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Middle English romance, attitudes to kingship and political crisis, c.l272-c.l350

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Middle English romance, attitudes to kingship and political crisis, *c.*1272-*c.*1350

by

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Abstract.

Middle English romance, attitudes to kingship and political crisis, *c.*1272-*c.*1350

Karen Lucas

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This study used mostly printed sources to investigate wider attitudes to kingship than those of the political philosophers and to consider their implications for the understanding of the political crises of 1297, 1326 and 1340-41.

Middle English romances are suitable for determining more 'popular' attitudes to kingship because of their subject matter, the length of texts, their dissemination and their receptivity to contemporary opinion. These 'popular' attitudes were those belonging to the audience of the romances, being the large and increasingly politically influential group comprising knights and gentry.

The romances contain substantial images and concepts of kingship, revealing strong expectations of the king in the areas of justice, good government and defence. They reveal an understanding of questions such as the nature of royal power and the king's position with regard to will and law. The perception of kingship which animated the relationship between king and people was shown to be that of familiar social bonds.

The images of kingship found in the romances are supported by those in a second type of popular literature, the legendary histories of Britain. The romance images provide legitimate evidence for the attitudes to kingship of knights and gentry. They are both representative of the opinions of this social group and capable of influencing the opinions of the people who had contact with the romances.

Edward I was familiar with the attitudes of his people towards kingship and he appealed to these extensively to gain support for his requests for military service, money and supplies in 1297. The deposition of Edward II in 1326 showed royal opposition to be equally at ease in appealing to 'popular' attitudes to generate public support for the rebellion. The attitudes also created a receptive background for the removal of the king. In 1340-41 Edward III and his opponent Archbishop Stratford appealed to royal subjects' attitudes on kingship in order to try to achieve their practical and political aims. 'Popular' attitudes towards kingship became strengthened by association with particular kings and events.

No part of this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university. The work described is my own except where duly acknowledged.

To my parents, my sister Joanne and to Niall.

And it is wisdom for to wytten,

þe state of þe land, & haf it wryten,

what manere of folk first it wan,

& of what kynde it first began;

And gude it is for many thynges

for to here þe dedis of kynges,

whilk were foles, & whilk were wyse,

& whilk of þam couthe most quantyse,

and whilk did wrong, & whilk ryght,

& whilk maynten[e]d pes & fyght.

Of þare dedes sall be my sawe;

& what tyme, & of what lawe

- Robert Mannyng, *The Story of England.*

Contents

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I am very grateful to Professor Michael Prestwich for all his help throughout my study and for his comments on the earlier drafts of this thesis.

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List of Tables

Abbreviations

AA	*Amis and Amiloun*, ed. M. Leach, EETS, OS 233 (1937).
Alex. A	*Þe Gestes of þe Worþi King and Emperour, Alisaunder of Macedoine, The Romance of William of Palerne*, ed. W. W. Skeat, EETS, ES 1,3, 4 (1867).
Alex. B	*Alexander and Dindimus*, ed. W. W. Skeat, EETS, ES 31 (1878)
AM	*Of Arthour and of Merlin*, ed. O. D. Macrae-Gibson, EETS, OS 268, 279 (1973, 1979).
ANTS	Anglo-Norman Text Society.
BIHR	*Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research.*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library.*
BL	British Library.
CCR	*Calendar of Close Rolls.*
Cal. Pap. Reg.	*Calendar of Papal Registers.*
CPR	*Calendar of Patent Rolls.*
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography.*
Documents 1297-98	*Documents Illustrating the Crisis of 1297-98 in England*, ed. M. Prestwich, Camden Society, Fourth Series 24 (1980),
EETS, OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series.
EETS, ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series.
EHR	*English Historical Review.*
FB	*Floris and Blancheflour, Middle English Metrical Romances*, eds. W. H. French and C. B. Hale (New York, 1930).
Foedera	*Foedera, conventiones, litterae et cuiuscunque generis acta publica*, ed T. Rymer, Record Commission (1816).
HC	*Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*, ed. M. Mills, MET, 20 (Heidelberg, 1988).
KA	*Kyng Alisaunder*, ed. G. V. Smithers, EETS, OS 227, 237 (1952, 1957).
KH	*King Horn: A Middle English Romance*, ed. J. Hall (Oxford, 1901).
KT	*The King of Tars*, ed. J. Perryman, MET, 12 (Heidelberg, 1980).

LLF	*Lay le Freine*, *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. D. B. Sands (Reprinted Exeter, 1993).
LPB	*Le Petit Bruit*, by Rauf de Boun, ed. D. B. Tyson, ANTS, Plain Text Series 4 (1987).
Manual	*A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, eds. J. B. Severs and A. E. Hartung (New Haven, Connecticut, 1968, 1975-).
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*.
MET	Middle English Texts.
OR	*Otuel and Roland, Firumbras and Otuel and Roland*, ed. M. I. O'Sullivan, EETS, OS 198 (1935).
Parl. Writs	*Parliamentary Writs and Writs of Military Summons*, ed. F. Palgrave (1830).
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.
PRO	Public Record Office.
Rot. Parl.	*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, Record Commission (1783).
RV	*Roland and Vernagu, The English Charlemagne Romances Part IV*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage, EETS, ES 37 (1881).
SMC	*An Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*, ed. E. Zettl, EETS, OS 196 (1935).
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*.
YG	*Ywain and Gawain*, eds. A. B. Friedman and N. T. Harrington, EETS, OS 254 (1964).

Introduction.

The 'long thirteenth century' has usually been seen in terms of a changing relationship between king, crown and people. Discussion has often focused on the issues thrown up by the many political crises during this time and on the origins and meanings of any constitutional developments arising from them. To help in the understanding of these developments, such discussion has focused on contemporary thoughts on kingship, in areas such as the basis of the relationship between king and people, the king's position in regard to his crown, the functional role of the king and the question of his fallibility, as well as concepts of tyranny and uselessness and the nature of royal power.

Fortunately many contemporary writings touching kingship have survived to aid this task. Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum*, Justinian's *Corpus iuris civilis*, *Code* and *Digest* and the commentaries of Laurentius Hispanus, Huguccio of Pisa, Accursius, Baldus of Perugia and Bartolus of Sasso Ferrato provide but a few of the viewpoints to kingship from Roman and canon law. The *De legibus et consuetudinibus angliae* by 'Bracton', *Fleta* and the *Mirror of Justices* supply additional legal and pseudo-legal points of view on kings. The *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury, the letters of Robert Grosseteste, Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* and *De regimine principum*, *Le Secré de Secrez* by Pierre d'Aubernun of Fetcham and Walter of Milemete's *De nobilitatibus, sapientiis, et prudentiis de regum* are some of the philosophical treatises that still survive. Brunetto Latini's *Tresor* and the *Liber custumarum* attributed to Andrew Horn both present comments on kingship from a more bourgeois point of view and are supplemented by complaint literature such as the *Song of Lewes* and other political songs and William of Pagula's *De Speculo Regis Edwardi III*.[1]

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[1] M. H. Keen, 'The Political Thought of the Fourteenth Century Civilians', *Trends in Medieval Political Thought*, ed. B. Smalley (Oxford, 1965), pp.105-126. J. H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450* (Cambridge, 1988). G. E. Woodbine (ed.), *Bracton, De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, revised and translated by S. E. Thorne i-iv (Cambridge, Mass., 1968, 1977). H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles (eds.), *Fleta*, Selden Society, 72, 89, 99 (1955, 1972, 1984). W. J. Whittaker (ed.), *The Mirror of Justices*, Selden Society, 7 (1893). M. F. Markland (ed.), *Policraticus* (New York, 1979). H. R. Luard (ed.), *Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae*, Rolls Series, 25 (1861). A. P. D'Entrèves, *The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought: Thomas Aquinas, Marsilius of Padua, Richard Hooker* (Oxford, 1939). O. A. Beckerlegge (ed.), *Le Secré de Secrez*, by Pierre d'Aubernun of Fetcham, ANTS, 5 (Oxford, 1944). M. R. James (ed.), *The Treatise of Walter de Milemete: De nobilitatibus, sapientiis, et prudentiis de regum* (Oxford, 1913). P. Barrette and S. Baldwin (eds.), Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor* (1993). H. T. Riley (ed.), *Liber Custumarum, Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*, Rolls Series, 12 (1860). C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *The Song of Lewes* (Oxford, 1890). P. R. Coss (ed.), *Thomas Wright's Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to that of Edward II* (Cambridge, 1996). J. Moisant (ed.), *De Speculo Regis Edwardi III* (Paris, 1891). For modern discussions on kingship see bibliography.

There are, however, two difficulties involved with relying on these writings for contemporary thinking on kingship. The first concerns their representative quality. Writers such as Laurentius Hispanus, John of Salisbury, Robert Grosseteste and the author of 'Bracton' formed quite an exclusive group of mainly clerical, highly educated men. Given the influence of Bishop Grosseteste on Simon de Montfort, for example, the tendency to associate their work with constitutional developments in England is not unreasonable.[2] However, the principles and concepts involved in these political crises affected more than those associated with the royal court. Even if some men fought more for personalities than the arguments concerned, many others involved themselves because of the principles at stake.[3] The thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries saw the knightly and gentry sector of society grow more politically independent and active. This group moved from showing some independent support for the issues in 1264-65, to withstanding Edward I's attempts to link cavalry service with landed wealth, to presenting their grievances independently in the Commons by the 1320s and being involved in the deposition process.[4] Although contemporary political philosophy seems to match the constitutional developments of the time, does it necessarily represent the views of this important group?

The second difficulty is perhaps more important. Although contemporary writings together provide an elaborate portrayal of kingship, it is one lacking in life. The only emphases to indicate the relative importance of its various facets are those obviously connected with the special interests of the authors. Roman and canon lawyers,

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[2] R. W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1986), pp.246, 289. W. A. Pantin, 'Grosseteste's Relations with the Papacy and the Crown', *Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop. Essays in Commemoration of the Seventh Centenary of His Death*, ed. D. A. Callus (Oxford, 1955), pp.205-206.

[3] D. Williams, 'Simon de Montfort and His Adherents', *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 1985), pp.166-177. J. R. Maddicott, 'Follower, Leader, Pilgrim, Saint: Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, at the Shrine of Simon de Montfort, 1273', *EHR*, 109 (1994), pp.641-653. D. A. Carpenter, 'English Peasants in Politics 1258-1267', *Past and Present*, 136 (1992), pp.3-42.

[4] P. R. Coss, 'Identity and the Gentry c.1200-c.1340', *Thirteenth Century England VI: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1995*, eds. M. Prestwich, R. H. Britnell and R. Frame (Woodbridge, 1997), pp.55-59. A. Harding, 'Plaints and Bills in the History of English Law, mainly in the period 1250-1330', *Legal History Studies 1972*, ed. D. Jenkins (Cardiff, 1975), pp.65-86. G. L. Harriss, *King, Parliament, and Public Finance in Medieval England to 1369* (Oxford, 1975), pp.98, 180-182, 297-301. R. W. Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order: England and France in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988), p.27. J. R. Maddicott, 'The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England', *TRHS*, Fifth Series 28 (1978), pp.31-42, and 'Parliament and the Constituencies, 1272-1377', *The English Parliament in the Middle Ages*, eds. R. G. Davies and J. H. Denton (Manchester, 1981), pp.61-87. M. R. Powicke, 'The English Commons in Scotland in 1322 and the Deposition of Edward II', *Speculum*, 35 (1960), pp.556-562. Williams, 'Simon de Montfort', pp.173-176.

for example, tend to focus on the king's relationship to the law. Political philosophy thus does not provide insight into the wider images of kings held by royal subjects, nor into the varying strengths of their more conceptual ideas about kingship. There is no sense of what was most important to English people about their kings, nor any sign of what specially animated the relationship between them.

There are two main aims for this study. The first is to try to establish wider attitudes to kingship than those of the political philosophers, in particular to see how the relationship between king, crown and people was perceived by royal subjects. The second is to look at some of the major political crises of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in the light of these more 'popular' attitudes. As the ultimate crisis of the 'long thirteenth century' the deposition of Edward II will be one of those considered. Two crises either side of this event will also be studied: that in 1297 as the major crisis of Edward I's reign and that in 1341 as the first faced by Edward III's personal government.

These events have been the subject of many studies. The present discussion is not, therefore, expected to reveal new developments or new interpretations. The intent is to add to the understanding of the crises by considering the strength and influence of wider attitudes to kingship, and the role that they played during such troubled times. How aware were the kings and their opponents of the political ideas and opinions of those beneath them? How successful were they at manipulating these feelings for their own purposes?

Chapter 1 - The Use of Middle English Romance.

To establish wider attitudes to kingship than those of the political philosophers will mean looking at some unusual sources of evidence. Official records and monastic chronicles are inadequate in that they are too focused geographically, either to certain religious houses or to offices of central and local government. This means that they also tend to come from a limited number of sources - a selection of monks or the royal administration - and thus are scarcely representative of the *populus*. Written cultural evidence was not so restricted in its movement around the country and was available to many people. Potentially, the ideas about kingship that it presents are more representative.

Fortunately many different types of cultural literature have survived, including accounts of saints' lives, homilies, lyrical poetry, sermons, romances, Biblical tales, humorous stories, vernacular histories, devotional works and poems of satire and complaint. Compilations of a variety of these items can be found in personal collections such as the National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 19.2.1 composed during c.1330-40 (known as the Auchinleck manuscript), and the later Lincoln Cathedral MS 91 (the Thornton manuscript), British Library MS Additional 31042 (the London Thornton), Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A. II, MS Harley 2253 and MS Digby 86. These compilations have often been described as comprising the popular literary taste of lesser landowners, wealthy burgesses, professional men such as lawyers and estate managers, merchants and the like.[1]

Naturally not all of these different types of material will be suitable for this study. The only type of literature which allows a more 'popular' understanding of kingship to be determined is Middle English romance.[2]

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[1] For descriptions of the manuscripts and their items see D. Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham (eds.), *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates MS. 19.2.1* (1977). D. S. Brewer and A. E. B. Owen (eds.), *The Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral MS. 91)* (1978). J. J. Thompson, *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript: British Library MS Additional 31042* (Cambridge, 1987). F. McSparran and P. R. Robinson (eds.), *Cambridge University Library MS. Ff.2.38* (1979). F. McSparran (ed.), *Octovian Imperator*, MET, 11 (Heidelberg, 1979), pp.8-18 for Cotton Caligula A. II. N. R. Ker (ed.), *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, EETS, OS 255 (1965). J. Tschann and M. B. Parkes (eds.), *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, EETS, Supplementary Series 16 (1996). On dating the Auchinleck manuscript see the introduction of the facsimile, p.vii, and L. H. Loomis, 'The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330-1340', *PMLA*, 57 (1942), p.601. The later collections have been referred to here as McSparran and Robinson comment on the continuity of literary tastes demonstrated by these manuscripts despite their distance in time from the Auchinleck manuscript. Their public is so classified in these editions by McSparran and Robinson, p.vii, and Pearsall and Cunningham, p.viii. See also A. I. Doyle, 'English Books In and Out of Court From Edward III to Henry VII', *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (1983), p.165.

[2] On the meaning of 'popular' regarding Middle English romance see H. E. Hudson, 'Towards a Theory of Popular Literature: The Case of the Middle English Romances', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 23

The romances firstly provide us with the right subject matter. They focus on secular subjects, predominantly on the world of kings, noble men and courts. Secondly, their length allows for insight into the perception of kingship, which subject is sometimes employed as a major theme in the narratives.

Thirdly, and more importantly, the accounts of kings in the romances are fictional, even if of historical figures. This may seem a strange requirement, but it means that descriptions of kings will reflect contemporary attitudes in a way that, for instance, Biblical examples of kings cannot. However pertinent Biblical kings were to people in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, they were ultimately derived from a fixed text and not reflective of feelings about kings of the time. The Old Testament David would always be the anointed of God, but this might not be how royal subjects commonly viewed Edward II, for example. If a good king is called for in the story of a romance then he would be described and act in line with contemporary expectations of a good king. Likewise, fears about kings at the time would be used in depictions of bad kings. Fictional portrayals of kings may even have provided an outlet for complaint against a real king, directly or otherwise. This again would reflect contemporary feeling on what it was felt the king should or should not be doing. The material used must be capable of reflecting contemporary thought in order to determine what more ordinary people thought about kingship.

Finally, Middle English romance is ideal because it is known to have had a wide dissemination. Although estimates suggest there was only a lay literacy of fifteen per cent in Yorkshire and fifty per cent in London, the romances were enjoyed by a much larger number because they were intended both to be read and heard.[3] Repeated use of conventional introductory and descriptive phrases, pleas for belief in the tale, expletives, blessings and prayers, as well as the double narrative design of some romances and texts which could be improvised if need be, all indicate oral delivery.[4] Portrayals of romances

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(1989), pp.31-50. It does not necessarily mean mass culture or require high levels of literacy. It is widely accessible without the need for much formal education and is of significant appeal. It is assumed to reach a varied audience, who appreciate aesthetics based on receptivity and familiarity. It is also popular rather than popularised because of its intrinsic appeal.

[3] R. W. Ackerman, *Backgrounds to Medieval English Literature* (New York, 1966), p.35. M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (1979), chapter 7. F. B. Bäum, 'The Varieties of Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Speculum*, 55 (1980), pp.237-265. M. Parkes, 'The Literacy of the Laity', *The Mediaeval World: Literature and Western Civilisation*, eds. D. Daiches and A. Thorlby (1973), pp.555-577. R. V. Turner, 'The Miles Literatus in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-century England: How Rare a Phenomenon?', *American Historical Review*, 83 (1978), pp.928-945.

[4] D. Pearsall, 'Middle English Romance and Its Audiences', *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval & Early Modern English for John Gerritsen*, eds. M. Arn, H. Wirtjes and H. Jansen

within the texts themselves are of stories being read aloud to others. In *Reinbrun* the king of Africa's daughter included minstrelsy and 'romaunce reding' among her accomplishments. At the hero's coronation feast in *Havelok* one of the entertainments is 'Romanz-reding on þe bok', while at the Castle of Heavy Sorrows in *Ywain and Gawain*:

> Þe mayden red at þai myght here
> A real romance in þat place[5].

Through the family group and social occasions Middle English romance could reach very disparate groups of people, ranging from wealthy families and their neighbours, to social and business contacts, vassals and servants.[6] The number and diversity of people in contact with these romances are potentially large.

The survival of manuscripts containing romances provides firmer evidence of their dissemination. Around ninety manuscripts are still extant, which has been estimated to represent approximately one-fifth of the total number in circulation.[7] Many of these romances survive in two or three manuscripts, for example *Arthour and Merlin*, *Kyng Alisaunder* and *King Horn*, while other tales are much more numerous. *Sir Degarre* is extant in seven manuscripts and a fragment, there are six manuscript copies of *Beues of Hamtoun*, the *Seven Sages of Rome* numbers nine manuscripts and *Gamelyn* is preserved in an astounding twenty-five manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*.[8] This level of survival is impressive and, given that the total number of copies must have been higher, surely indicates the great popularity of the romances.

There are additional indications of their popularity. Their success was bemoaned by the writers of more edifying texts for example. The author of the *South English*

(Groningen, 1985), pp.40-41. A. McI. Trounce, 'Tail-rhyme romances, Middle English', *Medium Ævum*, 1 (1952), pp.92-93. R. Crosby, 'Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 11 (1936), pp.98-110. J. A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle English Literature and Its Background 1100-1500* (Oxford, 1982), pp.47-48, 51.

[5] *Reinbrun, The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, ed. J. Zupita, EETS, ES 42, 49, 59 (1883, 1887, 1891), 1.12:12. G. V. Smithers (ed.), *Havelok* (Oxford, 1987), 1.2328. *YG*, ll.3088-3089. Crosby, 'Oral Delivery', notes the role of women reading aloud but pursues this outside of Middle English romance, p.97.

[6] Crosby, 'Oral Delivery', p.96. P. R. Coss, 'Aspects of Social Diffusion in Medieval England: The Early Romances, Local Society and Robin Hood', *Past and Present*, 108 (1985), pp.76-77.

[7] H. Hudson, 'Middle English Popular Romances: The Manuscript Evidence', *Manuscripta*, 28 (1984), pp.67-68.

[8] *AM*, ii.35-44, text cited throughout is the Auchinleck MS. *KA*, ii.1-8, text cited throughout is Laud Misc. 622. *KH*, p.vii. G. Schliech (ed.), *Sire Degarre* (Heidelberg, 1929), pp.5-8. E. Kölbing (ed.), *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, EETS, ES 46, 48, 65 (1885, 1886, 1894), pp.vii-viii. K. Brunner (ed.), *The Seven Sages of Rome*, EETS, OS 191 (1933), pp.ix-xii. *Manual*, i.31.

Legendary rebuked those who preferred to listen to tales of fictional heroes rather than the lives of holy men and women. However, in doing so he tried to win audiences away from the romances by promising all their excitement and more:

> Men wileþ muche to hure telle ᐧ of bataille of kynge
> And of kniȝtes þat hardy were ᐧ þat muchedel is lesynge
> Wo so witneþ muche to hure ᐧ tales of suche þinge
> Hardi batailles he may hure ᐧ her þat nis no lesinge
> Of apostle & martir ᐧ þat hardy kniȝtes were
> Þat studeuast were in bataille ᐧ & ne fleide noȝt for fere.[9]

The author of *Cursor Mundi* is even more direct, immediately holding out the promise of romance, offering:

> Storijs of diuers thinges,
> Of princes, prelates, and of kinges,
> Sangys sere of diuers rime,
> Engliss, franss, and latine,
> To rede and here, ilkon is prest[10].

Religious works, especially saints' lives, also adopted romance elements and style in a bid to win audiences from their more successful rivals.[11] The initial part of the life of St Thomas Becket in the *South English Legendary*, for example, is concerned with the exploits of Becket's parents and is almost entirely fictional. Gilbert Becket was of a Norman knightly family and became a merchant first of Rouen and then London, marrying Rohesia or Matilda who was a burgher-woman of Caen.[12] In the *South English Legendary*, however, Gilbert is said to have been imprisoned by a Saracen prince during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. There he is admired by the prince who makes him his servant and consults him about England and the law. The prince's daughter falls in

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[9] C. D'Evelyn and A. J. Mill (eds.), *The South English Legendary*, EETS, OS 235, 236, 244 (1956, 1959), ll.59-64.

[10] R. Morris (ed.), *Cursor Mundi*, EETS, OS 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 101 (1874, 1875, 1876, 1893), ll.20-24.

[11] See studies by M. D. Legge, 'Anglo-Norman Hagiography and the Romances', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series 6 (1975), pp.41-49 and D. Pearsall, 'John of Capgrave's *Life of St. Katharine* and Popular Romance Style', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series 6 (1975), pp.121-137. Some comments on the romance qualities of the *South English Legendary* are made by D. Speed, 'The Construction of the Nation in Medieval English Romance', *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp.143-144 and A. Samson, 'The South English Legendary: Constructing a Context', *Thirteenth Century England I: Proceedings of the Newcastle Upon Tyne Conference 1985*, eds. P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge, 1986), pp.192-193.

[12] *DNB*, xix.645.

love with Gilbert, promising to be baptised if he should marry her. However, Gilbert
escapes and returns to London. She forsakes her family and inheritance and follows him,
through many hardships, until they are reunited. She is baptised after consultation with a
bishop, they marry and Thomas is conceived that very night.[13] This 'prologue' to
Thomas's life could hardly contain more romance elements. The knight on pilgrimage,
whose worthiness is recognised even by Saracens and who serves an emir, the infidel
princess willing to forsake family, heritage and religion for love and the immediate
conception of their child are all familiar from romances such as *Guy of Warwick*,
Reinbrun and *Beues of Hamtoun*.

The style in which romances were composed was aped in several ways. The life
of St Edmund the Martyr in the *South English Legendary* follows conventions used in
romance in order to describe the saint.[14] The familiar stock terms are all employed in the
relevant lines:

> Swiþe fair knyȝt he was & strong · & hardi in eche poynte
> Meok mylþe & ful of milce · swiþe curteys & quoynte[15] .

He, like every other romance hero, is handsome, strong, good in a fight, courteous,
humble and kind. The imitation of romance style did not stop at 'borrowing' its stock
phrases, however. The adoption of poetic forms usually associated with romances was
also used to make hagiography more attractive to lay audiences. It has been recently
pointed out that even Matthew Paris was not above the use of such tactics.[16] Religious
writers capitalised on romance style and incorporated its elements in order to popularise
their works and, considering the number of saints' lives that survive, for example, had
great success. The impression gained is one of 'if you can't beat them, join them',
implying that romance was a force to be reckoned with in terms of audience preference.

There was also an element of competition between heroes both within and
without the romance genre. The author of *Cursor Mundi*, for example, promised that his
heroes would be braver and have more exciting adventures than those in the tales of
Alexander, Julius Caesar, the Trojan war, Brutus, Arthur, Gawain and Kay, Charlemagne

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[13] *South English Legendary*, life of St Thomas, ll.1-120.
[14] The widespread use of romance style and its implications will be additionally discussed in chapter 3,
pp.113-128.
[15] *South English Legendary*, life of St Edmund Martyr, ll.5-6.
[16] C. Hahn, 'Proper Behaviour for Knights and Kings: the Hagiography of Matthew Paris, Monk of St
Albans', *Haskins Society Journal*, 2 (1990), pp.237-248 especially p.240.

and Roland, Tristram and Isolt, Ioneck, Isumbras, or Ydoine and Amadas.[17] Likewise, in *Beues of Hamtoun* that hero is ranked alongside Guy of Warwick due to his fight against the dragon and in *Horn Childe* the poet declares that even Tristram and Isolt could not have loved each other half so much as Horn and Rimnild.[18] Although it is difficult to determine to which specific texts these generalised statements refer, it has been proposed that the *Cursor Mundi* poet at least was probably talking about earlier French or Anglo-Norman romances.[19] This certainly seems likely to have been the case. While the author of *Horn Childe*, composed *c*.1320, may have been familiar with the Middle English *Sir Tristrem* of *c*.1260-1300, particularly as both romances originated in northern England, *Beues of Hamtoun* was adapted from its Anglo-Norman predecessor *c*.1300 at much the same time as *Guy of Warwick*. It is therefore more likely that *Beues of Hamtoun*'s reference to Guy's adventures came from the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*, which had been circulating in England since *c*.1232-42.[20] Similarly, the author of *Cursor Mundi*, writing *c*.1300, would have been unlikely to refer to the Middle English *Kyng Alisaunder* or *Sir Isumbras* as they were being composed at much the same time, while the Middle English Charlemagne romances (*Otuel, Otuel and Roland, Roland and Vernagu*) and *Sir Amadas* were written well after this date.[21]

It is clear therefore that Anglo-Norman romances, in addition to those in Middle English, were popular and successful throughout the period under study. Copies were being made of the Anglo-Norman *Amadas and Ydoine* in the late thirteenth century, for example, and of *Amis e Amilun* even at the end of the fourteenth century.[22] So why not use them alongside Middle English romances to help reveal more widespread ideas about kingship?

