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Source: Midlands Historical Review, Vol. 5 (2021)

Published: 21/12/2021

URL:

<http://www.midlandshistoricalreview.com/deconstructing-monarchical-legitimacy-lancastrian-depositional-propaganda-and-the-language-of-political-opposition-c-1399-1405/>

Deconstructing monarchical legitimacy: Lancastrian depositional propaganda and the language of political opposition, c. 1399–1405

David Clewett

Abstract

This article assesses the political impact of the propaganda created by the newly-installed Lancastrian regime in 1399, used to justify the deposition of Richard II and legitimise the ascension of Henry IV. Ideological and historical discourses, underwritten by the concept of kingship, were integral to Lancastrian depositional propaganda. Importantly, they were also appropriated by overt political opposition in Henry IV's early reign (c. 1399–1406) to articulate and justify their grievances, and used as interpretative frameworks by chroniclers to rationalise this opposition. Firstly, this article provides a new perspective on Lancastrian propaganda, emphasising the role of the literary, historical, and ideological context in shaping its language, and the ideas which underwrote it. It will analyse "official" Lancastrian documents, pro-Lancastrian chronicles, and more equivocal chronicles, including those from France, to identify three key discourses. It will then show how—and why—the leaders of the Percy Rebellion (1403) and Archbishop Scrope's Rebellion (1405) also used these discourses as vehicles for arrogating their own legitimacy as rebels, and for simultaneously challenging Henry's legitimacy as king. The "manifestos" published by, or ascribed to, the rebels of 1399, 1403, and 1405, and their reception and reproduction by chroniclers, are discussed here, to illustrate the resilience of the discourses first used in depositional propaganda and how they had the potential to shape subsequent political opposition. This article emphasises the importance of ideology and ideas, the rhetorical power of language and "history", and the considerable, yet hitherto unappreciated, impact these had on the early Lancastrian polity and its politics.

Keywords: Lancastrian, Henry IV, Richard II, Propaganda, Chronicles, Ideology, Political Opposition, Deposition, Rebellion, Kingship

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The end of the fourteenth-century in England is generally discussed as a rather troubled period, afflicted by ‘baronial rebellions’, ‘an immediate and steep plunge into insolvency’, and an ‘acute instability’ in government and politics.¹ These issues largely stemmed from, or were exacerbated by, the particularities and consequences of the ascension of Henry IV. In 1399, Henry, in the ostensible process of reclaiming his ducal inheritance of Lancaster, rebelled and usurped the throne of England from his infamously megalomaniacal cousin, Richard II. However, alongside the naturally destabilising impact of changes in dynasty and regime, the process of deposition was antithetical in several ways to prevailing ideological schema. Particularly, the fundamental centrality and apparent inviolability of the king to the medieval political system was compromised by Richard’s deposition, thus making monarchical legitimacy something of a political *cause célèbre* that Henry could never quite escape. The new Lancastrian regime was, therefore, anxious to emphasise the legitimacy of his kingship, and of Richard’s deposition. The rhetorical power of the written word—and, indeed, the historical “truth” it sought to record—in this period lent itself well to such concerns; the Lancastrian government quickly became ‘adept propagandists’.²

The existence of “official” Lancastrian ‘propaganda’ has long been recognised.³ While early historians on the reign, namely James Wylie and William Stubbs, unwittingly accepted the Lancastrian version of events in their narratives, more recent historians have termed it a ‘smoke-screen of untruth’.⁴ Indeed, since the 1930s at least, the existence of ‘deliberate suppressions of the truth’ and

¹ B. Bevan, *Henry IV* (London, 1994), p. 70; G. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360–1461* (Oxford, 2005), p. 498; E. Powell, ‘The Restoration of Law and Order’, in G. Harriss (ed.), *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship* (Oxford, 1985), p. 54.

² G. Harriss, ‘The Court of the Lancastrian Kings’, in J. Stratford (ed.), *The Lancastrian Court* (Donington, 2003), p. 12.

³ A. Gransden, ‘Propaganda in English Medieval Historiography’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 1/4 (1975), p. 363.

⁴ J. Wylie, *History of England under Henry the Fourth, Vol. I* (London, 1884), pp. 14–15; W. Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England: In Its Origin and Development, Vol. II* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1877), pp. 502–8; G. Sayles, ‘The Deposition of Richard II: Three Lancastrian Narratives’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54/130 (1981), p. 257.

‘soothing falsehoods’ in Lancastrian propaganda has been appreciated.⁵ Yet, the concomitant assumption of incredibility and inherent political expediency of Lancastrian propaganda has led to a tendency to conflate this rather cynical appraisal with a misconceived understanding of how contemporaries received and worked with it—or against it. Historians have, therefore, generally failed to consider that Lancastrian propaganda, or, more specifically, the discourses it employed and the ideologies which underwrote them, could, and did, have a significant political role after the events of 1399. Tentative work in this area such as that by Paul Strohm and Jenni Nuttal has, however, indicated that the late-medieval society’s ‘knowledge of and interest in political language’ was greater than previously believed, and that the political community was undoubtedly ‘highly aware of the power of words’ and their manipulation.⁶ These are assumptions that also underpin the current study. Yet, even these commendable studies are limited in that they focus almost exclusively on the poetic, allegorical, and didactic literature produced at the time, such as the vernacular *Crowned King* and *Richard the Redeless* (both anonymous), or Thomas Hoccleve’s *Regiment of Princes*. Treatment of more “political” or politicised documents is somewhat lacking, despite the increasing appreciation of ‘the importance of the study of language and literary production’ for understanding the dynamics of medieval politics.⁷ As such, the possibility that Lancastrian depositional propaganda could influence the actual political dynamic in the early Lancastrian polity, that is to say, beyond the immediacy of 1399–1400, is left underappreciated.

This study will illustrate, therefore, that Lancastrian propaganda had a more significant political role in the tumultuous years of Henry IV’s early reign than has hitherto been ascribed to it, and that it reveals and reflects more about the contemporary political-ideological *Zeitgeist* than previously thought. This will be

⁵ M. Clarke, and V. Galbraith, ‘The Deposition of Richard II’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 14/1 (1930), p. 155.

⁶ J. Nuttal, *The Creation of Lancastrian Kingship: Literature, Language and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1, 127.

