Two main patterns of purchasing emerge from this analysis of the priory's accounts, the ‘tenurial’ and ‘market’ methods. This chapter addresses the first of these — the purchasing of goods via Durham Cathedral Priory's tenurial networks. This was especially important for basic foodstuffs such as grain, livestock, and some fish, as well as goods manufactured in the north-east of England. Such goods were mainly supplied by tenants of the priory, and were offset or credited against rents owing in the accounts. The analysis reveals the interrelationship between the priory as landlord and its tenants to have been exceptionally close, and to have been to both parties' advantage.

The chapter sets out the multiple definitions of core appropriate to the subject, ranging through the territorial, the dynastic, and the psychological. It looks at the full range of networks, seen and unseen, that supported the power of the cross-Channel elite and how they manifested themselves in times of crisis, as well as of peace. It analyses the interplay of local, regional, national, and imperial networks, emphasizing the differing strengths of all of them. The history of the British Isles is analysed in terms of hegemony and cultural transfer. The Church is seen as an important network that sometimes transcended the
power of empire. Positive emphasis is laid on trans-ethnic networks and on the importance of not reducing relationships to the simplifications that can be suggested by some of the narrative sources.

Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth-Century England, 1413-1471
Eliza Hartrich

Since the work of K.B. McFarlane in the mid-twentieth century, political histories of late medieval England have focused almost exclusively on the relationship between the Crown and aristocratic landholders. Such studies, however, neglect to consider that England after the Black Death was an urbanizing society. Towns not only were the residence of a rising proportion of the population, but were also the stages on which power was asserted and the places where financial and military resources were concentrated. Outside London, however, most English towns were small compared to those found in medieval Italy or Flanders, and it has been easy for historians to under-estimate their ability to influence English politics. Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth-Century England, 1413–1471 offers a new approach for evaluating the role of urban society in the political culture of late medieval England. Rather than focusing on English towns individually, it creates a model for assessing the political might that could be exerted by towns collectively as an ‘urban sector’. Based on primary sources from twenty-two towns (ranging from metropolis of London to the tiny Kentish town of Lydd), Politics and the Urban Sector demonstrates how fluctuations in inter-urban relationships affected the content, pace, and language of English politics during the tumultuous fifteenth century. Chapter 1 identifies the different types of links that towns formed with one another and with other members of political society. Chapters 2–5 are arranged chronologically, demonstrating the ways in which the frequent twists and turns of fifteenth-century ‘high politics’—from the reign of Henry V to the Wars of the Roses—were a reflection of the ever-shifting relationships between towns.

The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages
Gervase Rosser

The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages
Association in a guild or fraternity was an extremely common experience in medieval Europe. This book asks why so many people wished to belong to these highly miscellaneous groups (only rarely confined to a single craft), whose social diversity was of their essence. It finds a partial answer in the challenging material circumstances of the later Middle Ages, but a fuller one in contemporary debates surrounding the identity and fulfilment of the individual, and the problematic question of his or her relationship to a larger society. These debates are contextualized in a longer history which continues to be pertinent today. Unlike previous studies, the book’s focus is not on the guilds as institutions but on the social and moral processes which were catalysed by participation. These bodies are shown to have founded schools, built bridges, managed almshouses, governed small towns, shaped religious ritual, and commemorated the dead. Informing and transcending all of these activities, however, was the perception that association in a fraternity could be a catalyst of personal change. Members cultivated friendship between individuals on the understanding that the fulfilment of human potential depended upon a mutually transformative engagement with others. The peasants, artisans, and professionals who joined the guilds sought to change both their society and themselves. The study sheds light on the conception and construction of society in the Middle Ages, and suggests further that this evidence has implications for how we see ourselves.

Mercantile Politics and the Ascendancy of Networks, c. 1435–50

Eliza Hartrich

in Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth-Century England, 1413-1471

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Over the 1430s and 1440s, a subtle but important shift occurred in the nature of urban political agency. In 1413–35, the dramatis personae in the theatre of the English urban political sector were civic governments, but in the years after 1435 collective political action was coordinated instead through informal networks of wealthy merchants. This chapter examines the causes and consequences of this shift in urban involvement in national politics, from public and corporation-based to private and mercantile. The first section examines why the Crown came to rely on mercantile resources in the years following the 1435–6 Burgundian assault on Calais and how merchants used their political leverage to influence royal policy. The second section goes on to
investigate the effects that these lateral networks between members of the merchant elite had on the complexion of urban internal politics.

