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# Language and Regional Identity in the York Corpus Christi Cycle

## M. L. Holford

The remarkable series of publications on Middle English associated with Angus McIntosh and his colleagues, particularly the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, has yet to be fully utilized by literary and cultural historians.[1] Not only does the *Atlas* enable a previously unprecedented degree of subtlety and precision in the dialectal analysis of literary and other texts, but it is rich with implications for the study of late medieval social and cultural identities at local, regional and national levels. This article is an attempt to pursue these themes through an analysis of dialectal variation in the surviving civic register of the York Corpus Christi cycle.

Two decades ago the cycle's most recent editor pointed out that 'a detailed study of the language of the York Plays remains to be made',[2] and his comment still holds true, in spite of the availability of the play manuscript in facsimile, and the publication of a concordance to the cycle.[3] This article does not attempt to offer the detailed study that Beadle called for, but aims to explore in detail a hitherto neglected aspect of the manuscript's language: dialectal variation. Not only is this topic central to any discussion of the language of the cycle as a whole, but it relates to several issues of wider importance: the vagaries of late medieval scribal practice; the history of late medieval English; and attitudes to the play cycle on the part of the guilds who produced it and the civic authorities who sponsored and oversaw it.[4]

I shall show that the manuscript's main scribe displays a remarkably inconsistent attitude to spellings characteristic of Northern Middle English, tolerating them for a brief stretch of the manuscript but apparently avoiding them elsewhere. The result is a manuscript significantly less local in character than the guild originals of the pageants would have been. The scribe's erratic behaviour may be related to an ambivalence about local language evident in the

documentary material produced by York's civic administration. It may be possible to distinguish guild and civic versions of the cycle, and to identify the latter as part of a more general project of defining civic identity in opposition to perceptions of the local or regional.

## The linguistic context

*Language and identity in the late medieval north*

Linguistic diversity in late medieval England was usually understood in terms of 'countries'. Such 'countries' might be counties: Caxton, for example, observed that 'that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another', and there are references to the 'rude English' of Kent in the fifteenth century. Linguistic 'countries' could also be regional areas, such as East Anglia.[5] Most commonly, however, Middle English linguistic diversity seems to have been conceptualized in terms of northern and southern English, and linguistic distinctiveness became an important element in medieval ideas of the north. In the early fourteenth century Higden's *Polychronicon*, drawing on William of Malmesbury, referred to what Trevisa translated as the 'scharp, slitting, frotynge and unschape' language of those north of the Humber (*frotynge* being a word that Trevisa used elsewhere with reference to pigs).[6] A distinctive and apparently comic northern dialect is a feature of some early sixteenth-century jestbooks, such as *A Hundred Merry Tales*, whose northern *miles gloriosus* is characterized by his language as well as his *braggadocio*.[7] Not all writers were so hostile, but neutral observations of linguistic variation were also often couched in terms of north and south. 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,[8] and the compiler of material in Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114 (*c*. 1450) apologised for his style as 'umwhile soþeren, oþerwhile norþen'.[9]

The distinction between northern and southern English was made by northerners as much as southerners, and as well as being used to denigrate the north, it could become the focus of regional solidarity. A well-known passage in the religious treatise *Cursor Mundi* (*c*. 1300-25) refers to translation from 'sotherin englis' to 'our aun / Langage o northrin lede'.[10] In a less chauvinistic context, the cartulary compiled by Thomas Anlaby, of Anlaby near Hull, around 1450 included an etymology of the family's name deriving from the situation of

their manor: 'be an lake' or by a lake. Thomas explained that the name was also found in the form *Onlakby*, where '"on" ys southdryn spech'.[11] The natural spelling of the family's name and the name of its seat are, in contrast, recognized as northern: identity is created through the awareness of linguistic difference.

The Second Shepherds' pageant from the play cycle associated with Wakefield provides further suggestive evidence - perhaps particularly significant in relation to late medieval drama - that linguistic distinctiveness could serve as a focus for regional identities. One character's use of southern dialect forms and inflated diction is met by a chorus of disapproval which culminates in the instruction to 'take outt that Sothren tothe / And sett in a torde!'[12] The episode constructs northern language - implicitly, the language of the plays themselves - as an important marker of local identity. This is an emphasis that can also be found in modern critical commentary on medieval drama, such as Mills's argument that 'the local speech-form, like local topographical and contemporary allusions, is a major link between the drama and its community'.[13] As this article will show, however, the situation is rather more complicated.

### Dialectal Variation in Middle English

Comments about northern and southern English, and the association of dialect with local or regional identity, are of course not unique to the later medieval period. What is distinctive about this period is the absence of a written standard English, as a result of which linguistic variation is consistently reflected in written as well as spoken English. The details of this written variation were clarified immensely by the publication of the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* in 1986.[14] What remains much less clear is the degree to which contemporaries were familiar with the nature of regional written variation, how far tolerance of non-local spellings could extend, or how such questions related to the ideas of northern and southern English outlined above. Some of these issues have been approached through study of manuscript glosses and annotations, of translations between Middle English dialects, and of contemporary imitations of different dialects: particularly the manuscript tradition of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*.[15] Much work remains to be done, however, and the results could cast much light on the issue that has tended to dominate the study of later Middle English: the question of its standardization.

Although it is well known that written linguistic diversity decreased

significantly in the fifteenth century, the causes of this shift are not yet fully clear. An influential essay by M. L. Samuels argued that the language of documents produced by royal administration increasingly functioned as an 'incipient standard' in the fifteenth century, and this position has found a forceful exponent in John Fisher.[16] Sceptics have noted both that the internal consistency and external influence of 'Chancery English' are debatable, and that some writers, such as Capgrave, avoided notable 'provincialisms' but chose to replace them with more widely-distributed regional forms rather than those characteristic of state English.[17] Undoubtedly, the abandonment of regional spellings proceeded at differing speeds, in differing ways and for different reasons, from place to place and from text to text. For present purposes it is perhaps sufficient to observe that such a shift can be widely observed by approximately the second half of the fifteenth century, and not only in texts of a documentary nature.[18] This is the period in which the bulk of the surviving manuscript of the York play cycle was produced.

