends* and, in Simpson's words, '[centre] upon some specific place, person or object which really exists or had existed within the knowledge of those telling and hearing the story' and which function 'to confer glamour on the neighbourhood by offering some striking anecdote about one or more of its conspicuous material features, or about its placenames.'³¹ Such traditions are often reflected in local place-names, but for our knowledge of the form such traditions took, and for confirmation that traditions recorded in place-names were current in local society rather than ossified, we are heavily reliant on early antiquarian sources. For the late-medieval period Leland is the most important witness, although *his account can be supplemented to some extent by those of Camden and other later sixteenth-century writers if these are used with caution. A particularly useful source for local cultures in Yorkshire is the description of Cleveland produced for Sir Thomas Challoner around 1600, in connection with the establishment of an alum mine, and valuable material is also recorded in the description of Yorkshire written by James Ryder or Ryther in 1589 for lord Burghley.*³²

It is important to be aware of the limitations imposed by these antiquarian sources.³³ Not only were there undoubtedly a large number of oral traditions that escaped antiquarian notice, or were not considered interesting enough to record; but the form in which the legends were recorded makes it difficult to assess their circulation or influence in local society. Studies of later periods, for example, have suggested that local culture

³⁰ Clark, 'Onomastics', pp. 596-7. For examples see H. S. Darbyshire and G. D. Lumb, *History of Methley*, Thoresby Society 35 (1937), pp. 140, 145, 147, 148, 166, 176, etc.; PN: WRY, *passim*.

³¹ Simpson, 'Local Legend', pp. 25, 27; cf. J. Simpson, *British Dragons* (London, 1980), ch. 5.

³² 'A Description of Cleveland: In a Letter Addressed by H. Tr. to Sir Thomas Challoner', *The Topographer and Genealogist* 2 (1853), 403-32; BL, MS Lansdowne 119, fos. 109r-22r. For the latter, see D. M. Palliser, 'A Hostile View of Elizabethan York', *York Historian* 1 (1976), 19-22.

³³ Cf. in particular Woolf, 'Of Danes and Giants', pp. 167-71.

and memory were structured according to gender and age, with authority vested largely in older men, and the narrative and ritual practices through which local culture was transmitted male-dominated.³⁴ It is also apparent from later sources that the meaning of local sites or figures was frequently disputed. Both the transmission of local narratives, and the circulation of alternative or competing versions, however, are often filtered out in the antiquarian record. The antiquarian's reference to the 'common voice' conceals as much as it reveals, and I have often been forced to refer to the vague 'local legend' or 'tradition'. It should nevertheless not be assumed that such stories were universally held, or that they circulated in a single, fixed form.³⁵

Local traditions took a variety of forms which share features of the more learned narratives explored above but which are in other ways quite distinctive. The similarities and differences can both be seen in a story which was circulating in early-sixteenth-century Castleford. Here Leland was shown foundations which he believed to be the remains of a manor house, but which his informant imagined as the ruins of a castle.³⁶ It seems very likely that this informant based his speculations on the name of his locality. The etymological framework used by Thomas Anlaby and at Kirkstead and Meaux also informs this attempt to link physical environment, history and identity, but there is an important difference in the nature of the etymology. Thomas Anlaby created what might be called a reflexive etymology, which related the meaning of the place described directly to himself. In the Castleford etymology, in contrast, the local community is *not* responsible for the shape of its environment, although it does accrue an indirect prestige through association with it. It is generally characteristic of local legends that the local community is not responsible for prominent features of its environment, which are ascribed rather either to local potentates (sacred or secular), to national figures or events, or to extraordinary - but rarely purely local - mythic creatures. The prestige of the

³⁴A. Wood, *Politics of Social Conflict: The Peak Country 1520-1770* (Cambridge, 1999), chs. 6 and 7 (based largely around depository evidence, which might be expected to have a natural bias to male authority: compare John Aubrey's anecdotal evidence of women's role in cultural transmission: Fox, 'Remembering the Past', p. 234),

³⁵Simpson, 'Local Legend', p. 33; Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 41.

³⁶Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 42. The name Castleford probably originated with reference to the Roman fortification *Legeolio* (PN: WRY, II, 69).

community is borrowed from these exceptional contexts.

As the ruins at Castleford suggest, popular cultures of locality typically centred on nearby topographical features. These were interpreted through a limited, but nonetheless inventive and flexible, repertoire of cultural resources, which can often be paralleled in romances, hagiography or sermon exempla. The influence of preaching can probably be seen in the frequency with which the devil appears in the stories through which local communities related themselves to their surroundings, often in association with features of unusual size or age. His shaping presence in the landscape is implied by the name *dowelloynhed* (now the Devil's Pavement) given to a stretch of Roman road over Blackstone Edge in 1492. Camden recorded the 'stories told by the vulgar' about the monoliths near Boroughbridge 'who call them Devil's Bolts, shot out at old cities to destroy them', still known as *Devil's Arrows*.³⁷ In Cleveland near Roseberry Topping a late-sixteenth-century observer described 'cloudes almoste contynually smoaking, and therefore called the Divell's Kettles'.³⁸ A stream on the borders of Richmondshire and Westmoreland was called 'Hell-Gille, because it rennith in suche a deadly place', but the story behind the names *Develfeld* and *Duell* (a dialect form of 'devil') Lane in Sowerby Bridge is unclear.³⁹

Objects of great size were perhaps most naturally ascribed to the activity of giants, creatures whose existence would have been familiar from several sources - the Bible, romance, and perhaps national historiography - but whose primary characteristics at the local level were their ability to reshape the landscape.⁴⁰ The best example is recorded by Leland, who noted that stones on a hill near Mulgrave castle were locally

³⁷*PN: WRY* III, 63; William Camden, *Britannia*, ed. and tr. R. Gough, 3 vols. (London, 1789), III, 241; *PN: WRY*, V, 83. Leland was not aware of this tradition although he describes the monoliths in some detail (*Itinerary*, I, 84).

³⁸'Description of Cleveland', p. 409; compare Harrison in *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, vol. 1 (London, 1807), p. 219.

³⁹Leland, *Itinerary*, V, 138; cf. Camden, ed. Gough, III, 256. *Helebec* and *Helgill* are first recorded in the thirteenth century and have been derived from Old Norse *hella* 'flat stone.' (*PN NRY*, p. 259). For *Develfeld* and *Duell Lane* see *PN: WRY* III, 141.

⁴⁰Woolf, 'Of Danes and Giants', pp. 183-7; Fox, 'Remembering the Past', pp. 248-50; Fox does not note the importance of giants in Middle English romance, satirized by Chaucer in 'Sir Thopas' (*Canterbury Tales* VII, 807-832); see G. Bordman, *Motif-Index of the English Metrical Romances* (Helsinki, 1972), F531.

called 'Waddes Grave' and reputed to be the work of a giant who previously owned the castle; the same traditions, albeit much embellished, were remembered in the nineteenth century.⁴¹ A *Wade* was known to Chaucer and his early commentators and a similar figure appears in Walter Map and in Germanic, Norse and Old English poetry, although none of these figures were giants. The Mulgrave traditions may suggest not that it was 'the home of the Wade myth', but that a figure of wider currency was appropriated to the locality, and perhaps recast in accordance with popular conceptions of giants. The *Gyants-hill* recorded in the seventeenth century, where 'the credulous' could see the impression of the fingers of a giant who had cast a large stone from the hill, may also have its origins in earlier traditions.⁴² *Grymisdyk*, in the parish of Barwick-in-Elmet (first recorded 1257-85) may have originally evoked a by-name of Woden, but was probably understood in the later medieval period in reference to either the devil or a giant.⁴³

Stories associating the local community with dragons were probably nourished by a similar combination of romance and hagiographic motifs. Victory over a dragon was associated not only with well-known saints such as Michael and George, and with saints of local or regional importance such as the Cornish Carantoc, but with romance heroes a number of whom, like Fulk Fitzwarin, had important local associations.⁴⁴ Most such narratives involved a local landowner, and explained a community's history - the carving of a tomb in the parish church, or the meaning of a coat of arms - as well as its topography. Nothing is known of the dragon whose existence is recorded in the name *Drakehowe*, 'dragon mound', applied to a hill in Maltby, W. Strafforth in 1335, but in the seventeenth century a large hole near Slingsby, and a noticeable bend in the road there, were attributed to the presence of a local dragon which had been slain by a

⁴¹Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 59; J. Westwood, *Albion: A Guide to Legendary Britain* (London, 1987), pp.343-6; *VCH: NRY*, II, 390 (the source of the quotation in the text) reports that 'about a century ago people still repeated legends of Wade and his wife Bell.'

⁴²R. Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis*, ed. T. D. Whitaker (Leeds, 1816), p. 195; *PN: WRY* III, 215.

⁴³Fox, 'Remembering the Past', p. 249 cites the 'country people' of seventeenth-century Oxfordshire who 'will tell you that this Grymes was a gyant'.

⁴⁴See Simpson, *British Dragons, passim*, and pp. 49-51 for Carantoc and Fulk Fitzwarin; *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. D. H. Farmer, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1992), pp. 197-8, 338-9.

fourteenth-century owner of the manor.⁴⁵

Where supernatural or mythic figures were not invoked, communities used a variety of other means to account for the shape of their locality in ways that augmented the community's individuality and importance. This frequently seems to be the implication of place-names containing the element 'castel'. Although this can mean simply 'dwelling', in later Middle English the connotation was of a major defensive structure and this meaning is usually implied by the features with which the name is associated.⁴⁶ A lost place named *Casteldyk* (first recorded in 1292) near Barwick-in-Elmet probably referred to earthworks, as did the *Maidancastell* (1175-96) in Saxton.⁴⁷ A Roman encampment on the north bank of the Wharfe was called *Castleberg* in the thirteenth century.⁴⁸ The *Castlehou* at Sedbergh (1220-50) seems to have denoted what we would distinguish as a natural feature, a heap of boulders, while the *Castell hill* in Bradford parish in 1556 or the thirteenth-century *Castlested* in Thornton do not have any identifiable reference.⁴⁹ The names, together with Leland's evidence, suggest that the idea of a local castle was a relatively common means for local societies to make sense of their surroundings in a way that bolstered their historic, if not their present importance.⁵⁰

As this suggests, local communities were often concerned to assert the antiquity of their surroundings. Often this was done in unspecific terms, as in the name *Aldwarke* in Dalton, or other names formed with the element 'ald-'. According to Camden, the Ainsty was interpreted by some locals as 'the *Anciently*, for its antiquity'.⁵¹ Equally, more specific historical periods could be evoked. The interest which Leland noted at Pontefract in the route of Watling Street through the town suggests a desire to associate the town

⁴⁵PN: WRY I, 139; Westwood, *Albion*, pp. 340-1; see also Simpson, *British Dragons*, pp. 54-56, 63, 82.

⁴⁶A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, 2 vols, EPNS 25 and 26 (Cambridge, 1956). I, 81-2; PN: WRY VII, 23-4.

⁴⁷PN: WRY IV, 107, 70-1.

⁴⁸PN: WRY, I, 69.

⁴⁹PN: WRY, VI, 266; III, 253, 273.

⁵⁰For Leland see above and also, for example, *Itinerary* I, 43; and compare Fox, 'Remembering the Past', p. 235. Note also Leland's claim that Nappa was 'communely ...caullid No Castel' (*Itinerary* IV, 28).

⁵¹PN: WRY I, 180; Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, I, 8; Camden, ed. Gough, III, 244.

with Roman or legendary history, and sculptures in a chapel at Richmond, which were locally supposed to be the remains of a temple of idols, similarly linked the town to the pre-Christian past.⁵²

The importance of the Danish invasions to the frameworks of popular historiography current in late-medieval Yorkshire is less clear. The large earthwork near Ripon now called *Ailag Hill* was originally *Elueshou* or 'Elf's mound'; but when Camden visited the town he saw 'a very large hill of earth called *Hilshow*, and said to have been thrown up by the Danes.'⁵³ Ripon's destruction by the Danes was remembered in the town through the Middle Ages, and ascriptions of historical as opposed to supernatural agency may reflect divergent traditions circulating in the town. Equally, it appears that the Danes assumed a more prominent role in popular historical consciousness in the sixteenth century, and the earthwork may have been reinterpreted in this light.⁵⁴

The mysterious saint Alkelda, to whom churches at Giggleswick and Middleham were dedicated, was supposed to have been a Saxon princess strangled by Danish women. The narrative seems to be first described in the early nineteenth century, but was represented in stained glass in the church said to be fifteenth-century, and Alkelda was described as a virgin as early as 1389.⁵⁵ On the coast of Cleveland a tradition 'that the Danes used to lande there' was supported by large bones in the area 'in strength and

⁵²Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 39, 79. Most of Leland's other references to Watling Street (for which see the index) indicate his own interest in its route and not that of local societies, but compare Weedon, Northants., which 'stondith hard by the famos way, there comunely caullid of the people Watheling Strete. And upon this the tounet is caullid Wedon on the Streate.' (*Itinerary* I, 10).

⁵³*PN: WRY*, V, 168; Camden, ed. Gough, III, 241.

⁵⁴for the Danes see Woolf, 'Of Danes and Giants', pp. 193-7; Fox, 'Remembering the Past', pp. 251-2, although - as the following paragraph will show - his argument is overstated. Leland records a number of traditions relating to construction or destruction by the Danes (see for example *Itinerary* I, 10, 117, 119, 120, 121, 126) and it seems most unlikely that these were all of recent origin. On the other hand, *Danes' dyke*, the current Flamborough parish boundary, was simply called *Flayn(e)burghbyk* until at least 1452 (*PN: ERY*, p. 106; *VCH: ERY*, III, 151).