⁷ G. Dodd, ‘Kingship, Parliament and the Court: The Emergence of “High Style” in Petitions to the English Crown, c.1350–1405’, *English Historical Review*, 129/538 (2014), p. 515.

done through the lens of three historical and ideological discourses integral to both the Lancastrian propaganda of 1399, and the anti-Lancastrian indictments produced by the Percy Rebellion of 1403 and Archbishop Scrope's rebellion of 1405, long regarded as two of the most serious challenges of his reign.⁸ These include: the historical nature and conceptual implications of Richard's resignation as king, the king's expected and perceived financial conduct, and the king's expected and actual choice of counsel. This article will show that, because of the similarity and continuity in the moralised discourses used to internally articulate and externally rationalise them, the rebellions of 1403 and 1405 were conceptualised through—and perceived in relation to—the ideas given currency in the depositional propaganda of 1399. It will show how these ideas rotated around the axis of monarchical legitimacy in particular, and how they were set within the conceptual framework of kingship in general. It will become apparent that the regime lost control of the very things that underwrote its own existence, which consequently provided a 'perpetual opportunity' for those who soon came to challenge it.⁹

Lancastrian Historical Writing and the Use and Abuse of "History"

The Lancastrian regime, unsurprisingly, sought to rewrite history or, at least, those parts which they perceived as important, because they 'clearly recognized the value of historical works as propaganda'.¹⁰ As such, historical—or, rather, historicised—discourses were brought quite organically into, and formed an integral part of, Lancastrian propaganda. One in particular, that being the nature of Richard's resignation as king, and Henry's role in the process, was especially important, given the conceptual implications it could have on both monarchs' legitimacy. This also held considerable moral authority given its immediate

⁸ E. Powell, 'Lancastrian England', in C. Allmand (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Volume 7: c.1415–c.1500* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 459; Bevan, *Henry IV*, p. 74.

⁹ P. Morgan, 'Henry IV and the Shadow of Richard II', in R. Archer (ed.), *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud, 1995), p. 24.

¹⁰ A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), p. 186.

relevance, and will be considered here as representative of the broader Lancastrian use and abuse of “history”.

On the one hand, we have contemporary and near-contemporary sources representative of Lancastrian depositional dogma. These include “official” governmental documents, such as the parliamentary *Record and Process* of 1399; chronicles, largely monastic and written in the aftermath of the usurpation, from ‘official Lancastrian apologists’, like Thomas Walsingham’s *Chronica Maiora*, the *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, and, tentatively, the secular chronicle of the Henrician courtier Adam of Usk; and other, often more equivocal, anonymous chronicles, like the *Vita Ricardi Secundi* from Evesham, and the *Continuatio Eulogii* (the continuation of the *Eulogium Historiarum*, also known as the *Eulogium*).¹¹

The *Record* of 1399 was produced by the new Lancastrian regime, albeit ostensibly through parliament, and with its ‘deliberately vague and possibly misleading contents’, it is the clearest expression of the ‘official Lancastrian view’, and presents a rather straightforward and convenient narrative of Richard’s resignation.¹² The *Record* recounts, unequivocally, that Richard had, while ‘at liberty’ in Conway, promised to ‘resign and relinquish the crown ... and his royal majesty’.¹³ Walsingham, an ‘acerbically anti-Ricardian chronicler’ from St Albans, echoes this point, stating that Richard was then willing to uphold this promise and, in the Tower on 29 September, ‘with a cheerful countenance’, he ‘renounced and quit his royal powers’.¹⁴ This decision, thus presented as entirely free and comprehensive, was underpinned by his own recognition of his ‘unfitness and inadequacy’ as king, with his ‘notorious faults’—subsequently set out in the *Record*’s thirty-three “deposition articles”—rendering him entirely deserving of

¹¹ Clarke and Galbraith, ‘Deposition’, pp. 137, 142.

¹² B. Wilkinson, ‘The Deposition of Richard II and the Accession of Henry IV’, *English Historical Review*, 54/214 (1939), p. 238; G. Lapsley, ‘The Parliamentary Title of Henry IV’, *English Historical Review*, 49/195 (1934), p. 429.

¹³ Parliament of October 1399, in C. Given-Wilson (ed. & trans.), in C. Given-Wilson, P. Brand, R. E. Horrox, G. Martin, W. M. Ormrod, and J. R. S. Phillips (eds. & trans.), *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England* (Online Version, Leicester, 2005), item 11.

¹⁴ Lapsley, ‘Parliamentary Title’, p. 433; Thomas Walsingham, *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham*, D. Preest (trans.) and J. Clark (ed.) (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 309.

deposition.¹⁵ This portrayal was intentionally uncontroversial, as by indicating that Richard had willingly resigned the crown, Henry could ‘mitigate the ideological discomfort’ concomitant to royal depositions.¹⁶ Henry’s ascension, agreed upon ‘unanimously and without any difficulty or delay’ by the three estates (the clergy, or Lords Spiritual, the nobility, or Lords Temporal, and the Commons) in parliament, in light of his genealogical pedigree, was thus rendered wholly legitimate.¹⁷

On the other hand, those sources which provide alternative versions of events, either by omission or contradiction, and which thus throw the use of this discourse into sharper relief, include: contemporary Cistercian monastic chronicles, namely the *Dieulacres Chronicle*, the *Whalley Chronicle*, and the *Kirkstall Chronicle*; and secular French chronicles, such as Jean Creton’s *Histoire du Roy d’Angleterre Richard* (known as the “Metrical History”) and the *Chronique de la Traïson et Mort de Richart Deux Roy D’angleterre*, which are ‘uniformly favourable’ to Richard.¹⁸

These sources suggest that Richard’s resignation was not so amicable. The Cistercian *Kirkstall Chronicle*, for example, does not record any promises made by Richard at Conway or Flint, and consequently does not imply a free or willing resignation in the Tower. Instead, it does record Henry’s rather equitable distribution of the severed heads of Richard’s councillors after they had been beheaded at Chester; an event which was, undoubtedly, not conducive to the subsequent atmosphere of cordiality between the two at Flint, as alleged by the *Vita*.¹⁹

Other sources contradict the Lancastrian narrative, and, notably, draw upon the idea and act of perjury to add a moral emphasis to their accounts. The

¹⁵ Thomas Walsingham, *The St Albans Chronicle: The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham, Vol. II: 1394–1422*, J. Taylor, W. Childs, and L. Watkiss (eds. & trans.) (Oxford, 2011), p. 163; Parliament of October 1399, item 13.

¹⁶ L. Brown, ‘Continuity and Change in the Parliamentary Justifications of the Fifteenth-Century Usurpations’, in L. Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century VII: Conflicts, Consequences and the Crown in the Late Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 162.

¹⁷ Adam of Usk, *The Chronicle of Adam Usk: 1377–1421*, C. Given-Wilson (ed. & trans.) (Oxford, 1997), p. 69; Parliament of October 1399, item 54.