## The York cycle: the production of the manuscript and variations in scribal practice

The text of the York cycle is preserved in London, British Library MS Additional 35290. This manuscript was written by four scribes, two of the late fifteenth century (designated A and B by Beadle) and two of the sixteenth (designated C and D). It is an official civic 'register' of the cycle which was compiled from the guilds' 'original' copies of their pageants; the lengthy period over which the manuscript was copied seems to have resulted both from the dilatoriness of some guilds in supplying their pageants, and from changes in the performance of the cycle itself.[19] Scribe C, who has been identified as John Clerke, 'under-clerk' to the city of York, copied pageant 4 (between 1557 and 1559), part of pageant 7, and pageant 17 (*c*. 1567); and Scribe D copied pageant 46A (*c*. 1559).[20] Between 1463 and 1477 Scribe A copied the opening quire of the manuscript, containing the first three pageants in the cycle, and Scribe B copied the rest of the cycle, including a second copy of the third pageant, that of the Cardmakers. (The structure of the manuscript is summarily set out in Table 2.) It is on the work of this last scribe, responsible for the majority of the manuscript, that the following discussion will concentrate.

It is common to distinguish three types of scribal response to an exemplar

in a dialect that is not the copyist's own: he may (a) leave its language more or less unchanged; (b) translate it into his own kind of language; or (c) do something between the two.[21] Earlier discussions of Scribe B's language have argued that he attempted to reduce the dialectal diversity of his exemplars by translating them into forms that reflected his own linguistic preferences.[22] It has been argued that this parallels his efforts 'to produce a dignified volume of homogeneous appearance, which no doubt befitted the importance of the play in civic eyes'.[23] As a consequence neither the extent of the variation in Scribe B's language, nor its implications, have received the attention they deserve. Before we turn to this linguistic variation, however, a brief discussion of other variations in his scribal practice will be useful.

### *Layout, decoration and script*

Most of the significant variations in the layout, script and decoration of the different pageants have been identified and discussed by Beadle and Meredith. Firstly, there are a number of irregularities in the presentation of the earlier pageants in the manuscript: in the techniques used to separate the speeches of different characters, in the format of character-designations, and in the presentation of pageant-titles.[24] Beadle and Meredith see these irregularities as a reflection of Scribe B's initial uncertainties in finding a suitable layout for his material, and infer both that these pageants were the first to be copied, and that they were probably copied in the order in which they appear in the manuscript.

Secondly, Beadle and Meredith note a number of differences between the presentation of pageants prior to and after the beginning of quire q (fol. 124, the second folio of pageant 26). Most noticeably, rhyme brackets are used in the earlier, but not the later section; there are also differences in the decoration of catchwords, in the layout of the alliterative long line, and in the use of virgules and of speech-rules. However, the layout of pageant 33 (fols. 180r-87v), although it is in this later section of the manuscript, is characteristic of pageants in the earlier section. The most obvious interpretation is that this pageant was copied before the other texts in the later quires of the manuscript. (Curiously, however, pageant 33 does not begin a new quire: it runs from the third leaf of quire z to the third leaf of quire &.) So while the opening pageants suggest sequential copying, it is clear that some parts of the manuscript were *not* copied sequentially.[25]

Beadle and Meredith also comment on Scribe B's script, in which both

Secretary and Anglicana forms of *a* and *r* are used, and *þ* can signify both <þ> and <y>. However, they do not point out that Scribe B's use of *þ* varies noticeably in different sections of the manuscript. At the beginning of scribe B's work, *þ* and *y* are used in their historically correct functions, and continue to be distinguished until pageant 11, with the exception of pageant 8. Thereafter *þ* is used with varying frequency to represent <y> as well as <þ>: *þ* for <y> is very common after pageant 18 and almost exclusive in pageants 21 to 30 and 42 to 47.

The significance of these variations is twofold. Firstly, they indicate that while the opening pageants in Scribe B's section of the manuscript were probably the first to be copied by him, we cannot assume that in the manuscript as a whole the current sequence of pageants reflects the order in which they were copied. Equally importantly, scribal variation suggests that Scribe B was prepared to experiment with altering the format of his exemplars: such alterations, in turn, suggest his developing ideas about the kind of writing and layout appropriate to the cycle register. Both these points, I will argue, hold true of Scribe B's linguistic variation. In fact, variation between *þ* and *y* for <y> has dialectal as well as palaeographic implications. Benskin has shown that the 'correct' distinction of *y* and *þ* is characteristic of southern scribes, while northern and East Anglian copyists use the single character *y* to represent both <þ> and <y>.[26] Scribe B's use of the characters can be understood as a shift from a correct to a 'hypercorrect' use of the letters which, as we shall see, has significant parallels with his attitude to other northern and southern linguistic markers.

### *Language*

The most dramatic variation in Scribe B's language consists of the various spellings of 'shall' used in different sections of the manuscript.[27] We can group these into spellings beginning with *sch*-, with *sh*- and with *s*-. In late medieval English, the first two forms are largely found south of the river Humber, while the third occurs largely north and east of a line from the Wash to Morecambe Bay.[28] In Scribe B's work, *sch*- spellings are most common, but only become predominant from pageant 18; *sh*- spellings appear especially in pageants 3B, 5 to 7, and 16G, and sporadically in pageants 8 to 9 and 14 to 16M; while northern *s*- spellings are either the only or the predominant forms between pageants 8 and 16M, and in pageant 33.[29] (All occurrences of *s*- spellings are listed in table 1.) I shall refer to pageants containing *s*- spellings as a 'northern' group in the cycle.

Middle English spellings of 'should' have a comparable geographical distribution, and are combined with 'shall' on some of the *Linguistic Atlas* maps, although there is evidence that northerly *suld* is less common than *sall*.[30] It is certainly less frequent in Scribe B's output: it appears only in pageants 11 to 13 and 33, and only in 12 and 33 is it more common than *s(c)h-* spellings. *Schuld(e)*, like *schall(e)*, is the preferred form after pageant 18. Pageant 14, as well as lacking *s-* spellings for 'should', shows the first re-appearance of *s(c)h-* spellings for 'shall'. Thus, within the northern group of pageants, it seems that we can identify a 'core' group (11 to 13 and 33) whose regional language is particularly marked.

This is supported by the distribution of other northerly linguistic variants in Scribe B's repertoire. For example *fra* 'from', a spelling very rarely found south of the Humber, is used line-internally by Scribe B only in pageants 9 to 13 and 33.[30] *Twa* 'two', which has a similarly northern distribution, is used line-internally only in pageant 13.[31] Northern *eftir* 'after' is used by Scribe B only seven times, of which six are in pageants 8, 10 and 12.[32] Likewise *bathe* 'both' is used in rhyme elsewhere in the cycle, but appears in mid-line position only in pageants 12 and 13; and *haly* 'holy' is found eight times out of eleven between pageants 11 and 13.[33] A number of other northern spellings also cluster in these pageants. For example, *er(e)* 'are' appears twelve times out of twenty-four in pageants 11 to 13, and a further ten in pageant 33; *walde* 'would' is found thirteen out of eighteen times in pageants 10 to 13 and twice in 33 (once in rhyme).[34]

In summary, the language of pageants 8-16G and 33 is more northerly than the rest of the cycle in a number of respects; there is a decrease in the use of these northerly forms after pageant 13; and northerly forms seem to be concentrated in pageants 11-13. Even in these pageants, however, northerly forms are usually found alongside less local variants. Thus *wolde* 'would' is also used in pageants 10 to 13 and 33, and is, in fact, more common than *walde* in all but pageant 11. Furthermore, one of the occurrences in pageant 33 is in a rhyme sequence (*walde/halde/folde/wolde*) which may suggest that Scribe B altered an originally more northern form.