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[17] *Cursor Mundi*, ll.3-20.

[18] *Beues*, p.123. *HC*, l.311.

[19] J. J. Thompson, 'The *Cursor Mundi*, the 'Inglis tong', and 'Romance'', *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp.109-111.

[20] Date of *Cursor Mundi*, see S. M. Horrall (ed.), *The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi* (Ottawa, 1978), p.11. *Manual*, i.20 for date and Yorkshire dialect of *HC*; i.25, 28 dating *Beues* and J. Zupita (ed.), *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, EETS, ES 42, 49, 59 (1883, 1887, 1891) to *c*.1300. G. P. McNeill (ed.), *Sir Tristrem*, Scottish Text Society, First Series 8 (1886), pp.xxxiii, xxxvii. M. D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford, 1963), p.162 on *Gui*.

[21] *Manual*, i.2277 for date of *Cursor Mundi*, i.90-92 for Charlemagne romances. *Manual*, i.105, 122, 169.

[22] Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp.114-115. It has also been suggested that the reworking of French and Latin works by Middle English romance writers implies a lack of demand for the translation of Anglo-Norman romance because of an audience still familiar with it, see R. Field, 'The Anglo-Norman Background to Alliterative Romance', *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Background*, ed. D. Lawton (Woodbridge, 1982), p.60.

One reason is that although poets may have chosen to allude to works in French and then to write in English because of a genuinely bilingual culture,[23] it is more probable that they did so to add a certain cachet to their work, an air of high fashion. Anglo-Norman romance by the late thirteenth century was not so accessible to people because of the language in which it was written and was seen as something more exclusive than romances in Middle English.[24] By this time the use of French was expanding into areas of business, law and government. It was used in both private and diplomatic correspondence and was the language of international culture. Consequently it has been suggested that nearly anyone with any education would have been familiar with the language in some way, especially since it provided a non-dialectal alternative to the sometimes problematic Middle English. However, although many were familiar with at least some French it was increasingly becoming a learned language, restricted as a vernacular to mainly royal and noble households. The bilingual group below these came to prefer their entertainment in English, simply because English was easier. While some poets claimed to be writing in English for 'lewed' men and even gentle men who could not understand French, this did not stop those with French from enjoying romances in English.[25] Middle English romance is therefore potentially more representative in its

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[23] Thompson, '*Cursor Mundi*', p.111.

[24] Discussions on language in thirteenth century England include M. D. Legge, 'Anglo-Norman and the Historian', *History*, 26 (1941), pp.163-175. R. M. Wilson, 'English and French in England, 1100-1300', *History*, 28 (1943), pp.37-60. H. Suggett, 'The Use of French in the Later Middle Ages', *TRHS*, Third Series 28 (1946), pp.61-83. W. Rothwell, 'The Teaching of French in Medieval England', *Modern Language Review*, 63 (1968), pp.37-46 and 'The Role of French in Thirteenth Century England', *BJRL*, 58 (1975-76), pp.445-466. I. Short, 'On Bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England', *Romance Philology*, 33 (1979-1980), pp.467-479 and 'Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England', *Anglo-Norman Studies 14: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1991*, ed. M. Chibnall (Woodbridge, 1992), pp.229-249. E. Salter, *Fourteenth-Century English Poetry: Contexts and Readings* (Oxford, 1983), pp.21-27. S. Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (1986), pp.4-6, 9-10, and 'Social Aspects if Bilingualism in the Thirteenth Century', *Thirteenth Century England VI: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1995*, eds. M. Prestwich, R. H. Britnell and R. Frame (Woodbridge, 1997), pp.103-115.

[25] *AM*, ll.19-30. *LLF*, ll.224-226, 339-342 explaining French terms used in the romance. P. M. T. A. Schellekens (ed.), *An Edition of the Middle English Romance Richard Coeur de Lion* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis Durham, 1989), L ll.10-28. There is no modern published edition of this romance. The text in H. Weber (ed.), *Metrical Romances of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries ii* (Edinburgh, 1810) is not a critical edition and its use is problematic for several reasons, not least that Weber supplemented the version found in the Auchinleck manuscript without indicating where the extra material came from. Since this romance was extremely popular for centuries after its composition in the late thirteenth century, this supplementary material becomes even more problematic. On this see G. Paris, 'Le Roman de Richard Coeur de Lion', *Romania*, 26 (1897), pp.353-393. Therefore in this study the Schellekens edition will be cited since she reproduces the four earliest copies of the romance. Lines used will be accompanied by reference to the manuscript they are taken from, which will be usually the Auchinleck manuscript (L) supplemented by College of Arms MS Arundel 58 (A) as the closest in date to the former. Additional reference will be made to the relevant lines in the Weber edition where applicable since it is more readily available for consultation.

ideas about kingship because it was influenced by and in turn influenced a much larger social group.

Recent studies have questioned those generalisations which identified works in English as lower class and those in French as upper class and which suppose works in English to be of poorer quality than those in French. The identification of the Harley 2253 scribe as one closely associated with tradesmen, for example, has questioned previous assumptions that a trilingual manuscript was limited to the highly educated aristocracy.[26] A recent discussion on Humphrey de Bohun's commissioning of a translation of the Anglo-Norman *Guillaume de Palerne* into English suggests that this was for himself rather than his Gloucestershire retinue.[27] Anglo-Norman romance, however, can be more firmly identified with royal and noble men and women. Many romance texts were associated with or owned by people of this social group. Wace's *Brut* was presented to Queen Eleanor, *Waldef* has been linked with the Bigod family, *Fergus* with the marriage of Alan of Galloway to Margaret the niece of William I of Scotland and *Guillaume d'Angleterre* with the Lovel families, for example.[28] The issue of speculative dedications is always a problem of course, but it is notable that none of the surviving Middle English romances contain dedications except for the commissioned *William of Palerne*.

There are obvious problems in using manuscript ownership to indicate associations with particular social groups, but it is interesting to note that studies into the owners of manuscripts highlights a restrictive readership of Anglo-Norman romance. Royal households and their noble and gentle contemporaries tended to keep books in French and Latin rather than in English.[29] Queen Isabella possessed French romances of the adventures of Perceval, Arthur, Gawain and Tristram and Isolt. Guy earl of Warwick also accumulated a very large collection of French romances, giving those of Lancelot, Joseph of Arimathia, Brutus, Constantine, the death of Arthur, Alexander, Titus and

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[26] C. Revard, 'Richard Hurd and Harley 2253', *Notes and Queries*, 224 (1979), pp.199-202, 'Three More Holographs in the Hand of the Scribe of Harley 2253 in Shrewsbury', *Notes and Queries*, 226 (1981), pp.199-200, 'Scribe of Harley 2253', *Notes and Queries*, 227 (1982), pp.62-63.

[27] T. Turville-Petre, 'Humphrey de Bohun and 'William de Palerne'', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 75 (1974), pp.250-252 suggested the earl intended the translation for his men in the west midlands. G. H. V. Bunt, 'Patron, Author and Audience in a Fourteenth Century English Alliterative Poem', *Non Nova, Sed Nove: Mélanges de civilisation médiévale dédiés à Willem Noomen*, eds. M. Gosman and J. van Os (Groningen, 1984), pp.25-36 effectively refutes this, proposing that Humphrey's commission was principally for himself. For the poet's commission see W. W. Skeat (ed.), *The Romance of William of Palerne*, EETS, ES 1, 3, 4 (1967), ll.167-169, 5521-5522, 5529-5533.

[28] Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp.45, 145, 156, 161. Crane, *Insular Romance*, points out that Anglo-Norman romance developed outside of royal courts, p.10.

[29] Doyle, 'Books In and Out of Court', p.163.

Vespasian, the Trojan war, William Longspee, William Marshal, Firumbras, Guy of Warwick, Amadas and Idoine and many others to Bordesley Abbey in 1305. Some household knights of Edward I, for example Brian FitzAlan, Fulk de Pembridge and James Audley also possessed romances in French.[30] In comparison, recent studies of the ownership of manuscripts containing Middle English romances have shown a very different picture. Those owners who could be traced were lesser landowners, knights or gentry.[31] The relative plainness of manuscripts such as the Auchinleck and Thornton books also shows that these were not the luxury items usually associated with the very wealthy.[32] Although Anglo-Norman romances may not have always been in rich copies, the more commercial production of the Auchinleck manuscript, for example, suggests again that Middle English romance was not typically associated with the courts of kings and their contemporaries.[33]

Anglo-Norman romance was not only restricted to a smaller and more socially exclusive group. It was also less contemporary to the events of the 'long thirteenth century' than romances in Middle English. Anglo-Norman romances were largely composed in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries: the *Romance of Horn c.*1130, the

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[30] J. Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry: Chivalric Society and its Context 1270-1350* (Woodbridge, 1982), pp.49-50. M. Blaes, 'L'Abbaye de Bordesley et Les Livres de Guy de Beauchamp', *Romania*, 78 (1957), pp.511-518. M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (1996), p.229. R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (Reprinted 1970), chapter 5.

[31] Hudson, 'Manuscript Evidence', pp.76-77. C. M. Meale, "gode men / Wiues maydnes and alle men': Romance and Its Audiences', *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp.210-213 identifies the owner of Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 108 as a London draper and indicates a range of owners of late codices containing romances from nobles to tradesmen to friends of scribes.

[32] Pearsall and Cunningham, *Auchinleck Manuscript*. Loomis, 'London Bookshop', p.598. E. P. Hardman, 'Reading the Spaces: Pictorial Intentions in the Thornton MSS, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, and BL MS Add. 31042', *Medium Ævum*, 63 (1994), pp.250-274 and J. Fredell, 'The Decorated Initials in the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript', *Studies in Bibliography*, 47 (1994), pp.78-88. B. Y. Fletcher and A. L. Harris, 'On the Concept 'Popular' in Middle English Poetry', *English Studies*, 73 (1992), p.295.

[33] There are currently four main interpretations of the production of the Auchinleck manuscript as detailed by T. A. Shonk, 'A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Book-Making in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), pp.71-91: (i) Loomis, 'London Bookshop', pp.595-627, supplemented by her article 'The Auchinleck *Roland and Vernagu* and the *Short Chronicle*', *Modern Language Notes*, 60 (1945), pp.94-97 and N. Jacobs, '*Sir Degarré, Lay le Freine, Beves of Hamtoun* and the 'Auchinleck' Bookshop', *Notes and Queries*, 29 (1982), pp.294-301: proposes a London bookshop of writers and scribes working together. (ii) P. R. Robinson, 'The 'Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite MSS', *Codicologica*, 3 (1980), pp.46-69: proposes a London bookshop which assembled independent booklets into the compendium as ordered. (iii) A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century', *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, eds. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (1978), pp.163-210: reject a London bookshop, proposing a book dealer farming out exemplars to scribes for copying as requested. (iv) Shonk himself proposes loosely organised book production in which scribe 1 does much of the copying, farms out some of it to other scribes, edits the whole and sells the books. The secular commercial nature of its production is agreed by all.

lais of Marie de France during the reign of Henry II or John, *Boeve de Haumtone* *c*.1154-76, *Ipomedon* and *Protheselaus c*.1174-91, *Le Roman de Toute Chevalerie* *c*.1174-1200, *Amadas and Ydoine c*.1190-1220, *Amis e Amilun* and *Waldef* at the close of the twelfth century, *Fergus* in 1209 and *Gui de Warewic c*.1232-42.[34] While they certainly remained popular during the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries their earlier composition means that they cannot be wholly relied upon to reflect attitudes to kingship from that time.

In contrast Middle English romance began to flourish from the mid-thirteenth century onwards. There were two phases in its growth in popularity. The first came from outside the court from as early as *c*.1250, and increased from the reign of Edward I through to the mid-fourteenth century. The second saw increasing royal and noble patronage of men such as Gower, Chaucer and Lydgate.[35] This earlier period, which saw Middle English romance being enjoyed by large numbers of people beneath the aristocracy, largely coincides with the crises of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The romances from this phase, therefore, can be used to provide evidence of wider attitudes to kingship particularly during the political crises of 1297, 1326 and 1341.

The romances included for use in this study have been selected almost entirely according to their date of composition or redaction. Since Middle English romances are not always easy to date specifically, some will require a little extra justification for their inclusion. The most straightforward examples, of course, are those romances which have been determined as clearly belonging to the reigns of Edward I, Edward II and the early years of Edward III:

1) *King Horn* (1270s)

2) *Amis and Amiloun* (*c*.1300)

3) *Beues of Hamtoun* (*c*.1300)

4) *Guy of Warwick* (*c*.1300)

5) *Kyng Alisaunder* (start of the fourteenth century)

6) *Richard Coeur de Lion* (reign of Edward I, *c*.1300)

7) *Havelok* (reign of Edward I)

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[34] Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp.45, 72, 85, 109, 115, 146, 156, 161, 162. B. Foster and I. Short (eds.), *The Anglo-Norman Alexander (Le Roman de Toute Chevalerie) by Thomas of Kent*, ANTS, 32-33 (1977), ii.73-76. M. K. Pope (ed.), *The Romance of Horn by Thomas*, ANTS, 12-13 (Oxford, 1964), ii.123-124. Also Field, 'Anglo-Norman Background', p.52.

[35] The earliest surviving Middle English romance *FB* dates from *c*.1250, *Manual*, i.145.

8) *Sir Degarre* (before 1325)

9) *Horn Childe* (*c*.1320)

10) *Sir Isumbras* (early fourteenth century)

11) *King of Tars* (early fourteenth century)

12) *Lay le Freine* (start of the fourteenth century)

13) *Sir Perceval* (1300-40)

14) *Reinbrun* (*c*.1300)

15) *Seege of Troye* (late thirteenth to first quarter of the fourteenth century)

16) *Otuel* (first quarter of the fourteenth century)

17) *Roland and Vernagu* (first quarter of the fourteenth century)

18) *Otuel and Roland* (first quarter of the fourteenth century)

19) *Landevale* (start of the fourteenth century).[36]

One slightly earlier romance will be included because its popularity endured into the late thirteenth century:

20) *Floris and Blancheflour* (*c*.1250)

as will the following tales because of their possible composition during the reign of Edward I:

21) *Arthour and Merlin* (*c*.1260-1300)

22) *Sir Orfeo* (1250-1300)

23) *Sir Tristrem* (*c*.1260-1300).[37]

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[36] 1) R. Allen, 'The Date and Provenance of *King Horn*: Some Interim Reassessments', *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, eds. E. D. Kennedy, R. Waldron and J. S. Wittig (Woodbridge, 1988), pp.99-125. 2) *Manual*, i.167. 3) *Manual*, i.25. 4) *Manual*, i.28. 5) *Manual*, i.105. G. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge, 1956), p.37. 6) *Richard*, ii.71-72. Weber, *Richard*, p.xlvi. 7) *Havelok*, pp.lxiv-lxxiii. W. W. Skeat and K. Sisam (eds.), *The Lay of Havelok the Dane* (Oxford, 1915), pp.xxiii-xxv. There have been attempts to date *Havelok* more specifically within the reign: D. Speed (ed.), *Medieval English Romances*, Durham Medieval Texts, 8 (Durham, 1993), p.28 suggests 1290-95. G. V. Smithers, 'Four Notes on *Hauelok*', *So meny people longages and tonges: philological essays in Scots and mediaeval English presented to Angus McIntosh*, eds. M. Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh, 1981), pp.292-209 points to 1301 as the earliest possible date for the romance. This is dismissed by T. Turville-Petre, 'Havelok and the History of the Nation', *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp.127-129. 8) *Manual*, i.140. Text used is W. H. French and C. B. Hale (eds.), *Middle English Metrical Romances* (New York, 1930). 9) *HC*, p.17. *Manual*, i.20, suggests *c*.1320. 10) *Manual*, i.122. Text used is J. O. Halliwell (ed.), *The Thornton Romances*, Camden Society, 30 (1844). 11) *KT*, p.15. 12) *LLF*, p.233. 13) *Manual*, i.70. Text used is Halliwell, *Thornton Romances*. 14) *Manual*, i.27-28. This is strictly speaking a part of *Guy*, being separated with its own introduction only in the Auchinleck manuscript. The separation has been maintained in this study, both to follow the editor's version and because it makes the otherwise huge length of *Guy* easier to manage. 15) M. E. Barnicle (ed.), *The Seege or Batayle of Troye*, EETS, OS 172 (1927), p.xxx. 16-17) *Otuel, English Charlemagne Romances Part IV*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage, EETS, ES 37 (1881). *Manual*, i.90, 92. 18) *OR*, p.lxvii. 19) *Landevale*, in A. J. Bliss (ed.), *Sir Launfal*, by Thomas Chestre (1960), pp.14-15.

[37] 20) see above. 21) *Manual*, i.47. 22) A. J. Bliss (ed.), *Sir Orfeo* (Oxford, 1966), p.xxi. 23) *Tristrem*, p.xxxvii, with p.xxxiii suggesting that the end of that period is the most likely.

At the other end of the period there are several romances which could have been written during the early years of Edward III:

24) *Ywain and Gawain* (1300-1350)

25) *Alexander A* (1340-70)

26) *Alexander B* (1340-70)

27) *William of Palerne* (1335/6-1361).[38]

Romances which have not been specifically dated but assigned to c.1350 will also be included, as while they could have been written quite late on in the century they could equally well have been written around the time of the 1341 political crisis. These include:

28) *Gamelyn*

29) *Sir Eglamour*

30) *Joseph of Arimathie.*[39]

Finally, there are two romances which require additional justification for their use in this study:

31) *Athelston*

32) *Seven Sages of Rome* (late thirteenth to early fourteenth century).

There are problems in the use of *Athelston* because of the complexity involved in dating it. The romance survives in only one manuscript from the early fifteenth century. The text has been assigned by its editor to the years 1320-1400, most likely to the last quarter of the century. However, he believed that this version was the product of rewriting in the middle of the century and that the English *Athelston* thus firmly belonged to the end of the thirteenth century. This places the romance within the period under study and is the reason for its inclusion.[40]

The *Seven Sages of Rome* is not strictly a romance at all but a collection of stories within a narrative framework. What merits its inclusion is the fact that the individual tales are similar to short romances and certainly possess the style, preoccupations and conventions found in true romances. The collection is often grouped

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[38] 24) *YG*, p.lviii suggests 1325-1350. 25) *Manual*, i.106. Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, p.48. 26) *Alex. B*, p.xx. Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, p.49. 27) *William*, p.xi. *Manual*, i.34. Bunt, 'Patron, Author and Audience', p.26, determines the time of redaction as 1335/6-1361.

[39] 28) W. W. Skeat (ed.), *The Tale of Gamelyn* (Oxford, 1884), p.xvi. Text used is D. B. Sands (ed.), *Middle English Verse Romances* (Reprinted Exeter, 1993) as it is more accessible. 29) F. E. Richardson (ed.), *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, EETS, OS 256 (1965), p.xxx. 30) W. W. Skeat (ed.), *Joseph of Arimathie*, EETS, OS 44 (1871), p.x.

[40] A. McI. Trounce (ed.), *Athelston: A Middle English Romance*, EETS, OS 244 (1951), pp.1, 40, 60-61.

with romances in modern discussions because of this and the same practice will be followed here.[41]

Anglo-Norman and Middle English romance were not isolated from each other. Nearly all English romances had their origins in French or Anglo-Norman texts,[42] although comparatively few immediate predecessors of the Middle English romances survive.[43] Although this means that Middle English romance is derivative it is not at the expense of contemporaneity. Anglo-Norman and French romances provided their basic narrative structure and characters but Middle English adapters gave themselves a free hand with the rest.[44] Typically they cut the love elements of the story and personal reflection by the characters. They increased the action adding fights, tournaments and battles to please their audiences. While they have been criticised for the subsequent

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[41] *Sages*, p.xxx.

[42] Those with associated Anglo-Norman texts include: *Beues*, see for example A. J. Stimming (ed.), *Boeve de Haumtone*, Bibliotheca Normannica, 7 (Halle, 1899); *Manual*, i.26-27. *Guy*, see A. Elvert (ed.), *Gui de Warewic*, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 74, 75 (Paris, 1933); *Manual*, i.27-28. *Havelok*, pp.xvi-xix; see T. D. Hardy and C. T. Martin (eds.), *Lestorie des Engles*, by Geffrei Gaimar, Rolls Series, 91i, ii (1888, 1889). *AA*, see E. Kölbing (ed.), *Amis and Amiloun*, Attenglische Bibliothek, 11 (Heilbronn, 1884); Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p.115. *HC*, pp.44-49, and *KH*, see the *Romance of Horn*, p.29. *Tristrem*, p.xxxviii, is from a Norman or Anglo-Norman source via a Northumbrian version of *c.*1260-1300; possibly from Thomas's poem, see B. H. Wind (ed.), *Les Fragments du Roman de Tristan: Poème du XIIᵉ Siècle* (Geneva, 1960); *Manual*, i.77 and Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p.50. *Isumbras*, p.xviii, and *Athelston*, p.40, are supposed to have lost Anglo-Norman versions.

Those with French texts include *LLF*, see Marie de France's *Lay le Fresne* in K. Warnke (ed.), *Die Lais der Marie de France*, Bibliotheca Normannica, 3 (Halle, 1925); Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p.73. *Perceval*, p.vii; see W. Roach (ed.), *Le Roman de Perceval au Le Conte Graal*, by Chrétien de Troyes (Genève, 1956). *Sages*, p.xiv; see redaction A of G. Paris, *Deux Rédactions du Roman des Sept Sages de Rome*, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 4 (Reprinted New York, 1966). *William*, see A. Micha (ed.), *Guillaume de Palerne: Roman du XIIIe siècle* (Genève, 1990); I. P. McKeenan, 'Guillaume de Palerne: A Medieval Best Seller', *PMLA*, 41 (1926), pp.785-809. *Orfeo*, pp.xl-xli, is supposed to have come from a lost French text, as is *FB*, see *Manual*, i.146, and *Degarre*, see D. Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (1969), p.41.

A group of romances have their source in Latin histories: *Alex. A* and *B* used the J² recension of the *Historia de Preliis*; Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, pp.48, 49. *Richard*, pp.72-75, used the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* and Ambroise's *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte* and *Troye* used Benoit's *Roman de Troie* and various other histories; *Manual*, i.116. *KT*, p.42, used several chronicles including the *Flores Historiarum* and Rishanger's *Chronica*. The Charlemagne romances originate with the prose *Estoire de Charlemagne*, redacted from Johannis Turpin *c.*1206, and the Pseudo-Turpin chronicles; *Manual*, i.88, S. H. A. Shepherd, 'The Middle English *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*', *Medium Ævum*, 65 (1996), pp.19-34. *Eglamour*, pp.xxxix-xl, was constructed from elements taken from the romances of *Degarre*, *Octovian* and *Emaré*. *Gamelyn* was composed entirely in English, see *Manual*, i.32, J. Scattergood, 'The Tale of Gamelyn: The Noble Robber as Provincial Hero', *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), p.159.

[43] *AM*, p.2, redacted from the Vulgate *Merlin*, and *Joseph* from *Lestoire del Saint Graal*, both in H. O. Sommers (ed.), *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances* (Reprinted New York, 1969); *Manual*, i.2, 74. *KA*, p.15, from *Le Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, p.1. *YG*, p.xlii, from T. B. W. Reid (ed.), *Yvain (Le Chevalier au Lion)*, by Chrestien de Troyes (Manchester, 1942). *Landevale*, p.2, from Marie de France's *Lanval* reproduced in the appendix of the Middle English edition.

[44] Hudson, 'Popular Literature', pp.33-34, 38-39 on author's choice of material and form reflecting his audience's tastes and interests, and that alteration of works in French was for audiences with very different interests and literary expectations.

concentration on action and the external life of the characters with the loss of 'more sophisticated' thoughts and feelings, this has allowed more reflection of the world in which they wrote. The poets infused their tales with the dress, arms and armour, manners, attitudes and values of their day.[45] They veered away from making the tales 'romantic' in favour of relevancy. Every romance was placed by its poet in 'Olde Daye', in times of 'eldirs þat byfore vs were', but in reality described an 'idealised modernity'.[46] This means that the attitudes to kingship found in Middle English romance can be expected to be reflective of their times rather than of the earlier period during which Anglo-Norman romance flourished. Perhaps if identical statements concerning kingship are found in both the Middle English and immediate source texts this probably infers that later audiences still held those views. In the event of this occurrence it will be indicated along with the relevant Middle English lines.[47]

Before discussing the images of kingship found in Middle English romance it is first necessary to determine to whom they may be attributed. While the views on kingship expressed in the tales are likely to have been those of their poets, they are also likely to have been those of their audiences. Writers of such a popular genre will have been influenced by the attitudes of the people they wrote for and reflected contemporary ideas and opinions in order to secure the success of their work. To suggest the social groups to whom the images of kings found in the texts belonged means defining the romance audience.

Many studies have attempted such an analysis, but there are too many obstacles to ever allow a firm identification.[48] The long period involved saw many changes in

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[45] *Landevale*, p.23 the editor comments that despite the closeness of the text to *Lanval* the total effect of the Middle English version is very different from the original. This is true for other romances. *KA*, p.15. G. Guillaume, 'The Prologues of the *Lay le Freine* and *Sir Orfeo*', *Modern Language Notes*, 36 (1921), pp.461-462. D. Pearsall, 'The Development of Middle English Romance', *Studies in Medieval English Romances: Some New Approaches*, ed. D. Brewer (Woodbridge, 1988), pp.17, 19-33. A. C. Baugh, 'Convention and Individuality in Middle English Romance', *Medieval Literature and Folklore: Essays in Honour of Francis Lee Utley*, eds. J. Mandel and B. A. Rosenberg (New Jersey, 1970), pp.124-140. D. Matthews, 'Translation and Ideology: The Case of Ywain and Gawain', *Neophilologus*, 76 (1992), p.457. M. Mills (ed.), *Ywain and Gawain, Sir Percyvell of Gales, The Anturs of Arther* (1992), pp.xviii-xix.

[46] *Sages*, Balliol College MS 354 1.4 (the text cited will usually be Lincoln's Inn MS 150 as it is the longest version of the collection). *Eglamour*, 1.5 (text cited will always be Lincoln Cathedral MS 91). R. M. Wilson, *Early Middle English Literature* (1939), p.193.

[47] Of the romances that lack an immediate source text *William* and *Guy* are the only ones to occasionally produce close translations of earlier material. Therefore the original Anglo-Norman will additionally be indicated in the discussion

[48] A. C. Baugh, 'The Authorship of the Middle English Romances', *Annual Bulletin of the Modern Humanities Research Association*, 22 (1950), pp.13-28. S. Knight, 'The Social Function of the Middle

society, the economy, levels of literacy and general education. Additionally there are many dangers in arbitrarily deciding what level of literary sophistication appealed to high and low status audiences, and in equating uncourtly styles and a taste for violence or the fabulous with particular social groups or gender.[49] Despite the impossibility of assigning Middle English romance to a specific audience several probabilities can be explored through the themes within the texts, the social diversity of the characters, and the detail (or lack of it) given in the context of the drama.