⁵⁵T. Carter Mitchell, 'S. Alkelda of Middleham', *YAJ* 12 (1892-3), 83-6; *Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the North Riding of Yorkshire, York and the Ainsty*, ed. E. Gutch, Publications of the Folk-Lore Society 15 (London, 1901), p. 402 (quoting a source of 1814); *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. Farmer, pp. 15-6. For the glass and its date see M. Hartley and J. Ingilby, *The Yorkshire Dales*, revised edition (London, 1965), p. 305. The 1389 grant of a fair at Middleham on the feast of S. Alkelda the virgin is printed in *Documents Relating to the Foundation and Antiquities of the Collegiate Church of Middleham*, ed. W. Atthill, Camden Society o.s. 38 (1847), p. 106.

bignes gyant-like'. As I showed in chapter 5, this tradition can be traced with some confidence to the early fourteenth century: the form in which it was recorded illustrates how common motifs in historical memory could become combined.⁵⁶ The late-fourteenth-century historical tables displayed at York *Münster* described how the people of Northumbria rose up against Sweyn and Knut in a battle fought 'super Yorkswalde usque Beverlacum', of which evidence was still there, and Harrison in the sixteenth century referred to 'the Danefeld', near Driffield, 'wherein great numbers of Danes were slaine, and buried in those hills, which yet remaine there to be seene.' Both texts almost certainly refer to the 'Danes' graves' near Great Driffield, although the name has not previously been traced back beyond the nineteenth-century.⁵⁷

The ascription of features of local topography to saints follows the patterns described above, aiming to associate local communities with antiquity, authority or the extraordinary, and drawing as readily on national as on regional traditions. On Roseberry Topping a cleft in the rock through which one might squeeze was known as St Winifred's needle.⁵⁸ This was quite possibly a local derivative of St Wilfrid's needle at Ripon, but illustrates that the celebrity of a saint mattered as much or more than any local connections. The tradition (recorded in 1588) that St Hilda had lived near Knaresborough probably arose to explain the dedication of a local chapel, and suggests the ways in which the biography of a regional saint could be appropriated in the interests of local prestige.⁵⁹

A number of traditions which were associated with saints of particularly local significance can be traced back to institutional writings and sponsorship. We have already

⁵⁶'Description of Cleveland', pp. 411-2. Likewise in some versions of the Guy of Warwick story the giant Colbrond is a Dane.

⁵⁷*John de Foxton's Liber cosmographiae (1408)*, ed. J. B. Friedman (Leiden, 1988), p. 300; *Holinshed's Chronicles*, p. 158; for later references see *Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the East Riding of Yorkshire*, ed. E. Gutch (London, 1912), pp. 201, 203, 204, 206-7. The earliest reference for these names in *PN: ERY* is 1828 (p. 154).

⁵⁸'Description of Cleveland', p. 410. The name is unlikely to be earlier than the fifteenth century, when Winifred's cult was promoted: *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. Farmer, p. 500.

⁵⁹BL, MS Lansdowne 119, f. 121r. For the chapel see *The Metrical Life of Robert of Knaresborough*, ed. J. Bazire, EETS o.s. 228 (1953), pp. 86-7, with references.

seen how patronal saints could be used to lend authority to institutions' jurisdictional boundaries. Leland also implies that the story which accounted for ammonites in the coast at Whitby in terms of St Hilda's miraculous driving of snakes from the area was actively disseminated by the monks (he thought the snakes had been enclosed in rock by 'inclementia caeli'). They evidently had much success, since as late as the eighteenth century the ammonites were 'to this day vulgarly called St Hilda's stones.'⁶⁰

Although it must have been much less common, there is some evidence that communities which lacked obvious associations with saints were able to draw on hagiographic motifs to account for their origin or situation in similarly dramatic terms. Camden claimed to have heard from some of the inhabitants of Halifax that the town's name derived from the *haly fax* or 'holy hair' of a local maiden who had been slain by a lecherous priest. His frustrated love for her had turned to madness, causing him to cut off her head and place it on a yew tree.⁶¹ The town had formerly been called Horton but pilgrimage to the yew-tree caused it to grow to such an extent that it took its new name from the maiden. There is late-seventeenth-century evidence that the bark of a tree 'that once grew' on the hill at Halifax, in which the virgin's hair could still be seen, provided supporting evidence for this narrative, but as often in such cases it is impossible to know whether the story arose to explain the natural feature or whether the feature was used to support a pre-existing story.⁶² In addition to the physical evidence, however, the story was also tied to its locality because it was constructed in terms of local dialect and accent: Camden explained to this readers '*fax* signifying hair among the English on the other side Trent'.

The combination of antiquity and authority provided by saints could also be supplied by traditions associating the community with magnates, particularly those known to have local connections. At Wakefield, Leland heard that when the Earl of

⁶⁰Leland, *Collectanea*, IV, 39; L. Charlton, *The History of Whitby and of Whitby Abbey* (York, 1779) p. 32.

⁶¹Camden, *Britannia*, ed. Gough, III, 236. This tradition may be a sixteenth-century development Camden seems to be the first to record it. By the seventeenth century it was incorporated into the town's seal. (*PN: WRY*, III, 104; J. Stansfield, 'Seals of Corporate Bodies of Halifax', *Thoresby Society* 2 (1891), 111-14 (112).

⁶²Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis*, p. 195.

Warene began building on a nearby hill, the work was destroyed by wind as fast as it could be erected, a tradition which suggests the limits of lordly authority. At Stamford (of which the Warennes were also lord) the earl was associated with the origin of the town's bull run, in a less ambivalent assertion of the town's famous connections.⁶³

Curiously, and in contrast to the metropolitan church, the city of York seems to have made relatively little of its well-known illustrious foundation by the British king Ebraucus. It was apparently only Henry VII's progress of 1486, when emphasis on British origins was expedient, that encouraged the city to present Ebraucus as its 'primatyve patron', although the preparation and production of Henry's reception seem to have spurred civic authorities to adopt Ebraucus as a symbol of the antiquity and legitimacy of civic government.⁶⁴ In 1501 a statue of Ebraucus is mentioned for the first time - in a catalogue of the civic achievements of John Stokdale's mayoralty - as being moved from the corner of Colliergate and St. Saviourgate to the east end of the chapel in the Guildhall in Coney Street.⁶⁵ York lagged far behind not only London but other provincial cities such as Bristol or even nearby Beverley, in the exploitation of its historic past.⁶⁶

Such connections did not necessarily rely on 'historical' figures, as place-names alluding to Robin Hood indicate. Robin Hood's stone in south Yorkshire is first

⁶³Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 41-2; G. Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1985), p. 276.

⁶⁴There are two accounts of this pageant: one in the York House Books and one, apparently recorded by a herald, in BL MS Cotton Julius B.xii (both printed in *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. A. F. Johnston and M. Rogerson, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1979), I, 137-43 and 146-52). I quote from the latter, which (somewhat oddly) provides a better text. For a recent discussion of the pageant and its circumstances, see L. Attreed, 'The Politics of Welcome: Ceremonies and Constitutional Development in Later Medieval English Towns', in *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, ed. B. A. Hanawalt and K. L. Reyerson, *Medieval Studies at Minnesota 6* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 208-31 (pp. 219-222).

⁶⁵*York Civic Records*, ed. A. Raine et al., 9 vols., YASRS 98, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119, 138 (1939-78), II, 171.

⁶⁶For Brennius at Bristol, see D. H. Sacks, 'Celebrating Authority in Bristol, 1475-1640', in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. S. Zimmerman and R. F. E. Weissman (London, 1989), pp. 195-6; for London, see J. Clark, 'Trinovantum - The Evolution of a Legend', *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981), 135-51 (esp. pp. 147-8), and e.g. *Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter Book K*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1911), pp. 81-3, 90-1; for the copy of a history of Beverley and its provosts, beginning with Lucius, in the town's Great Guild Book, see above, ch. 3, p. 126.

mentioned in the early fifteenth century, and suggests the early impact of the legend in this area; Robin Hood's bay, south of Whitby, is first so named in 1532 and is more typical of such place-names.⁶⁷ The hero's name became applied to a variety of locales, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the legends were widely disseminated through the printing presses.⁶⁸ The *Robyn Hude's Cross* which Leland saw on the boundary of Rutland and Lincolnshire must have been a boundary-marker before it became associated with the hero.⁶⁹ The invocation of Robin, in the same way as references to well-known 'historical' figures, was a way of increasing the community's celebrity, and it is unlikely that Robin was the only famous figure who was used in this way in Yorkshire. References to Guy of Warwick are well-known in the areas with which his legend was particularly associated, but the narratives were widely diffused and the *Gyecliffe* recorded near Agbrigg in 1445, for example, may well refer to them.⁷⁰ A cave called 'Arthures hall' at Giggleswick invoked perhaps an even more renowned figure from national history.⁷¹

The desire to tie a local community to a wider national context could also be accomplished through reference to well-known historical events. Leland was told that Cowton Moor, near Northallerton, was the site - as Roger of Howden had attested - of 'the feld of the standard bytwixt the Englisch menne and the Scottisch'; at the end of the seventeenth century there were still trenches known locally as 'Scots Pits'. More recent occasions when the local community had been caught up in national events were also remembered, and not always tied to particular topographical features. Leland recorded

⁶⁷For various later accounts of the story behind the name, see *Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the North Riding*, ed. Gutch, pp. 10, 414-5; and for a useful list of Robin Hood place-names, see *Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw*, ed. R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor, rev. edn (Stroud, 1997), pp. 292-311.

⁶⁸See most recently M. Evans, 'Robynhill or Robin Hood's Hills? Place-Names and the Evolution of the Robin Hood Legends', *English Place-Name Society Journal* 30 (1997-8), 43-52.

⁶⁹Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 23.

⁷⁰*PN: WRY* II, 111. For Guy, cf. V. B. Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York, 1996); R. S. Crane, 'The Vogue of Guy of Warwick', *PMLA* 30 (1915), 125-94. A legend recorded in the early nineteenth century told that Guy killed a dragon at Long Witton, Northumberland. (Simpson, *British Dragons*, p. 51)

⁷¹BL, MS Lansdowne 119, f. 120v.

a 'commune saying' at Wakefield that the earl of Rutland, after the battle of 1460, 'wold have taken ther a poore woman's house for socour, and she for fere shet the dore and strait the erle was killid.'⁷²

The majority, although by no means all, of the traditions outlined above, attempt to account for a particular local custom or a topographical feature in the locality. The desire to associate a community with antiquity and with figures or narratives of national or regional significance also informs the foundation narratives which account for the origins of the community itself. Robert Mannyng referred to the story of 'Flayn' told by Thomas of Kendale, which is now lost but may have explained the origin of Flamborough in similar terms to Scarborough's Viking foundation.⁷³ This suggests - like the material examined in the previous chapter - the importance of local rivalries and neighbouring traditions, in addition to broader cultural influences, in determining the stories that might be told in a society about its locale and history.⁷⁴

The above account makes no claims to cover all the means whereby local communities asserted their distinctiveness and excellence. In addition to the largely historical traditions which I have discussed, local culture could also focus on the present characteristics of the environment, such as its fertility. A Lincolnshire rhyme boasted 'Ancolme ele, and Witham pike / Search all England and find not the like'.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, it does seem that historical and semi-historical traditions accounted for the larger and most important part of the culture of locality.

Broadly speaking, such traditions all functioned to associate local communities with the well-known or the extraordinary, often in relation to particular topographical

⁷²Leland, *Itinerary*, I, 68, 41; *VCH: NRY*, I, 160. It is not clear whether the description of Stamford Bridge 'where the Danes faught' (Leland, *Itinerary* IV, 33) comes from local informants or Leland's own knowledge, although the town was also known in the Middle Ages as *Pons belli* or *Punt de la Bataille*, probably in colloquial as well as documentary usage. (PN: *ERY*, 186-7)

⁷³For Flayn, see *The Story of England by Robert Manning of Brunne*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, RS 87, 2 vols. (1887), II, 514 (ll. 14816-19); PN: *ERY*, p. 106.

⁷⁴See also the comments of Simpson, 'Local Legend', p. 33.

⁷⁵Recorded by Harrison: *Holinshed's Chronicles*, p. 169; the reference is to the rivers Ancholme, which drains into the Humber, and Witham which drains into the Wash.

features.⁷⁶ Such associations were made using a variety of cultural resources. Occasionally, local narratives seem to be directly derived from elite discourses - the tradition associating St Hilda with the boundaries of Whitby Strand, for example, probably originated with Whitby abbey itself. More often, local traditions were not directly dependent on learned ideas, but were nonetheless structured by their assumptions: in the etymological approach to meaning, for example, or in their reliance on established historiographical schemes. But the relation between popular and elite ideas could be transformative as well as derivative. The place-names associated with Robin Hood sometimes imply that he was seen not in terms of the human hero of the ballads but as a gigantic figure of supernatural strength.⁷⁷ Giants themselves, while they figured significantly in official historical culture, seem to have been particularly important at a local and popular level.⁷⁸ With this and other motifs - such as natural features ascribed to the devil or the idea of work undone the next day - the lines of influence from 'elite' to 'popular' culture or vice versa are impossible to trace.⁷⁹ But while many of the frameworks through which locality was made meaningful were shared by a range of social groups, it is important to draw attention to the extent to which constructions of locality were shaped by social structures.⁸⁰ In this respect it is instructive to compare the account of Mulgrave castle discussed above, in which it was said to have been built by a giant, with the account in the chronicle of Meaux abbey. The Meaux chronicler records that the castle was built by Peter Maulay, and called Mulgrave 'id est multum grave', because a local knight with little affection for Maulay had called it a bad thing when he

⁷⁶For the role of geographical surroundings in structuring memory, compare Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, pp. 93, 113, 118-9.