There are some striking correlations between linguistic and non-linguistic variation in Scribe B's output. The distinctive language of pageant 33 in relation to the later section of the manuscript suggests, like its distinctive layout, that it was copied before the other pageants in the later quires of the manuscript: the appearance of *sulde* and *þ* for <y> associates it linguistically with pageant 12.[35] There is also a correlation between the linguistic change to *sch-* spellings for

'shall' and 'should' in pageant 18 and a marked increase in the use of þ for <y>. On the other hand, the dramatic changes in pageant layout from quire q onwards, including the abandonment of rhyme-brackets, are not accompanied by any striking changes in spelling practice. How are we to account for the somewhat incoherent appearance of Scribe B's work?

## Explaining variation

There are two ways of explaining either linguistic or non-linguistic variation in the cycle manuscript. On the one hand, it may derive from differences in the guilds' originals which have been carried through into the register; on the other, it may reflect changes in Scribe B's own scribal practice, and thus his developing ideas about the nature of the volume he was compiling.

Some aspects of Scribe B's language do seem to derive from his exemplars. Certain linguistic variants appear only in certain pageants, or are used sporadically throughout the manuscript with no apparent pattern. For example, the spelling *os* 'as' appears in the cycle manuscript only in pageant 8;[36] *ony* 'any', a spelling which is most common in the south-east midlands but is also recorded in more northerly and westerly texts, is found only in pageant 16G.[37] More frequent in Scribe B's output, but still no more than sporadic, are the spellings (largely northern and eastern) *qw(h)-* for 'wh-', which also appear in pageant 8, as well as being scattered elsewhere throughout the manuscript.[38] This kind of variation is most plausibly explained as reflecting the dialectal diversity of the guild originals. Some peculiarities of layout in the manuscript, such as the spaces left for ornamental initials in pageant 12, probably have similar origins.

On the other hand, it seems highly unlikely that the entirety of Scribe B's behaviour can be explained as exemplar-dependent. Aspects of his practice, as we have seen, vary within as well as between pageants and are closely related to the structure of the register itself: most noticeably the changes of layout at the beginning of quire q. It is hardly plausible that the exemplar would have changed so dramatically at exactly that point: instead, features such as the abandonment of rhyme-brackets must reflect changes in Scribe B's own attitudes to the manuscript he was compiling. This is confirmed by a rather careless treatment of rhyme-brackets in the preceding pageant (for example, none are drawn on fols. 118r or 119r).

It could still be the case that Scribe B was willing or able to experiment

with altering the layout of his exemplars, but that he exercised less freedom with regard to their language. It is true that linguistic changes are less clear-cut and absolute than changes in layout. Linguistic variation also seems to occur in relation to particular pageants rather than cutting across them according to the structure of the manuscript. Thus, only pageants 10-13 exclusively use the northern *sall* 'shall', but it is not clear that they form a distinct section in the manuscript. Pageant 10 begins a new quire (d) and a singleton (fol. 47) has been inserted after quire e to receive the end of pageant 12. The insertion of a singleton is unusual for Scribe B: as Beadle and Meredith comment, it gives pageants 10-12 the appearance of a self-contained unit. In linguistic terms, however, this unit is neither self-contained (pageant 13 is linguistically very similar) nor entirely homogeneous (the first appearance of *þ* for <y> is in pageant 12). Nor does the shift away from northerly spellings in pageants 16G and 18 relate to the structure of the manuscript. In 16G, *sall* and *shall* each appear both in quires h and I: the relative frequency of *sall* on fol. 68r most probably reflects only inconsistent translation at the beginning of a pageant. This may suggest that Scribe B's exemplars had a greater influence on his linguistic behaviour than on other aspects of his scribal practice.

However, Scribe B's language cannot be seen as entirely reflecting the various guild originals. There are a number of indications that pageants whose language in the register copies is not markedly regional originally contained more northerly spellings. Occasional northern forms in later pageants – such as the isolated appearances of *sall* in pageants 22, 23 and 28 – may reflect the continued presence of regional linguistic forms in the guild exemplars, some of which escaped Scribe B's translation. The evidence of rhymes, although not always straightforward, is also suggestive.[39] It is important to note that rhymes suggest a good deal of dialectal diversity in the guild originals, including a number of more southerly forms.[40] Nevertheless, many rhyme sequences must at one stage have been based around northern spellings.[41] In the form in which these appear in the register, however, many of these sequences reflect Scribe B's line-internal preferences for less northerly forms. Such sequences may already have lost some of their northerly character in the guild originals, but a comparison of the texts copied by Scribes A and B shows that it is unlikely that Scribe B's exemplars were characterized by the consistent avoidance of northernisms.

The register contains copies of pageant 3 made by Scribes A and B respectively. Scribe A's language is of a more northerly aspect than Scribe B's and it is noticeable that he preserves some northern rhymes that Scribe B changes (B:

*is/liknesse*; A: *es/liknes*; B: *broode/made*; A: *brade/made*; B: *where/more* A: *whare/mare*). Given that Scribe B's copy of the pageant uses *is* and tends to avoid *a* spellings of ON, OE *ā* (*gost*, Scribe A *gast*) and other northerly spellings such as *warlde* (Scribe B *worlde*), it is likely that Scribe A's copy of the pageant is generally closer to the language of the guild original.[42] We may draw two important conclusions from this comparison: Scribe B's language cannot be assumed to be derived from the language of his exemplars, and he may have had a southerly rather than northerly idiolect or 'spontaneous usage'.[43] This reasoning presumably lies behind the terse comment in the *Linguistic Atlas* that the language of Scribe B is 'apparently from considerably far S[outh] of York.'[44]