Perhaps the most prominent theme in the romances is that of inheritance and property rights.[50] This preoccupation concerned the rightful ownership of land and goods and is most clearly expressed in the dispossession romances.[51] These see the hero deprived of his inheritance and, after many years of hardship and adventure, return to regain what belonged to him. There are many factors which cause this initial loss of lands and position. In the Horn romances Horn is cast out because of Saracen invasion. Plots by family members to supplant the true heir occur in *William of Palerne* and *Beues of Hamtoun*. The hero of *Sir Perceval* and Paris in the *Seege of Troye* are denied their rights by mothers determined that they renounce the world. Illegality and corruption deprive the hero of *Gamelyn*, while injustice and the fear of it drive out child heirs in *Sir Degarre*, *Sir Eglamour* and *Lay le Freine*. These reflect a range of threats to the owners of property. Although they might not have feared actual dispossession, which was comparatively rare after the Barons' Wars, the romances reveal a distinct sense of insecurity regarding their holdings.

The romances also show comparatively little idealism when it comes to reliance on friends and allies. Most tales see the wronged hero working alone to claim what rightfully belonged to him. Although the purpose of the narrative often demands it, there is nonetheless a distinct sense of 'every man looking out for himself'. In *Havelok*, for example, no one comes forward in support of the imprisoned children in Denmark or England. Arthur fails to turn up to help Lot against the invading Danes in *Arthour and*

English Romances', *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. D. Aers (Brighton, 1986), pp.99-123. Pearsall, 'Audiences', pp.37-47 and 'Development', pp.11-35. Coss, 'Cultural Diffusion', pp.35-79.

[49] Crane, *Insular Romance*, p.43. Coss, 'Cultural Diffusion', p.53. Speed, *Medieval English Romances*, p.9. Pearsall, 'Development', p.22. R. Levine, 'Who Composed *Havelok* for Whom?', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 22 (1992), pp.97-98.

[50] Knight, 'Social Function', pp.102-111. Dannenbaum, 'Ancestral Romance?', pp.604-608. Crane, *Insular Romance*, chapter 1, and pp.55-56, 64-67.

[51] *Havelok, KH, HC, William*, and *Beues. Degarre, Gamelyn, LLF*, and *Perceval* also involve dispossession but without the exile-and-return motif which is so prominent in the other romances.

Merlin. Athelston and the Horn romances see close companions turn against their leaders. Even when there are friends to be seen circumstances ensure that they are rarely supportive, or supportive only in a situation when the inheritance is in sight. In *Beues of Hamtoun* Saber remains on the Isle of Wight while Beues is sold in the East. After Reinbrun is stolen by merchants, Heraud seeks him fruitlessly for years, but only after the goading of the English earls. In *Gamelyn* Sir Ote is absent for many years during which time Gamelyn is abused by his eldest brother. These romance instances reflected real experience. Reliance on familial and tenurial relationships was undermined by tenants possessing more than one lord and agreements for mutual aid and armed brotherhoods, and further complicated by petty assizes which enabled tenants to defy the usual loyalty owing to a lord. The subsequent rise in popularity of indentures to secure real support 'in peace and war' during this period is perhaps an indication that the cynicism displayed in the romances was not unjustified.[52]

Even the king is not always the friend of the dispossessed. In *Beues of Hamtoun* the fact that Beues goes before the king to recount his history and demand:

> be-fore ʒour barnage,
> Þat ʒe me graunte min eritage[53]

suggests that he felt it safer to approach Athelstan in the company of his peers. Perhaps his inheritance may not have been safe from the king otherwise? *William of Palerne* and *Ywain and Gawain* also present a rather predatory image of kings. In the first tale the emperor meets William herding his beasts in the forest. He is intrigued by the boy's handsome appearance and asks to meet his parents. The response is fearful:

> "nay, sire, bi god," quaþ þe barn, "be ʒe riʒt sure,
> bi crist, þat is krowned heye king of heuene,
> For me non harm schal he haue neuer in his liue!"

[52] Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, pp.43-45. J. Scammell, 'The Formation of the English Social Structure: Freedom, Knights, and Gentry, 1066-1300', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), pp.614, 616. On indentures see introduction of M. Jones and S. Walker (eds.), 'Private Indentures for Life Service in Peace and War 1278-1476', *Camden Miscellany XXXII*, Camden Society, Fifth Series 3 (1994), pp.9-33. K. B. McFarlane, 'An Indenture of Agreement between Two English Knights for Mutual Aid and Counsel in Peace and War, 5 December 1298', *BIHR*, 38 (1965), pp.200-210.

[53] *Beues*, ll.3501-3502. Text cited throughout is the Auchinleck version. Crane, *Insular Romance*, points out that *Boeve* is much more cynical towards Edgar with the hero refusing to pay the inheritance fee as the king had failed to protect his rights, and warning Edgar not to interfere with his lands while he is in exile, ll.2428-2450, 2508-2522, 2545-2550, 2615-2521.

When William is persuaded to seek his foster-father, the cowherd's reaction is exactly the same:

> "What? sone," seide þe couherde· "seidestow i was here?"
> "ȝa, sire, certes," seide þe child· "but he swor formest
> Þat ȝe schuld haue no harm.

The emperor eventually discovers William's mysterious origins and decides to raise him at court. The cowherd has no choice but to accept this, and 'witerly dorst he nouȝt werne· þe wille of his lord'.[54]

What is interesting is that both this emperor and Arthur in the second tale are known in these romances to be good rulers. In *Ywain and Gawain* Arthur is called 'þe nobil king' even as Alundyne and Lunet discuss his approach knowing that he will seize Alundyne's lands since her husband had recently died. Ywain had killed him in combat and both women agreed that:

> if he [Arthur] find none hym ogayn,
> ȝowre landes er lorn, þis es sertayn.

Alundyne, albeit sweetened by his handsome appearance, marries her husband's killer 'To kepe Arthurgh and hys rowt' out.[55] The belief found in the romances that even the approach of good kings was a threat to property is clear. Support for this feeling of insecurity can be found in the protests made by the vicar of Winkfield, William of Pagula, to Edward III. He warned that his parishioners were being ruined through abusive royal purveyance. Living close to Windsor, they were particularly susceptible to this, as not only the king's household but households of other members of the royal family visited so often.[56] The instability facing propertied people in the romances was clearly not far from real experience.

Dispossessions in the romances have been said to represent the fears of the landowning social group, not only of the loss of lands and property but of poverty, friendlessness and the subsequent vulnerability to the whims of stronger men.[57] *Sir*

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[54] *William*, ll.251-253, 267-269, 305.

[55] *YG*, ll.957-958, 1025. *Yvain*: 'li rois a si grant ost, / Qu'il seisira tot sanz deffanse', ll.1636-1637.

[56] *Speculo Regis*. L. E. Boyle, 'William of Pagula and the Speculum Regis Edwardi III', *Medieval Studies*, 32 (1970), pp.329-336.

[57] Knight, 'Social Function', pp.111.

Isumbras is a perfect expression of these fears, indeed their realisation in this romance is even equated with the punishment of sin. Isumbras loses everything: horse, hawks and hounds, his manor buildings, possessions and livestock and his men. He and his family must leave home and beg on the roads, as he immediately realises that without wealth or status 'Owre frendis of us wille sone be irke'.[58] Moreover, without friends he is powerless to stop the loss of his sons to wild beasts, or his wife to a sultan who desires her for himself. This fear is seen again in *Sir Landevale* when that knight had squandered his fortune at court on his 'friends'. He also soon realises that 'men will me hold for a wrech' and that he can count on none of them.[59] The warning is that if any man should lose his position and money then every other will be against him.

Contrast these fears with the universal success of dispossessed heroes and what is revealed is the corresponding wish-fulfilment of property owners. It has been pointed out that the double design of some dispossession romances, such as *Havelok* and *King Horn*, was a response to this strong desire to see victories over the enemies and fears of landed audiences as it provided even more chances and ways to achieve that triumph which was most longed for.[60] The heroes always return and overthrow their enemies gloriously through the strength of their own arms and the malefactors are accorded dire punishments. Where enemies have usurped the royal position, as in the case of Godard and Godrich in *Havelok*, they are given a traitor's death. Alternatively Sir John in *Gamelyn* is beaten to death by his deprived brother cheered on by the local people. Where local corruption occurs, as in *Gamelyn*, all the guilty officials are killed.[61] Those who dispossess invariably die for their crime and there is no doubt of the righteousness of this in the romances. The heroes, having achieved their revenge, then turn to the proper channels to restore their position and possessions. Their faith in custom, law and social order has been shown to be both confident and persistent.[62] There are no humbling petitions or bribes to make with all their attendant insecurities. There are no mitigating circumstances, no legitimate rival claimants and there is no muddying of the waters by petitions and bribes. What more could propertied people desire?

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[58] *Isumbras*, ll.117-118.

[59] *Landevale*, l.29.

[60] Dannenbaum, 'Ancestral Romances', pp.605-608. Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp.42, 88.

[61] Thompson, 'Noble Robber', pp.169-189 matches real life local solidarity against royal officials, especially justices, to the feeling shown in *Gamelyn*.

[62] Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp.23, 40, 68-69.

A second theme is that of marriage, which in many ways is connected with the first. Marriage in the romances provided stability and helped men to maintain or increase their property. It also provided children, to whom wealth could be passed in inheritance. As such, marriage was another measure of a hero's success in the romances. In addition to regaining his lost inheritance, or improving his status by his military prowess or the favour of a patron, a hero added to his just reward by marrying well. Whilst love forms an element of the narrative of most romances, marriage is always considered in worldly terms. At the very least it should not disadvantage those concerned. Goldboru's marriage in *Havelok* is obviously a dastardly project of Godrich because of this very reason, since by marrying a kitchen boy she will be excluded from her inheritance. Discussion is very naturally drawn to this aspect of the marriage. However Havelok's reaction to the news is also interesting. Despite being given the beautiful Goldboru he refuses her on very practical grounds:

> J ne may hire fede no cloþe no sho.
> Wider sholde Ich wimman bringe?
> J ne haue none kines þinge -
> J ne haue hws, Y ne haue cote,
> Ne I ne haue stikke, Y ne haue sprote,
> J ne haue neyþer bred ne sowel,
> Ne cloth but of an hold with couel.
> Þis cloþes þat ich onne-haue
> Aren þe kokes and Ich his knaue![63]

He is very aware of his economic position and realises that the marriage will affect him badly. Usually though, marriage was recognised as a means for advancement in terms of wealth, status and powerful friends. For example, as reward after his success in a tournament in *Horn Childe* King Houlac gives Horn leave:

> forto chese
> Þe maidens þat were fre:
> Riche of kin & hondes sleye
> Þai hadde frendes fer & neiȝe:
> He miȝt avanced be.[64]

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[63] *Havelok*, ll.1138-1147.
[64] *HC*, ll.433-438.

In spite of this, however, the romances do stress that marriage should take place between social equals. Several characters are shown realising that they could never have the woman of their choice because of their inferior status. In *William of Palerne* the hero laments his lowly position in relation to Melior:

> Min hert is to hauteyn ˙ so hyȝe to climbe,
> Þat is an emperours eir ˙ and euene his pere,
> to come to swiche a caytif[65].

Horn, in *King Horn*, is more blunt about his possible relationship with Rymenhild, saying:

> Hit nere so fair wedding
> Bitwexe a þral & a king.[66]

Horn and William though, are known to the audience to be dispossessed royal heirs and therefore of equal status to Rymenhild and Melior. This is not the case in *Guy of Warwick* or *Sir Eglamour*. Guy is the son of the earl's steward and loves the earl's daughter Felice. He realises that he can have no hope of marrying her but feels driven to tell her how he feels anyway. Eglamour is made to face realities before he reaches the point of confession to Cristabelle. His squire Bellamy is brutally honest about his chances of gaining the duke's daughter, pointing out that:

> ȝe are a knyghte of lyttill lande
>
> hir wowes emperour and kynge
> And dukes þat are bolde;
> Erlis, barons hir dose also -
> And ȝitt ne will scho none of tho
> Bot in gudnes hir holde.
> Wist hir fadir, by heuens kynge,
> Þat hir were profirde swylke a thyng
> Ful dere it mond be sold;
> Now ne wold scho neuir kyng forsake
> And til a sympil knyght hir take[67].

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[65] *William*, ll.707-710.
[66] *KH*, ll.423-424. Text cited throughout is Cambridge University Library MS Gg. iv.27.2.
[67] *Guy*, ll.341-376. Text cited throughout is the Auchinleck version, occasionally supplemented by the editor's C text. *Eglamour*, ll.65, 74-83.

Paradoxically, heroes in the romances always do obtain the woman they desire. These women are invariably of the highest status the story affords, be they the daughter of a king, earl or knight. At the very least the hero gains a social equal and her dowry, but more often he improves his social situation and acquires all of her father's lands into the bargain. All the heroines are only children and, without any rival brothers, are thus the ultimate prize. Theirs may be a love match, but it is certainly not without material advantage.

Marriage was also of material advantage to the women in Middle English romance. However, this is where a second paradox occurs, in the promiscuous behaviour of most of these ladies. In *William of Palerne* and *Beues of Hamtoun* Melior and Josian run away with their lovers, whilst in *Sir Eglamour* Cristabelle has Eglamour's child before he has completed the tasks set by her father to prove his worth as a suitor. In *King Horn* Rymenhild invites Horn into her chamber, seats him on costly fabrics and plies him with wine in order to seduce him. Belisaunt intimidates Amis into becoming her lover in *Amis and Amiloun*. Yet although these women may be very forward in their affections, they rarely suggest marriage and are instead looking simply for affairs. They ask for a 'lemman' and not a husband. It has been argued that in French and Anglo-Norman romances women unconsciously recognise the true value of the hero because of his beauty. Their susceptibility to his appearance gives a 'reliable index to the soul'.[68] It helps the audience to accept their apparent willingness to become involved with men seemingly of unequal status, even when these men are really dispossessed royal heirs, for example. However, in Middle English romances the women are much more practical. With a few notable exceptions they do not commit themselves to men of apparent inferior status no matter how good looking they are. Note the protests of Goldboru in *Havelok*:

> Þat hire sholde noman wedde
> Ne noman bringen to hire bedde
> But he were king or kinges eyr
> Were he neuer man so fayr.

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[68] J. Weiss, 'The Wooing Woman in Anglo-Norman Romance', *Romance in Medieval England*, eds. M. Mills, J. Fellows and C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1991), pp.153-154.

She was well aware that marriage to 'sum cherles sone' would prevent her succeeding to her inheritance.[69] The women in Middle English romance are just as aware of a good match as men and consider their position very carefully.

When they are not in love themselves but are loved, the women weigh up the advantages of the proposed match. Felice in *Guy of Warwick* is openly scathing of Guy's proposal:

> icham þi lordes douhter biname;
> Þan dostow him wel michel shame
> When þou of loue bi-sechist me
>
> Erlis, doukes of þe best
> In þis world, & þe richest,
> Me haue desired apliȝt,
>
> Al to fole-hardi þou were,
> When þou me of loue bisouȝtest here.
>
> tow dost me litel worþschipe,
> When þou me desirest to schen schipe[70].

Her repeated orders to him to go and carry out ever greater feats of arms almost suggest that she is trying to rid herself of such insulting addresses! In *Sir Eglamour* Cristabelle gives her proposal more thought:

> So God me see,
> Þou arte a gud knyght and a fre,
> And comen of gentill blode;
> And doghetily vndir þi schelde
> Hase wonne þe gre in ilke felde,
> Full menskfully, by þe rode!
> I sall avyse me of it.

In *Ywain and Gawain* Alundyne is reconciled to marriage to her husband's killer on discovering that he is King Urien's son.[71]

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[69] *Havelok*, ll.1112-1117, 1093, 1092-1100.

[70] *Guy*, ll.385-387, 397-399, 403-404, 633-634. *Gui*, ll.343-349, 355-357, 361-362, 370-371: 'Dune sui jo fille vostre seignur? / Mult me faites grant deshonur, / Quant me requerez de folie, / Que jo seie vostre amie; / Ne troverai nome qui tant me deist, / Ne d'amur tant me requeist, / Nul duc, cunte, ne barrun; // Ducx e cuntes e baruns - / Ne sunt plus riches desqu'as munz, / Qui sur totes me desirent, // Trop grant folie, Gui, pensastes, / Quant vus de amur a mei parlastes; // De faire itel deshonur / A la fille lur seignur'.

[71] *Eglamour*, ll.157-165. *YG*, ll.1044, 1054-1055.

Few women in the romances run off with their lovers and when this happens they do take care to protect their position. In *Beues of Hamtoun* Josian establishes Beues's status as an earl's son before leaving her family, and keeps her virginity until they are eventually married.[72] Cristabelle becomes betrothed to Eglamour before anything further happens between them. Even Melior in *William of Palerne*, possibly the woman most carried away by love, still has her position on her mind. She does throw caution to the wind and runs away with a man she believes beneath her, declaring that she would rather have William than all the world's wealth without him. These are brave words, but when the werewolf reveals William to be the son of a king she breathes a palpable sigh of relief:

> ȝif any miȝt be most ˙ meliors was gladdest,
> Þat hire loueliche lemman ˙ was lord of þat reaume.[73]

Inheritance and marriage thus were seen through the interests of propertied people, but who within that group made up the audience of Middle English romance? A look at the characterisations in the romances might help with this.

In considering the heroes, the derivative nature of these romances must always be borne in mind. The basic narrative and the main characters were preserved from their elitist French and Anglo-Norman sources. This means that the heroes were all of high status, for example knights, earls and kings. However, a closer look at the romances reveals a distinct focus upon knights. A large group of romances including *Lay le Freine, Gamelyn, Reinbrun, Sir Tristrem, Sir Perceval, Sir Eglamour, Otuel, Otuel and Roland, Sir Landevale* and *Amis and Amiloun* possess heroes who are knights. More interesting are those non-historical romances with heroes of higher status. In many, lead characters spend much of the narrative as knights before becoming kings. Isumbras, for example, becomes a king during the course of his adventures and that his time as a knight forms the bulk of the narrative is hardly surprising. However, although Horn, Degarre, William and Ywain are all royal heirs, their adventures also only see them become kings at the close of the tale, if at all. Havelok's story is much the same, except that he spends a good deal of time at even lower ranks before becoming knight and then king. *Arthour and Merlin* follows a different pattern in that it speaks of the youth of Arthur before he

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[72] *Beues*, ll.1113-1117, 1125-1128.
[73] *William*, ll.3310-3313, 4666-4667.

became king and after this point focuses on battles and skirmishes mainly involving other knights such as the sons of Lot. The *Seege of Troye* is largely made up of similar episodes. Romances in which the heroes become earls share the same focus. Beues succeeds to his title right at the end of the tale and again his adventures see him in his role as a knight. Guy of Warwick does not even stick around long enough to enjoy the earldom brought to him by his wife Felice, returning to his life as a knight under the guise of pilgrimage. Only *Athelston, Roland and Vernagu* and the *King of Tars* focus on their heroes as kings. This constant focus on knights and their world surely implies that the romance audience might be made up of knights too.

This focus is heightened by the very sketchy depiction of activity at royal and noble courts. The descriptions of kings and earls where they are not the main characters are vague and distant. Edgar in *Beues of Hamtoun*, Athelston in *Guy of Warwick* and Arthur in *Ywain and Gawain* are unimposing and, more importantly, inactive. This may have been to provide a background against which the action of the heroes could shine.[74] However the poor material description of the courts themselves is not so easily dismissed. Usually when heroes spend time at royal or noble courts there is a feast with sumptuous food which lasts for fourteen days. In addition the king or earl sometimes goes hunting with his guests and attendants. There are, however, no real details to these events. What kinds of sumptuous foods were served, which rich clothes were worn, what group of people was in attendance on the king, who went hunting with him and even what was hunted remain a mystery. While these sparse descriptions do fit in with the conventional formulaic style of the romances, their baldness is still surprising. Conventional descriptions of the characters, for example, can include comments on the beauty of the individual, their stature, colouring, speech and manners. In comparison conventional descriptions of courts have been skimped.

Does this indicate anything about a possible knightly audience for the romances? The presence of household knights in the stories is high. We come across them in the Charlemagne, Alexander and Horn romances, *Beues of Hamtoun, Amis and Amiloun, Sir Eglamour* and *Sir Degarre* for example. Yet, in these romances, there is an apparent lack of familiarity with the courts frequented by this type of knight. The detailed reference to a host of local officials, images of knights on their estates and sometimes, as

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[74] E. Peters, *The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327* (New Haven, 1970), pp.173-174.

in *Gamelyn*, a strong feeling of local solidarity does, in contrast, suggest that the romances may be aimed at a knightly audience based in the provinces.

There is an alternative theory that the audience of Middle English romances was made up of lower to lower middle rank people who aspired to improve their social position. They wanted the entertainment of what they thought were their social betters, but in English, to give them the feeling that they were 'on the up'.[75] This seems a reasonable enough proposal. There is a timeless fascination with those who have a more 'glamorous' lifestyle, and people always fantasise about a world better than that in which they live. It has been also pointed out that there might well be a certain element of flattery on the part of the poets with regard to their audiences. The writer of *Alexander A*, for example, addresses:

> Yee þat lengen in londe Lordes, and ooþer,
> Beurnes, or bachelers þat boldely thinken
> Wheþer in werre, or in wo wightly to dwell,
> For to lachen hem loose in hur lifetime,
> Or dere thinken to doo deedes of armes,
> To be proued for pris & prest of hemselue,
> Tend yee tytely forsothe & take goode heede.
> I shall sigge forsothe ensaumples ynow
> Of one, þe boldest beurn & best of his deeds,
> That euer steede bestrode of sterne was holden!

It is unlikely that a real group of noble warriors would need reminding of who they were, and it is probably that the poet is beguiling his audience with what they would like to hear.[76]

Any possible aspirant nature of the literature can only be judged by looking more closely at the romances. Poets incorporated in their work the tastes, values and experiences of their audiences.

A recent study has suggested that some of the interests of gentle landowners would have been shared with the new professional and commercial social groups.[77] These interests are reflected in the background of the romances where there are many unnamed people who have no individual part to play in the narrative. Considerable social diversity is displayed here. Bearing in mind that these characters are incidental to the

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[75] Pearsall, 'Development', p.12. Fletcher and Harris, 'Concept 'Popular'', p.296.

[76] *Alex. A*, ll.1-10. Pearsall, 'Audiences', p.44. T. Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (New Jersey, 1977), p.38.

[77] Crane, *Insular Romance*, p.44.

story the range of tradesmen and artisans, for example, is quite impressive. There are foresters, herdsmen, carpenters, taverners, quarrymen and colliers, builders, merchants, cooks, porters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, fishermen and sailors.[78] There are also some fuller depictions of tradesmen at work. *Sir Isumbras* sees the hero working the bellows and hammers as a blacksmith. In *Havelok* there are realistic descriptions of the sturgeon, talbot, seal, eel, whale, herring, mackerel, lamprey, salmon, cod, plaice and skate which are caught and taken to be sold in Lincoln. The description of the merchants' visit to Warwick in *Reinbrun* is more dazzling still. Their wares include gold and silver, brass, iron and steel, muslin and silk and clothes from Paris, wood wax and candles, cloves, pepper, cumin and aniseed, almonds and rice, figs, raisins, dates and pomegranates.[79]

However, these tradesmen are mainly just incidental characters and the descriptions employed in the narratives of merchants especially are very conventional. The merchant who cannot be trusted and who sells Christian children into infidel slavery is a stock image and is used as such. It is merchants to whom the king in *Floris and Blancheflour* turns when he decides to get rid of Blancheflour. They fulfil the same function for the evil mother in *Beues of Hamtoun* and in *Reinbrun* it is merchants who steal the child to sell in the East. The portrayal of artisan and mercantile activity displayed in the romances has no real depth save for those very few exceptions above. It probably helped to increase the breadth of appeal of the stories as it meant that there was a token something for everyone. This portrayal, however, would not have been particularly for the benefit of socially aspirant lower ranks.

Another group of people present in the background of the romances includes bachelors, vavasours, men-at-arms ('beurnes'), squires and swains, and in addition lesser attendants, for example servants, grooms and knaves.[80] It can be difficult to determine the meaning of these terms in a social context, let alone establish their meanings in a literary sense. For example, in the thirteenth century the term 'bachelor' was used

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[78] *Havelok*, ll.700-704, 752-760, 772-777, 1627-1632. *Beues*, pp.174, 175, l.4357. *AM*, l.529. *Otuel*, l.696. *Isumbras*, ll.88, 392-412. *William*, ll.39, 172-176, pp.76, 84, 92-93. *Guy*, ll.8680-8745, 20:7. *Reinbrun*, ll.4:10-5:11, 21:6, 64:4-6. *FB*, ll.155-162. *Degarre*, ll.259-268. NB These references are not exhaustive.

[79] *Isumbras*, ll.392-416. *Havelok*, ll.752-760. *Reinbrun*, ll.4:10-5:11.

[80] Bachelor, in *William*, l.1136; *Reinbrun*, l.57:3; *AM*, l.4547; *Otuel*, l.1074; *Beues*, l.3731; *Troye*, ll.159, 900. Bachelerie, in *AM*, l.4089; *KA*, ll.2660, 3532. Beurnes, in *Alex. A*, ll.55, 309. Young Warrior (fode), in *KT*, l.177. Knave, in *KA*, ll.3535, 4304; *Degarre*, l.412. Squire, in *Eglamour*, ll.50, 142; *YG*, ll.1376, 888; *AM*, l.2156; *Degarre*, l.140; *KA*, l.3300; *OR*, l.1597; *Sages*, ll.239, 1823; *Guy*, l.1988; *Otuel*, l.1636. Swain, in *AM*, l.146; *HC*, l.955; *Guy*, l.1035; *Beues*, l.372; *FB*, l.352. Vavasour, in *KA*, l.3823; *Sages*, l.1656; *AM*, l.4761; *Guy*, l.8839. NB instances of one term per line mentioned; list is not exhaustive.

interchangeably to mean a man close to knighthood or an actual knight. It could also denote a rank between knight and knight banneret.[81] A vavasour has been suggested to be a substantial landowner, or a powerful castellan, a man part of knightly society but no higher.[82] Swain has to be the most elusive term to determine, partly because it appears to have been more of a literary word than a social one. However, the interpretation generally followed is that given by the *Middle English Dictionary* of an attendant upon a knight such as a squire or a soldier of a rank lower than a knight.[83]

This group is made up of fighting men and there are close associations between them in the romances. Different types of warrior are often coupled together in instances such as the rush into battle. Vavasours and bachelors are placed together, as are 'beurnes' and bachelors, squires and swains and 'fotmen and squiers'. There are also links between warriors and lesser attendants, for example, swains and knaves, squires and 'garsouns', swains and grooms, knaves and grooms and servants and squires.[84] What is more interesting is a second association between these warriors and knights. These knights are not the major characters in the stories but are also among the 'extras' in the background. In forty-one instances of different types of fighting men being coupled together in the same line, thirty involve knights. Knights are coupled with bachelors, with squires, and with swains.[85] There was clearly therefore much social interaction between knights and the social group immediately below them and it is obviously possible that many of the young men in the shires aspired to knighthood.

