

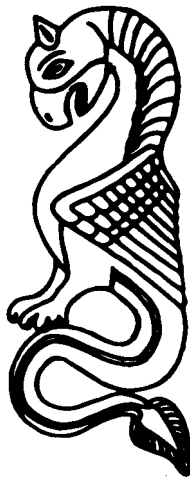
Leeds Studies in English

Article:

Patricia Badir, "'In this all other townes, thou doest, and Citties ore'shine": Textuality, Corporeality, and the Riding of Yule in York', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 29 (1998), 19-34

Permanent URL:

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Leeds Studies in English
School of English
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**'In this all other townes, thou doest, and Citties ore'shine':
Textuality, Corporeality, and the Riding of Yule in York**

Patricia Badir

Archbishop Grindal's Register for 1570-76 records a peremptory command to ministers and churchwardens of all parishes within the province of York:

Item that the minister and churchwardens shall not suffer anye lordes of misrule or *summerr* Lordes or ladyes or anye disguised persons or others in christmasse or at may *gammes* or anye minstrels morrie dauncers or others at Ryshebearinges or at any other tymes to come vnreverentlye into anye church or chappell or churchyard and there daunce or playe anye vnseemelye partes with scoffes ieastes wanton gestures or rybaulde talke namely in the tyme of divine service or of anye sermon.¹

The Archbishop's censorious posture becomes decisively focused in a second document in which he, and a selection of members of the Queen's Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes, position themselves as unequivocally distressed by a popular theatrical performed by and before the citizens of York: the riding Yule and his wife upon the feast day of St Thomas the Apostle.² The letter, dated 1572, reads in part, as follows:

[. . .] where as there hath bene heretofore a very rude and barbarouse custome maynteyned in this Citie, and in no other Citie or towne of this Realme to our knowlege that yerely vpon St Thomas day before Christmas, twoo disguised persons called Yule and Yules wif shoulde ryde throughe the Citie very vndecently and vncomely drawing great concurses of people after theym to gaise often tymes comyttyng other enormyties fforasmoch as the said disguised rydyng and concourse aforesaid

besydes other inconvenyences, tendeth also to the prophanyng of that day appoynted to holy vses, and also withdraweth great multitudes of people frome devyne service and Sermons [. . .].³

The winter riding was also vilified by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians and chroniclers who drew attention to the uncivil behaviour of York citizens whose infamous theatricals cast public doubt upon the piety and respectability of their town. Hector Boece's *Chronicles of Scotland* (1527) traces the Christmas events to the legendary siege of King Arthur, whose troupes allegedly wintered in York indulging 'pair lust, sleip, ryottus bankettis & sensualite [. . .]'.⁴ John Leland's description of 'Yule att York' (c. 1534) notes that upon the day of St Thomas the Apostle the sheriffs 'shall every one of them have a Horne, and so go forth to the fower Barres of the Citty, and blow the *Youle Girth*'. The account also refers to the crying of the King's peace and makes note of the prohibition upon public assemblies but further suggests that '*all manner of Whores, and Theives, Dice-Players, Carders, and all other unthrifty Folke be welcome to the Towne, whether they come late or early, att the Reverence of the high Feast of Youle, till the twelve Dayes be passed*'.⁵ George Buchanan (1583), like Boece, registers Yule in York as an Arthurian tradition and similarly records the apparently insatiable appetites of the nobility and commoners for 'plays, drunkenness, and such debasing vices, as the season gives rise to'. 'The vulgar persuasion is', Buchanan concludes, 'that these festivities celebrate the birth of Christ, when in truth, they refer, as is sufficiently evident, to the lascivious rites of a Bacchanalia, and not the memorial of the Saviour's nativity'.⁶ Francis Drake (1736) finds the roots of the disgraceful riding not in pagan tradition or Arthurian legend but in a ritual of humiliation associated with William the Conqueror's St Thomas day attack upon York which was allegedly supported by two friars of the Priory of St Peter's who, seeking relief 'against *Christmas*', made it possible for William and his troops to enter the city and lay siege. Subsequent to the beleaguered town's demise, the governors, when asked what they would like as compensation from their vanquishers, requested that each year a friar of the Priory be made to ride through the city on horseback with his face to the horse's tail 'in memory of betraying the city by the said fryers to *William the conqueror*'.⁷ These anecdotes corroborate Grindal's critical posture by confirming what Alexandra Johnston has aptly described as 'the impression of the feast of Yule in York as a period of licentiousness and horseplay'.⁸