In summary, although some elements of linguistic variation in Scribe B's output probably reflect the diversity of his exemplars, the broader linguistic groupings in the manuscript which have been identified above seem more likely to derive from an inconsistent policy of scribal 'translation'. As we saw above, pageants 3B and 5 to 7 share certain similarities of layout and were probably the first group to be copied. Comparison with Scribe A's copy of pageant 3 suggests that Scribe B diluted the northerly language of these texts. Having decided on a standard format around pageant 7, however, the scribe also seems to have adopted a different approach to the language of the pageants he was copying. This involved, at least initially, an abandonment of the translation he had attempted in the earliest pageants. Pageants 8 to 16M and 33 are distinguished from the rest of Scribe B's work in containing a large number of northern spellings; in particular *s-* spellings of 'shall' and 'should' as opposed to less regional spellings with *s(c)h-*. Pageants 8 to 9, 14 to16M, and 16G contain varying proportions of *s-* and *s(c)h-* spellings and mark transitional stages in Scribe B's linguistic behaviour, while pageants 10 to 13 are particularly northern in character. It may even be that the originals of these pageants were at one stage less northerly than the surviving versions.[45]

This group of pageants also witnessed a significant change in Scribe B's script. In pageant 11 he ceased to distinguish consistently between *þ* and *y*, but rather than adopting the northern convention of writing *y* for <þ>, he used *þ* with increasing frequency for <y>. This becomes particularly marked in pageant 18, where the *sch-* spellings that are to predominate in the later parts of the manuscript first become common. It may be that Scribe B's understanding of *þ* and *y* was disturbed by the occurrence of *y* for <þ> in his exemplars: what can be

described as hypercorrection in his later use of þ seems to relate to his decreasing tolerance of northern spellings. This may have resulted from a general shift in the exemplars themselves – we need to remember that Scribe B's work may have taken place over as long as fourteen years – although we have seen evidence that the language of guild exemplars remained northerly in at least some respects. After pageant 18 there is a relative consistency about Scribe B's language, although he continued to alter other aspects of his exemplars, such as their layout, and continued to vary in his use of *y* and þ.

Within this series of broad changes the sequence of individual pageants is not always clear. We noted above, for example, that pageant 8 is uncharacteristic of earlier pageants in its use of þ and *y*. The suggestion that it was written after its neighbours might be supported by some clear differences in the handwriting between pageant 8 and pageants 7 and 9; by the lack of any decoration around the catchword on fol. 22v; and by the undecorated speech rules used in pageant 8. Several of these factors combine to associate pageant 8 with pageants 12-14.[46] An analysis of the manuscript's language may, then, help us to understand the manner in which it was compiled; but such analysis also raises wider implications.

## Civic language, guild language, and regional language

As some earlier scholars perceived, northern linguistic forms are almost conspicuous by their absence from Scribe B's work, but this absence is not total or complete. Over forty folios of the manuscript are characterized, to a greater or lesser degree, by northern forms. Clearly, Scribe B was familiar with and to some extent tolerant of such spellings, which must have continued to occur in his exemplars. In the final section of this paper, I shall suggest a context in which his erratic linguistic practice might be placed.

The cycle manuscript was produced for York's civic authorities, probably as part of the increased civic vigilance over the production of the cycle that developed in the later fifteenth century.[47] Although there is no evidence that it was produced by a civic scribe, it is similar in some respects to contemporary civic registers of documentary material. In contrast to the manuscript of the Towneley cycle, with its continuous, largely unannotated text and elaborate strapwork decoration, the York register is, like the city's records, a working volume, with running titles used for ease of reference, blank space for potential additions, and a good deal of later annotation.[48] The first reference to the

manuscript in the civic records (in 1527) makes it clear that it is the responsibility of a civic official, the common clerk, and describes it as a *registrum* – the term used to denote the city's other volumes of record.[49] Likewise, the copying of pageants into the manuscript was known as 'registering', and the entry of documents in other record books was described in the same way.[50] Furthermore, two of the sixteenth-century pageants, and many of the annotations in the manuscript are the work of John Clerke, who also wrote many contemporary civic records.[51] The civic associations of the manuscript are therefore clear, and may shed light on the language of its principal scribe. For while the inconsistency of Scribe B's 'translation' of his exemplars is difficult to parallel in other literary manuscripts,[52] it shows some similarity to the linguistic behaviour of York's civic scribes in the fifteenth century.[53]

Middle English material in the surviving fifteenth-century York civic registers may be roughly divided into three periods.[54] Documents copied at York in the 1420s and 1430s, the work of at least five different scribes, use northern forms such as *sall, suld; bathe* 'both', *fra* 'from', *alde* 'old'; present participle *-and*; *mykill* 'much', *swylk* 'such', *whylk* 'which.'[55] By the mid-fifteenth-century (*c.* 1443-*c.* 1467), certain of these northern forms have been replaced – for the most part – by more widespread variants: for example, *shall* instead of *sall, fro* instead of *fra*, *-ing* instead of *-and*. The replacement of other northerly forms is more erratic. From the mid-fifteenth century, *such* is preferred to *swilk*, but *mykill* 'much' continues to be used. Indeed, both *ilk* 'each' and *mykill* continue to be found in documents from the later fifteenth century (1470 onwards).[56] This group of documents is, in fact, marked not by any greater avoidance of northern forms, but rather by a significant increase in the use of forms of restrictedly southern distribution, such as *eny* 'any', *nat* 'not' and *tofore* 'before' (usually as a preposition).[57] In fact, even what seem to have been strongly-marked northern forms do not die out completely: a few entries in the 1490s contain the present participle in *-and*, and a contemporary scribe (perhaps the common clerk Robert Plumpton) used *suld* and *sal* as well as *shuld* and *shall*. But by the end of the fifteenth century such spellings are unusual, and occur in entries whose language has lost regional colour in many other respects.[58]

This is a brief summary of a difficult body of material whose analysis is not straightforward. A large number of different scribes are involved, all with rather different linguistic preferences. In the later part of the fifteenth century no scribe's work can be followed for long enough to observe changing usage, as is possible, for example, with some of the Paston correspondents.[59] Linguistic

change cannot be shown to result from individual decision-making, but must be extrapolated from the output of several scribes, about most of whom little or nothing is known. However, the persistence of certain regional spellings in the records seems to indicate that the changes in the records' language are not due to the recruitment of less regional clerical staff (although this in itself would be of considerable interest), but to a deliberate attempt on the part of scribes to avoid what must sometimes have been their spontaneous usage in favour of less regional spellings. This hypothesis is supported by the occasional appearance of even marked dialectal forms, and by occasional corrections of regional to less regional forms.[60]