¹⁸ Lapsley, ‘Parliamentary Title’, p. 433.

¹⁹ 12– Two accounts of Bolingbroke’s progress through England, in C. Given-Wilson (ed. & trans.), *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397–1400: The Reign of Richard II* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 134–5; 11– Bolingbroke’s campaign and his meeting with Richard according to the monk of Evesham, in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 130.

Dieulacres Chronicle and *Whalley Chronicle* in particular leave ‘little doubt’ that Richard’s free resignation was a fabrication.²⁰ *Dieulacres*, as ‘the most fearlessly partisan [to Richard] of the English chronicles’, is a particularly valuable counterpoise to the Lancastrian narrative.²¹ It highlights the duplicity and perjury of Henry’s proctors in securing Richard’s eventual—and evidently not free—resignation. Archbishop Arundel and Henry Percy, the first Earl of Northumberland, at Conway, ‘swore upon the sacrament of the body of Christ ... that King Richard would be permitted to retain his royal power and dominion’, but then at Flint they ‘denied their fine promises’, capturing Richard, ‘and began to treat [him] like a prisoner’.²² Even Usk’s chronicle, valuable for its author’s proximity to the events, as one of the commissioners tasked with legalising Richard’s removal, presents this episode similarly, despite this intimacy with the Lancastrian faction. He, like *Dieulacres*, records the apparent conditionality of Richard’s surrender to Henry through Northumberland and Archbishop Arundel, such that he promised to do so only ‘on condition that his [royal] dignity would be saved’—he would remain king.²³ The *Whalley Chronicle* also highlights Henry’s apparent perjury, stating that he, ‘contrary to the aforesaid oath [to treat Richard appropriately, and not to dethrone him], seized King Richard’ and imprisoned him in the Tower ‘until such time as he would resign to him the crown’.²⁴ The moral emphasis contemporaries placed upon oath-taking and promises, especially those made upon religious artefacts, was significant, and we should not pass over their inclusion in both Lancastrian and non-Lancastrian historical narratives. Perjury was, therefore, seen with considerable distaste, with the perjurer losing their moral authority, and in a king’s case, his legitimacy. A final English document, the memorandum entitled the *Manner of King Richard’s Renunciation*, previously regarded by George Sayles as a ‘Lancastrian narrative’, but now regarded, following Christopher Given-Wilson’s

²⁰ J. Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987), p. 194.

²¹ *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 10.

²² 14– Two Cistercian accounts of the perjury of Henry Bolingbroke, in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 155.

²³ Adam of Usk, *Chronicle*, p. 59.

²⁴ Clarke and Galbraith, ‘Deposition’, p. 144; Two Cistercian accounts of the perjury of Henry Bolingbroke, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 156.

reappraisal, as a more ‘independent account’, presents several clear contradictions to the Lancastrian version.²⁵ Specifically, this document, likely an eyewitness account, according to Given-Wilson, and thus of great value, records with exceptional clarity that Richard ‘would not [resign] under any circumstances’.²⁶ Together, these sources indicate that Richard’s resignation could not be free nor willing, thus rendering it invalid, and the act of perjury committed by Henry’s proctors is associated with him personally by these accounts, thereby compromising his integrity and legitimacy as king.

French chronicles, taking a uniformly ‘pro-Ricardian standpoint’, have been seen, perhaps a bit too emphatically, as ‘the most accurate accounts’ of the deposition.²⁷ Firstly, Creton’s *Metrical History* carries particular value for scholars, especially for events at Conway, owing to Creton’s personal presence at Conway in 1399, as part of his travels in England, and the *History* having been written shortly after, over the winter of 1401–02.²⁸ In this, Creton, like *Dieulacres*, highlights Northumberland’s—and, by association, Henry’s—duplicity and perjury, by stating how he ‘swore upon the body of our Lord’ to convince Richard of his ostensible, but ultimately false, honesty.²⁹ Secondly, the contemporary historian-poet Jean Froissart, despite his superficial inaccuracy with dates and place, similarly contradicts the more general thrust of the Lancastrian narrative, making it clear that, as Richard was ‘imprisoned in the Tower’, ‘it was decided that [he] must give up all his royal prerogatives’.³⁰ Of importance here is the removal of agency from Richard in changes in his own condition. While Froissart acknowledges that Richard

²⁵ Sayles, ‘Three Lancastrian Narratives’, pp. 259–60; C. Given-Wilson, ‘The Manner of King Richard’s Renunciation: A “Lancastrian Narrative”?’ , *English Historical Review*, 108/427 (1993), p. 369.

²⁶ 16– The “Manner of King Richard’s Renunciation”, in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 163.

²⁷ A. Tuck, ‘Henry IV and Europe: A Dynasty’s Search for Recognition’, in R. Britnell and A. Pollard (eds.), *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society* (Stroud, 1995), p. 107; J. Palmer, ‘The Authorship, Date and Historical Value of the French Chronicles on the Lancastrian Revolution: I’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 61/1 (1978), p. 145.

²⁸ *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 7.

²⁹ 13– The betrayal and capture of the king according to Jean Creton, in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 147.

³⁰ Jean Froissart, *Froissart’s Chronicles*, J. Jolliffe (ed. & trans.) (London, 1967), p. 409.

ultimately gave up the crown ‘freely and willingly’, by framing it as a pragmatic recognition of the precarious state of his life in London, we can understand the Lancastrian emphasis on an entirely voluntary process to be a fabrication, divorced from Richard’s actual circumstances.³¹ And thirdly, the *Traïson et Mort* includes a novel episode regarding the Bishop of Carlisle, who apparently made a protest in parliament that Richard had not had a fair trial in person, and that he should, in fact, be brought to parliament ‘to see whether he be willing to relinquish his crown to the duke or not’.³² The possibility of such dissent clearly challenges the perceived validity of the apparently self-evidently free resignation in the Tower. Cumulatively, the accounts recounting the deposition highlight that the Lancastrian historical narrative of Richard’s resignation, with its emphasis on notions of peace, amicability, and moral acceptability, was an important discourse within their propaganda.