However, these documents of critique and censorship are not the only remains of York's Yuletide revels; Grindal's letters, as transcribed in the *Records of Early English Drama* volume for York, edited by Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, flank a

broadside, dated c. 1570, that tells quite a different story.⁹ 'Yule in Yorke', as the broadside is titled, confirms that the 'vulgar persuasion' was indeed that these festivities were a celebration of the birth of Christ. As Johnston has argued, the event may well have had its 'roots in the pagan and mythical past of ancient York' but it had by this time been 'assimilated by the Christian church'; and clearly, 'the unseemliness complained of by the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1572 [was] related not to morality but to a survival of the old religion'.¹⁰ Yule's illegitimacy was thus, at least in part, determined by the vexed relationship between the visual and iconic elements of the Catholic calendar and the textual, gospel-based paradigms of the English Reformation. The broadside identifies the conservatism of the inhabitants of York whose defiant sense of corporate Catholicism manifested itself most spectacularly in the extraordinary staying power of the Corpus Christi and Pater Noster plays after the onset of the Reformation. York was popularly thought of as the home of the Romish and the renegade and it was no stretch of the imagination to think of its citizens as positioning themselves as reluctant converts to the practices and policies of the Reformation.¹¹ For example, Ryther's letter to Cecil (1588), though reflecting a more benign attitude to the riding (Ryther classifies it amongst the 'more comendable or [as I may rather say] the lesse condemnable' of York customs), nevertheless, contextualizes the tradition within what is observed to be the general spiritual depravity of the North.

Thes people ar much gyven to gamyng and to tryall of actyvitie; idellness is a generall falt in which they ar from youthe investid by want of educacion and contynewid in yt by their lardge unemployde commons [. . .]. By affynytie with the Skottes and borderers thes people delight in a rude & wilde kinde of musick, to which ar sewtable rymes and songs entwynynd and soonge eyther of wanton or warlyke actions [. . .]. Ingland is praisid of Erasmus because they make choise of their byshops for gravyty & learning, [. . .] but I wish our bishoppes wolde make as good choise of discreet mynysters, for by such we see dayly that our country people ar easily drawn to amendment of manners & religion, wher the undiscreet do dayly dryve away many. Learninge and perswasion will lytell availe with our people if love and good lyfe be absent, and when thes byshops have sett up good lights they must be as viggillint to snoof their candells, or els som will soon wax dym with wordly desiers.¹²

Ryther's letter also reflects upon the very uniqueness of York's 'pryncypall feaste', suggesting that communal, popular entertainments and amateur theatricals could articulate, likely to the detriment of the commonwealth, the corporate distinction of a particular constituency. The cry of 'Yule', Ryther notes, is the very name by which 'they tearme that tyme or feast, nowher in the south parts used that ever I c wolde heer' – a statement that is confirmed by the broadside and that suggests that Yule was a sign of York's defiant autonomy as well as its conservatism. Rather than proof of its intemperance, Yule, according to the broadside, was a manifestation of the town's unique sense of its own importance; 'No Cittie but Yorke' assures a marginal gloss to the ballad, 'was euer hearde to welcome our Sauour, with this ioyfull word, Yule'. Thus the REED edition of the Yule material establishes two competing views of the event: the riding was either the appalling mark of barbarism or the shining illustration of civility. The editorial inclusion of the broadside permits the insertion of a narrative of resistance into the historical record – a narrative whose presence qualifies the authority of Archbishop, commissioners and chroniclers by describing events that made use of urban space for the expression of civic identity in the face of hegemonic articulations of national subjectivity.

And yet, while the consideration of the broadside within the context of the Reformation is absolutely orthodox, it is possible that such an interpretation overdetermines the text, and perhaps the riding itself, by subsuming its narrative complexity within familiar (albeit accurate) materialist readings of popular resistance.¹³ The predominant characteristics of sixteenth-century York, its religious conservatism, its persistence in the practices of conservative popular piety, do provide stable ground for reading the broadside as evidence of carnivalesque opposition to authoritative restraint; but I would like to suggest that the formal structure of the text also draws upon narrative strategies, both formal and rhetorical, that seek to identify and subsume the physical materiality of the riding within legitimate and legitimizing discursive tropes and thereby circumvent, rather than radically counter, opposition.