In the early thirteenth century, possibly during c.1215-30, the numbers of knights in England had fallen dramatically, and towards the end of the century more and more candidates were failing to take up knighthood. Several theories have been put forward to explain this situation, including both the possible economic crisis or economic success of this social group. It has been noted that as a result of the fall of knight service quotas

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[81] J. W. M. Bean, '"Bachelor" and Retainer', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series 3 (1972), pp.117-131. Jones and Walker, 'Indentures', p.20.

[82] P. R. Coss, 'Literature and Social Terminology: The Vavasour in England', *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton*, eds. T. H. Aston, P. R. Coss and J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1983), pp.109-150 and 'The Formation of the Gentry', *Past and Present*, 147 (1995), p.53. D. Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (1992), pp.171-172.

[83] The editors of *AA* and *FB* have interpreted swain to mean young man and chamberlain respectively, but this is unusual.

[84] *AM*, ll.2156, 3762. *YG*, l.1549. *KA*, l.3301. *Sages*, l.239. *Alex. A*, l.2. *Guy*, ll.234, 721, 4515, 4516. *HC*, l.945. NB list is not exhaustive.

[85] *William*, l.840. *Beues*, ll.756, 582, 1488. *Reinbrun*, l.127:4. *Otuel*, ll.188, 197, 1535. *Tristrem*, ll.832, 1643. *Degarre*, ll.353, 412, 446. *Havelok*, ll.273, 343, 1329. *HC*, l.93. *Orfeo*, l.86. *OR*, l.1597. *Troye*, ll.82, 460. *AA*, ll.460, 1419, 1505. *AM*, l.303. *KA*, ll.141, 2836, 4356. *Sages*, ll.1602, 1823. NB list is not exhaustive.

there was no need for lords to encourage their tenants to become knights. Men also may
have been reluctant to undergo the ceremony, not only because of the costs of the
ceremony itself and the purchase of equipment, but also the additional expense brought
on by the new lifestyle and obligations. Some, like Anschetil de Martinwast lord of
Noseley who inherited his estate in 1246, wished to avoid the public duties which were
pressed upon those who were knighted, quite apart from the military duties subsequently
imposed by the king.[86]

However, those landowners who declined to take up knighthood still maintained
their connections and position within local society.[87] They also carried out the same
work in local administration as their knighted fathers and grandfathers, working in
borough and county courts, as keepers and justices of the peace, sheriffs, coroners,
escheators, foresters, tax collectors, local justices and the main members of inquests and
perambulations. They also represented their counties before the king, the royal courts,
and in parliament.[88] There was no clear line between the 'knights and non-knights' of
local society, or separating knights from squires and other lesser landowners whose
wealth too made them eligible for knighthood. By the fourteenth century in local
administration squires were to all intents and purposes seen as the equal of knights,
despite not having gone through the ceremony of knighthood.[89]

Although some of this social group may well have aimed for knighthood, on the
whole it is not a picture of a very aspirant class. While the knightly world portrayed in
the romances may have represented the ambitions of some, it could equally well portray
the world to which this group of knights, non-knights and associates (the gentry) saw
themselves as belonging already. It has been remarked that from the late thirteenth

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[86] On the decline of knighthood see K. Faulkner, 'The Transformation of Knighthood in Early
Thirteenth Century England', *EHR*, 111 (1996), especially pp.1-20, and N. Denholm-Young, 'Feudal
Society in the Thirteenth Century: the Knights', *History*, 29 (1944), pp.107-119. On a possible
economic crisis see P. R. Coss, 'Sir Geoffrey de Langley and the Crisis of the Knightly Class in
Thirteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 68 (1975), pp.3-37. On the fall of knight service see
Faulkner, 'Transformation', p.22. On the expenses of knighthood, public office and military service see
P. R. Coss, *Lordship, Knighthood and Locality: A Study in English Society c.1180-c.1280* (Cambridge,
1991), pp.253-254, and *The Knight in Medieval England 1000-1400* (Stroud, 1993), pp.60-67; N. Saul,
Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century (Oxford, 1981), pp.44-46;
Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, pp.15-16, and 'Miles in Armis Strenuus: The Knight at War', *TRHS*,
Sixth Series 5 (1995), pp.201-207; Crouch, *Image of Aristocracy*, pp.146-147.
[87] Coss, *Lordship*, p.308.
[88] A. Verduyn, 'The selection and appointments of justices of the peace in 1338', *BIHR*, 68 (1995),
pp.1-25. R. C. Palmer, *The County Courts of Medieval England 1150-1350* (Princeton, New Jersey,
1982), pp.292-293. N. Denholm-Young, *The Country Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford,
1969), pp.1, 48-52, 58, 65. Saul, *Gloucestershire Gentry*, chapter IV. Coss, 'Gentry', p.55.
[89] Denholm-Young, *Country Gentry*, pp.1, 22. Saul, *Gloucestershire Gentry*, pp.24, 30. Prestwich,
Armies and Warfare, pp.17-18.

century there was a shift in the conception of chivalry and the perception of a knight.
Those seen as knights were increasingly the sons of knights or those who were militarily
successful. Many whose birth entitled them to be knighted, but who were not, still
maintained the lifestyle, obligations and estate of knights and this would have made the
perception of who was actually knighted difficult.[90] For example, it has been shown that
returns from sheriffs in 1297, listing those with twenty librates of land prior to the issue
of military summons, included many men who in the past would have been knights. The
forty-one *armigeri* returned by the sheriff of Northamptonshire included family heads
who had not yet taken up knighthood, heads of collateral families who would have
traditionally become knights and whose families would have provided additional knights,
as well as men who had become the head of previously knightly families by marriage.
The picture could not have been made any clearer once brothers and younger sons of
knights, like Robert de Langley and James de Clinton, began using their families' seals
without having been knighted themselves.[91] The rise in status of squires during this
period, many of whom were wealthy too and who performed the same public duties,
could only have increased this difficulty. Therefore, could it not be the case that the
knightly world of the romances, with its concern about property and family stability,
belief in custom, law and social order and its focus on local rather than central affairs,
was the world which knights and gentry largely perceived themselves as belonging to?

This group were, however, fighting men and the romances themselves are
predominately concerned with martial affairs. A closer look at aspects related to military
matters may help to show whether the knightly world of the romances was something
this large group was familiar with or simply wished for.

Almost every romance sees armies called to fight, often occurring several times
within a single story. It is immediately apparent that there was a familiarity in the
romances with writs of military summons. One example comes from *Havelok*, although
not in the guise of this type of writ. It has been suggested that the call to parliament in
Lincoln is in reality a 'literary version' of a writ of military summons because of its highly
unusual use of a specific date for the meeting. It calls for people:

> Of Marz þe seuentenþe day

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[90] M. H. Keen, *Chivalry* (1984), p.144.
[91] P. R. Coss, 'Knights, Esquires and the Origins of Social Gradation in England', *TRHS*, Sixth Series 5
(1995), pp.156-157, 173-174.

> To Lincoln with gode stedes
> And al þe wepne þat knith ledes

and this at least points to an awareness of military summons.[92] More usually it is the timing given in these writs which is reflected in the tales. In *Horn Childe* Haþeolf's barons and knights were armed and ready to fight against the Danes on Teesside 'Wiþin þat ich fourtennizt' and against the Irish in Westmoreland 'wiþin elleuennizt'. When the sultan in the *King of Tars* decided on military means to gain his bride he ordered his men that:

> Rizt bi þat day a fourtennizt
> Þou schul ben alle redi dizt.

Likewise, in *Ywain and Gawain*, Alundyne's steward specified that her knights 'be here byn þis fowretenyght' to repulse Arthur's attack.[93] The timing allowed for the muster in these examples is quite short, which reflected procedures in real emergencies. Kings planning campaigns could give several months of notice to their men, as Edward I did in 1297 when he issued writs on the 15th of May for an assembly on the 7th of July or as Edward II did when he summoned men on the 23rd of December 1324 for the 17th of March 1325. However, in times of invasion a much quicker response was demanded. For example, because of the imminent invasion of Queen Isabella in the summer of 1326 Edward II issued writs on the 8th of August calling for a muster on the 31st of that month, and after the queen had landed the time allowed for the muster was shortened to five days in order to be able to march against her army.[94]

Who was expected to come is much more vague. In *Horn Childe* the call included 'Al þat hold her lond fre' and in *Roland and Vernagu* Charlemagne summoned 'Al þat mizt armes bere', but this is about as specific as it gets. When Horn gathers an army to rescue Rymenhild he 'gedred folk eueraware' as he rode, but whether they accompanied him out of loyalty, service or for money is unclear.[95] The use of hired troops also occurs in the romances. When King Anguisant arrives for battle in *Arthour and Merlin* 'Of purchas he hadde þousendes ten'.[96] Usually, however, there is

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[92] *Havelok*, ll.2560, 2573-2574. Smithers, 'Four Notes', pp.203-206.
[93] *HC*, ll.61-66, 171. *KT*, ll.139-140. *YG*, ll.1213-1216.
[94] *Parl. Writs*, II.ii, pp.281, 688, 756-757, 761.
[95] *HC*, ll.164, 843. *RV*, l.80.
[96] *AM*, l.4507, ll.4361, 4378, 4407, 4433, 4467.

acceptance that a king's 'folk' will help him in times of danger and no further qualification seems to have been necessary.[97]

The acquaintance with military summons seen in the romances would seem to indicate an audience of men of fighting rank, who owed military service. Supporting this is the obvious familiarity with arms and armour displayed in the romances.[98] The sword, shield, helmet and lance or spear appear to be standard items for all the stories. Aside from these a considerable range of weapons and armour is present. Beyond the obvious hauberk or 'brini' and 'harness' specific parts of body armour are named, such as the aventail, barbel, bascinet, corselet, cuisses, gorget, gauntlet, habergeon, haketoun and gambisoun, jambers, 'oyllier', pizaine and visor. Weapons used in the romances include bows and crossbows, daggers, falchions, gaveloks, pikes, maces and 'lyttille Scottes speres'.[99] Several types of axe are mentioned such as the bill, poleaxe, halberd and hachet, as are several types of shield including the 'quarre', talevace, buckler and targe. Sometimes aspects of individual weapons are spoken of, such the coronal of a spear, the lainer on which a shield was suspended around the neck and the scabbard and pommel of a sword.

Poets and audiences certainly had experience of warfare. In the romances there are details of military personnel, organisation and strategy. Foot and mounted soldiers, 'sawders' and sergeants, crossbowmen and archers, spearmen, sappers and catapult and siege engine operators all make appearances in the romances.[100] Armies are divided into companies or 'wards' and ordered into position on the battlefield. Schiltrom, 'sarrilich' and 'punay' fighting formations are used. There are portable lodgements for the troops and pavilions for their leaders. Spies report on enemy activities. When besieging towns and cities the army protects itself from attack using ditches and palisades. The besieged are assaulted by means of belfries, are bombarded by mangonels and springalds casting heavy missiles and Greek-fire and undermined by sapping operations.[101]

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[97] More fully discussed pp.70-71.

[98] See Appendix A for details and references to the following arms and armour.

[99] *Perceval*, 1.191.

[100] Mounted soldiers, *KA*, 1.6105. Foot soldiers, *OR*, ll.1720, 1753; *AM*, 1.3762; *KA*, ll.1400, 1609. Crossbowmen, *KA*, ll.2609, 3302; *OR*, 1.1591. Archers, *OR*, ll.1598, 1736; *KA*, ll.2609, 3302; *Alex. A*, ll.268, 290. Sawders (professional soldiers), *KA*, 1.1397. Sergeant, *KA*, ll.3459, 3473; *Guy*, ll.6559, 6565; *Havelok*, ll.2117, 2362. Spearmen, *OR*, 1.1591. Sappers, *KA*, 1.1218. Siege engine operators, *OR*, 1.1598.

[101] Wards, *AM*, 1.3841, *KA*, 1.1996. Schiltrom, *Guy*, ll.2010, 2317; *Orfeo*, 1.187, text cited is the Auchinleck MS. Sarrilich, *KA*, ll.2128, 3761. Punay, *AM*, 1.3233. Portable lodgements for an army, *KA*, 1.4288; *AM*, 1.6938. Pavilions, *Troye*, ll.1602, 1826; *OR*, ll.694, 1768; *AM*, ll.2494, 3171; *KA*, ll.481, 861; *Guy*, ll.3101, 3682; *Otuel*, ll.686, 841; *Beues*, ll.3356, 3969; *Tristrem*, ll.3077, 3127; *Perceval*, 1.1131; *Landevale*, ll.78, 91. Spies, *AM*, ll.3805-3810; *KA*, ll.3525-3517; *Guy*, ll.2458-2476.

The proposition of an audience composed of the fighting social groups seems to be supported by the portrayal of arms, armour and knowledge of warfare, but the romances' familiarity with these subjects does not necessarily specifically imply knights. In 1285 the statute of Winchester specified that every man was to be assessed and sworn to arms according to the value of his property. The assessment ranged from those with fifteen librates of land and forty marks worth of chattels having hauberks, helmets, swords, knives and horses, through to those with only twenty marks worth of goods having swords, knives and other small weapons.[102] The bearing of arms was a requirement based on economics, not social status, and so an audience familiar with military equipment need not be knightly or one aspiring to be such.

What was exclusive to knights as a social group was the ceremony of knighthood. It seems to have been very popular with audiences, occurring twenty-one times in only fourteen romances.[103] This is be expected if the audience were knightly since this ceremony was probably the single most expensive time of a knight's life. It could also be expected if the audience aspired to knighthood, since this was what they would have desired for themselves. It therefore seems reasonable to expect this event to be celebrated in the romances.

The many circumstances under which knighthood could be conferred are well represented in the romances. There are group knightings in several different settings, for example. In *Horn Childe* Haþeolf conferred knighthood upon sixty men after the battle against the Danes. At the knighting of Alexander by his father in *Kyng Alisaunder*:

Dubbed weren an hundreþ kniʒttes
For his loue myd hym þere-riʒttes.

On a crown-wearing occasion in *King Horn*, Horn and all his companions were knighted, and in *Guy of Warwick* Guy and twenty barons' sons were knighted at the feast of the

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Ditches, *Troye*, 1.1644; *KA*, 1.2654. Palisades, *KA*, 1.2781. Wooden towers, *KA*, 1.2773. Mangonels, *Richard*, L 1.2070; *AM*, 1.2430; *Guy*, 1.2431; *KA*, ll.1208, 1591. Springalds, *Beues*, 1.4346; *Troye*, 1.1069; *Reinbrun*, 1.81:5. Siege engines, *Richard*, L 1.967-974; *William*, ll.2858, 3000; *Alex. A*, 1.294; *KA*, ll.1213, 5095; *Troye*, 1.1062; *Guy*, 1.363. Catapults, *KA*, 1.1191. Peises (heavy missiles), *KA*, ll.1619, 1629. Greek-fire, *KA*, ll.1614, 1902; *Richard*, L ll.1828, 1925. Sapping operations, *KA*, 1.1612; *AM*, 1.2429. See Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, especially chapters 8 and 12.
[102] W. Stubbs, *Select Charters* (Reprinted Oxford, 1948), p.466, section VI. H. Summerson, 'The Enforcement of the Statute of Winchester, 1285-1327', *Journal of Legal History*, 13 (1992), pp.232-250.
[103] *Degarre*, *HC*, *AA*, *Perceval*, *KA*, *Troye*, *Reinbrun*, *AM*, *William*, *Eglamour*, *KH*, *Beues*, *Guy*, *Havelok*.

Holy Trinity.[104] Knightings could also occur when an individual's potential was spotted, for example, by a lord who wished to secure a good fighter. Degarre and Isumbras were offered knighthood and service by an earl and king respectively after their military prowess was seen. In *Horn Childe*, Horn's companions Tebaud and Winwald are knighted by the king of France, and Gariis and Apelston by a British earl, because of their obvious military abilities.[105] More ordinarily many were accorded knighthood by lords in whose household they had grown up in. This is certainly the case for Reinbrun, Amis, Amiloun, Arthur, Beues, Guy, Horn, William, and Degrebelle in *Sir Eglamour*.[106]

Unfortunately the ceremony itself is not so clearly represented in the literature. The language used for the conferring of knighthood is invariably present. Knights are always 'made', more usually 'dubbed'.[107] Some romances speak of receiving the 'ordur of kniȝt' or the 'seruise of þe dubbing', but the details of the ceremony are sketchy.[108] The stroke conferring knighthood is sometimes mentioned, using either the hand or the sword,[109] but the night of prayer, ritual bath and dressing seen, for example, at the Feast of Swans in 1306 is usually absent.[110] The meaning attached to the elements of the ceremony is not expanded upon beyond the exhortation to be a good knight.[111]

What is always mentioned is the giving of arms. Armour is often given as well as weapons, and less frequently horses too. The detail given varies enormously, from the 'hors & armes briȝt' given to Reinbrun, William, Degarre, Amis and Amiloun, to the:

> stede & sadel
> Helme and brini and hauberioun
> Gaumbers quissers and aketoun
> Quarre scheld gode swerd of stiel

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[104] *HC*, 1.101. *KA*, ll.817-818. *KH*, ll.475-477, 519-520. *Guy*, ll.697-722. On group knightings see F. Lyons, 'Aspects of the Knighting Ceremony', *The Medieval Alexander Legend and Romance Epic: Essays in Honour of David J. A. Ross*, eds. P. Noble, L. Polak and C. Isoz (1982), pp.125, 127. M. Powicke, *Military Obligation in Medieval England: A Study in Liberty and Duty* (Reprinted Connecticut, 1975), p.171.

[105] *Degarre*, ll.407-414. *Isumbras*, ll.482-483. *HC*, ll.452, 463-465. On nobles knighting see Powicke, *Military Obligation*, p.104.

[106] *Reinbrun*, ll.53:10-12, 64:7-8. *AA*, ll.163-167. *AM*, ll.4647-4650. *Beues*, ll.969-977. *Guy*, ll.697-722. *KH*, ll.496-504. *HC*, ll.421-425. *William*, 1100-1103. *Eglamour*, ll.1028-1039.

[107] *Isumbras*, 1.483. *Degarre*, 1.414. *HC*, ll.101, 419, 422, 452, 463. *AA*, 1.164. *KA*, 1.808, 817. *Troye*, 1.1310. *Reinbrun*, ll.53:10, 64:7, 118:7. *AM*, ll.2972, 4598, 4650. *Eglamour*, 1.1028. *William*, 1.1100. *KH*, ll.499, 520. *Beues*, 1.970. *Guy*, ll.698, 699, 702, 706, 710, 717.

[108] *William*, 1.1096. *KA*, 1.819.

[109] *Havelok*, ll.2315-2316. *KA*, 1.813. *KH*, ll.503-504. *Eglamour*, ll.1028-1039.

[110] H. Johnstone, *Edward of Carnarvon 1284-1307* (Manchester, 1946), pp.106-109. Keen, *Chivalry*, pp.64-65 on the rituals of the ceremony. Gifts of clothing as part of the ceremony appears to be mentioned when those knighted are entering the lord's service and will be discussed later.

[111] *KH*, ll.503-504. *KA*, ll.812-814.

And launce stef bite and wel

given to Arthur in *Arthour and Merlin*.[112]   Sometimes the significance of the conveying

of the arms as the major part of the ceremony is shown.   In *Kyng Alisaunder*, for

example, Philip 'Girde hym [Alexander] wiþ riche swerde'.   However, the main emphasis

is on the arms themselves rather than the meaning attached to them.[113]   The equipment is

the most important feature of the knighthood ceremony in the romances, being the only

element of it always to be included.   The accounts of knighthoods are not really what

might be expected for a knightly audience familiar with the event.   The actions of Haslak

in *Reinbrun* who took his father's arms and 'Me selues y dobbed the kniȝt þare' are

certainly not anticipated since they seem rather a mockery of the institution of

knighthood.[114]   The weaponry and armour were the most important elements to romance

audiences and everyone of a certain economic status possessed those arms.

Bearing this in mind it is interesting that the romances favour fifteen years as the

age at which young men become knights even when there was no set age in real life.

When they were fourteen noble boys were only just learning to ride and fight and not

considered an adult until they were around twenty.[115]   Yet Horn in *Horn Childe*, the two

heroes in *Amis and Amiloun* and Degrebelle in *Sir Eglamour* were all fifteen when they

were knighted.[116]   In *King Horn* Horn was knighted 'Mid his twelf yfere', but this seems

to be exceptional.[117]   In the slightly later romance of *Octovian*, Florent is fifteen and

constantly referred to as 'child' both before and after he is knighted.[118]   Since his deeds

and knighthood were not related to his maturity there must have been some other reason

behind the significance of this age.   The answer could lie with the statute of Winchester.

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[112] *Reinbrun*, 1.53:11. *William*, 1.1103. *Degarre*, ll.408-409. *AA*, 1.163. *AM*, ll.2974-2978. Horses mentioned in the tales are usually the warhorses, destriers and coursers, palfreys for travelling and sumpters for carrying luggage. Courser, *Troye*, 1.436; *KA*, 1.4052; *Guy*, 1.720; *Gamelyn*, ll.179-609. Destrier, *AM*, ll.1370, 2565; *Sages*, 1.402; *KA*, ll.850, 1798; *Guy*, 1.2356; *Reinbrun*, 1.104:12; *Beues*, 1.4068. Palfrey, *YG*, ll.568, 1592; *AM*, 1.311; *Troye*, ll.436, 861; *KA*, ll.1379. 3203; *Sages*, 1.1031; *Guy*, ll.720, 3268; *Havelok*, 1.2601; *Orfeo*, 1.156; *Beues*, ll.1353, 1608; *Tristrem*, 1.3074; *LLF*, 1.58; *FB*, 1.364; *Degarre*, ll.411, 751. Sumpter, *Guy*, ll.3258, 4673; *KA*, ll.826, 1410; *Beues*, 1.1487. On these animals and their use see A. Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses: Military Service and the English Aristocracy Under Edward III* (Woodbridge, 1994), pp.31, 58, 62-69. Other animals mentioned include the chacer, *Guy*, 1.3210; hackney, *Beues*, ll.1255, 1259; mule, *Guy*, 1.1330.
[113] *KA*, 1.812.
[114] *Reinbrun*, 1.118:7.
[115] N. Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530* (1984), pp.5-7.
[116] *HC*, 1.425. *AA*, 1.163. *Eglamour*, 1.1021.
[117] *KH*, 1.496.
[118] F. McSparran (ed.), *Octovian*, EETS, OS 289 (1986), ll.794, 801, 816, 855, 873, 877-880, 891, 903, 906, 950.

The assessment of arms applied to all men between the ages of fifteen and sixty.[119] Therefore it seems likely that the special attention paid to the age of fifteen in the romances was related to a young man's first swearing of arms.

The romances thus reveal a mix of aspects concerning knighthood ceremonies. The sketchy detail of the ceremonies and the popularity of the event could well indicate an audience wishing to be knightly. However, whilst there is only a limited philosophical description of the event and some of its more symbolic elements and thus no true celebration of knighthood, the language, weaponry and dubbing are well detailed. Not all knights had the full experience of Edward of Caernarfon and his fellows at the Feast of Swans, but mere dubbing was no longer enough in the thirteenth century and some ceremony would have been experienced.[120] Those coming to be knighted under the duress of various distraints of knighthood during the period, for example, might not have had such an occasion in store for them.[121] Bearing this in mind the focus on arms in the romances need not necessarily exclude an audience of knights. Except for a few lucky individuals provided for by the king, candidates paid for their equipment themselves and this is what made the occasion so expensive. By focusing on arms rather than other aspects of the knighthood ceremony, the romances thus catered for an audience that included those who had experienced knighthood and those who bore the same arms because of their economic status.

Aside from arms, robes were increasingly the king's gift to a knight in the ceremony and the clothing worn by the knight is mentioned in five romances. Sometimes this is limited to comment on how the knights were dressed, such as Achilles 'In riche atyr' in the *Seege of Troye* and Guy in *Guy of Warwick*:

> Of cloth of Tars & riche cendel
> Was he[r] dobbeing euerich a del;
> Þe panis al of fow & griis,
> Þe mantels weren of michel priis[122].

On other occasions there is a specific note of the gift of robes and/or cloth during the ceremony. When Antour knights Arthur in *Arthour and Merlin* 'First he fond him cloþ and cradel', the duke in *Amis and Amiloun* gives his young knights 'Hors & wepen &

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[119] *Select Charters*, p.466.
[120] Coss, *The Knight in Medieval England*, pp.64-65.
[121] Powicke, *Military Obligation*, p.70 on varying ceremonies, pp.71-174 on distraints of knighthood.
[122] *Troye*, 1.1311. *Guy*, ll.710-713.

worþly wede', and in *Horn Childe* when Haþeolf dubs sixty men after the battle on Teesside, he 'ȝaf hem riche mede'.[123]

During the period 1200-75 there was a movement away from the reward of land for service. New means of reward included money and robes, hence robes were also linked to service.[124] During the reign of Edward II, Nicholas de Kyriel served Stephen de Segrave for 'robes et seales pur mey tiers de Bachiller, et gages pur xij chivaux et pur xij garcons'. Bartholomew de Enfield agreed to serve Humphrey de Bohun in February 1307 in return for which he would receive 'robes et seles come ses autres bachelers'. In June 1313, Thomas Fillol agreed to serve John de Grey, lord of Dyffryn Clwyd and for the term of his life would receive from 'sire Johan et de ses heyrs chekun an treys robes en une sele si cume apert a chivaler'.[125] This is reflected in the romances. Aside from Arthur, the above men were knighted by the lord in whose household they had grown up, or in order serve him in war. In *Guy of Warwick*, for example, Roland specifically knights Guy 'In her seruise armes to vnder-fong'.[126] The robes in these examples are not simply an aspect of the ceremony, but part of agreements of service or indentures between a lord and his man. Even the language of indentures is present in the romances. In *Arthour and Merlin* Arthur knights Galathin to be his man 'in pays and fiȝt', which was the common agreement between lords and retainers in this period.[127]

There are more direct examples of contracts of service offered in the romances. In *Horn Childe*, Elidan offers Horn 'Bi ȝere a þousend pounde' to stay with him and be his man. The sultan in *Sir Isumbras* offers the hero 'gold and fee' if he will join him in military service. In *Amis and Amiloun* when a knight at Amis' court sees Amoraunt at the gate with the leprous Amiloun, he tells the boy that 'richeman he wald him make' in return for his service.[128] The reward of money is reflective of real life indentures. For John de Bracebridge's faithful service Robert lord of Mohaut agreed in August 1310 to pay him 'dys livrees de annuele rente en la ville de Walton sur Trente en le counte de Derby a recevire des tenauntz'. In June 1317 Thomas of Lancaster settled with Thomas Lovel that he should be given rents from the earl's lands in parts of Wiltshire in return for

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[123] *AM*, 1.2973. *AA*, 1.167. *HC*, 1.102.
[124] S. L. Waugh, 'Tenure to Contract: lordship and clientage in thirteenth-century England', *EHR*, 101 (1986), pp.817-820. F. Lachaud, 'Liveries of Robes in England, c.1200-c.1330', *EHR*, 111 (1996), pp.283-293. Powicke, *Military Obligation*, pp.69, 74, 116.
[125] Jones and Walker, 'Indentures', nos. 13, 14, 21.
[126] *Guy*, 1.704.
[127] *AM*, 1.4598.
[128] *HC*, ll.679-681, here 1.681. *Isumbras*, ll.270-275, here 1.270. *AA*, 1.1938.

life service. In August 1328 Henry Percy retained the service of Ralph Neville for £100, to be paid twice yearly at the feast of St Martin and the octave of the Trinity, which was to come from the manors of Topcliffe and Pocklington.[129] Such details of the level of reward itself, the manner of payment and where the money was to come from are not given in the examples of indentures in the romances. Bearing in mind the nature of the evidence, this is not surprising. What the romances do show, with their robes and riches as reward for service, is familiarity with this type of agreement.