⁷⁷Evans, 'Robynhill', pp. 46-7, 49.

⁷⁸This remains to be explored: J. J. Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages*, Medieval Cultures 17 (Minneapolis, 1999) has some interesting comments on the role of giants in English historiography and romance.

⁷⁹For these motifs, cf. S. Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk-Literature*, 6 vols. (Copenhagen, 1955-8), A962-3, A972, A977, D2192.

⁸⁰On attempting to balance 'common cultural values' with 'the role of power or social hierarchy in the shaping of ideas and behaviour' see especially B. Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 1-3 (quote from pp. 1 and 2) and 198-223.

heard it was being built.⁸¹ The differences between learned and 'vulgar' ways of thinking about locality which became increasingly clear-cut in the sixteenth century undoubtedly had earlier origins.

⁸¹*Melsa* I, 106.

EXCURSUS
THE LANGUAGE OF LOCAL SOLIDARITY

Throughout the thesis, I have tried to emphasize that frameworks of locality - ideas of the county, or attitudes to home - structured interpersonal relationships as well as relationships between communities and territory. In this chapter, I want to focus more intently on the ways in which relationships were structured by ideas of locality, and in particular on the language through which specifically local relationships were constructed. Some previous studies have recognized that such idioms and the attitudes they embody need to be explored if the values of the late-medieval gentry are to be fully understood, but there has been little attempt to follow up these suggestions.¹ Such attitudes, furthermore, were important to a wider section of society: as I shall show, they informed the language of urban politics and the idiom of political protest. As much as the community of the shire, communities of country or neighbourhood were 'imagined communities' which misrepresented the real complexity of social relations; again, though, the style in which such communities were imagined had a very real influence on attitudes and behaviour at all levels of medieval society.

What follows is an attempt - which given the current state of research can only be preliminary - to identify the concepts through which relationships were constructed in terms of locality, and the importance of these ideas in different social contexts. I begin by exploring the values associated with ideas of neighbourhood and country. I then focus on the face-to-face communities of town, manor or parish, arguing the the legal and religious backgrounds to the concepts of neighbourhood and country were particularly at this level, where they could inform the language of popular politics. In a final section,

¹C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-99* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 8; but the only developed study along these lines is P. Maddern, ' "Best Trusted Friends": Concepts and Practices of Friendship among Fifteenth-Century Norfolk Gentry', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. N. Rogers (Stamford, 1994), pp. 100-17. Other scholars have noted the importance of these concepts in passing: for example, K. B. McFarlane, "Bastard Feudalism", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 20 (1943-5), 161-80 (p. 170).

I examine situations in which ‘country’ had more ambivalent associations, describing specifically rural areas.

Neighbours and countrymen

The concepts through which relationships were most frequently and clearly constructed in terms of locality in late medieval England were those of *country* and *neighbourhood*. These words were frequently associated by the late-medieval gentry, and it would be a mistake to try and distinguish their senses too exactly. Nevertheless, each term could carry particular connotations and I shall begin by considering them in turn.

The language of ‘country’ and ‘countrymen’ (*patriota* or *compatriota*) was used to describe or create shared ties of locality.² Expectations of such local loyalties lay behind the proverbial idea that every man was strong in, or could trust to, his own ‘contree’.³ The ‘country’ around which loyalties were based could encompass the full range of areas described in this thesis. As we saw in chapter 2, both northerners and southerners at Oxford were sometimes perceived as acting out of ‘affectus patrie’, and were even prepared on some occasions ‘to stand with their countrymen and fight to the death for them’. At a similar geographical range, Walsingham describes the English force at the battle of Myton as determined to avenge ‘civium et patriotarum sanguinem’, the blood of their fellow citizens and countrymen’.⁴ The detail is absent from Walsingham’s source, and has little claim to authority, but it illustrates the extent to which solidarities based around large regional ‘countries’ could be seen to inform situations of conflict.

The language of country and countrymen was also used, together with the antonymical language of ‘strange’ and ‘stranger’, to reflect and reinforce county loyalties.

²For the Latin terms cf. *Promptorium parvulorum sive clericorum*, ed. A. Way, 3 vols., Camden Society o.s. 25, 54, 89 (1843–65), I, 109; *Catholicon Anglicum: An English Wordbook dated 1483*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage, EETS o.s. 75 (1881), p. 86.

³Whiting, C350, C474, C475, cf. L58.

⁴Walsingham, *Historia anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols., RS 28/1 (1863–4), I, 156; cf. *Johannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneфорde*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS 28/3 (1866), pp. 103–4.

John Jenney's comment about John Howard being a 'straunge man' with no 'lyvelode in the shire' has been cited above.⁵ The county community invoked by the language of 'country' could be relatively socially inclusive: it was said that Wolsey agreed to stand surety for the Suffolk rebels who had protested against the Amicable Grant of 1525 because - as a native of Ipswich - they were his 'countrey men'.⁶ As we have repeatedly seen, though, countries and the attitudes they inspired did not always follow county boundaries. When the abbot of Notley asked Sir William Stonor to recommend him to his wife 'as a contreyman nowe of hurs nat to her k[n]owing', their 'country' extended over the boundary between Buckinghamshire, where the abbey was located, and Oxfordshire.⁷

It is important to range the territorial range that the concept of 'countryman' could encompass, but most uses of the term are not concerned to spell out the exact area that is referred to. The language of 'country' and 'countrymen' embodied a system of values and attitudes rather than particular geographical areas. It emphasized ties of locality above differences of interest, status or gender.⁸ These ties were usually binding to the area of one's birth: as an early-sixteenth-century teaching text has it, 'We were borne in one countre therefore we must love well togyder'.⁹ Consequently Wolsey could aid the Suffolk rebels regardless of his current geographical and social distance from them. The abbot of Notley, however, indicates that one's 'country' could change under certain circumstances. For women, marriage, if it involved substantial geographical movement, may have been the most important circumstance, although the wills of aristocratic women suggest that adoption of a husband's country was by no means

⁵Ch. 2, p. 83.

⁶*Hall's Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1809), p. 702; for the revolt, see D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 290-8.

⁷*Stonor Letters and Papers*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, Camden Society 3rd ser. 29, 30, 34, ed. C. Carpenter (Cambridge, 1996; cited by original volume and page), II, 136, of c. 1480-1. The wife could be Agnes, William's second wife, who was the widow of the son of a Devonshire squire (I, xxxi); or his third wife Anne Neville (I, xxxiii).

⁸Contrast Maddern's identification of friendship as a relationship largely between men ('"Best Trusted Friends"', pp. 113-5).

⁹*The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittinton*, ed. B. White, EETS o.s. 187 (1932), p. 22.

automatic.¹⁰

These obligations were idealized by friar John Brackley, writing to John Paston I, as ‘zelus et amor rei publice tocius vestre patrie’; more colloquially, Robert Warcop wrote to Sir Robert Plumpton offering to do ‘as I may do that may be plesur to you, and my contry.’¹¹ The term frequently used to describe behaviour which ran contrary to these obligations was ‘oppression’: John Paston II wrote to his father reporting a bill ‘seyng þat ye wold an oppressyd syndre of yowre contremen of worchypfull men’, and William Worcestre similarly claimed that Fastolf would rather not have built Caister than that ‘hyt shuld be yn the gouernaunce of eny sovereyn that wole oppresse the cuntree.’¹²

Obligations to county and countrymen were realized not only in the avoidance of ‘oppression’ but in a wide range of positive actions.¹³ The abbot of Notley’s letter offered an apparently routine sociability and hospitality based around shared locality. Margaret Paston appealed to similar social expectations when she told John I that ‘many of yowyr contre-men’ agreed with her worries about his long absence from home.¹⁴ On a more practical level, actions could range from armed conflict to legal support, and the language of ‘country’ was also appealed to as a reason for undertaking, or agreeing to keep to, arbitration to settle legal disputes.¹⁵ Elizabeth, duchess of Norfolk asked John Paston III for help in arranging an arbitration at the hands of ‘suche as tendyr and love

¹⁰See the will of Anne Harling, *TE* IV, 149-54. The question of how attitudes to one’s country and countrymen were affected by geographical and social mobility, and how loyalties to potentially conflicting countries were worked out in individual contexts, deserves further attention than I can give it here.

¹¹*Paston*, II, 206 (c. 1460); *Plumpton Letters and Papers*, ed. J. Kirby, Camden Society 5th ser. 8 (1996), p. 102 (n.d.).

¹²*Paston*, I, 391; II, 355.

¹³In addition to the material cited below, see *MED* s.v. *contre-man*.

¹⁴*Paston*, I, 277.

¹⁵On arbitration, see I. Rowney, ‘Arbitration in Gentry Disputes of the Later Middle Ages’, *History* 67 (1982), 367-76; E. Powell, ‘Arbitration and the Law in England in the Late Middle Ages’, *TRHS* 5th ser. 33 (1983), 49-67; C. Rawcliffe, ‘The Great Lord as Peacemaker: Arbitration by English Noblemen and their Councils in the Later Middle Ages’, in *Law and Social Change in British History: Papers Presented to the Bristol Legal History Conference 14-17 July 1981*, ed. J. A. Guy and H. G. Beale (London, 1984), pp. 34-54; C. Rawcliffe, ‘“That Kindliness Should be Cherished More, and Discord Driven Out”: The Settlement of Commercial Disputes by Arbitration in Later Medieval England’, in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. J. Kermode (Stroud, 1991), pp. 99-117.

the wele of bothe parties and also the pees and tranquyllyte of the cuntre, and love to esehewe variaunce and parties in the contre.’¹⁶ In similar terms a justice of King’s Bench invited William Plumpton to enter into arbitration ‘for the ease of you both and the rest of the contry’.¹⁷

A good illustration of how attitudes to country and countrymen might work in practice is provided by the actions of Sir Walter atte Lee in the aftermath of the revolt of 1381, at least as they are described by Walsingham. Walsingham alleges that Richard II had planned to visit St Albans with an army to punish the rebels there, but Sir Walter, who was ‘de patria illa’ (he was of Albury in Hertfordshire) had feared the destruction of the country, and persuaded the king to grant him a commission instead. In a speech to the inhabitants of St Albans, Walter emphasized the damage that a royal army would have inflicted, his worry over the destruction of ‘patriae meae’; he described his pity for his neighbours (*compatiens convicinis*) and the burden he had undertaken for his countrymen (*pro patriotis*), and stressed that his commission was made up ‘not of foreigners or strangers (*non extranei, non incogniti*) but of your neighbours and friends (*proximi vestri et amici*).’¹⁸ Nevertheless, the jury he summoned refused to indict: clearly local loyalties could pull in more than one direction.¹⁹

As Sir Walter’s speech indicates, at the level (roughly speaking) of the county and below, idioms of ‘country’ and ‘neighbourhood’ overlapped to some extent. But although the distinctions between the two concepts were far from hard or fast, neighbourhood often carried implications of more immediate geographical proximity. The common expression ‘nigh neighbours’ illustrates this well. In 1537 Sir Brian Hastings of Hatfield petitioned Cromwell on behalf of the priory of Hampole (perhaps ten miles distant from his seat),

¹⁶*Paston*, II, 476.

¹⁷*Plumpton*, ed. Kirby, p. 27 (Jan 1461/2).

¹⁸*Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS 28/4, III (1869), 335-7; cf. *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, II, 22-4. For a biography of Lee, drawing on this narrative, see *The House of Commons 1386-1421*, ed. J. S. Roskell, L. Clark and C. Rawcliffe, *The History of Parliament*, 4 vols. (Stroud, 1993), III, 577-9.

¹⁹*Gesta Abbatum*, ed. Riley, III, 336; for the townsmen’s use of the language of neighbourhood, see below, p. 332.

who he described as near neighbours of his.²⁰ In 1446 John viscount Beaumont was able to broker a settlement between two gentry in dispute over the ditch which separated their property ‘consideryng that the saide too knyghtes are negh neyhiburs’; while an appeal for a marriage licence could also emphasize that ‘the faders of the children loves right welle togeder, and they be right negh neighbours’.²¹

Country and neighbourhood were distinguished not only by the different geographical range that they might evoke, but by the temporal depth of the relationships they described. Despite the abbot of Notley’s letter, it was usually the language of neighbourhood that was used to describe contemporaneous geographical relationships. Around the close of the fifteenth century Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, wrote to Sir John Paston on behalf of Thomas Hartforde, a bower of Norwich who had been ‘noysed in Norffolke for a Scoteman borne’. He explained that he had been asked to write by the mayor and aldermen of York (where Hartforde had been born) ‘for whom I must nedes do because þaye arr my nye neighbours’.²² The tie of neighbourhood was relatively recent, however, dating only from Howard’s elevation to Lieutenant-General of the North in 1490. Similarly in 1466 Edward IV could direct the bailiffs of Yarmouth to ‘be friendly and neyhbours’ to John Paston on his arrival a few miles away at Caister.²³

Again, though, these distinctions were not clear cut. In 1465, John Paston advised Margaret and others to exploit the appeal of neighbourhood, during the Duke of Suffolk’s attacks on the manors of Drayton and Hesseldon. His letter shows clearly the power which the idea of neighbourhood was expected to carry, and also the extent to which ties of neighbourhood could persist after geographical separation:

make mech of men of Cossey [Costessey, a manor near Hesseldon and Drayton] because þey were owr wel-willeris when we wer neyboris ther...desyr god will of yowr neyboris, &c., and fynd all othir menis þat

²⁰*L&P* XII/1, 929.

