

THE SPIDER IN THE WEB: THE WEAVING OF A NEW, LANCASTRIAN
ENGLAND IN THE LATE FOURTEENTH AND
EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2013

ABSTRACT

In late-fourteenth century England, the third surviving son of King Edward III, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, became obsessed with gaining control of the nation and establishing a Lancastrian legacy that would one day evolve into a dynasty. This thesis investigates and compares the political maneuvering of John of Gaunt and his grandson, King Henry V, in order to illuminate the long-lasting effects of their actions which forever changed the face of both the monarchy and church in England.

In the 1370s, the aged King Edward III left the governance of the realm in the hands of his third surviving son, John of Gaunt. Edward the Black Prince of Wales was himself very sickly and incapable of administering the government, and the king's second son, Lionel of Antwerp the Duke of Clarence, had passed away earlier, on 17 October 1368. From the early 1370s until his father's death in 1377, while Lancaster acted as *de facto* king of England, he developed a predilection for power that he was not readily

willing to relinquish when his ten-year old nephew, Richard of Bordeaux, ascended to the throne as King Richard II. During his tenure as the guardian of the realm, John of Gaunt brought together a group of powerful men whose unwavering loyalty was critical in Lancaster's scheme to seize the realm. The insatiable appetite of John of Gaunt extended as far as coveting the authority of the church and centralizing that power under the crown. Lancaster's web of supporters propagated his agenda in the governance of the kingdom, and threw the church in England into an age of turmoil and uncertainty, leaving it vulnerable to possible appropriation by the temporal realm. John of Gaunt's eldest son Henry of Bolingbroke, who seized the throne from his cousin as King Henry IV in 1399, either learned little from his father's stratagems or rejected them, leaving him vulnerable to coercion by his advisors and parliament. Unimpressed by his father's mediocre reign, Henry V adopted his grandfather's flawed tactics for constructing a power base, and improved them. Examining the political maneuvering of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and his grandson, King Henry V, this thesis will show how the House of Lancaster wove the authority of both the temporal and spiritual realms into an inescapable web that enabled John of Gaunt's direct descendents to secure their continuous position as heirs to the throne of England.

APPROVAL PAGE

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Capgrave</i>	<i>The Book of the Illustrious Henries</i>
<i>Chronica</i>	<i>The 'Chronica Maiora' of Thomas Walsingham</i>
<i>CAU</i>	<i>The Chronicle of Adam of Usk 1377-1421</i>
<i>CD</i>	<i>Tractatus de Civili Dominio</i>
<i>CChR</i>	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls</i>
<i>CCR</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
<i>CFR</i>	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls</i>
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls.</i> Project of Professor G. R. Boynton and the University of Iowa Libraries. http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/patentrolls/search.html , 2003. (accessed 26 January 2013).
<i>Duchess</i>	<i>The Book of the Duchess</i>
<i>Ecclesia</i>	<i>Tractatus de Ecclesia</i>
<i>Expeditions</i>	<i>Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land made by Henry Earl of Derby (Afterwards King Henry IV) in the Years 1390-1 and 1392-3: Being Accounts Kept by his Treasurer During Two Years</i>
<i>Foedera</i>	<i>Foedera, Conventiones, Literæ, et Cujuscunque Generis Acta Publica, inter Reges Angliæ</i>
<i>Froissart</i>	<i>The Chronicle of Froissart, Volume I</i>
<i>FZ</i>	<i>Fasciculi Zizaniorum: Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico</i>
<i>GEC</i>	<i>The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom</i>
<i>GHQ</i>	<i>Gesta Henrici Quinti: The Deeds of Henry the Fifth</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Historia Anglicana</i>

<i>Hardyng</i>	<i>The Chronicle of Iohn Hardyng</i>
<i>Holinshed</i>	<i>Holinshed's Chronicles</i>
<i>House</i>	<i>The House of Fame</i>
<i>IE</i>	<i>Issues of the Exchequer from King Henry III to King Henry VI</i>
<i>IR</i>	<i>Issue Roll, Edward III, 1370</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth: Written in 1513 by an Anonymous Author Known Commonly as 'The Translator of Livius'</i>
<i>Life-Records</i>	<i>Life-Records of Chaucer IV</i>
<i>Monstrelet</i>	<i>The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet</i>
<i>PC</i>	<i>Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England</i>
<i>Reg 1371-1375</i>	<i>John of Gaunt's Register: 1371-1375</i>
<i>Reg 1379-1383</i>	<i>John of Gaunt's Register: 1379-1383</i>
<i>Rot Parl</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum; ut et Petitiones, et Placita in Parlamento Tempore Edwardi R. III.</i> 6 volumes. Project of the Genealogical Society of Utah d.b.a. FamilySearch. https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE101362 , 2008. (accessed 26 February 2013).
<i>St Albans</i>	<i>The St. Albans Chronicle: The 'Chronica Maiora' of Thomas Walsingham</i>
<i>WC</i>	<i>The Westminster Chronicle: 1381-1394</i>

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The first semester of my graduate program, several years after completing my Bachelor's, I enrolled in a course on *The Crusades* under the instruction of Dr. Linda Mitchell. When she returned the first paper of my career as a graduate student, Dr. Mitchell's comments, written in large, bold, red letters on the first page, read: "WTF is this?! This is *not* graduate level work! If this is the kind of work you are going to produce you might as well drop out of the program now!" Horrified and tearful as I was, from the moment I sat down with Dr. Mitchell to discuss the problems with my writing and how I might improve it, she has been nothing but my greatest supporter and mentor during my arduous journey through graduate school. It was Dr. Mitchell who looked at the disparate research I had done throughout my graduate career and pulled the pieces together, guiding me to the man whom I would obsess over for years: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

I have drawn heavily from the works of the renowned K. B. McFarlane, Simon Walker, and others. Dr. Mitchell has endured tedious draft after draft in which thoughts and ideas were never quite tied together, or that merely consisted of a master narrative and nothing more. It is only through her patient guidance and encouragement that I have been able to complete this work. Needless to say, any shortcomings herein are entirely my own.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Bradley R. Brattin, without whose love, support, and eternal patience and prodding, this work would have remained incomplete for many years to come.

Thank you for pushing me when I didn't think I could be pushed any farther.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scientific researchers have proven that spider silk is the most unique fiber in the world; “It is five times stronger than steel and can expand nearly a third greater than its original length and snap right back like new. Ounce-for-ounce spider silk is even stronger than Kevlar, the man-made fiber used in bulletproof vests.”¹ For an ambitious man like John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, third surviving son of King Edward III,² forging a network of allies whose bond to him had the strength of spider silk was invaluable. With two older brothers and their children standing between him and the crown of England,³ Lancaster would have to apply immense political strategy to position himself, and his descendents, in line for the throne. As it turned out, the duke was astonishingly savvy in the political arena and eventually succeeded in positioning his family side-by-side with the monarch of England.

¹ Andrew Myers, “Stanford Researcher Sheds New Light on the Mysteries of Spider Silk,” Stanford University School of Engineering, 4 February 2013, <http://engineering.stanford.edu/news/stanford-researcher-sheds-new-light-mysteries-spider-silk> (accessed 23 June 2013).

² King Edward III had five surviving sons: 1. Edward the Black Prince of Wales 2. Lionel of Antwerp the Duke of Clarence, 3. John of Gaunt the Duke of Lancaster, 4. Edmund of Langley the Duke of York, and 5. Thomas of Woodstock the Duke of Gloucester. For dates of births and deaths see Appendix A: *Chronology*.

³ Edward the Black Prince of Wales and his son Richard of Bordeaux, and Lionel of Antwerp and his daughter Philippa of Clarence.

The Lancastrian Circles

John of Gaunt was raised in an atmosphere that valued learning and intellect, Queen's College, Oxford having been founded in 1340/1341 in honor of his mother, Philippa of Hainault, who was the college's first patroness.⁴ Lancaster's interest in learned men of letters, illustrated below in Chapter 2, makes it almost certain that the duke was acquainted with the significance and importance of the number twelve in daily life, the spiritual realm, in the creation of art, and the construction of solid, durable buildings. In order to weave a web as enduring as the great cathedrals of stone, and in accordance to the laws of perfection, the duke recognized that he would need precisely twelve men to support him and his cause.

While John of Gaunt failed to acquire the crown for himself, the fractured government he left in his wake perfectly positioned his eldest son, Henry of Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford and Earl of Derby, to claim the throne of England after Lancaster's death in 1399. John of Gaunt's maneuvering was possible only through his association with twelve men, the 'Lancastrian Circle', who were willing to go to any lengths to protect the duke and their fellow Circle members. When Henry of Bolingbroke claimed the crown of England as Henry IV eight months after his father's death, he did not have a circle of supporters to protect his interests when he was threatened by his enemies. The result was a lackluster reign of mediocrity. Henry of Monmouth, the future Henry V, had clearly been attentive to the political artifices of his father and grandfather, and

⁴ Anil de Silva-Vigier, *This Moste Highe Prince...John of Gaunt: 1340-1399* (Edinburgh, Cambridge, Durham: The Pentland Press Ltd., 1992), 2.

intentionally modeled his strategy for controlling his kingdom on the tactics of his grandfather, John of Gaunt. While still Prince of Wales, the future Henry V followed his grandfather's example and created his own 'New Lancastrian Circle' of twelve supporters; unlike his grandfather, however, when Henry lost a member of his Circle they were replaced so the Circle always consisted of twelve men. Surrounding himself with men in whom he had implicit trust, Henry V realized, unlike his grandfather, that his Circle had to be tended to, and when a member was lost to death it was imperative to replace him – just as Matthias was appointed by the drawing of lots as the twelfth Apostle after Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Christ and subsequent suicide.

Appropriating the Authority of the Church

The benefices associated with bishoprics led to the appointment of men who held office in the service of the Crown prior to their appointments as bishop, and continued to hold certain secular offices during their appointments. During the reign of Edward III, bishoprics were used as a means to reward trusted and valued members of the royal administration, particularly its clerical servants. By 1365, Pope Urban V had blocked the marriage of Edmund of Langley to Margaret, the heiress of the count of Flanders, and had banned the holding of offices in plurality and demanded an inquiry be carried out into the state of pluralism in England.⁵ The crown's right to use church offices as a

⁵ "Edward III: January 1365," *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry, and Rosemary Horrox, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=116467> (accessed 25 July 2013).

means of providing incomes for its clerical servants challenged, and the livelihoods of the king's clerks threatened, the crown revived the Statute of Praemunire during the parliament of 1365.⁶ Edward III's successor, Richard II, who ascended to the throne of England in 1377 at the age of ten, continued his grandfather's tradition of providing benefices as political rewards, or as the fees for his retainers.⁷ Later, the crisis created by the Great Schism (1378-1417) saw a drastic increase in the secular abuse of the establishment of the church as the rival popes jockeyed for the support of Europe's princes.

Coveting the resources and authority of the church, John of Gaunt saw this as an opportunity to propagate the idea of crown supremacy over the clergy and the church. To expedite this campaign, the duke brought in a royal chaplain, John Wycliffe, who concluded that temporal lords had the right and authority to judge whether a church or churchman had fallen into error and to confiscate possessions and temporalities from them – even from the pope himself – if the crown established a case in which the church or churchman was found to be in error.⁸ Under the protection of the duke, Wycliffe's conclusions grew more radical and eventually attacked the very foundations of the established church, auricular confession and transubstantiation.

⁶ *Rot Parl*, 2: 283-285.

⁷ Edward III r.1 February 1327 – 21 June 1377; Richard II r.21 June 1377 – 30 September 1399 W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 23.

⁸ *CD*, 1: 270. *CD*, 2: 1, 4, 36, 114. *CD*, 3: 193, 235, 259. *FZ*, 258-264.

Although John of Gaunt shielded the man the clergy regarded as a ‘second Satan’, Lancaster himself remained entirely orthodox to the doctrines of the established Roman church in England. To Lancaster, the ‘border-warfare’ he began between the rival systems of Crown and Church did not imply any disbelief in the church’s spiritual authority on his part, but in utilizing a man as radical as Wycliffe – upon whose conclusions the Lollard movement was founded – and protecting him from prosecution, the duke propagated a conflict that spread across England like wildfire. In actively promoting an agenda of crown supremacy over the church, John of Gaunt set all of the pieces in place for the resulting decades of turmoil that affected not only contemporaries of his inner circle, but the reigns of his son and grandson.

Also desirous of the church’s resources, Henry V applied a campaign to appropriate its power that greatly differed from that of his grandfather. Instead of undercutting the authority of the church, Henry V worked tirelessly to stabilize the tumult of the institution and to support the church and its traditions. The controversy surrounding the church in England quieted under the control of Henry V, who, seemingly unnoticed by the church, installed himself as the supreme religious leader of the realm to bring the church’s power under the control of the crown. As the head of the church in England, Henry V had access to all of the institution’s power, authority, and resources in a way his grandfather could never have accomplished.

The Application of Propaganda

Suggesting that Geoffrey Chaucer’s life and writing are inseparable from the history of his time, co-founder of the *Annales* School, Lucien Febvre, argued that “an

individual can only be what his period and social environment allow him to be.”⁹ The impact of Chaucer’s experience of life in the Ricardian court and his friendship with John of Gaunt were of profound significance on his poetry which, when read in light of his membership in the Lancastrian Circle, can be recognized as works of propaganda promoting the duke and censuring his critics. Before his nephew ascended to the throne in 1377, John of Gaunt was quickly becoming the most despised man in England. As the early-fourteenth-century philosopher Robert Holcot asserted years earlier,¹⁰ a cultured fourteenth-century Englishman would be aware of the connections between fame and language.¹¹ Surrounded by men of great learning and intellect, Lancaster must have fancied himself a learned man, and one could thus assume that, as Holcot asserted, he understood the relationship between power, reputation, and the production of culture.¹² This would certainly account for the personal use the duke made of his relationship with his brother-in-law, the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, using Chaucer’s talent to his advantage and bringing the poet into the Lancastrian Circle to act as his propagandist. During the reign of the capricious Richard II, publically taking a stand on any social or political issue could spell disaster for the assertor. In order to promote John of Gaunt and the House of

⁹ Lucien Febvre, “History and psychology,” in *A New Kind of History from the Writings of Febvre*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York, Evanston and San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 4.

¹⁰ Holcot was born c.1290 and died c.1349.

¹¹ Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), 141.

¹² Lynn Staley, “Gower, Richard II, Henry of Derby, and the Business of Making Culture,” *Speculum* 75.1 (2000), 93.

Lancaster, Chaucer employed what Esther Casier Quinn coined his ‘poetics of disguise’, in which he camouflaged his reflections on his own experiences and the political issues of his day behind an ingenious veil that enabled him to speak out without risking disfavor.¹³

Henry of Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, was careless with his reputation, leaving his *fama* to the ministrations of his father. Perpetually concerned with the future legacy of the House of Lancaster, John of Gaunt handed his son a propagandist, the poet John Gower, who was a personal friend of Geoffrey Chaucer’s.¹⁴ John Gower was a poet of renown who was acquainted not only with Chaucer, but also with Lancaster and his Circle from having served with them on Commissions of Oyer and Terminer. Despite his possession of a skilled propagandist, Derby was either unable to, or did not prioritize the maintenance of good *fama* after his ascension to the throne as Henry IV in 1399.

Henry IV’s son, Henry of Monmouth – King Henry V – was far more cognizant of the necessity of a good reputation than his father had been. Instead of utilizing poets, Henry V cunningly chose to employ the court chroniclers to propagandize his reign. Although in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there was not always a distinction between poetry and historical chronicle, both were forms of narrative in which tradition

¹³ Esther Casier Quinn, *Geoffrey Chaucer and the Poetics of Disguise* (Lanham: University of America Press, Inc., 2008), x, 4.

¹⁴ Speculated to have been written in the mid-1380s, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* was dedicated to his friend, “O moral Gower” (Book V, 1856). All quotes of Chaucerian poetry are from *The Riverside Chaucer*. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson and F. N. Robinson (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).

was handed down,¹⁵ in the intervening centuries poetry came to be viewed as more of a literary art form and chronicles as historical records, although modern historians recognize the chronicles are as biased and fanciful as poetry, and, therefore, must not be taken as necessarily truthful or accurate. In tandem with his campaign to appropriate the church's power by centralizing the institution under the crown, Henry V employed the chroniclers to propagate an image of him as the 'most Christian king',¹⁶ the 'prince of priests',¹⁷ and the 'Scourge of God'.¹⁸ He would later combine this pious reputation with his invasion of France, claiming that he was seeking God's divine judgment on his right to the throne of France; if successful, he would also prove beyond any doubt that he was the rightful king of England, ending any lingering talk of the superior claim of his cousin, Edmund Mortimer, 5th Earl of March.

The Lancastrian Web

Throughout the reign of Henry IV, Lollardy, the anticlerical religious movement instigated by the teachings of John of Gaunt's theologian, John Wycliffe, continued to spread throughout England. Although Henry IV authorized the burning of heretics at the stake for the first time in English history in 1401, and Chancellor Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, made it his personal mission to promote orthodoxy, the pair

¹⁵ Sheila Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1994), 95.

¹⁶ *Life*, 7.

¹⁷ *Chronica*, 405. *HA*, 2: 306. *St Albans*, 2: 663.

¹⁸ *Life*, 131.

were unable to stamp out the growing tide of heresy. Co-founder of the *Annales* school, Marc Bloch, maintained that this was because “within any society, whatever its nature, everything is mutually controlled and connected; the political and social structure, the economy, the beliefs, the most rudimentary as well as the subtlest manifestations of the mind.”¹⁹ Henry IV’s reliance and dependence on Lollard leaders, such as Sir John Oldcastle in whom he placed a great deal of faith to defend the realm, ensured his pursuit of heretics would be anything but zealous. Arundel’s preoccupation with persuading heretics to recant and return to the church, as opposed to eradicating the movement, enabled Lollardy to move underground and continue to flourish.

By the time John of Gaunt’s grandson, Henry of Monmouth, ascended to the throne as King Henry V in 1413, the Lollard movement threatened to undermine not only the church in England, but the authority of the government as well. When Henry V was crowned, few people felt a natural loyalty to the House of Lancaster. The new king understood that, as the German sociologist Norbert Elias would later state, internal pacification was important for the ‘civilizing’ process.²⁰ In order to solidify his claim to the throne, Henry V would have to unify the people of England.

The second Lancastrian king was well aware that the creation of his power base would require bringing together “Church, State and Civilization, the three great forces of unification, [which] exert their pressure on a wide variety of men attached to an equally

¹⁹ Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 188.

²⁰ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process Volume I: The History of Manners* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), 48.

wide variety of groups whose feelings and ideas stand in contradiction.”²¹ According to Elias, “The struggles between the nobility, the Church and the princes for their shares in the control...of the land run through the entire Middle Ages,”²² and Henry V knew that to maintain his claim to the throne he had to emerge triumphant from that struggle. Reinvigorating the fractured church and the peoples’ belief in the church as the sole means of salvation, Henry V reawakened England’s dedication to orthodoxy and Holy Mother Church. Of the English struggle between heterodoxy and orthodoxy, Elias would claim that notions of orthodoxy had not died out in the intervening decades, but had merely slept for a time; for, “At times, too, they only sleep, or sleep in certain respects, and acquire a new existential value from a new social situation. They are recalled then because something in the present state of society finds expression in the crystallization of the past”²³ manifested in them. Henry V brought value and function back to orthodoxy and the church. The Lollard uprising of 1414 instigated by Henry V’s former brother-in-arms, Sir John Oldcastle, left no doubt in his mind that if he could stamp out heresy he could stamp out treachery.

Henry V’s carefully calculated process of creating a national church, with himself as the supreme head, went a long way to solidify his place on the throne. The king took

²¹ Lucien Febvre, “Religious Practice and the History of France,” in *A New Kind of History from the Writings of Febvre*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York, Evanston and San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 273.

²² Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process Volume II: Power & Civility*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 3.

²³ Elias, *The History of Manners*, 7.

his role as head of the church a step further and declared that he intended to seek a divine ruling and sought supreme judgement on his right to invade France to reclaim the birthright that had been kept from him; his invasion of France fused together his roles as the temporal and spiritual leader of England. Henry's spectacular military victory at Agincourt brought to mind memories of past glories unseen since the days of the Black Prince at Crécy and Poitiers.²⁴ It is after Agincourt that the *Gesta Henrici Quinti* exclaims, "And let our England be zealous in pleasing God unceasingly, in purging herself of heresies and errors along with other acts of sedition and unrighteousness, in making acknowledgement...in the Lord Who hath...given the victory to His anointed." Through Henry V's imposition of himself as both the temporal and spiritual leader of the realm, he demonstrated his adept understanding that "these various memberships do not always create confusion. They maintain harmony," as Febvre would later assert in the twentieth century.²⁵

The following chapters focus on how the actions of two ambitious men, John of Gaunt and Henry V, forever affected the trajectory of the government and church in the realm of England. Taken together, this thesis will focus on the tactics used by these two particularly powerful men who utilized the support structures of their Lancastrian Circles, conflict and stability in the church, and propaganda to secure a dynastic legacy for the House of Lancaster. According to Bloch, "a historical phenomenon can never be

²⁴ Battle of Crécy: 26 August 1346, Battle of Poitiers: 19 September 1356 – Two of the three greatest English victories in the Hundred Years War (between England and France, 1337-1453 for control of the French crown).

²⁵ Febvre, *Religious Practice*, 273.

understood apart from its moment in time,” and, “historical facts are, in essence, psychological facts. Normally, therefore, they find their antecedents in other psychological facts.”²⁶ The point, to Febvre, “is to integrate an entirely individual historical psychology...into the powerful current of a history which, like all things, is moving on towards the unknown destiny of mankind.”²⁷ In the progression through John of Gaunt and his Circle during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II, the reign of Henry IV, and the new Circle under Henry V and his appropriation of the church’s authority during his reign, a map of the maneuvering that furnished late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century English political culture with its essential characteristics begins to emerge.

²⁶ Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, 35, 194.

²⁷ Febvre, *History and Psychology*, 11.

CHAPTER 2

WEAVING THE LANCASTRIAN WEB

“A spider web's ability to adapt to different levels of stress is the key to its remarkable stability...”¹

One of the greatest architects of late fourteenth-century political upheaval and religious disturbance, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, has largely been overlooked by popular historians of late-medieval England. John of Gaunt's military exploits were ineffective, if not disastrous, and did not earn him the acclaim and illustrious reputation the victories at Crécy and Poitiers accorded his eldest brother, Edward the Black Prince of Wales. Lancaster quickly learned that if he were to acquire authority and power, it would not be through victory on the battlefield, but rather through triumph in politics. Acting as regent during the end of the reign of his father, John of Gaunt acquired an appetite for power that was insatiable. Although he quickly became the wealthiest and most powerful man in England, he lusted for more. Lancaster longed to wear the crown and to consolidate the power and resources of the church under the crown. John of Gaunt learned not to be a great military leader, but a skillful political figure whose manipulation

¹ Ella Davies, “Spider Silk’s Flexibility Makes Webs Super-Strong,” BBC Nature Knowledge and Learning Beta, 1 February 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/16809642> (accessed 23 June 2013).

of his contemporaries steered the English government in a direction that promoted, and secured, a Lancastrian dynastic legacy.

In the early-1370s, John of Gaunt, a young man in his early thirties, shrewdly brought together a circle of men outside of his affinity whose names and actions could not be traced directly back to him. Lancaster surrounded himself with knights of the king's chamber and figures whose intellect and literary pursuits proved to be expedient for the duke; these men constituted the 'Lancastrian Circle'. When the line of succession came into question after the death of the Black Prince of Wales in 1376 and King Edward III in 1377, John of Gaunt spun a web that positioned his descendents to claim both the crown, and the highest administrative offices in England. With each member of Lancaster's Circle constituting a critical strand of his web, John of Gaunt and his men ensured that the fledgling House of Lancaster would grow into a dynastic legacy.

Strands of the Web: Lancaster's Affinity and the 'Lancastrian Circle'

In his seminal work, *The Lancastrian Affinity 1361-1399*, Simon Walker made enormous strides in recreating John of Gaunt's association with his retainers and the depth of their loyalty to him. Walker defined the Lancastrian affinity as consisting of men belonging to three major categories: household attendants, indentured retainers, and estate officials.² The composition of the Lancastrian affinity was thoroughly explored in Walker's work and requires no repetition here, but it is worth noting that Walker painstakingly recreated the duke's affinity and identified that, in addition to Lancaster's

² Simon Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity 1361-1399* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 8.

attendants, retainers, and officials, “on any one occasion the duke’s ‘affinity’ [also] consisted of...a much larger outer circle of ‘well-willers’...[that] was very fluid indeed, varying in composition on every occasion.”³ A point of note is the brief mention made of a particular complaint the parliamentary commons had with the duke in this regard: Lancaster, illegally, paid retaining fees to justices of the central courts, the King’s Bench, and the Common Bench.⁴ The bribes John of Gaunt paid to several justices over the years gave him an advantage in litigation and Commissions of Oyer and Terminer that, while an illegitimate means of domination, was highly effective in protecting his interests. Despite Walker’s meticulous exploration of John of Gaunt’s affinity, and illumination of Lancaster’s habit of bribing officials, he failed to recognize a powerful, core group of men outside of Lancaster’s ‘official’ affinity who, once bound to the duke, remained entangled in his web until death.

John of Gaunt began gathering a group of knights of the king’s chamber and influential public servants around him in the early 1370s. These men were more than just friends; they formed an intimate circle that was quick to come to the defense or aid of each other when it was needed. The intimacy of these men was noted by the chronicler Thomas Walsingham, who identified the group as the ‘Lollard knights’.⁵ Lancaster’s utilization and protection of John Wycliffe from the early 1370s until Wycliffe’s death in 1384, as well as Walsingham’s ‘Scandalous Chronicle’ criticizing the duke and the

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵ *Chronica*, 250.

abhorrence and criticism of Wycliffe present in all of his chronicles,⁶ leaves little doubt that Walsingham associated the ‘Lollard knights’ with John of Gaunt, although he never wrote of such an association in his chronicles. The Lancastrian Circle is easily identifiable in a review of the numerous and various appearances of these men together throughout the records, confirming Walsingham’s representation of them as a tightly knit group.

The Lancastrian Circle included the men identified by Walsingham as the ‘Lollard knights’: Sir William Neville, Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir John Clanvowe, Sir Richard Stury, Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir John Montagu, and Sir John Cheyne.⁷ A close inspection of various Chancery Rolls and private registers from the reigns of Edward III and Richard II reveals additional members of Lancaster’s Circle that the chronicler failed to identify. The records show that the Circle also included Sir William Beauchamp, Sir Guy de Brienne, Geoffrey Chaucer, William Lord Latimer, and Philip de la Vache.⁸ The

⁶ John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss, “Introduction,” in *The St. Alban’s Chronicle: The ‘Chronica Maiora’ of Thomas Walsingham I: 1376-1394*, ed. and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), lvii-lx.

For Walsingham’s commentary on John Wycliffe see: *Chronica*, 29-31, 49-61, 117-118, 149, 174-180, 221, 372-374. *HA I*, 325, 345-364, 450-451. *HA II*, 50-59, 65, 120. *St Albans I*, 74-76, 80-84, 176-188, 192-196, 198-210, 210-212, 402-404, 584-588, 598-602, 982. *St Albans II* 16-17, 478-479, 570-571, 568-591, 572-579.

⁷ *Chronica*, 250. Walsingham added Sir John Cheyne to his list at a later date, although as an enemy of the church, not a ‘Lollard knight’. K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 168.