We then see that this same discourse was employed in the accounts of the Percy Rebellion, crucially, as a vehicle to challenge Henry’s legitimacy. The Percy “manifesto”, set out by John Hardyng, has been treated and dismissed somewhat unfairly by historians, on the implicit assumption that its author’s own political affiliation, both at the time as a Percy associate, and in later years as a Yorkist, and the potential political expediency it could thus serve, precludes it from being of much use.³³ That the Yorkist version of Hardyng’s chronicle, in which the manifesto is recorded, is not favourable to Henry is well known.³⁴ Yet, while his chronicle was written about 50 years after the Percy Rebellion, and so the specifics of the manifesto have rightly been questioned, it is nevertheless fair to assume that he at least captured the main *ideas* put across in 1403. Even if Hardyng exaggerated how far he ‘knewe [Hotspur’s] entent’, it is not too far removed from his position, as part of Hotspur’s (the son of the rebel Earl of Northumberland) household ‘fro twelve yere of age’, to suggest that his account is based on the contemporary political

³¹ Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 413.

³² 18– The protest of the Bishop of Carlisle, in *Chronicles of the Revolution.*, p. 191.

³³ John Hardyng, *The Chronicle of Iohn Hardyng*, H. Ellis (ed. & trans.) (London, 1812), pp. 351–4.

³⁴ Bevan, *Henry IV*, p. 75.

Zeitgeist as he experienced and internalised it.³⁵ This manifesto is, therefore, highly informative, and his chronicle not entirely the ‘most untrustworthy quarter possible’ it has been dismissed as.³⁶

Firstly, the manifesto flatly contradicts the Lancastrian narrative of 1399, which can be interpreted as a method of legitimising their resistance to Henry. While the manifesto acknowledges that Richard had ‘resigned the kingdoms of England and France’, it stresses that this only came after being coerced ‘under threat of death’.³⁷ Hardyng’s verse similarly states that the resignation had been made only ‘vnder dures ... in fere of his life’.³⁸ It is thus implied that the throne which Henry claimed was not vacant, because Richard’s resignation was invalid, and his consequent ascension was thereby rendered illegitimate.

Secondly, the manifesto also challenges Henry’s legitimacy through the idea of perjury, as the *Record* did with Richard’s. An oath, sworn ‘upon the holy gospels’, was apparently made by Henry at Doncaster in 1399, with rumours elsewhere of one made at Knaresborough.³⁹ Henry had apparently sworn to ‘claime no more but his mothers heritage, His fathers landes, and his wifes in good entent’, and to ensure that ‘Richard would remain king for the term of his life’, and retain his royal prerogatives.⁴⁰ Richard’s enforced resignation, his unsavoury death, and Henry’s seizure of the crown thus violated this oath, rendering Henry ‘perjured and false’.⁴¹ Yet, *Dieulacres* does refer to an oath sworn by Henry, on the relics of Bridlington, that he would not seek the Crown; whether this was made at Doncaster is unclear, but perhaps the perjurious element thus suggested may actually be less a fabrication than historians have thought.⁴² That Henry made some sort of oath in 1399, at

³⁵ John Hardyng, *Chronicle*, p. 351.

³⁶ Lapsley, ‘Parliamentary Title’, p. 440.

³⁷ 18– The Protest of the Percies, in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 194.

³⁸ John Hardyng, *Chronicle*, p. 353

³⁹ The Protest of the Percies, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 194.

⁴⁰ John Hardyng, *Chronicle*, p. 350; The Protest of the Percies, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 194.

⁴¹ The Protest of the Percies, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 195.

⁴² Unknown Author, *Chronicle of Dieulacres Abbey, 1381–1403*, in M. Clark and V. Galbraith (eds. & trans.),

‘The Deposition of Richard II’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 14/1 (1930), p. 179.

Doncaster, Knaresborough, or elsewhere, is probably true—perhaps, as has been suggested, even ‘inherently plausible’.⁴³ While the Doncaster oath may still be dismissed as a politically-expedient ‘forgery’, it does nevertheless show that the idea of perjury certainly had a legitimating or de-legitimizing effect, and that it was employed as a rhetorical device by the political opposition during the events of both 1399 and 1403 for those ends.⁴⁴ Overall, what we find in the Percy manifesto is a commentary upon Henry’s current legitimacy as king, based on a revised account of the events which made him so.

The rebels of 1405 levelled charges against Henry that ‘closely echoed’ those of both 1399 and 1403.⁴⁵ They were previously, and unfairly, dismissed as ‘naïve nonsense’, highly divorced from political reality.⁴⁶ But it is now understood that, actually, they ‘reflected political reality and resonated with those who read them’, which throws into sharper relief how they might have actually reflected perceptions of Henry’s legitimacy.⁴⁷ The manifesto ascribed to Archbishop Scrope and his followers is more widely and variably recorded than that of 1403. Walsingham’s version is usually seen as the most accurate, with historians like Given-Wilson taking for granted that he had ‘translated [the articles] almost word for word, and ... inserted them here as they were expressed, without any bias’.⁴⁸ Yet, it is likely, upon analysis of alternative sources, that he actually consciously obscured certain historical narratives, which naturally throws into doubt his professed accuracy. In particular, there is an alternative version of Scrope’s manifesto, which has been in print for some time, but has been largely unused by scholars, although it is unclear

⁴³ J. Sherborne, ‘Perjury and the Lancastrian Revolution of 1399’, *Welsh Historical Review*, 14/1 (1988), p. 218.

⁴⁴ J. Dahmus, ‘Thomas Arundel and the Baronial Party under Henry IV’, *Albion*, 16/2 (1984), p. 138.

⁴⁵ Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, p. 497.

⁴⁶ P. McNiven, ‘The Betrayal of Archbishop Scrope’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 54/1 (1971), p. 185.

⁴⁷ D. Biggs, ‘Archbishop Scrope’s Manifesto of 1405: “naïve nonsense” or reflections of political reality?’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 33/4 (2007), p. 358.

⁴⁸ C. Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* (London, 2017), p. 274; Thomas Walsingham, *Saint Albans Chronicle*, p. 445.

why this is the case.⁴⁹ This longer version, valuable for its vociferous contrariness to Walsingham's, condemns the Lancastrian faction as '*invasores, destructores et proditores* (invaders, destroyers, and traitors)', a turn of phrase which would be highly out of place in Walsingham's chronicles.⁵⁰

The narrative of Richard's deposition thus resurfaces in 1405 in a similarly contentious manner. The fourth article of the longer manifesto states that Henry had captured Richard and forced him to resign the crown '*per metum mortis* (under fear of death)', thereby making the invalidity of his resignation self-evident, and Henry's conduct morally questionable.⁵¹ The manifesto also comments upon the nature of Richard's death. Article five makes it clear that Henry had sent Richard to Pontefract and had him shamefully murdered there, after fifteen days of indignities.⁵² This directly contrasts the nascent Lancastrian narrative of Richard's death, as is represented in the *Annales Ricardi Secundi*: Richard was, after hearing of the death of John Holland, the Duke of Exeter and a close and longstanding friend, apparently 'so overwhelmed with grief ... that he wished to put an end to his life by refusing all food. So thoroughly did he starve himself'.⁵³