The evidence suggests, then, that by the mid-fifteenth century, York's civic scribes were uncomfortable with what have been described in a comparable context as 'old fashioned and provincial spellings'.[61] The intensity of this discomfort, as well as the linguistic features with which it was associated, evidently varied from person to person, as did the spellings which were adopted as substitutes. Nevertheless, we can infer that in the second half of the fifteenth century York's administration was characterized by uncertainty – and perhaps anxiety – as to what linguistic forms were appropriate for civic documents. The argument that the late-fifteenth-century York House Books are 'still written in a gritty Northern speech, full of dialect words . . . [and] of expressions obsolete in the south', with its implication of civic solidarity with regional language and indifference to standardizing pressures, is a serious over-simplification.[62]

There are a number of differences between the language of civic documentary material and the language of the cycle register. The proportion of northerly forms in the latter is generally greater than in the former, and some forms which appear to have been highly salient to the scribes of the registers seem to have been less marked to Scribe B. The most noticeable is the formation of the present participle in *-and*, which is hardly found after the early fifteenth century in the civic registers.[63] Although Scribe B's 'spontaneous usage' (to judge from the headings to some of the earlier pageants on fols 11r, 16v and 19r) was to use *-ing*, he seems to have had no compunction against reproducing the more dialectal form. Furthermore, whereas the civic scribes move, more or less steadily and consistently, from regional to less regional forms, Scribe B seems to have begun his work by avoiding northern forms, to have tolerated some of them for a while, and then to have avoided them again; in contrast to the hypothetical city clerk anxious to avoid the provincialisms of his 'spontaneous usage', Scribe B's spontaneous usage may have been for southerly rather than northerly forms.

Nevertheless, the civic administration's discomfort with northern Middle English, combined with its uncertainty as to precisely which linguistic features were to be avoided as provincial or imitated as prestigious, provides a suggestive context for Scribe B's inconsistent linguistic 'translation'.

Explanations of Scribe B's linguistic behaviour can only be hypothetical in the absence of biographical information or the identification of other manuscripts copied by him. But whatever the explanation, it is striking that much of Scribe B's work is distinguished by the relative absence of regional language. A connection between this absence and the civic associations of the cycle register seems to be supported by the only surviving non-civic text of a pageant, a copy of the guild 'original' of the 'Incredulity of Thomas' (pageant 41) dated *c*. 1525-50.[64] The language of the guild manuscript is in some respects less regional than that of Scribe B: for example, the present participle is formed with *-yng* rather than *-and*. The considerably later date of this manuscript must go a long way towards accounting for these and similar differences.[65] Despite its later date, however, the manuscript uses the spelling *suld* (l. 136). The presence of this northern form, so rare in Scribe B's work as to suggest that he avoided it assiduously in most of the register, provides further evidence that careful attention to spellings may be seen as characteristic of the civic rather than the guild versions of the cycle.

This seems to be born out by later additions to the register. It is true that the fragmentary pageant 46A, perhaps copied as late as 1559, contains a number of northerly spellings including *sulde*.[66] However, this must be balanced against the significantly more numerous sixteenth-century annotations which are concerned with decreasing the northerly language of certain pageants. Particularly striking is the treatment of pageant 8, where not only spelling (*lang*, *strang* changed to *long*, *strong*) but vocabulary (*must* substituted for *bus*) have been corrected. Pageant 46A demonstrates that the consistent avoidance of northerly language in the cycle manuscript was not natural or inevitable, even by the mid-sixteenth-century. Nevertheless, the sixteenth-century history of the manuscript tends to confirm and continue the avoidance of certain regional spellings initiated by Scribe B.

Where do we stand in relation to 'local speech-forms' and 'the drama and its community'? The language of the surviving texts can tell us little if anything about the dialect of the cycle in performance. What the texts do suggest, though, is a distinction between guild and civic attitudes to the language of the plays.

While the evidence is complex and rarely susceptible to dogmatic interpretation, the discussion above has shown that the civic copy of the cycle is characterized by relatively careful awareness of the language of the pageants, and by attempts to impose a certain uniformity on this language while reducing its regional colour. This process parallels those concerns with aspects of the pageants' presentation which have received more scholarly attention. On the other hand, both the cycle manuscript and the surviving guild text indicate that the guild originals of the pageants were not subject to such close scrutiny of language or layout, and must have continued to be characterized by much northerly language. We need to recognize that 'the drama and its community' were not monolithic, and that the cycle may have meant rather different things to the various institutions involved in its production. While the presence of local language in guild versions of the pageants is ambivalent in its implications, the widespread *avoidance* of such language in the civic copy does suggest that the identity of the civic oligarchy, in the cycle as elsewhere, might be constructed precisely against and in distinction to the region of which York was often seen as the capital.

This is not, perhaps, the conclusion one would expect to have reached, having begun with the celebration of local language implicit in the Towneley cycle: much of which, after all, derives directly from York. In fact, however, the Towneley manuscript poses exactly the opposite problem. We have already noted some of the ways in which its layout and presentation are more formal and lavish than the York register. Trusler pointed out that its language also 'shows much greater consistency and uniformity of usage than does York',[67] and despite the protests against Mak's 'southern tooth', its spellings are in many ways less regional than Scribe B's later usage. For example, Scribe B continues to use forms like *swilk* for 'such', whereas the scribe of the Towneley manuscript only uses the northerly *slyke* in rhyme, preferring to write *sich* elsewhere.[68] While Scribe B mostly preserved the dialectal inflection of the present participle in *-and*, the Towneley copyist consistently used *-ing*, again only keeping *-and* where it was required by rhyme. Why should a manuscript associated with a relatively minor urban community such as Wakefield be less regional in its language than one produced in York?

The question is difficult to answer because there are no surviving records from Wakefield which clarify the context of the Towneley manuscript's production. Its date and original ownership are both uncertain. The tendency of recent scholarship, however, is to date the manuscript relatively late, perhaps not earlier than 1500 and thus as much as a generation later than Scribe B's work. As

Trusler suggested, the Towneley scribe may also have been 'working from a manuscript that had already been compiled, instead of being faced, as was apparently the York scribe, by the task of copying and compiling simultaneously'.[69] Finally, of course, Wakefield is considerably south of York, and northern forms are thus less to be expected. A combination of these considerations seems to account for the language of the Towneley manuscript without invalidating the present explanation of Scribe B's linguistic behaviour.