⁸ See Appendix A: *Chronology*, for birth and death dates of members of the Lancastrian Circle.

twelve men of the Lancastrian Circle who became entangled in John of Gaunt's web were bound through intermarriage, service in the king's household, enrollment as brothers in orders of chivalry, participation in military expeditions, and standing for each other in courts of law.

The *Calendar of Patent Rolls* shows a score of instances in which members of the Lancastrian Circle appear together in Commissions of the Peace, Commissions of Oyer and Terminer, as witnesses, feoffees, mainpernors, and executors. The frequency of these occurrences, and Walsingham's association of the men with each other, surprisingly, thus far seems to have drawn the attention of W. T. Waugh, K. B. McFarlane, Derek Pearsall, and Paul Strohm. Although Waugh's article, written in 1913, is assuredly outdated, he nonetheless accurately concluded that "the striking point is that the chroniclers, with several scores of king's knights to choose from, should pick out as fellow heretics some half-dozen who as a fact were particularly intimate."⁹ McFarlane detailed the connections the men had to each other,¹⁰ but he not only missed their clear connection to John of Gaunt, but denied its existence, claiming "None can be traced to the service of the Duke of Lancaster; where the Lollard knights are concerned we have no justification in talking of... 'the Lancastrian faction'."¹¹ McFarlane promptly qualified

⁹ W. T. Waugh, 'The Lollard Knights' *The Scottish Historical Review* 11.41 (1913), 88.

¹⁰ McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights*, 160-171.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

his assertion, however, rationalizing that “On the other hand, it would be equally foolish to think of them as opposed to John of Gaunt...”¹²

While Derek Pearsall expanded the group’s membership to include Geoffrey Chaucer, Sir Philip de la Vache, Sir Simon Burley, and Henry Scogan, and would likely acknowledge the involvement of John of Gaunt, he, as Paul Strohm also did later,¹³ erroneously coined the group the ‘Chaucer circle’.¹⁴ Where Waugh and McFarlane at least concurred that the formation of this intimate circle of friends was no accident, Pearsall incorrectly concluded that the Circle was, “a group that came together by chance and contingent circumstance at a particular historical moment...[whose] change coincided with the gathering around himself by Chaucer of...friends and disciples with whom he could share.”¹⁵ A review of contemporary records reveal the Circle cannot have come together by mere coincidence, particularly given the inclusion of a number of men from Edward III’s inner circle who witnessed the writing of a legislative document by the king not long before his death that detailed his desired line of succession.¹⁶ The

¹² *Ibid.*, 171.

¹³ Paul Strohm also names the Lollard knights, along with William Beauchamp, Philip de la Vache, John Gower, Ralph Strode, Henry Scogan, and Peter Bukton as the ‘Chaucer circle’. Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 41-46.

¹⁴ Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 181-185.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁶ Cotton Charter XVI.63.

formation of the Circle must be attributed to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster as the man who stood to benefit the most from its existence.

Members of the Lancastrian Circle were bound to each other through an interlocking web of marriages. Although not all of the marriages are notable, a few of the Circle members married ladies of royal descent, as illustrated in the figures below.

Figure 1 details the relevant descendants and marriages in the line of King Henry III, and *Figure 2* details the connections between John of Gaunt and seven of his Circle members that were established through marriage. Perhaps most significant was John of Gaunt's marriage to Katherine Swynford (de Roet) in 1396,¹⁷ the sister of Geoffrey Chaucer's wife, Philippa Pan (de Roet).¹⁸ Connection through marriage was by no means a peculiar characteristic of the Circle, however; intermarriage among members of prominent families was a customary and conventional method of allying families in the Middle Ages. Nonetheless, the Lancastrian Circle's marital alliances reinforced the allegiance of the Circle's members to John of Gaunt, and to each other.

¹⁷ In September 1397, despite his admission of committing adultery with Katherine while married to Constance of Castile, John of Gaunt received papal dispensation to marry Katherine Swynford, with all of the children born to them prior to their marriage declared legitimate. "Lateran Regesta 43: 1396-1397," *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 4: 1362-1404*, ed. W. H. Bliss and J. A. Twemlow, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=96467> (accessed 27 July 2013).

¹⁸ Although Philippa Chaucer died in 1387, Lancaster and Chaucer would still have considered themselves brothers in 1396.

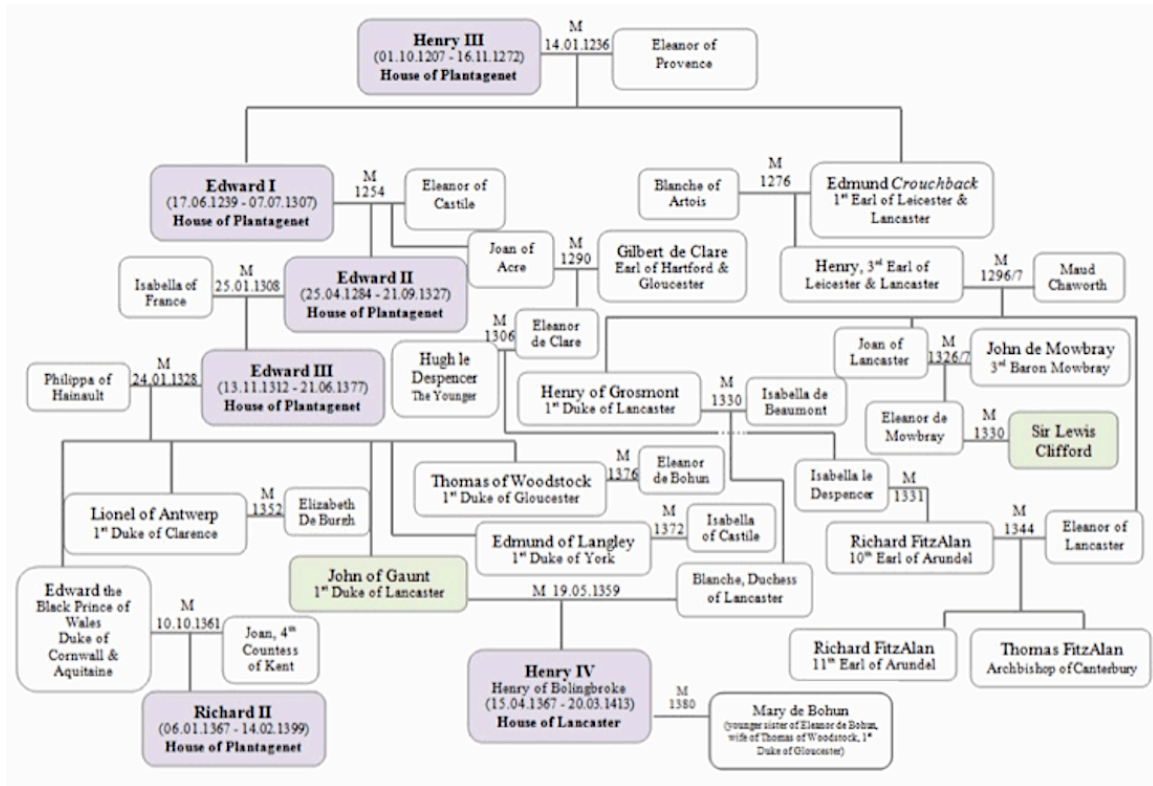


Figure 1: Descent from King Henry III (not all descendants are listed – only those with a direct relation to this thesis appear)

Monarchs

Lancaster and his Circle

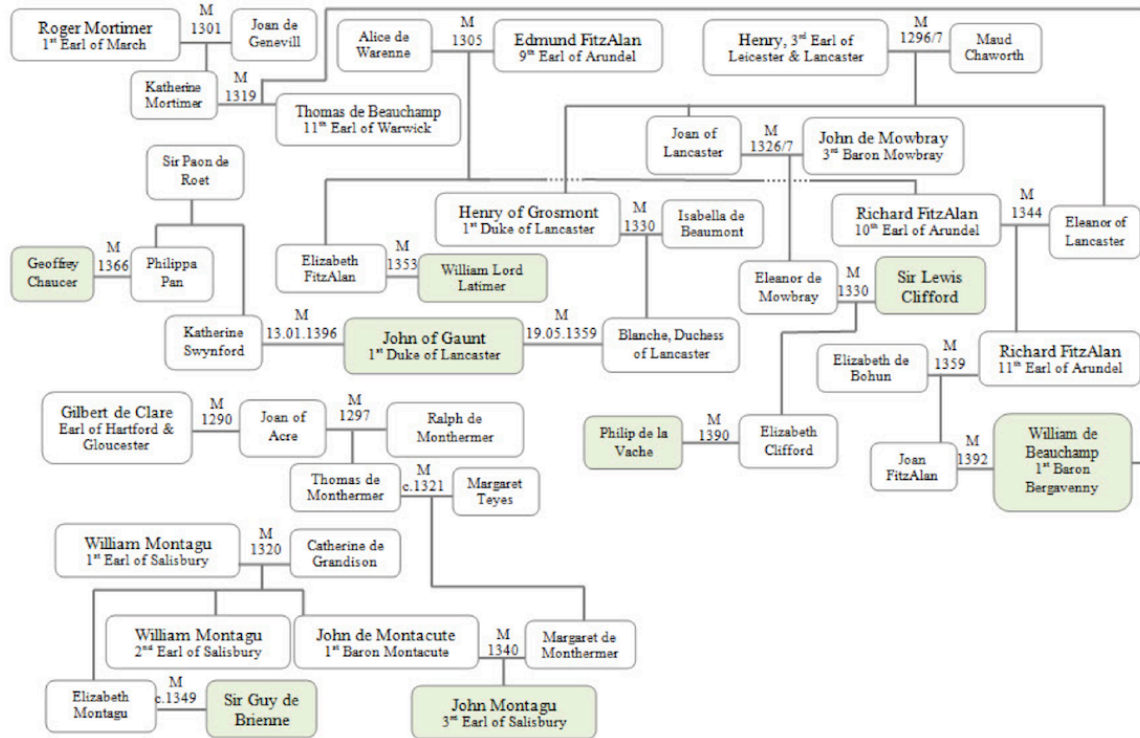


Figure 2: Marital Connections between John of Gaunt and members of the Lancastrian Circle

Lancaster and his Circle

In addition to the close bonds of matrimony, there was a connection between members of the Circle that Lancaster might have considered even more valuable. John of Gaunt's life was dominated by the Hundred Years War, the duke himself having served in twelve major military expeditions between 1359 and 1395.¹⁹ Lancaster surrounded himself primarily with martial men; sixty percent of his retainers and annuitants can be

¹⁹ John of Gaunt led military expeditions in 1359, 1367, 1369, 1370, 1372, 1373, 1378, 1380, 1384, 1385, 1386, 1394, and 1395. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, 40-41.

shown to have served with the duke on at least one campaign overseas.²⁰ All twelve of the men that John of Gaunt recruited as members of the Lancastrian Circle served the Plantagenet royal family in at least one military campaign. Members of the Circle began their service as early as the initial invasion of France in the Hundred Years' War.²¹

Following the initial invasion, Lewis Clifford and Thomas Latimer continued the Circle members' military service under Plantagenet command.²² William Lord Latimer spent more time in France than any other member of the Circle; he appears to have stayed on in France for more than a decade.²³ John Montagu was one of three warrior poets in the Circle who each served their time in the war in France.²⁴ Of the other two warrior

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 262-284.

²¹ Guy de Brienne served in King Edward III's retinue from 1346 to 1347, in 1347 he bore the King's Standard at Calais, and in 1359 he was made Admiral of the Fleet (*GEC*, 2: 361-362.). Richard Stury served at sea from 1347 until he was captured in 1359 or 1360 (McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights*, 178.). William Latimer and John Montagu both served under Edward the Black Prince of Wales, fighting in his division at Crécy in 1346 (*GEC*, 7: 470. *GEC*, 9: 86-87.). Montagu was also at the siege of Calais, which fell 4 Aug 1347 (*GEC*, 9: 86-87.).

²² Lewis Clifford's service led to his capture near Calais in 1351. Thomas Latimer served under the Black Prince from 1365-1367 (McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights*, 167, 178. *GEC*, 7: 455.).

²³ William Latimer served under the Black Prince at Crécy in August 1346, was in the king's service in 1351, in Gascony in 1359, Vannes in 1362, Auray in 1364, and Brittany in 1366; he did not return to England until summoned to parliament in 1367 (*GEC*, 7: 470-472.).

²⁴ John Montagu continued to serve under the Black Prince in his expeditions of 1356 and 1359-1361, and eventually served under John of Gaunt in 1378 (*GEC*, 9: 86-87.). Although none of his work has survived, Christine de Pizan highly praised his work and sent her son to live in his household. "Le comte de Salisbury, favori de Richard roy d'Angleterre, aimoit la poësie, & faisoit luy-même des vers: *Gracieux Chevalier*, dit Chriftine, *aimant dictiez, & luy-mefine gracieux dicteur*...il fit connoiffance avec

poets in the Circle, Geoffrey Chaucer and John Clanvowe, Chaucer served his time in France under Lancaster's elder brother, Lionel of Antwerp, Duke of Clarence, from 1359 to 1360.²⁵ Clarence's company was in the division led by the Black Prince,²⁶ so it is possible that Chaucer may have served beside fellow poet, Montagu, in the 1359 campaign. John Clanvowe, on the other hand, served his time exclusively in the retinue of John of Gaunt. With the exception of William Latimer's service as constable of the forces of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, to assist Brittany 1380-1381,²⁷ all military service by members of the Circle in the war with France after 1370 was in the retinue of the duke. William Beauchamp served under Lancaster more than any other member of the Circle, serving as his banneret in the 1370s and also appearing in the duke's companies of 1367, 1370, and 1372; the frequency of Beauchamp's service under John of Gaunt could be attributed to his being the sole member of the Circle who was indentured to the duke.²⁸ After the formation of the Circle, the members appear to have

affection; & luy voyant un fils qu'elle cherchoit à placer, il luy offrit de l'emmener en Angleterre, pour le faire élever avec le sien. Chrifline y confeutit; & fon fils aîné, pour lors âgé de treize ans, passa en Angleterre avec ce feigneur Anglois." Christine de Pizan, *Memoires de Literature, Tirez des Registres de L'Academie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, Tome Second*, ed. M. Boivin the Younger (Paris: The Royal Press, 1736), 709-710.

²⁵ *Life-Records*, 153.

²⁶ Pearsall, *Chaucer: A Critical Biography*, 41.

²⁷ *GEC*, 7: 473-474.

²⁸ *Reg 1371-1375*, 50, 832. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, 47-48, 264.

John Clanvowe, Lewis Clifford, Thomas Latimer, and William Latimer all fought together in Lancaster's expedition of 1373-1374 (*GEC*, 7: 455, 472. McFarlane,

been entirely dedicated to the duke who was known for paying higher fees in war than peace, making wartime service under the duke a highly profitable venture for the members of the Lancastrian Circle who chose to take advantage of it.²⁹

Before he became a political juggernaut, John of Gaunt was not personally appointed to Commissions of the Peace, but his interests were represented. In 1361, retainers and three members of his Circle, John Montagu, John Cheyne, and Guy de Brienne, represented the duke in twenty-five of the fifty-two total commissions appointed between March 20 and December 15 that year.³⁰ Shortly after Lancaster began acting as regent for his father in 1374, in the Commissions of the Peace of 1375 he was personally appointed to six commissions, responsible for inquiring, hearing, and determining trespasses in the West Riding of York, the North Riding of York, Lindsey in Lincoln, Derby, Leicester, and Hertford.³¹ Four members of his Circle, John Montagu, Guy de Brienne, William Latimer, and John Cheyne, were appointed to nine commissions

Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights, 178-179.). The duke was well served on his expedition to Brittany in 1378 during which William Beauchamp, John Cheyne, John Clanvowe, Lewis Clifford, Thomas Latimer, John Montagu, and Richard Stury all fought in his retinue (*GEC*, 9: 87. *Reg 1371-1375*, 50. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights*, 167, 169, 178-179.). William Beauchamp also served as the Captain of Calais in 1383/1384 (*GEC*, 1: 24. *CPR, Richard II, 1381-1385*, 472.) at the same time that John Cheyne was ‘on the king’s service beyond the seas’ in 1384 and 1385 (*CPR, Richard II, 1381-1385*, 481, 532.). Considering John of Gaunt’s expeditions to France in 1384 and 1385, it is entirely possible that Beauchamp and Cheyne’s service there was connected to Lancaster’s ventures.

²⁹ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, 42-43.

³⁰ *CPR, Edward III, 1361-1364*, 63-66.

³¹ *CPR, Edward III, 1374-1377*, 137-139.

overseeing Buckingham, Devon, Gloucester, Kent, Somerset, and Southampton.³²

Members of Lancaster's retinue and household were also often appointed, as were justices the duke was bribing;³³ in all, John of Gaunt was assured that his interests would be taken into account in forty-four of the fifty total commissions appointed between 4 February and 6 December 1375. The Lancastrian web nearly stretched across the entirety of England from as far South as Devon, to Hereford and Shropshire in the West, Norfolk and Suffolk in the East, and Cumberland in the North.

After John of Gaunt fell from grace with the succession of his nephew in 1377, his reach was no less expansive. Although he ensured that it outwardly appeared as though his interests were less well represented than in the past, with the help of his Circle, annuitants, retainers, and bribed justices, the scope of Lancastrian influence grew. In the Commissions of Peace and of Oyer and Terminer appointed between 20 December 1382 and 15 March 1383, there was not a single commission, or county, out of the total forty-eight that did not contain men who were loyal to the duke. John of Gaunt was personally appointed to fifteen commissions, Guy de Brienne, Thomas Latimer and John Montagu were appointed to seven commissions, Lancastrian retainers and members of his household were appointed to thirty-one commissions, and justices accepting bribes from the duke were appointed to eighteen commissions.³⁴ While the duke's web expanded and

³² *Ibid.*, 135-139.

³³ *Ibid.*, 135-139.

³⁴ *CPR, Richard II, 1381-1385*, 251-255.

enveloped practically the entirety of England, it was cleverly divided among his men to give the illusion that this was not the case.

As the duke's political domination began to attract unfavorable scrutiny, throughout the 1370s until his father's death in 1377, his grip on the English government loosened and the creation of a Lancastrian legacy became more dependent upon his Circle. As the reign of Edward III was nearing its end, Parliament resented the power wielded by John of Gaunt and his associates and began to attack the duke and his Circle, attempting to cut the strands of the web that the Lancastrian Circle had spun across England. The 'Good' Parliament was called in May 1376 to ordain 'good governing'; however, the commons accused 'some people', with the assent and agreement of the king's 'intimates', of making loans to the king by means of usury "...for the gain and singular profit of those close to the king and the others of his coven [the Lancastrian Circle]."³⁵ John of Gaunt's service in France on behalf of the crown in the 1370s involved substantial financial loss; by the time the 'Good' Parliament convened, the crown owed the duke nearly £15,000, placing him beyond the reach of his critics.³⁶ Parliament instead assailed a man they knew was in high favor with Lancaster,³⁷ William Lord Latimer, who bore the full force of the attack and was impeached on charges of

³⁵ 'Edward III: April 1376', *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry, and Rosemary Horrox, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=116474> (accessed 27 February 2013).

³⁶ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, 63.

³⁷ *GEC*, 7: 472-473.

“...various deceits, extortions, grievances and other evil deeds done by him and others of his inner circle...”³⁸ The assault on one of the king’s ministers, and member of the Lancastrian Circle, was untenable to the duke who, acting as regent on behalf of his father, declared the ‘Good’ Parliament to be no Parliament at all. Rallying to the side of their fellow Circle member, Lewis Clifford, William Beauchamp, John Montagu, William Neville, John Clanvowe, and Philip de la Vache acted as mainpernors on behalf of William Latimer, enabling Lancaster to secure his restoration.³⁹

In 1998, Michael Bennett published an article revealing the discovery of a remarkable declaration by Edward III regarding his desired line of royal succession.⁴⁰ Although half of the text of Cotton Charter XVI.63, a ‘Writ of Succession’, was lost in the Cotton Library fire at Ashburnham House in 1731, Bennett was able to discern not only the general sense of the charter, but a few specific pieces of information that make it remarkable. In this thirty-five line letter patent given under the great seal, Edward III referred to the recently deceased Prince of Wales twice (7, 12)⁴¹ and went on, in line 16,

³⁸ ‘Edward III: April 1376’, *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry, and Rosemary Horrox, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=116474> (accessed 27 February 2013).

³⁹ *Rot Parl*, 2: 326-327.

⁴⁰ Michael Bennett, “Edward III’s Entail and the Succession to the Crown, 1376-1471,” *The English Historical Review* 113.452 (1998), 580-609.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 582-583. The dating and regnal year, and attestation at Havering atte Bower, enabled the charter to be assigned to sometime between the summer of 1376 and February 1377.

to state that Richard of Bordeaux should succeed him to the throne. Through the next ten lines the ailing king laid down an order of succession to follow Richard beginning with his eldest surviving son, “Johan Roy de Castille et de Legioun, duc de Lancastre” (19), with the settlement in tail male.⁴² The witness list was peopled entirely by men of the king’s inner circle and a number of the executors of his will, including Lancaster, who claimed the title ‘King of Castile and León by right of his wife Constance of Castile, William Lord Latimer, Richard Stury, and Philip de la Vache.’⁴³ It seems that Edward III’s declaration on the succession was not widely publicized, despite the production of a letter patent indicating that the king’s intention was for an announcement to the public to involve the community of the realm. Even if the contents of this charter were never made public knowledge, there was a small group of powerful members of the peerage who knew the line of succession was in question; Edward III passed over Lionel of Antwerp’s daughter, Philippa of Clarence the Countess of Ulster, in favor of John of Gaunt, whom he named as next in line for the throne.

Bennett’s discovery of this Writ of Succession may shed light on the actions of the ‘Good’ Parliament, whose intent was to weaken royal power and undermine John of Gaunt’s hold on the administration of the government. Key and powerful members of the peerage knew Edward III intended for Lancaster to ascend to the throne were anything to happen to Richard of Bordeaux, who was only nine years old at the time the writ was

⁴² *Ibid.*, 583, 608.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 583, 608.

issued. The chronicler Thomas Walsingham claimed that as soon as Edward the Black Prince died on 8 June 1376,

the duke and his criminals became more troublesome and confident. The duke...constantly [requested]...that while parliament was still in session and the affairs of the realm were being discussed,...[they] should discuss who was to succeed to the throne of England after the death of the king...He [Lancaster] reflected on the age of the king...and the youth of the son of the prince...if these two were removed from the scene...There was no male heir left who had more right to the throne than he.⁴⁴

Where Walsingham's claim might ordinarily be dismissed as anti-Lancastrian propaganda, given Bennett's discovery of the Writ of Succession, it appears that it may be a more accurate descriptor of the parliamentary session than one would have originally believed. In light of the Writ of Succession and John of Gaunt's well-known, insatiable, ambition, his opponents would naturally have panicked at the thought of his possible succession, and struck against him any way they could.

Walsingham asserted that Lancaster was "aware that while the position of the Church remained strong it would be difficult for him to achieve his designs...He therefore went to great pains especially to overturn the liberties of...the Church."⁴⁵ On 22 September 1376 a messenger was sent to Oxford to summon John Wycliffe to the King's Council in London.⁴⁶ At the duke's behest, Wycliffe spent the next year 'scurrying from church to church' arguing for the right of royal power to divest

⁴⁴ *St Albans*, 1: 39.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁶ *IE*, 200.

ecclesiastical property.⁴⁷ As the unrest caused by Wycliffe's writing and preaching escalated, various members of the Circle stepped in to protect each other from both the church and the ire of the citizens of London. Incurring the wrath of the church for his propagation of crown supremacy over the church, *The St. Albans Chronicle* and the *Chronica Maiora* claimed that Wycliffe was summoned to St. Paul's cathedral to appear before the bishops on 17 February 1377.⁴⁸ John of Gaunt personally accompanied Wycliffe to St. Paul's to ensure, according to Walsingham, that nothing could be accomplished.⁴⁹ On 20 February 1377 Guy de Brienne attended a council meeting held by the citizens of London, who were outraged by the duke's mistreatment of the bishops, in order to discover their true intentions.⁵⁰ When the infuriated Londoners took up arms to march on John of Gaunt's Savoy palace, Princess Joan interceded and sent Lewis Clifford to London to restore the peace.⁵¹ Walsingham claimed the entire episode ended with the people and clergy giving way, "for they put their fear of the duke, it seemed, before their fear of their Lord God."⁵² Thomas Walsingham is certainly well known as a

⁴⁷ *St Albans*, 1: 79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 81. *Chronica*, 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 81-85.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 85-89. At this point, the *Chronica* merely states that the bishop of London (William Courtenay) stopped the Londoners who had taken up arms against John of Gaunt, who had been warned about the uprising and fled to Kennington where Richard of Bordeaux was staying with his mother. *Chronica*, 30-31.

⁵¹ *St Albans*, 1: 91-95.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 101.

critic of the duke, as evidenced by his outspoken attacks on John of Gaunt in the ‘Scandalous Chronicle’, but the lack of thorough accounts of the late 1370s makes Walsingham an invaluable source for the history of the period, despite his bias and occasional inaccuracies.⁵³ Having found no reason to entirely exclude his accounts, Walsingham typically finds his way into the modern studies of medieval historians. Although it is likely there is a deal of exaggeration his account of the events at St. Paul’s in 1377, the inclusion of Guy de Brienne and Lewis Clifford seems too coincidental for the narrative to entirely be a product of Walsingham’s imagination. Whether the chronicler’s relation of events is accurate or not, the passage is important as a testament to the tenacious dominance Lancaster and his Circle held over England.

Attempts to malign John of Gaunt’s reputation were made for several years, one of the most notorious examples of which occurred during the Salisbury parliament of 1384.⁵⁴ A Carmelite friar, John Latimer, accused Lancaster of “a crafty and treasonable plot against the king’s life.”⁵⁵ Although Richard II was reported to have immediately called for his uncle’s execution, the nobles in attendance on the king – including John

⁵³ John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss, ‘Introduction’ in *The St. Alban’s Chronicle: The ‘Chronica Maiora’ of Thomas Walsingham I: 1376-1394*, ed. and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xxxvi, xcii.

⁵⁴ ‘Richard II: April 1384’, *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry, and Rosemary Horrox, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=116486> (accessed 14 April 2013).

⁵⁵ *WC*, 68, 69.

Clanvowe and John Montagu – refused to allow the duke to be condemned without a trial. John Clanvowe made a statement that, in a fit of fear, the friar feigned insanity; afterwards, the king ordered John Montagu, and others, to deliver the friar to Salisbury jail.⁵⁶ Upon delivery of the friar to the jail, a party of knights vowed they would make the friar confess who had prompted him to accuse the duke of treason.⁵⁷ On 27 May 1384 a writ was issued to John Montagu, Robert Bealknap,⁵⁸ and others, to “deliver the gaol of Old Sarum of brother John Latymer.”⁵⁹ They were unable to do so as the torture endured at the hands of the knights, all of whom were connected to the duke, led to the friar’s death. In response to the friar’s defamation of John of Gaunt’s character,

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-73.

⁵⁷ The party of knights included John Holland, Henry Green and Thomas Morieux. *WC*, 72-73.

John Holland, Richard II’s elder half-brother by Princess Joan’s first marriage, was an annuitant – although not a retainer – of John of Gaunt’s; the tie of kinship made a formal contract superfluous. In 1386 he married Lancaster’s daughter Elizabeth, and accompanied the duke in his expedition to Spain in which he served as constable of the English army. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 17, 106, 203, 272.

