

Married to the City

The Early Modern Lord Mayor's Show Between Emblematics and Ritual

by Sarah Briest

DESCRIPTION:

"Married to the City" offers a fresh take on the interrelationship of emblems and mayoral pageants and a novel investigation into the function of feminine allegorical personifications in the early modern Lord Mayor's Show, with a special focus on the allegorical nuptials of mayor and city. The study finds that the newly sworn-in mayor's ritual passage through the streets of London serves not only as a spatial enactment of his rise in status but simultaneously confirms a metaphorical bond of marriage between mayor and city.

This naturalizes the prerogative of the mayor and company elites to wield civic power while it also serves to incorporate Londoners into an idea of the city as an integral, bodily entity. This function of personified London ("the speaking female city") in the Lord Mayor's Show is anticipated by the late medieval Corpus Christi celebrations which also figure community in terms of body. The study also pays attention to the hitherto neglected yet typical phenomenon of 'serious punning' on the names of new mayors in the Lord Mayor's Show by which new officeholders are ceremonially established in their positions at the heart of the city.

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