## Conclusions

Linguistic distinctiveness was an important constituent of northern identity in late medieval England, both for those inside and for those outside the region. While written linguistic distinctiveness decreased sharply over the fifteenth century, little is known about the motivation behind this change, or its relation to or impact on regional identities. This paper has suggested a way in which such questions might be approached, through a more detailed account of the language of the York Corpus Christi cycle than has hitherto been available. This has offered a new and fruitful perspective on Meg Twycross's question: 'quite how far the mystery plays of Northern England may have contributed to a sense of communal identity on a series of levels: at the small-group level of the trade guild, the larger level of the city, and possibly even the larger regional level of the North of England as opposed to the South.[70]

Twycross focussed on the former two aspects, arguing that the northern dialect of the York and Towneley cycles did not necessarily make them '*self-consciously* northern'.[71] As we have seen, however, the language of the manuscript's main scribe is far from homogeneous. While a significant part of the manuscript must reproduce fairly closely the northerly language of the guild originals, the preceding and following sections are characterized by less regional spellings which may in part reflect changes in the language of the scribe's exemplars but which also represent conscious acts of scribal translation. The civic copy of the cycle is distinguished by a general avoidance of regional language, which may be related to a comparable avoidance of northerly spellings in the later-fifteenth-century documentary materials produced by York's civic administration. In both cases, there is an effort to distinguish the civic from the local: to position civic identity as precisely not regional. The language of the York cycle – quite apart from its intrinsic interest for the history of later medieval

English – poses important questions about the place of the north in civic and guild identity at York, the importance of language as a constituent of these identities, and the role of the Corpus Christi cycle itself in articulating them.

TABLE 1: Distribution of variants of 'shall' in selected pageants. (All occurrences of *s-* spellings are shown.)

| Pageant | *s-* | *sch-* | *sh-* |
|---------|------|--------|-------|
| 8 | 17 | 1* | 6 |
| 9 | 25 | | 5 |
| 10 | 35 | | |
| 11 | 46 | | |
| 12 | 29 | | [1]** |
| 13 | 13 | | |
| 14 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| 15 | 7 | | 2 |
| 16M | 29 | | 3 |
| 16G | 6 | 3 | 32 |
| 18 | | 6 | 3 |
| 19 | | 23 | 4 |
| 20 | | 18 | 5 |
| 21 | | 15 | 2 |
| 22 | 1 | 17 | |
| 23 | 1 | 16 | 1 |
| 28 | 1 | 49 | 1 |
| 33 | 38 | | |

\* corrected from an original *sall* when the present lines 102-03 were relocated at rubrication.

\*\*added in a later hand, l. 168.

TABLE 2: Structure of the manuscript

| folios | quire | pageant | scribe if not B |
|--------|-------|---------|-----------------|
| 1-8 | [a*] | 1-3a | A |
| 9-16 | [a] | 3b-6 | B and C |
| 17-22 | b | 6-8 | B and C |
| 23-30 | c | 8-9 | |
| 31-38 | d | 10-11 | |
| 39-47 | e | 11-12 | |
| 48-55 | f | 13-14 | |
| 56-61 | g | 15 | |
| 62-69 | h | 16M | |
| 70-77 | i | 16G and 18 | |
| 78-85 | k | 18-19 | |
| 86-93 | l | 20-21 | |
| 94-101 | m | 21-[22a] | |
| 102-09 | n | 23-[23a] | |
| 110-15 | o | 24-25 | |
| 116-23 | p | 25-26 | |
| 124-31 | q | 26-27 | |
| 132-37 | r | 27-28 | |
| 138-45 | s | 28-29 | |
| 146-53 | t | 29-30 | |
| 154-61 | v | 30 | |
| 162-69 | x | 30-31 | |
| 170-77 | y | 31-32 | |
| 178-85 | z | 32-33 | |

| folios | quire | pageant | scribe if not B |
|--------|-------|---------|-----------------|
| 187-91 | & | 33-34 | |
| 192-99 | 9 | 34-35 | |
| 200-07 | xxvj | 35-37 | |
| 208-15 | xxvij | 37-38 | |
| 216-23 | xxviij | 38-39 | |
| 224-31 | xxix | 40-17 | B and C |
| 232-40 | xxx | 17-42 | C and B |
| 241-48 | xxxi | 43-44 | |
| 249-56 | xxxii | 45 | |
| 257-64 | xxxiii | 46-47 | |
| 265-68 | xxxiv | 47-46a | B and D |

Based on the diagram in *The York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xii-xv, to which the reader is referred for fuller information; the numbering of the pageants here corresponds to that used in *The York Play*, ed. by Beadle.

**NOTES**

[1] Angus McIntosh and others, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986; henceforward *LALME*). The General Introduction to volume 1 provides a useful outline of the history of Middle English dialectology, and an account of the techniques employed in the *Atlas* itself, with full references. For a more informal account of its production, and a response to some of the work's critics, see Michael Benskin, 'In reply to Dr Burton', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 22 (1991), 209-62.

[2] *The York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle (London: Arnold, 1982), p. 39, who lists the principal previous studies. References to pageants in the cycle are given according to the numbering of this edition, using Arabic rather than Roman; with the exception that the Masons' and Goldsmiths' pageants are distinguished as 16M and 16G.

[3] Gerald Byron Kinneavy, *A Concordance to the York Plays*, with a textual introduction by Richard Beadle (New York: Garland, 1986); *The York Play: A Facsimile of British Library MS Additional 35290 Together With a Facsimile of the* Ordo Paginarum *Section of the A/Y Memorandum Book*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Peter Meredith, Leeds Texts and Monographs Medieval Drama Facsimiles 7 (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1983). References to British Library MS. Additional 35290 are to the foliation of the facsimile.

[4] On these issues see, for example, P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Performing the Word of God: Corpus Christi Drama in the Northern Province', in *Life and Thought in the Northern Church c. 1100 - c. 1700: Essays in Honour of Claire Cross*, ed. by Diana Wood, Studies in Church History Subsidia 12 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), pp. 145-70; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government', in *The Government of Medieval York*, ed. by Sarah Rees Jones, Borthwick Studies in History 3 (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 1997), pp. 141-63, the latter partly taking issue with Heather Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), 29-48.

[5] *Caxton's* Eneydos, *1490*, ed. by W. T. Culley and F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 57 (London: Trübner, 1890), p. 2; B. J. and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), K11; *Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum*, ed. by Albert Way, 3 vols., Camden Society o.s. 25, 54, 89 (London, 1843-65), I, 1-3.

[6] *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Hans Kurath, Sherman M. Kuhn and Robert E. Lewis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956-2001; henceforward *MED*), s.v. *froten*; *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, ed. by Churchill Babington and Joseph

Rawson Lumby, 9 vols, Rolls Series 41 (London: Longman, 1869), II, 156; the work survives in over 120 manuscripts. Compare *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum Libri Quinque*, ed. by N. E. S. A. Hamilton, Rolls Series 52 (London: Longman, 1870), p. 209.