Henry Green was an annuitant and retainer of the duke’s who also served in his expedition to Spain in 1386. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 270.

Thomas Morieux married John of Gaunt’s daughter, Blanche, in 1381, and served in Lancaster’s 1386 expedition to Spain during which he was killed. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 17, 188, 203, 275.

The two Lancastrians who shared kinship with the duke received annuities in excess of £100: John Holland received £133 6s. 8d. from at least 1391-1397 and Thomas Morieux received £100 from at least 1381-1385. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 272, 274.

⁵⁸ A Justice of the Common Bench who accepted bribes from John of Gaunt.

⁵⁹ *CPR, Richard II, 1381-1385*, 428.

Lancaster's supporters invoked the 'law of retaliation' and had the friar's corpse dragged through the streets.⁶⁰ The loyalty of Lancaster's men clearly ran deep, and they were prepared to go to great lengths to defend the duke's reputation.

Members of the Lancastrian Circle acted on behalf of one another in a few notable instances as well. When Geoffrey Chaucer was released by Cecily Champaign on 1 May 1380 from all actions concerning her raptus or anything else, her acknowledgment of the document entered into the chancery releasing Chaucer was witnessed by William Beauchamp, John Clanvowe, and William Neville.⁶¹ In 1385, Sir Richard Scrope⁶² and Sir Robert Grosvenor brought a dispute to the Court of Chivalry over the right to bear certain arms.⁶³ On 15 October 1386 Chaucer testified on behalf of Lancaster's retainer, stating he had seen Scrope bearing the arms in question when he was serving under Clarence in France in 1359.⁶⁴ Four days later, John Clanvowe testified on Scrope's behalf. A ruling was not made until 1390, by which time Lewis Clifford was a member

⁶⁰ *WC*, 80-81.

⁶¹ *Life-Records*, 225-226. Christopher Cannon, "Raptus in the Chaumpaigne Release and a Newly Discovered Document Concerning the Life of Geoffrey Chaucer," *Speculum* 68 (1993), 74-94.

⁶² Richard Scrope was a retainer and annuitant of John of Gaunt's who served in his military expeditions in 1359, 1367, 1369, 1373, 1384, and 1385. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, 281.

⁶³ *Life-Records*, 264. "arms of azure with a bend" *CPR, Richard II, 1389-1392*, 337.

⁶⁴ *Life-Records*, 265.

of the Court of Chivalry.⁶⁵ On 28 November 1390 a commission, that was later reconfirmed on 1 May 1391, was appointed to carry out the ruling in favor of Scrope; John of Gaunt was personally appointed to each of these commissions, ensuring that his faithful Lancastrian retained his arms.⁶⁶ Despite the advantage the Lancastrian Circle provided John of Gaunt in spreading his influence across the nation, he remained a highly unpopular figure and knew he needed to take more extreme action if he were to successfully create a Lancastrian legacy.

Snagging the Strands of the Web: John Wycliffe

In 1366 Pope Urban V demanded that thirty-three years' arrears of tribute owed by the kingdom of England, under the convention of King John, be paid to the court in Rome. Parliament, attended by John of Gaunt and Guy de Brienne, convened in May 1366 to discuss the pope's demand⁶⁷ which was put to debate at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and among the four mendicant orders. It is uncertain whether John Wycliffe, a royal chaplain by this time, had any input in the debate, but he went on to defend parliament's decision to uphold the Statue of Praemunire at Oxford.⁶⁸ It was

⁶⁵ Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 183.

⁶⁶ *CPR, Richard II, 1389-1392*, 337. *Foedera*, 7: 686-687, 697-698.

⁶⁷ *Rot Parl*, 2: 289-290. Also in attendance were at least one of Lancaster's faithful retainers and two Justices of the Common Bench he was bribing. *Rot Parl*, 2: 289. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, 105, 120n., 121.

⁶⁸ Walter Waddington Shirley, "Introduction," in *Fasciculi Zizaniorum: Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico*, ed. Walter Waddington Shirley (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1858), xix.

Wycliffe's defense of crown supremacy over the church that led him to the service of John of Gaunt.

Following the 'Good' Parliament of 1376, John of Gaunt did not content himself merely with William Lord Latimer's restoration. The duke took the offensive and returned the assault on the man who had instigated Latimer's impeachment, William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester. Lancaster sent for this master theologian on 22 September 1376 to lead the attack against the bishop and the establishment that supported him.⁶⁹ Wycliffe spent the next year composing *De Civili Dominio* arguing for a total royal divestment of all ecclesiastical property.⁷⁰

John Wycliffe staunchly believed that the church should follow Christ's example of apostolic poverty, and that a priest's thoughts should be set firmly on his ministry. If the possession of earthly goods led a clergyman into the lust of lordship, entanglement with temporal affairs, sensual indulgence, or neglecting their duty of preaching the gospel, it was the duty of temporal lords to deprive the clergyman of his worldly possessions.⁷¹ It can hardly be surprising that William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester and William Courtenay, Bishop of London took Wycliffe's conclusions as a personal affront. Both men had risen in the church by the very abuses that Wycliffe attacked – the benefices associated with their bishoprics were rewards for their secular

⁶⁹ *IE*, 200.

⁷⁰ Part of a greater whole, *De Civili Dominio* consisted of three books that occupied the third, fourth, and fifth places in the series of twelve books that made up Wycliffe's *Summa in Theologia*.

⁷¹ *CD*, 1: 268-270.

careers and service to the king.⁷² It was William of Wykeham's rise through service to Edward III that made his attack against William Latimer at the 'Good' Parliament so abhorrent to John of Gaunt, incurring his wrath and, ultimately, entangling Wycliffe in the fray.

After Bishop Wykeham and Bishop Courtenay's assault at St. Paul's in 1377, Wycliffe produced *Books II and III* of his *De Civili Dominio* which addressed the right of temporal lords to deprive churchmen of property. He argued that the evils of the 'state' arose from churchmen holding property and that it would be advantageous to both the church and 'state' if the temporalities of the clergy were placed in the hands of secular lords.⁷³ In support of Lancaster's quest to appropriate the power and authority of the church, Wycliffe claimed that God conferred the power of correction upon secular lords,

⁷² On 23 May 1363, Edward III granted William of Wykeham, a king's clerk, the archdeaconry of Lincoln: *CPR, Edward III, 1361-1364*, 345. On 14 March 1365, Edward III granted William of Wykeham 20s. a day due to his service as king's clerk, keeper of the privy seal, and "besides that office, has supported and will have to support daily excessive labours and charges about divers offices connected with the king's private affairs...": *CPR, Edward III, 1364-1367*, 97. On 24 October 1366, Edward III gave his assent to the election of William of Wykeham to the bishopric of Winchester: *CPR, Edward III, 1364-1367*, 324.

On 19 March 1370, Edward III delivered to William Courtenay, "late canon of York, doctor of laws," the bishopric of Hereford: *CPR, Edward III, 1367-1370*, 379. On 2 December 1375, Edward III issued a writ to the mayor of London to deliver the bishopric of London to William Courtenay: *CPR, Edward III, 1374-1377*, 203.

⁷³ *CD*, 2: 15. The propositions of *Book III* can be stated in a few points: priests who held property sinned mortally, it was wrong to take away the king's right to grant benefices, the clergy should not hold property, rulers could take away the wealth of the clergy, and an endowment forfeited by abuse could not be revived by return into grace. *CD*, 3: 193, 259, 306, 463, 490.

who could lawfully use that power, and that they had the right to reprove even the pope himself.⁷⁴

Sometime during the late summer or autumn of 1377, Arnald Garnier, a papal agent, began pressing the crown for a substantial amount of money.⁷⁵ Richard II and his council requested that John Wycliffe provide a written assessment of whether the kingdom of England could lawfully withhold the funds. In *The Answer of Master John Wycliffe to the Question Below, Asked of him by the Lord King Richard II, and his Great Council: In the First Year of his Reign*,⁷⁶ Wycliffe argued that, based on principles of natural reason, the gospel, and the law of conscience, the realm could withhold her treasure from the pope.⁷⁷ In detailing the perils that would come from giving the pope the money he was demanding, Wycliffe claimed that “All Christendom holds the belief

⁷⁴ *CD*, 2: 114, 127-128.

⁷⁵ Papal bulls were issued on 8 February 1375 to ‘prelates and other clergy, secular and regular’ requesting safe conduct for Arnold Garnerii, whom the pope appointed as the collector in England with the power to impose subsidies and the ability to punish by ecclesiastical censure any who hindered him or his sub-collectors. “Regesta 278: 1375,” *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 4: 1362-1404*, ed. W. H. Bliss and J. A. Twemlow, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=96395> (accessed 27 July 2013). “Regesta 281: 1374-1376,” *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 4: 1362-1404*, ed. W. H. Bliss and J. A. Twemlow, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=96398> (accessed 27 July 2013).

⁷⁶ *FZ*, 258. Although the Carmelite friar Thomas Netter’s account is certainly biased against Wycliffe, the *Fasciculi Zizanorium* gives the best contemporary account of Wycliffe’s assent from Oxford don to the instrument of the Duke of Lancaster.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 258-261.

that the papal office should be held in voluntary poverty. If it is not, then the pope will fall prey to carnal voluptuousness and secular men could expel him from his dominion.”⁷⁸ The king’s council responded to Wycliffe’s bold statements by ordering him to stop his attacks on the church, and, on 5 October 1378, Arnald Garnier was licensed by the king to demand and receive the money due to the church of Rome.⁷⁹ Capitulation to Garnier and the pope was not the response Lancaster had hoped for, and the censure of the theologian now so closely associated with his name humiliated the duke.

In the midst of the debate regarding funds owed to the church in Rome, Wycliffe also became entangled in the defense of John of Gaunt in the ‘Hauley-Shakyl’ incident. Ten years previously, Robert Hauley and John Shakyl had captured the Count of Denia in Spain, whom they refused to hand over to the crown for ransom. They were arrested and imprisoned in the Tower, but quickly escaped and claimed sanctuary in Westminster. According to Walsingham, Lancaster was responsible for the plan to imprison them and confiscate the Count of Denia so that he could benefit from his ransom. Armed courtiers from the king’s court entered Westminster on 10 August 1378, where they apprehended Shakyl and took him back to the Tower, and slaughtered Hauley and a priest who had been celebrating the mass.⁸⁰

Whether the duke was the perpetrator of the plot or not, John of Gaunt was blamed for the defilement of Westminster Abbey by the violation of sanctuary, with the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁷⁹ *CPR, Richard II, 1377-1381*, 276.

⁸⁰ *St Albans*, 1: 239-243. *HA*, 1: 375-378.

apprehension of one man and the murder of another two. Wycliffe came to the duke's defense upon receiving "a mandate from the lord king."⁸¹ Commanded to give his opinion on "the question of whether it is lawful for the king and his kingdom in this case to extract the said prisoners out of Westminster,"⁸² Wycliffe composed the *Tractatus de Ecclesia* in defense of Lancaster. He argued that it was lawful for the king's men to enter Westminster in pursuit of prisoners for three reasons: first, by God's law as given in Exodus 21:14,⁸³ second, by the precedent of Solomon with Joab,⁸⁴ and thirdly, because of the danger to the realm.⁸⁵ He argued that in the case of Hauley and Shakyl, there were the same grounds for actions as in Joab's case, and King Solomon's actions were approved by Scripture.⁸⁶ He went on to assert that Westminster did not have the right to shelter criminals because that would grant license to sin; Hauley and Shakyl were offenders against the law of God and the Church, and those who break the law cannot

⁸¹ *Ecclesia*, 142.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 143.

⁸³ Exodus 21: 14 – "If ony man sleeth his neiybore bi biforecastyng, and bi aspies, drawe thou hym away fro myn auter, that he die." All biblical quotes from: John Wycliffe, *The Wycliffe Bible: John Wycliffe's Translation of the Holy Scriptures from the Latin Vulgate: Old & New Testament* (Winchester: Lamp Post, 2008).

⁸⁴ 3 Kings 2: 29 – "And it was teld to kyng Salomon, that Joab hadde fledde in to the tabernacle of the Lord, and was bisidis the auter; and Salomon sente Banaie, sone of Joiada, and seide, Go thou, and sle hym." In Wycliffe's Bible, the books usually known as 1 Samuel=1 Kings, 2 Samuel= 2 Kings, 1 Kings=3 Kings, and 2 Kings=4 Kings.

⁸⁵ *Ecclesia*, 143-144.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

claim its help.⁸⁷ “If the majority of our kingdom either did not want to stand near or by the laws of our kingdom, but sporadically receive church defenses that stirs up sedition in the people, both claiming liberty, how to establish a kingdom?”⁸⁸ Wycliffe concluded his defense of Lancaster by asserting that those in authority were not to be condemned for wrong done by their subordinates without their consent, and, besides, the man slain was the first to fight in the church.⁸⁹ Wycliffe’s flimsy defense of Lancaster, in particular his sophomoric assertion that “Hauley started it,” proved that he was more of a hindrance than a help to the duke, who never called on Wycliffe for his assistance again.

John of Gaunt had no qualms about using John Wycliffe and his anticlerical views for his personal benefit in propagating the royal divestment of churches. The duke, however, harbored no sympathy for Lollard doctrine and remained a devout Catholic who resolutely believed in the cornerstones of the faith. As early as 4 January 1359, John of Gaunt was granted papal license for a portable altar for himself, his wife and his household, as well as papal dispensation to choose his own confessor.⁹⁰ Lancaster also

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 150, 152.

⁹⁰ “Volume XXX: 7 Innocent VI,” *Petitions to the Pope: 1342-1419*, ed. W. H. Bliss, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=92386> (accessed 27 July 2013).

The license for a portable altar was reconfirmed on 16 March 1363 by Urban V (“Volume XXXV: 1 Urban V,” *Petitions to the Pope: 1342-1419*, ed. W. H. Bliss, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=92386>).

gained the pope's license for his chaplain to hear the confessions of, and administer the sacraments to, members of his household⁹¹ so that, at any given time, there were multiple confessors⁹² retained by John of Gaunt. As evidenced by entries made from the duke's various estates, members from the religious body of the Lancastrian household traveled with him as permanent fixtures in his retinue.⁹³ John of Gaunt may have tried to use Wycliffe's divergent doctrines to his political advantage, but the duke had no tolerance for disputing the most sacred beliefs of Holy Mother Church.⁹⁴ Where Lancaster had

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=92391> (accessed 27 July 2013).)

⁹¹ On 9 June 1363. "Volume XXXVII: 1 Urban V," *Petitions to the Pope: 1342-1419*, ed. W. H. Bliss, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=92393> (accessed 27 July 2013).

⁹² John of Gaunt had his own confessors (John Badby, Walter Dysse) and his wives had their own confessors; Blanche's confessor in 1372 was Friar John Bennington (*Reg 1371-1375*, 423, 519, 687.).

⁹³ John Crowe, the duke's chaplain, was at Sandwich with Lancaster in August 1372 and at Hertford in January 1375 (*Reg 1371-1375*, 675, 828, 1041.).

⁹⁴ Other notable aspects of John of Gaunt's conventional piety: on 6 July 1363 John and Blanche were granted plenary remission at the hour of death and permission to change, as well as choose, their confessors ("Volume XLIII: 4 Urban V," *Petitions to the Pope: 1342-1419*, ed. W. H. Bliss in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=92399> (accessed 27 July 2013).); on 13 September 1382 the duke founded Doncaster Carmelite friary (*Reg 1379-1383*, 1198.); on 6 April 1383, his petition requesting plenary indulgence for himself and all those who accompanied him to Spain was granted by the pope and less than a week later, on 12 April, he was named "the standard-bearer of the cross for the pope and the Roman church" ("Regesta 310: 1379-1383," *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 4: 1362-1404*, ed. W. H. Bliss and J. A. Twemlow, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=96414> (accessed 27 July 2013).).

hoped that disrupting the church would leave its authority vulnerable to appropriation while leaving the faith itself unscathed, he was mistaken. Instead of seizing the church's power for himself, the duke became associated with heterodoxy, despite his notably conventional piety, and engendered the enmity of the clergy who became dangerous adversaries.

In 1381 Oxford's new chancellor, William Berton, gathered a formal council of twelve scholars to weigh the orthodoxy of John Wycliffe's views,⁹⁵ hoping the Hauley-Shakyl incident signaled an end to his protection by the duke. Wycliffe appealed to the secular power and authority of the crown for his defense,⁹⁶ "And after the appeal his master arrived – an illustrious, noble duke and ardent soldier – the wise counselor the Duke of Lancaster, devoted and faithful son of the church, who admonished Master John and prohibited him from speaking any further on this matter."⁹⁷ Lancaster endured no further transgressions from Wycliffe, and forced him to retire to his parish church of Lutterworth where he would remain until his death on 31 December 1384.⁹⁸ John of Gaunt's plan to appropriate the resources, power, and authority of the church by creating dissension and upheaval had backfired on him spectacularly.

Dew Drops on the Web: Geoffrey Chaucer

⁹⁵ *FZ*, 104, 112-113.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 112, 114.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁹⁸ Stephen Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27.

As a member of the Lancastrian Circle, Geoffrey Chaucer acted as John of Gaunt's propagandist and wrote of his commitment and friendship with the duke in his work. The earliest literary evidence of his dedication to John of Gaunt was written shortly after the passing of Blanche of Lancaster in *The Book of the Duchess*, memorializing and eternalizing John of Gaunt's love for his first wife on the page.⁹⁹ Any personal affection John of Gaunt and Geoffrey Chaucer might have felt for each other aside, Lancaster knew that Chaucer's talents could be of great political use to him. Although the fourteenth-century philosopher Robert Holcot had died c.1349, his discussions of fame were likely familiar to John of Gaunt. According to Holcot, a cultured Englishman was aware of the connections between fame and language,¹⁰⁰ and

⁹⁹ In the *Duchess*, the narrator relates the sorrowful tale of "A long castel with walles white/Be Seynt Johan, on a ryche hil" (1318-1319) who is mourning grievously after the death of his love, "And goode faire White she het/That was my lady name ryght" (948-949). The phrase 'long castel' is a reference to Lancaster (also called 'Loncastel' and 'Longcastell'), 'walles white' is thought to likely be an oblique reference to Blanche, 'Seynt Johan' was Gaunt's name-saint, and 'ryche hil' is a reference to Richmond; these thinly veiled references reveal the identity of the grieving black knight of the poem as John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Richmond. 'White' is the English translation of the French word 'blanche', implying that the white lady was Blanche of Lancaster. Further evidence that the *Duchess* was written to memorialize Blanche of Lancaster appeared years later in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*. 'Chaucer as narrator' is acclaimed for the praise and service that ignorant men have delightedly given to the God of Love because of the books Chaucer has written, the list of which includes "And eke the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse" (418). (See: Colin Wilcockson, "Explanatory Notes on 'The Book of the Duchess'," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson and F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 973-974, 976. F. N. Robinson, "Explanatory Notes on 'The Book of the Duchess'," in *The Poetical Works of Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1933), 881, 883-886.)

¹⁰⁰ Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), 141.

the duke would have been conscious of the relationship between power, reputation, and the production of culture,¹⁰¹ so would have naturally used his relationship with Chaucer to his advantage. Chaucer's contemporary, and source of great influence on his poetry, the Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio claimed that rulers,

strove to deify their fathers, grandfathers, and ancestors, in order that they themselves might be more feared and revered by the masses. These things could not have easily been done without the collaboration of the poets, who, in order to extend their own fame, as well as to win the favor of the princes, [and] delight their subjects, . . . made the people believe what the princes wanted by masterfully contriving various fictions that are wrongly understood by the uneducated today . . .¹⁰²

Following the suit of Petrarch, another poet of great influence on Chaucer, Boccaccio wrote in his *Trattatello in laude di Dante*¹⁰³ that poets were prince-pleasers who were hired as disseminators of a prince's ideology, causing what the princes wished to be believed, to be believed.¹⁰⁴ Drawing heavily from the works of Boccaccio and Petrarch, as well as Dante, there can be little doubt that Chaucer was aware of their belief that

¹⁰¹ Lynn Staley, "Gower, Richard II, Henry of Derby, and the Business of Making Culture," *Speculum* 75.1 (2000), 93.

¹⁰² Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Life of Dante (Trattatello in Laude di Dante)*, trans. Vincenzo Zin Bollettino (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 36-37.

¹⁰³ Dante was likely the poet who influenced Chaucer's work more than any other. *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Douglas Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 126-127.

¹⁰⁴ Robert J. Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21-22.

poets were propagandists for the mighty, and, judging from the works of propaganda Chaucer produced for John of Gaunt, it is likely that Chaucer agreed with them.¹⁰⁵

Generally dated to the mid-1380s, Chaucer's fourth and final dream poem, *The Legend of Good Women*, was written when John of Gaunt's reputation was at its lowest, in 1386, when the duke decided it was in his best interest to remove himself from

England by pressing his claim to the throne of Castile and León for a second time.¹⁰⁶

According to Peter Brown, dream visions can serve as "an instrument of radical analysis and evaluation," and in some measure "the literary dream...[is] at once intensely private and expansively public, providing a means whereby the outer world can be read through the inner."¹⁰⁷ Chaucerian critics have long associated the God of Love in the *Legend's* prologue with Richard II, and a great deal of work has already investigated the *Legend* in

¹⁰⁵ Sheila Delany noted that after the narrator in the *House of Fame* stepped out of the temple of Venus and found himself in a vast wasteland, he significantly uttered the bewildered prayer "O Christ!...that art in blysse/Fro fantome and illusion/Me save!..." She claimed that what must have been the most powerful meaning of 'phantom' for any poet was "the deception of the written word...the artist can also impose delusive images on others..." Sheila Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 66.

¹⁰⁶ CPR, *Richard II, 1385-1389*, 134. On 21 September 1371 John of Gaunt married Constance of Castile, heir apparent to the throne of Castile which had been usurped from her father by his half-brother Henry of Trastámara in 1366. Lancaster assumed the title 'King of Castile and León' by right of his wife on 29 January 1372 and pressed their claim to the throne of Castile for the first time.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Brown, "On the Borders of Middle English Dream Visions," in *Reading Dreams: The Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 44.

a historical context, a conversation which bears no repetition here.¹⁰⁸ Cupid's court appears as a near mirror image of the court of intrigue that drove John of Gaunt back to Spain around the time of the *Legend's* composition.¹⁰⁹ As Queen Alceste assigns the poet his penance for writing stories of unfaithful women, she tells him "For Love ne wol nat be countrepleted be/In ryght ne wrong; and lerne that at me!" (*F*, 476-477) – given Richard II's well known frivolous and erratic nature, it hardly surprises the reader to learn Cupid cannot be argued against. As a means of analysis, the prologue to the *Legend* acts much like the legend of a map, revealing information that can be applied to Chaucer's other dream poems. It stands to reason that if Richard II is represented by the

¹⁰⁸ See: Robert R. Edwards, 'Ricardian Dreamwork: Chaucer, Cupid and Loyal Lovers', in *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception*, ed. Carolyn P. Collette (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 60. Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994). Michael Hanrahan, "Seduction and Betrayal: Treason in the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*," *The Chaucer Review* 30.3 (1996), 229-240. Kelly Robertson, "Laboring in the God of Love's Garden: Chaucer's Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 24 (2002), 115-147. M. C. E. Shaner and A. S. G. Edwards, "Explanatory Notes on 'The Legend of Good Women'," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson and F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 1061. James Simpson, "Ethics and Interpretation: Reading Wills in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 20 (1998), 73-100.

¹⁰⁹ In the *G* prologue to the *Legend*, the capricious God of Love demands to know what 'Chaucer as narrator' is doing in his presence, for a worm would be more worthy to come into Cupid's sight than the narrator (241-244). He goes on to accuse the narrator of being his mortal foe, warring against him, speaking evil of his old servants, using works of 'translacyoun' to plague his servants, and for believing it is foolish to trust in him (248-253) – "Thow Mast it nat denye/For in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose...And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe" (253-254, 257). After nearly two decades as the Lancastrian propagandist, it is unlikely that his efforts on behalf of John of Gaunt went unnoticed by the king or his supporters. "The god of Love hereth many a tale yfeyned/For in youre court is many a losengeour/And many a queynte totelere accusour/That tabouren in youre eres many a thyng/For hate, or for jelous ymagynyng.../Envye.../Is lavender in the grete court always.../Whoso that goth, alwey she mot [nat] wante" (*G* 327-331, 333, 334, 337).

capricious God of Love in the *Legend*, then he is likely to be represented by the God of Love, or Cupid, in Chaucer's other dream poems as well.

The date of composition of Geoffrey Chaucer's second dream poem, *The House of Fame*, is contested, but is generally believed to have been written between 1379 and 1380.¹¹⁰ In the past, Chaucerian critics had been unable to agree on how to read the *House*,¹¹¹ but in light of Chaucer's membership in the Circle as Lancaster's propagandist, it appears to have been written to assert the fickleness of fame, or reputation, in order to

¹¹⁰ Piero Boitani asserted that Chaucer must have realized writing a book on fame would not be an easy task, for "The tradition of Fame was ancient and all-pervasive, and to write a poem on it meant confronting it and making quite a significant *cultural* statement." Boitani, *Imaginary World of Fame*, 1.

¹¹¹ In the nineteenth-century, critics tended to read the *House* as an allegory of Chaucer's own life; in the early-twentieth century those readings were replaced by attempts to explain the work as an occasional poem, possibly meant to rebuke John of Gaunt for indecency or to celebrate a royal marriage; John Matthews Manly argued that the vision was meant to introduce a collection of tales; more recently, critics have attempted to find a unifying theme such as a plea for patronage, rejection of fourteenth-century philosophical thought, a Boethian rejection of earthly mutability, skepticism about books, dreams, and experience, or, as Delany claimed, the subject of the *House* was poetry itself. See: Wilber Owen Sypher, *Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1907). John Matthews Manly, "What is Chaucer's *House of Fame*?" in *Anniversary Papers: by Colleagues and Pupils of George Lyman Kittredge* (Boston and London: Ginn and Company, 1913), 73-82. Paul G. Ruggiers, "The Unity in Chaucer's 'House of Fame'," *Studies in Philology* 50.1 (1953), 16-29. Robert J. Allen, "A Recurring Motif in Chaucer's 'House of Fame'," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 55.3 (1956), 393-405. Laurence K. Shook, "The *House of Fame*," in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. Beryl Rowland (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 414-427. J. L. Simmons, "The Place of the Poet in Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 27 (1966), 125-135. B. G. Koonce, *Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in the House of Fame* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). J. A. W. Bennett, *Chaucer's 'Book of Fame': An Exposition of 'The House of Fame'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). Robert O. Payne, *The Key of Remembrance, A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963). Sheila Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 115.

rebuke John of Gaunt's critics, as well as console and praise the duke. In *Book I*, the narrator finds himself in the glass temple of Venus (120), accompanied by her blind son, Cupid (130, 137); here, Chaucer asserts that Richard II, represented by Cupid, is blind to what surrounds him. On the walls of the temple are written innumerable tragedies from antiquity whose characters were of high reputation and were struck low by *Fame*; "O wikke Fame! – for ther nys/Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!" (348-349). The Fairfax and Bodleian MSS gloss these lines with the quote, "Rumor (Fama) of all evils the most swift."¹¹² It is clear that what is to come in *Books II* and *III* is a rebuke of all those who had defamed the poet's friend.