The theme of perjury returns again in 1405. The second article highlights that Henry had returned to England '*contra juramentum* (against his oath)', although which oath this refers to is not made clear, and on the ostensible premise of recovering only his '*hæreditatem paternam* (paternal inheritance)', which retrospectively exacerbates the detestable nature of his conspiracy, given that he then seized the throne instead.⁵⁴ Clearly, the idea of perjury was one eagerly seized upon by political opposition in 1399, 1403, and 1405, and was used explicitly as a

⁴⁹ Unknown Author, I. Articuli venerabilis domini Richardi Scrope, archiepiscopi Eboracensis, contra Henricum Quartum, intrusorem regni Angliae, in J. Raine (ed.), *The Historians of the Church of York and Its Archbishops, Vol. II* (London, 1886), pp. 292–304.

⁵⁰ Articuli contra Henricum Quartum, p. 294. All translations are the author's, unless otherwise stated.

⁵¹ Articuli contra Henricum Quartum, p. 297.

⁵² Articuli contra Henricum Quartum, p. 298.

⁵³ 3– Death of Richard II, in J. Flemming (ed. & trans.), *England under the Lancastrians* (London, 1921), p. 5.

⁵⁴ Articuli contra Henricum Quartum, p. 295.

de-legitimizing tool to simultaneously challenge the monarch and justify their resistance.

The events of Richard's deposition were therefore a highly contested issue, and as a whole formed a key historical discourse within both Lancastrian propaganda and that produced by subsequent anti-Lancastrian political dissenters. It was made ever more relevant and useful through the implications it had on the legitimacy of both monarchs' kingships; a fact which underwrites its use across the period. To obscure any resistance on Richard's behalf, and any intimation of Lancastrian misconduct, as favourable narratives, like the *Record*, do, is to provide Henry with a greater degree of legitimacy. To discuss the complications of Richard's resignation, in particular the element of coercion and Lancastrian perjury involved, as unfavourable sources, like the French chronicles, do, is to naturally throw into question the validity of the deposition, the vacancy of the throne, and the legitimacy of Henry's ascension and assumption of kingship as an office.

Political Theory and Depositional Propaganda

The second and third discourses considered by this study relate to the diachronic ideological frameworks in which the political community operated, one of which gained an amplified synchronic political currency through its deployment in 1399: the concept of kingship. It is probably not too ambitious of Mark Ormrod to suggest that kingship was the one political issue on which 'almost everyone living' in England had an opinion'.⁵⁵ With this heterogeneity notwithstanding, the common denominator across the various theories of kingship was the king's centrality to the political system, and his threefold purpose: to provide for 'the defence of the realm', which had a financial resonance; to 'maintain internal order' through judicial means; and to provide a general 'directive force' in the government of the realm, moderated

⁵⁵ W. Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England 1300–1450* (London, 1995), p. 61.

by his moral qualities.⁵⁶ The currency of these ideas stemmed from their elaboration in the “mirrors for princes”, a didactic genre of advice literature extolling the virtues of the ideal ruler.⁵⁷ In particular, the theory of kingship reflected in the *Record and Process* was influenced by medieval writers of political theory, such as Henry of Bracton, John of Salisbury, and Giles of Rome.⁵⁸ Kingship was largely a public performance, and one which needed to be upheld to retain royal legitimacy. For the purposes of this study, in the two discourses discussed in this section, specific reference is made to the king’s expected financial conduct, and his keeping of royal counsel. What we find in Lancastrian sources, when they are examined using these two discursual frameworks, is critical commentary on Richard’s performance as king, and the inference that Henry would perform better. It will emerge that, as John Watts has suggested, ‘the public principles and practices’ of the medieval political system were, in fact, ‘quite as real as the private aims of its participants’.⁵⁹

The interwoven deployment of these two discourses is revealed in the *Record*. The first article states that Richard had granted the crown’s ‘goods and possessions ... to unworthy persons’, thus ‘dissipating them carelessly’, and ‘imposing taxes and other weighty and insupportable burdens on the people without cause’.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the inclusion of the coronation oath in the *Record* seems to bear witness to the emphasis the propagandists placed upon the oath as a touchstone for their subsequent critical commentary on the perjury inherent in Richard’s exercise of kingship.⁶¹ Yet, this aspect of the *Record* is often ignored or treated as a formulaic inclusion, isolated from the charges it quite clearly underpins. It is made very clear in the *Record* that Richard had ‘rashly [violated] the aforesaid

⁵⁶ J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 21; Brown, ‘Continuity and Change’, p. 158; J. Dunbabin, ‘Government’, in J. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c.350–c.1450* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 483.

⁵⁷ K. Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England* (Abingdon, 2013), p. 17.

⁵⁸ J. Theilmann, ‘Caught between Political Theory and Political Practice: “The Record and Process of the Deposition of Richard II”’, *History of Political Thought*, 25/4 (2004), p. 606.

⁵⁹ Watts, *Henry VI*, p. 14.

⁶⁰ Parliament of October 1399, item 18.

⁶¹ Parliament of October 1399, item 16.

oath'.⁶² Perjury was an unavoidable and, in the event, quite useful, idea underwriting Richard's deposition.

The Problem of Financing Dynastic Legitimacy

Alongside the increasing emphasis on the more general 'responsibilities of the king in domestic government', the late-medieval king was increasingly expected to rule in such a way as to enhance the material well-being of his subjects, which meant a reduction in public taxation, non-interference with his subjects' property rights and inheritance, and a reduction in royal profligacy and unnecessary expenditure, especially in the household.⁶³ Moreover, Aristotelian political thought, as expressed in Thomas Aquinas's and Ptolemy of Lucca's "mirrors", had held for some time that, should the king not rule in this economical way, he fulfilled 'the criterion of tyrannical behaviour', and could be deposed.⁶⁴ In several ways, therefore, 'financial rectitude was the paradigm of good kingship'.⁶⁵ In passing judgement on Richard, the Lancastrians could not avoid commenting on his fiscal misconduct, which conveniently gave them the conceptual scope to depose him.