The text of 'Yule in York' is tri-partite in structure: it begins with a two-part ballad ('Our Sauour is come' and '*The meaning of Yule, in Yorke*') the second part of which includes marginal glosses; the third section of the broadside is prose commentary reflecting upon the ballad that precedes it. '*The meaning of Yule, in Yorke*' provides some information on the appearance of the procession in its verse descriptions of the cries of the townspeople and of the provision of food (specifically lamb and cakes). It is the concluding commentary, however, that allows the reader to visualize the circulation of bodies through public space and to experience, to some degree, the palpable theatricality of the event as intensified by the sensory properties

of the urban context: actors disguised as Yule and his wife; children cheering and casting nuts to onlookers; sergeants marching in attendance; women processing with their domestic work in hand; spectators milling about; the sounds of shawms and music; the smell of food and even the refuse on the pavement.

However, as if to prove that the riding is more than a light-hearted charivari only ostensibly dedicated to the Nativity of Christ, the story is given liturgical substance as the text comes to exude sensuality or the 'stuffness of the body' that Caroline Walker Bynum sees as particularly associated with the affective devotional piety of the late middle ages.¹⁴ For example, the ballad deliberately glosses the image of victual-laden men as Eucharistic by introducing a typological reading that links the shoulder of lamb to the paschal lamb of I Cor. 5 and the cakes to Christ's provision of the bread of life from John 6:

The shoulder of the Lambe the man in hand doth beare,
Doth represent the lambe of God which Iewes on crosse did reare.
The Cake of purest meale, betokeneth very well,
The bread of life which came from heauen in earth with vs to dwell.

Unlike the broadside gloss, Drake's assessment of the origins of the Yule ritual attributes the references to the lamb and cakes to the legendary friars of St Peter's who provided William with the opportunity to enter and conquer York. The association of food with priest/rogue figures whose ambition was matched only by their appetite may have been lost as the riding was refocused in specific relation to the Nativity.¹⁵ On the other hand, Sarah Beckwith's comments on the *corpus mysticum* suggest that the two accounts may, in fact, be related. While consenting to Kantorowicz's observation that by the mid-twelfth century the ecclesiastical establishment had formulated doctrine that insisted that the church was the 'organized body of Christian society united in the sacrament of the altar,' Beckwith qualifies that it is also clear that by the late Middle Ages the meaning of Christ's body is unstable 'for his body is also the focus for the democratizing, lay tendencies of late medieval piety'. Certainly part of what makes the broadside's description of Yule in York resonate as 'medieval' at all is precisely its 'deployment of the central symbol of the mass, the body of Christ, outside its liturgical, ecclesiastical setting and into the urban landscape'. The lay rendition, in lamb and cakes, of the doctrine of transubstantiation can be read as a parodic invocation of the priesthood and its rights to be the exclusive handlers of Christ's body.¹⁶ Drake's chronicle, rather than offering an alternative semiotics, records

a similar carnivalesque inversion as both texts become reminiscent of another Yuletide tradition, the boy bishop.¹⁷ The long-standing threat posed by lay piety in the form of theatrical entertainment may have been as strong a catalyst for Grindal's puritanical blast as was the theological distrust of images of 'Christ in a cake'.¹⁸

The tone of the broadside is, however, at least as much earnest as it is parodic. The true 'meaning of Yule in York', as determined by the prose commentary, lies beyond its obvious physical spectacle as glorious and universal qualities are conferred upon urban festivity. A significant portion of the final section of the broadside is dedicated to a reading of the riding that links phenomenal event to a series of holy intertexts—biblical and exegetical. The entire field of performance (players, spectators and even the streets themselves) is allegorized so that everything becomes other than what it seems: Yule and his wife 'resemble true Israelites crying *yule*'; the children 'do signifie our Children and Successors, who shall celebrate this Feast to the worlds end, with iofull & triumphall clamours'; the music resembles 'the mirth and melody of Angels'; the officers, the 'noble spreaders & publishers' of the Word; the women's distaffs, the 'laying aside' of 'seruile workes' in order to prepare for 'this solemne feast'.

The most striking example of this kind of allegorical reading is the explanation provided for the nuts, described in the fourth stanza of the ballad as :

Nuts casten abroad, puts vs in remembrance of that most noble
Nut our sauours blessed body, springing miraculously from that
beautifull branch of *Iesse*, the most pure and imaculate virgin. As
it was possible (according to Saint Austen) for the rod of Aaron,
to bring forth Nuts, against the common course of nature. So
was it possible for the blessed virgin, to bring forth that most
excellent nut our sweete Sauour, contrary to the lawe of nature,
whose sacred body (according to the same Saint Austen) is aptlie
compared to a nut. For the Nut hath in it body a triple vnion,
that is to wit, *Testam* the shell, signifying the bones; and
Corium et nucleum, the skinne, and kinnell signifying the flesh
& inward soule of our Sauour. The nut destroyeth poyson, Our
sauour crushed vpon the crosse, imbraced with a liuely faith,
destroyeth the poyson, of sinne and Sathan.