The House of Fame is a significant poem in terms of Geoffrey Chaucer's works of propaganda as it contains bold statements against John of Gaunt's critics and rivals. When the narrator leaves the glass temple of Venus to discover where he is, an eagle clutches the narrator in its talons and carries him to the *House of Fame*.¹¹³ This eagle calls the narrator 'by name' (558) and later 'Geffrey' (729), connecting the narrator to

¹¹² John M. Fyler, "Explanatory Notes on 'The House of Fame'," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson and F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 980. Delany approached the concept of 'fame' with the traditional definitions of rumor and reputation, but to this she added that 'fame' should be understood as the body of traditional knowledge that confronted the educated fourteenth-century reader. Delany, *The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*, 3.

¹¹³ "Me thoughte I sawgh an egle sore/But that hit semed moche more/Then I had any egle seyn/But this as sooth as deth, certeyn/Hyt was of gold, and shon so bryghte/That never sawe men such a syghte/But yf heven had ywonne/Al newe of gold another sonne/So shone the egles fethers bryghte" (499-506).

Chaucer himself.¹¹⁴ When the eagle awakens the narrator, who had fainted in fear, it speaks in a voice exactly like one that ‘Geffrey’ was so accustomed to that he could name the person to whom the voice belonged, and, as soon as he heard that voice, he regained his wits (561-564).¹¹⁵ The eagle soon refers to the narrator as his friend (582) and, later, as his brother (795, 816). In his third dream poem, *The Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer very clearly identified the eagle with royalty, claiming “the royal egle.../That with his sharpe lok perseth the sonne” (330-331) and “The tersel egle, as that ye knowe wel/The foul royal, above yow in degree/The wyse and worthi, secre, trewe as stel” (393-395). Taken together – Chaucer’s association of the eagle with royalty, the eagle’s voice being that of a person the narrator was clearly on intimate terms with, and the eagle’s references to the narrator as his friend and brother – there can be little doubt that this eagle is representative of Chaucer’s friend, John of Gaunt. Further evidence that the eagle is representative of Lancaster appears in *Book III* when ‘Geffrey’ approaches the house of *Fame* “That stood upon so high a roche/Hier stant there non in Spayne” (1116-1117). With the composition of the poem seven to eight years after John of Gaunt first assumed the title King of Castile and León, the reference to Spain stands out as conspicuously as the rock that Chaucer describes – the poem contains no other geographical references to

¹¹⁴ There has been no consensus on whether the narrator of the *House* is representative of Chaucer himself or not. Boitani claimed, for instance, that ‘Geffrey’ was Geoffrey Chaucer in person (Boitani, *Imaginary World of Fame*, 8.), but Delany noted that although at certain points the narrator and Chaucer’s experiences closely approached each other, the *House* had to do with the exploration of artistic problems with which Chaucer was directly concerned (Delany, *The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*, 109.).

¹¹⁵ “Ryght in the same vois and stevene/That useth oon I koude nevene/And with that vois, soth for to seyn/My mynde cam to me ageyn” (561-564).

Spain, or any other location. The eagle, Chaucer's friend and brother, was responsible for the narrator's presence in this place, which would further indicate that the noble eagle represents John of Gaunt, King of Castile and León.

During their ascent to the *House of Fame*, the eagle reveals that he lives with the god Jupiter who sent him to 'Geffrey', for "Certeyn, he hath of the routhe/That thou so longe trewely/Hast served so ententyfly/Hys blind newew Cupido.../As thou best canst, in reverence/Of Love and of hys servants eke (614-624). The eagle goes on to refer to the one 'Geffrey' has been serving as "Cupido the rechcheles" (668), and later exclaims, "Loo, ys it not a gret myschaunce/To lete a fool han governaunce/Of thing that he can not demeyne?" (957-959). The similarities between the courts of Richard II, blind Cupid, and *Fame* parallel one another too closely for the comparison to have not been intentional. Through his 'poetics of disguise', Chaucer used his fictitious courts to overtly criticize the rumors and gossip that were born and emanated from King Richard's court. Using the eagle as the mouthpiece of censure against John of Gaunt's rivals and the court's gossip-mongers, the assault on Richard II's blindness and carelessness in the rule of England pervades the *House*.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ The eagle's lengthy proof of 160 lines (711-871) in which he employs non-sequiturs, circumlocution, recapitulation, and proofs that prove nothing (Delany, *The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*, 70-75. Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 71-74. J. D. North, *Chaucer's Universe* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 14. Larry Sklute, *Virtue of Necessity: Inconclusiveness and Narrative Form in Chaucer's Poetry* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984), 40. John Leyerle, "Chaucer's Windy Eagle" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 40 (1971), 256.) could be viewed as problematic if the eagle is representative of John of Gaunt. While, in the context of the *House* being a work of propaganda promoting the duke and censuring his critics, this section appears problematic, one must take in to account Chaucer's sardonic and deprecating sense of humor before jumping to conclusions. One need look no further than Chaucer's

Inside *Fame*'s palace, Calliope¹¹⁷ and her eight sisters sang around *Fame*'s throne, and on pillars lining both sides of the hall were the classical poets, from Homer to Claudian, each responsible for bearing the weight of the fame of those whose names had withstood the test of time. In the *House*, it was not the poets, but their subjects, that were

descriptions of 'Chaucer as narrator' to find an abundance of self-deprecation. In the *House*, the eagle describes 'Geffrey' after he has finished his day's work as "domb as any stoon/Thou sittest at another book/Tyl fully daswed ys thy look" (656-658). The eagle also teases 'Geffrey' about his size, "Thou art noyous for to carye!" (574). In the *Prologue to Sir Thopas*, the Hoost describes 'Chaucer as narrator' as "a popet in an arm t'enbrace/For any womman, smal and fiar of face/He semeth elvyssh by his countenaunce" (701-706) and his poetry (*Sir Thopas*) as "drasty" and "nat worth a toord" (930). Between the eagle and Hoost's comments, Chaucer (if the narrator of each poem is in fact Chaucer) refers to himself as fat (the eagle) and slight (the Hoost). It seems only natural that the poet that poked fun at himself would also take the opportunity to tease his friend – as he later does in *Fortune*. Where the greatest philosophical achievement of fourteenth-century England had been in the field of logic (Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 70), considering Lancaster's education and interest in learned men, it is possible that the duke fancied himself as somewhat of an intellectual, and that Chaucer utilized the eagle's reductive simplicity to poke fun at a friend who may have been consistently intellectually outmatched by the poet.

Alternatively, "the poem is structured as a series of propositions that Lady Fame makes about how reputation is established in this world, propositions that... seem to make no logical sense... this illogic turns out, according to specific principles of medieval logic, to represent acceptable reasoning and calls the whole discipline of logic into question" (Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 27.). As the logic utilized by *Fame* has been described as "illogical" or "mock-logic" (William S. Wilson, "Scholastic Logic in Chaucer's *House of Fame*" *The Chaucer Review* 1 (1967), 183.) where her devotees may be "famous, infamous, or a contradiction in terms, 'unfamous' (Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 74.), Chaucer may be using the eagle's tautological proof to prepare the reader for the 'logic' they are about to encounter in *Fame*'s court, and, comparatively, to comment on the 'logic' utilized in the Ricardian court. As Boitani noted, 'Geffrey's description of the spread of bad fame (1636-1656) utilized "the very images employed by the Eagle in his scientific demonstration of how sound spreads..." (Boitani, *Imaginary World of Fame*, 162.).

¹¹⁷ The Muse of epic poetry. Boitani noted that the very presence of the Muses in *Fame*'s palace sealed the "close connection between poetry and fame." Boitani, *Imaginary World of Fame*, 15.

famous.¹¹⁸ Poets were responsible for the reputation and renown of those they wrote about – just as Boccaccio, Dante, and Petrarch claimed, in Chaucer’s *House of Fame*, poets were the propagandists of princes.

Baffled by the capricious nature of *Fame*, ‘Geffrey’ leaves her court and castle, and comes upon the wicker House of Rumor. This house, shaped like a cage and spinning round and round, never stopping and never quiet, was filled with the ‘whisprynges’ and ‘jangles’ of everyone who entered. In the House of *Fame*, ‘Geffrey’ observed the process by which the past became known to, or hidden from, the present; the House of Rumor, on the other hand, was entirely concerned with the present, where ‘Geffrey’ observed the present quickly becoming history.¹¹⁹ The House of Rumor functioned much like the Ricardian court where one man would tell another something and, whether the tidings were true or false, that second man would tell a third man and the third man would tell a fourth, and so on – the story growing greater with every tongue that told it. While everyone scrambled over each other for a scrap of gossip, the tidings squeezed out of the holes in the House of Rumor and flew directly to *Fame*, who allotted each their duration, some to grow and others to diminish quickly. “In the movement of tidings from the House of Rumor to Fame’s palace, we see histories becoming history, and rumor becoming renown. Chaucer as a courtier was especially well placed to observe this process...”¹²⁰ The House of Rumor spun so rapidly that Geoffrey had to be

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Delany, *The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*, 106.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

flown in by the eagle as he could never have entered on his own, much like Chaucer's entrance to the Ricardian court. Although Chaucer's family had a history of royal service, the poet himself would never have become such an intimate of court without John of Gaunt's friendship to elevate him and carry him to court.

At the end of the *House*, everyone in the House of Rumor crowded into one corner, "Atte laste y saugh a man/Which that y [nevne] nat ne kan/But he semed for to be/A man of gret auctorite..." (2155-2158). Although it has been widely accepted by Chaucerian critics that the *House* is incomplete and it will never be known who the man of great authority was meant to be,¹²¹ with Chaucer cast as Lancaster's propagandist, that is unlikely. Shaped like a birdcage into which 'Geffrey's brother, the eagle, had to fly, it seems that trapped in the House of Rumor stood John of Gaunt. While it is entirely possible that the poem is unfinished as is commonly believed, ending the *House* inside the House of Rumor with the lone man of great authority, Lancaster, standing staunchly and resolutely apart from the crowd makes a much bolder statement. If the poem is complete, Chaucer's ending daringly cast John of Gaunt's rivals as the gossipmongers who created and exaggerated stories of the duke, with Lancaster perseveringly standing

¹²¹ Delany claimed that speculating about the identity of the man adds nothing to the poem, for, "It is difficult to imagine any figure of authority sufficient to overcome the impact of the rest of the poem, short of Christ himself..." However, she went on to assert that Chaucer was surely saying something about literary tradition and personal experience in this last episode. *Ibid.*, 108, 110. Lynch noted that *Book I* was 508 lines long, *Book II* was 581 lines, and *Book III* was approximately the size of the first two books combined, by all rights of symmetry and proportion, *Book III* should have been finished; however, she does not offer an opinion on whether it was or was not complete, or speculate on the identity of the man of great authority (Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 81.).

his ground, in spite of the constant barrage of attacks. If the spinning House of Rumor is the Ricardian court and the man of great authority is John of Gaunt, it does not seem that Chaucer could have ended the *House* any other way; with Lancaster away in Spain while the gossipmongers of Richard's court continued to defame the duke, his future was uncertain and seemingly at the mercy of those very slanderers. For Chaucer to appropriately comment on the current state of affairs as Lancaster's propagandist, he could not conclude the *House* as the events it was criticizing were still in progress. After John of Gaunt's return from Spain at the behest of Richard II, for Chaucer to then continue or 'finish' the *House* would have detracted from the boldness of its critique of Richard's court and the duke's rivals; as such, it could not have ended any way other than precisely as it did, with John of Gaunt, his fate uncertain, bravely standing alone against his adversaries. Lancaster could not have chosen a more perfect propagandist. Chaucer was talented enough to avoid censure for his work criticizing the king and his court, and he was genuinely attached and dedicated to his "beste frend,"¹²² the man who would later, truly, become his brother.

Flies Caught in the Web

While John of Gaunt was elevating his own power base and fashioning his reputation, he was also occupied with positioning his eldest son to claim the power and authority Lancaster himself had been unable to grasp. Henry of Bolingbroke, Earl of

¹²² *Fortune* (32, 40, 48, 50).

Derby – and Duke of Hereford in 1397 by right of his wife, Mary de Bohun¹²³ – inherited little of his father’s ingenuity or acumen. Lancaster tried to use his own connections to overcome his son’s political ineptitude, but to no avail. The earl carelessly maintained public political alliances while failing to cultivate a separate group to support him covertly when threatened by his enemies. Although Derby came to depose his cousin and claim the throne of England as Henry IV, this lack of sagacity eventually led to his downfall, condemning him to a reign in which he was bullied by his own parliament.

Aside from the three warrior poets of his own Circle, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Clanvowe and John Montagu, John of Gaunt was acquainted with another well-known poet of the time who he engaged to promote his son. John Gower served with Lancaster and several of the men in his Circle on Commissions of Oyer and Terminer in 1361 and 1375.¹²⁴ Gower was most intimately associated with Lancaster’s own propagandist,¹²⁵ and followed Chaucer’s lead in promoting princes. The first recension of *Confessio Amantis*, believed to have been written between 1386 and 1390, was “A book for King

¹²³ 15 April 1366 – 20 March 1413 (reigned as Henry IV 30 September 1399 – 20 March 1413) Henry of Bolingbroke was John of Gaunt’s third child, but first son, by his first wife, Blanche of Lancaster. Richard II created Henry Duke of Hereford on 29 September 1397 (*CR, 1341-1417*, 369.).

¹²⁴ *CPR, Edward III, 1361-1364*, 63-66. *CPR, Edward III, 1374-1377*, 135-139.

¹²⁵ Written sometime between 1378 and 1385, the end of *Book V* of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* was dedicated, “O moral Gower, this book I directe/To the...” (1856-1857). Almost in answer to this dedication, at the end of *Book VIII* of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, the character of the goddess Venus referred to Chaucer as “mi disciple and mi poete” (first recension, 2941-2942) (John Gower, *Confessio Amantis, Volume I*, ed. Russell A. Peck (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2000), 349. All quotes of John Gower’s poetry are from Russell A. Peck’s 2000 edition of *Confessio Amantis*.).

Richardes sake/To whom bilangeth my ligeance/With al myn hertes obeisance,” (first recension, 24-26) composed while John of Gaunt was away, pressing his claim to the throne of Castile. It can hardly be coincidence that shortly after Lancaster returned from Spain at Richard II’s behest, sometime in late 1389 or early 1390,¹²⁶ Gower rededicated the poem c.1392 “unto myn oghne lord/Which of Lancastre is Henri named/The high God him hath proclaimed/Ful of knyhtode and alle grace” (third recension, 86-89). Within a few years, Gower had written and dedicated *Cinkante Balades*, his laureate poems – *Rex celi dues*, *H. aquile pullus*, and *O recolende* – and *In Praise of Peace*, praising Henry of Bolingbroke, in whom he placed high hopes.¹²⁷ John of Gaunt provided his son with a propagandist who was well respected.

The young Earl of Derby resented the attacks continually leveled against his father at court, so in retaliation, while John of Gaunt was campaigning in Spain from 1386 to 1390, Derby and the ‘Lords Appellant’ planned to impeach five of Richard’s favorites. With the addition of Henry of Bolingbroke, these were five of the most powerful and influential men in England¹²⁸ who banded together in order to restrain

¹²⁶ Richard II wrote to “His dearest uncle” on 30 October 1389, “because We have much longed for your presence in Our kingdom,” to speed his return from Spain. *Foedera*, 7: 648.

¹²⁷ All of these poems were written 1399-1400. Russell A. Peck, “Introduction,” in *Confessio Amantis, Volume I*, ed. Russell A. Peck (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2000), 62.

¹²⁸ Thomas of Woodstock the Duke of Gloucester and Constable of England, Henry Bolingbroke the Earl of Derby, Richard FitzAlan the Earl of Arundel and Surrey, Thomas Beauchamp the Earl of Warwick, and Thomas Mowbray the Duke of Norfolk and Earl of Nottingham (*Rot Parl*, 3a: 229.)

Richard II's tyrannical and capricious rule. As *Figure 3* shows below, the Lords Appellant – much like the Lancastrian Circle – were bound to each other through blood and marriage. Thomas Beauchamp, 12th Earl of Warwick, was closely allied to the families of the four other Appellants, but was the sole member who was not bound to the group through blood or marriage.

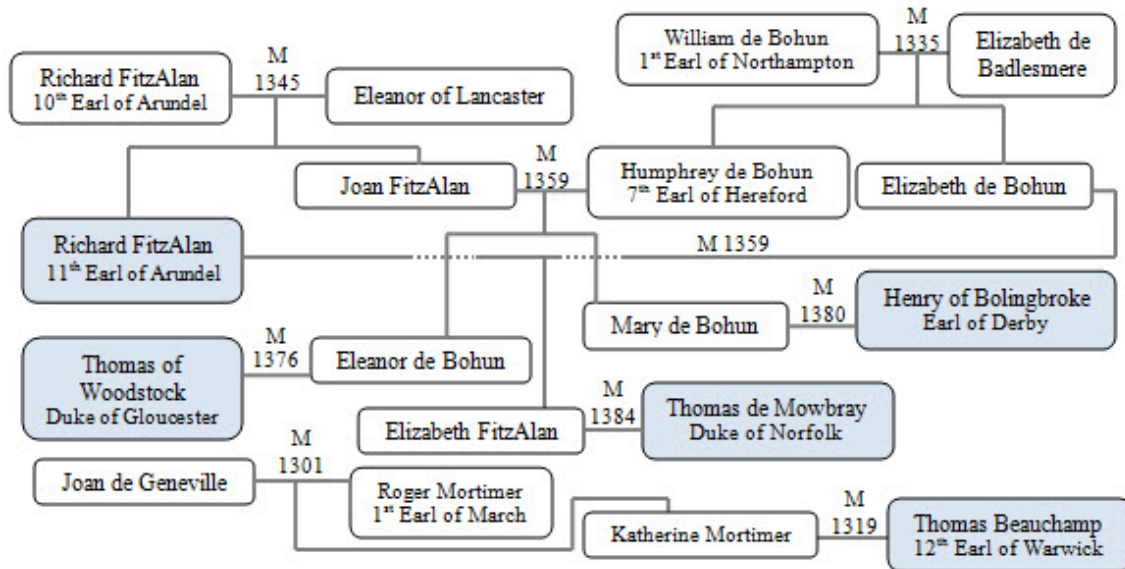


Figure 3: Marital Connections between the Lords Appellant

Lords Appellant

The Lords Appellant and the ‘Merciless’ Parliament of 1388 systematically purged the royal household’s administration, retainers, clerks, chaplains, secretaries, judges, and chamber knights. After the virtual *coup d’état* of the Lords Appellant,

Richard II was little more than a puppet who suddenly longed for the return of his uncle, John of Gaunt, from Spain. At the age of twenty-two, Richard II declared his majority and reclaimed administration of the government of England. On 11 August 1389, Richard II appointed his sergeant at arms to see to the arrival and safe conduct of his uncle John, Duke of Lancaster, from Bordeaux to England.¹²⁹ The capricious young king had finally come to appreciate the tenacity and authority in his uncle by whom he had once felt so threatened, and, in turn, the duke finally succeeded in positioning the House of Lancaster beside the crown.

Well aware of the vindictive nature of his nephew, almost immediately upon his return from Spain in 1390 John of Gaunt wisely encouraged his son to leave England to avoid the revenge of Richard II that would surely come crashing down on those involved in the Merciless Parliament. On 13 June 1391 Derby's accounts recorded that he received the equivalent of 4,000 marks from his father to fund his participation in the Teutonic Knights' crusade in Prussia.¹³⁰ The earl's exploits made him "famous everywhere in the mouths of all with great praise."¹³¹ He was said to have governed himself and his companions so prudently that "he was declared to be pleasing to God, an honour to this realm, and friendly to all with whom he associated."¹³² By the time he

¹²⁹ *CPR, Richard II, 1389-1392*, 140.

¹³⁰ *Expeditions*, 3-4. "From the illustrious Prince John, Duke of Aquitaine and Lancaster, his father, because of the great expense of his gift of his guardianship of the voyage for the aforesaid [Henry, Earl of Derby]..."

¹³¹ *Capgrave*, 104.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 104-105.

returned to England on 30 June 1393,¹³³ Henry of Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, was a prince of European renown.

King Richard II made his fatal mistake after John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, died on 3 February 1399. The king declared that his cousin's treachery, for his part in the failed 1397 plot of the Lords Appellant to arrest and imprison Richard II and John of Gaunt forever, forfeited the entirety of the Lancastrian inheritance to the Crown, and extended his sentence of exile from six years to life.¹³⁴ While the king was preoccupied leading a military contingent to attend to the rebellion of Ireland, Henry of Bolingbroke was able to muster a large army under the pretense that he wished to return to England only to recover the Lancastrian inheritance.

When John of Gaunt's son claimed the crown of England as Henry IV in 1399, the nation rejoiced in anticipation of an age of peace and prosperity. The chronicler Thomas Walsingham declared,

God suddenly determined to crush his [Richard's] arrogance, and to come to the aid of the English people, who were now being wretchedly oppressed, and would have lost all hope or relief or remedy had not God wonderfully stretched forth his hands to help them. God therefore put it into the heart of Henry...to return to the land of his birth...When talk of this was heard throughout the whole realm...there was great joy among the commons, who truly thought that God would send this man to remove the yoke of their most grievous servitude.¹³⁵

¹³³ *Expeditions*, 254-255.

¹³⁴ Bevan, *Henry IV*, 54.

¹³⁵ *St Albans*, 2: 137-141.

The illustrious reputation Henry IV created through his expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land, and with the help of the poet John Gower, tarnished and faded not long after his ascension to the throne of England. Whether he was blind to or was incapable of emulating his father's political strategies, the new king seemed to have inherited little of his father's political savvy. Henry IV's mistake laid in maintaining only the public political affiliation with the Lords Appellant while he was Earl of Derby, and his inability to sustain new alliances after his ascension to the throne.

In an ill-advised effort to secure the line of succession, Henry IV alienated those who would likely have been his staunchest supporters. Richard II, "yielding to the prayers of our said uncle [John of Gaunt]," legitimated Henry's half-brothers and sisters, the Beauforts, on 4 February 1397, also granting them the capability of inheriting "all honours, dignities, preferments, estates, degrees, and public and private offices, both perpetual and temporal, and feudal and noble rights, by whatsoever name they are called...as if you were born in wedlock."¹³⁶ In 1407 Henry IV reconfirmed the Beauforts' legitimation, but added the clause "besides the royal dignity,"¹³⁷ barring the Beauforts from the line of succession. Henry IV's half-brothers, who could have been his

¹³⁶ *Rot Parl*, 3a: 354.

¹³⁷ In parliament on 22 December 1406, the line of succession was officially set down in tail male beginning with Henry of Monmouth (followed by any of his male heirs) – if he died with no male issue, the crown was to pass down the line to Henry IV's younger sons – Thomas of Lancaster, John of Lancaster, and Humphrey of Lancaster. With an official line of succession that included Henry IV's four sons and any sons they might have, it was unnecessary to add "excepta dignitate regali" ("besides the royal dignity") to the original document of 1397 legitimizing the Beauforts. *Rot Parl*, 3b: 580-581. Christopher Allman, *Henry V* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1992), 42.

most powerful and reliable allies, withdrew from the new king and allied themselves with his son, Henry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales.

Without John of Gaunt, it is possible that the poet John Gower would not have rededicated *Confessio Amantis* to Henry or later written poems in praise of him. Without his father's funding, Henry would never have been able to make his expeditions to Prussia or the Holy Land. All of the good *fama* surrounding Henry IV when he claimed the crown had been created for him by his father: the nation's relatively easy acceptance of the usurping king was therefore an orchestration of the enterprising John of Gaunt. It was through the duke's ceaseless ambition, shrewdness, and sagacity in promoting the House of Lancaster and establishing a Lancastrian legacy that Henry IV ascended to the throne; without the web woven by his father, it is unlikely that Henry would have been able to overthrow his cousin and claim the crown of England. The ingenious maneuvering of John of Gaunt transformed the monarchy and political landscape of England, the repercussions of which resounded for decades to come.

CHAPTER 3

TWISTING THE LANCASTRIAN WEB

“...a spider web's design, and the unique properties of its silk, allowed just a single thread to break so the rest of the web remained unharmed.”¹

The chronicler Adam of Usk recorded Henry V's coronation day, 9 April 1413, Passion Sunday, as having been marked by, “unprecedented storms, with driving snow which covered the country's mountains, burying men and animals and houses, and, astonishingly, even inundating the valleys and fenlands, creating great danger and much loss of life.”² Thomas Walsingham, a contemporary of Usk's, echoed the sentiment that the weather was seen by many as an ill omen of the severe fate that awaited England, although in his account, Walsingham also presented the opposing view in which others:

...took the unseasonable weather as the best of omens, suggesting that he [Henry V] would cause to fall upon the land snow-storms which would freeze vice and allow the fair fruits of virtue to spring up, so that his subjects would truly be able to say of him: ‘Winter is now past; The rains are over and gone’. [Song of Songs 2:11]³

¹ Ella Davies, “Spider Silk's Flexibility Makes Webs Super-Strong,” BBC Nature Knowledge and Learning Beta, 1 February 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/16809642> (accessed 23 June 2013).

² *CAU*, 243. Also see: *Capgrave*, 125. *Chronica*, 389. *Hardyng*, 371. *HA*, 2: 290.

³ *Chronica*, 389.

Frequently considered one of the greatest English monarchs in history, Henry V⁴ re-defined the role of the English king in a way his grandfather, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, would have unreservedly applauded. John of Gaunt shrewdly utilized twelve powerful men outside of his affinity to build the legacy of the House of Lancaster. The duke recognized the power of propaganda in garnering authority, and found his brother-in-law, the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, an invaluable ally. Lusting for the influence and assets controlled by the church, Lancaster used the heterodox theologian John Wycliffe to destabilize the church in England and throw it into an age of uncertainty and upheaval. Henry V recognized, as his grandfather did, the importance of a circle of men one could trust in promoting one's agenda, the value of propaganda in fashioning one's public image, and the usefulness of the church in garnering power. Both John of Gaunt and Henry V yearned to secure the Lancastrian legacy through succession of kingship, and to forge the House of Lancaster into the most powerful dynasty in England. John of Gaunt ran afoul of his own ambition by alienating himself from the church; Henry V knew that to become the undisputed king, he needed to embrace the church and bring the clergy into his fold.

John of Gaunt and Henry V utilized two opposing sources of authority, temporal and spiritual, as the means to secure their legacy. Henry V learned a great deal from the partially-successful tactics of his grandfather. At a time when few people felt a natural

⁴ Henry of Monmouth (16 September 1387 – 31 August 1422) was knighted in Ireland by Richard II in 1399, and second time by his father, Henry IV. On 15 October 1399 he was created the Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earl of Chester. He was crowned king on 9 April 1413 (r. 21 March 1413 – 31 August 1422) after the death of his father on 20 March 1413.

loyalty to the House of Lancaster, Henry of Monmouth – the future King Henry V – found a trustworthy circle of twelve influential friends who were invaluable in stabilizing his seat on the throne, constituting the ‘New Lancastrian Circle’. Henry spoke out against John of Gaunt’s theologian and the splintering of the church under John Wycliffe’s program of church reform, while simultaneously adopting his grandfather’s objective of consolidating the church’s power under the crown. Where John of Gaunt attempted, and failed, to appropriate the church’s authority and resources by trying to disable its power base, Henry V succeeded by advocating and endorsing orthodoxy and the church. The New Lancastrian Circle included highly placed churchmen whom the king used as his instruments of church ‘reform’,⁵ and he cleverly utilized the court chroniclers as his propagandists, fashioning himself as “the most Christian king”⁶ and *miles Christi*, the soldier of Christ. Henry V twisted the strands of the web woven by John of Gaunt into an enduring Lancastrian legacy.