[7] *Shakespeare's Jest Book: A Hundred Mery Tales*, ed. by Hermann Oesterley (London: J. B. Smith, 1866), p. 158

[8] D. M. Owen, 'White Annys and others', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 331-46 (p. 344); cited together with other examples by C. Clark, 'Another Late-Fourteenth-Century Case of Dialect Awareness', *English Studies*, 62 (1981), 504-05.

[9] Cited by A. I. Doyle, 'Reflections on Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 14 (1983), 82-93 (p. 91 n. 16). A similar scribal distinction between 'Northarn' and 'Sutherne' is cited by Angus McIntosh, 'A New Approach to Middle English Dialectology', *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 1-11 (p. 8).

[10] *Cursor Mundi: A Northumbrian Poem of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Richard Morris, EETS o.s. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101 (London: Trübner, 1874-1893), lines 20059-64.

[11] M. R. James, 'The Anlaby Cartulary', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 31 (1934), 337-47 (p. 340).

[12] *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, EETS s.s. 13, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), I, 135.

[13] David Mills, 'Preliminary Note: The Language of Medieval Drama', in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by A. C. Cawley and others, Revels History of Drama in English I (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 69-78 (p. 75).

[14] See above, n. 1.

[15] See, for example, N. F. Blake, 'Wynkyn de Worde and the *Quatrefoil of Love*', *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen*, 206 (1969), 189-200; Thomas G. Duncan, 'A Middle English Linguistic Reviser', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 82 (1981), 162-74; J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Chaucer as a Philologist: *The Reeve's Tale*', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, (1934), 1-70; N. F. Blake, 'The Northernisms in The Reeve's Tale', *Lore and Language*, 3 (1979), 1-8.

[16] M. L. Samuels, 'Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology', *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 81-94, reprinted in Angus McIntosh and others, *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some Principles and Problems* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), pp. 64-80 (esp. pp. 66-77); John H. Fisher, *The Emergence of Standard English* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996). See also A. O. Sandved 'Prolegomena to a Renewed Study of the Rise of Standard English', in *So Meny People, Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Medieval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, ed. by Michael Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh: M. Benskin and M. L. Samuels, 1981), pp. 31-42; and for a full bibliography on the

subject, Laura Wright, 'Introduction', in *The Development of Standard English 1300-1800: Themes, Descriptions, Conflicts*, ed. by Laura Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-8 (pp. 7-8).

[17] P. J. Lucas, 'Consistency and Correctness in the Orthographic Usage of John Capgrave's *Chronicle*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 45 (1973), 323-55; N. Davis, 'The Language of Two Brothers in the Fifteenth Century', in *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, ed. by E. G. Stanley and Douglas Gray (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 23-38; Jeremy Smith, *An Historical Study of English: Form, Function and Change* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 68-77.

[18] For its impact on some of the Paston correspondents, see N. Davis, 'A Paston Hand', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 3 (1952), 209-21; N. Davis, 'The Language of the Pastons', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 40 (1954), 119-44.

[19] Richard Beadle and Peter Meredith, 'Further External Evidence for Dating the York Register', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 11 (1980), 51-58. For the terms 'register' and 'original' see Peter Meredith, 'Scribes, Texts and Performance', in *Aspects of Early English Drama*, ed. by Paula Neuss (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 13-29.

[20] *York Plays*, ed. by Beadle, p. 16; for John Clerke see *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xxi-iii, and Peter Meredith, 'John Clerke's Hand in the York Register', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 12 (1981), 245-71.

[21] *LALME* I, 13.

[22] Richard Beadle, 'The Textual Basis', in Kinneavy, *Concordance*, pp. xix-xxiii (p. xxii). See also *York Plays,* ed. by Beadle, p. 39; *York Plays*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), p. lxviii.

[23] *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, p. xx.

[24] *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xxiv-xxvii.

[25] *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xxiv-xxvii.

[26] Michael Benskin, 'The Letters <þ> and <y> in Later Middle English, and Some Related Matters', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 7 (1982), 13-30.

[27] Supporting evidence for the following may be found in Kinneavy, *Concordance*.

[28] *LALME* I, dot maps 144-45, 148; IV, 37-40.

[29] Noteworthy, but not of direct interest for the present discussion, are the rarer forms *sill* at 28.92 (in rhyme), and *shull* at 43.66; the former is not attested in *LALME*. (The spelling is recorded in *OED*, without any illustrative quotation; the example from the York cycle is the only citation of the spelling in *MED*.)

[30] *LALME* I, dot maps 144-45 and 148; IV, 37-43

[31] *LALME* I, dot map 173; IV, 49; *LALME* I, dot map 548; IV, 272.

[32] *LALME* I, dot map 180; IV, 51-52.

[33] *Bathe: LALME* I, dot map 366; IV, 134; *haly: LALME* I, dot map 805; IV, 201.

[34] *LALME* I, dot maps 121 and 168; IV, 34 and 46-47.

[35] Compare Beadle and Meredith's association of pageants 11 and 33 on the basis of handwriting: *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, p. xx.

[36] *LALME* I, dot map 628; IV, 61.

[37] *LALME* I, dot map 99; IV, 29.

[38] *LALME* I, dot maps 272-73; IV, 81.

[39] The study by J. H. Scroggs, 'A Phonological Study of the Riming Words of the York Plays' (unpublished MA dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1959), was interested in the rhymes as evidence for pronunciation rather than scribal practice but accepted that in a number of cases scribal interference must lie behind the forms in the register (see for example pp. 39, 46 and 54).

[40] A number of rhymes, for example, suggest original *is* rather than northerly *es* (*LALME* I, dot maps 134-35): 23.26-32 (*wys*/hominis/*mys*/*is*), 41.52-54 (*is*/*blis*). It is unclear whether *prophesieth*/*bright* (17.115-17), indicates original southerly inflection of third person plural present indicative in *-th* (*LALME* I, dot map 654) or scribal alteration of original weak preterite in *-t* (*LALME* I, dot map 655).

[41] For example, *froo*/omnia (43.34-36); *two*/visita/*ma*/*swa* (43.134-40); *sore*/*wore* ('were', subjunctive pl.)/*fare*/*euermore* (20.266-72); *-nesse*/*is*/*dresse*/*expres* (22.199-203).

[42] Relevant maps are: OE, ON *ā: LALME* I, dot maps 633-34; *warlde, worlde*: dot maps 290-91; *is, es*: dot maps 134-35; *whare, where*: dot maps 323-24.

[43] For 'spontaneous usage', see *LALME* I, 14.

[44] *LALME* I, 102.

[45] Note the rhyme *waa*/domino (11.405-07).