Military aspects of the romances do not seem to suggest that the literature was that of an aspirant audience. They show a world familiar to knights and 'non-knights': one of military summons, indentures, experience of arms and warfare and even knighthood. The themes in the romances of inheritance, land and property rights, family stability, family continuance and belief in custom, law and social order all support a picture of an audience drawn from the large and increasingly influential social group made up of knights and gentry.

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[129] Jones and Walker, 'Indentures', nos. 18, 23, 33.

Chapter 2 - Middle English Romance and Kingship.

This chapter aims to show how Middle English romances can reveal a great deal about the attitudes of their audiences to kingship. They demonstrate popular expectations of kings and what their role was considered to be in practical terms. For instance, they show royal characters active in the areas of justice and the practice of royal government and fulfilling military duties. They also reveal more theoretical ideas about kingship, for example the popularly perceived relationship between a king and his people, an understanding of treason and the special qualities attributed to kings themselves.

Some romances, such as *Havelok*, deliberately set out to explore both these areas.[1] In this tale there is a lengthy description of the 'ideal king' Athelwold. He loves God and all his people and protects the interests of both. He makes good laws and enforces them vigorously, with no heed to rank or wealth. He is a fearsome warrior whose international reputation secures the safety of his subjects, even when they travel overseas. He is generous, courteous and kind, and the achievements of his reign are the goals to which Havelok aspires throughout the narrative.[2] Other tales detail schemes of ideal kingship or advice on how to rule well. In *William of Palerne*, for example, William's foster-father advised him to be faithful to all and to take the part of poor men in distress. There is also advice on the role of queens in this romance, who it is said should be courteous, humble, pious, love their lord and intercede on behalf of the poor and those in trouble. William's rule itself has similar qualities as that of Athelwold in *Havelok*. He is praised in like manner for making and enforcing good laws, showing impartiality in justice and making good use of wise counsellors.[3]

These direct discussions on kingship are, however, exceptional. More usually, popular feeling on the subject is revealed through the setting of the tale, the speeches of the protagonists and the action of the storyline. Inevitably these areas provide only glimpses of attitudes to kingship, but pooled together from the body of Middle English romance under consideration these glimpses provide a substantive and detailed 'popular'

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[1] Discussions on *Havelok* and kingship include: Crane, *Insular* Romance, pp.48-52; G. Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.41-46; S. Delany, *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology* (Manchester, 1990); J. Halverson, '*Havelok the Dane* and Society', *Chaucer Review*, 6 (1971-1972), pp.52-62; R. W. Hanning, '*Havelok the Dane*: Structure, Symbols, Meaning', *Studies in Philology*, 64 (1967), pp.586-605; L. O. Purdon, 'The Rite of Vassalage in *Havelok the Dane*', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series 20 (1994), pp.25-39; D. Staines, '*Havelok the Dane*: A Thirteenth-Century Handbook for Princes', *Speculum*, 51 (1976), pp.602-623; C. Stuart, '*Havelok the Dane* and Edward I in the 1290s', *Studies in Philology*, 93 (1996), pp.349-364; J. Weiss, 'Structure and Characterisation in *Havelok the Dane*', *Speculum*, 44 (1969), pp.247-257.
[2] *Havelok*, ll.27-105.
[3] *William*, ll.328-340, 5115-5135, 5476-5484.

picture. Such fragmentary evidence could be dismissed as circumstantial detail. It could be the result of familiarity with kings leading expeditions or holding parliament, for example, and not a reflection of the considered and consistent views of the knightly and gentry group on kingship. However it is not just the weight of detail gleaned from the literature that convinces that the romance evidence does show that their audiences did think about and possess strong attitudes on this subject. The poets also used the more conceptual ideas of political philosophers in their work. Moreover they did this with the familiarity associated with a sure knowledge of the ideas and understanding of their audience.

Several of the more abstract concepts about kingship appear in the romances. Some of these were common ideas, such as the division of spiritual and temporal power that is seen, for example, in *Joseph of Arimathie*. When Christ ordains Josaphe as bishop in a dream Josaphe is entrusted with 'soules to kepe'. Others 'schal bodiliche hem ȝeme' and he shall care for them 'gostiliche'.[4] Another familiar idea was the use of the body as an analogy for the kingdom. When Alexander is poisoned at the end of the romance *Kyng Alisaunder* this parallel is used to great effect:

> Þoo þe kyng was ydelue,
> Vche duk went to hym-selue,
> And maden woo and cuntek ynouȝ.
> Vche of hem neiȝ oþer slouȝ,
> For to haue þe kynges quyde.
> Michel bataille was hem myde.
> Þus it fareþ in þe myddelerde,
> Amonge þe lew[ed] and þe lerede!
> Whan þe heued is yfalle,
> Acumbred ben þe membres alle.[5]

Less commonplace concepts are also found. The philosophical reconciling by St Thomas Aquinas of the Aristotelian view of political relationships within the state with St Augustine's belief in the equality of status of all men is present, for example.[6] Aquinas's

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[4] *Joseph*, ll.306, 309, 310. *Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae*, p.199: Henry III to the bishop 1245/6: 'spiritualia tracentur ab ecclesiasticus et spiritalibus, secularia vero a secularibus'. *Bracton*, iv.375.
[5] *KA*, ll.8010-8019. *Fleta*, p.37: 'if the king should lack wisdom he will destroy the people, for the head being corrupt, the corruption descends to the members, and if understanding and virtue flourish not in the head, it follows that the other members cannot perform their office'. *Bracton*, ii.306. *Latini*, p.352. *Liber Custumarum*, p.16.
[6] *Medieval Contribution to Political Thought*, pp.27-28, 30, 33. St Augustine wrote of the original freedom and equality of all men in *De Civitate Dei*, xix.15. St Thomas reconciled this with the

explanation of why some men seem to be more equal than others, notably kings ruling over their fellows, is to be found detailed in the *Alexander B* fragment. When Alexander travels east towards India he meets the Gymnosophists who ask him why he must conquer the world if he is only mortal like themselves. He replies that it is his destiny, which he cannot resist, for:

> ʒif god sente euery gome · þat goþ up-on molde
> Wordliche wisdam · & wittus iliche,
> Betur miʒhte no burn · be þan an oþur;
> A-pere miʒhte þe pore · to parte wiþ þe riche.
> Þanne ferde þe worlde as a feld · þat ful were of bestes,
> Whan eueri lud liche wel · lyuede up-on erþe.
> For þatt enchesoun god ones · oþur chef kinguus,
> Þat scholde maistrus be maad · ouur mene peple[7].

Another, more theological idea expressed in the literature is the Biblical stress on the divine favour and punishment of a king, as a result of his own actions applying also to his people because he represents them. In the very dark romance *Athelston* the king becomes dominated by ill will to the point of tyranny. The archbishop punishes him for his behaviour by excommunicating him and placing his kingdom under interdict. The archbishop's curse falls on the people as well as on the king despite their innocence in the situation:

> I schal brynge vpon þy lond
> Hungyr and þyrst ful strong,
> Cold, drouʒþe, and sorwe;
> I schal nouʒt leue on þy lond
> Wurþ þe gloues on þy hond,
> To begge ne to borwe.[8]

Further conceptual elements of kingship are also found in the romances, concerning for example the king and justice, ill will, tyranny, the separation of the person and office of the king, and how to decide the fate of a failed king. These facets will be

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Classical view of the paramount importance of the state: order among men was based on their inequalities, but without affecting their freedom.

[7] *Alex. B*, ll.101-108.

[8] *Athelston*, ll.489-494. *Leviticus* 4.3: 'If it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people' applied to an anointed king also.

discussed in greater depth later. However the range with which attitudes to kingship are discussed in the romances clearly emphasises the point that cultural evidence does provide strong arguments on the wider thinking on kingship of sub-aristocratic society.

Middle English romance provides two areas of insight into popular images of kingship. The first group of images to be discussed deal with the area of expectations of the king and the more practical details of his role. These can be divided into several sections comprising justice, the practice of royal government and military duties.

Justice is a major preoccupation in the romances and it is viewed both on a conceptual and practical level. Ideals about the king and justice are very prominent and echo those of the political philosophers. As seen from their discussions the function of a king was to protect his subjects externally by military means and internally through the provision of justice.[9] The king, as would be expected, is firmly identified as the source of law and justice and both of these activities are seen as important, perhaps being a reflection of the legislative work of Edward I.[10] The origin of law was without doubt the king, and the promulgating of law was an expected duty as part of his supposed tireless concern for his people. The dispensation of justice is one quality particularly selected by poets to define a good king. There are marked references to it in this context with the descriptions of Athelwold in *Havelok* and William in *William of Palerne*. Both kings make good laws and enforce them to their utmost.[11]

Although the king is firmly placed at the centre of legal activity in the romances there is no mention of the law-making process. Statute is firmly held to belong to the king, but there is no reference to any involvement of the magnates, or the 'community', in the forming of it. This is not to say that romance poets and audiences believed that law was made solely by the king. The making of statutes should not be expected to appear in the romances since it is not likely to be the focus of action-based stories. There is some indication of statute being regarded as the work of more than just the king, however, and a firm refutation of the belief of Roman legists that the word of the

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[9] *Fleta*, p.1: 'kingly power should be equipped, not only with arms against the rebellious and the nations that rise up against the king and his realm, but also with laws for the meet governance of his peaceful subjects and peoples'. *Bracton*, ii.19, 166.

[10] Burns, *Medieval Political Thought*, p.426, Justinian's *Code* states that the emperor is the source of law.

[11] *Havelok*, ll.27-29. *William*, ll.5476-5477, 5240-5242.

king had the force of law.[12] In *Arthour and Merlin* Uther Pendragon holds a feast at which he becomes enamoured of Ygerne, the wife of Duke Hoel. Hoel takes exception to Uther's advances and leaves for Tintagel with Ygerne and his knights. Uther's insistence that he had laid down the law that all should stay for the seven days of the feast is given great attention. The poet patently disapproved of this. The king's wish was not true law. It had not been made with advice of the barons for the common profit of the realm:

> 'Where is þe douke Tintagel?
> Icham adrad him is nouȝt wel.'
> 'Certes sir' quaþ a kniȝt,
> 'He is went homward toniȝt
> Wiþ wiif and kniȝtes to his lond.'
> 'Eye' quaþ þe king 'þat is me schond!
> Þef! He haþ broken mi statout
> He schal abigge wiþouten dout' -
> His statout was and his lawe
> Þat non no schuld in seuen dawe
> Þat were of priis oþer noblay
> Fram þat fest wende oway
> Bot it were bi þe kinges wille
> And who so dede he schuld spille.
>
> Þe king com wiþ his barnage
> And tounes brent in gret rage
> He bilay him swiþe long
> And men slouȝ - it was wiþ wrong.[13]

If the king alone declares something statute then it is no true statute, but will masquerading as law.

The issuing of statute is not the only aspect of the king's relationship with law regarded with importance. It is interesting to see the emphasis given to the king having studied law so that he had a personal knowledge of it. In *Horn Childe* King Houlac turns Horn's education over to Herlaund, stressing that he be taught 'þe lawes boþe eld & newe'.[14] Study of the law also receives special attention during the education of Florentine in the *Seven Sages of Rome*. His seven tutors instruct him in grammar, music,

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[12] Ullman, 'Political Thought of Civilians', p.120 on Baldus of Perugia: 'he is *lex animata*'. *Bracton*, ii.19. Burns, *Medieval Political Thought*, p.426 on Ulpian and what pleases the prince has the force of law.
[13] *AM*, ll.2380-2394, 2421-2424.
[14] *HC*, l.274.

astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, rhetoric and physics. Before their commission however, they petition for their appointment. The fact that the poet details only the promise of Bancillas that 'j wylle teche the alle the lawys' shows the value put upon this study for a royal heir. Indeed the entire romance is a lesson in the paramount importance of this knowledge. Florentine soon 'passede his maistres euerichon', but it is his knowledge of legal matters which dominates the storyline and ultimately saves him from the fury of his stepmother whose advances he had scorned.[15] It was essential for a king to have a thorough grounding in law for how else could he hope to protect the interests of himself and his crown, let alone dispense justice to his people in a satisfactory manner?

Aside from issuing law the king was also expected to enforce it vigorously and with complete impartiality.[16] *William of Palerne* shows the tireless hatred of the king for all robbers and reivers who he 'hastili hange ' or with hors to-drawe.'[17] *Havelok* is equally sharp on this issue and also praises the detachment of the king from thoughts of his own profit. These two expectations form the main themes in the portrayal of the ideal king Athelwold. The poet devotes forty-four out of the seventy-eight lines of this passage solely to the provision of good law and justice. He praises Athelwold for enforcing laws and pursuing with a passion those who break them. So dedicated was he that men could walk abroad with full purses and merchants with their wares and have no fears for their safety. He was completely incorruptible and let neither the prospect of material gain nor the power of social status deter him from punishing those who had done wrong.[18]

Justice should be pursued at all times, and always according to the rule of law. The romance poets were fully in accordance with political philosophers in seeing the law

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[15] *Sages*, ll.169-172, 41, 206. O. Kratins, 'Treason in Middle English Metrical Romances', *Philological Quarterly*, 45 (1966), p.675 discusses the place of silence in medieval law. She also notes the outdated judicial knowledge displayed in the romances, such as this principle of the right to silence. Other, more popular, examples of this include the presence of the rather old-fashioned trial by combat and use of champions, trial by ordeal and the legendary trial by walking through fire. See *Athelston*, p.5, ll.555-800; *Guy*, pp.429-477, 537-559, 577-605; *AA*, ll.829-1368; *Tristrem*, ll.2224-2290; *Reinbrun*,, ll.150:7-211:6; *YG*, ll.2159-2682. Also V. H. Galbraith, 'The Death of a Champion (1287)', *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, eds. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin and R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1948), pp.283-295. In contrast, E. F. Shannon, 'Mediaeval Law in the Tale of Gamelyn', *Speculum*, 26 (1957), pp.457-464, and M. H. Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval England* (1961), chapter 7, stress the great familiarity with the contemporary working of the law found in *Gamelyn*.

[16] *Latini*, p.241 states that the king should be devoid of emotion, impartial to rich and poor; he must have justice so firmly established in his heart 'that he gives each person his right, and that he cannot be swayed to the right or the left'.

[17] *William*, ll.5478-5479.

[18] *Havelok*, ll.27-29, 39-62, 67-86.

as the support which enabled a fallible king to rule well.[19] There are many examples of issues coming before the king which are conducted under the principles of a fair trial, and this was particularly important when the king was personally involved in a case. They show that romance audiences agreed with political philosophers that the king was as bound by the law as his subjects were.[20] In *Sir Landevale* this knight refuses the seduction of Guinevere on the grounds that he already had a lover. The trial focuses on the truth of his assertion rather than the lasciviousness of the queen as the jurors are already convinced that 'she was wyckyd', but for all that the court proceeds upon reasonable lines. Landevale is given time in which to produce his lover, at which time the king will command the barons to render judgement upon him.[21] Legal requirements are followed in *Guy of Warwick* when the sultan's son Sadok is killed by the overly competitive Fadour during a chess game. Despite the temptation for the sultan to have Fadour killed out of hand, he follows legal practice. He summons the accused to come to court for a judgement which orders Fadour, or his champion, to trial by combat.[22] Even more admirable is the king of Germany in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, who faced great provocation from Richard who had killed his only son. This was clearly a case of treason, yet the king does not simply go ahead with the prescribed punishment. He determines that Richard 'shulde be dampned by þe lawe' and calls together his magnates for that purpose.[23]

The above examples show the ideal way for the king to deal with cases. In fact in the romances arbitrary judgements, the product of ill will, are frequent. They make for a longer and more interesting story but they are always condemned wholeheartedly, especially since the object of the king's wrath is always known to be innocent. The romances concur with the belief expressed in *Bracton* that a false judgement made by a king as a result of will rather than justice 'will not then be the deed of a king. And since it is not his deed, because wrongful, it may be questioned and judged'.[24] The barons always try to restrain and reason with kings who depart from the path of true justice. They seek to calm the duke in *Amis and Amiloun* from his attempt to kill Amis outright on hearing that the latter had deflowered his daughter. They play the same role in trying

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[19] *Liber Custumarum*, p.16: 'Salamon dist, qe juste roi navera jamais mescheaunce'. *Bracton*, iv.159.
[20] *Policraticus*, p.40. *Bracton*, ii.33, 166, iii.43. *Fleta*, p.36. Burns, *Medieval Political Thought*, p.431.
[21] *Landevale*, ll.298, 295-334.
[22] *Guy*, ll.60:1-65:6.
[23] *Richard*, A ll.488, 541-542. Weber, *Richard*, ll.934-935.
[24] *Bracton*, ii.305, iv.159. *Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae*, pp.308, 437.

to quell the similarly caused anger of King Houlac in *Horn Childe*. The barons in *Beues of Hamtoun* both restrain and restore the king to the proper course of justice, after his determination to hang Beues when the king's son is killed by a kick from the latter's horse while trying to steal it:

> Þe barnage it nolde nouȝt þole
> & seide, hii miȝte do him no wors,
> Boute lete hongen is hors;
> Hii miȝte don him namore,
> For he serued þo þe king be-fore.[25]

The baronial role in the return to the rule of law is instrumental but in each case that return is dependent on the king's receptiveness to their influence. Sometimes it takes a while for baronial criticism to persuade the king back onto the right track. Fourteen cautionary tales are needed in the *Seven Sages of Rome* before Diocletian at last declares that he will seek the truth so that according to the law:

> Whether of whom hathe the wronge,
> He shalle in dethe dy stronge.[26]

Despite the narrative demands of this collection's framework, baronial persuasion does appear to have its limits if the king remains obdurate, and movement from persuasion to more forceful action does not seem to be advocated for the cause of justice. The barons in *Athelston* do turn against the king for his refusal to listen to good advice and judge the case of Egelond fairly, but this is exceptional in more than one way. It is the queen and the archbishop of Canterbury who try to persuade the king to judge fairly; the barons play no part in it. Their statement of rebellion is impressive:

> but he graunte vs oure bone,
> Hys presoun schal be broken soone,
> Hymselff to mekyl sorwe.
> We schole drawe doun boþe halle and boures;
> Boþe hys castelles and hys toures,
> Þey schole lygge lowe and holewe.
> Þouȝ he be kyng and were þe corown,
> We scholen hym sette in a deep dunioun.

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[25] *AA*, ll.817-819. *HC*, ll.505-516. *Beues*, ll.3570-3573.
[26] *Sages*, ll.2868-2869.

However, this statement only comes after the archbishop has excommunicated the king and interdicted the country. It is not the ultimate threat of the barons that persuades the king to stop acting wilfully. They make their declaration after the archbishop has made his pronouncement and because 'oure crystyndom we wole folewe'.[27] It is besides not the threat of armed rebellion which convinces the king to submit and try the case according to God and fair principles, through the dramatic trial by ordeal. Athelston sends messengers to tell the archbishop he has relented before he even sees these rebellious barons. It is his respect for the church and fear of God which has really made him return to the rule of law.

Did romance audiences believe that the king was under the law? It has been pointed out that justice is portrayed as something greater than the king in the romances, because it always prevails despite the king's best efforts to subvert it.[28] The many examples of kings making arbitrary judgements in the romances do not present the king as above the law. The ideal way for the king to behave was according to the law. However, in the case of false justice baronial intervention is also clearly portrayed in line with legal experience and contemporary political thought. Royal action in the area of justice could, as *Bracton* pointed out, be questioned and judged but, as the author also realised, in matters of judgement the only recourse could come from God.[29]

Since the king was the fountain of law and justice, the application of justice was synonymous with his royalty. It is one important element of what recognisably makes a king a king. This is something which comes across clearly in the establishment of lordship by a new ruler, as described in the romances. When, in *Sir Tristrem*, the hero returns to Brittany and kills the usurper Morgan:

> Tvo ȝere he sett þat land,
> His lawes made he cri.
> Al come to his hand.[30]

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[27] *Athelston*, ll.522-529, 530.
[28] Crane, *Insular Romance*, p.69.
[29] *Bracton*, ii, 33, iv.159, 197. *Fleta*, p.36. Burns, *Medieval Political Thought*, pp.363, 426 canon and civil lawyers on this point.
[30] *Tristrem*, ll.902-905.

Similarly, in *Kyng Alisaunder*, after conquests of Thrace, Sicily and India Alexander immediately establishes his laws and appoints justices to administer them, as does William in *William of Palerne* on his assumption of power in Rome.[31]

The romances reveal further instances of the manner of royal rule which also seem to be synonymous with the royal position, the exercise of powers which made a king. There are images of kings ruling, through the forests, castles, towns, estates, courts, shire meetings and assizes.[32] They use justices and their messengers, jurymen, gaolers, sheriffs, bailiffs, coroners, foresters, constables and town administrative officials, castellans and keepers of the peace.[33] Kings are seen distributing lands and rents, as well as levying military services.[34] Purveyors, wool and tax collectors are not seen in the romances though, which is perhaps unusual given the exceptional levels of activity of these officials during this period. Given the burdens associated with them, however, it is perhaps not surprising that they are not mentioned, even sarcastically, in such light entertainment.

Aside from this omission there is do get a clear picture of how a king ruled and that he was expected to be active in royal government. However oppressive this manner of rule might be at times, people obviously expected their king to be a vigilant governor and kings who fulfil this are praised in the romances. When the hero of *William of Palerne* becomes emperor of Rome his rule is approved because he:

> rides þurth þempire of rome · richeliche & faire,
> to alle solempne cites · & semliche holdes,
> to knowe þe kuntres · as a king ouȝt;[35] .

The king of Little Brittany in *Sir Degarre* is also approved for:

> he ȝemeȝ his kyngdom oueral
> Stoutliche, as a god king sschal.[36]

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[31] *KA*, ll.1421-1422, 1433, 7438-7439. *William*, l.5476.

[32] *KA*, ll.1421, 7436. *Havelok*, ll.253, 1443-1445. *AM*, ll.2189-2191. *YG*, l.3445. *Sages*, l.2480; *Tristrem*, l.322. *Gamelyn*, ll.709, 714, 889.

[33] *KA*, ll.1422, 960, 1588, 4727, 2604. *Landevale*, ll.295, 315, 328. *Havelok*, ll. 263, 266-267, 1628-1629, 2287, 2959. *Gamelyn*, ll.550, 575, 583, 709, 742, 761, 790, 862, 869, 883. *Beues*, ll.886, 947, 1591, 1615, 1635. *Guy*, ll.6510, 33:4. *William*, p.173. *AM*, ll.890-1170. *HC*, l.103. *Troye*, l.1646; *YG*, l.3446. *Reinbrun*, l.33:4. *Richard*, A ll.456, 1221. *Degarre*, l.502.

[34] *KA*, ll.1423, 7436. *Havelok*, ll.1442-1445.

[35] *William*, ll.5471-5473.

[36] *Degarre*, ll.151-152.

The dangers inherent in a king who is inattentive to government are clearly spelled out in one of the empress's stories in the *Seven Sages of Rome*. The Emperor Herowde ruled Rome through the advice of seven wise men. One day, riding out from the city, he was struck blind and asked them to discover the cause. They could not find the answer, but an old man told them to seek a child who had no father. This child was Merlin and he revealed to Herowde seven boiling cauldrons under his chamber which, as long as they boiled, caused his blindness. Alone with the emperor he tells him that they represent his seven counsellors who, while his attention was elsewhere, had judged against the law and ordered new customs that caused the people to groan. The heads of the wise men were cast into the cauldrons to calm them and the emperor is then praised for:

> Anon he wichss þerof his hond,
> And ouer seȝ al þe lond[37].

The king should always be alert to these dangers and govern the country with a strong hand, otherwise he will fail to fulfil his role of protecting his people. It is interesting to note that in *Sir Orfeo* the hero is called by the title of king usually only when ruling his kingdom. While he leaves his government in the hands of another to pursue a personal quest he is only once referred to in this way. When Orfeo again takes up the reins of government the poet accords Orfeo his title in a rapid succession of lines. In fact Orfeo even appears to undergo a second coronation at this time, as he begins his rule afresh, emphasising the point that kings should rule their kingdoms personally and attentively.[38]

The king's military defence of his subjects is a theme that is greatly stressed in the romances. All romances are motivated by drama and a main feature of the stories is their concentration on the external actions of characters. Without showing the emotions of players any drama must come from the action. Some of this comes from the interaction of the characters, but without the internal contribution which is prominent in French romances this remains limited. The main focus of the stories thus becomes martial activities, be it sieges and battles, tournaments or brawls. Several expectations of kingship in this area are apparent within the stories.

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[37] *Sages*, ll.2480-2482, 2509-2510.
[38] *Orfeo*, ll.39, 51, 175 show instances where Orfeo is named king before he leaves his kingdom, l.248 is the only time when he is so called while in the wilderness, ll.553, 558, 576, 586, 593 shown the rapid number of times on his return to power where Orfeo is given his title, l.593 'Now King Orfeo newe coround is'.

It is obviously convention that the hero is the best fighter ever. In *Reinbrun* the abilities of the hero's father Guy are so great that:

> Þar nas nowhar his per
> In Fraunce, in Pycardy,
> In Spayne, in Lombardy,
> Neyþer fer ne ner.[39]

The hero's father in *Beues of Hamtoun* was also so good at fighting that:

> Neuer man of flesch ne felle
> Nas so strong[40].