²¹Quoted in Rawcliffe, ‘Arbitration by English Noblemen’, p. 46; *TE* III, 292n

²²*Paston*, II, 481.

²³*Paston*, II, 549.

ye kan to plese þe pepill.²⁴

Margaret had earlier written to John I that the tenants of Hesseldon and Drayton were glad of a Paston presence, 'and so be many othere of oure old nebors and frendys'.²⁵

The behaviour which was justified or request in the name of neighbourhood, like that of 'country', ranged from appeals to legal, financial or military support of varying kinds and degrees of urgency, to everyday social contacts and relationships.²⁶ The language of neighbourhood was likewise appealed to in the course of arbitration: at York an arbitration was said to be ordained *pur nurrir amour et charite entre veisyne*s, and in a letter written before 1474, Thomas Gate appealed to Thomas Stonor for his direction in a legal dispute, in the hope that this would allow both parties to 'leve and love in peas to the confort of our neyghbors and lovers'.²⁷ References to both 'neighbourhood' and 'country' also seem to have been common ways of excusing what might have been unwelcome requests, as when the earl of Surrey says he 'must do' for his neighbours of York.

The values of neighbourhood and country cannot be understood in isolation. Both concepts were closely associated: Margaret Paston's attitudes to Walter's acquaintance Thomas Hollere were shaped by the fact that Walter was both his 'contre-man' and his 'neghboure'.²⁸ Both concepts, but particularly neighbourhood, were also related to ideas of friendship. William Jenney wrote to John Paston I on behalf of his 'good freend and neyghbur' Robert Tylyard, and in a similar situation Philip Fitzlewis wrote in 1479-80 to William Stonor on behalf of 'my neyghburreys ffreendys' and 'many gentlymen and other

²⁴*Paston*, I, 133.

²⁵*Paston*, I, 303.

²⁶See also 'Dunkanhalgh Deeds c. 1200-1800', ed. G. A. Stocks and J. Tait, Chetham Society n.s 80 (1921), pp. 1-108 (p. 35), cited by *MED* s.v. neigheborshipe

²⁷*York Memorandum Book*, ed. M. Sellers, 2 vols. SS 120, 125 (1912-5), II, 25 (1392); *Stonor Letters*, ed. Kingsford, I, 136-7, no. 130.

²⁸*Paston*, I, 370.

yure neyghborres in thys contre'.²⁹ One English-Latin word list has *proximus* as an equivalent for both 'a frende' and 'a neightbure', and conversely 'strange' in Middle English could be antonymical to 'frende', 'cuntre' or 'blode'.³⁰ Proverbial collections advised 'Lete thy neyghburgh thy frendskep fele.'³¹

The interaction of ideas of friendship, neighbourhood and country enabled local solidarities to be constructed in a range of fashions that defies straightforward summary. It is helpful, however, to recall Margaret Paston's advice to John II on his relations with her cousin Robert Clere: 'þat iche of yow xulde do for othere, and leue as kynnysmen and frendys ...so nyhe newborys as 3e be.' In the romance of 'King Edward and the Shepherd', the king (in his disguise as a merchant) similarly informs the shepherd that he too is from Windsor, and 'sith þou art neightbur myne, / I wil my nedis do and thyne.'³² It is perhaps this idea of 'doing for other' that most concisely sums up the behaviour expected between those associated by bonds of neighbourhood and country, bonds which could be strengthened by the invocation of the related bonds of friendship.

The connections between these idioms, make it difficult to assess the importance of ideas of local solidarity within the total set of values which moulded gentry conduct. It is undeniable that neither 'neighbourhood' or 'country' was invoked as frequently or insistently as the language of kinship, friendship or lordship, and it seems likely that locality was not considered to impose obligations as powerful as those expected from relationships of blood or service. It is equally important to stress, however, that relationships based on locality were often impossible to disentangle from other relational values.

The preceding discussion has concentrated on gentry culture. Much of what has been said also held true at other levels of society, but the language of neighbourhood and

²⁹Paston II, 225; *Stonor Letters*, ed. Kingsford, II, 97.

³⁰*Catholicon Anglicum*, ed. Herrtage, pp. 142, 251; *MED*. under the relevant entries; other examples are in Maddern, "Best Trusted Friends", pp. 105-6; *Paston*, I, 162; *Stonor Letters*, ed. Kingsford, I, 136-7.

³¹Whiting, N80; Maddern, "Best Trusted Friends", p.105. For other associations of country and friendship see *Plumpton*, ed. Stapleton, p. 156 *Clifford*, ed. Hoyle, p. 173 *Paston*, II, 441; *Armburgh Papers*, ed. Carpenter, p. 89.

³²*Paston*, I, 381; *Middle English Metrical Romances*, ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale, 2 vols. (New York, 1930), II, 949-85, lines 70-1; Adam the shepherd later says of the king 'We ar neightburs. i and he / We were never lothe.' (lines 690-1).

country could have significantly different resonances in other social contexts. The following sections of this chapter explore two such contexts, where the language of neighbourhood seems to have been particularly distinctive - the negotiations of urban oligarchies, and the face-to-face society of the manor or parish.

Neighbourhood and local politics in late medieval York

For a number of reasons, the language of neighbourhood seems to have been particularly important in negotiating relationships between towns and other institutions. In part, this was because 'country' had the distinctive sense in urban culture of the area outside and distinguished from the town, so that the idiom of 'countrymen' was not as readily available for constructing local solidarities.³³ Furthermore, neighbourhood could describe permanent institutional relationships in a way that was less true for geographically mobile individuals; and as we have seen, 'country' also implied 'the land of one's birth', which was not suitable for institutions.

Whatever the explanation, the language of neighbourhood appears probably with greater frequency, and certainly with greater force, in the records of urban administrations than in the papers of the gentry. Many of the references are grouped in the latter part of the fifteenth century, but this probably reflects the surviving documentation rather than any more profound change in political culture. At York and elsewhere it is only from this period that minute-books and comparable records of the day-to-day business of the council survive, and it is in these contexts that records of negotiations with local institutions are likely to be preserved.

The language of neighbourhood could be used by urban administrations over a wider range of geographical areas than I earlier suggested was typical. It was used to negotiate relationships with immediately adjoining institutions, often religious houses with which urban administrations were in conflict. In the early sixteenth century York requested the adjoining abbey of St Mary's to 'be neghbur unto us' during a jurisdictional

³³Discussed in more detail below, pp. 334-43.

dispute.³⁴ In a comparable dispute at Bristol, Henry VII on a visit to the city commanded the civic administration 'to be good and lovyng neighboures' to the abbey of St Augustine.³⁵ At the other extreme, a merchant of Newcastle appealed to 'neightborlye favour' when his goods were seized at York in 1531: perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the distance that the idea of neighbourhood could be made to span.³⁶

Usually neighbourhood was used to construct solidarities over distances somewhere between these extremes, often with the implication of the preceding examples that the full rigour of legal process should be avoided. When John Grene, mayor of Hull, complained to York in 1463-4 about rumours that Hull had restricted the attitudes of York merchants he expressed the hope that such rumours would be replaced by 'syttyng and conveyant langage...as good neighbored and reson shuld requir.' Grene went on to state that York merchants had traded illegally in Hull, but 'for to have contenede of good neighbored I and my said comburges have forbered to forfeit þe same or to shewe any maner of cause of unkyndnesse of neighbored, trustyng in þe neighborly reformation of theym.'³⁷ The emphasis on neighbourly conduct in this letter goes well beyond anything in gentry correspondence, and other evidence suggests that such emphasis is not wholly exceptional.

In 1500 Sir William Conyers wrote to York in protest at the city's arrest of the boat of William Tankerd of Boroughbridge. The terms of his letter are worth quoting at length:

I praye God that your poure neghburs of the Citie fare never the warse for your hasty arrest of your neghburs goods, for if it please and content your mynd nowe to put your neghburs to trouble at this tyme, your tyme in the office whiche ye occupie nowe is bot schort. I wald ye take no sample by a carle, your neghbour, John Metcalf, which ye knawe is comen lightly up and

³⁴*York Civic Records*, ed. A. Raine et al., 9 vols., YASRS 98, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119, 138 (1939-78) III, 93; for earlier disputes between monastery and city see *VCH: York*, pp. 39-40, 68-9 and 83.

³⁵*The Great White Book of Bristol*, ed. E. Ralph, Bristol Record Society 32 (1979), pp. 25-7 (the full records of the dispute are printed *ibid.*, pp. 17-67).

³⁶*York Civic Records*, ed. Raine et al., III, 136-7.

³⁷Hull Corporation Record Office, BRB 1 (Bench Book 3A), p. 39 (datable by address to Thomas Scauseby as mayor of York).

of smale substance and wilbe maid glade shortly to knawe his neighbours for his better. I wald not ye troubled my neighbours in your tyme, for if ye do, your wynnyng shalbe smale without profett.³⁸

Conyers also described two servants of his from Richmond as 'my neighbours' and it is clear that the word is deliberately used in a range of senses, but the insistence that York and Boroughbridge are 'neghburs' is apparent.

York's reply provides a valuable indication of how such appeals to neighbourhood could be countered. The mayor's letter accepts that his fellow-citizens are his 'poure neighbours' but applies a more legalistic language of rational judgement to the city's relations with Boroughbridge. The city's cause is described as 'resonable' and Conyers is requested to deal 'as right reason requireth'.³⁹ Similarly, in 1531 the Newcastle merchant's request was met with a reference to the 'lauffull grants' under which it operated, appealing to royal authority and suggesting that the hierarchical relationship between city and crown necessarily took precedence over any potential solidarity between regional institutions.⁴⁰

York itself seems to have made only limited attempts to invoke neighbourly values, although in 1503 the city claimed to *Archbishop* Savage that the punishment of a woman from Boroughbridge selling sub-standard bread had been lessened 'for pite and neighbourhed'.⁴¹ It may well be that - as the earl of Surrey's actions of behalf of Thomas Hartforde suggest - that neighbourhood was appealed to more frequently by the city's representatives in informal negotiations. Furthermore, much of the civic business recorded in the House Books was conducted with the crown or through the mediation of local magnates like the duke of Gloucester or the earl of Northumberland. The language of good lordship or friendship was more appropriate to such exchanges.⁴²

In urban as in aristocratic texts, the idea of neighbourhood is found alongside

³⁸*York Civic Records*, ed. Raine et al., II, 156.

³⁹*York Civic Records*, ed. Raine et al., II, 156

⁴⁰*York Civic Records*, ed. Raine et al., III, 136-7.

⁴¹*York Civic Records*, ed. Raine et al., II, 182-3.

⁴²e.g. *York House Books 1461-1490*, ed. L. Attreed, 2 vols. (Stroud, 1990), I, 9-10, 128-9, 163-4, 194, 248, 250, 256, 337, 346-7, 395.

other relational ideas - friendship, amity, good lordship to name only the most important. In the mid-fifteenth-century dispute between the corporation and cathedral of Exeter, the city appealed to the 'gode frendship' of the bishop's counsel, and an agreement of 1500-1 between Nottingham and Lincoln was similarly reaffirmed for 'more perftye quietnes, amytye and love' between them, while a later letter refers to 'amyte and frenchip'.⁴³ Nevertheless, ideas of neighbourhood do seem to have especially prominent in the complex of values in terms of which relationships between towns and other institutions were conducted.

Neighbourhood, face-to-face society and popular protest

A number of the documents quoted above demonstrate that, in addition to relations between towns and other institutions, the language of neighbourhood could also describe the local society of towns themselves. More broadly, the language of neighbourhood had particular resonance and force in what might roughly be called the 'face-to-face' society of town, manor or parish.⁴⁴ It was at this level, I shall argue, that the Christian teaching which coloured the idea of neighbourhood, and the legal concepts which informed ideas of neighbourhood and country, were largely seen to apply. The concept of local society as a neighbourly community, bound to assist and protect its own members and often defined in contrast to external authority, had a powerful influence on various kinds of popular protest.

Clanchy has pointed out that the discourse of 'love' as opposed to that of 'law' was informed by the language of the Bible (particularly the New Testament), and Biblical doctrine seems to have been an equally powerful influence on late-medieval ideas of

⁴³*Letters and Papers of John Shillingford, Mayor of Exeter 1447-50*, ed. S. A. Moore, Camden Society n.s. 2 (1871), p. 81; *Records of the Borough of Nottingham III, 1485-1547* (London, 1885), pp. 305. 307.