Tangled in the Web

When Henry of Bolingbroke claimed the crown of England in 1399 from his despotic cousin, Richard II, the chronicler Adam of Usk asserted that Henry IV’s coronation foreshadowed the festering of both the usurping king and his reign, claiming that “as a result of his anointing then, his head was so infected with lice that his hair fell

⁵ Henry Chichele, Bishop of St. David’s, and later, in 1414, Archbishop of Canterbury; Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester (Henry V’s uncle); and later, in 1415, Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham.

⁶ *Life*, 7.

out, and for several months he had to keep his head covered,”⁷ and at the offertory he dropped a gold noble, which then rolled away out of sight. At his coronation banquet in Westminster Hall the royal champion, Sir Thomas Dymock, came into the hall fully armed on a warhorse and ordered a herald to proclaim to each quarter of the hall a challenge to anyone who denied Henry IV was the rightful king. Henry loudly replied, “If need be, Sir Thomas, I shall personally relieve you of this task.”⁸ Henry IV’s awareness that he was a usurper who did not hold the rightful claim to the throne dominated his him and his reign.

Archbishop Thomas Arundel of Canterbury, the younger brother of the Lord Appellant, Richard FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel, was considered Henry IV’s most valuable advisor and friend. After Richard II sentenced Henry to exile for life in 1399, Arundel helped him invade England and claim the throne. Obsessed with eradicating heresy, in 1401 Arundel persuaded Henry IV to pass *De Heretico Comburendo*, a statute about the Lollards, stating that, “any person within the said kingdom or dominions [who] was convicted...[for] heretical notions and errors...or was pronounced relapsed...[the sheriffs, mayors, and bailiffs] shall cause these same persons to be publically burnt in a high place...”⁹ The archbishop’s political sagacity sustained the king when he was threatened by his enemies; however, Arundel was more concerned with the maintenance of orthodoxy than with strengthening the House of Lancaster’s claim to the throne or

⁷ *CAU*, 243.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁹ *Rot Parl*, 3b: 467.

creating a Lancastrian dynastic legacy. Where Archbishop Arundel was obsessively preoccupied with orthodoxy and heresy, Henry IV seemed to take little interest in the struggle.

Henry IV's reliance on Lollard knights, such as Sir John Oldcastle, ensured he remained lukewarm toward the pursuit of heretics. In Wales, Owain Glyn Dŵr was declared a traitor in 1400 for failing to levy troops for service on the Scottish border, despite having been intentionally informed of this order too late to act upon it;¹⁰ on 8 November 1400 all of Glyn Dŵr's lands were declared forfeit to the crown 'by reason of treason'.¹¹ The Welsh, supporters of the recently murdered Richard II,¹² quickly rebelled under the leadership of Glyn Dŵr. To attend to the Welsh rebellion, Henry IV relied most heavily on his son, Henry of Monmouth, the Prince of Wales, and the well-known Lollard knight, Sir John Oldcastle. Through his service during the rebellion, Oldcastle became an asset to the crown and was awarded shares of power accordingly: by 3

¹⁰ D. Helen Allday, *Insurrection in Wales: The Rebellion of the Welsh Led by Owen Glyn Dwr (Glendower) Against the English Crown in 1400* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1981), 51.

¹¹ *CPR, Henry IV, 1399-1401*, 386.

¹² Richard died soon after his imprisonment, on or around 14 February 1400, reportedly killed by 'forcible starvation'. While the chroniclers speculated wildly about Richard's death, Nigel Saul pointed out that the minutes of the Privy Council around 9 February were strangely portentous, stating that if Richard were alive he should be kept in safekeeping but if he were dead his body should be publically displayed; "the implication of the minute, if scarcely spelled out, was clear: Richard was to be disposed of." (Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 425.). See: *PC*, 1: 107. *CAU*, 91. *Chronica*, 317. *HA*, 2: 245-246. *Hardyng*, 356-357. *St Albans*, 2: 291.

November 1404 he was Captain of Hay Castle in Wales,¹³ in 1404 and 1405 he was commissioned to inquire into reports that certain of the king's subjects were sending victuals, armaments, and artillery to the Welsh rebels,¹⁴ and by November 1407 he had been appointed sheriff of Herefordshire, a county on the Welsh border.¹⁵ The king had so much confidence in Oldcastle that he granted him *carte blanche* to pardon or punish any of the king's Welsh tenants that Oldcastle deemed rebels.¹⁶ Threatened by rebellion on every border, as well as within the kingdom itself, Henry IV could not afford to alienate allies that were as useful and loyal as Oldcastle; however, with Archbishop Arundel, "that lofty tower of the English church and its never defeated champion,"¹⁷ at the king's side, he also could not afford to entirely ignore heresy – Henry IV was, in effect, trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Henry IV's refusal to commit to a position toward Lollardy, and his apathy toward the spread and annihilation of the sect, earned him the censure of Archbishop Arundel. He later rebuked the king for his lack of concern regarding heresy and the

¹³ *CPR, Henry IV, 1399-1401*, 464.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 504. *CPR, Henry IV, 1405-1408*, 149.

¹⁵ *CPR, Henry IV, 1405-1408*, 407.

¹⁶ *CPR, Henry IV, 1401-1405*, 299. All of these territories were connected to the family of Henry IV's wife, Mary de Bohun, through the earldom of Hereford and the thirteenth-century Marshal inheritance of Eleanor Braose who married Humphry Bohun. "Grant to John Oldcastell, 'chivaler'...of full power to receive into the king's grace any Welsh rebels of the king's lordships...so that they surrender their bows, arrows, swords and other armour offensive and defensive and take oaths of loyalty, saving to the king forfeiture of their lands and goods."

¹⁷ *Chronica*, 396.

divestment of the church, proclaiming that the sin of the king's servants would redound upon his own head, for "as long as there had been a strong, wholesome faith in this land...the royal throne had been strong...But now, after the royal knights had begun to stray in matters of faith...peace has been banished from the kingdom..."¹⁸ Continuously faced with the possibility of rebellion, Henry IV's contradictory reliance on both Lollard knights and Archbishop Arundel resulted in a stagnant rule of mediocrity. Henry IV pandered to parliament and the commons, and failed to provide England with the 'good governance' he promised when he took the throne; instead, his reign was wracked by riots and banditry. The clash between the king's apathy toward Lollardy and Arundel's obsession with its eradication placed England's temporal and spiritual leaders at an impasse as to the governance of the realm, leaving the door open for one ambitious enough to step in and appropriate the king's authority.

Aged twenty and already considerably experienced in war through his campaign in Wales, by 1406 Henry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales, was ready to undertake more routine activities in the government of the realm.¹⁹ During the 'Long' Parliament of 1406 the commons came into conflict with the king over the composition of the king's council; it was not until the originally proposed council of seventeen was reduced to twelve, with the Prince of Wales named as the dominating member, that the commons was satisfied.²⁰

¹⁸ *St Albans*, 2: 427.

¹⁹ Christopher Allmand, *Henry V* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1992), 39.

²⁰ Christopher Allmand claimed that the council consisted of 12 members, and the list of those present at the council held at Hereford on 4 September 1405 began with Prince

Prince Henry began his career in governmental service by supporting the divestment of his father's authority. Medieval historian K. B. McFarlane claimed that the parliament of 1406 was "instrumental in bringing the king [Henry IV] to the greatest surrender of the reign."²¹ The commons drew up thirty-one articles that transferred power to the councilors, a number of whom were to remain with the king's person at all times. Among these articles, Henry IV agreed to "govern entirely in all cases with their advice, and to trust them" and that all warrants be submitted to the council for its approval; any warrant not endorsed by the council would therefore be invalid.²² In the biography of Henry V, Christopher Allmand noted that it appeared that "the king's ability to seek advice from persons neither recognized nor...paid as members of his council was curtailed by the disappearance of 'fringe' members from conciliar meetings."²³

Henry's name. (Allmand, *Henry V*, 39n.). The editors of the Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, on the other hand, claimed that Henry IV's council of 1406 was constructed of 13 members: Archbishop Thomas Arundel of Canterbury, Edward of Norwich the Duke of York, Bishop Nicholas Bubwith of London, Bishop Henry Beaufort of Winchester, Bishop Thomas Langley of Durham, John Beaufort the Earl of Somerset, William Lord Roos, Thomas Lord Furnivall, Hugh Lord Burnell, John Prophet, Richard Lord Grey of Codnor, Sir John Stanley, and Sir John Tiptoft ("Introduction to 'Henry IV: March 1406'," *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry, and Rosemary Horrox, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=116512> (accessed 21 July 2013).).

²¹ K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 91.

²² *Rot Parl*, 3b: 585-587.

²³ Allmand, *Henry V*, 40.

The Prince of Wales emerged as a conspicuous political figure in the parliament of January 1410, which was packed with his party. Unwilling to relinquish the power he had gained through the establishment of the king's council in 1406, the parliament of 1410 brought Prince Henry into conflict with his father, one of the outcomes of which was the replacement of both of the king's chief ministers. At the behest of the prince's council, Henry Scrope replaced John Tiptoft as the king's Treasurer, and Thomas Beaufort replaced Archbishop Arundel as Chancellor.²⁴ Bishop Henry Beaufort opened Parliament on 27 January, and on the following day the commons presented Thomas Chaucer as their speaker.²⁵ On the closing day of parliament, 9 May, in the name of the commons Thomas Chaucer asked the king to confirm who would be serving on his council. At Prince Henry's behest, Henry IV's final list of councilors of 1410 included the Prince of Wales, Henry Beaufort, Thomas FitzAlan, Henry Chichele, and Richard Beauchamp – seven councilors were appointed in total, five of whom were primarily concerned with transferring the crown's authority from the king to the prince. Prince Henry and his party maintained control of England from 1406 until 1411.²⁶ As the man

²⁴ *CCR, Henry IV, 1409-1413*, 26. *Foedera*, 8: 616. *GEC*, 11: 565. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights*, 107. "Introduction to 'Henry IV: January 1410'," *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry, and Rosemary Horrox, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=116516> (accessed 27 June 2013).

²⁵ *Rot Parl*, 3b: 622-623.

²⁶ The Prince of Wales and his chosen councilors are generally agreed to have taken full control of the government until the parliament of November 1411.

responsible for Parliament's domination of Henry IV, the Prince of Wales was well aware of the commons' tactics to force the crown into submission, and he was determined not to fall victim to them. When the prince ascended to the throne as Henry V in 1413, the new king made law and order his priority.

The first parliament of Henry V's reign began five weeks after his coronation, on 15 May 1413. Chancellor Henry Beaufort announced that Henry had summoned Parliament "because he wished to be counselled by the most wise and discreet men of his kingdom...so that he might gain their advice according to their discretion as seemed best to them; explaining that in every matter to be undertaken, he needed good counsel..."²⁷ Playing to the pride of the assembled lords, Henry V claimed that he did not wish to act without the good counsel of the temporal and spiritual lords and the commons.²⁸ A week later, the commons tried to intimidate the new king, claiming they desired that

good governance might be done, such as would be upheld and preserved in time to come; and he [the speaker of the commons] recounted how in the time of our lord the king his father, whom God absolve, the said commons had requested good governance on many occasions, and their request had been granted. But our lord the king was well aware of how this was subsequently fulfilled and carried out.²⁹

On 30 November 1411 Henry IV thanked the council and said that he was satisfied with their good and loyal diligence, counsel and duty during the time they had been on his council, serving as a dismissal of the council that had controlled the kingdom since the parliament of 1406. *Rot Parl*, 3b: 649.

²⁷ *Rot Parl*, 4: 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Henry V was willing to go only so far in placating the members of parliament. Cajoling them was one thing; succumbing to demands and covert threats was another. Not to be browbeaten as his father had been, Henry V countered by asking the speaker to put all of the commons' complaints in writing so that he could endeavor to rectify them. Taken aback by the king's response, a deputation came from the commons complaining that the speaker had agreed "without the advice and assent of his said companions,"³⁰ and asked the king to hold them excused. From the first, Henry V made it well known that he would not be dominated by his own Parliament.

Untangling the Web: The New Lancastrian Circle

Disillusioned by the lackluster reign of his father, the young Henry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales, chose instead to model himself after his grandfather, John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster. The prince not only adopted his grandfather's strategy for bolstering his power and influence, but he was also able to improve upon it. Various Chancery and Parliamentary Rolls from the reign of Henry IV reveal the identities of the members of the prince's 'New Lancastrian Circle', just as they revealed John of Gaunt's original Lancastrian Circle two generations before. The records show the Circle of the future King Henry V consisted of twelve members, precisely as his grandfather's Circle had: Richard Beauchamp the Earl of Warwick, Bishop Henry Beaufort of Winchester, Thomas Beaufort the Earl of Dorset and later the Duke of Exeter (in 1416), Thomas Chaucer, Bishop Henry Chichele of St. David's and later the Archbishop of Canterbury (in 1414),

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

Thomas FitzAlan the 13th Earl of Arundel, Henry Lord FitzHugh, Walter Hungerford, John of Lancaster the Constable of England and later the Duke of Bedford (in 1414), Ralph Neville the Earl of Westmorland, Henry Lord Scrope of Masham, and Gilbert Lord Talbot.³¹ Where John of Gaunt established an original Circle of twelve but allowed its number to dwindle as members died,³² Henry V was continually recruiting so members could be replaced upon their deaths, always maintaining the number twelve. Only three members of the New Lancastrian Circle died during Henry V's reign and had to be replaced; Henry Scrope was replaced by Bishop Thomas Langley of Durham in August 1415, Thomas FitzAlan by Sir John Tiptoft in October 1415, and Gilbert Talbot by Edmund Mortimer, 5th Earl of March, in October 1418. To Henry, continually maintaining a Circle of twelve men ensured continuity and the structural integrity of his Circle.

Henry V began constructing the New Lancastrian Circle in the early 1400s; it was through his Circle that he was able to appropriate his father's power in the parliament of 1406. Inducted into the Order of the Garter by his father in 1399 at the age of thirteen,³³ the prince must have kept a watchful eye on the Order for potential Circle members. Out of the fifteen men who had constituted members of Henry's Circle by the time of his

³¹ See Appendix A: *Chronology*, for birth and death dates of members of Henry V's New Lancastrian Circle.

³² John of Gaunt was predeceased by Circle members William Latimer (28 May 1381), Guy de Brienne (17 August 1390), John Clanvowe (17 October 1391), and William Neville (19 October 1391).

³³ *GEC*, 2: 538.

death in 1422, nine were Knights of the Garter.³⁴ Of the six men who were not Garter Knights, three – Henry Chichele, Henry Beaufort and Thomas Langley – were bishops, Thomas Chaucer was a king’s esquire and the Chief Butler,³⁵ and John Tiptoft and Edmund Mortimer were Knights of the Bath.³⁶

Henry populated his Circle with men who had a personal stake in his success and whom he knew would promote a Lancastrian dynasty. As illustrated in *Figure 4* below, several of these men were related to the prince by blood. Of the men unrelated to the prince, and therefore not represented in *Figure 4*, Henry FitzHugh was an ally of the prince’s father; he was one of the lords who gave their assent in parliament 23 October 1399 to secretly imprison Richard II.³⁷ Richard Beauchamp was the nephew of John of Gaunt’s man, William Beauchamp, and Henry Scrope’s first wife, Philippa de Brienne, was the daughter of John of Gaunt’s man Guy de Brienne.³⁸ Bishops Chichele and Langley had no relation to the prince or his family, but both had a long history of valued royal service.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 538-540. John of Lancaster, Thomas FitzAlan, Thomas Beaufort, and Richard Beauchamp were all inducted in 1400; following this, Ralph Neville was inducted in 1403, Gilbert Talbot in 1408/9, Henry FitzHugh in 1409, Henry Scrope in 1410, and Walter Hungerford in 1421.

³⁵ Thomas Chaucer was listed as an esquire as early as 20 March 1399 (*CPR, Richard II, 1396-1399*, 494) and as the king’s “well beloved Esquire” on 5 June 1399 (*Life-Records*, 332.), and as the Chief Butler as early as 6 November 1402 (*CPR, Henry IV, 1401-1405*, 168).

³⁶ *GEC*, 12a: 746.

³⁷ *Rot Parl*, 3b: 426-427.

³⁸ *GEC*, 1: 24-26. *GEC*, 12b: 372, 374-375, 377-378. *GEC*, 11: 566.

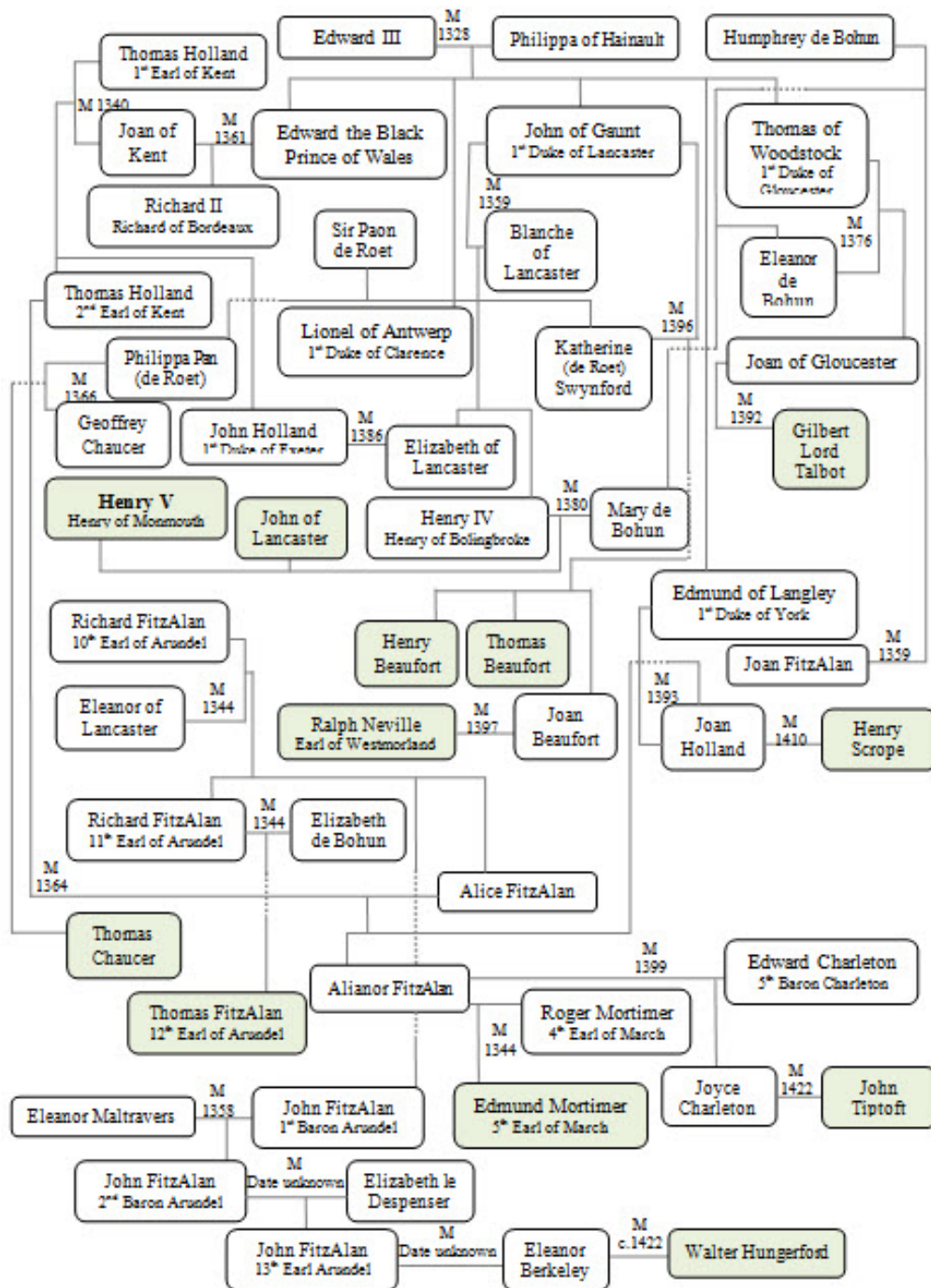


Figure 4: Blood & Marital Connections among Members of the New Lancastrian Circle

Members of the New Lancastrian Circle

Between Owain Glyn Dŵr's rebellion in Wales and the ongoing conflict over the English king's right to the crown of France, war was one of the dominating notes of Henry V's life. It comes as little surprise that the men he recruited into his Circle and counted among his most intimate friends were experienced soldiers. The king was involved in two major military campaigns in his life, and he was aided by members of his Circle in both. In the early 1400s Henry became the focus of authority for all of those who were opposing the rebels in Wales. Of his original twelve Circle members, Thomas FitzAlan fought with moderate success from 1401 to 1405, and was finally victorious against the rebels in 1405.³⁹ Ralph Neville was with Henry in Wales by September 1402 and Gilbert Talbot was in the service of Henry on the Welsh border from April 1403.⁴⁰ In July 1403, Henry FitzHugh was ordered to raise forces to aid in the fight against the Earl of Northumberland who had joined forces with the Welsh rebel Owain Glyn Dŵr; the Prince of Wales, Richard Beauchamp, Ralph Neville, and Gilbert Talbot all fought in the battle of Shrewsbury on 21 July 1403.⁴¹ Richard Beauchamp was later with Henry at Worcester in June 1404, Gilbert Talbot defeated the insurgent Welsh at Grosmont on 11 March 1405, and Thomas Beaufort was commissioned to garrison Carmarthen, Newcastle Emlyn, and Cardigan for one year from 27 April 1405.⁴² While the

³⁹ *GEC*, 1: 246. Future Circle member John Tiptoft was ordered to join the king against Owain Glyn Dŵr at Shrewsbury in August 1402 (*GEC*, 12a: 746.).

⁴⁰ *GEC*, 12b: 546. *GEC*, 12a: 617.

⁴¹ *GEC*, 5: 422. *GEC*, 12b: 378, 546. *GEC*, 12a: 617.

⁴² *GEC*, 12b: 379. *GEC*, 12a: 617. *GEC*, 5: 201.

suppression of Owain Glyn Dŵr's rebellion continued, other Circle members were engaged in military affairs in Scotland at the time, preventing their presence in Wales. Henry Scrope was commissioned to see to the Scottish prisoners taken at the battle of Homildon on 9 March 1403.⁴³ Shortly after Shrewsbury, Ralph Neville was appointed as the Warden of Carlisle and the West March (1403-1414), John of Lancaster was appointed as the Warden of the East Marches and Captain of Berwick (1403-1414), and Henry FitzHugh was appointed as a commissioner to treat for peace with Scotland in 1404 and 1405.⁴⁴ In the first decade of the fifteenth-century, eight of the prince's Circle members were engaged in military service to the crown.⁴⁵

Henry IV appointed Commissions of the Peace scattered over twenty-two months from 1401 to 1405. Over the course of these four years, only seven members of the New Lancastrian Circle were included in the commissions, appointed during fourteen of those

⁴³ *GEC*, 11: 565.

⁴⁴ *GEC*, 12b: 546. *GEC*, 2: 70. *GEC*, 5: 422. Future Circle member John Tiptoft was appointed as a commissioner of array for Huntingdon and Cambridge against the rebels in the North in May 1405 (*GEC*, 12a: 746.), and in February 1405, after he and his brother were kidnapped with the intention of taking them to Wales as rallying points against the king, future Circle member Edmund Mortimer recapture and placed in the charge of Richard, Lord Grey in February 1405 until 1409 when Prince Henry took charge of him (*GEC*, 8: 450-451.).

⁴⁵ The members of his Circle not engaged in military affairs in Wales or Scotland included his two bishops, Henry Beaufort and Henry Chichele, Thomas Chaucer the Chief Butler, and Walter Hungerford the Steward of the Household. Hungerford was appointed to several commissions to inquire into appeals and reports throughout England (*CPR, Henry IV, 1401-1405*, 221, 362. *CPR, Henry IV, 1405-1408*, 308.), and on 25 March 1406 he received 100 marks "in consideration of his great charges on the king's service before this time and especially lately at the town of Calais, where he had to do with a knight of France to the honour of the king and the realm of arms..." (*Ibid.*, 161.).

months and representing only twelve counties.⁴⁶ After the Long Parliament's divestment of the king's power in 1406, the New Lancastrian Circle's presence in Commissions of the Peace began to increase. Between January 1406 and February 1408, nine Circle members were appointed across fifteen counties;⁴⁷ where the commissions of 1401-1405 saw more than one Circle member appointed to the same county only three times, the commissions of 1406-1408 appointed multiple Circle members to seven counties.⁴⁸ After the New Lancastrian Circle took almost complete control of the realm in the parliament of 1410, their presence in peace commissions leapt exponentially. From February 1410 through July 1412 eleven of the twelve Circle members were appointed to commissions, and Prince Henry himself was appointed for the first time.⁴⁹ During this year and a half, Henry's Circle had inserted themselves into the affairs of eighteen counties evenly spread across England. Prince Henry and his Circle's control of the king's council and their appointments to peace commissions ensured that the prince and his interests were well-promoted throughout the realm. The riots and banditry that wracked Henry IV's reign began to still under the leadership of the tenacious prince and his Circle.

⁴⁶ *CPR, Henry IV, 1401-1405*, 515-521. *CPR, Henry IV, 1405-1408*, 489-500. Three of the 'counties' included in this count were commissions to the East Riding, North Riding, and West Riding of York.

⁴⁷ Five of the 'counties' included in this count were commissions to the town of Lynn, the liberty of Ripon, and the East Riding, North Riding, and West Riding of York.

⁴⁸ *CPR, Henry IV, 1405-1408*, 489-500.

⁴⁹ *CPR, Henry IV, 1408-1413*, 479-487.

The abiding bond between Henry V and the men in his Circle was attested to by the king's last will and testament. Henry V composed two wills, his first drafted on 24 July 1415 prior to his initial invasion of France, and the second on 10 June 1421 prior to his third, and final, expedition to France. The first testament included bequests to eleven of the twelve Circle members and appointed eight Circle members as executors.⁵⁰ The second will included bequests to nine of the twelve members of his Circle, and appointed those same nine members as its executors.⁵¹ The inclusion of so many members of the New Lancastrian Circle in both versions of the king's testaments speaks to the strong and enduring bond the members of the Circle shared. On Henry V's death in 1422, the Council of Regency appointed to his nine-month-old heir, Henry VI, attested to the

⁵⁰Henry V's 1415 will included bequeaths to: John of Lancaster, Henry Chichele, Henry Beaufort, Richard Beauchamp, Thomas Beaufort, Thomas FitzAlan, Thomas Langley, Ralph Neville, Gilbert Talbot, Henry FitzHugh, and Walter Hungerford (and future member Edmund Mortimer). The only Circle member not included in Henry V's testament of 1415 was Thomas Chaucer. Edmund Mortimer, 5th Earl of March, who replaced Gilbert Talbot in the Circle in 1418, was also included. Executors of Henry V's will included Henry Beaufort, Ralph Neville, Thomas Beaufort, Henry FitzHugh, Walter Hungerford, John of Lancaster, Thomas Langley, and Henry Chichele. *Foedera*, 9: 291-293.