In a time when military strength was prized and in stories dominated by violence, a hero who was anything less would be irrelevant and of no interest at all.

In descriptions of good kings personal military qualities are required quite aside from their power to call on many lords to field a large army. This is also expected. The lengthy details of the knights brought by each king in fealty to Arthur and those standing against him at his coronation in *Arthour and Merlin* amply prove this.[41] In addition, examples of military service being called upon are present in *Guy of Warwick*, *Reinbrun*, *William of Palerne*, the *Seege of Troye* and the *King of Tars*.[42]

The personal military prowess of good kings cannot be matched. Of the king of Little Brittany in *Sir Degarre* it was said that 'so stron[g] he was of bon and blod' that none could stand against him in tournament or battle and in *Havelok* kings Birkabeyn, Athelwold and Havelok are similarly described as peerless.[43] However, it is not just convention that the king should be the best knight of his people and preferably also of the world.

This ideal had very practical considerations. The king had to be the example to inspire his army and fulfil his role as protector of his subjects. A people would not be motivated to their own defence if their king was not quick to lead and active and courageous in the field. The importance of these factors is highlighted in *Richard Coeur de Lion* and *Horn Childe*.

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[39] *Reinbrun*, ll. 2:1-6.
[40] *Beues*, ll.14-15.
[41] *AM*, ll.3065-3106, 3725-3773.
[42] *Guy*, ll.8784-8787. *William*, ll.2663-2668, 3004-3006. *Troye*, ll.101-108. *KT*, ll.113-141, 163-165.
[43] *Degarre*, l.16. *Havelok*, ll.7-10, 24-26, 87-92, 345-347.

The importance attached to the king's conduct in battle is well illustrated by Richard, for whom the poet praised God for he 'neuer no was couward!'.[44] His enthusiasm for the fight and the conviction of his belief in his army inspires victories at Messina and in the many battles against the Saracens in the Holy Land. It has been pointed out that Richard's personal military performance becomes identified with victory in the romance. When Richard wins his individual battle the Christians win against the Saracens. When Richard is absent from the fray due to illness the army lose, only recovering ground and moving on to victory when he recovers and rejoins the fight.[45] This pattern is necessarily a narrative device to promote Richard as the hero of the tale, but it also stresses the importance of a king's showing on the battlefield.

Courage combined with quick and able leadership from the king preoccupies the first section of *Horn Childe*. It was written c.1320 during the worst years of Scottish raids, and is deliberately set in the north of England with references to Stainmoor, Pickering, Allerton, York and Teesmouth. The account of Horn's father Haþeolf is the fullest and clearly the most important section of the romance and focuses on the king's military behaviour. It obviously provided political comment on the failure of Edward II to protect the north from Robert Bruce, with the poet's lament that:

> Now schal men finde kinges fewe
> Þat in batail be so trewe[46].

Haþeolf is the most responsive, most active military leader that a people could wish for. His kingdom is attacked by the Irish and by the Danes and he is both quick to lead and first in the fight. When the Danes land on Teesside:

> He busked boþe niȝt & day
> Oȝain hem forto ride.

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[44] *Richard*, L l.6. Weber, *Richard*, l.4.

[45] *Richard*, p.67.

[46] *HC*, ll.202-203. See l.54 for Teesside, l.67 for Allerton Moor, ll.54, 70 for Cleveland, l.110 for Blacklow Moor, l.116 for Pickering, l.118 for York, and ll.175, 182 for Stainmoor; also p.40 for general comment on northern place names. The lost original French tale for the surviving Horn romances comprised a trilogy of Horn's father Anlaf, Horn and then Horn's son. *HC* is considered to be closer to the original than any of the other Middle English Horn romances and the fullness of the Haþeolf section may therefore be a reflection of this. However the stress on the military defence of the north and the unusual use of political language does support a theory of political intent on the part of the poet. For the development and correlation between the Horn romances see the introduction to this text, pp.44-49, *Romance of Horn*, pp.20-21.

Later, fighting the Irish on Stainmoor:

> Sexti þousand were layd to grounde,
> In herd is nouȝt to hide;
> King Haþeolf slouȝ wiþ his hond,
> Þat was comen out of Yrlond,
> Tvo kinges þat tide

and when the invaders return 'King Haþeolf fauȝt fast'.[47] To further emphasise the point the poet even employs different terms to describe Haþeolf. As the ruler he is consistently excellent, but he is only called 'king' when in the field, courageously defending his people.[48]

A king's military prowess was also important in another practical manner. The king was the representative of his people. If he was known to be hesitant to lead, a coward, or even simply inadequate in battle then this bad personal reputation would lay the country open to attack. Equally, it opened the way for attacks upon royal subjects travelling overseas for there would be no fear of retribution. It was important that with a strong man as king none would dare to attack. This idea is clearly seen in *Havelok*, where Athelwold is so fearsome a warrior that:

> Was non so bold lou[er]d to Rome
> Þat durst upon his [londe] bringhe
> Hunger ne here-wicke þinghe.[49]

This betrays a very real concern. Witness the scorn of Robert Bruce, who not only ravaged northern England defiantly for many years, but even reportedly said that 'he feared the bones of the dead king more than the living king; and the greater glory of war

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[47] *HC*, ll.59-60, 188-192, 199.

[48] Haþeolf is termed 'king' when performing courageous acts and 'hende' when acting compassionately. 'Hende' is defined in the *MED* as meaning a noble person, having the approved courtly or knightly qualities. For examples of the use of 'hende' see the general description of Haþeolf, ll.8, 85-87, his generosity, ll.85, 145-147, his diplomacy with the Irish invaders, l.184. 'Hende' is also applied to Horn's generosity, l.381. For examples of the use of 'king' see Haþeolf hunting, ll.109-114, slaying the Irish kings, ll.190-192, on the second attack of the Irish, ll.193-199, his brave death in combat, l.224. For the distinction in the use of terms see *HC*, p.107.

[49] *Havelok*, ll.64-66.

to him who wanted to reign was to acquire the area of half a pace of land from King Edward while he lived, than a whole realm from the king succeeding him.'[50]

The personal success of a king in both defending his people and motivating them to their own defence also had a nationalistic dimension. Slanders against the French form a part of the entertainment in the romances, even in those involving the Matter of France such as *Otuel and Roland*. In this story Otuel appears at the court of Charlemagne taunting the knights that it was well known that the French were better boasters than fighters![51] Elsewhere, in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, that king laments French treachery at Messina.[52] This is unsurprising considering the background of war with France during the reigns of the three Edwards, but there was more to this than simple slander of old (and still active) enemies. In the romances there is a move towards claiming famous successful military kings as English.[53] For example, the British kings Uther and Arthur are pointedly described as English in the romance *Arthour and Merlin*. All in England tried to pull the king's weapon, Excaliber, whose inscription is twice detailed as written in English. The kingdom is pointedly described as England, with the action moving between a host of English towns and counties including Rockingham forest, Arundel, Cornwall, Northumberland, Kent, Norham, Portsmouth, Winchester, Salisbury, Glastonbury, Bristol, London and Camelot.[54] Richard I, unlike Arthur, was a king of England, yet the insistence on his Englishness, and the identification of the king with his Englishmen is still all important. At Messina Richard is called upon for 'ȝour Inglische he(pe)', prompting him to swear that:

> we schul ous vengi fonde
> wiþ quentise and wiþ strengþe of hond,
> of þe Freyns and of þe Griffouns
> Þat haue despised our naciouns![55]

Even the siege engine used against the city is proudly described as having been made from timber 'of Inglond'.[56] Fighting together the king of England and his English men

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[50] W. Stubbs (ed.), *Annales Paulini, Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, Rolls Series, 76 (1882), p.265.

[51] *OR*, ll.132-137.

[52] *Richard*, L ll.961-966.

[53] T. Turville-Petre, *England and the Nation: Language and Literature and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford, 1996), pp.111-155.

[54] *AM*, ll.1725, 2050, 2074, 2235, 2816-2820, 2833-2838, 3097, 3533, 3640, 4211, 4402, 5326, 7123, 7302, A435, P2373. See also Speed, 'Construction of the Nation', pp.135-157.

[55] *Richard*, L ll.917, 963-966.

are unbeatable. This is nationalism with the king as its head and representation. It is a very powerful image, perhaps heightened by the 'Brutus' propaganda of the Great Cause, anti-French propaganda such as Edward I's claim that the French were planning to obliterate the English language in 1294, the military failures of Edward II and the beginnings of the Hundred Years War, all of which formed the backdrop against which these romances were written.[57]

The practical ideal of a militarily successful king, whose very reputation protects his people, could only have contributed to the growth of nationalism during this period and in turn strengthened the importance of success for a king. To be militarily successful was not just egoistic but a very real concern. Failure would mean an inability to fulfil the king's role in defending his people. The seriousness with which this issue was viewed is revealed strongly in the romances. It is raised most obviously when the inheritance of a kingdom did not pass directly to an adult son. When Birkabeyn dies in *Havelok* his son is still only a child. He is entrusted to the care of a regent, Godard, until he is old enough to rule. It is interesting that no specific age is mentioned when the arrangements are made, only the proviso:

> Til his sone mouthe bere
> Helm on heued and leden vt here,
> Jn his hand a spere stark,
> And king ben maked of Denemark.[58]

What confirms the concern with having a militarily able king is the fact that despite the experience of a minority in England prior to the poet's writing, in the romance Havelok shall not be made king until he is capable of defending the kingdom himself. Of course this is partly due to the needs of the storyline, but it does illustrate the stress placed upon a king to be militarily able. In *Arthour and Merlin*, on the death of Moyne there are two minors in line for the throne: Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon. They are passed over in favour of the steward Vortigern because they 'Armes miȝt bere non'.[59]

Where the next in line was a daughter, the choice of her husband is dictated by the military prowess of the suitor. This situation is also well illustrated in *Havelok* with Athelwold's dying regret that Goldboru:

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[56] *Ibid.*, L ll.917, 963-966, 968.
[57] *Select Charters*, p.480.
[58] *Havelok*, ll.378-381.
[59] *AM*, l.246.

> Yif scho couþe on horse ride,
> And a thousande men bi hire syde,
> And scho were comen intil helde
> And Engelond sho couþe welde[60].

As it is though, England will be liable to attack and men may not fight for Goldboru since she is not able to lead them. The promise exacted from Godrich that he will see her married to the strongest man in England shows the reliance placed upon a king's military prowess as proof against these dangers.[61]

To ensure that the next king will also be the best knight for the defence of the kingdom heiresses are married to the strongest man who happens along. In *King Horn* the sons of the Irish King Thurston, Alrid and Berild, are chosen with Horn to combat a Danish giant as they are the best warriors of the kingdom. Horn is the sole survivor and as the best knight now left alive Thurston decides that he shall marry Reynild and become king after him. A similar offer is made by the king of Sidon to the hero of *Sir Eglamour* when passing by he defeats the giant Marasse and also by the emperor to the hero of *Guy of Warwick* as reward for his proven military abilities.[62] More often, however, to ensure the best knight becomes the next king, regardless of other abilities, heiresses are simply put up as prizes in competitions to find the strongest fighter. In *Sir Degarre* the king of Little Brittany holds a tournament to discover a fit husband for his daughter, as does the king of Egypt for Cristabelle in *Sir Eglamour*.[63]

The issue of personal military prowess is raised again when the king becomes incapable of defending his people due to old age. In these cases good kings are able to take stock of the situation and stand aside in favour of their more able sons, or newly proven and obtained sons-in-law. In *Guy of Warwick* Tirri's father sends for him to help repel an attack for:

> His fader no may armes weld,
> No no lenge help himself for eld.[64]

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[60] *Havelok*, ll.126-129.
[61] *Ibid.*, ll.189-203.
[62] *KH*, ll.897-904. *Eglamour*, ll.602-605. *Guy*, l.4190.
[63] *Degarre*, ll.432-597. *Eglamour*, ll.1045-1266.
[64] *Guy*, ll.4979-4980.

King Edgar, in *Beues of Hamtoun*, has Miles marry his daughter and rule with him as his successor because he also is too old to fulfil his duties. In *William of Palerne* the king of Spain goes even further and:

> krouned alphouns to king ᐧ to kepe þat reaume,
> for him-self was febul ᐧ & fallen in elde[65].

Obviously this rounds off a romance in a satisfying manner. Where a hero has married into his inheritance it is good for the audience to see him in possession of it even if the current owner was still around. That even more minor characters such as Alphonso, however, are installed under the same considerations must be significant. Consider the proposal of the king of Sidon to the hero of *Sir Eglamour* on his killing of the giant Marasse:

> He sayd, 'Sir Eglamour, by Sayne Iame,
> Here þou sall be kynge!
> To-morne sall þou crownede be;
> Þou sall wedd my doghetir free'.[66]

This situation is not the satisfactory ending to the tale, but an offer made at a relatively early stage of the narrative. Perhaps it serves simply to show how true Eglamour was to Cristabelle that he turned down such an opportunity. Perhaps King Edmond also realised that as he was unable to defend his people against the giant, he saw Eglamour as one who could initially help and then take over from him in this matter. All in all, the romances show this issue to be vital.

There exists no blame or complaint against kings who become incapacitated by age, especially since all of those in the romances make fitting provision for this eventuality and thus continue to fulfil their defensive role. Cowardice, however, receives nothing but scorn. Moyne, in *Arthour and Merlin*, was considered 'bot a breþeling' by his barons for this failing. His failure in the field against the Danes and his subsequent holing up in Winchester which left England to fend for itself gave his barons grounds for serious complaint:

> Sir our king is bot a conioun

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[65] *Beues*, ll.4543-4550. *William*, ll.5226-5227.
[66] *Eglamour*, ll.602-605.

Þo he seiȝe swerdes drawe
To fle sone he was wel fawe
He no can conseil to no gode
He is so adrad he is neiȝe wode.[67]

His murder follows hard upon this. It was essential for a king to do his utmost in defence of his people, even if that meant the ultimate sacrifice of his own life.

To summarise, it seems that knightly and gentry society had definite expectations of what a king should be doing. These expectations were very much in line with contemporary political thought. The function of a king was to make good laws and enforce them with complete impartiality. When he deviated from this the barons should persuade him to return to right rule. The king should be a vigilant governor and guard against the abuse of his officials. He was to be responsive and courageous in the defence of his people and his very reputation as a military leader should protect the kingdom.

So far the group of images comprising popular expectations of kingship have been considered. The second area of insight provided by Middle English romance includes more theoretical concerns, such as the relationship between the king and his people, treason, and the special beliefs attached to kings.

The relationship between king and people is the most prominent and deeply revealed aspect of kingship present in the romances. Popular attitudes concerning this are arguably the most important for understanding the later events of the long thirteenth century because of this.

Immediately striking is the almost complete lack of reference to the sacral nature of kingship in these stories. The sole possible interpretation of kings being God's representative or of royal power being derived from Him is found in the *Alexander B* fragment. When the Gymnosophists ask Alexander why he feels he must conquer the world he replies that 'Þorou þe grace of god · i gete þat i haue'.[68] Even this example is ambiguous and does not necessarily support a sacral emphasis on the nature of kingship. Alexander's statement could be taken to mean that royal power was given to him by God, or it could be interpreted as simply meaning that Alexander's victories and his

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[67] *AM*, ll.164, 206-210.
[68] *Alex. B*, l.84.

destiny to be conqueror of the world were given to him by God. No other romances speak of the royal position or the source of royal power in sacral terms.

The anointing of kings is mentioned in only one romance, the *Morte Arthure* which, with the most conservative dating, was written at least ten years later than the body of romance under consideration.[69] Coronations are not set in major ecclesiastical buildings, neither are high-ranking clergy placed at the ceremony except in the case of Arthur in *Arthour and Merlin*. At his coronation:

> Biforn hem al þe bischop Brice
> Arthour crouned and dede þe office[70].

It should be noted that these lines in fact form a very small part of the account of Arthur's coronation. They do not seem to hold any great importance in the description of the event where a great deal more emphasis is placed on the people present. At the opening of the passage the 'significant' part of the festivities is almost dismissed in one line with 'King Arthour bare coroun'; the passage then quickly moves onto the real focus of the description. Indeed, the crown itself seems to be much more important than anointing, or the ceremony itself. The crowning and/or crown are usually noted at the making of a king even when nothing else is mentioned, sometimes with additional mention of a ring.[71] Perhaps the sacral side of kingship was taken for granted and the poets felt no need to describe it. What they do describe and nearly exclusively stress, however, is the Germanic idea of 'contract' in kingship. The emphasis in perceptions of the nature of kingship and the origins of royal power is very much on the personal relationship between king and people. Whilst only a bare statement is made of the actual crowning, the role of royal subjects in the king-making process is generally emphasised.

Opinion seems to be that the barons and people had a role to play in the making of a king, both in election of the candidate and public agreement or acclamation at the

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[69] E. Brock (ed.), *Morte Arthure, of The Death of Arthur*, EETS, OS 6 (Reprinted 1871), ll.42, 2447. More recently the dating of this romance has been pushed backwards to *c*.1400 by L. F. Benson, 'The Date of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', *Medieval Studies in Honor of Lillian Herlands Hornstein*, eds. J. B. Bessinger and R. R. Raymo (New York, 1976), pp.19-40.
[70] *AM*, ll.3111-3112.
[71] References to crowning and/or the crown include *KA*, ll.1383, 7431; *Eglamour*, l.604; *FB*, l.1083; *AM*, ll.2049, 311-313; *Alex. A*, ll.28, 100; *Havelok*, ll.2943-2948; *Troye*, l.687; *Beues*, l.4566. *Orfeo* sees that king apparently accorded a second coronation following his return, l.593. Reference to kings wearing crowns outside of the king-making context is frequent, see *YG*, ll.520-523; *HC*, l.562; *KT*, l.555; *KH*, ll.475, 1286; *Richard*, L l.540; *Reinbrun*, l.6:3; *Tristrem*, ll.516, 937; *Orfeo*, ll.149-235; *Isumbras*, l.482. Reference to crown and ring is in *AM*, ll.76, 275-276.

ceremony itself. After the assassination of Moyne in *Arthour and Merlin* the barons first
discount Aurelius and Uther because of their age and then approach Vortigern saying:

> We haue ȝou chosen our king
> And ȝouen ȝou boþe croun and ring.[72]

Similarly at the death of Porus in *Kyng Alisaunder*, the Indian princes and dukes:

> token Alisaunder by þe honde
> And ȝelden hym þe coroun of Ynde londe.[73]

Possibly they were only recognising the inevitable and looking to save their own skins,
but it is interesting that the initiative, such as it was, came from the barons of that
country. To further confirm this image, it is the knights in *Sir Isumbras* who take him up
and make him king over them all.[74]

The people of a kingdom did have an important place in the making of a king in
the romances. There is a sense of the people as a whole being involved in this process
even if not all were actually attending. Going back to *Arthour and Merlin*, when Uther
finally does become king:

> *alle þe lond þo com anon*
> And maked her oþ to Vter Pendragon
> And þo þe oþ was ymade
> *Bi comoun dome bi comoun rade*
> Vter Pendragon coroun nam
> And *king of Inglond bicam.*[75]

The description in *Havelok* of that hero's instalment in Denmark gives the same picture:

> Hwan he hauede manrede and oth
> Taken of lef and of loth,
> Vbbe dubbede him to knith
> With a swerd ful swiþe brith,
> *And þe folk of al þe lond*
> Bitauhte him al in his hond,

[72] *AM*, ll.275-276.
[73] *KA*, ll.7430-7431.
[74] *Isumbras*, ll.685-687.
[75] *AM*, ll.2045-2050. Italics are my own.

Þe cunneriche eueril del,
And *made him king heylike and wel.*[76]

The people are portrayed as very much involved. The eye is naturally drawn to the rendering of oaths of fealty, but the distinct sense of the people's presence additionally conveys a real feeling of the mutuality of the relationship formed at the coronation.

These oaths of fealty are very important in the making of a king and the formation of the relationship between king and people. Of course there are practical considerations here: without acceptance by at least the majority of the barons it is difficult to see how a candidate could move to the ceremony let alone establish himself. In *Havelok*, before the hero moves to take his crown in Denmark and in England he takes these oaths from the people.[77] He was an outsider in Denmark and relatively so in England, despite his true claims to both these thrones; perhaps he had a greater need to gain that security before becoming king. Kings who succeed their fathers in the more usual manner, such as Alexander, also take oaths of loyalty at this time. This king receives fealty from dukes, earls, knights, burgesses and barons at his initial coronation and when he assumes the crown of India in *Kyng Alisaunder*.[78] Even when a king has a son who is his acknowledged heir these oaths are exacted from barons, along with promises to ensure that the heir will become king in his father's place after his death. When the kingdom is beset with enemies in *Horn Childe* Haþeolf has to install Horn's companions in their dead fathers' positions. Then:

To Horn his sone he hem bitoke
& dede hem swere opon þe boke
Feute þai schuld him bere,
While þat þai liue miȝt,
Wiþ helme on heued & brini briȝt,
His londes forto were.[79]

The oath exacted from Godard in *Havelok* that he should take care of Birkabeyn's son until he was old enough to be made king is a similar example.[80] In *Arthour and Merlin*, at the deathbed of Constance this king's thought is all for the succession of his heir:

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[76] *Havelok*, ll.2313-2320. Italics are my own.
[77] *Havelok*, ll.2181-2186, 2267-2268 for Denmark, ll.2851-2852 for England.
[78] *KA*, ll.1384-1386, 7432-7433.
[79] *HC*, ll.139-144.

> After his barouns he gan sende
> And when þai were ycomen ichon
> Þe king seyd to hem anon
> 'Lordinges' he seyd 'lesse and more
> Out of þis warld y most fare
> Þerfore y pray for loue o me
> For Godes loue and for charite
> When ich am dede and roten in clay
> Helpeþ mi childer þat ȝe may
> And takeþ Constaunt mi neldest sone
> And ȝif him boþe reng and crone
> And holdeþ him for ȝour lord euer mo.'[81]

This is a real concern and not just dramatic effect. The passage shows similarities to the account of the dying Edward I in the *Brut*. It relates that 'he wiste wel þat his deþ was ful neyȝ, and callede to him Sir Henry þe Lacy, Erl of Lyncoln, Sir Gy, Erl of Warrwyk, Sir Aymer Valence, Erl of Penbrok, and Sir Robert of Clifford, baroun, and prayede ham oppon þe faiþe þat þai to him owede, þat þai shulde make Edward of Carnaryuan, kyng of Engeland, his sone, as raþe as þai myght'.[82] In practical terms alone royal subjects did enable the making of a king.

There is more to this than the merely practical. Repeated notices of oaths of fealty do convey a sense of mutuality about the subsequent relationship between king and people. This is especially revealed in *Havelok* at Ubbe's presentation of the hero to the Danes:

> Hwan he hauede of hem alle
> Manrede taken in þe halle,
> Grundlike dide he hem swere
> Þat he sholden him god feyth bere
> Ageyns all þat woren on liue.
> Þer-yen ne wolde neuer on striue
> Þat he ne maden sone þat oth -
> Riche and poure, lef and loth.[83]

Again, at his assumption of power in England:

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[80] *Havelok*, ll.372-402.
[81] *AM*, ll.66-77.
[82] F. W. D. Brie (ed.), *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England*, EETS, OS 131 (1906), pp.202-203.
[83] *Havelok*, ll.2267-2274.

> Hauelok anon manrede tok
> Of alle Englishe on þe bok,
> And dide hem grete oþes swere
> Þat he sholden him god feyth bere,
> Ageyn alle þat woren liues[84].

The close association here between oaths of fealty and the royal coronation oath strongly stress the 'contractual' nature of kingship. Both king and people have made undertakings to each other at the start of their association. Alongside the feeling obtained of the sense of involvement of the people at the coronation it seems to place the relationship between king and people rather on the footing of an unequal partnership.

So, involvement of the barons and people in the making of a king is on more than a practical level. But what does the romance emphasis on the 'contractual' nature of kingship actually signify? The king's oath of office can be seen as the symbol of a power-giving relationship, the guarantee that what has been given shall not be misused as in some sense a king was empowered by his people. Does the exclusive stress on 'contract' seen in the romances indicate that the knights and gentry of England believed that the origin of royal power lay with themselves and the rest of the English people? This is unlikely. However, the emphasis does suggest that this aspect of kingship was prominent in their thoughts and important to them. It suggests that Middle English romance audiences liked to view kingship in relation to themselves, or what they knew and were familiar with. Perhaps it made an important, but slightly distant figure, more understandable.

The 'contractual' bond is expressed very much in terms of the social bonds experienced by the landowning sector of society. The considerations of lordship, homage, loyalty, service, obligations, reward and honour are applied to the relationship with the king in much the same way that they would be applied to the relationship between a knight and his more immediate lord.[85] The importance of these goes beyond any practical needs for security, that in reality did not always materialise. Perhaps because of this there is almost a sense of idealism about lordship and service which entails more than personal honour. The stress on personal honour in, for example, chivalric literature such as the *chansons de gestes* means that it often seems that it is the individual who matters most. Personal honour is to be maintained even if at variance

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[84] *Ibid.*, ll.2267-2274, 2851-2855.
[85] Evidence of the use of this view and these terms will be provided in the following discussion.

with other demands: loyalty to women, for example, may conflict with that owing to a lord. Individual chivalry comes before all else. In contrast Middle English romance conveys a sense of something wider than this. Yes, individual honour is important, but true service will produce an ideal society. This idealism is seen in the relationship between the king and his vassals and also lower down the social scale. In *Otuel* Roland presents that knight to Charlemagne. He says that Otuel is now ready to perform homage and wait on the king's commands. He will attend parliament and be prepared to fight at his hand.[86] The image is of Otuel, a previously pagan rogue knight, coming into a civilising framework, where performance of obligations on all sides will ensure a peaceful society. The ideal is more clearly expressed in *Guy of Warwick*. The earl's steward:

> His lord he serued treweliche
> In al þing manschipeliche.
> Þer was non erl in Inglond
> Þat to ȝeines him durst stond,
> Bot, ȝif he wold be wiþ him at on,
> He wald do nimen him anon,
> & wiþ strengþe him nim wolde,
> Þei he to Scotlond suwe him scholde.
> His lordis honour he held worþscipliche,
> & defended it wele & hardiliche;
> Þer nas kni[ȝ]t in Inglonde
> Þat wiþ wretþe durst him atstonde.[87]

Maintenance of these bonds with honour and true service will exclude the rogue element and create a society in which everyone is protected, even if venturing north into Scotland! These types of bonds and this kind of relationship are thus viewed with even greater importance than at first sight, which has interesting implications for kingship when it is viewed in this way.