[46] Boxes around catchwords are found on fols 16v, 30v, 38v, 46v: that is, up to pageant 12, with the exception of pageant 8. Catchwords without boxes appear on fols 22v (pageant 8), 47v (the singleton containing the end of pageant 12) and 55v (pageant 14). (Thereafter follow two catchwords in boxes, fols 69v (pageant 16G) and 77v (pageant 18), and three without, fols 85v (before 20), 93v (21) and 101v (before 23); before decoration becomes standardized after quire p. See *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, p. xviii.)

[47] Goldberg, 'Craft Guilds' (n. 4 above), pp. 158-59.

[48] *The Towneley Cycle: A Facsimile of Huntington MS HM 1*, ed. by A. C. Cawley and Martin Stevens, Leeds Texts and Monographs, Medieval Drama Facsimiles 2 (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1976).

[49] *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979; henceforward *REED: York*), I, 244; compare, for example, the description of York A/Y Memorandum Book (York City Archives

E20) in terms of the *maior registrum* and the *novum registrum*. (*REED:York*, I, xix)

[50] *REED: York*, I, 330-31 and 351; Meredith, 'Scribes, Text and Performance', p. 15; compare, for example, the oath taken by the York common clerk, 'all thinges that shall be enterd of Recorde ye shall truely enroull and Registre.' (York City Archives D1 (the Freeman's Register), fol. 1v.)

[51]   See above, note 20.

[52]   See M. L. Samuels, 'Langland's Dialect', *Medium Aevum*, 54 (1985), 232-47, reprinted in *The English of Chaucer and his Contemporaries: Essays by M. L. Samuels and J. J. Smith*, ed. by J. J. Smith (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp. 70-85 (82 n. 25); J. J. Smith, 'Spelling and Tradition in Fifteenth-Century Copies of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', in *The English of Chaucer*, ed. by Smith, pp. 96-113; Smith, *Historical Study of English*, pp. 73-75; J. J. Smith, 'Dialect and Standardisation in the Waseda Manuscript of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*', in *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference 20-22 July 1995*, ed. by Shoichi Oguro, Richard Beadle and Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 129-43.

[53]   See above, note 16.

[54]   A study of the language of documentary and literary material from Yorkshire was made in Ida Baumann, *Die Sprache der Urkunden aus Yorkshire im 15. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätbuchhandlung, 1902), but this was reliant on printed material at a time when the majority of the Middle English York records had not been edited.

[55]   These documents, which consist largely of guild ordinances and verdicts concerning disputed property, are contained in York City Archives, E20 (often referred to as the A/Y Memorandum Book), and have been printed in *York Memorandum Book Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers, 2 vols, Surtees Society 120 and 125 (Durham: Andrews and Co., 1912-15); and in *A Volume of English Miscellanies Illustrating the History and Language of the Northern Counties of England*, ed. by James Raine, Surtees Society 85 (Durham: Andrews and Co., 1888); see also *LALME* III, 565 for an analysis of a lengthy memorandum of 1428 whose language is characteristic of these earlier documents. There are also some items in York City Archives E25 (the B/Y Memorandum Book), printed in *York Memorandum Book,* ed. by Joyce W. Percy, Surtees Society 186 (Gateshead: Northumberland Press, 1973). The best brief description of these civic manuscripts is *REED: York*, I, xviii-xx.

[56]   In addition to the references given in n. 55 above, the third group of documents includes material registered in York's House Books. The earlier volumes, York City Archives, B1-B6, have been fully edited in *York House Books 1461-1490*, ed. by Lorraine C. Attreed, 2 vols (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991), and later volumes are excerpted in *York Civic Records*, ed. by Angelo Raine and others, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 98, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119, 138 (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1939-78). A number of letters testimonial

against accusations of Scottish nationality, printed in *English Miscellany*, ed. by Raine, are more northern in language: they are not of civic origin and have been excluded from this analysis.

[57]   *LALME* I, dot maps 98, 276 and 362; IV, 29, 82 and 124-28.

[58]   For *-and* see *York House Books*, ed. by Attreed, I, 206, 208 and 210. The second scribe's work is found in York City Archives, B7: see for example fols 37r (printed in *York Civic Records*, ed. by Raine and others, II, 70), 39v, 51v-52r, 56v, 60v, 65r. Entries in other hands in this volume use *shuld* or *shall*: see for example fols 39A, 44r, 48v, 55v; but note also the appearance of *sall* in a record of the Linenweavers' ordinances on fol. 20v of York City Archives, B1 (*York House Books*, ed. by Attreed, I, 42).

[59]   See above, note 18.

[60]   See above, note 58; examples of corrections are the change of *als-als* to *als-as*, York City Archives, B1, fol. 69v (see *York House Books*, ed. by Attreed, I, 124, where the second *als* is misread as *ale*), and the change of *gyf* to *geue*, in the paper volume bound into the A/Y Memorandum Book, fols 26 and 27 (see *York House Books*, II, 712 and 714). For the more southerly associations of the latter forms in these pairs, see *LALME* I, dot maps 629 and 630; IV, 62; IV, 181-82.

[61]   Davis, 'A Paston Hand', p. 219.

[62]   D. M. Palliser, 'Civic Mentality and Environment in Tudor York', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), 78-115 (p. 99).

[63]   The only exceptions are noted above, n. 58.

[64]   A. C. Cawley, 'The Sykes MS of the York Scriveners' Play', *Leeds Studies in English*, n. s. 7 (1972), 45-80 (for the date, p. 45).

[65]   See Cawley's comparison of the language of the two versions, 'Sykes MS', pp. 54-56.

[66]   For the date see *York Plays*, ed. by Beadle, pp. 462-63, noting that the handwriting might suggest a date earlier in the sixteenth century.

[67]   Margaret Trusler, 'The Language of the Wakefield Playwright', *Studies in Philology*, 33 (1936), 15-39 (p. 36).

[68]   *LALME* III, 622-23 gives an analysis of the language of the pageants attributed to the 'Wakefield Master', which seems to be characteristic of the manuscript as a whole, with the exception of the pageant *Suspencio Iude*, which is in a different hand and more dialectal language. For the association of the Towneley cycle with Wakefield, and the date of the manuscript, see *Towneley Plays*, ed. by Stevens and Cawley, pp. xix-xxii and xv.

[69]   Trusler, 'Language', p. 39.

[70]   Meg Twycross, 'Civic Consciousness in the York Mystery Plays', in *Social and Political Identities in Western History*, ed. by Claus Bjørn, Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Copenhagen: Academic Press, 1994), pp. 67-89.

[71]   Twycross, 'Civic Consciousness', p. 67.