The *Record* sets out Richard's financial misconduct quite clearly. Despite the fact that Richard could 'live honestly from the proceeds of his realm' and 'the patrimony pertaining to his crown', he 'imposed so many burdens of grants [taxation] on his subjects ... almost every year', resulting in 'the impoverishment of his realm'.⁶⁶ He also 'cunningly' deceived his people 'to acquire their goods for himself' through the infamous "blank charters", which were charters given to royal agents that allowed them to fill in as they saw fit and in such a way as to obtain additional revenue for the crown, and which raised 'great sums of money' as a result.⁶⁷ Indeed, the blank charters raised as much as £30,000, not an insignificant

⁶² Parliament of October 1399, item 26.

⁶³ Ormrod, *Political Life*, pp. 64–5; Theilmann, 'Record and Process', p. 604.

⁶⁴ C. Barron, 'The Tyranny of Richard II', in M. Carlin and J. Rosenthal (eds.), *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron* (Kalamazoo, 2017), p. 3.

⁶⁵ G. Harriss, 'Introduction: The Exemplar of Kingship', in G. Harriss (ed.), *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship* (Oxford, 1985), p. 15.

⁶⁶ Parliament of October 1399, item 32.

⁶⁷ Parliament of October 1399, item 38.

sum, and one which, when seen to have been used inappropriately, was bound to raise criticism.⁶⁸ Richard is further condemned for still finding it necessary to also raise loans from ‘a great number of lords and others’, and, importantly, ‘not [fulfilling] this promise of his’ to repay them.⁶⁹

Given that Richard did not pay the money raised, the charge, as Caroline Barron asserts, is ‘completely substantiated’.⁷⁰ It is unsurprising, therefore, to find that Walsingham highlights how ‘the king was very rich’, undoubtedly a result of his intentional ‘measures to impoverish all the rich and poor’ to ‘amass riches’ for himself.⁷¹ While the extent of Richard’s actual wealth can be brought into question, it is the *idea* that he had such ill-gotten wealth which provided the grounds for such moralistic condemnation. To drive the point home, the *Record* states that this ‘superfluous wealth’ was spent for the sole purpose of the ‘ostentation and pomp and vainglory of his name’.⁷² Richard’s avarice, profligacy, and his misappropriation of public funds are thus laid bare. Beyond the *Record*, the anonymous, anti-Ricardian author of the continuation of the *Eulogium Historiarum*, who Antonia Gransden suggests to be a Franciscan friar from Canterbury, provides an account of Richard’s ‘extravagance’ and ‘life of debauchery’ which is uniquely descriptive.⁷³ Apparently, ‘no one in [the Books of] Kings was more glorious’ than Richard, who, seeking to ‘outdo all his predecessors in riches and to rival the glory of Solomon’, ‘accumulated inordinately’ vast wealth and ostentatious symbols of it: ‘treasures and jewels ... kingly robes and adornments ... the splendour of his table ... the palaces that he built’.⁷⁴ In light of where the money for this was perceived to have come from, such conspicuous self-aggrandisement was not in line with the expectations of the monarch. The only conclusion that the unwitting reader can reach, and one which the propaganda intended to encourage, was that Richard’s

⁶⁸ Barron, ‘Tyranny’, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Parliament of October 1399, item 31.

⁷⁰ Barron, ‘Tyranny’, p. 7.

⁷¹ Thomas Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 145.

⁷² Parliament of October 1399, items 38, 32.

⁷³ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 158; Unknown Author, *Continuatio Eulogii: The Continuation of the Eulogium Historiarum*, C. Given-Wilson (ed. & trans.) (Oxford, 2019), p. 91.

⁷⁴ Unknown Author, *Eulogium*, p. 95.

financial conduct was simply incongruous to the established expectations of the monarch. He was categorically not ruling in the material interests of his subjects, nor was he applying the material wealth of the realm towards proper ends.

As a component of kingship, financial conduct was also important to the rebels of 1403, and we find a similar condemnation of Henry through this discourse, which was further exacerbated by its interweaving with the act of perjury. The rebels claimed that Henry swore, as part of the Doncaster oath, that while he lived, he 'would not permit any tenths ... or fifteenths ... or any other tallages' to be levied without parliamentary agreement.⁷⁵ The fact that he had apparently done so in the interim thus rendered him 'perjured and false', a claim compounded by the accusation that he had requested them 'under threat from [his] royal majesty' in suspiciously Ricardian fashion.⁷⁶ This is notwithstanding the fact that Henry's promise of parliamentary assent for taxation was essentially an affirmation of existing practice. Of importance here, though, is that Henry was seemingly providing a blueprint, defined in opposition to Richard's, for his own fiscal governance, against which he is, in 1403, clearly being judged. Henry's wider financial conduct was also brought into question by the *Eulogium*, which states that, prior to the battle at Shrewsbury, Henry was rebuked by Hotspur, who said: 'you rule worse than [Richard] did ... you despoil the kingdom, yet you always say you have nothing ... you never make payments, [and] you do not maintain your household'.⁷⁷ These accusations—or at least, the ideas which the *Eulogium* intimates as relevant in 1403—are akin to those voiced in 1399 to condemn Richard's financial misconduct as king, and are fundamentally based on the same conceptual framework.

Henry's general promise to 'live of his own' in 1399 meant that his subsequent financial demands were invariably portrayed as a 'breach of the king's faith', and this is also apparent in 1405.⁷⁸ The third article of Scrope's manifesto

⁷⁵ The Protest of the Percies, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 195.

⁷⁶ The Protest of the Percies, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 195.

⁷⁷ Unknown Author, *Eulogium*, p. 117.

⁷⁸ S. Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV', *Past & Present*, 166 (2000), p. 50.

claims that Henry had promised a general freedom from tithes and certain taxes, declaring that clerical tenths (*'decimationes ecclesiasticas in clero'*), lay fifteenths (*'quintam-decimam in populo'*), and certain indirect taxes on cloth and wine (*'panni ... et vini'*), would either be left unrequested, or reduced.⁷⁹ Despite this, the manifesto continues, Henry had continued to demand money from the realm, and article nine highlights the great damage and financial extortion which the country was thus subject to, such that there is now no money at all.⁸⁰ Henry was clearly not living of his own. Indeed, Douglas Biggs has highlighted that, considering the substantial taxation between 1401–05, this issue 'reflected no small amount of political reality'.⁸¹ One of their aims, therefore, was to liberate the realm from these *'exactione, extortione, et injusta solutione* (exactions, extortions, and unjust solutions).⁸² Even in Walsingham's version, the first article admits that a series of 'insupportable burdens' had been placed on the clergy, and his third similarly posits 'extortionate and oppressive demands' made on the lay members of society.⁸³ The *Eulogium*, too, recounts that Scrope referred to the 'excessive levies of tolls and customs', and the 'unendurable taxes' levied on the 'clergy and people', but does so from a more directly challenging perspective, without the scepticism inherent in Walsingham.⁸⁴ Clearly, Henry's financial conduct, or misconduct, as king was highly topical in 1405, and could not be refuted regardless of the sympathies of the various authors. In such a conducive ideological context it was only logical that, across all the instances of rebellion under investigation, this could be made into a vehicle for de-legitimation and rebel justification.