⁵¹ Henry V's 1422 will included bequeaths to: John of Lancaster, Henry Chichele, Richard Beauchamp, Henry Beaufort, Thomas Beaufort, Thomas Langley, Ralph Neville, Henry FitzHugh, and Walter Hungerford. Regarding the execution of the terms of the will, the king specified that Richard Beauchamp, Henry Beaufort, Thomas Beaufort, Thomas Langley, Ralph Neville, Henry FitzHugh and Walter Hungerford act as executors, with FitzHugh and Hungerford appointed as 'active administrators' who were to report twice a year to Langley and the Beauforts until the provisions had been fulfilled, and Henry Chichele and John of Lancaster were appointed as the will's 'supervisors'. Henry V excluded three Circle members from his 1421 will: Thomas Chaucer (originally excluded in 1415 as well), John Tiptoft, and Edmund Mortimer (who was included as the recipient of a bequeath in the 1415 will, but was removed from the list of the 1421 will). Patrick Strong and Felicity Strong, "The Last Will and Codicils of Henry V," *The English Historical Review* 96.378 (1981), 86-87, 94-97.

unchallengeable power amassed by the Circle under Henry V. John of Lancaster was appointed Protector of the Kingdom of England and Regent of the Realm of France, Thomas Langley became Chancellor, and Henry VI's council of regency included Richard Beauchamp, Henry Beaufort, Thomas Beaufort, Henry FitzHugh, Walter Hungerford, Edmund Mortimer, Ralph Neville, and John Tiptoft.⁵² Henry V trusted the men of his Circle to protect Lancastrian interests implicitly, although the ascension of his nine-month-old heir would later see the Circle's loyalty to the House of Lancaster falter.

Re-Threading the Web: *Miles Christi*

Where John of Gaunt attempted to appropriate the authority of the church by championing the royal divestment of ecclesiastical benefices, throwing the church into upheaval and earning the duke several enemies, Henry V took the opposite course and did everything he could to stabilize and strengthen the church. During his first Parliament on 15 May 1413, the recently crowned king took steps to cajole not just the Parliament, but to placate the church as well. In Chancellor Henry Beaufort's opening statements he claimed that Henry V's primary concern was to grant and confirm that holy church "shall have and enjoy its liberties and franchises properly granted by his noble progenitors..."⁵³ During this parliamentary session, Henry V confirmed the statutes dating back to Edward III that banned papal provisions, and proclaimed that no protection or other grant be given to anyone contrary to this statute, as it would be held null and

⁵² *Foedera*, 10: 253. *GEC*, 2: 70. *GEC*, 5: 200, 421. *GEC*, 6: 613. *GEC*, 8: 450. *GEC*, 12a: 747. *GEC*, 12b: 378, 544. Richard Beauchamp also served as Henry VI's tutor.

⁵³ *Rot Parl*, 4: 3.

void.⁵⁴ The commons followed this statute with two petitions regarding the authority of the church. The commons complained that the ordinaries of churches had been taking excessive sums of money, ‘sometimes £100 or £40’, from the executors of wills to acknowledge and confirm the testament’s terms, where under the king’s forebears the amount had been limited to 2s. 6d. They also complained that ordinaries had been inflicting pecuniary fines on those guilty of adultery and lechery, impoverishing the lieges of the realm; the commons instead desired that the guilty be chastised by corporal punishment. In both cases, if an ordinary were in violation of either, the commons proposed that he be fined ten times the amount he took, half to pay for the subsequent lawsuit and half to fill the king’s coffers. The king replied to both petitions that he had charged spiritual lords with ordaining a proper remedy, and if they did not, he would keep the matter firmly in mind to rectify it sometime in the future.⁵⁵ Henry V had no intention of alienating the clergy, whose allegiance he desperately needed to unify the kingdom, by appearing to interfere in church matters. When it came to conflict between the temporal and spiritual realms, the king seemed to come firmly down in favor of the church.

Henry V also protected the interests of the church by actively pursuing the eradication of Lollardy. He made his first move against the Lollards five months to the day after his coronation, when he ordered that a “proclamation against the Lollards,” forbidding chaplains and unlicensed persons from privately or publically preaching the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

doctrine of the Lollards, be published throughout England on 21 August 1413.⁵⁶ Henry V's England was not the safe haven for religious dissenters that Henry IV's England had been. On 23 September 1413, Sir John Oldcastle, who had faithfully served at Henry V's side in Wales, was charged with heresy by Archbishop Arundel and tried at St. Paul's cathedral.⁵⁷ On 25 September, he was questioned on his beliefs and erupted into an outburst about the pope and the assembled bishops. Oldcastle claimed "that the pope is the real Antichrist...[and] further[,]...these men who want to judge and condemn me, they will seduce themselves and all of you and lead you to hell, therefore you must beware of them."⁵⁸ He was sent to the Tower for the opportunity to recant, but he escaped on 19 October 1413.

For the few months after his escape from the Tower, John Oldcastle remained in hiding and worked to raise an armed force intended "to kill the king and his brothers...provoke religious men to mundane occupations, spoil...churches...of relics and other ecclesiastical goods and level them to the ground..." and to appoint himself

⁵⁶ *Foedera*, 9: 46. *De Proclamatione contra Lollardos* "...a number of priests – who do not have the privilege of the law, license from the diocese, or permission of the church – who are said to be of the new sect of the Lollards, are said to be, in the public places within the city mentioned above [London] and in the suburbs and adjoining places...under the pretext of preaching, sow discord among our people and plant the seed of Lollardy and its evil doctrines...Take any of these chaplains, regardless of their rank, status, or condition with such opinions of heresy or error that is contrary to the determination of Holy Mother Church...[and] arrest and imprison them without delay..."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

regent of the realm.⁵⁹ Henry V was warned about Oldcastle's Lollard uprising and was prepared on the night of 9 January 1414 when a small number of rebels gathered at St. Giles' Fields; they were quickly arrested by the king's forces. It is unclear whether Oldcastle was simply not present at St. Giles' Fields or whether he escaped; in either case, he was not apprehended and remained in hiding for the next few years, continuing to incite Lollard demonstrations. Of the Lollards captured at St. Giles' Field, *Holinshed's Chronicles* claimed that the majority of the captives were "condemned by the cleargie of heresie, and atteinted of high treason...and adjudged for that offense to be drawn and hanged, and for heresie to be consumed with fire, gallowes and all..."⁶⁰ Between the 'proclamation against the Lollards' and the thwarted St. Giles' Field uprising, it was clear that the maintenance of orthodoxy was a priority of Henry's; however, the king's preoccupation with heresy likely had more to do with eradicating dissension and challenges to his authority than heterodox religious beliefs or practices.

After Archbishop Arundel's death on 19 February 1414, less than one month after Oldcastle's failed rebellion, Henry V nominated one of his Circle members, Henry Chichele, as the successor to the see of Canterbury.⁶¹ Together, the king and his new archbishop wasted no time in waging war against perceived heretics. On 22 February

⁵⁹ *CPR, Henry V, 1413-1416*, 162.

⁶⁰ *Holinshed*, 3:6.

⁶¹ On 13 March 1414, Henry V sent a letter to the pope in Rome recommending the promotion of Henry Chichele to the Archbishopric of Canterbury. *Fodera*, 9: 119. On the 23 March 1414, Henry V submitted assurance to the pope of his royal assent to Henry Chichele's assumption of the see of Canterbury. *CPR, Henry V, 1413-1416*, 181.

1414, 100s. were paid to Thomas Burton, ‘the King’s spy’, “for the great pains and diligence exercised by him, for his attentive watchfulness to the operations of the Lollards, now lately rebellious, also because he fully certified their intentions to our said Lord the King for his advantage.”⁶² Soon afterward, on 30 April 1414 in Leicester, a Lancastrian stronghold and the recognized center of Lollardy, a solemn parliament was opened by Chancellor Beaufort. He explained to those assembled that the king desired that “holy church should have and enjoy the rights, liberties and franchises properly granted by himself and also by his noble progenitors...”⁶³ Item twenty-four of the Leicester Parliament was a statute concerning Lollards passed by Henry V

because great uprisings, assemblies and insurrections of various of the king's lieges, both those belonging to the heretical sect called Lollardy as well as others of their confederacy, persuasion and leaning, have occurred recently here in England, with the aim of abolishing and subverting the Christian faith and the law of God within this kingdom as well as destroying our most sovereign lord the king himself and all the various estates of the same kingdom, both spiritual as well as temporal, and also all manner of governance, and ultimately the laws of the land....⁶⁴

The statute was lauded by the chronicler Adam of Usk who described the punishment that awaited convicted heretics: once their lands and tenements were forfeited to the king, “[he] should also, for that same offence, be regarded as having committed high treason, so that, in addition to being burned as a heretic, he should also suffer the penalties of

⁶² *IE*, 333.

⁶³ *Rot Parl*, 4: 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

drawing and hanging at the gallows....”⁶⁵ The Leicester Parliament of 1414 was a major turning point in the religious history of England; now anyone convicted of heresy was also considered a traitor to the crown. Where religion had been outside the purview of secular power prior to the fifteenth century, after the Leicester Parliament orthodoxy was established and monitored by the crown – and the crown equated heresy with treason. With Henry V at the helm of the administration of both the government and the church, secular and religious service were fused, and the definition and encouragement of orthodoxy became a temporal matter. In effect, Henry V laid the foundations of the Anglican Church, with himself acting as the supreme governor of the establishment, over a century before the title was formally used by King Henry VIII.

Where the Council of Pisa in 1409 failed to bring an end to the Papal Schism and exacerbated the situation by electing a third papal claimant, the Council of Constance (1414-1417) sought to rectify the dilemma once and for all. Henry V sent a delegation to attend the Council of Constance as his “ambassadors, envoys, true and undoubted agents, and special messengers...for us and in our name to the above General Council,” three of whom were temporal members of his Circle.⁶⁶ Henry’s motives to send a trustworthy delegation to the Council of Constance undoubtedly included bringing an end to the Papal Schism, but they also included his obsession with abolishing heresy in England.

⁶⁵ *CAU*, 249.

⁶⁶ *Foedera*, 9: 162, 167, 369-371. *IE*, 335. England’s delegation included Richard Beauchamp, Henry FitzHugh, and Walter Hungerford. Not all of the ambassadors remained at Constance for the full four years of the Council, or traveled there with the initial delegation in 1414.

Although the teachings of John Wycliffe were deemed heretical prior to his death in 1384, on 4 May 1415 the Council of Constance officially declared that Wycliffe himself had been a heretic. While Wycliffe's condemnation was quickly attended to by the council, by summer 1417 they were no nearer to the election of a new, single pope. In England, Henry Beaufort resigned his chancellorship in July 1417 in order to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and, like Henry V's *deus ex machina*, arrived in Constance on 31 October.⁶⁷ Although Bishop Beaufort likely confirmed a compromise that had already been reached, his sudden arrival seems to have been the catalyst for the immediate election of Pope Martin V on 14 November.⁶⁸ Perhaps out of gratitude for England's role in his election, or out of genuine concern to see the will of the council done, the new pope wrote to the bishop of Lincoln in execution of the sentence of the Council of Constance, directing him to proceed to "where John Wickleff is buried, and cause his body and bones to be exhumed, cast far from ecclesiastical burial and publicly burned, and his ashes to be so disposed of that no trace of him shall be seen again."⁶⁹ The English delegation had unquestionably played an important role in bringing an end to the Papal Schism; however, Henry V's concern for maintaining control of his nation through the suppression of heresy, and by extension, treason, was likely an influential

⁶⁷ *Foedera*, 9: 467, 471-472. *St Albans*, 2: 707.

⁶⁸ Pope Martin V was crowned and consecrated on 21 November 1417. *Foedera*, 9: 523-524, 534-537. *St Albans*, 2: 707-709. Allmand, *Henry V*, 252-253.

⁶⁹ "Vatican Regesta 358: 1417-1428," *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 7: 1417-1431*, ed. J. A. Twemlow, in *British History Online*: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=104296> (accessed 07 July 2013).

impetus for the prominence of the English delegation at Constance. Having reigned in his parliament and beguiling the church into entrusting its authority to the crown, Henry V cemented his seat on the throne by unifying the power of the temporal and spiritual realms under the control of the crown.

Pulling the Strands of the Web: The “Most Christian King”⁷⁰

Just as Henry V took John of Gaunt's tactics for appropriating the power of the church and altered them to successfully achieve that end, he also utilized his grandfather's strategy of employing propaganda in his favor. Again, Henry built upon Lancaster's strategy and skewed it in a way that made it more effective than it was in his grandfather's case. Regarding John of Gaunt's propagandist, Sheila Delany noted that “[Geoffrey] Chaucer, like most of his contemporaries, does not always distinguish between poetry and historical chronicle – the two kinds of narrative in which tradition was handed down.”⁷¹ A man as shrewd as Henry V was surely aware of this lack of distinction and, recognizing that Chaucer and his ‘poetics of disguise’ did not have the overwhelming impact on John of Gaunt's reputation that the duke had hoped, chose the alternative route of utilizing the court chroniclers as his propagandists.

Henry V did not leave the crafting of his reputation up to the discretion of the chroniclers, either. The king had a very carefully calculated image that he wanted to be portrayed. According to the early fourteenth-century philosopher, Robert Holcot,

⁷⁰ *Life*, 7.

⁷¹ Sheila Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1994), 95.

“‘worldly men’ write their names on the ground...and their name will therefore be deleted...But holy men inscribe their names in the ‘celatura mundi’, in Heaven...as Heaven is incorruptible so their name will be indelible.”⁷² To this end, the chroniclers sculpted the nation’s perception of Henry V as “the true elect of God” and “the most Christian king.”⁷³

While the chroniclers were supposed to recount the history and record the present events of the realm, they were to do so with a very specific slant in order to promote the reign of Henry V as ordained by God. The earliest of the portrayals of Henry as the champion of the church was in 1410 while he was still Prince of Wales. Since the passing of *De Heretico Comburendo* only one Lollard had been sentenced to be burned, and that execution had taken place during the parliament of 1401 in which the statute was passed.⁷⁴ It is not by coincidence that the next burning of a Lollard was presented against the backdrop of the parliament of 1410 during which the prince and his Circle took effective control of the government. Vehemently anti-Wycliffite, Thomas Walsingham must have been disillusioned by Henry IV’s failure to pursue the suppression of Lollardy; the prince’s assumption of the governance of the realm in 1410 provided the chronicler with the perfect opportunity to illustrate that the prince was far better suited to the ‘good

⁷² Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), 144.

⁷³ *GHQ*, 3. *Life*, 7.

⁷⁴ William Sawtre – a priest from King’s Lynn, Norfolk. For particulars of his trial and execution, see: *CAU*, 123. *Chronica*, 319. *HA*, 2:247. *St Albans*, 2: 309-311. John Fox, *Book of Martyrs* (Hartford: Edwin Hunt, 1845), 193.

governance' of the realm than his father. According to the chronicles, when Thomas Badby, a lay tradesman,⁷⁵ was convicted of heresy and sentenced by Archbishop Arundel to be burned alive at Smithfield he was put in a barrel, but, before it could be set on fire, Prince Henry happened by and stopped to counsel Badby to “abandon his foolishness and to defer to Christian teaching.”⁷⁶ Badby refused and was shut into the barrel that was set ablaze. When he cried out for mercy, “the noble prince” commanded that the barrel be removed from Badby, and begged him to forsake heresy and embrace the holy church, even offering to pay him three silver pennies every day for the rest of his life if he would recant.⁷⁷ When Badby refused a second time, the prince ordered that he be put back in the flaming barrel to be burned to ashes.⁷⁸ During that same parliamentary session of 1410, the commons petitioned that all benefices be divided in half, half to the incumbent and the other half to the king,⁷⁹ but “the most serene prince abhorred the malice of the Lollards so much, that he forbade them from presuming to comment on such things in the future.”⁸⁰ Before Prince Henry had even ascended to the throne, readers of the chronicles

⁷⁵ Capgrave refers to Badby as a ‘smyth’, Fox as ‘a layman, and by trade a tailor’, and Walsingham as ‘a tradesman’. *Capgrave*, 122. Fox, *Book of Martyrs*, 194. *St Albans*, 2: 581-583.

⁷⁶ *Capgrave*, 122. Fox, *Book of Martyrs*, 194. *St Albans*, 2: 583.

⁷⁷ *St Albans*, 2: 583.

⁷⁸ *Capgrave*, 122. Fox, *Book of Martyrs*, 194-195.

⁷⁹ *Rot Parl*, 3b: 645. “...the true value, with the necessary charges deducted from it, should be equally divided into two parts, and one half should remain to the said incumbents, and the other half should be levied for your use and profit.”

⁸⁰ *HA*, 2: 283.

were already predisposed to believe that Henry had been selected by God and would bring England the “good governance” it had been lacking.

As the young Prince of Wales, Henry was said to have lived a life of sin and vice, even disguising himself and his companions in order to rob his own collectors of rents.⁸¹ A marked change in the character of the new king was noted unanimously among the chroniclers. Walsingham claimed that, from the wild youth that rewarded the men he robbed who fought back and “of whome he had receaved the greatest and most stroakes,”⁸² as soon as Henry V was invested with the emblems of royalty, he “suddenly became a different man. His care now was for self-restraint and goodness and gravity, and there was no kind of virtue which he put on one side and did not desire to practise [*sic*] himself.”⁸³ Almost immediately following his coronation the new king went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury, where he offered a gold piece in the shape of a man’s head, ornamented with pearls and precious stones and worth £160, as his offering.⁸⁴ The chroniclers portrayed Henry V’s ascension as a drastic conversion experience that transformed a sinful and rowdy youth into an honorable,

⁸¹ *Life*, 17.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 17. Prince Henry did not reward those he robbed who did not fight back; neither did he reward men for defending his rents, rather, they were rewarded for giving the prince a good fight.

⁸³ *Chronica*, 389.

⁸⁴ *IE*, 321-322.

virtuous, honest, and modest man who set the ideal example for religious and laymen alike.⁸⁵

The chroniclers used Henry V's coronation as a common device employed in medieval hagiographies. When hagiographers mentioned the childhood or youth of male saints or visionaries, they usually presented the future saints as having been excessively preoccupied by material or worldly concerns. In typical hagiographies, "Men nearly always undergo a radical conversion experience during or after adolescence... This experience separates them drastically from their previous way of life and sets them on the path to God."⁸⁶ Henry V's coronation was presented as an extreme conversion experience that transformed him from the sinful Prince of Wales into the "most Christian king."⁸⁷ He was next said to have "called unto him all those younge Lordes and gentlemen that were the followers of his younge acts,"⁸⁸ and "the laie men he willed to serve God, and obeie their prince, prohibiting them above all things breach of matrimonie, custome in swearing; and namelie, willful perjurie."⁸⁹ Henry presented them with an ultimatum: either change their lifestyles, as he had done, and remain in his court, or continue in their sinful ways and never come into his presence again, on pain of

⁸⁵ *Chronica*, 389. *Hardyng*, 372. *HA*, 2: 290. *Holinshed*, 3: 3. *Life*, 17. *St Albans*, 2: 621.

⁸⁶ Rosalynn Voaden and Stephanie Volf, "Visions of My Youth: Representations of the Childhood of Medieval Visionaries," *Gender & History* 12.3 (2000), 672.

⁸⁷ *Life*, 7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸⁹ *Holinshed*, 3:3.

death.⁹⁰ The chroniclers' unanimous presentation of the new king as an immoral youth whose conversion experience transformed him into the elect of God very clearly cast Henry V as pious from the moment he took the crown.

In his *Book of Chivalry*, the French knight Geoffroi de Charny, who was well known as the quintessential knight of the age, claimed that rulers were "chosen that they might love, fear, and serve God and all his works."⁹¹ This was precisely the image that Henry wanted the chroniclers to portray. Presenting Henry V as a devoutly Christian king who enjoyed God's constant approval and support, the *Gesta Henrici Quinti* identified Henry V as God's champion. The anonymous author, who is believed to have been a member of the king's private chapel,⁹² claimed that "he began his reign, like the true elect of God savouring the things that are above, he applied his mind with all devotion to encompass what could promote the honour of God, [and] the extension of the Church"⁹³ With the help of the chroniclers working as his propagandists, Henry V's religious fervor became a sinecure of his nine-year reign.

Where the most prolific chronicler of the time, Thomas Walsingham, allotted only a single sentence to the parliament of 1413 in his *St. Albans Chronicle*, he dedicated

⁹⁰ *Life*, 19.

⁹¹ Geoffroi de Charny, *The 'Book of Chivalry' of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context, and Translation*, ed. Richard W. Kaeuper and Elspeth Kennedy, trans. Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 141.

⁹² Allmand, *Henry V*, 409.

⁹³ *GHQ*, 3.

seven pages to Sir John Oldcastle's heresy trial of 1413.⁹⁴ Walsingham's priority was clearly to condemn Wycliffites and Lollards, and paint Henry V as the man who could save England from these plagues. The chronicles were all equally as biased about Oldcastle's 'Epiphany Uprising' in January 1414. One could take the chronicles' assorted depictions of the St. Giles' Field rebellion, combine them in various configurations, and still come out with the same story time and again in which the elect of God triumphed over the misbegotten plot of heretics who were bent on destroying the kingdom.

The account of Oldcastle's 1414 rebellion began when "God himself, Who is the searcher of hearts and in Whose hand are the hearts of kings, in order that...His elect be proved in the furnace of tribulation, allowed an adversary to rise up against him..."⁹⁵ Sir John Oldcastle "ordered these degenerate followers [Lollards] to join him...so that they could launch an attack against the king – that mighty zealot and champion of the Christian faith – and destroy him and all the prelates and the churches."⁹⁶ However, "almighty God refused to allow an innocent man to suffer ill at the hands of wicked men, but implanted His fear in the hearts of some of the conspirators, and these warned the king secretly to avoid the danger and escape the plot..."⁹⁷ The king had heard that the

⁹⁴ *St Albans*, 2: 623-635. (Even numbered pages contain the Latin text and odd numbered pages contain English translations.)

⁹⁵ *GHQ*, 3.

⁹⁶ *CAU*, 247.

⁹⁷ *St Albans*, 2: 637.

Lollards planned “in the event of their vain schemes being successful to destroy first the monastic houses of Westminster, St Albans and St Paul’s and those of all the friars situated in London. And so the king, confronting these evils and entering on the path of danger,”⁹⁸ “repaired unto saint Giles fields...and so handled the matter, that he tooke some, and slue some, even as stood with his pleasure.”⁹⁹ Of the men who were apprehended, “diverse of them [were] executed...whether for rebellion or heresie, or for both...”¹⁰⁰ Afterwards, the king “commanded litanies to be performed...saying that it was well pleasing and grateful to God for thanks to be given to the Most High Sower after the destruction of so great a crop of evil, and the cutting off of the vilest tares from the good grain.”¹⁰¹ “Thus the first victorie of that noble Kinge after his Coronacion was against these cursed superstitious heretiques for Christ and the defence of the Church of God, in the defence and supportacion of our Catholique faith.”¹⁰² Oldcastle’s rebellion was said to show that “God scourges the sons whom He receives in one way, and those He decides to root out... in another. For He scourged the king through him, and him also He scourged through the king. That He might utterly destroy the one, and that He might perfect the other.”¹⁰³ The narrative of the St. Giles’ Field rebellion of January 1414

⁹⁸ *Chronica*, 395.

⁹⁹ *Holinshed*, 3: 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰¹ *Capgrave*, 128.

¹⁰² *Life*, 23.

¹⁰³ *GHQ*, 11.

created by this mélange of excerpts from the various chronicles attests to their common goal of presenting Henry V in a particularly affected, supremely Christian, manner. From that point on, the king was persistently presented as the greatest enemy of the Lollards and the resolute champion of Holy Mother Church.

Re-Weaving the Web: The “Scourge of God”¹⁰⁴

Robert Holcot claimed that “the name of a virtuous man must have three qualities – honesty, truth, and piety, and in particular the second, truth. Our fame must be true, i.e. ‘our name ought to agree with the thing’. Many, instead, have a great name, but nothing ‘de re’ [‘of the thing’].”¹⁰⁵ It was not enough for the ambitious Henry V merely to bring stability to England and consolidate command of both the nation and the church under the crown. In order to justify his father’s deposition of Richard II and disinheritance of the Earl of March, Henry craved victory in France where his predecessors had failed.¹⁰⁶ Henry longed for a virtuous name as described by Holcot; he believed he could achieve this if he wove the power of the New Lancastrian Circle, the authority of the church now controlled by the crown, and his reputation propagated by the chroniclers as the “prince

¹⁰⁴ *Life*, 131.

¹⁰⁵ Boitani, *Imaginary World of Fame*, 144.

¹⁰⁶ Edward III was the great-grandson of Philip the Bold (King Philip III of France), grandson of Philip the Fair (King Philip IV), and the son of Philip the Fair’s daughter, Isabella of France. As Isabella’s son, Edward III was at least as closely related to the Capetians as the current kings of France; where Edward’s claim was matrilineal, theirs was patrilineal.

of priests”¹⁰⁷ into a single stratagem. By calling for a ruling from the Supreme Judge, victory in France would prove to all of Europe that his reign was ordained by God and establish his right to the throne of England beyond any doubt. Henry V used the war in France as the vehicle through which he would achieve Holcot’s “de re.”

Although Henry V had been preparing for an invasion of France from the moment he ascended to the throne, he took the time to position himself as a diplomat who desired peace, which was part of his calculated plan to build his reputation as, first and foremost, a supremely Christian prince. Henry began this self-promotion as early as July 1413 when he commissioned Henry Chichele, Richard Beauchamp, and Henry Scrope to treat for a truce with France, “[o]n account of [the] reverence due to God...to avoid the shedding of Christian blood and other irreparable damages that dreadful wars have led to, and will probably lead to in the future.”¹⁰⁸ As part of Henry’s carefully crafted endeavor for the “de re” to complement the *fama* he had created for himself, he sought the advice of the peers and knights of England regarding his claim to the crown of France in a meeting of the Privy Council held at Westminster in 1414. In this council meeting, the “lordes spiritual and temporal” recommended to “so cristen a Prince” who would do nothing except “that were to Goddes pleasance” that he should send ambassadors to treat regarding the recovery of his right.¹⁰⁹ If the proper envoys were sent and Henry V did

¹⁰⁷ *Chronica*, 405. *HA*, 2: 306. *St Albans*, 2: 663. According to Walsingham, ‘prince of priests’ was the Lollards’ name for Henry V.

¹⁰⁸ *Foedera*, 9: 36.

¹⁰⁹ *PC*, 2: 141.

everything in his power to reach a diplomatic resolution, but to no avail, they would consent to invasion and “shul be redy with oure bodyes and goodes to do yow the service that we may...”¹¹⁰ Confident that three envoys, sent on 14 July 1413 and 10 and 28 January 1414 respectively, would satisfy the terms set by the peers and knights in the Privy Council, Henry felt he had kept up his charade long enough. On 5 December 1414 he gave Thomas Langley and Thomas Beaufort the power to suspend the truce with France and his promise of marriage to Catherine, daughter of Charles VI of France.¹¹¹ Although Henry V had exerted minimal energy to maintain the appearance that he tried to negotiate peace, his reputation as *miles Christi*, “the most Christian kinge,” and the “prince of priests” played perfectly into his plan to invade France under the pretense that he did so under protest and only to seek God’s divine judgement on his right to the crown of France.

As part of his invasion strategy, Henry V evenly divided the New Lancastrian Circle to ensure that there were an equal number of members fighting at his side in France as there were remaining in England to tend to the maintenance of the realm. On 17 April 1415, as Chancellor, Bishop Henry Beaufort detailed to the king’s council, the temporal and the spiritual lords the king’s plan for the guardianship of England while he was abroad: Henry’s brother, John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford would be the Lieutenant of England, and the council supporting him would include Archbishop Henry

¹¹⁰ *PC*, 2: 141-142.