What does this relationship entail? Contributions to it were definitely two-sided: both parties were obligated to fulfil certain duties. The main duties of the people of the kingdom, especially the barons, were to provide counsel for their king and to support

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[86] *Otuel*, ll.1731-1735.
[87] *Guy*, ll.123-134. *Gui*, ll.97-107: 'Ne qui servist sun seignur / Tuz jorz a si grant honur. / Ne aveit coens en tote la terre / Qui osast sun seignur mesfaire, / Se par amur ne se desçast, / Que tost sur lui ne alast, / Pur aler desqu'en Escoce. / Tote la terre a sun seignur / Gardat a si grant honur / E faite i aveit tele peis'.

him in arms when necessary. This is seen very clearly in *Otuel* when this knight performs homage to Charlemagne and promises that he will:

> ben at þi comaundement;
> & at eche parlement,
> Al redi at þin hond[88].

Not only were the barons to give counsel to the king as he required it, but the king was also obliged to seek it from them. The romances do not state this explicitly, but implicitly the conviction is evident. All good kings in the stories seek advice whenever decisions of importance need to be made, particularly those which will affect the kingdom as a whole. Kings are criticised only when they fail to listen to counsel. Through personal malice, or more usually the work of a traitor, these kings exercise ill will and the course of justice is abandoned. It is the failure to listen to good counsel, or abandonment of fit counsellors, which causes this to happen and allows the situation to progress beyond the initial error. It has been recently pointed out that in the romances private counsel is the means by which crises are set in motion.[89] Kings are not infallible and like contemporary political philosophers, romance poets and audiences clearly believed that alongside law, wise counsel was the staff which a king should rely upon.[90] Counsel was required, for example, in difficult cases or those outside the law. Florentine's tale from the *Seven Sages of Rome* is a bizarre example, but a useful one. In this story the king is being harassed by three noisy ravens. It is revealed that two of the ravens had been together for thirty years until the female was forsaken and so took a younger mate from whom she would not now part. The ravens sought a judgement from the king with whom she should stay. This case was outside of the king's experience and so he turned to counsel and came to a decision 'thorowe the baronys wille'.[91] Where the law fell down or did not provide the guide for a fallible king to follow, he must turn to counsel to ensure right rule.

Who was to supply this counsel? In *Otuel* Charlemagne seeks advice from 'hise duzze peres wit him' and 'muche poeple' who were around him, but generally the

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[88] *Otuel*, ll.1733-1735.
[89] Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, p.29.
[90] *Liber Custumarum*, p.16: 'Tut autersi doyvent ly souzoit amer lour soverain a droit que et od vraie entencioun, et doner lui consail et ayde a meintenir soun office. Car ceo qil nest qe un soul entre eus, il ne purroit riens faire ne acomplir saunz eus'. *Latini*, p.352. *Fleta*, p.38.
[91] *Sages*, ll.3433-3676, here l.3609.

romances provide a more detailed idea of where it should come from.[92] They agree with political commentators that close advisors should be both noble and wise. For example, Athelwold in *Havelok* is praised for he surrounded himself with 'rightwise men'.[93] The king is usually seen turning to his baronage. Kings in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the *King of Tars*, *Sir Degarre*, *Otuel*, *Joseph of Arimathie*, the *Seege of Troye* and *Guy of Warwick* all turn to their barons, or a parliament made up of them, for counsel.[94]

Areas on which both the barons should give and the king seek advice are quite specific in the romances. They include issues which would affect the entire kingdom. One was the provision for the future governance of the country. This is not to say that the barons were deeply involved in the preparations for an absentee government. Both kings in *Sir Orfeo* and *Richard Coeur de Lion* are free to settle their governments as they see fit. When Orfeo leaves to search for his kidnapped queen he calls together his magnates simply to state that he would be away for some time, and detail his arrangements for guardianship of the realm during that period.[95] In comparison, when Richard leaves for the crusades he does not call for any discussion on the matter, he simply makes the decisions and leaves.

What the barons were more closely involved in was the question of the king's marriage. This was obviously very important not only for the king but for the whole country. The barons of the sultan in the *King of Tars* were consulted during the process of negotiation (or in this case intimidation) for the daughter of that king, as were the Roman barons in *William of Palerne* in the discussion of the proposed marriage between Melior and Partenedon.[96] Similarly, in *Ywain and Gawain*, while Alundyne considers marrying Ywain to help hold and defend her lands:

> hastily sho went to hall;
> Þare abade hir barons all
> Forto hald þaire parlement
> And mari hir by þaire asent.[97]

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[92] *Otuel*, ll.59, 60.
[93] *Havelok*, ll.37-38, especially here l.37.
[94] *Richard*, A ll.541-544, 961-966. Weber, *Richard*, ll.934-935. *KT*, ll.113-135. *Reinbrun*, ll.16:1-4. *Degarre*, ll.432-442. *Otuel*, ll.59-61. *Joseph*, ll.62-63. *Troye*, ll.349-361. *Guy*, ll.2563-2504, 238:5-12, 8784-8787.
[95] *Orfeo*, ll.201-217.
[96] *KT*, ll.133-135, 289-297. *William*, ll.1457-1459.
[97] *YG*, ll.1179-1182. *Yvain*, ll.2038-2043: 'Et la dame ot son parlemant / Devant tenu a ses barons, / An cele sale, óu mes janz sont, / Qui loé et conseillié m'ont / Por le besoing que il i voient; / Que mari aprandre m'otroiènt'.

The barons sometimes take it upon themselves to ensure that the king does marry and even suggest a likely match. In *Lay le Freine* Giroun's knights demand he put aside his mistress and suggest a suitable marriage to a local woman of equal status and with considerable inheritance. Not only will Giroun, and presumably his men, profit by such a desirable marriage but in addition his knights:

> seid him were wel more feir
> In wedlok to geten him an air[98].

This is the reason why the knights felt it so important to interfere. Suitable provision must be made for the future holding of a lordship. The importance of this issue for kings was naturally much greater. When the barons of Rome pushed Diocletian to take a second wife 'And biȝeten children mo' in the *Seven Sages of Rome* it is because of their worries that the kingdom would be left without a direct heir to the throne.[99] If a king, especially one beset by enemies or old age, does not make provision for his country in the event of his early death then he leaves it open to invasion from the outside and power struggles on the inside. In such a case everyone in the kingdom would suffer badly, possibly for many years to come if a tyrant seized the throne.

Such interference in the king's business by the barons as a group does suggest certain interesting 'popular' views of their role. It has just been shown that baronial counsel can be given even if not sought in instances of importance for the country, where the king is not giving enough thought to the people's welfare. It has already been seen how the barons should interfere in cases where the king has departed from the path of true justice because of ill will. In such situations in most of the romances it is not an old and trusted wise counsellor who intervenes in the king's misguided actions, as Anthony Bek does in Pierre de Langtoft's *chronicle* for example, but the barons acting as a group.[100] This could suggest that romance audiences perceived the baronial group as having a role to play in 'correcting' the king, or persuading him to move in the right direction. This group are attributed with a sense of 'community'. They represent a form

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[98] *LLF*, ll.311-324, here ll.315-316.
[99] *Sages*, l.216.
[100] J. C. Thiolier (ed.), *Édition Critique et Commentée de Pierre de Langtoft: Le Règne d'Édouard Ier* (Crétuil, 1989), ll.264-267.

of security that, should a fallible king cast aside the props of law and right counsel, would ensure he returned to ruling for the benefit of his people.

Other, more ordinary, occasions when counsel is necessary include decisions which will have direct effects on the people of the kingdom. One such issue is that of religion. In *Joseph of Arimathie* Joseph tries to convert King Evalak to Christianity. If he decided to do so it would mean immediate practical consequences for his people. They also would have to convert or, as happened in the *King of Tars*, be killed. This was not simply a personal decision for Evalak and it was only right that he should consult his barons as to the wisdom of this action.[101]

Most frequently, however, counsel is sought because of a foreign power challenge and its military implications. In circumstances where the king decides to attack, or fears attack himself, he seeks advice on what to do. In the *King of Tars* the sultan calls his men together for advice on aggressive moves in response to the rejection of his marriage suit. Contrasting situations face the kings in *Beues of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick*. In the former, King Ermin consults his men on the attack threatened by King Brademond. In the second romance, following Duke Segyn's attack, the emperor calls his men to ask them:

> What schal we do?
> Rede ȝe þat we þider go?

Later in the tale England becomes threatened by the Danes and Athelstan turns to his magnates:

> 'Lordyngis,' he seyd, 'yeld yow to me:
> Ye beth my men, and owte to be.
> I byd yow yevyn me good counseyle
> That may all my londe aveyle.'[102]

These situations required counsel for obvious reasons. Naturally the barons would be the closest involved in any military activity, being the greatest contributors of men and money. Their co-operation was essential in any venture because of this and meant that the king should continue to seek their counsel on the conduct of the campaign. Not only

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[101] *Joseph*, especially ll.62-63. *KT*, ll.1045-1056.
[102] *KT*, ll.113-135. *Beues*, ll.930-932. *Guy*, ll.2563-2564, 8784-8787.

could the barons mobilise their own men, but their experience would be invaluable. Pyramus very wisely took advantage of these qualities after the Greek attack in the *Seege of Troye*. He wished to mount a counter-attack but his barons, sensibly realising the costs of war, advised him first to seek the return of his sister through negotiation. Only when this failed should he move against the Greeks in arms.[103]

It was also, of course, the duty of the people to provide their king with actual military support. In times of war the king was the undoubted leader of his men in battle. The king's position of complete command was unquestioned during times when the kingdom was under attack. Romance audiences wholeheartedly supported the right of kings to take complete command in the defence of their kingdoms. Whenever enemies marched on king and kingdom, good kings in the romances act without hesitation and summon their men to arms. Even if some consultation had been taken with his nobles, the king commands obedience and was obeyed without dispute. When Charlemagne receives the news of King Ebrahim's march against Christendom in *Roland and Vernagu* he promptly calls upon 'al þat miȝt armes bere' to join him in defending the empire. The joint offensive of the Muslim kings on the sultan in the *King of Tars* sees that king calling:

> Erl, baroun, douk, & kniȝt,
> Do alle ȝour folk bede
> Wiþ helme on heued & brini briȝt
> Þat ȝe ben alle redi diȝt
> To help me at þis nede.

Likewise the emperor in *William of Palerne* commands his men to be ready in arms for war when the duke of Saxony marches against Rome.[104]

The instant response of Haþeolf's order to arms against the Danes landing on Teesside in *Horn Childe* not only shows the dissatisfaction about the comparatively feeble attempts of Edward II to protect the north, but also indicates an acceptance of the prime importance of the king's command in times of necessity:

> Wiþin þat ich fourtenniȝt,
> Barouns fele & mani a kniȝt,
> Al were þai redi boun;

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[103] *Troye*, ll.362-374.
[104] *RV*, ll.23-80, here l.80. *KT*, ll.1009-1014. *William*, ll.1079-1083.

> Wiþ helme on heued & brini briȝt
> (Alle were þai redi to fiȝt)
> & rered gonfeynoun.[105]

There is some question as to whether a principle of necessity or simple common sense was behind the call to arms in times of danger. The right of kings to levy taxes because of the principle of necessity during such times was well established in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but whether this also applied to military service is not clear. When attack comes in the romances kings quite often talk of necessity. When the daughter of the *King of Tars* finally agrees to marry the sultan he informs his men, currently in arms, that he requires no more help 'at his nede.' Later in the romance the king summons his men for aid to be given to the sultan 'to helpe me at þis nede'. Similarly in *Horn Childe* when the Irish kings invade England Haþeolf bids his men come armed to 'helpe now at þis nede.'[106] Whether or not this can be interpreted as an established principle or common sense is entirely open to question.

Although the right and responsibility of a king to lead his people and direct their aid in defence of the kingdom was fully accepted, war was still a time of personal danger. Whilst there was probably more danger of losing life or limb if an invasion of the country succeeded, a sense of duty was not always enough to compel some into the fray, especially if things were not running smoothly. Personal loyalty to the king was also needed. This quality was integral to the making of homage and fealty. Honour may have gone a long way to maintaining bonds between a king and his people, but personal loyalty was the ultimate key to unity because it is based on love. A reminder of the bond between a king and his men is often a deeper reminder of this. When Haþeolf oversees oaths of fealty to his son in *Horn Childe* part of this is their promise that they:

> schal neuer fram him fle,
> For gold no siluer, lond no fe,
> Oȝein outlondis here.[107]

Kings who obtain this bond by force do not achieve the love and allegiance of those they rule. Such a situation can never prosper, as is seen in *Sir Tristrem* when the

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[105] *HC*, ll.61-66.
[106] *KT*, ll.303, 1014. *HC*, l.165.
[107] *HC*, ll.136-138.

Moraunt arrives from Ireland to demand tribute from King Mark. Mark explains to
Tristrem his intention to rebel, saying:

> þe king of yrlond,
> Tristrem, ich am his man.
> To long ichaue ben hir bond,
> Wiþ wrong þe king it wan.[108]

In times of conflict a king could not rely on his men for support if they felt no loyalty to
him. Rather they would be likely to turn against him as soon as the opportunity
presented itself, as Mark does in the above example.

Loyalty is a quality whose importance was recognised even by sworn enemies.
Consequently, during troubled times in the romances good rulers are seen reminding
their men of their oaths of fealty and thus their allegiance. When Queen Felice is
besieged by the king of Spain in *William of Palerne* her men wish to surrender the fight.
She replies:

> lordinges, ȝe ar my lege men · þe lasse & þe more,
> & sworn eche bi his side · to saue mi riȝt,
> & manliche men ben · beter mow non liue.[109]

A people thus owed it to their king to give him counsel when he needed it and to
support him militarily. With their love and loyalty he could fulfil his functions of
governing for their benefit and protecting them. These duties were vital, but they do not
solely make up the king's contribution to the relationship with his people. In the
romances he also contributes in terms of the expectations associated with personal
lordship.

If, for example, the people owed a personal loyalty to the king, then the king also
owed a personal loyalty to his subjects. They had to know that their lord would protect
them if they were threatened. When Alexander advanced across Persian lands in *Kyng
Alisaunder*, Darius's people came to him:

> And makeþ pleynt and makeþ cry
> On Alisaunder her enemy -

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[108] *Tristrem*, ll.969-972.
[109] *William*, ll.3004-3005. *Guillaume*, ll.4465-4467: '<<Signor, tot estes mi lige home / Et loial gent
molt et preudoume; / Bien savés de voir li pluisor'.

> Telleþ þe slauȝtte and þe brennyng,
> And biddeþ hym smertly helpyng,
> And of-sendeþ quyk socour hende[110].

The king's loyal support of his people was expected and Gilmyn's rebuke to Duke Segyn in *Guy of Warwick* that he:

> abidest to longe, by seynt Martyn.
> Socour thy folke, and that blyue:
> The Almaignes begynne fast on vs dryue

amply supports this.[111] They deserved protection from their enemies by a king who was loyal to them. Loyalty in lordship is demanded. In *Sir Tristrem*, for example, Roland is praised because there was 'trewer non to frende' than he. In *Horn Childe* Haþeolf's support of his men extends after death: for their sakes he invested their minor heirs with their lands immediately, even at the cost of his wardship rights.[112] The pledging of allegiance on both sides secured the bond between king and people.

The king's contribution to his people as lord did not stop there. Kings were also expected to provide for their men in the same manner as other, lesser lords. It was expected that they should be generous, as both chivalry and good lordship demanded.[113] In *Guy of Warwick* Triamour reasons that the hero's shabby appearance must be because Guy's lord is 'feble'.[114]

The distribution of wealth from the throne had more practical applications. Rich reward had a strong role to play in attracting and sustaining allegiance. This principle is seen in action at the start of Alexander's various assumptions of power in *Kyng Alisaunder*, where the king distributes first his father's and subsequently his defeated predecessors' treasures. For the results of a king's generosity consider Lot's fight against the Saracens in *Arthour and Merlin*. He faced an army nine thousand strong:

> And ȝete for his wiȝt pruesse
> And hendeschip and largesse

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[110] *KA*, ll.1907-1911.
[111] *Guy*, C ll.2150-2152. *Gui*, ll.2169-2172: '<<Sire dux, a quei demorez? / Vostre gent pur quei aider n'alez? / Ja sunt mis a desconfiture; / Pur quei nes alez secure?>>'
[112] *Tristrem*, l.93. *HC*, ll.121-132.
[113] Examples of this include *KT*, ll.289-297; *Landevale*, ll.10-16, 21-24; *Orfeo*, ll.42, 449-451; *William*, ll.190-193; *Isumbras*, ll.19-21; *Perceval*, ll.23-36. See also *Secré de Secrez*, ll.175-180, 201-262.
[114] *Guy*, ll.84:7-10, here l.10.

> Þre þousand after him come
> Gode bataile forto done.[115]

Reward was clearly the sign of appreciation which encouraged further support.

There is an even more practical side to a king's generosity. A people cannot support a king in terms of men and money without the means to support themselves first. The pointedly unusual generosity of Haþeolf in *Horn Childe* illustrates this well. After defeating the Danes at St Sybil's church the king took:

> Schepe & nete þat þer slain lay,
> And ȝaf it þe folk oȝain;
> Armour & brini briȝt
> He ȝaf to squier & to kniȝt,
> To seriaunt & to swayn.
> Schipes he dede to lond drawe
> & ȝaf to bondmen on rawe
> For her catel was slayn.[116]

Haþeolf's kingdom support him to the utmost in response, out of gratitude and simply because it is due to his actions that they are able to.

The division of spoils for this purpose is especially important when a king leads his army outside of their own country, away from their usual sources of income and supply. This practice also had a second purpose, however. In *Otuel and Roland* Charlemagne takes Navarre from the Moors and shares out these new conquered lands amongst the barons accompanying him. This not only rewards them and provides them with supplies, but also means that Charlemagne will find it easier to hold onto his newly won territory.[117]

Material reward was not the only form of patronage expected from the king as a lord. Faithful vassals could also claim the support of their lords in the pursuit of their own affairs. An example of this is the question of marriage, which occurs in *Sir Eglamour* and *King Horn*. In the former romance this knight boldly approached his lord to seek his daughter Cristabelle for his wife. This was a sensitive situation, since Cristabelle was intended for better suitors than Eglamour and he began by reminding his lord of his record of good service saying 'I hafe ȝow seruede many a daye'. A similar

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[115] *KA*, ll.1389-1390, 4669-4672. *AM*, ll.4385-4394, here ll.4391-4394.
[116] *HC*, ll.89-96.
[117] *OR*, ll.1952-1963.

approach is taken by the hero of the second romance. Horn hears of Rymenhild's impending marriage and goes to Thurston to ask:

> king þe wise,
> ʒeld me mi seruise,
> Rymenhild help me winne,
> Þat þu noʒt ne linne[118] .

Both Eglamour and Horn aim to get in their lord's good graces and also remind him that he should support their interests.

It is very evident from the romances, therefore, that the relationship between king and people was considered to be very much two-way. The people of the kingdom were expected to provide good advice to help their king rule well, to come ready for battle as necessary and to support their king with the utmost fidelity. In return, a king should fulfil the duties of his role, which were to dispense justice and defend his subjects from their enemies. Beyond this he was also to distribute material reward to sustain his people to enable them to help him in his task, to protect and further the interests of his men and to display great loyalty to his people. Both sides knew what was expected of them in this relationship. If the people did not come to arms when the kingdom was attacked then the king could not defend them. Unless the king distributed patronage in the proper manner his people would not have the means to support him, let alone the wish to stand faithfully beside him when the need arose. For it to work, this relationship was dependent on the mutual fulfilment of obligations.

What is equally clear from the romances is that this relationship, mutually agreed by oaths of fealty and the royal coronation oath or simply by the presence of the people, was not immutable. As it was dependent on the mutual fulfilment of expectations by both parties, then if one of those parties defaulted on their obligations the 'contract' between them could be ended. The bond with the king was perceived ultimately in the same light as that with lesser lords. In the romances nationalism, respect for the king's position or even simple fear of retribution are not considered before action against a failing king. The attitude towards kings who do not fulfil their obligations towards their people in uncompromising. If they do not meet their responsibilities then the relationship between king and people is ended.

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[118] *Eglamour*, ll.64-66, 73-84 on Cristabelle's worldly value, l.221 here. *KH*, ll.989-992.

Kings do not, however, tend to lose their power because of failure as a lord. This type of short-coming was usually patchy in nature. For example, where *largesse* was concerned not everyone could receive the same post, marry the same heiress or obtain the same pardon. The nature of 'lordship' failings would cause problems for a king, but makes them unlikely to stand as the sole cause for his removal. For the distribution of wealth and interest to provoke a people to break with a king would require him to squeeze the kingdom for all it was worth and be universally miserly. In the romances there are no baronial grievances against alien patronage or depletion of crown resources such as those which dogged the political crises of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but they should not be expected. Neither make for good entertainment and the situations dealt with in these tales simply do not include these types of real life complaint.

The king typically loses power because of a non-fulfilment of his functional duties. Political philosophers determined two types of abuse of royal power involving the supremacy of will over reason, namely uselessness and tyranny. Uncontrolled oppression by any who cared to take advantage of a useless king, or uncontrollable oppression directly by a tyrant, both spelled disaster for the people. Both types of abuse are present in the literature.

The uselessness of a king receives less attention and is dealt with more vaguely than tyranny. Since the romances do not include a detailed focus on the inadequacy of kings in government this obviously important area is not covered. However three romances of *Sir Eglamour*, *Arthour and Merlin* and the *Seven Sages of Rome*, portray rulers who are inadequate in their military activities. In the first romance it is Cristabelle's father who shows great cowardice on the return of the angry Eglamour to the city. Eglamour's anger is righteous, but it was still the place of his adversary to face this anger and defend his people from it. Instead he locks himself in a tower for years, leaving his country to fend for itself. The cowardice of Moyne in the face of the Danish invasion in the second tale has already been noted. Malquidras's tale in the latter collection is different in that the Emperor Cressus leaves his people defenceless through his own greed, which causes him to destroy the magical protection of his city. The death of Cressus was most inventive:

> Þe smale and þe poeple of Rome
> To sire Cressus þai nome sone
> And tolde him for coueitise
> He hadde iloren Romes prise.

> Þai ladde forth in þat stounde
> And to a table fast him bounde,
> And red gold quik þai melte
> And nose and mouht ful þai helte
> And eren and eȝen also,
> Þer whiles a drope wolde in go,
> And saide "Sire, for godes loue,
> Þou hast mad þral þat was aboue.
> Nou artou ful, nou make þe heit,
> Nou wiltou nammore coueit."[119]

Moyne was murdered by his barons soon after his desertion of the battlefield, while Eglamour's enemy fell out of his hiding place to his death.[120] That none of these examples see the formal removal of rulers may be a reflection of the importance of military prowess in a king rather than comment on attitudes to the fate of useless kings. This leaves little impression of popular feeling on this type of abuse of royal power. However, it does not necessarily follow that opinion on this matter did not exist among romance poets and audiences. Kingly inadequacy was simply not interesting or dramatic enough for entertainment purposes and therefore would not have been used as the basis of a narrative. Uselessness is also a less well discussed idea in political thought. It is hard to pinpoint exactly when incompetence becomes an intolerable abuse. Does it come after one, two, three or more lost battles? Or following two, five or ten years of rule by evil counsellors?

In contrast, tyranny was a well formulated and more easily defined abuse, widely discussed by influential writers such as John of Salisbury, Brunetto Latini and Peter of Auvergne.[121] The domination of a king by ill will and his consequent tyrannical actions are, therefore, both instantly recognisable and highly dramatic. Not surprisingly there are very clear examples in the romances of the removal of kings for this particular abuse of royal power.

The formal renunciation of the 'contract' between king and people occurs in cases where the rule of law has been abandoned and when the barons have been unable to persuade the king from ruling by his own will. An initial example, taken from *Guy of Warwick*, involves one individual breaking his bond with his lord, in this case the

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[119] *Eglamour*, ll.997-999. *AM*, ll.133-240. *Sages*, ll.2123-2136.
[120] *AM*, ll.133-240. *Eglamour*, ll.1339-1344.
[121] *Liber Custumarum*, p.24. *Policraticus*, pp.40, 144-148. *Latini*, pp.179-180. *Fleta*, p.35. *Bracton*, ii.305. Burns, *Medieval Political Thought*, pp.437, 494. Ullman, 'Political Thought of Civilians', p.123.

emperor. Guy withdraws his service because the emperor has refused to dispense the justice owing to him when another noble, Morgadour, kills his lion. Guy first reminds his lord of the bond between them, saying 'Ich haue þe serued wiþ gret honour'. He then continues:

> Seþþe þou no miȝt nouȝt waranti me,
> Whar-to schuld y serui þe,
> On oncouþe man in thi lond,
> When þou no dost him bot schond?
> Harm me is, & michel misdo;
> Þer-fore ichil fram þe go,
> & in oþer cuntres serue y wil,
> Þer men wille ȝeld me mi while.[122]

In refusing justice to Guy the emperor is acting according to his own desires in protecting Morgadour. He is acting tyrannically towards Guy and so Guy returns his service to him. Once done there is no longer a bond between them. Guy is no longer the emperor's man and the emperor no longer has any power over Guy.

The bond between king and people may be ended in the same way. There are two examples in the romances where a king is renounced by his people. Although the grounds for the following depositions were not those used in practice, the methods by which kings were removed from office are very interesting. The clearest of these is from *Richard Coeur de Lion* and concerns the emperor of Cyprus and his blatant exercise of ill will. When Richard and his crusaders are shipwrecked on his shores the emperor behaves dishonourably to them, throwing Richard's messengers out on their ears. His steward remonstrates with him over his misconduct for which his lord spitefully cuts off his nose to shut him up. The baronial response amply details the unacceptable fears which such a tyrannical act has provoked. Through a spokesman they declare that:

> Wiþouten enchesoun and jugement
> Þi gode steward þou hast ysch(ent)
> Þ(at) schuld, as he wele couþe,
> ous haue ysoc(u)[red] and saued nouþe;
> and in þi wil ma(li)cio[u]s
> also woldestow ser(ue) ous!
> Y [þe] sigge at wordes bold:
> (t) wiþ swiche a lord (w) [...
> to f[iȝ]t oȝain Richard, þe king,

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[122] *Guy*, ll.4404, 4415-4422.

> Þe best bodi vnder sonne sch[ining],
> no non of al mi barnage
> no schal þe (n)e(ue)r [do]n o[mage]![123]

It is clear that by ignoring all sense of justice and acting so maliciously the emperor is ruling solely for his own benefit and that no-one will be safe. The baronial group intervene in the king's affairs and then render back their homage and fealty, thereby reversing the relationship in which they accepted the emperor as their ruler.