⁷⁹ *Articuli contra Henricum Quartum*, p. 296.

⁸⁰ *Articuli contra Henricum Quartum*, pp. 302–3.

⁸¹ Biggs, 'Scrope's Manifesto', p. 364.

⁸² *Articuli contra Henricum Quartum*, p. 304.

⁸³ Thomas Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 445.

⁸⁴ Unknown Author, *Eulogium*, p. 133.

The Quality of Royal Counsel

While the king had public financial responsibilities, this was an age of ‘overwhelmingly personal kingship’, so other aspects of royal conduct, and how they reflected upon the personal moral calibre of the king, naturally influenced his perceived legitimacy.⁸⁵ Because rulership was seen as an ‘ethical act’, the moral quality of those advising the king in his household, his council, or elsewhere was of vital importance, as they might influence his character, and his suitability for kingship.⁸⁶ Indeed, in moments of political crisis, the royal household was never ‘far from the centre of the stage’, and those who complained about its size and extravagance in these years indeed ‘had good reason to do so’.⁸⁷ It was also a well-established belief in the “mirrors” that, as John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* exemplifies, it was vital that a king should ‘act on the counsel of wise men’, without favouritism.⁸⁸ Taken together, the increasing distinction between the king’s two bodies (that ‘dichotomous concept of rulership’), an emphasis on the king’s personal attributes and the role of royal counsel in determining these qualities, and the popular beliefs in the “mirrors”, meant that the personality of the king, and how this was indicated by the perceived quality of his counsellors, was a ‘natural and proper target’ for those questioning monarchical legitimacy.⁸⁹

Royal favourites were seen as particularly problematic insofar as they could ‘dominate the king’s person and manipulate his prerogative’.⁹⁰ A susceptibility to this was associated with a lack of legitimacy as king, as had been the case in the preceding reigns of John I, Henry III, and especially Edward II. Richard, in keeping his favourites, like John and Thomas Holland, as his principal counsellors, which was a natural and logical connection to make, ignored the advice of his ‘natural

⁸⁵ L. Born, ‘The Perfect Prince: A Study in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Ideals’, *Speculum*, 3/4 (1928), p. 504.

⁸⁶ Dunbabin, ‘Government’, p. 483.

⁸⁷ C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King’s Affinity: Service, Politics and Finance in England 1360–1413* (London, 1986), pp. 23, 41.

⁸⁸ Born, ‘Perfect Prince’, p. 473.

⁸⁹ E. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Oxford, 1957), p. 497; C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c.1437–1509* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 40.

⁹⁰ Lewis, *Kingship*, p. 32.

counsellors’—his wider nobility, who were themselves ‘answerable for the good governance of the realm’—choosing instead, we can assume, those upstarts or the *duketti* he so favoured.⁹¹ Indeed, the belief that such men should naturally surround the king was similarly well-established. Giles of Rome’s *De Regimine Principum*, written in the mid-thirteenth century, emphasises that the wisest counsel of all came from the prince’s nobility.⁹² The *Record* incorporates this idea by highlighting how Richard had ‘frequently rebuked and reprimanded’ his faithful counsellors—the nobility and justices—in great councils, such that they ‘did not dare to speak the truth’.⁹³ Moreover, the unsavoury qualities of youth, such as impulsivity, ignorance, and vanity, were also associated with Richard’s counsellors, exacerbating their malign influence. Usk makes it quite clear that Richard had ‘callow counsellors’, and, like ‘Rehoboam, the son of Solomon’, followed ‘the counsel of youths’.⁹⁴ While Richard could not lose the Kingdom of Israel by following such poor-quality counsel, he certainly did lose the Kingdom of England.

Royal favouritism was also associated with a parasitic drain on royal finances. As highlighted above, in the *Record and Process*, the first article against Richard accuses him of granting possessions to ‘unworthy persons’—in other words, his favourites, some of whom had been granted the confiscated lands of the Lords Appellant, notably those of the Earl of Arundel and the Duke of Gloucester, after Richard had them killed in 1397.⁹⁵ To compromise royal finances in this quite unprofitable way, for the benefit of favourites was, naturally, to throw into doubt the king’s wisdom—the ‘root of all kingly rule’—and to present it in such a way as to provide a deeper resonance with the landed classes, many of whom naturally lost

⁹¹ The term *duketti* refers to a small number of magnates who were close to Richard, and who were granted newly-minted dukedoms. For example, Thomas de Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, was promoted to Duke of Norfolk. These were seen by the wider, more established nobility with some distaste. The *duketti* were, in a sense, an unpopular *nouveau riche*; G. Harriss, ‘Political Society and the Growth of Government in Late Medieval England’, *Past & Present*, 138 (1993), pp. 33, 38.

⁹² C. Briggs, *Giles of Rome’s De Regimine Principum: Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275–c. 1525* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 61.

⁹³ Parliament of October 1399, item 40.

⁹⁴ Adam of Usk, *Chronicle*, p. 77.

⁹⁵ Parliament of October 1399, item 18.

out from Richard's narrow patronage.⁹⁶ A lack of wisdom, it is construed, removes legitimacy from a king.

The issue of royal counsel naturally resurfaced in 1403. The Middle English continuation of the *Brut*, and the *Eulogium* it drew heavily from for this period, posits a conversation between Northumberland and Henry. Here, Northumberland said that Henry had 'made promys forto be rewlid be our counsel', yet despite receiving 'great sums every year', Henry '[has] nothing', and '[pays] for nothing', because he was not taking wise counsel from one of his natural counsellors.⁹⁷ The tendency among pro-Lancastrian chroniclers to dismiss, or at least minimise, the historical accusations and claims made by the rebels in 1403, and to frame the rebellion through these ideological discourses, is most clear in Walsingham's works. From the start, he points out that the letters sent out by the Percys contained pure fabrications, made solely 'to excuse their conspiracy', that is to say, their contents were false or unfounded.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, what he does say about these letters is revealing. The letters presented the rebels' aims in fairly simple terms: they sought to 'correct misrule in the state', and to 'establish wise counsellors'.⁹⁹ The equally favourable *Annales* similarly records that the rebels sought 'the reform of public administration, and the appointment of wise counsellors'.¹⁰⁰ Given the *Annales'* subsequent references to the rents, taxes, and tallages received by the king '*pro salva regni custodia*' (meaning, essentially, for the defence of the realm) having been '*atque consumpta* (improperly wasted and consumed)', we can assume that such misrule related to financial matters, or at least the financial implications of political decisions, as in Henry's choice of counsellors.¹⁰¹ To a degree, however, these were

⁹⁶ Harriss, 'Introduction', p. 13

⁹⁷ Unknown Author, *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II., Henry IV., Henry V., and Henry VI. Written Before the Year 1471*, J. Davies (ed. & trans.) (London, 1856), p. 27; Unknown Author, *Eulogium*, p. 115.