⁴⁴It is at this level that neighbourhood has received particular attention from historians: see, for example, K. Thomas, *Religion and Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), pp. 555-7, 563-6; J. Sharpe, 'Such Disagreement betwix Neighbours', in *Disputes and Settlements*, ed. J. Bossy (Cambridge, 1983), esp pp. 178-80.

neighbourhood.⁴⁵ The prohibitions of the Decalogue against bearing false witness or coveting the goods of one's neighbour (*proximus*), together with the commandment to love God and your neighbour (*proximus*) as yourself, were widely disseminated through exegetical, devotional and homiletic literature. They were not, of course, intended to apply only to those to which one was related by geographical proximity: as Chaucer's Parson states, 'neighebor' in this context is equivalent to 'evene-Cristene'.⁴⁶ But in practice it is frequently difficult to separate, as *MED* does, the senses of 'one who dwells nearby' and 'fellow man, fellow Christian'.⁴⁷

In sermons, for example, 'neighbour' often has a geographical meaning in addition to, or instead of, a spiritual one, with the language of these sermons illustrating the connection between ideas of neighbourhood and country that emerged from gentry correspondence. One evil doer who was 'so prowde that his neghbores myght not lyve in pease' was brought down to earth by 'a riche man and a good man of that same contre'; another who reckoned himself 'the beste man in al a cuntre' was in fact cursed by 'the moste parte of hys neybors'; another plotted to 'begyle is evencristen, and to oppresse is poure ney3bores' in order to 'lede and rewell all the countrey'.⁴⁸ We also hear of men 'in a parishe...wiche speken ever siaundre and detraction of ther ney3bore', or the husbandman who ploughs 'into his neihboris lond': literary sources provide many parallels.⁴⁹ Similarly at confession, sins against neighbours (like other kinds of sin) were placed in a local context.⁵⁰

A large number of wills contain bequests *in convocatione amicorum et vicinorum*, for 'pore tennantes and neightbors', or for 'neyghbours to make mery wt alle'.

⁴⁵M. Clanchy, 'Law and Love in the Middle Ages', in *Disputes and Settlements*, ed. Bossy, pp. 47-67 (pp. 49 and 51).

⁴⁶Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, X (I), 394; for other examples see *MED* s.v. neighebor.(c)

⁴⁷*MED* s.v. neighebor. (a) and (c).

⁴⁸G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1961), pp. 308, 312, 319.

⁴⁹Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 458, 367.

⁵⁰Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. E. Peacock, EETS o.s. 31 (1868), lines 978-9, 1309-12; *Piers Plowman* B, V, 256.

Such bequests imagine the parish as a neighbourly community, and could specifically forbid ‘common doole to straungers.’⁵¹ Even Margery Kempe protested to a burgess of King’s Lynn that it was ‘mor almes’ to help their ‘owyn neybowrys pan oper strawngerys wech þei knew not.’⁵² It is not therefore surprising that one text should find it necessary to enjoin love to both ‘negburghes and strangers’.⁵³ The idea of Christian neighbourhood, as it was popularly disseminated and practised, placed less emphasis on duties to all fellow-Christians on relationships involving some kind of geographical proximity.

These doctrines undoubtedly affected the understanding of neighbourhood at all social levels. Margaret Paston in 1469 instructed John Paston II to ‘entend welle to God and to 3owr neyborgs,’ in terms that might have come directly from a didactic treatise.⁵⁴ They probably had their greatest impact, however, at the ‘face-to-face’ level of village, parish or town society, where the facts of physical proximity were less negotiable. It is revealing that the *Promptorium Parvulorum* contains two entries for ‘neighbour’: *neyhborowe* (defined as *proximus* or *vicinus*), and *neyhbore, of þe same strete* (defined as *convicanus*). This seems to recognize that neighbourhood carried a distinctive meaning at the face-to-face level of local society.⁵⁵

In this context it is perhaps unsurprising that a number of manorial communities conceptualized themselves as ‘neighbours’ (often in distinction to their lord, steward or bailiff) both when drawing up their bye-laws and when dealing with offenders in the manor court.⁵⁶ We have seen above that the parish could also be seen as a community of

⁵¹‘Holderness Wills’, ed. W. Brown, *Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society* 10 (1903), pp. 1-18, p. 4 (1492); ‘York Civic Wills’, 28 (1905-6), 862-3; 32 (1913-4), 570-1, 582-3. etc.; *TE* III, 259 (1480); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 135-6.

⁵²*The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. S. B. Meech and H. E. Allen, EETS o.s. 212 (repr. 1997), p. 56.

⁵³cited *MED* s.v. *straunger*(e, (b).

⁵⁴*Paston*, I, 346.

⁵⁵*Promptorium parvulorum*, ed. Way, II, 352. Note also that both definitions are given in feminine as well as masculine forms.

⁵⁶W. O. Ault, ‘Manor Court and Parish Church in Fifteenth-Century England: A Study of Village By-Laws’, *Speculum* 41 (1967), 53-67 (p. 55 and nn. 27-8); W. O. Ault, ‘Village By-Laws by Common Consent’, *Speculum* 29 (1954), 378-94 (p. 380-1); W. O. Ault, *Open-Field Husbandry in the Village Community: A Study of Agrarian By-Laws in Medieval England*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* n.s. 55/7 (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 41, 54, and documents cited *passim*.

neighbours, and the same was true of a range of urban communities.⁵⁷ The mayor of Hedon was ordered by John Constable that his neighbours (*vicini sui*) should keep the peace.⁵⁸ The language of neighbourhood was used to legitimize civic authority in ordinances, perhaps especially those dealing with nuisances such as the disposal of dung.⁵⁹ It could also be used in petitionary contexts - guildsmen are described as *voz simples veisyntes de la comunaltee* or *voz povres veisyntes et conciteins*, although as the latter example suggests, a competing and perhaps more prestigious language of citizenship was also available in a number of towns.⁶⁰

The legal idioms of ‘country’ and of ‘neighbourhood’, in which parties placed themselves *super patriam* before juries chosen from the *visnetum*, were likewise primarily meaningful at the local level of either the township or the hundred. In a pervasive late-medieval trope, furthermore, the legal connotations of neighbourhood and country also combined with their associations of mutual aid and support, to create a powerful image of local societies resistant to external authority or interference. This sentiment received its classic formulation in the Statute of Winchester (1285), with its opening claim that increasingly frequent robberies, murders and arsons were unable to be prosecuted because jurors would rather suffer felonies done to *estraunges gentz* than indict criminals *de meismes le pays*, or criminals of *autre pays* whose receivers were *del visne*. Such formulations recur frequently.⁶¹ In 1331, a man from Lincoln boasted before King’s Bench that he would be acquitted by a jury of his neighbours; in the 1460s, William Plumpton was

⁵⁷For the parish see above, pp. 326-7, and the parish of Masham’s description of itself as ‘neghburs’ in a visitation of 1510: *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, ed. J. Raine, SS 35 (1859), p. 263.

⁵⁸J. R. Boyle, *The Early History of the Town and Port of Hedon* (Hull, 1895), p. lvi.

⁵⁹For example, *Coventry Leet Book*, ed. M. D. Harris, 4 vols., EETS o.s. 134-6, 146 (1907-13), pp. 30, 217, 294, 331.

⁶⁰*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, I, 55, 61, 78; cf. II, 47; also *Coventry Leet Book*, ed. Harris, pp. 10, 105; *MED* s.v. *concitisein* and *comburgeis*.

⁶¹*The Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London, 1810-1828), I, 96-8; for developments of the trope, see Stone, ‘Folvilles of Ashby Folville’, p. 131.

informed that ‘if the matter shold be tryed by his neighbours, we deem the countrey should be found of his appeale’.⁶² The idea is also commonplace in petitions for equitable judgement: if a plea were sued at common law, ‘the matier shuld be tried within theym self or be their neighbours’, so the plaintiffs have no remedy.⁶³

The prominence of the idea of neighbourhood in the culture of manor or parish made it a natural part of the language used to motivate popular protest. While it is all too rare that the ‘manifestos’ of such protests survive, let alone that the documents that circulated between rebels should be preserved, intriguing evidence survives from the East Riding in the late fourteenth century and from the Pilgrimage of Grace.

In 1392 a number of indictments were made detailing a disorder on a greater or lesser scale in Yorkshire.⁶⁴ A group of connected disturbances centred around Beverley, Hull and Cottingham between c. 1386 and 1392 and involved a substantial group of men (the various sources estimate between roughly one and three hundred) dressed in a common livery for maintenance in suits of law and resistance of royal authority. These disturbances have not received much scholarly attention and their motivation remains obscure.⁶⁵ They were characterized by a particular emphasis on opposition to royal officials. The aim of the rebels’ maintenance was said on one occasion to be that ‘no sheriff or other minister of the lord king should dare to carry out any business or commands of the king in the vill of Cottingham’; elsewhere emphasis was placed on opposition to William Holme, escheator for Yorkshire in 1386-7.⁶⁶ When William was at Hessle in March 1389, he was set upon by a large group of men who threatened to kill

⁶²*Select Cases in the Court of King’s Bench*, ed. G. O. Sayles, 7 vols., Selden Society 55, 57, 58, 74, 76, 82, 88 (1936-71), V, 63-4; *Plumpton Letters*, ed. Kirby, p. 44.

⁶³*Great White Book of Bristol*, ed. Ralph., p. 68 (1500); for similar complaints see *RP III*, 542.

⁶⁴PRO, KB 9/144; cf. *Select Cases in the Court of King’s Bench*, ed. Sayles, VII, 83-5.

⁶⁵J. G. Bellamy, ‘The Northern Rebellions in the Later Years of Richard II’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 47 (1964-5), 254-74 (pp. 258-9) provides a brief summary.

⁶⁶*Calendar of Fine Rolls 1383-91*, pp. 151, 210.

him if he dared to carry out his business.⁶⁷ It is unclear in what capacity Holme was acting at Hessle, and the records of his escheatry do not provide any clues to the opposition he later provoked.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the tenor of the rebels' statements is plain.

There is nothing immediately remarkable about these disturbances. There are records of contemporary resistance to royal authority in the Yorkshire area, including assaults on a keeper of the peace at Howden in 1387, and on the sheriff's assistant at Otwell earlier in the decade.⁶⁹ Likewise there are comparable accounts of groups bound together in fraternity in livery: Hilton mentions one at Chipping Camden in 1387, and the indictments at York refer to another group, numbering more than forty men, wearing a single livery for maintenance in quarrels at Malton in 1393.⁷⁰ What is exceptional about the records of the disturbances around Cottingham, though, is their inclusion of a vernacular proclamation, composed by one John Berwald the younger of Cottingham and others and delivered at Beverley and Hull, which provides some insight into the mentality of the rebels. Although this song is relatively well known, it is reproduced in full here, as none of the printed texts is wholly satisfactory.⁷¹

⁶⁷KB 9/144, m.31.

⁶⁸E153/701. The vill of Hessle had refused to surrender the goods of the outlawed Robert de Goxhill, but it was not exceptional in this; the same problems were experienced at Great Driffield, Thorpe Basset, Wymbleton and the liberty of York (mm. 6, 13, 14).

⁶⁹*CPR 1385-9*, p. 319; *1381-5*, p. 507.

⁷⁰Hilton, *English Peasantry*, pp. 92-3; KB 9/144, m. 11.

⁷¹KB 9/144 m. 31. The poem is written on a separate strip of parchment sewn on to the preceding indictments. This document was the basis for the text in W. Skeat, 'English Rhyme in Holderness Dialect', *YAJ* 15 (1900), 116-7, which contains a number of emendations or inaccuracies. The text in KB 27/528 (printed by Sayles) suffered from a number of scribal misunderstandings in its transmission.

<p>In ye contre herd was we Yat in oure soken schrewes shuld be With al for to bake</p> <p>Among yis frers it is so And other ordres many mo Whether yei slepe or wake</p> <p>And yet wil ilkan hel up other And meynten him als his brother Bothe in wrong and righte</p> <p>And so wil we in stond and stoure Meynten oure negheboure With al oure myght</p> <p>Ilk man may come and goo Among us both to and froo I say yow sikerly</p>	<p>But hethyng wil we suffre non Nouther of Hobbe ne of Iohan With what man he be</p> <p>For unkynde we ware Yif we suffird of lesse or mare Any vilans hethyng</p> <p>But it were quit double agayn And acorde and be ful fayn To byde oure dressyng</p> <p>And on yat purpos 3et we stand Who so do us any wrang In what plas it falle</p> <p>Yet he might als wele Als haue I hap and sel Do agayn us all</p>
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The poem is presented as a public justification of the rebels' actions and a statement of the principles underlying them. Its argument is not always entirely clear, although Sayles's translation captures its broad movement well: the rebels' 'contre', which seems to be equivalent to their 'soken', is troubled by 'schrewes'. Like the friars, who protect their brothers, the rebels will protect their neighbours through mutual defence against 'hethyng' (usually 'scorn' but perhaps here better understood as 'insult' or 'injury'), whoever it comes from. ('Hobbe or John' perhaps denotes men of lesser and greater status respectively.)

The neighbourhood and country for which the rebels present themselves as acting seem to have a predominantly manorial reference (the 'soken'), and this tallies with what is known of the rebels' origins. Most of the named rebels were drawn from the lordship of Cottingham - many from Cottingham and its adjoining hamlets of Dunswell, Hullbank and Newland, others from Hessle and Buttercrambe which were members of the lordship.⁷² The proclamation derives directly from the manorial culture of

⁷²For lists of the rebels see *Select Cases*, ed. Sayles, VII, 83-5; indictments in KB 9/144; *CPR 1391-6*, pp. 249-50. Robert Bulmer, a ringleader, was evidently a man of some substance: see BIHR, Probate Register 3, fo. 94; *TE I*, 335. For the topography of Cottingham, *VCH: ERY IV*, 61; part of Hessle pertained to the manor of Cottingham, and Buttercrambe was held by the same lords. (*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, II, 260; IX, 204; X, 47; XVI, 177).

neighbourhood that we have been exploring - it asserts the physical and social identity of the lordship in opposition to strangers and to external authority. (Although, of course, it is on such strangers that the idea of neighbourhood depends - it is revealing that the proclamation was delivered, and violence was concentrated, on the edges of the lordship, at Beverley and Hull.)