¹¹¹ *Foedera*, 9: 183.

Chichele, Bishop Henry Beaufort, Bishop Thomas Langley of Durham¹¹² and Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland.¹¹³ A special commission for the guardianship of the Scottish marches was also given to Ralph Neville.¹¹⁴ The king granted his “well-beloved and trusty” knight Gilbert Talbot the power to negotiate with Owain Glyn Dŵr in the marches of Wales.¹¹⁵ Leaving his kingdom in the capable hands of precisely half of the members of his Circle, Henry V was accompanied to France by the remaining six members: Richard Beauchamp, Thomas Beaufort, Thomas Chaucer, Thomas FitzAlan, Henry FitzHugh, and Walter Hungerford.¹¹⁶

Although Henry V could be certain that England was well protected by the members of the New Lancastrian Circle that he appointed to see to the governance of his kingdom, he took a further step toward the safety of the realm. Perpetuating the illusion that the spiritual lords were integral to the temporal functioning of the realm, “desiring the safety and secure custody and defense of our kingdom and our Mother the Anglican

¹¹² Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham replaced Henry Lord Scrope in Henry V’s Circle after Scrope’s execution on 5 August 1415 for his participation in the Southampton Plot.

¹¹³ *Foedera*, 9: 223.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9: 223. *GEC*, 12b: 546.

¹¹⁵ *Foedera*, 9: 283. *GEC*, 12a: 618.

¹¹⁶ *CPR, Henry V, 1413-1416*, 360, 400, 408. *GEC*, 12b: 378. *GEC*, 5: 200, 421. *GEC*, 1: 245. *GEC*, 6: 613. *GEC*, 2: 70. John of Lancaster defeated the French fleet off the coast of Harfleur on 17 August 1415 before returning home to assume administration of the government. Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March also accompanied Henry V to France in 1415 (*GEC*, 8: 450.).

Church and the Catholic faith,”¹¹⁷ the king issued a Commission of Array to the clergy. The king’s commission asked the clergy to “gather together and be united” and, from time to time, that they “attend, counsel, and assist as necessity demands and requires of them” under penalty of forfeiture of everything the king was able to take from them.¹¹⁸ Giving temporal responsibility for the defense of the realm to the clergy furthered their acceptance of Henry’s new Lancastrian England in which the crown reigned supreme over both the temporal and spiritual realms.

Under the façade of claiming trial by combat to prove his reign was ordained by God, Henry V hoped to crush any lingering allegations that the Lancastrians were usurpers. In a letter to King Charles VI of France dated 5 August 1415, Henry V, “by the grace of God king of England and France,”¹¹⁹ asserted his right to the French throne. He claimed that the time had come to “appeal to the sovereign Judge...[for we] must now rely on the sword for regaining what is justly our heritage...and we feel such assurance in our courage that we will fight to the death in the cause of justice...restore what thow owest, for such is the will of God...”¹²⁰ “[E]ntrusting his cause to God,”¹²¹ on 11 August 1415 the king departed for France with his army. Henry’s forces landed just three days later on 14 August 1415 at Chef de Caux, where Henry “falling to the ground upon

¹¹⁷ *Foedera*, 9: 253. 28 May 1415

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 253-254.

¹¹⁹ Montereset, *Chronicles*, 331.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 331.

¹²¹ *Capgrave*, 130.

his knees devoutly prayed unto God that to the honor of His divinity He would give him justice of his enemies.”¹²² If France fell to Henry V, he could be certain that his claim to the English throne would never again be questioned.

Henry V’s army arrived at Harfleur on 17 August 1415. Before laying siege to the town, Henry offered peace if Harfleur would freely open its gates and restore the town to him.¹²³ When the king’s offer of peace was rejected he “called upon God as his witness to his blameless quarrel,”¹²⁴ maintaining his image as God’s elect who was unjustly being denied his birthright. In a section of his *Book of Chivalry* concerning “The True Function of Princes,” Geoffroi de Charny claimed that true princes, or true kings, behaved with humility, “giving thanks and acknowledging their indebtedness for all that they have to God from whom they hold it and who gave it to them....”¹²⁵ After holding out for thirty-six days, the leaders of Harfleur began negotiating terms for the surrender of the town with Thomas Beaufort and Henry FitzHugh on 22 September 1415.¹²⁶ Amid his account of the surrender of Harfleur, the French chronicler Enguerrand de Monstrelet corroborated the English chroniclers’ claims of Henry V’s piety. In Monstrelet’s account, “[W]hen the king came to the gate, he dismounted...and thence walked barefooted to the parochial church of St. Martin, where he devoutly offered up his prayers

¹²² *Life*, 33.

¹²³ *GHQ*, 35.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹²⁵ Charny, *Book of Chivalry*, 143-145.

¹²⁶ *Capgrave*, 131. *Chronica*, 406-407. *GEC*, 5: 200. *GHQ*, 53. *St Albans*, 2: 667.

and thanks-givings to his Creator for his success.”¹²⁷ Although Henry V had already established his reputation as the most Christian king and the elect of God, he understood the fragility of *fama* and continued to cultivate this image to ensure his people did not lose faith in him as they had in his father after his ascension to the throne.

In the midst of the siege of Harfleur, around 10 September, dysentery ravaged the English forces, causing more deaths than the siege itself.¹²⁸ Among those killed by the disease was one of Henry’s Circle members, Thomas FitzAlan,¹²⁹ who would later be replaced in the Circle by Sir John Tiptoft. So many men were afflicted by the flux that Henry separated the healthy from the ill and gave leave to the afflicted to return to England. Richard Beauchamp led the sick to Calais, where they were able to take ships home to England. Beauchamp remained in Calais, in charge of the prisoners from the capture of Harfleur, and took up his appointments as Captain of Calais and Governor of the Marches of Picardy.¹³⁰ Thomas Beaufort was appointed Captain of Harfleur and was left with a contingent of armed men to hold the town.¹³¹ Henry continued forward with only three of the six members of his Circle that originally set out with him in August

¹²⁷ *Monstrelet*, 337.

¹²⁸ *Capgrave* 132. *Chronica*, 480. *GHQ*, 45, 59. *HA*, 309. *Holinshed*, 29. *Life*, 47. *St Albans*, 2: 671.

¹²⁹ *GEC*, 1: 246.

¹³⁰ *GEC*, 12b: 379-380. Henry V’s brother, Thomas of Lancaster, Duke of Clarence and Edmund Mortimer, 5th Earl of March (who would become a Circle member in 1418) were among the ill who returned to England. *Capgrave* 132. *Chronica*, 480. *GHQ*, 45, 59. *HA*, 309. *Holinshed*, 25. *Life*, 47. *St Albans*, 2: 671.

¹³¹ *GEC*, 5: 202-203.

1415, Thomas Chaucer, Henry FitzHugh and Walter Hungerford. Even with his greatly depleted force,¹³² “with God, as is believed, affording him His leadership,” Henry, “relying on divine grace...piously reflecting that victory consists not in a multitude but with Him for Whom it is not impossible to enclose the many in the hand of the few and Who bestows victory upon whom He wills, whether they be many or few,”¹³³ resolved to press on toward Calais.

Henry V was reported to have issued a command upon his arrival in France that buildings not be burned, churches and sacred buildings be left intact and no one was to lay a hand on a servant of the church, woman or child, upon pain of death.¹³⁴ Although this ordinance had surely been infringed upon, two months after its issuance, on 17 October 1415, an Englishman who had stolen a pyx¹³⁵ from a church was brought before

¹³² Accounts of the strength of Henry’s force after the siege of Harfleur and the ravages of dysentery through his ranks vary. The *Gesta* claimed the English forces “...numbered about five thousand, so that of what was left of the army ther remained no more than nine hundred lances and five thousand archers...” (*GHQ*, 59.). Holinshed estimated that “he had but onelie two thousand horssemen and thirteene thousand archers, bilmen, and of all sorts of other footmen” (*Holinshed*, 29.) Walsingham claimed a slightly stronger force remained, numbering no more than eight thousand archers and armed men (*Chronica*, 409. *HA*, 310. *St Albans*, 2: 673.). Monstrelet estimated Henry V was “...escorted by about two thousand men-at-arms and about thirteen thousand archers, and numbers of other men...” (*Monstrelet*, 337.). With the English sources intended to illustrate the king’s bravery and prowess, and the French sources to elevate the reputation of the dauphin and his supporters, the actual number of men remaining in Henry’s army must lie somewhere in the middle of these exaggerated figures.

¹³³ *GHQ*, 61.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 27. *Life*, 34. *Capgrave*, 130.

¹³⁵ A round container used by Catholic churches to carry the consecrated host. The *GHQ* claimed the stolen pyx was copper (the author noted the thief may have thought it was gold) and the *Life* claimed it was silver. *GHQ*, 69. *Holinshed*, 30. *Life*, 44.

the king. Henry V is supposed to have halted his entire army on its march to Calais until “the sacrilege was purged,” restoring the pyx to the church, and executing the thief – hanging him from a tree so that every man in Henry’s army could see him and what happened to men who disobeyed or challenged his authority.¹³⁶ Henry V’s execution of the thief supposedly earned his army food supplies and other necessities from the French locals who were moved when they heard “of such zeale in him, to the maintenance of justice....”¹³⁷ Henry was highly praised, for “this edict and proclamation evidently proved both the love and dread that this most victorious King had unto God.”¹³⁸ That the king was willing to sacrifice one of his number after his force had been so sorely depleted was supposed to prove that he “had his confidence only in God and Justice, and not in the number of people.”¹³⁹ Henry V, an accomplished showman, never faltered in presenting himself as the most Christian king, even in the direst of circumstances.

In a show of devotion, on 24 October 1415, the day before the battle of Agincourt, both the *Gesta* and *Capgrave* claimed that Henry commanded his entire army to confess their sins to God and receive penance, “for he thought he could conquer men if he first conquered sin.”¹⁴⁰ Walsingham noted that the English forces spent the night, not tending

¹³⁶ *GHQ*, 69. *Life*, 44-45.

¹³⁷ *Holinshed*, 30.

¹³⁸ *Life*, 34.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴⁰ *Capgrave*, 132-133. *GHQ*, 79. “And then every man who had not previously cleansed his conscience by confession, put on the armour of penitence...”

to their bodies, but in making their confessions for the salvation of their souls.¹⁴¹ In the *First English Life of King Henry V*, the king would not array his host until after his priests had performed mattins, masses, prayers, and supplications ‘with all devotion’.¹⁴² Even Monstrelet claimed they did not dislodge from Maisoncelles until “after calling on the Divine aid against the French...”¹⁴³ While Henry’s army was tending to the state of their souls, the author of the *Gesta* recounted a conversation between Henry V and Walter Hungerford, who expressed to the king his wish to have ten thousand of the best archers in England there with them. Henry reportedly replied to Hungerford that his wish was foolish “because, by the God in Heaven upon Whose grace I have relied and in Whom is my firm hope of victory, I would not...have a single man more than I do. For these I have here with me are God’s people, whom He deigns to let me have at this time.”¹⁴⁴ Henry V surely knew the coming battle would either be his making as God’s elect, or his complete undoing; at no time was it more important for Henry’s kingship to appear ordained and endorsed by God.

When Henry’s army finally faced the French armies in pitched battle on 25 October 1415, the off-road site was a sea of mud from days of heavy rain and newly-sown grain. Where French victory seemed certain from their far superior numbers, “God [was not] unmindful of the multitude of prayers and supplications being made in

¹⁴¹ *Chronica*, 410. *HA*, 310. *St Albans*, 2: 675.

¹⁴² *Life*, 53.

¹⁴³ *Monstrelet*, 340.

¹⁴⁴ *Holinshed*, 35. *GHQ*, 79.

England, by which, as it is devoutly believed, our men soon regained their strength....”¹⁴⁵

With only Circle members Thomas Chaucer, Henry FitzHugh, and Walter Hungerford remaining at his side, Henry’s far inferior English forces managed to rout the French in less than four hours. Even the French chronicler, Monstrelet, conceded that the battle concluded with a complete victory for Henry V and that, on finding himself master of the battlefield, he proclaimed, “It is not we who have made this great slaughter, but the omnipotent God, and, as we believe, for a punishment for the sins of the French.”¹⁴⁶

Unanimously echoing Monstrelet’s claim that Henry did not attribute the victory to himself, the English chroniclers also asserted that the king gave thanks to God for his victory,¹⁴⁷ Henry V’s brilliant strategy of weaving together the loyalty and power of the New Lancastrian Circle, his dominion over the church, and his reputation as the “fearless and greathearted prince, who assuredly was moved by the spirit of God”¹⁴⁸ brought him victory where defeat seemed certain. Those three ingredients – the Circle, the church and

¹⁴⁵ *GHQ*, 89.

¹⁴⁶ *Monstrelet*, 343.

¹⁴⁷ “King Henry ascribed all these successes to God, as was right, and gave boundless thanks to Him...” (*Chronica*, 413.). “...let it [the triumph] be ascribed to God alone, from Whom is every victory...” (*GHQ*, 99.) “...and gathering his armie together, gave thanks to almightie God... and commanded everie man to kneele downe on the ground at this verse: *Non nobis Domine, non nobis, sed nomimi tuo da gloriam*. Which done, he caused *Te Deum*, with certeine anthems to be soong, giving laud and praise to God, without boasting of his owne force or anie humane power” (*Holinshed*, 39.). “...the Kinge...gave the greatest thanks and laud to God that might be...” *Life*, 61. “...the king therefore ascribing all the successes of this battle to God, as he should, gave ceaseless thanks to the One who had given him unexpected victory...” *St Albans*, 2: 683.

¹⁴⁸ *GHQ*, 21.

the *fama* crafted by his propagandists – created for Henry V what appeared to be a verdict from the Supreme Judge endorsing his kingship.

The Completed Web: The Lancastrian Dynasty

Henry V named his historic victory of 25 October 1415 “Agincourt” after a nearby castle. After this astonishing domination of French forces, there was no doubt to the people of England that God had deliberated and given His verdict on Henry V’s trial by combat. God resolved that Henry was, in fact, the rightful king of England and France. When Henry landed in Dover on 16 November 1415, the chronicles claim that he was greeted by a frantically cheering crowd – “innumerable people of religion, of priests, and noble men, and of the commons” – who ran out into the waves waist-deep to greet him, intending to bear him to land in their arms “so greate was the love they had to the Kinge, and so much the desire of his returne.”¹⁴⁹ Henry’s victory at Agincourt had earned him an elevated reputation throughout all Europe. The man who had restored law and order to England, rescued the English church from the brink of heresy, and emerged victorious from God’s trial by combat no longer had anything to fear from Ricardians or Lollards. Henry had succeeded in gaining the loyalty of the English people and proving to them that he was their rightful king, securing the House of Lancaster’s dynastic legacy through assured succession of kingship.

¹⁴⁹ *Life*, 64. “The king of England, on his return home from such a victory, and his conquest of Harfleur, was most joyfully received by the nobles, clergy, and all ranks of men: he proceeded to London...” *Monstrelet*, 348.

Although the Lancastrian succession of kingship had been secured and Henry V succeeded in obliterating the allegation that the House of Lancaster was a family of usurpers, he never stopped maintaining the *fama* he had earned for his house. Continuing the chroniclers' employment as his propagandists, after his spectacular victory at Agincourt, Henry V's entry into London on 23 November 1415 was reported like that of a Roman triumph. The author of the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, presumably a member of Henry V's private chapel, wrote in great detail about the supposed events of the day – casting Henry not only as the undisputed king of England, but also as God's knight and defender of His values.¹⁵⁰ When he reportedly entered the city around ten o'clock that morning, the people gave “to God glory and honor,” and to the king “congratulations and thanks for the victory he had gained and for his efforts on behalf of the public weal.”¹⁵¹ London was said to have been covered in various inscriptions, surely at the king's behest, that paid tribute to God; “Honor and glory to God alone,” “For the king's hopes in the Lord and the mercy of the most High shall not be moved,” “Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of God,” “We praise you God, we give thanks to You,” “Thanks to God.”¹⁵² During his triumphal procession through London, ‘the faithfull and constant Champion of God’¹⁵³ stopped at St. Paul's where twelve bishops led him to the high altar where he offered prayers and devotions to God and kissed the relics. He was greeted at

¹⁵⁰ Allmand, *Henry V*, 178.

¹⁵¹ *GHQ*, 103.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113.

¹⁵³ *Life*, 65.

Westminster by the abbot and monks who escorted him into the church to make offerings at the Confessor's shrine.¹⁵⁴ As God's elect, Henry V's reign was approved and ordained by God; he could finally be assured that no one would challenge his right to the English throne.

Although Henry V had succeeded in creating a Lancastrian England, his ambition demanded more. To create the dynastic legacy envisioned by his grandfather, Henry V wove together the strands of his web so that it was seemingly indestructible. Combining the power of the New Lancastrian Circle, the authority of the church, and his reputation as *miles Christi*, Henry V sought to solidify the Lancastrian right to the throne of England by invading France to press for the rightful inheritance that was being denied him.

Claiming that he was calling upon the Supreme Judge to arbitrate his right to the crown of France, victory where his predecessors had failed would prove to all of Europe that he was the rightful king, securing the Lancastrian monarchical succession. Henry's identity as *miles Christi*, the most Christian king and the prince of priests, and his steadfast fidelity and devotion throughout his 1415 expedition to France solidified his claim to the throne when God's verdict was delivered as an overwhelming victory for the English forces at Agincourt in October 1415. Although the Lancastrian dynasty could not be maintained after Henry V's death by his nine-month old heir, Henry VI, this "Invincible King,"¹⁵⁵ "the scourge of God, sent to punish the people of God for their synns"¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ *Chronica*, 413. *GHQ*, 113. *St Albans*, 2: 685.

¹⁵⁵ *Life*, 83.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

succeeded in creating the Lancastrian monarchical dynasty in England envisioned by his grandfather nearly fifty years earlier.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster laid the foundations upon which Henry V built his reign. The web spun across England by Lancaster was strong enough to enable his son, Henry of Bolingbroke, to claim the crown of England as Henry IV in 1399; however, it was not strong enough to support the weight of the House of Lancaster after the duke died. John of Gaunt brought together twelve men, the ‘Lancastrian Circle’, who unwaveringly supported the duke and his interests.¹ In an ill-advised attempt to procure the authority of the church, John of Gaunt employed the heterodox theologian, John Wycliffe, to destabilize the church. A man with many enemies, the list of which grew as he amassed more power, Lancaster utilized one member of his Circle, his brother-in-law,

¹ The number twelve was significant and familiar to medieval peoples; there are twelve months in a year, two cycles of twelve hours in a day, twelve signs of the zodiac, and twelve stations (points in the orbit where the celestial body either becomes retrograde or direct) of the moon and sun. A medieval Catholic would also have been familiar with the twelve days of Christmas, the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, the twelve gates and twelve angels of the book of Revelations, the woman crowned with twelve stars in Revelations 12:1, the twelve tribes of Israel, and most importantly, the twelve Apostles: after Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus and subsequent suicide, among the remaining eleven, Peter counseled the Apostles that because Judas “was noumbrid among vs, and gat a part of this seruyce...And it is writun in the book of Salmes...[that] an other take his bishopriche...Therfor it bihoueth these men, that ben gaderid togidere with vs in al the tyme...that oon of these be maad a wisse of his resurreccious with vs...And thei yauen lottis to hem, and the lot felde on Mathie; and he was noumbrid with enleuen apostlis.” Acts 1: 15-26. John Wycliffe, *The Wycliffe Bible: John Wycliffe’s Translation of the Holy Scriptures from the Latin Vulgate: Old & New Testament* (Winchester: Lamp Post, 2008).

the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, to write brilliant works promoting and praising the duke to try to increase Lancaster's *fama*. The duke understood the fundamentals needed to create a Lancastrian dynasty, but he was unable to master the application of the tactics needed to support his bold vision. These were strategies that required continual maintenance and the failure of Lancaster's son, Henry IV, to create his own Circle and to tend to his *fama* branded the House of Lancaster as a family of usurpers who could be dominated and manipulated by their own parliament. John of Gaunt's grandson, Henry of Monmouth, astutely realized what was needed to reinforce the foundations laid by his grandfather under the House of Lancaster in order to see the vision of a Lancastrian monarchical dynasty realized.

The Lancastrian Circles were much like the knotted cords used by medieval architects to create the great stone cathedrals; employed to work out the mathematics and geometry required to construct such ambitious buildings, a cord was knotted thirteen times with twelve equal spaces between the thirteen knots.² Henry of Monmouth, as King Henry V, continually replenished the membership of his own group of unflinchingly loyal supporters, the 'New Lancastrian Circle'. Each member of the Circle, including Henry, representing a knot on the cord, Henry V recognized that for his Circle to maintain the power necessary to keep him beyond the reach of parliament, retain the church's authority, sustain his reputation, and ensure the continuity of support for his campaign in France, he had to ensure that there were always precisely twelve members in

² The knotted cord was a tool that demonstrated Pythagoras' theorem ($a^2+b^2=c^2$). John Harvey, *The Mediæval Architect* (London: Wayland Publishers, 1972), 98, 108, 120-121, 124.

his Circle.³ The make-up of Henry's Circle reflected his approach to effectively ruling the nation; including peers from the noblest families, churchmen, and members of the commons ensured that it appeared as though the interests of each estate were represented within the king's inner Circle. Where his grandfather, John of Gaunt, was only partially successful in securing this legacy by creating a strong power base of temporal men in the Lancastrian Circle, Henry V overwhelmingly succeeded by constructing the New Lancastrian Circle out of both temporal and spiritual men.

Where John of Gaunt failed to appropriate the authority of the church by unsettling the institution with his heterodox theologian, Henry V succeeded in absorbing the power and authority of the church by fanatically supporting it. Equating heresy with treason, he healed the rifts in the church by actively pursuing Lollardy and eliminating any trace of dissidence. Henry employed the court chroniclers as his propagandists who created an image of the king as "The most devout Prince to God and to the Church."⁴

The portrayal of Henry V's conspicuous piety, coupled with his reliance on bishops as

³ Pythagoras' series of 'musical numbers' (2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12) were recognized by medieval philosophers as fundamental to the order and stability of the universe, as well as to beauty in the arts (Paul Calter, "Pythagoras & Music of the Spheres," Dartmouth College, 1998, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~matc/math5.geometry/unit3/unit3.html> (accessed 25 July 2013)). The arithmetical significance of the number twelve lies in it being one out of only two existing sublime numbers: a positive integer that has a perfect number of positive divisors, including itself. Its positive divisors also add up to another perfect number (12 has a perfect number of positive divisors (6): 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 12; the sum of these divisors also equals a perfect number (28): 1+2+3+4+6+12). A perfect number is a positive integer that is equal to the sum of its positive divisors (excluding the number itself); it is also half of the sum of all of its positive divisors (including the number itself).

⁴ *Life*, 87.

statesmen, crushed the remaining shreds of dissent in the church, bringing the power, authority and resources of the institution, and the qualifications of orthodoxy, under the control of the crown. Blurring the lines between the church and the nation by giving churchmen the illusion of having a hand in the governance of the realm – such as by issuing a Commission of Array to the bishops to defend the realm while he was in France – gave the church a stake in the affairs of the nation, allowing Henry to create an Anglican church under the control of the crown. Henry V perfectly blended the New Lancastrian Circle, the church controlled by the crown, and his image propagated by the chroniclers to support his invasion of France – securing a Lancastrian dynastic legacy through assured succession of kingship.

Henry V was a strong leader who commanded the loyalty of his men and his nation; while he lived, no one would challenge the Lancastrian claim to the throne. The power and authority held by the New Lancastrian Circle is blatantly evidenced by the 26 August 1422 supplementary codicils, written just five days prior to Henry V's death, to the king's 10 December 1421 last will and testament. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, of the nineteen executors of the king's will, nine were members of the New Lancastrian Circle, with two of them appointed to act as the testament's supervisors.⁵ Queen Catherine, who Henry V had finally married on 2 June 1420, was not given formal charge of the nine-month old Prince Henry of Westminster; instead, Henry FitzHugh and Walter Hungerford were charged with the day-to-day attendance on the person of the

⁵ Executors: Richard Beauchamp, Henry Beaufort, Thomas Beaufort, Henry FitzHugh, Walter Hungerford, Thomas Langley, and Ralph Neville. Supervisors: John of Lancaster and Henry Chichele.

prince and Thomas Beaufort was to have an important share in the prince's upbringing.⁶ Richard Beauchamp was also the prince's tutor and governor from June 1428 until 19 May 1436.⁷

Conspicuously, what the 1422 codicils do not contain are any clear, indisputable provisions for the governance of the realm during a prospectively long royal minority.⁸ Henry V's failure to anticipate an immensely long minority demonstrates how fragile the seemingly insurmountable Lancastrian dynasty really was. It is not surprising that the New Lancastrian Circle retained the power they had amassed under Henry V and charged into Henry VI's reign as the political force behind the throne. Henry V's younger brother, John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford, was appointed as the Protector of the Kingdom of England and Regent of the Realm of France, and his youngest brother, Humphrey of Lancaster, Duke of Gloucester, was appointed as Protector, Defender and Principal Councillor of the King.⁹ Richard Beauchamp, Thomas Beaufort, Henry FitzHugh, Walter Hungerford, Edmund Mortimer, Ralph Neville, and John Tiptoft were

⁶ *GEC*, 5: 203. The final sentence of the codicil does, however, imply that Queen Catherine would live with Prince Henry. Patrick Strong and Felicity Strong, "The Last Will and Codicils of Henry V," *The English Historical Review* 96.378 (1981), 84-85.

⁷ *GEC*, 12b: 381.

⁸ It has been suggested, however, that Henry's political plans may have been declared orally soon before his death. Strong, *Last Will and Codicils*, 85. Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 29. Richard Beauchamp and Thomas Beaufort were both present with Henry V at his deathbed. *GEC*, 5: 203. *GEC*, 12b: 380.

⁹ *GEC*, 2: 70. *GEC*, 5: 733. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, 30.

all appointed to Gloucester's Council of Regency,¹⁰ and Thomas Langley was appointed as the Chancellor of England.¹¹ Even after Henry V's death, the New Lancastrian Circle was still very much in control of the governance of the kingdom.

The absence of strong, cohesive kingship soon wore on the Circle and contests for power inevitably arose. Henry V's 1422 codicils named Gloucester as the prince's Principal Guardian and Defender,¹² but the Commons refused to give him these titles, which they were afraid might imply supreme authority of governance. During the first ten years of Henry VI's reign, Henry Beaufort, who was given no part to play in Henry VI's government, loaned the crown more than £45,000, making him the preeminent power in the land.¹³ Gloucester resented that Henry V's plans for him had been ignored, and Beaufort resented his total exclusion from the governance of the realm. In October 1424, when Gloucester left England with an army to conquer his wife's inheritance in Hainault, Holland, and Zeeland, Henry Beaufort usurped his nephew's place as Principal Councillor in England.¹⁴ Henry VI's minority became dominated by the political rivalry

¹⁰ *GEC*, 12b: 381, 544. *GEC*, 5: 203, 421. *GEC*, 6: 613. *GEC*, 8: 450. *GEC*, 12a: 746.

¹¹ "September-December 1422," *Rymer's Foedera Volume 10*, ed. Thomas Rymer, in *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk.proxy.library.umkc.edu/report.aspx?compid=115300>, (accessed 26 July 2013).