The image of Christ in a nut is quite common in devotional and exegetical writing as is the reading of a story from the Old Testament (here Numbers 17. 1-11 – the flowering of Aaron's rod) as a signal of a general Christian truth (here the virgin

birth).¹⁹ However, this particular reference, as Johnston has pointed out, is a remarkably detailed allusion to *De myseterio Trinitatis et Incarnationis* (I), a sermon attributed to St Augustine.²⁰ The sermon explains that the nut produced from Aaron's rod, like the body of Christ, is a triple union of substances: outer skin, shell and kernel. The skin of the nut is then linked to the fleshly body of Christ, the shell to his bones and the kernel to 'the inner sweetness of the deity, that gives food, and provides the service of light'. Finally, the wood of the shell (that connects without to within) suggests the cross (or the blood upon it) that reconciled all things in heaven to those on earth.

In a recognizably Augustinian fashion, the broadside lifts its readers from the bustling streets of York and re-locates them in a numinous landscape, where pedestrian popular piety meets with exalted, authoritative texts, and where quotidian signs are revealed as containing '[m]ysticall and miraculous' truths. The broadside is, in this instance, once again, 'typically medieval' as the simultaneous invocation of corporeality and divine truth resonates against the narrative strategies frequently deployed by the medieval chroniclers of miracles whose genre demanded that they find transcendent significance in the everyday. The broadside's exegesis concludes by stipulating that the refuse left by the procession signifies 'the shaddowes and carnall ceremonies of the old law, Which being weake and vnable to iustifie or saue vs, are', and here the writer cites St Paul as his authority, 'to be reiected and esteemed as dung and dirt, in comparison of the light of truth it selfe, which hath now shined vpon us'.²¹ Even trash has a figurative connotation within this allegorical landscape; the 'matter' of the city fades into abstraction as Christ's resplendent body emerges as the only body that really matters.

Even the body of the actor playing Yule, a possible site of controversy given antitheatricalist anxiety over the representation of sacred themes by means of corporeal conventions, is described as 'wrongfully called *Yule*' as if to draw attention to the artificiality and perhaps even the impropriety of the theatrical medium. The broadside describes a popular entertainment in sensual detail which betrays the influence of affective medieval piety; but it concludes, with an anti-theatrical reading of the performance event that textualizes the corporeal by situating it within the magnificently literary landscape of the Scriptures. Marginal glosses and prose exegesis handily steer the narrative away from misguided or unwarranted accusations of sensational travesty or frivolous misinterpretation.

The conversion of the phenomenal, and thus highly controversial, properties of the riding into text is most clearly present in the first part of the ballad, 'Our Sauour is come'. Consider the opening stanza:

Mans teares and wofull plaint, hath pierst the lofty skies,
with gladsom newes in glittering robe, from heauen an Angell
flies.
the clouds now open wide, & grace sends downe it shewers,
Which watereth natures barren soyle, with euerlasting flowers.

John King's discussion of the interrelationship of 'ghostly psalms' and 'bawdy ballads' is useful here as King notes how Protestant writers made use of ballad measures and other 'staples of popular culture' in their paraphrases of the Scriptures. 'Popular native traditions and conventions', suggests King, 'constitute both the norm for Reformation poetry and the immediate background for Elizabethan verse'.²² To this thesis, Tessa Watt adds 'the language of conflict between Protestant culture and popular culture was by no means the universal discourse of early Elizabethan reformers. From the 1550s to the 1570s, the writers of metrical psalms and "moralized" ballads borrowed the tunes of secular song as their route to the people's heart'. I draw attention to these arguments, not to suggest that 'Yule in Yorke' is, in fact, a godly ballad that 'appropriate[s] pre-Reformation cultural forms in the service of Protestantism' – this is clearly not the case; but King's and Watt's remarks do imply that there was a certain convergence of conventions between popular and Protestant writing.²³ I would like to introduce, therefore, the speculative possibility that the text of 'Yule in Yorke' guilefully appropriates the formal and rhetorical strategies of metrical psalms and religious poems in order to advocate on behalf of a popular, playful recreation.