The preservation of the rebels' proclamation is exceptional, but other evidence suggests that the values it embodies were not. In 1381 the townsmen of St Albans were unmoved by the abbot's appeal to them as 'good neighbours' (*boni proximi*), but were sustained in their revolt (if Walsingham is to be relied on) by ideas of neighbourhood. They are described as exposing themselves to harm for their neighbours, and when Walter Lee arrested three of them and carried them to Hertford, the townsmen are made to cry that if one of their neighbours (*quemquam ex proximis eorum*) is killed, a hundred will be killed in return.

Other evidence from 1381 suggests that ideas of neighbourhood could also motivate revolt at a wider geographical level. According to the continuation of the *Eulogium Historiarum* the citizens of London refused to shut the city against the approaching rebels whom they described as 'their neighbours and friends (*non contra vicinos et amicos suos*).'⁷³ The particularly well-preserved evidence of rebel communications during the Pilgrimage of Grace also suggests that the idiom of neighbourhood, together with that of country, functioned at a number of levels both to justify and to encourage local solidarity and resistance to the crown.

During the Lincolnshire rebellion, when the commons of Boston were counselled against rebellion, they had stated that they would do as their neighbours did; the parson of Farforth and other priests had determined to strike down the Lord Chancellor, and trusted in the support of their neighbours.⁷⁴ Similar sentiments animated

⁷³*Eulogium (historiarum sive temporis)*, ed. F. S. Haydon, 3 vols., RS 9 (1858-63), III, 352, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. R. B. Dobson, 2nd edition (London, 1983), p. 206

⁷⁴*L&P* XI, 585, 975 (p. 401).

the rebels in Yorkshire. Notes for a sermon, apparently from Sallay abbey, appealed to the two central ideals of local relationships in the argument that it was lawful to fight on behalf of faith, country, and wrong done to one's neighbours.⁷⁵ A rebel summons to William Nycholson of Preston ordered him to be at Hull with his neighbours of Holderness, and a letter was directed to the country of Cleveland, advising them to join their neighbours of Richmondshire.⁷⁶ Others were directed to 'come and take their neighbours of Westmoreland's parts'.⁷⁷

We saw in chapter 2 that at the widest geographical level the pilgrims could be united by ideas of the north and (to a lesser extent) of the county. Neighbourhood and country, conversely, were concepts which were largely used to organize cooperation and common purpose between bodies of men at the more local level of the district or wapentake. In contrast, when local gentry appealed to the idea of neighbourhood during the Pilgrimage of Grace, it was usually to placate the commons. Robert Constable of Flamborough appealed 'good and loving neighbours, let us stay ourselves', while Aske addressed the commons as 'neighbours' when he expressed wonder at their continued restlessness.⁷⁸ In common with the language of the abbot of St Alban, this suggests that the language of neighbourhood could have very different force and implications when directed at the local community than when used by that community.

It is difficult to trace any changes or developments in the meaning of neighbourhood over the late medieval period; indeed, it is clear that neighbourly values continued to be important in much the same form a good deal later. Loyalty to one's country and countrymen also continued to be valued, but these concepts, unlike that of neighbourhood, did undergo important shifts in the sixteenth century and later. One of

⁷⁵*L&P* XI, 786.

⁷⁶*L&P* XII/1, 370 (p. 169), 789 (p. 345).

⁷⁷*L&P* XII/1, 114,

⁷⁸*L&P* XII/1, 103 and 137; compare 135 and 157/i.

these shifts, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, is the broadening of 'country' to refer primarily to the kingdom as a whole. The other is the shift in meaning whereby the term becomes primarily associated with the rural as distinct from the urban.

The roots of this shift are in the later medieval period, and it is the subject of the following section.

Town and country

The earlier parts of this chapter have argued that in correspondence and petitions, and also in the protests of 1392 and 1536, ideas of *country* are closely associated with concepts of neighbourhood, and both are related to notions of friendship and kinship in a network of ideas in which individuals or institutions are related to others in greater or lesser geographical proximity in a vaguely defined but powerful set of mutual obligations.

It is important to recognize, however, that 'countryman' and cognate terms in late medieval England, in addition to denoting someone from one's own locality, could also be used to refer to an inhabitant of the 'country' in modern usage, a rustic. This sense was particularly common in urban culture, but seems to become increasingly prominent towards the end of the late medieval period. I shall end this chapter with a necessarily brief examination of the development of this sense of 'country', and ask whether it is representative of broader changes in attitudes to rural life. Of course, this is a subject which requires much fuller treatment than is possible here, but some examination of these attitudes, however summary, is necessary if we are to fully appreciate the meaning of 'country' and how it and associated concepts were used to structure local relationships.⁷⁹

The distinction between the town or city and country, *pais* or *patria* is clearest in the records of larger urban administrations and their craft fraternities. The extent to which such language, and the patterns of thought behind it, typified smaller towns awaits further research, but it is significant that in the surviving records of Beverley, for

⁷⁹For a similarly brief survey of later attitudes, see K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London, 1983), pp. 242-54.

example, when *countre* is used it is associated with (rather than distinguished from) the town.⁸⁰

At York, on the other hand, distinctions between town and *contre* are well-developed from a relatively early date. Of course, the civic administration was happy on certain occasions to use language in which the interests of the city and its country were presented as closely associated. The conventional petitionary expressions of a complaint against the archbishop of York and his failure to repair a stretch of wall around the Old Baily, stated that this was to the slander of the city and *tout la pays la envyron*.⁸¹ But such formulations are uncommon in the civic records. The very earliest guild records, through to those of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, regularly distinguish between - rather than associate - the city and the country. It seems from some ordinances that a fuller or earlier distinction would have referred to the city and the *patria ad extra* or *the contree aboute the saide citee*, but the majority of records refer simply to *the contre*.⁸² The Litsters' ordinances, for example, are concerned to prevent the importing of goods *de pays tantqez a Everwyk* in avoidance of toll or murage.⁸³ The Bowers' ordinances of 1395 distinguish between bowers of York and *lez bowers de la cuntre*, and specifically prohibit servants from travelling *en la pays* to pass trade secrets to *gentz de la cuntre*.⁸⁴ The ordinances of the Bakers (1479) refer to the bread *called countrie breid* made by bakers *of the countrie* and which is only to be sold in the city's market.⁸⁵

The Bakers' ordinances suggest that it was not only in guild administration, but at the everyday level of the market in foodstuffs, that a distinction was drawn in urban culture between 'the city' and 'the country' which was powerfully stimulated by the organization of civic and guild administration. This conceptual distinction was separate

⁸⁰As in the butchers' ordinances, c. 1468, against any member who 'goos oute of the seid town and countre (*extra villam et patriam*)' without informing the aldermen. (*Beverley Town Documents*, ed. A. F. Leach, Selden Society 14 (1900), p. 127).

⁸¹PRO, SC 8/153/7623 (early-fifteenth-century).

⁸²*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, II, 129, 207 (1422, 1463/4).

⁸³*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, I, 113; cf. their later ordinances, II, 205 (late-fourteenth-century and 1460).

⁸⁴*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, I, 53-4.

⁸⁵*York Memorandum Book*, ed. Sellers, I, 171.

from, although it interacted with, the distinction between *intrinsecus* and *extrinsecus* or *forinsecus*, between citizens and foreigners or strangers, at York and other cities.⁸⁶ In London, for example, it was claimed that in 1388 Nicholas Brembre had armed ‘as wel straungers of the contree as othere of with inne.’ In 1432/3 the London commons petitioned against ‘foreines as well strangiers as denizens’ who were admitted to the franchise through bribery but dwelt outside the city and did not share in the burden of civic office or taxation; the resulting ordinance decreed that ‘alle tho þat are continuell dwellers in þe cuntre and oute of þis cite’ should be discharged from the franchise.⁸⁷ In some cities, the antitheses both between ‘citizen’ and ‘foreigner/stranger’ and between ‘cite’ and ‘contree’ intensified towards the end of the fifteenth century as a result of economic decline. In early-sixteenth-century Coventry, the threat of rural competition inspired the first attempts to regulate the production of cloth in the city’s hinterland (in 1514), regulation that came to be articulated through the opposition between the neighbourly community of the city and the country. In 1518 it was ordered that citizens should ‘put no cloth to wevyng in-to the countre but to ther own neighbours within this cite’.⁸⁸

Although London shared this language of city and country, it also developed its own distinctive usages. In Middle English and Anglo-Norman, the idea of rural countryside is often denoted by the term ‘upland’ or its variant: a glossary of c. 1500, for example, translates *rusticus* as *upland-man*.⁸⁹ In London civic records from at least the thirteenth century, however, ‘upland’ is apparently used to refer to all areas outside the city.⁹⁰ This prefigures the later usage of ‘country’ to refer to the same area. This

⁸⁶Cf. D. Pearsall, ‘Stangers in Late-Fourteenth-Century London’, in *The Stranger in Medieval Society*, ed. F. R. P. Akehurst and S. C. Van D’Elden, *Medieval Cultures* 12 (Minneapolis, 1997), pp. 46-62 (p. 49).

⁸⁷*Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter Book K*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1911), pp. 161, 164; *An Anthology of Chancery English*, ed. J. H. Fisher, M. Richardson, J. L. Fisher (Knoxville, 1984), p. 195.

⁸⁸*Coventry Leet Book*, ed. Harris, IV, 661; C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 48.

⁸⁹*MED*, s.v. *uplandish*(e, adj.), (a).

⁹⁰*Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber albus, liber custumarum et liber horn*, ed. H. T. Riley, 3 vols., RS 12 (1859-62), II, ii, 772; see also, for example, *Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved among the*

usage already seems to be present in the Anonimale chronicle's account of the revolt of 1381, which distinguishes between *comunes del pais* (which had earlier been described as *comunes del Kent*) and *comunes del Loundres*. 'Country' here seems to distinguish between London and other areas, rather than describing the specifically rural.⁹¹ This usage is also found in a letter of Thomas Betanson. Betanson was in service with the chief judge of the court of Common Pleas and adopted the perspective of a Londoner when he wrote of going 'into the country to his [the judge's] place' in Christmas 1486.⁹² Likewise in 1479 Richard Cely wrote that because of plague in London 'meche pepyll of the Sete [i.e. City] ys into the contre for fere of the sekenesse'.⁹³

Although the sense of country as an area distinct from town or city may have been particularly strong in urban milieux, it can be found, with varying explicitness, in a range of other contexts. From 1294, the distinction was recognized by the royal administration, which taxed rural and urban communities at differential rates. In several late-medieval texts the distinct identity of the country was strengthened by its association with boorish or unsophisticated qualities or occupations. The fourteenth-century *William of Palerne* distinguished between 'clerk', 'knight' and 'of cuntre cherle', and 'churle' (along with 'husband' or 'tylle man') seems to have been a recognized equivalent for *rusticus* and *rudis*.⁹⁴ The *rurales homines* whom Higden described as aping the gentry's desire to learn French were called *churles* in the later translation (Trevisa has *uplondisshe men*), while a version of the *Secreta Secretorum* warned the king against associating with

Archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter-Book E, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1903), pp. 56-7; *Letter-Book F*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London, 1904), p. 102.

⁹¹*The Anonimale Chronicle 1333 to 1381*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1927), pp. 140, 144.

⁹²*Plumpton Letters*, ed. Kirby, p. 67.

⁹³*The Cely Letters 1472-1488*, ed. A. Hanham, EETS o.s. 273 (London, 1975), p. 48.

⁹⁴*MED* s.v. *contre* 4(b); *Catholicon Anglicum*, ed. Herrtage, pp. 64, 193, 388. *Promptorium Parvulorum*, ed. Way, I, 62, distinguishes between 'carle or chorle' in the sense of *rusticus* and in the sense of 'bondeman or woman, *servus nativus, servus nativa*.'

‘chorlis and ruralle folke’.⁹⁵ Lydgate described his style as ‘boistous and rural’, and in an early-sixteenth-century teaching text ‘boysterly and rudely’ is equivalent to ‘rusticano more’.⁹⁶ The brutish and the rustic were associated in a description of the parishioners of Romalldkirk, in a mid-thirteenth-century dispute over mortuary customs in Richmondshire, as ‘moribus agrestes et quasi brutales’.⁹⁷

The associations between the rural and the brutish are particularly strong in certain Latin texts dealing with rebellious tenants or the rising of 1381 where the chroniclers’ low opinion of the rebels was articulated through the language of rusticity, often in combination with ideas of serfdom. The Ledger book of Vale Royal Abbey describes a revolt (c. 1338) of the abbey’s ‘nativi’ and rustici’.⁹⁸ The Westminster chronicler describes the rebels of 1381 as ‘ignobilis turba rusticorum’, ‘agrestis societas’, ‘turbulenta et tumultuosa turba ruralium’.⁹⁹ Walsingham identifies the rebels as ‘rustici’ or commons, characterized by stupidity (*stoliditati*): his account is headed *de tumultuatione rusticorum et aliorum communium*. In a revealing account of the invasion of the tower of London, Walsingham is unable to conceal his astonishment that not only rustics, ‘but the most base (*abjectissimos*) of rustics’ entered the king’s bedroom with their ‘vile staffs’, and stroke the beards of ‘most noble knights’ with their ‘most barbarous and filthy (*incultissimis et sordidissimis*) hands’.¹⁰⁰ The Westminster chronicler also focused on ‘rustica manus’, the bodily marks of agricultural labour seen to distinguish the country from the city or the court.¹⁰¹ (*Urbanitas*, which lacked a direct Middle English equivalent, was closely associated with *curialitas* and the ‘curtas’).¹⁰²

⁹⁵*Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, 9 vols., RS 41 (1865-91), II, 158-60; *MED* s.v. *rural*.