¹² Strong, *Last Will and Codicils*, 84.

¹³ Geoffrey Richardson, *A Pride of Bastards: A History of the Beaufort Family, their Origins, and their part in the Agincourt War and the Wars of the Roses* (Ripponden: Baildon Books, 2002), 46.

¹⁴ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, 39.

between Gloucester and Beaufort. The enduring conflict between these two Lancastrian princes eventually threw the governance of the realm into enough turmoil that the growing civil unrest opened the door for the dynastic conflict between the houses of York and Lancaster in the War of the Roses (1455-1485).

Amid the turbulence of Henry VI's reign caused by Humphrey of Lancaster and Henry Beaufort, Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York, asserted a superior claim to the throne through Edward III's second and fourth sons, Lionel of Antwerp and Edmund of Langley. York's descent from Lionel of Antwerp, the elder brother of John of Gaunt, arguably gave him a stronger claim to the throne than the Lancasters, although his descent was through Lionel's daughter, Philippa of Clarence, and Edward III's 'Writ of Succession' clearly ignored cognatic primogeniture in favor of agnatic primogeniture. Richard of York never became king, but within a few weeks of his death in 1471 his eldest son, Edward of York, finally established the House of York on the throne, ascending as Edward IV.¹⁵ Although not a Lancastrian, Edward IV could claim closer descent to Edward III through John of Gaunt than through Lionel of Antwerp,¹⁶ Richard

¹⁵ Henry VI and Edward IV alternated reigns throughout the progression of the War of the Roses. Henry VI reigned from 31 August 1422 to 4 March 1461; Edward IV then reigned from 4 March 1461 to 3 October 1470; Henry VI regained the throne from 30 October 1470 to 11 April 1471; Edward IV reclaimed the throne on 11 April 1471 and held it until his death on 9 April 1483.

¹⁶ King Edward III of England>Lionel of Antwerp, 1st Duke of Clarence>Philippa of Clarence, 5th Countess of Ulster>Roger Mortimer, 4th Earl of March>Anne de Mortimer, Countess of Cambridge>Richard of York, 3rd Duke of York>Edward of York, King Edward IV of England

of York's wife, Cecily Neville, was the daughter of New Lancastrian Circle member Ralph Neville and Joan Beaufort, John of Gaunt's fourth child by Katherine Swynford. Through Edward IV, the Beaufort line found an alternate route to the throne.

John of Gaunt, the Lancastrian Circle, John Wycliffe, and Geoffrey Chaucer perfectly set the stage for Henry of Bolingbroke to claim the throne of England as Henry IV in 1399. When Henry IV confirmed the legitimization of his half-brothers and sister, the Beauforts, he added a clause barring them from the royal line of succession. This decision led Henry and Thomas Beaufort to withdraw their support from their half-brother and, instead, to throw it, and their considerable talents, behind their nephew, Henry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales. Henry of Monmouth had implicit faith in his uncles who helped him appropriate his father's power. After his ascendancy as Henry V in 1413, his Beaufort uncles remained within his inner circle, stood stalwartly by his side, and promoted Henry and the House of Lancaster in everything they did, despite the fact that Henry never restored them to the line of succession. Henry's failure to restore the Beauforts' position within the line of succession was little more than a stumbling block for the family that patiently waited within the Lancastrian web for their moment to strike – and strike they did.

King Edward III of England>John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster>Joan Beaufort, Countess of Westmorland>Cecily Neville, Duchess of York>Edward of York, King Edward IV of England

King Edward III>Edmund of Langley, 1st Duke of York>Richard of Conisburgh, 3rd Earl of Cambridge>Richard of York, 3rd Duke of York>Edward of York, King Edward IV of England

The Beauforts were a force to be reckoned with. The sagacity they inherited from their father may be the instrument that truly changed the face of the English monarchy forever. They sustained Henry V prior to and throughout his reign, and Henry Beaufort's resentment at his exclusion from the governance of the realm after Henry V's death led to years of political turmoil that eventually resulted in civil war. When Henry VI's son, Edward of Westminster, Prince of Wales, was killed during the War of the Roses at the battle of Tewkesbury on 4 May 1471, seventeen days prior to his father's execution in Wakefield Tower of the Tower of London,¹⁷ the legitimate Lancastrian line died with him. The civil war that extinguished the Lancastrian line, instigated by the power struggle between Humphrey of Lancaster and Henry Beaufort, eventually led the descendants of the Beauforts to the throne of England. While the establishment of a dynastic legacy through his illegitimate children might not have been what John of Gaunt initially had in mind, the deposition of Richard II and ascendancy of Henry IV, the rise of the Beauforts through the power and authority they amassed under Henry V, and the War of the Roses and the Beaufort ascendancy all resulted from what John of Gaunt set in motion in the 1370s when he began playing for power and established his Lancastrian Circle. Although Lancaster was never able to win a throne for himself, he placed his eldest daughter, Philippa of Lancaster, on the throne of Portugal, his eldest son, Henry of Bolingbroke, on the throne of England, and his third daughter, Catherine of Lancaster, on

¹⁷ Henry VI died 21/22 May 1471 and Edward IV was crowned the next day. It has been suggested that, either, with Prince Edward's death there was no longer a reason to keep Henry alive, or that until Prince Edward died there was little benefit to killing Henry. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, 347.

the throne of Castile. While the scope of the effect John of Gaunt's actions had on the English monarchy has begun to emerge throughout this study, it cannot begin to explore the possibility of how far across Europe the Lancastrian web might have eventually spread through Philippa and Catherine, and their descendents. John of Gaunt's cunning in spinning his web of influence and perpetuating it after his death through Henry V's artful imitation of his techniques created an enduring Lancastrian legacy that was maintained by the Beauforts. Inheriting all of their father's sagacity, political savvy, and power of manipulation and maneuvering, after the death of John of Gaunt perhaps it was the Beauforts who became the true spiders in the web.

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY

- c.1309: Guy de Brienne born, date uncertain.
- 1312: Edward of Windsor (Edward III) born, 13, November.
- 1314: Philippa of Hainault (Queen Consort of Edward III) born, 24 June.
- 1327: Edward II dies; Edward III ascends throne, 1 February.
- Edward III and Philippa of Hainault married by proxy, the Bishop of Coventry, in Valenciennes, October.
- c1328: John Wycliffe born, date uncertain.
- 1330: William Lord Latimer born, 24 March.
- Edward the Black Prince of Wales born, 15 June (1st son of Edward III).
- Willam Beauchamp born between 1330 and 1340, date uncertain.
- 1337: Edward III declares right to French throne, beginning the Hundred Years' War.
- 1338: Lionel of Antwerp (Duke of Clarence) born, 29 November (2nd surviving son of Edward III).
- 1340: John of Gaunt (Duke of Lancaster) born, 6 March (3rd surviving son of Edward III).
- Geoffrey Chaucer born, early 1340s, date uncertain.
- 1341: Edmund of Langley (Duke of York) born, 5 June (4th surviving son of Edward III).
- John Clanvowe born, date uncertain.
- 1345: Blanche of Lancaster born, 25 March.
- 1346: Richard FitzAlan (11th Earl of Arundel) born, date uncertain.
- Philippa Pan (de Roet) born, date uncertain.

- c.1348: Philip de la Vache born, date uncertain.
- 1350: Katherine de Roet (Swynford) born, 25 November.
John Montagu born, date uncertain.
- 1353: Thomas (FitzAlan) Arundel (Archbishop of Canterbury) born, date uncertain.
- 1355: Thomas of Woodstock (Duke of Gloucester) born, 7 January (5th and final surviving son of Edward III).
- 1357: John of Gaunt and Geoffrey Chaucer meet, Christmas (contended).
- 1359: John of Gaunt marries Blanche of Lancaster, 19 May.
Katherine Swyford becomes governess of the daughters of John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, c.1359-1363 (Philippa of Lancaster b.31 March 1359, Elizabeth of Lancaster b. b/w 1 January 1363 & 21 February 1363).
- c.1360s: John Tiptoft born, date and year uncertain.
- 1361: Henry of Grosmont, Duke of Lancaster (Blanche of Lancaster's father) dies; John of Gaunt receives half of Grosmont's lands; title Duke of Lancaster becomes extinct, 23 March.
- 1362: Maud of Lancaster (co-heiress with her sister Blanche of Lancaster to the Duchy of Lancaster) dies; John of Gaunt inherits other half of Grosmont's lands, 10 April.
Edward III recreates the title Duke of Lancaster and bestows it on his son John of Gaunt, 13 November.
- c.1363: Henry FitzHugh (Chamberlain to Henry V) born, date uncertain.
Thomas Langley (Bishop of Durham) born, date uncertain.
- c.1364: Ralph de Neville (Earl of Westmorland) born, date uncertain.
Henry Chichele (Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop of St. David's, Chancellor of Henry V) born, date uncertain.
- 1366: Henry of Bolingbroke (Henry IV) born to John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, 3 April.

- Geoffrey Chaucer marries Philippa Pan (de Roet), date uncertain.
- 1367: Richard of Bordeaux (Richard II) born to Edward the Black Prince and Princess Joan of Kent, 6 January.
- Thomas Chaucer (Esquire and Chief Butler to Henry V) born, date uncertain.
- 1368: Lionel of Antwerp, Duke of Clarence dies, 17 October.
- 1369: Queen Philippa dies, 15 August.
- Blanche of Lancaster dies, 12 September.
- c1370: Henry Scrope (Lord of Masham) born, date uncertain.
- John of Gaunt begins love affair with Katherine Swynford.
- 1371: John of Gaunt marries Constance of Castile, the claimant to the throne of Castile, 21 September.
- c1373: John Beaufort (Earl of Somerset) born to John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford.
- Thomas Arundel provided bishopric of Ely, 13 August.
- c1374: Henry Beaufort (Bishop of Winchester) born to John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford, date uncertain.
- 1376: The 'Good' Parliament, 28 April – 10 July.
- Edward the Black Prince of Wales dies, 8 June.
- c1377: Thomas Beaufort (Earl of Dorset, Duke of Exeter) born to John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford, date uncertain.
- Edward III dies; Richard II (Richard of Bordeaux) ascends throne, 21 June.
- 1378: Walter Hungerford (Steward of the Household to Henry V) born, 22 June.
- c1379: Joan Beaufort (Countess of Westmorland) born to John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford.
- 1381: William Lord Latimer dies, 28 May.

- Thomas FitzAlan (12th Earl of Arundel) born, 13 October.
- c1383: Gilbert Lord Talbot born, date uncertain.
- 1384: John Wycliffe dies at Lutterworth, 31 December.
- 1385: Richard Beauchamp (Earl of Warwick) born, 25/28 January.
- 1386: Henry of Monmouth (Henry V) born to Henry of Bolingbroke and Mary de Bohun, 16 September.
- c.1387: Philippa Chaucer dies, date uncertain.
- 1388: The 'Merciless' Parliament, 3 February – 20 March, 13 April – 4 June.
Thomas Arundel elevated to Archbishopric of York, 3 April.
- 1389: Aged 21, Richard II declares his intent to govern England himself, 3 May.
John of Lancaster (Duke of Bedford) born to Henry of Bolingbroke and Mary de Bohun, 20 June.
- 1390: Guy de Brienne dies, 17 August.
- 1391: John Clanvowe dies, 17 October.
William Neville dies, 19 October.
Edmund of Mortimer (5th Earl of March) born, 6 November.
- 1394: Constance of Castile dies, 24 March.
- 1396: John of Gaunt marries his long-time mistress Katherine Swynford (de Roet) and becomes Geoffrey Chaucer's brother-in-law, 13 January.
Thomas Arundel elevated to Archbishopric of Canterbury, 25 September.
- 1397: Ralph de Neville and Joan Beaufort marry, 3 February.
Beauforts legitimated in parliament, 4 February.
The Lords Appellant conspire against Richard II, June.

Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester and Richard FitzAlan, 11th Earl of Arundel executed, 8/9 September.

Archbishop Arundel impeached and exiled.

1398: Thomas Mowbray sentenced to exile for life; Henry of Bolingbroke sentenced to exile for six years, 16 September.

1399: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster dies, 3 February.

Richard II commutes Henry of Bolingbroke's sentence to exile for life and claims forfeiture of the Lancastrian inheritance to the Crown, 18 March.

Edmund Mortimer, 5th Earl of March proclaimed heir apparent.

Richard II leads campaign to Ireland, 18 May.

Henry of Bolingbroke and Thomas Arundel return from exile and land in England, 4 July.

Richard II abdicates, 29 September.

Richard II deposed by his cousin, Henry of Bolingbroke, 30 September.

Henry of Bolingbroke crowned King Henry IV, 13 October.

Henry of Monmouth created Prince of Wales and named heir apparent, 15 October.

1400: John Montagu dies – beheaded for treason by Henry IV – 5 January.

Richard II dies under mysterious circumstances (forcible starvation?), 14 February.

Geoffrey Chaucer dies, c. 25 October.

1401: William Sawtre, curate of St. Margaret's, Lynn, first Lollard to be burned alive at Smithfield, 2 March.

Henry IV persuaded to pass *De Heretico Comburendo* by Archbishop Arundel, 10 March.

Thomas Latimer dies, 14 September.

Richard Stury dies, date uncertain (his last appearance in the *Calendar Patent Rolls* is on 8 July 1401 [*CPR, Henry IV, 1399-1401, 509.*]).

- 1402: Edmund of Langley, Duke of York dies, 1 August.
- 1403: Katherine Swynford dies, 10 May.
- c.1405: Lewis Clifford dies, date uncertain (the records show he was still living as of 10 May 1404 [*CPR, Henry IV, 1401-1405, 309.*] and was deceased by 5 April 1406 [*CPR, Henry IV, 1405-1408, 165.*]).
- 1407: Henry IV confirms the legitimization of the Beauforts, adding they are ineligible for succession to the throne of England.
- c.1408: Philip de le Vache dies.
- 1409: Henry of Monmouth participates in burning of the second convicted Lollard, Thomas Badby, at Smithfield.
- 1411: William Beauchamp dies, 8 May.
- 1413: Henry IV dies; Henry V (Henry of Monmouth) ascends throne, 20 March.
Sir John Oldcastle escapes from the Tower, 19 October.
- 1414: Sir John Oldcastle's Lollard uprising at St. Giles' Fields, 9 January.
Archbishop Thomas Arundel dies, 19 February.
Henry Chichele elected Archbishop of Canterbury, 4 March.
Archbishopric of Canterbury translated by papal bull to Henry Chichele, 28 April.
The Council of Constance is called, October.
John Cheyne dies, date uncertain.
- 1415: John Wycliffe declared a heretic at the Council of Constance, 4 May.
Henry Lord Scrope executed as one of the Southampton conspirators, 5 August.
Henry V departs for France for divine trial by combat, 11 August.

The siege of Harfleur begins, 17 August.

Henry V challenges the dauphin to single combat, 16 September.

The town of Harfleur surrenders, 22 September.

Thomas FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel dies from dysentery contracted at Harfleur, 13 October.

English forces defeat the far superior French forces at Agincourt, 25 October.

1417: Henry V departs for France on second expedition, 30 July.

Papal Schism ended with election of Pope Martin V, November.

Execution of Sir John Oldcastle, 14 December.

1418: Gilbert Lord Talbot dies, 19 October.

1420: Henry V marries Catherine of Valois, 2 June.

1421: Henry of Windsor (Henry VI) born, 6 December.

1422: Henry V dies, 31 August.

1425: Henry FitzHugh (Chamberlain to Henry V) dies, 11 January.

Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March dies, 18 January.

Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland dies, 21 October.

1426: Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter dies, 31 December.

1434: Thomas Chaucer (Henry V's Chief Butler) dies, 18 November.

1435: John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford dies, 14 September.

1437: Thomas of Langley, Bishop of Durham dies, 20 November.

1439: Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick dies, 30 April.

c1442: John Tiptoft dies, 27 January (possibly 1443).

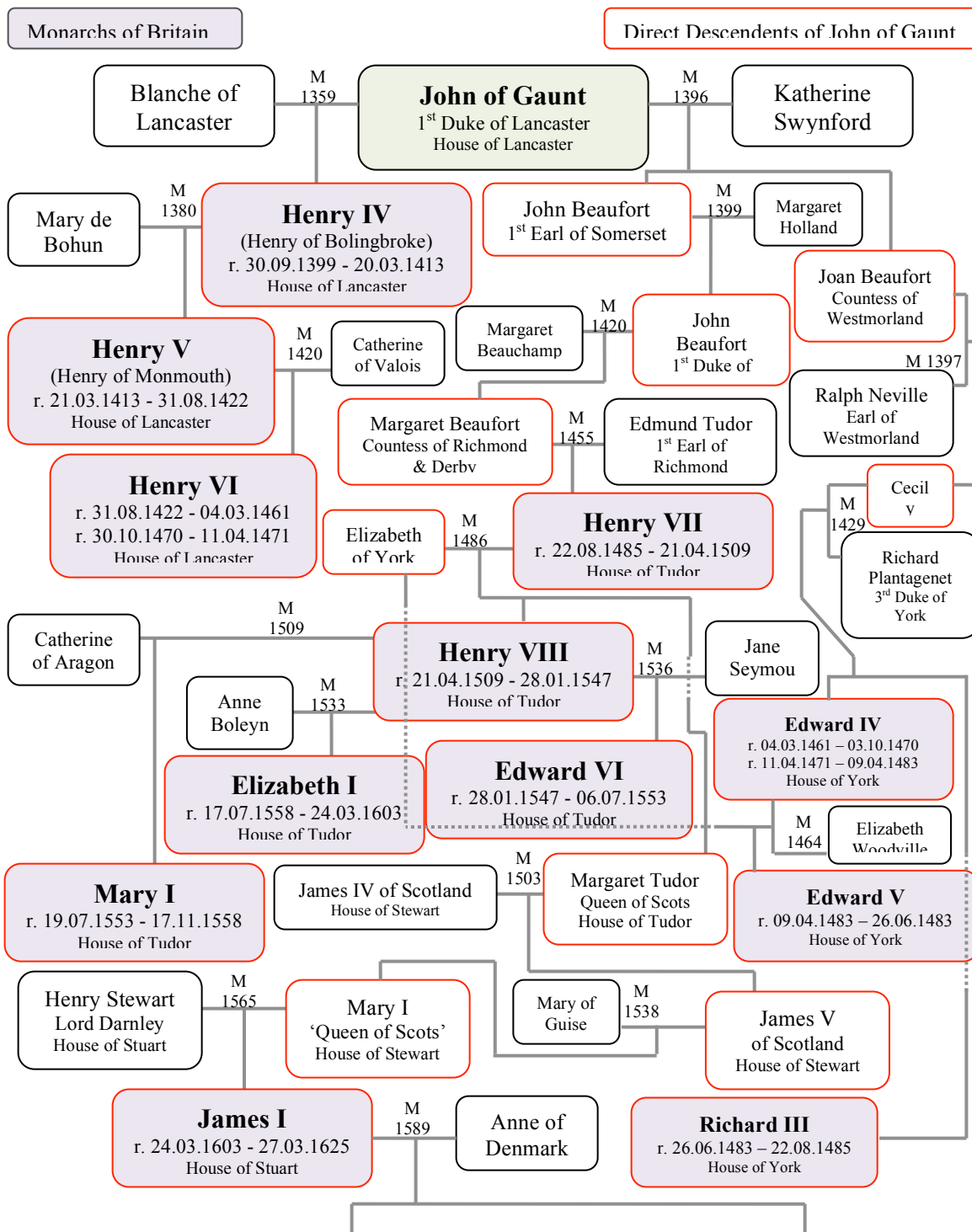
1443: Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury dies, 12 April.

1447: Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester dies, 11 April.

1449: Walter Hungerford (Steward of the Household for Henry V) dies, 9 August.

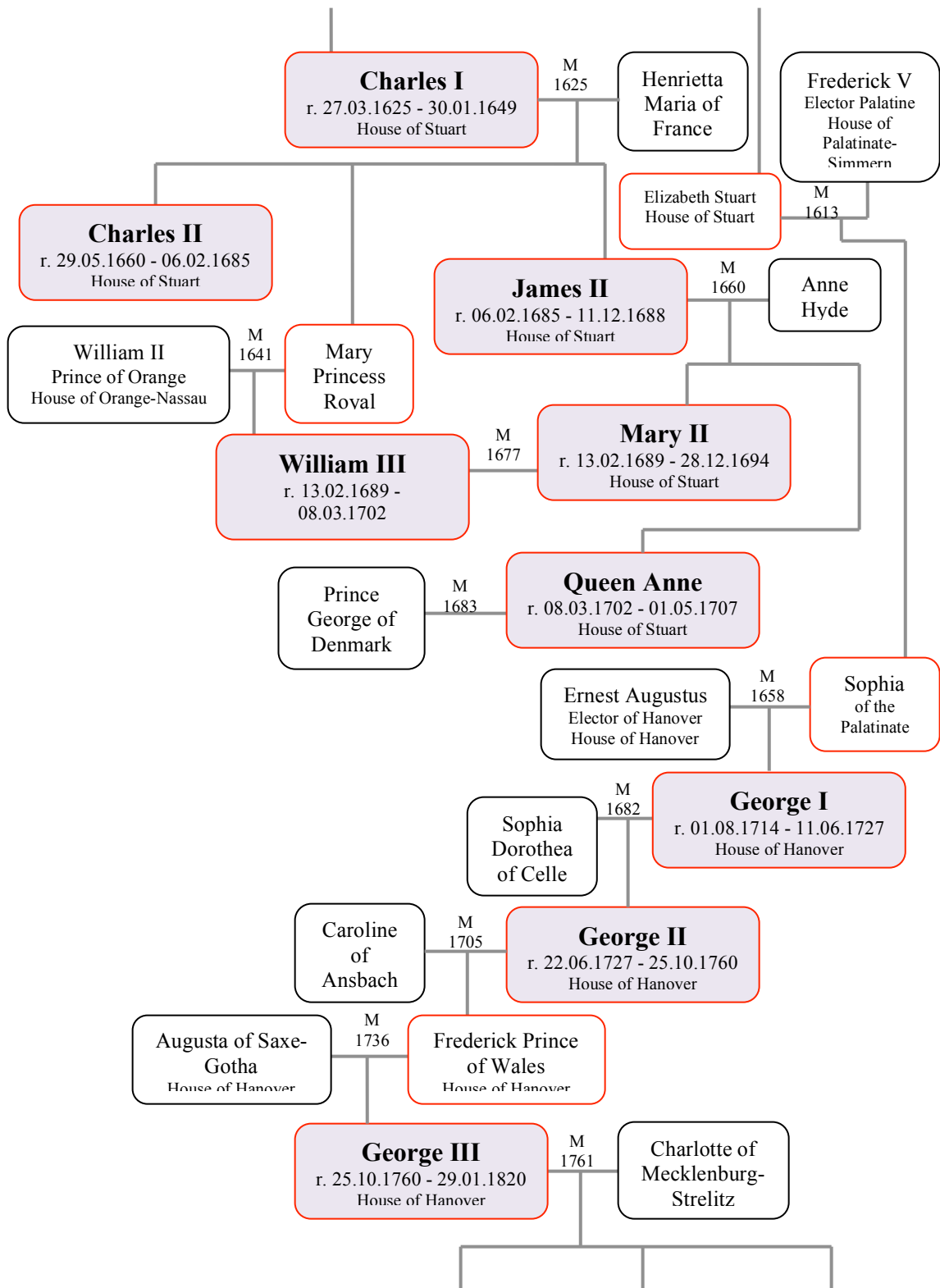
APPENDIX B

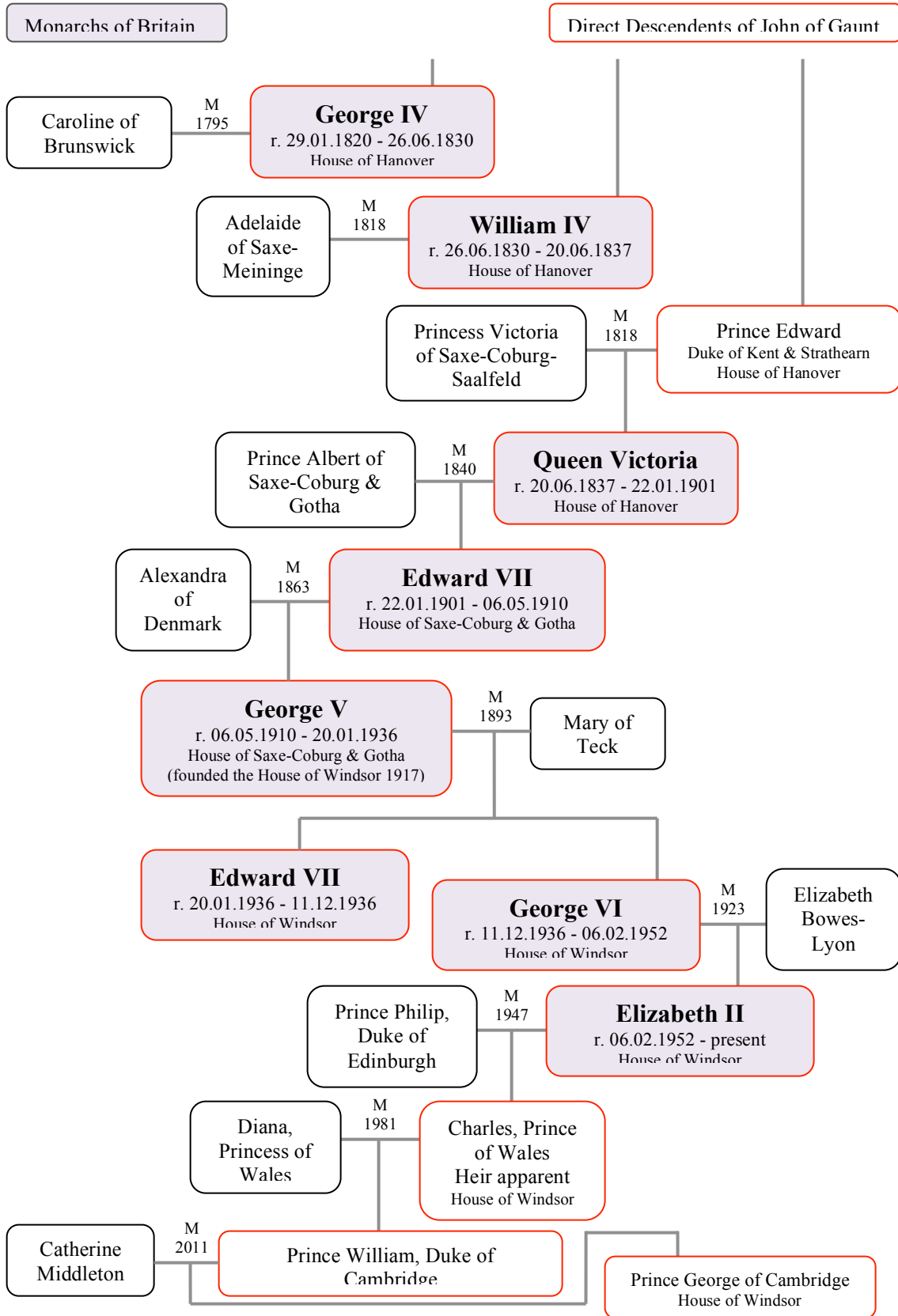
MONARCHS OF BRITAIN DESCENDED FROM JOHN OF GAUNT



Monarchs of Britain

Direct Descendents of John of Gaunt





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