While the diction of the ballad cannot be bound, without qualification, to Renaissance models of grand style, the 'passion, sublimity, and grandeur' that Debora Shuger associates with the sacred rhetorics of the Renaissance, seem to be reflected in the broadside's 'lofty' aspirations.²⁴ 'Our Sauour is come' remarks upon the momentousness of the Nativity, establishing that it is through the advent of Christ that the law of the Old Testament, the law of the stone (which 'cannot redeeme us from the deuill') is replaced by the law of the gospels (in which that very lamb 'on crosse his Cristiall blood was spent'). The Pauline trope of the demise of the Old Testament in favour of the New obviously had deep resonance in a Reformation context where the iconographic precepts of the old tradition were being replaced by the Gospel-centred vision of a new faith, based upon individual contemplation of the Word. The Yule broadside is not a Protestant text, but the tension the document registers between the antiquated 'old' and the progressive 'new' law slips conveniently into a trope for Protestant conversion.²⁵ It may even be that the Calvinist debt to Augustine lurks behind what can be, in this context, re-viewed as the distinctly

'Reformation' theology of the subsequent prose commentary.²⁶

The ballad's repeated invocation of Satan and the Devil and the references to divine grace and to the sin of Man seem to function within what Barbara Lewalski has identified, in the lyric poetry of the seventeenth century, as 'the classic Protestant paradigm of sin and salvation'.²⁷

O Deuill, O Death, O Sinne, disgorge your bitter gall,
A babe is borne, the which wilbe, the ruine of you all.
O Deuill where is thy rage, O Death where is thy sting.
O Sinne where be thy chaines, a child, your force to ground will
bring
*The ayre therefore resounds, Yule, Yule, a Babe is borne,
O bright and blazing day, to saue mankind that was forlorne.*

The broadside is a speech act in which the utterance itself, 'Yule, Yule,' ushers forth more than a commemoration of the Nativity; the text also heralds a new and propitious beginning for the God-fearing citizen of York. This reading is consistent with the Calvinist understanding of 'grace' with respect to the doctrine of predestination.

When sathan did outrage and Sin did most abound,
And cruell death man trodden downe, with dinting dart did wound
Then God from heauen did shew, the riches of his grace,
The Lyon then of Iuda came, the Dragon to displace.

The Pauline terms of election and calling emerge again in the second part of the ballad (and its marginal glosses), further linking the text to emerging Protestant poetics.²⁸ *'The meaning of Yule in York'* smirks cunningly at Yule's critics by declaring that divine election is a local privilege: 'Triumph O Yorke, reioyce, this priueledge is thine, In this all other townes, thou doest, and Citties ore'shine'. Named in the refrain at the end of each stanza as the 'true Israelites', the townspeople are identified as the chosen citizens of God; the uniqueness of the performance to a particular urban environment becomes a splendid indication of the state of grace bestowed upon a select constituency. Yule in York was indeed triumphant, for the Christmas revel not only heralded the blessed arrival of the saviour child but also consecrated York's particular commemoration of the Nativity as the sign of shining status both ancient and everlasting.²⁹

In its appropriation of sanctioned terms of expression in order to defend an enduring tradition, the tone of 'Yule in Yorke' is, I suspect, not entirely incommensurate with that of the sermons that competed with the riding for the attention of York citizens. It is also striking that the date of the York broadside coincides with a peak in the licensed publication of broadsides more generally – a publication explosion that Watt argues was partially a reaction to the Catholic uprising in the North.³⁰ 'Yule in York' does not, by any means seek to denounce the conservatism of northern rebels in the fashion suggested by contemporary titles such as 'Northumberland's Newes', and 'The confusion of ye Rebelles with a songe of thanks for the same'.³¹ Nevertheless, the Christmas broadside does at least offer up the possibility that it was defending the distinction of a Northern town by making use of a medium and a language that was associated with piety, legitimacy and power.