⁹⁸ Thomas Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 359.

⁹⁹ Thomas Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 359.

¹⁰⁰ 10– Rebellion of the Percies, 1403, in *England under the Lancastrians*, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ Unknown Author, *Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti, Regum Angliæ*, in H. Ellis (ed.), *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani, III. Johannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneforde, Monachorum S. Albani, Necnon Quorundam Anonymorum, Chronica et Annales, Regnantibus Henrico Tertio, Edwardo Primo, Edwardo Secundo, Ricardi Secundo, et Henrico Quarto* (London, 1866), p. 362.

accusations that could be made against every medieval monarch, and so their inclusion is not necessarily a direct and specific challenge to Henry's particular legitimacy. What is interesting, however, is the acknowledgement that many magnates 'praised the quick perception' of the rebels, and 'applauded [their] insolent behaviour'; to refute entirely the shortcomings of Henry would apparently be too much even for Walsingham.¹⁰²

This tendency resurfaces in Walsingham's account of Scrope's rebellion. His articles refer to the 'squandering of funds, namely expenses claimed for private individual advancement', but he obscures who these individuals are, and does not bring Henry's conduct into question.¹⁰³ The *Annales*, too, speaks of 'uncontrolled extravagance' as one of the rebels' grievances, but does not associate this with Henry specifically.¹⁰⁴ But, when compared with the *Eulogium* and the *Brut*, which are less favourable, it becomes clear that these references could mean little other than the perceived self-aggrandisement of the royal household. The *Eulogium* makes it clear that those who were 'enriching themselves' at the expense of others were 'the greedy and rapacious councillors who surround the king'.¹⁰⁵ The existence of 'suche covetous men' was, as suggested above, both a pragmatic financial problem and, in relation to the king, a moral one, such that the rebels of 1405 were eager to draw upon it to justify their dissent.¹⁰⁶

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Ideological discourses associated Richard with fixed and homogenous assumptions, which were then used to evaluate his kingship and prevent flexible thinking upon it.¹⁰⁷ Although the thirty-three charges in the *Record* were, pragmatically speaking, a 'Lancastrian political manifesto', they were also, in John Theilmann's words, a 'mid-range work of political theory', and thus provided both a

¹⁰² Thomas Walsingham, *Chronica Maiora*, p. 326; Thomas Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 361.

¹⁰³ Thomas Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 443.

¹⁰⁴ 16– Rebellion in the North, 1405, in *England under the Lancastrians*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Unknown Author, *Eulogium*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁶ Unknown Author, *An English Chronicle*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷ Nuttal, *Lancastrian Kingship*, p. 10.

justification and normative standard for Henry's kingship.¹⁰⁸ In combination with the obvious financial implications of Richard's failed kingship, the corollaries of Richard's keeping of poor counsel and favourites, which included alienating his nobility, damaging his patrimony, and compromising his judicial impartiality, were inherently de-legitimising, amplified by the idea of perjury, and employed by the Lancastrian faction to justify their actions. While Richard's failings as king had evidently led to the breakdown of the Ricardian *status quo*, it was beyond Henry's ability to close the 'Pandora's box of disorder' once it had been opened in this way.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

In 1399, Henry IV and his Lancastrian faction had 'perpetrated an act of political unorthodoxy of truly monumental proportions'.¹¹⁰ In this essay, the pivotal role played by the propaganda which sought to justify this unorthodoxy, and its consequent influence on the political opposition faced by Henry IV, has been laid bare. Rather than being constrained to 1399 by its own incredibility, the language of Lancastrian propaganda, characterised by its emphasis on monarchical legitimacy, actually functioned as a set of discursal vehicles through which subsequent political opposition could articulate their grievances. Moreover, it encouraged contemporary and near-contemporary chroniclers across the Lancastrian-Ricardian spectrum to rationalise this opposition through similar discursal frameworks. Henry's legitimacy as king, especially *vis-à-vis* Richard, was, at least among contemporary political agents and historical commentators, *the* subject for discussion at the turn of the fifteenth century.

¹⁰⁸ G. Dodd, 'Conflict or Consensus: Henry IV and Parliament, 1399–1406', in T. Thornton (ed.), *Social Attitudes and Political Structures in the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud, 2000), p. 135; Theilmann, 'Record and Process', p. 617

¹⁰⁹ A. Gross, 'K. B. McFarlane and the Determinists: The Fallibilities of the English Kings, c. 1399–c.1520', in R. Britnell and A. Pollard (eds.), *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society* (Stroud, 1995), p. 52.

¹¹⁰ P. McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby* (Woodbridge, 1987), p. 69.

The discourses used by the regime provided outlets for rhetorical moralisations, social and political commentary, and for the expression of political dissent. Their value was not so much in their factual plausibility, but in the possibility that people could be persuaded that they were true. While it is true to state that ‘Henry had raised great expectations in 1399 and had disappointed them’, it is more informative to explain why those specific expectations were raised, what purpose this had served, why Henry was seen to have disappointed them, and how this apparent failure contributed to the political dynamic of these years.¹¹¹

Caroline Barron wrote that, ‘Nearly six hundred years after Richard’s deposition, it is time, finally, to rid ourselves of the pervasive influence of the propaganda of the House of Lancaster’.¹¹² However, this essay has shown that we are not entirely ready, or entirely justified, in doing so. There is much more to be said about Lancastrian propaganda, but only if we take it and apply it to the politics of Henry’s reign, rather than just to Richard’s. What emerges is a rather different perspective on this fractious reign, one in which ideas, concepts, and language have a much greater role than they have hitherto been assigned. Ultimately, language frames our social and political existence, and puts into identifiable shape both the abstract and the physical; but it can also be used to change this existence, to alter our perspective on reality, and the evidence of the early-fifteenth century bears witness to this.

¹¹¹ K. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford, 1972), p. 78.

¹¹² C. Barron, ‘The Deposition of Richard II’, p. 96.

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