Conclusion
Eliza Hartrich

in Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth-Century England, 1413-1471

By studying the urban political sector—a framework within which towns and the people who lived in them could pool their collective resources to influence national politics, and in which the internal governance and political experiences of different individual towns could influence those of others within the sector—it becomes possible to write a history of late medieval English politics that is not focused exclusively on aristocratic landholders. An urban sector model allows for the political might of smaller towns in a centralized monarchy (such as was the case in fifteenth-century England) to be compared more profitably to that exercised by the more celebrated towns and urban leagues of Northern Italy and Flanders. Also, this book’s emphasis on frequent fluctuations in the nature of the English urban sector, rather than long-term trajectories, serves to question evolutionary narratives concerning the transition from the ‘medieval’ to ‘early modern’ English town.

Introduction
Eliza Hartrich

This introduction suggests that political practices, discourses, and events in fifteenth-century England were shaped by the experiences of those who governed, lived in, and travelled through towns. The tradition, however, of studying individual English towns, rather than assessing the collective influence of multiple towns, has made it difficult for the role of townspeople and urban spaces in English political life to be appreciated. Here, a new methodology is proposed for studying relationships between towns and for tracing the relative strength of this inter-connected ‘urban sector’ at particular points in time. Fluctuations in the membership and
strength of this ‘urban sector’ had significant implications for how pivotal events in English history—including the Wars of the Roses—played out.

The Government of Light: Gasworks, Gaslight, and Photometry
in The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910

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Item type: chapter

This chapter studies the development of gaslight and the networks that secured it. As physical systems delivering gas to its point of illumination proliferated, questions of management became pressing. Mains and gasworks had to be inspected and maintained, while the standards of both gas and the light it produced needed calculating. The science of photometry had emerged in the eighteenth century but became particularly important when light levels, for both public and private use, required measuring. This was an extremely complicated task, and the chapter traces the institutionalization of municipal photometry and various attempts to establish minimal light levels for streetlights.

Securing Perception: Assembling Electricity Networks
in The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: March 2013
Publisher: University of Chicago Press
DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226640785.003.0007
Item type: chapter

This chapter offers a detailed study of early electricity infrastructure, from mains and streetlamps to domestic meters and switches, in order to explore the attempt to construct autonomous systems that secured perceptual aptitudes that were themselves vital elements of liberal subjectivity. It concludes with a case study of the illumination of the City of London in the final two decades of the century.

Sacrament

Gervase Rosser
in The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550

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Item type: chapter
The ritualized eating and drinking organized by every guild, as the records reveal, were analogues for the miracle of the mass. In the annual feast, the lay members of the guilds revived the inclusive spirit of the early Christian ‘agapē’. The spirit of communion on these occasions was epitomized in the passing of a common drinking-cup. The solemn processions, religious services and plays of the fraternities, which framed the feasts, functioned equally both to embody and to advertise to a wider public the sacramental aspirations of these societies. The inclusion of the poor at the feast emulated monastic charity. Patterns of attendance at guild feasts show the deliberate and strategic use of these occasions by members to cultivate both non-utilitarian ties of friendship and diverse secular connections.

Bishops and the Political Community

S. T. Ambler

in Bishops in the Political Community of England, 1213-1272

This chapter surveys the place of bishops in the political community, outlining their key roles and responsibilities in the kingdom and examining the composition of the English episcopate in the thirteenth century, in particular the culture of sanctity amongst England’s bishops (which encouraged the canonization of six English bishops during the period under consideration here, an enterprise in which many bishops were involved), their educational networks, their friendships, and joint enterprises. It also argues that, although the bishops shared a vigorous culture, they were not a distinct group, in that many maintained friendships with lay nobles, and indeed served regularly at court. Serving both king and diocese was not necessarily problematic, especially now (following the loss of most Plantagenet possessions on the Continent) that this involved long and predictable periods spent at Westminster.