I began this article by suggesting that the inclusion of the Yule text in the *REED* collection introduces a narrative of resistance into a historical record that, without the broadside, reads as disciplinary and autocratic. However, while 'Yule in Yorke' does indeed provide evidence of a popular theatrical tradition that survived, despite opposition, until the latter part of the sixteenth century, it does so by glossing, commenting upon, and essentially textualizing the very theatricality of that tradition. Rather than an act of overt opposition or resistance, the broadside's formal and rhetorical gestures seem to me to be a series of tactical manoeuvres that appropriate legitimate forms of cultural interpretation in order to assure, if nothing more, the memory of other forms that have been prohibited. The ensuing question is thus whether or not this reading of an archival source makes any difference to the understanding of the history of the riding as a social and theatrical event, whether the form of the literary creation reveals anything about the form of the world in which the riding took place.³² Michel de Certeau compares the 'acting-out of language' that takes place when words are written or spoken to pedestrian appropriations of urban topographical system[s] and he concludes that the latter, like the former, are tactical interventions that opportunistically mark out and appropriate the restrictions placed upon civilian mobility.³³ If the broadside is a tactical rhetorical manoeuvre that asserts community distinction by taking on and then 'acting out' the language of legitimacy, can one not then make use of these textual ruses to rethink the social function of the Yule riding in York and in so doing refocus discussion of the phenomenological event itself?

In order to defend the riding, the 'lofty' rhetoric of 'Yule in York' needs to invoke a certain sensuality (those very 'scoffes', 'ieastes' and 'wanton gestures') that would inevitably raise the back of any properly pious Protestant clergyman. In order

to lift its readers to the resplendent, and crystalline city of God, the broadside, with a shrewd glance at its reader, also preserves for posterity the quotidian city of the people.³⁴ Like the records of the civic mystery drama, that are as much vestigial remains of the *ad hoc* corporeal properties of communal recreations as they are records of edifying images of communal wholeness, 'Yule in Yorke' records a pedestrian mobility that defined the riding as 'a space of enunciation' for creative and clandestine acts of revelry and holiday.³⁵ Beckwith has argued, with respect to the York cycle, that 'the ritualization of the city is not about the imposition of a homogenous kind of unity onto the city but rather an implication of its webs of signification'. One could make the same case of the Yule riding and likewise conclude that 'the politics we need to talk about, then will not be those of dominance and subversion or resistance and containment, but rather the politics of mobility and access'.³⁶

By 1572, York citizens had ceased to cry 'Yule' on the feast of St Thomas; but the text of the broadside continues today to bind the echoes of those cries to the unruly, undisciplined, intemperate quality of a popular tradition while, at the same time, drawing attention to the 'bright and blazing' ways in which such activity could be transformed into allocutions of reformed pious distinction. The broadside's description of Yule in York oscillates between virtual and material space in such a way that it refuses to stand as a narrative of active resistance or even plebeian protest. Instead, like the event it documents, the text juggles both the profane and the sacred in terms that articulate and beguile their 'other opposites': the imperious judgements of Boece, Buchanan, Leland, Ryther, Drake and Grindal.³⁷

NOTES

¹ *Records of Early English Drama: York* (hereafter *REED*), ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) I, 358.

² The feast of St Thomas the Apostle was the 21 December, also the Winter Solstice.

³ *REED*, I, 369.

⁴ According to Boece, the holy days of the Christmas season were 'gevin mair to voracite þan vertu, and mair to þair wame þan to divyne seruice [. . .]' while the solemn feast itself was corrupted 'like vnto þe festis of Gentylis maid in honour of Bachus, Flora, and Priapus, quhilkis wer devisit mair for þe lust and plesouris of men & wemen than ony gude religioun'. *The Chronicles of Scotland*, trans. of *Scotorum Historiae* [1527] by John Belende [1531] ed. by R. W. Chambers and Edith C. Batho, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons for the Scottish Text Society, 1836), I, 369. This passage is cited in Alexandra Johnston, 'Yule in York', *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter*, 1 (1976), 3-10 (p. 9, note 1).

⁵ John Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. by Thomas Hearne from the Dodsworth Collection of Manuscripts, 8 vols (Oxford, 1769), IV, 183 ('Out of Mr. Dodsworth's Coll. MSS. Vol. 157. fol. 114. a'). It is interesting that Leland makes reference to the Sheriffs' riding in this context. As Johnston notes ('Yule in York', p. 9), the riding may be a variation upon the sheriffs' accompaniment of the Corpus Christi procession – a tradition begun before 1537.