⁹⁶*MED*, s.v. *rural*; *Vulgaria of Stanbridge and Whittinton*, ed. White, p. 121.

⁹⁷*Registrum Honoris de Richmond*, ed. R. Gale (London, 1722), pp. 101-6 (p. 101).

⁹⁸BL, MS Harley 2064, fos. 15r-16v; translated in *Peasants’ Revolt*, ed. Dobson, pp. 80-3.

⁹⁹*The Westminster Chronicle 1381-94*, ed. and tr. L.C. Hector and B. F. Harvey, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1982), pp. 2, 4, etc.

¹⁰⁰Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, I, 453-4, 459.

¹⁰¹*Westminster Chronicle*, ed. Hector and Harvey, p. 4.

¹⁰²*Catholicon Anglicum*, ed. Herrtage, p. 87.

The revolt of 1381 also offers some suggestive evidence for a reversal of the chroniclers' position, in which the implicit 'truth' of 'the contractual, face-to-face communally sanctioned life of the rural village from which the rebels drew their principles of political reform' was opposed to the falsity of urban life.¹⁰³ This is especially evident in John Ball's injunction to 'bee war of gyle in borugh', which was the foundation for Hilton's portrayal of an 'ancient distrust' between town and country.¹⁰⁴ Like much else about the letters of 1381, the precise significance of this not clear, but it is clearly related to the later injunction 'knowe[th] 3our frend fro 3our foo'. Ball's statement implies a certain currency to the idea of 'gyle in borough', and it can be paralleled from other literary sources. The list of towns in the early-fourteenth-century manuscript, for example, ends with the comment 'Asetz iad des uiles / Mes trop iad des giles' ('enough of towns - too much of tricks!').¹⁰⁵ An association between the country and plain speech or truth-telling also lies behind the late-fourteenth-century tract *Jack Upland*, whose speaker denounces the state of the church. Foxe described it as written 'in the person of a certaine uplandish and simple ploughman of the countrey.'¹⁰⁶

The later fourteenth century may also have seen the origin of a number of narratives in which the contrast between town/court and country/forest is particularly important. The story of 'King Edward and the Shepherd', whose humour derives from both the contrasts and the parallels between the shepherd's home and Edward's court, has been dated to this period.¹⁰⁷ Other ballads, which set the lives of yeoman in the 'grene

¹⁰³S. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994), p. 187, and ch. 4, although this presents a somewhat idealized portrait of village relations.

¹⁰⁴R. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages: The Ford Lecture for 1973 and Related Studies* (Oxford, 1975), p. 76 and ch. 5. Ball's letter has often been edited: most recently in Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, pp. 13-15 (pp. 14-15).

¹⁰⁵'List of English Towns in the Fourteenth Century', ed. C. Bonnier, *EHR* 16 (1901), 501-3 (p. 503). Bonnier's text reads 'g'les' in the final line: *giles* is an obvious emendation to preserve rhyme. My interpretation differs from that of *English Historical Documents 1189-1327*, ed. H. Rothwell (London, 1975), p. 884, which understands 'gille' as a measure of wine, and translates 'There's plenty of places / But too much to drink'. But *gile* 'guile' is commonly attested: see *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, s.v.

¹⁰⁶*Jack Upland, Friar Daw's Reply, and Upland's Rejoinder*, ed. P. L. Heyworth (Oxford, 1968), pp. 54, 58, 114.

¹⁰⁷*Middle English Metrical Romances*, ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale, 2 vols. (New York, 1930), II, 949-85; the only surviving manuscript is Cambridge University Library, MS Ff. V. 48 of c. 1450.

wod' against representatives of corrupt authority in the town are notoriously difficult to date; the extant versions are usually placed in the fifteenth century, although it is clear from references such as Langland's that the narratives in some form were widely known earlier. In the *Gest of Robin Hood*, towns such as York and Nottingham are the seats of official power and corruption, and the values of the text are summarized in Robin's early instruction to his men -

...loke ye do no husbonde harme,
That tilleth with his ploughe.

No more ye shall no gode yeman
That walketh by grene wode shawe.¹⁰⁸

Despite these and other texts, however, it is arguable that the opposition between urban and rural in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century culture was less significant than it was to become in the sixteenth century. This shift probably has a number of causes, and can be traced in a number of ways. One cause is the growth of London (both absolutely and as a proportion of English population), its increasing importance in the kingdom's commercial life, and its development as the seat of the court. It is a sign of the increasing dominance and assertiveness of metropolitan culture in the fifteenth century that those ideas of 'uplond' and 'uplondish', which had long current to describe rural areas, become increasingly associated with 'rudeness'.¹⁰⁹ Shirley wrote of the 'rude uplandishe wise' in which he had carried out his work; Caxton described the 'rude, uplondysssh man' at whom his works were not directed.¹¹⁰

In the early-sixteenth-century jestbooks, with their primarily metropolitan audiences, the 'country' has become established as a generically rural location,

¹⁰⁸*Rymes of Robyn Hode*, ed. Taylor and Dobson, p. 80.

¹⁰⁹for these concepts, see *MED* s.v. *uplond*, *uplondish(e)*; *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, ed. L. W. Stone and W. Rothwell (London, 1977-92), s.v.; *OED*, s.v.; for the early use of 'uplond' see also *Munimenta Gildhalliae Londoniensis*, II, i, 306; ii, 772 (and references there given).

¹¹⁰*MED* s.v. *uplandish(e)*, (b); *Caxton's Own Prose*, ed. N. F. Blake (London, 1973), pp. 47-8, 80.

appropriate on the one hand for ignorance and barbarity, and on the other for blunt homespun wisdom.¹¹¹ In *A Hundred Mery Tales*, for example, a ‘curate in the contrey’ preaches to a miller who cannot understand the words ‘commandment’ or ‘doubt’; a ‘poore man of the country’ leaves his wife in bed with a friar, and ‘certayn women in the countrye’ are outwitted by friars; and we hear of ‘a certayn priest there was that dwellyd in the cuntry which was not very well lernyd’.¹¹² *Tales and Quicke Answeres* has a story about ‘a certayn man of the countre’ who loses his purse in London, and is mocked by a ‘gentyllman of the Temple’; about ‘a priest in the countrye, not the wysest nor the best lerned’; and about ‘a rude uplandyshe ploughman’ who is unable to recite the whole Pater Noster.¹¹³ On the other hand, when the son of a ‘ryche frankelyn in the contrey’ attempts to show on his return from Oxford that two chickens are really three: his father says he can have the third for his dinner; another scholar of Oxford finds his astronomical learning less effective in predicting the weather than ‘the connyng of herdmen and shepardes.’¹¹⁴

In the sixteenth century the positive associations between the rural and simplicity and plainness seem to have strengthened. A schoolboy text written by the head of Eton and printed in 1519 contained the assertion (presumably not intended as revolutionary) that ‘uplandysse men (*agricoli*) lyue more at hartis eese than som of us;’ Starkey’s *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* took it as axiomatic that there was ‘in grete cytes most vyce’ and ‘in the rude cuntrey most study of vertue and veray true symplycyte’.¹¹⁵ In the fifteenth century, *rustic* and *rural* and the adjectives derived from these words are infrequently used (often under the influence of Latin source texts), usually in unflattering contexts. By the second half of the sixteenth century this group of terms has become

¹¹¹Cf. D. Brewer, ‘Prose Jest-Books Mainly in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries in England’, in *A Cultural History of Humour From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. J. Bremmer and H. Roodenberg (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 90-111 (p. 94).

¹¹²*Shakespeare Jest-Books*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, 3 vols. (London, 1864), I, 11, 99, 106, 108.

¹¹³*Shakespeare Jest Books*, ed. Hazlitt, I, 23, 130, 39-40.

¹¹⁴*Shakespeare Jest Books*, ed. Hazlitt, I, 95, 109-10.

¹¹⁵William Horman, *Vulgaria Puerorum*, cited in *Promptorium Parvulorum*, ed. Way, III, 512n; Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T. F. Meyer, Camden Society 4th ser. 37 (1989), p. 6.

significantly more common and is used with positive as well as negative implications.¹¹⁶ The increasing awareness of, and value placed on, the idea of the rural may partly result from the increasing size and importance of London. Equally important, however, was the influence of humanist texts which reasserted the worth of husbandry, manual labour and farming, and the related rediscovery of classical ideals of rural peace and contentment. These factors in turn probably contributed to the increasing interest in farming techniques among the gentry that accompanied the widespread return to personal involvement in demesne farming.¹¹⁷

One of the most intriguing indications of the changing meaning of 'country' in the early sixteenth century, and the shifting attitudes behind this change, is the emergence of pastoral eclogues in English. The pastoral eclogues of Alexander Barclay, although not published until 1570, were written in the 1510s: translated from Latin, they include 'the disputation of citizens and men of the countrey'.¹¹⁸ Barclay added to his source accounts of the immorality of town craftsmen, drawing on the language of Chaucer's General Prologue to describe, for example, the huckster who 'in the otes could ... well drop a candle'; he also tells, though, how townsmen 'laugh... unto scorne' men of the country, who are 'neuer to be ridde from bondage and thraldome'.¹¹⁹ Barnabe Googe's very influential *Eglogs, Epitaphes and Sonnettes* (1563) began with a reference to shepherds' tales told 'in countrey poets ryme'.¹²⁰ Of course, 'country' in the sixteenth century and later retained the meaning of 'locality' or 'environs' which had been its dominant medieval sense; but it was used with increasing frequency to describe purely rural areas,

¹¹⁶Cf. *MED* s.v. *rural, rustik, rusticalle*; *OED* s.v. *rustic, rustical, rustically, rural*.

¹¹⁷See *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern Europe: Writing and the Land*, ed. M. Leslie and T. Raylor (Leicester, 1992), esp. J. Thirsk, 'Making a Fresh Start: Sixteenth-Century Agriculture and the Classical Inspiration', pp. 15-34. For the classical ideal of rural peace and contentment, and its later history, see M.-S. Røstvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal*, second edition, 2 vols. (Oslo, 1962-71).

¹¹⁸*The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay*, ed. B. White, EETS o.s. 175 (1928, repr. 1961), pp. 200-10. On pastoral see H. Cooper, *Pastoral: Medieval into Renaissance* (Ipswich, 1977), although the extent to which praise of the country life only emerged in England in the sixteenth century is perhaps not entirely clear in this work.

¹¹⁹*Eclogues*, ed. White, pp. 200-10, lines 700, 374, 382.

¹²⁰Barnabe Googe, *Eglogs, Epitaphes and Sonnettes* (1563), repr. with an introduction by F. B. Fieler (Gainesville, Florida, 1968), p. 23.

in a development which seems to mirror the increasing importance of the urban/rural dichotomy as a framework for the perception of locality.

Conclusions

The earlier chapters of this thesis explored how local identities were shaped by essentially territorial frameworks, from the north at one end of the spectrum to districts and smaller areas at the other. I emphasized, however, that these frameworks were rarely (if ever) *merely* territorial: they were laden with complex and sometimes conflicting attitudes and attachments. These attitudes usually had roots in broader cultural values relating to phenomena as diverse as barbarity and antiquity. They were also informed by an important set of values which clustered around ideas of 'country' and 'home'. In earlier chapters, I explored how these values influenced the expression of local identities in what might be called their territorial dimension, although I have tried to make it clear that relationships to territory can very rarely be separated from relationships with associated communities. In this chapter, I have focused in more detail on the ways in which local identities were realized through relationships with individuals or communities as well as places. The meaning and significance of 'country' have been further explored, and it has been recognized that the concept could be associated with divisions as well as solidarities within local society; the idea of 'neighbourhood', which received little attention earlier in the thesis, has also been studied. I have tried to make it clear that these subjects have not been studied in detail before, so that any conclusions that might be drawn can only be very tentative.

We need to recognize both the shared values which lay behind the various idioms of country and neighbourhood, and the diversity of functions and meanings that these idioms could carry. Both country and neighbourhood provided a framework of values based around support and 'doing for' those of shared locality, irrespective of differences of age, gender or status. These values informed attitudes and behaviour at all levels of society, but with significant differences of emphasis in various social contexts.

Constructions of the rural, too, may have oscillated throughout the period between the brutish and the bucolically simple, although this is a dichotomy which becomes particularly pronounced in the sixteenth century. In some respects, the language and concepts explored in this chapter provided a core of values which gave coherence to relationships within and between a range of localities. In other respects, they reflect disjunctions and conflicts over the meaning of locality that have been explored throughout the thesis.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore the importance of locality to late-medieval English cultures and identities. A number of earlier studies have made passing comments on local or regional identities; others have included important discussions of particular aspects of the culture of locality, such as heraldic display, historical writing, or conceptions of the county. Previous studies have not, however, considered the importance of locality as a whole in late-medieval England, and its importance in all spheres of medieval culture has not been appreciated.