⁶ Buchanan also found the general debauchery to be a renewal of 'the representation of the ancient Saturnalia, but doubling the number of days, and trebling them among the wealthy, on which it was reckoned unlucky to engage in any serious undertaking'. He concludes, and not without considerable disdain, that 'our countrymen call the festival, Julia, substituting the name of Caesar, for that of Saturn'. *The History of Scotland*, trans. of *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* [1583] by James Aikman, 4 vols (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton & Co, 1827) I, 239-40. This passage is referred to in Johnston, 'Yule in York', p. 9, note 1. Buchanan's inaccurate articulation of the origins of the utterance 'Yule' is repeated over a century later by James Ryther in his letter to William Cecil (1588) in which he suspects that the cry had 'ben lefte in this cytty by the Roman garrison, who in their greatist feasts & tryumphes cried 'Yule', after the usurpid emper of Julius Cesar (W. J. Craig, 'James Ryther of Harewood and his Letters to William Cecil, Lord Burghley', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 56 [1984], 95-118, p. 104). Johnston confirms that the word 'yullath' is a transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning 'he is born' ('Yule in York', p. 9).

⁷ Francis Drake, *Eboracum* [1736], p. 217; repr. in *County Folklore: North Riding*

of *Yorkshire, York and the Ainsty*, ed. by Eliza Gutch, County Folklore, 2 (London: David Nutt for the Folk-Lore Society, 1901), pp. 357-59. Also cited in Johnston, 'Yule in York', p. 9, note 9.

⁸ Johnston, 'Yule in York', p. 4.

⁹ 'Yule in York' is housed in the Bodleian Library. It is a printed broadside, 305mm x 368mm (262mm x 305mm), with double columns. For further detail see REED, I, p. xli.

¹⁰ Johnston, 'Yule in York', p. 8.

¹¹ In 1580 York was still considered by the Privy Council to be 'very unsound' in religion and the recurrence of orders and restraints suggests that both magistrates and citizens were recalcitrant conservatives (*Acts of the Privy Council of England* [London: HMSO, 1890], pp. 107-08 [1580-81]). In 1599, the mayor and aldermen complained that many inhabitants 'especially of the inferior sortie', were still absent from church, instead 'lyinge in there beddes or idelleye sittinge at there dores or in the stretes or walking abrode in the feilds [. . .] sittinge in the alehouses or taverns, [. . . and] playing in the ailehouses at unlawful games so longe as they either have money or credit' (D. M. Palliser, *Tudor York* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], p. 259). Evidence suggests that those who were not engaged in the pursuit of leisure were also increasingly retreating from the Church. For examples of resistance to Reformation injunctions in York parishes see J. S. Purvis, *Tudor Documents of the Parish of York* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948], pp. 24, 29, 46-48, 67, 68, 83, 91, 93, 137, 187, 191, 192-93). On the subject of Recusancy in York see Hugh Aveling, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York 1558-1791* (London: Catholic Record Society, monograph ser., 1970), pp. 46-47, 267-73.

¹² Craig, 'James Ryther of Harewood', pp. 107-09.

¹³ Seth Lerer has recently argued that 'certain texts may be preserved, copied, compiled and relied upon not so much because they exemplify particular traditions as because they speak to certain preoccupations of their readership', "'Representyd now in yower syght": the Culture of Spectatorship in Late-Fifteenth-Century England', in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and Culture in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 32.

¹⁴ Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Why all the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective', *Critical Inquiry*, 22 (1995), 1-33.

¹⁵ Drake writes that one of the indulgent friars had 'a wallet full of victualls and a shoulder of mutton in his hand, with two great cakes hanging about his neck'; the other was decked with 'bottles of ale, with provisions likewise of beife and mutton in his wallett'. As mentioned above, this was done as a reminder that 'on this day the city was betrayed' (pp.

358-59). It should be noted that Drake describes his story as 'a mixture of truth and fiction' (p. 357).

¹⁶ Beckwith, Sarah, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 30-33. Beckwith cites Ernst Kantorowicz's *The Kings Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 196.

¹⁷ REED, I, 1.

¹⁸ For notes on the origin of the expression 'Christ in cake' see Beckwith, *Christ's Body*, p. 137n. For an example of medieval anti-theatricalism see the Lollard (or Wycliffite) *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* (1380-1425) that argues that staging Christ was 'scorning of [him]', whose own body never laughed but was the source of 'penaunce, teris and scheding of blod' (*A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, ed. by Clifford Davidson [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1993], p. 39).

¹⁹ On the relationship between Numbers 17. 1-9 and the birth of Christ, see Peter Meredith's note to line 713 of *The Mary Play from the N. Town Manuscript*, ed. by Peter Meredith (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), pp. 100-01. The association of virgin and the rod of Aaron is usually a function of the Latin etymological link between 'rod' (*virga*) and 'virgin' (*virgo*). For a complete discussion of nut allegories see Hans-Jörg Apitz, *Die Metaphorik des Geistigen Schriftsinns* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972), pp. 61-67. Of particular interest is Luther's use of the allegory to explain the difference between the law of the Old Testament and that of the New ('Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 15-20' in *Luther's Works*, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan, 55 vols [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961], III, 147-52).

²⁰ Johnston ('Yule in York', p. 10, note 16) has traced the Augustine reference to *Sermo CCXLV, De myseterio Trinitatis et Incarnationis* I, (b) in the *Sermones Supposititios: Classis Quarta: Sermones de Diversis, Patralogia Latina*, ed. by J. P. Migne, Vol. 39 (Paris, 1865), cols 2196-98.

²¹ Relevant passages from St Paul include: Rom. 3. 21-22, II Cor. 3. 12-18, Gal. 3. 10-14 and, in particular, Heb. 7. 18-22, 8. 6-7.

²² John King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 209-10.

²³ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 40-41.

²⁴ Debora Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 7, 67-9, 242-44. The *OED* records that, prior to the late sixteenth century, 'lofty' was used to suggest: 'haughty, overweening, proud'. I am here invoking, as does Shuger and, I would argue, the ballad

itself, the Renaissance definitions of the word: 'extending to great height in the air; of imposing altitude (1590)' and 'exalted in dignity, rank, character, or quality (1548)'. For further relevant discussion of the rhetoric and form of devotional poetry see Rivkah Zim, *English Metrical Psalms: Poetry as Praise and Prayer 1535-1601* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

²⁵ Drake wrote his description of Yule in 1736 based on a manuscript he described as 'of no very old date, for the reader may observe, that this was wrote since the Reformation, and not above threescore years from the disusing of the ceremony'. Drake's description of his source suggests that representations of the festivity continued to circulate even after the Yule tradition itself was abandoned (Drake, p. 357).

²⁶ William Halewood notes the way in which Augustine was cited on all sides of the religious disputes of the period and yet it was Calvin whose influence 'worked most strongly in the English Reformation and who can be held most directly responsible for the Augustinism of the Elizabethan church', *The Poetry of Grace: Reformation Themes and Structures in English Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 46-47, 55-56.

²⁷ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 13.

²⁸ Lewalski notes that 'the Pauline terms – election, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification – mark the important stages in the spiritual life of any Protestant Christian' and she argues, throughout her work, that this paradigm informs the poetic practice of Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Taylor (see especially pp. 13-27).

²⁹ I am developing the concept of civic distinction in the terms provided by Pierre Bourdieu's observation that 'art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences'; these differences, Bourdieu argues, become the mark of distinction, civic and otherwise. See *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 7.

³⁰ Watt, p. 44.

³¹ *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640*, ed. by Edward Arber, 5 vols (New York: P. Smith, 1950), I, 403, 405. The Yule broadside does not appear in the Stationers' Register. It is also worth noting that on 1 July, 1570, Queen Elizabeth issued an order for the arrest of any individual caught selling seditious or papistical books and bulls. See *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. by Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press), II (1969), 341-43.

³² See Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of the relationship between the structure of the literary text and the structure of the social world described by that text in *The Field of*

Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature, ed. by Randal Johnson, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 145-75.

³³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 97-98. De Certeau is working from Speech Act theory, in particular J. Searle, 'What is a Speech Act?' in *Philosophy in America*, ed. by Max Black (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 221-39 and E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), II, 79-88.

³⁴ De Certeau describes pedestrian mobility as 'tactical' or as vigilantly making 'use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches them. It creates surprizes in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse', p. 37.

³⁵ 'space of enunciation' is de Certeau's term, p. 98. For further discussion on civic space and the social body in the Corpus Christi play see M. E. James, 'Ritual, Drama and the Social Body in the late Medieval Town', *Past and Present*, 98 (1983), 3-29; Eileen White's detailed study 'People and Places: The Social and Topographical Context for Drama in York, 1554-1609', doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 1984; Sarah Beckwith, 'Making the World in York and the York Cycle', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 254-76 and 'Ritual, Theatre and Social Space in the York Corpus Christi Cycle', in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and Culture in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 63-86.

³⁶ Beckwith is referring here to the York cycle, 'Ritual, Theatre and Social Space', p. 76.

³⁷ 'other opposites' is de Certeau's term, p. 98.