This thesis has explored the culture of locality in a restricted area, the county of Yorkshire, but the approach it has adopted would be equally applicable to other areas of late-medieval England and perhaps also to earlier and later periods. This approach was derived from the contemporary terminology used to describe locality. As I showed in the introduction, 'country', and its related concepts, had a range of denotation and connotation that is difficult to recreate in modern English. It was used to describe areas of greatly varying extent, from large regional units such as the North to areas as small as the parish or hundred. It could be used to describe an area perceived as socially or politically cohesive; the area dominated by a particular institution or individual; or an area perceived in terms of its terrain or geography. It frequently described local communities as well as the areas associated with them, and it carried implicit judgements about the proper relation between individuals, communities and territory, which was one of affection and solidarity. Finally, towards the end of the late-medieval period, the meaning of 'country' was complicated still further when it was increasingly used to refer to rural areas and to the kingdom.

The approach and structure of this thesis were designed to reflect the complex experience of locality reflected in this terminology. Rather than approaching late-medieval culture in terms of the modern historian's vocabulary of local or regional identities, it tried to explore the full range of 'countries' which were important to cultures and identities in late-medieval Yorkshire. It suggested that these 'countries' were

constructed in over-lapping discourses that could be divided into three broad groups. The first of these were national frameworks, in which locality was seen as part of the kingdom as a whole. These frameworks were broadly shared in all parts of late-medieval England and did not develop through any individual initiative, but through the intersection of a number of administrative, historical and ethnographic discourses. In these frameworks locality was conceptualized in two principal ways: in terms of counties and in terms of larger regional areas. The frameworks of the county of Yorkshire, and of the North, exerted a strong influence on how local identities were imagined in late-medieval Yorkshire and outside it. The frameworks of national culture were used to give weight to petitionary requests, and provided a focus for individual and collective solidarities.

The second set of discourses was characterized by its concern with the meaning of locality at regional levels and often by dissemination at correspondingly restricted levels, although the extent of the 'region' involved could vary considerably. These discourses were without exception produced by major families or institutions seeking to justify or assert their local or regional power, although it is difficult to generalize about the circumstances in which they were created. Some seem to reflect periods of achievement and consolidation, others moments of crisis and uncertainty. It is also difficult to generalize about the circulation and impact of these discourses. To some extent, they formed the basis of a culture of locality whose values and historical frameworks were shared by major and perhaps middling landowners, both secular and ecclesiastical. More widely, though, while it is clear that regional figures and icons were important to local cultures, attitudes to these figures were not always shaped by 'official' discourses but by a variety of historical and geographical traditions.

The final set of discourses enjoyed a still more restricted circulation. One framework of locality, perhaps particularly important in Yorkshire because of its size, but also significant in other parts of England, consisted of the districts within the county which were known to some extent in national culture but were of much greater significance in regional society. These districts were important as territorial areas of varying precision, and to some extent provided a framework through which various elements of local society could be characterized. They overlapped to some extent with the regional discourses examined in the second part of the thesis, providing one of the frameworks through which dominance of a wide locality was expressed; but like the

national frameworks examined in the first part of the thesis, the meaning of districts developed at the intersection of a range of discourses and practices and not as a result of individual efforts.

Districts were also important, in a way that counties or magnate's 'countries' generally were not, as units of relatively definite territorial extent which affected local perceptions of the 'shape' of locality. At the more restricted level of the parish, manor, or township, the territorial and geographical characteristics of locality were particularly important, and shaped local cultures and identities in two main ways. The first was through the traditions and practices through which boundaries and 'head places' were located and commemorated (although the concept of 'head places' was also important over wider territorial levels). The second was through the traditions which accounted for the shape or nature of the environment in which a local community was situated. These traditions took a number of forms but were generally linked by their concern with the physical specificity of a particular location. To some extent, they were traditions about *loci* or places, rather than *patria*e or countries, but the distinction was a fuzzy one.

Attitudes to locality were shaped not only by these three overlapping discourses, but by a broader conceptual framework concerning proper behaviour towards one's country, countrymen and neighbours, deriving from classical and Biblical sources. These frameworks influenced attitudes at all territorial levels: one's countrymen and neighbours could be fellow northerners, men of the same county (often they were men, although the concepts themselves were gender-neutral), or of the same parish or town. Only in urban culture did 'country' and 'countryman' lack these positive resonances, denoting instead an area or its inhabitants outside of, distinguished from, and in some contexts inferior to the town. This last meaning, however, did become increasingly common in other contexts from the sixteenth century onwards.

These, in sum, were the frameworks which shaped local cultures and identities in late-medieval Yorkshire, and which all shaped local cultures in a wide range of social and institutional contexts. These frameworks were moulded by a number of (sometimes interrelated) factors. Contemporary administrative frameworks influenced ideas of the

North, of the county and of some districts. Other districts were shaped by older administrative structures and historical traditions, and historical traditions in turn were important to contemporary understandings of the North and of certain counties. Other districts reflected perceptions of wide differences of geography and terrain, and at a still broader level, geographical ideas also fed into perceptions of the county and the North. More restricted local identities reflected a similar melange of administrative or tenurial divisions, perceptions of landscape, and historical traditions.

But while the importance of administration, topography and history needs to be recognized, each also had its limits. Although the structure of royal administration influenced perceptions of the county and the North, the division of Yorkshire into three ridings - for all its antiquity and significance for the organization of justice or military service - seems to have had very little impact on local identities at any level. Awareness of geographical areas within the county, likewise, was relatively restricted, consisting largely of a sense of 'high countries'.

Although the thesis has outlined the nature and impact of the most important frameworks of locality, its structure has allowed little discussion of how these frameworks overlapped to shape individual and collective identities. At the collective level, the Pilgrimage of Grace provides a suggestive example of such overlapping. The Pilgrims as a whole conceived of themselves as the barons and commons of the North, and were influenced by ideas about the territorial extent and characteristics of the region. Smaller groups within the rebel force imagined themselves in terms of counties and districts, and the values of neighbourhood and country played a role in establishing solidarities within and between these units.

Other sources which have been drawn on throughout the thesis illustrate how individual and institutional identities were fashioned by the entirety of the frameworks outlined above. Thomas Anlaby's cartulary, for example, contains the note on the Ughtred family, which constructs its founder as a figure of regional importance; and it contains a note on the Anlaby family itself, which combines detailed attention to local topography with an awareness of wider regional frameworks in its reference to

'southern' spellings of the family name. The Meaux chronicle combines an interest in national events and frameworks of locality, a record of the church of York and its archbishops, and detailed attention to the boundaries and topography of local districts and manors.

Some distinction can be drawn between collective and individual local identities. With a few exceptions, such as the *patriae* of north and south at Oxford, groups of individuals or institutions which join together under the banner of a particular locality are usually assembled for specific and limited purposes. While these groups persist, locality - as the factor which unites and defines them - assumes particular importance, but it is an importance which tends to be short-lived, lasting only until an immediate objective has been achieved. In individual identities, locality is more persistent but less important, coexisting with a number of other elements such as age, gender, occupation, status and kin- and friendship-groups. Locality could also be more variable, reflecting birth, youthful associations or present location.

As I have been at pains to point out, this thesis is a study of a largely unexplored subject, many aspects of which invite further research. Undoubtedly, the local cultures of late-medieval Yorkshire could themselves be explored in more detail. At a broader level, though, there are other important questions that this thesis has raised without being able to explore in detail.

I have not been able to give sustained attention to the importance of gender in structuring local identities. Further investigation of attitudes to women's place in locality and of the construction of women's local identities, which should be possible at least at the level of aristocratic and urban women, would add another level of insight to the account I have presented here. Likewise, I have given relatively little attention to the question of how individual local identities were affected by status, occupation or life-cycle.

Questions of continuity and change also invite fuller consideration. In particular, the impact of the religious and cultural changes of the sixteenth century on local identities offers a promising field of investigation. What was the real impact of the removal of

sanctuary, of changes in the liturgical calendar, or of the destruction of shrines and images of local saints? Did the historical frameworks through which locality was understood become increasingly dominated by the attempts of newly-arrived gentry to fabricate their antiquity in local society?¹ What were the effects of increasing scepticism concerning the legendary history of Britain, and increasing emphasis on its Saxon past?²

Finally, the range of local identities which I have described in late medieval Yorkshire awaits comparison with other areas of England, and England itself with other areas of Europe. I have tried throughout to suggest ways in which identities available within Yorkshire may have been (more or less) distinctive – the unusual importance of the north in contemporary politics and historical discourse; the impact of the church of York and its jurisdictional claims; the significance of well-defined districts within the shire itself. More sustained investigation of other parts of England may well reveal that these suggestions need modification. It will certainly be found that many – perhaps most – other parts of the kingdom possessed local cultures as rich, varied and important as those I have examined in late-medieval Yorkshire, and which have received all too little scholarly attention.

¹See F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 20-47, esp. pp. 34-7.

²T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London, 1950), still provides the best introduction to these issues.

ABBREVIATIONS

BIHR	York, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research
BL	London, British Library
Bodl.	Oxford, Bodleian Library
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls, 1227-1509</i> , 62 vols. (London, 1892-1963)
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls 1216-1509</i> , 56 vols. (London, 1891-1916)
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. L. Stephen and S. Lee, 66 vols. (London, 1885-1901)
EETS	Early English Text Society
EYC	<i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i> , ed. W. Farrer and C. Clay, 13 vols., YASRS e.s. (1914-65)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
EPNS	Publications of the English Place-Name Society
Emden, BRUC	A. B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500</i> (Cambridge, 1963)
Emden, BRUO	A. B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A. D. 1500</i> , 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957-9)
Foedera	<i>Foedera, conventiones, litterae</i> , ed. T. Rymer, 20 vols. (London, 1704-35)
GEC	<i>The Complete Peerage by G. E. C.</i> , rev. V. Gibbs, 14 vols. in 15 (London, 1910-98)
HCY	<i>Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops</i> , ed. J. Raine, 3 vols., RS 71 (1879-94)
HMC	Reports of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts
IMEV	C. Brown and R. H. Robbins, <i>Index of Middle English Verse</i> (New York, 1943); R. H. Robbins and J. L. Cutler, <i>Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse</i> (Lexington, 1965)
Leland, <i>Itinerary</i>	<i>The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1543</i> , ed. L. T. Smith, 5 vols. (repr. London, 1964)
L&P	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R. Brodie, 21 vols. (London, 1862-1910); vol. 1 revised by R. Brodie (London, 1920)

- MED* *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. H. Kurath et al. (Ann Arbor, 1952-)
- Melsa* *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, ed. E. Bond, 3 vols., RS 43 (1866-8)
- Monasticon* W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis. B. Bandinel, 6 vols. in 8 (London, 1817-30)
- OED* *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd edn (London, 1989)
- Paston* *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. N. Davis. 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971-6)
- PN: ERY* A. H. Smith, *Place-Names of the East Riding*, EPNS 14 (Cambridge, 1937)
- PN: NRY* A. H. Smith, *Place Names of the North Riding*, EPNS 5 (Cambridge, 1928)
- PN: WRY* A. H. Smith, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, 8 vols., EPNS 30-37 (Cambridge, 1961-3)
- PRO* London, Public Record Office
- RP* *Rotuli Parliamentorum, ut et petitiones et placita in Parlamento*, ed. J. Strachey, 6 vols. (London, 1767-77)
- RS* Rolls Series
- Scrope and Grosvenor* *The Controversy Between Sir R. Scrope and Sir R. Grosvenor in the Court of Chivalry A.D. MCCCCLXXV-MCCXC*, ed. N. H. Nicolas, 2 vols. (London, 1832), all refs. to vol. 1.
- SS* Surtees Society
- STC* A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England...1475-1640*, rev. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, K. F. Pantzer, 3 vols. (London, 1976-86)
- TE* *Testamenta Eboracensia*, ed. J. Raine and J. W. Clay, 6 vols., SS 4, 30, 45, 53, 79, 106 (1836-1902)
- TRHS* *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
- VCH* The Victoria History of the Counties of England
- York* *The City of York*, ed. P. M. Tillott (London, 1961)
- ERY* *The County of York: The East Riding*, ed. K. J. Allison, 6 vols., in progress (London, 1969-)
- NRY* *The County of York: The North Riding*, ed. W. Page, 2 vols. (London, 1914-25)
- Yks.* *The County of York*, ed. W. Page, 3 vols. (London, 1907-25)

- Whiting B. J. and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA, 1968)
- YAJ *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*
- YASRS Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series
- 'York Civic Wills' 'Some Early Civic Wills of York', ed. R. B. Cooke, *Associated Architectural Societies' Reports and Papers* 28 (1905-6), 827-71; 31 (1911-2), 319-39; 32 (1913-4), 293-317, 569-93; 33 (1915-6), 161-77, 473-92; 34 (1917-8), 201-17; 35 (1919-20), 61-74. Cited by volume, year and page, e.g. 'York Civic Wills', 34 (1917-8), p. 215.

ERY, NRY and WRY denote respectively the East, North and West Ridings of Yorkshire. Chaucer and Langland are cited, using the standard abbreviations, from the following editions: *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L. D. Benson et al. (Oxford, 1988); William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The C-Text*, ed. D. Pearsall (London, 1978); William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Complete Edition of the B-Text*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London, 1987).

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BRB 1

Leeds

Brotherton Library

MS 29

West Yorkshire Archive Service

NP C1/1/1

London

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Additional 18276

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Cotton Cleopatra C. IV

Cotton Cleopatra D. III

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Egerton 2827

Egerton 3053
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Harley 1808
Harley 2064
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Harley 3648
Harley 3882
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Lansdowne 204
Lansdowne 894
Lansdowne 896
Lansdowne Charter 315
Lansdowne Charter 318
Royal 18 D. II

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C1
C255
DL39
E28
E153
E199
KB9
KB27
SC1
SC8

Northallerton

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ZAZ
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