In the second example there is more emphasis on the baronial role in the process of removal, and more besides. In *Sir Isumbras* this knight, after many hardships, becomes the king of a Saracen country. Once installed he begins to buy back Christians who had been sold as slaves and to rule his kingdom by Christian laws. Understandably his barons revolt and try to remove him from power.[124] This is more than just a Muslim/Christian clash; it also concerns the question of law. It does not matter that the king is a Christian, otherwise Isumbras would never have been installed as king. What does matter is that he arbitrarily ignores the laws of his kingdom, even though they are Muslim. Although Isumbras is doing the 'right' thing for the true faith, the poet does not emphasise this. *Sir Isumbras* is a highly religious romance, where the hero chooses to undergo the punishment for his sins immediately rather than wait for it later in life or after death. The slaughter of thousands of Saracens at the close of the tale by his purified family alone is surely a high point in the triumph of Christianity over the infidel. Yet the poet remains quiet in this section of the story and does not condemn the infidel barons for rising against the imposition of Christian law. Isumbras has acted tyrannically in ignoring the laws of that land, however wrong they might be, and that was not something deserving of praise.

Just as it was the barons who interceded in the affairs of the king in the romances, again it was the barons who acted together on this instance to depose the king. They, in arms, summon Isumbras:

> to thaire perlement,
> And there be bothe hangede and brynt[125].

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[123] *Richard*, A ll.1186-1230, L ll.1231-1592, here ll.1581-1592. Weber, *Richard*, ll.2401-2412.
[124] *Isumbras*, ll.685-710.
[125] *Ibid.*, ll.685-710, 708-709.

Whether parliament here means a full assembly of clergy, barons, knights and burgesses called by the barons, or a gathering of the baronial group itself is not certain. However, it is evident that it is this group who will be instrumental in removing a king and it is parliament (whatever that term may cover) where it should take place. In this setting, Isumbras will be judged and his tyranny will be subjected to the rule of law where he will be found wanting.

The judicial connotations of parliament are enhanced by the punishment of the king, which is that normally associated with treason. It is an interesting choice of sentence for a defaulting king. As treason was the worst possible crime known to people and is associated in this romance with the worst possible actions of a king, the sentence implied that the king had become a tyrant who has 'betrayed' his people. He had harmed his people and, perversely, also himself. For, as Robert Grosseteste contended, whilst the plenitude of power could do only good as it came from God, so incorrect rule must not be the work of a true king.[126] This proposition separates wrongful acts from the king and in turn implies that in behaving in a tyrannical way Isumbras had 'betrayed' the 'king' too. This was treason recognisable to all.

The 'contract' between king and people, therefore, was seen very much as a personal relationship. It was portrayed in terms known to romance audiences through their own experiences with their more immediate lords. As with these lesser bonds, homage and fealty once rendered to the king could be taken back again, either by an individual or by the nation. Perceptions of the 'contractual' nature of kingship are paramount in the romances. The emphasis on a personal relationship with the king which could be broken if he did not fulfil popular expectations, only serves to strengthen this perception.

Studies of the movement towards the first deposition of an English king have tended to focus on the constitutional developments of the 'long thirteenth century'. Attention, therefore, is directed onto the separation of the person and office of the king. The claims of Simon de Montfort and his allies to be working and fighting for the English crown during the period 1258-65, the declaration on homage in 1308 and the emphasis in 1326 itself on the good of crown and kingdom have all provided interesting material illustrating this concept. The emphasis of these studies has been on the baronial relationship with the crown, justifying rebellion and deposition as loyalty. In the

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[126] *Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae*, pp.308, 437.

romances, however, a challenge to a king or his removal need not be justified. Due to the concentration on the personal relationship with the king, the view on deposition is very straightforward. If the king fails or abuses his power then he will be abandoned.

This is not to say that romance audiences were unfamiliar with the concept of distinguishing between the office and person of the king.[127] On the contrary it is one of the most commonly and familiarly used concepts found in the tales. How royal acts motivated by will rather than by reason were regarded separately as non-kingly and kingly respectively has already been seen. So too has the separation of the office of the king from the acts of kings who failed to fulfil their obligations. The distinction between the person and office of the king was further strengthened by perceptions of the crown as an entity in the romances. The crown was seen as representative of the kingdom itself and all the lands, lordships, towns, castles and forests which it comprised. As holder of the crown the king had possession of all of this, but ownership remained with the crown itself, with the office of kingship. The crown was more important than the king, who operated as its guardian, as he did with his people. The *Alexander A* fragment shows this clearly in its opening lines:

> Now shall I carp of a King · kid in his time,
> Þat had londes, & leedes · & lordships feole;
> Amyntas þe mightie · was þe man hoten:
> Maister of Macedoine · þe marches hee aught,
> Both feeldes, & frithes · faire all aboute;
> Trie towres, & tounes, · terme of his life,
> And kept þe croune · as a King sholde.[128]

The author is not referring to a king avoiding deposition but rather to the keeping of the possessions of the kingdom, as making up the crown itself, whole and safe. It is the king's right to have seisin of these things, but that right is not personal to him but again to the crown. *Havelok* also links these two thoughts. When Godard is entrusted with the regency of Denmark he is instructed to look after Havelok:

> Þanne biteche him þo his ricth:
> Denemark and þat þer-til longes -
> Casteles and tunes, wodes and wonges.[129]

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[127] E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Oxford, 1957). P. N. Riesenberg., *Inalienability of Sovereignty in Medieval Political Thought* (New York, 1956). Burns, *Medieval Political Thought*, pp.438, 442.
[128] *Alex. A*, ll.11-17.

Of course this refers to the crown as the representation of the country, to which belong the physical possessions which Havelok will have seisin of. This view is further echoed in *Kyng Alisaunder*, at Alexander's coronation:

> Þere bare Alisaunder coroune,
> And took feute of vche toune,
> Of duk, erle, kniȝth, burgeys, baroun,
> Þat longed vnto his coroun.[130]

So the idea of separation between the person and office of the king was widespread, occurring in some of the most popular romances. Its use was easy and familiar and was evidently accepted by poets and audiences alike. The concept does not contrast with the romances' emphasis on the personal relationship with the king. Rather they complement each other. After all, when a king's relationship with his people is ended, he is removed from his office. Since the 'contractual' relationship between king and people in the romances is seen in the light of familiar personal lordship, it naturally follows that this will be the manner in which the removal of a king will be considered. There was simply no need to complicate the story with further conceptual justification of the act.

Typically, however, thoroughly bad kings do not appear in the romances. This may seem surprising considering the number of stories where kings become consumed by ill will and trample on justice in order to follow their own inclinations.[131] With the notable exception of the emperor of Cyprus in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, it is not the kings themselves who are at fault because their evil actions are all provoked and forced out of them by the betrayals of traitors.

It is important at this point to stress what constituted a traitor in the romances. Crimes of treason were well established by the thirteenth century. Works such as *Bracton* and the *Mirror of Justice* detailed plotting or acting to kill the king, betrayal of the king and kingdom to their enemies, disinheriting the king from his realm and the

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[129] *Havelok*, ll.395-397.

[130] *KA*, ll.1383-1386. *Le Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, ll.1057-1058: 'Illuec venent ly prince e li font feauté, / Ly duc e ly baron e ly conte alosé.'

[131] These romances include *HC, Beues, Athelston*, and *KH*. Bad rulers, such as Morgan in *Tristrem* and Vortigern in *AM*, tend to be usurpers and so are not to be included here where discussion will focus on legitimate kings.

defilement of women of the immediate royal family.[132]   There are some characters in the romances who do commit treason in a straightforward manner and whose crimes fit such a legal definition, such as Godard and Godrich in *Havelok*.   However these instances are comparatively rare.   Outside of these, there are two groups of people involved in cases of treason in the romances.   The first includes those simply accused of treason, falsely or otherwise.   The feeling of both poet and audience is not against these men as might be expected.   This is because a lot of alleged treachery is sexual and when true, as in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, *Sir Tristrem*, *Sir Eglamour* and *Amis and Amiloun*, it is the heroes themselves who are the guilty ones.   Sympathy is therefore with them rather than with the wronged rulers and they are not presented as traitors.   Where allegations are false the innocent, such as Horn in both *King Horn* and *Horn Childe*, the hero of *Sir Landevale*, Egelond from *Athelston* and the hero of *Beues of Hamtoun*, are naturally not considered to be traitors either.

The second group comprise those who are truly traitorous in the eyes of the audience, but who do not actually commit crimes of treason.   Instead they are responsible for causing the king to act tyrannically.   In these instances the real traitors are evil counsellors who misinform and manipulate the king for their own purposes.   Jealous nobles in *Beues of Hamtoun*, *Athelston*, *King Horn* and *Horn Childe*, for example, whisper treason in the ears of their kings until their ill wills are released on the objects of their wrath.

Evil counsellors are labelled as traitors in the romances, not because of their selfish interests, but because they deliberately unleash royal ill will, against the king's own reason it always seems, to betray his people and his office.   This is perhaps the most extreme situation where royal acts are dissociated from the king himself.   It is not ignorance on the king's part that allows his servants to oppress his subjects, as is seen so clearly in the tale of the Emperor Herowde in the *Seven Sages of Rome*.[133]   The king is personally involved and yet escapes the blame for it.

Even in the worst cases in the stories it is not the king who acts tyrannically but the evil counsellor who has released blind and unreasoning power.   The very dark and interesting romance *Athelston* is a wonderful example of this.   The jealous Earl Wymound villainously tells the king of a plot by Earl Egelond to seize the throne.

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[132] *Mirror*, p.15. *Bracton*, ii.334. J. G. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1970), pp.15-16.

[133] *Sages*, ll.2239-2510.

Athelston lures Egelond and his family to court and throws them in a dungeon with the resolve to execute them at dawn. The pleas of his sister (Egelond's wife) are ignored and when the queen begs on her knees for a fair trial the king kicks her out of the way, killing his son in the womb. Even this calamity does nothing to stop the king's tyranny until he is finally excommunicated and the kingdom placed under interdict. Surely no king could match these terrible acts. Yet the poet takes great pains to wipe away any ill feeling which might be directed towards the king. At the very beginning of the story he makes clear who is blame, saying:

> Lystnes, lordynges þat ben hende,
> Off falsnesse, hou it wil ende
> A man þat ledes hym þerin.[134]

At the most awful point in the narrative, the killing of the unborn heir to the throne, he even feels it necessary to remind the audience who is responsible. A king would never do such terrible things himself but:

> Þus may a traytour baret rayse,
> And make manye men ful euele at ayse,
> Hymselff nouȝt afftyr it lowȝ.[135]

The evil of traitors was not limited to causing the abuse of royal power. They were perceived as the agents of dystopia. If true service produced a kind of ideal society then traitors were the tools of its destruction. Not only did they unleash disruptive forces from the throne, but they did so disguised as true servants. When Wymound 'informs' on Egelond he portrays the earl as the enemy of the kingdom as if a loyal subject himself.[136] He masquerades as the faithful vassal but aims to destroy such bonds and necessarily the society they hold together. To emphasise this point the poets generally stress the previous closeness of a traitor to the king. These are not just any royal subjects who turn treasonous. Wymound was the sworn brother of Athelston, Wikard in *Horn Childe* was Horn's childhood companion, and in *Arthour and Merlin* Constance's steward Vortigern was so close to the king that 'in him was al his trust at nede'. In *Havelok* Godrich was 'trewe man withuten faile', while the viler Godard was

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[134] *Athelston*, ll.7-9.
[135] *Ibid.*, ll.7-9, 294-296.
[136] *Ibid.*, ll.133-144.

described as 'þe kinges oune frende'. Besas and Besanas in *Kyng Alisaunder* were orphans to whom Alexander had given everything.[137] None of these traitors could have been closer to those they betrayed.

If these men were portrayed as traitorous to true feeling and social bonds, they were equally portrayed as traitorous to God. Oaths of fealty and of the faithful guardianship of minor heirs take place over an altar or mass gear in the romances. In *Horn Childe* Wikard swore his fealty to Horn 'opon þe boke'. In *Havelok* Godrich undertakes his regency of Goldboru over:

> þe messe-bok,
> Þe caliz and þe pateyn ok,
> Þe corporaus, þe messe-gere

while his counterpart Godard swears similar oaths:

> On auter and on messe-gere,
> On þe belles þat men ringes,
> On messe-bok þe prest on singes.

To renege on these oaths would be sacrilegious as well as a breach of honour, in Wymound's case doubly so since he swears his treachery true 'be masse-book and belle' in *Athelston*.[138]

Traitors are portrayed as the worst people in the world, unlike all other men in that they stand outside religion and society and act as agents disrupting both. That evil counsellors should be perceived in this way is very revealing indeed.

Despite the severe condemnation of traitors, it is never considered acceptable for a king to punish them summarily. This must surely be the overwhelming lesson to be learned from the many examples of kings acting arbitrarily over false accusations on the advice of evil counsellors in these tales. If justice had been served immediately in *Horn Childe*, *King Horn*, *Athelston* and *Beues of Hamtoun* things would have turned out very differently indeed. Horn's exile and the following battles, the false imprisonment of Egelond and his family with the subsequent rebellion against Athelston, and the London riots provoked by the attack on Beues would all have been avoided for the better peace

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[137] *Ibid.*, ll.13-24 on sworn brotherhood. *AM*, l.85. *Havelok*, ll.179, 375. *KA*, ll.4595-4596.
[138] *HC*, l.140. *Havelok*, ll.185-187, 389-391. *Athelston*, l.150.

and security of all realms involved in these tales. Of course this would have deprived these stories of a plot, but nonetheless the lesson remains clear: always follow justice or the innocent will perish and there will be terrible consequences for both king and kingdom.

To simply label someone as a traitor and then try to deal out the fitting punishment was wrong. Even known traitors should still face trial. Their guilt should still be proven before any other action could be taken. In *Richard Coeur de Lion* Richard's killing of Ardour was undoubted, yet the case was still heard. In *Otuel and Roland* Terry's accusation against Ganelon was first proven during trial by combat before he was hanged.[139] In the romances the notoriety of crimes did not remove the need for the proper course of justice.

Just as all accusations of treason should be judged to discover their truth, not all types of treason were judged to be equal. There existed degrees within this crime which distinguished some traitors as worse than others. For example, regicide is always considered to be appalling in the romances. In *Kyng Alisaunder* Besas and Besanas decide to kill their king Darius in the hope of rich reward from Alexander. The conqueror duly enters the city and assumes Persia, but the only reward these two nobles receive is a traitor's death apiece. The prime consideration in this story is that to trust those who had already killed their king would be foolhardy. It is the treasonous murder of a king which is the focus of this incident. The poet berates the evil of such traitors for the following ten lines, praying that 'þe deuel of helle hem mote stike', giving a true sense of the heinousness of their crime for which Alexander is really punishing them.[140] Compare this to another episode earlier in the same romance, when a Persian knight disguises himself as a Greek merchant to get close enough to Alexander to kill him. Discovered, he is tried before Alexander's nobles who determine that he should be executed. Alexander, however, rewards the knight and sends him safely back to Darius. The case hinges on whether the knight had committed treason in his attempt on Alexander's life. Obviously the nobles felt that this was the case, but because the knight had no bond with Alexander it is loyalty and good service which he has shown rather than treason. The accused protests that he has sworn to kill the enemies of his lord, Darius, and in that no taint of treason could be found even if put to the test in combat. Tholomeus the marshal points out during the trial that:

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[139] *Richard*, A ll.541-542. Weber, *Richard*, ll.934-935. *OR*, ll.2672-2747.
[140] *KA*, ll.4681-4724, here l.4717.

His dede ne was bot honest,
For he dude his lordes hest.[141]

Evidently if regicide is planned by someone outside of the 'contract' between a king and his people then that bond is not betrayed and treason has not been committed. This is an obvious point to make in distinguishing between degrees of treason. Less obvious is the distinction made between he who deliberately sets out to seize the power of a king for himself and he who is seduced into the same position by the corruption of power through wielding it for a short time. This is exactly what is seen in *Havelok* with the parallel situations of Godard and Godrich. These earls were appointed as regents until the coming of age of the children of the late kings of Denmark and England respectively. Both of them seize the crown for themselves. The treason of Godrich and Godard provokes the poet to periodic exclamations that they were fiends, as bad as Judas, or even worse than Satan himself.[142] However aside from these outcries the poet treats Godard's as the worse case. Godard is a thoroughly evil villain. From the death of Birkabeyn he intends to seize the kingship for himself. On assuming power he immediately kills Havelok's sisters and arranges the death of both Havelok and the henchman he orders to see the job done. The poet's hatred of this extreme treason is revealed early in the tale, even before Godard destroys the royal family:

> Vnder God þe moste swike
> Þat eure in erþe shaped was,
> Þithuten on-þe wike Iudas!
> Haue he þe malisun today
> Of alle þat eure speken may -
> Of patriark and of pope,
> And of prest with loken kope,
> Of monekes and hermites boþe...
> And of þe leue holi rode
> Þat God himselue ran on blode!
> Crist warie him with his mouth![143]

This lengthy condemnation is not repeated for Godrich. He is condemned but never so violently, as his treason is considered lesser than that of Godard. Godrich did intend to

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[141] *KA*, pp.219-227, here ll.3988-3993, 4008-4009.
[142] *Havelok*, ll.506, 425, 482, 1101, 1134, 1135.
[143] *Ibid.*, ll.423-433.

fulfil his oath to Athelwold but he was corrupted by the power he wielded as regent. He sets out to govern England well for Goldboru and rules exactly as a king would. He makes an oath to the people 'þat he shulden him ghod fey beren'. He appoints castellans, justices and their staff and keepers of the peace as he travels through the realm to establish his government. And yet:

> Al Engelond of him stod awe -
> Al Engelond was of him adrad,
> So his the beste fro þe gad.[144]

He becomes a tyrant and soon realises that he could not give up his position and decides to keep the kingship for his own family.[145] Yet he is not entirely to blame. There is a strong feeling in the romances that only a true king could safely handle the burden of power without being seduced into tyranny. A king might choose to go down that path himself and abuse his power, but as has been seen this could only be because of the work of evil counsellors. There is more to the expectation that in the absence of the king his men would inevitably slide from the ideal than simple realism. They would always do so because, not being born to rule, they would succumb to the lure of power. This is also seen clearly in *Sir Orfeo*. When Orfeo returns to his kingdom after a long absence he continues his disguise as a minstrel because he expects his steward will have succumbed to his own desires.[146]

The distinction between the straightforward treason of Godard and the more complicated acts of Godrich is reflected in the fate of the two men. On Havelok's return to power in Denmark Godard is dealt with very quickly. He is captured, judged guilty by the Danish nobles and delivered to his fitting punishment. The account of his final torture and death is detailed and lengthy, with each gory moment relished by the poet. In comparison Godrich's end is nobler. He prepares to fight Havelok and Goldboru for England and fights so well that Havelok is prompted to offer him a second chance. This is not simply the recognition of the value of a strong man. It reveals that whereas Godard's crimes were unforgivable, those of Godrich were not. There were extenuating circumstances which could be applied to his case, as well as the fact that in a twisted fashion he had actually managed to fulfil his oath to Athelwold to marry Goldboru to the

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[144] *Ibid.*, ll.255, 249-252, 260-269, 277-279.
[145] *Ibid.*, ll.292-311.
[146] *Orfeo*, ll.497-555.

strongest man in England. He did not take this chance and was duly judged and punished, yet the poet does not relish this death, according it barely half the attention given to that of Godard.[147]

What made a king so special that he alone possessed the quality to rule well? So far very little has been seen to suggest that kings had any unique qualities aside from their position. The sacral nature of kingship receives scant attention in the romances, and the relationship between king and people has been revealed to have been viewed in very practical terms indeed. Yet the romances constantly distinguish true kings as something special, even exceptional.

As has been pointed out, Middle English romance focuses upon the external life of its characters. Therefore any distinguishing of individuals must be external too. It is obviously convention to make the hero of a story an handsome man. It makes him more appealing to the audience and points him out as the chief character. The hero of *Sir Isumbras* is described as 'the faireste mane', that of *Guy of Warwick* as 'a fayre yonge thynge' and of *Sir Degarre* 'a fair child'. The two friends in *Amis and Amiloun* are so striking that fellow feasters exclaim:

> Of body how wel þey were þyȝt,
> And how feire þey were of syȝt,
> Of hyde and hew and here,

while King Ermin from *Beues of Hamtoun* immediately distinguishes the boy in his court, saying 'A fairer child neuer i ne siȝ'.[148]

The principle that the hero should be of good personal appearance holds true for kings too. As the representative of his people, a king should look the part. Since beauty is also equated with goodness in the romances it is doubly necessary for this to be so.[149] It is interesting, for example, how the poet in *Athelston* exceptionally chooses not to describe his main character until he was 'kyng semely to se'. Horn's arrival in

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[147] *Havelok*, ll.2464-2512 on the fate of Godard, ll.2716-2722 on Godrich's second chance, ll.2819-2842 on the fate of Godrich.

[148] *Isumbras*, l.259. *Guy*, C l.23. *Degarre*, l.274. *AA*, ll.79-81. *Beues*, l.536.

[149] Examples of this correspondence can be found with descriptions of the sultan's baptism in the *KT*, ll.928-930; description of Colbrond in *Guy*, ll.257:8-257:9; appearance of Vernagu in *RV*, ll.473-484. Note that this also forms part of a tendency in the Charlemagne romances for exaggeration in personal description, see for example that of Charlemagne himself in *OR*, ll.1984-1989; however scaled down to the right proportions the description of Vernagu fits the argument.

Westernesse in the romance *King Horn* illustrates the point that looking the best reflects kingly status. Men from the royal court approach the newcomers when:

> Horn spak here speche,
> He spak for hem alle,
> vor so hit moste biualle;
> He was þe faireste
> & of wit þe beste.[150]

It is significant that his intelligence is twinned with his appearance, which in this case distinguishes him from the start to those approaching. A similar situation occurs when Ywain meets Alundyne's barons in *Ywain and Gawain*. Despite his killing of their old lord they are moved to accept him as their new lord by his appearance:

> For his bewte in hal and bowre
> Him semes to be an emperowre.[151]

Havelok also supports this contention fully. The process whereby Havelok becomes king of Denmark strongly involves his appearance. Ubbe initially recognises Havelok as the true heir of Denmark when he realises:

> For it was neuere yet a broþer
> Jn al Denemark so lich anoþer,
> So þis man, þat is fayr,
> Als Birkabeyn; he is hise eyr![152]

It might be forgiven for asking why Ubbe, a close friend of the late king, did not see this earlier in the story, but he certainly uses Havelok's good looks as an important element in persuading the Danes to accept their new king. When Ubbe presents Havelok to the people he declares:

> Lokes hware he stondes her!
> Jn al þis werd ne haues he per -
> Non so fayr, ne non so long,
> Ne non so mikel, ne non so strong.
> Jn þis middelerd nis no knith

[150] *Athelston*, l.37. *KH*, ll.170-174.
[151] *YG*, ll.1201-1204.
[152] *Havelok*, ll.2155-2158.

Half so strong ne half so with.[153]

Note too that strength of body is important: kings were required to be strong warriors and the ultimate champions of their people. Good stature and strength are often described in the depiction of kings alongside their good looks.[154] This is recognised by Ubbe, as seen above, who almost 'sells' Havelok through his obvious physical capability to defend Denmark.

If this all seems a little too far-fetched, it only needs remembering that kings were constantly distinguished from the ordinary through physical differences. Kings were commonly portrayed wearing regalia, for instance. Royal burials differed in the material treatment of the body. In *Arthour and Merlin* it is the archbishop who conducts the service in which Uther is 'layd swiþe nobeliche', while in *Kyng Alisaunder* Alexander grants Darius's request to:

> graunte me swiche beriȝing
> Als afereþ to a kyng.
> Ne take þou neuer wreche non
> On synful flesshe and on bon,
> Bot beriȝe me by kynges lawȝe.

Darius's body was borne home with honour, the body embalmed and laid in a 'shrine'.[155] This physical distinction of kings was borne out in real life in the burial of English kings. Henry III was probably buried in the robes he wore during his second coronation in 1220, while Edward I was entombed in a noble ceremony, wearing fine clothes decorated with jewellery, holding two sceptres and bearing a crown.[156] The distinction of a king by his good looks and stature in the romances is not a far remove from these other instances of physical distinction. It is worth remembering the puzzlement of one educated man, the author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*. He was fairly mystified as to the failure of Edward II given that that king was so strong, tall and handsome.[157]

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[153] *Ibid.*, ll.2241-2246.

[154] *AM*, ll.2719-2724. *Isumbras*, ll.13-16. *HC*, ll.289-297. *Havelok*, ll.7-10. *William*, ll.430-432. *Troye*, ll.29-31. *Guy*, ll.161-162, 8677. *KH*, ll.901-902. Singular description of stature are found in *Degarre*, ll.7-16.

[155] *AM*, l.2760. *KA*, ll.4615-4619, p.261.

[156] D. A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (1996), chapter 21. J. Ayloffe, 'An Account of the Body of King Edward the First, as it Appeared in Opening his tomb in the Year 1774', *Archaeologia*, 3 (1786), pp.376-413. E. M. Hallam, 'Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship in France and England, 1060-1330', *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (1992), pp.359-380.

[157] N. Denholm-Young (ed.), *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (1957), pp.39-40.

The romances reveal a firm belief that status was linked to blood. Many tales follow noble and royal heroes who are raised in obscurity.[158] These displaced characters naturally exhibit the manners, abilities and chosen pursuits associated with their true status. The hero of *William of Palerne*, for example, was noted for his 'menskfull maneres' and generosity. In *Arthour and Merlin*, while Arthur grows up with Antours 'he was curteys hende and gent' and the hero of *Sir Landevale* was also praised for being 'curteyse and hend'.[159] This type of character naturally rides, hunts and fights well, even if raised unaware of these activities. In *Sir Perceval* this knight grew up uneducated and isolated in the forest with his mother. Yet she could do nothing to keep him from his self-taught mastery of hunting or his desire to become a knight. A similar situation occurs in the *Seege of Troye*, when the queen has a dream which is interpreted to mean that her son will destroy the city. She sends Paris to be raised as a pig herder, but again nothing can prevent him from instinctively turning to warfare and he is recalled by Priam.[160] Status and the abilities associated with it were clearly inherited and this was most notable with kings. In fact royal blood was the key to what made a king special and made only him capable of ruling well.

Nationalistic attachment to a country's royal line is evident in the romances. There are several instances where genealogical reference is made when future kings are born or new kings made, for example in the *Seege of Troye* and *Athelston*.[161] Usurpers, of course, are naturally condemned by the poets, being not of the right line of descent. In *Sir Tristrem*, Morgan is described as 'cruwel was and heiʒe'.[162] No blame is attached to those who resist these traitors. The poet of *Kyng Alisaunder* makes no comment on the defiance of the people of Mantona to Philip of Macedonia, nor does the *Alexander A* fragment protest at the nobles' rejection of Philip in Macedonia because he was unknown to them, having been fostered by King Epaminondas of Thebes. As for the second poet's feeling towards Nectanabas, he receives very short shrift for 'Egipt by eritage · entred hee neuer'.[163] It was not, however, the main reason behind the belief that royal blood made kings true rulers.

Royal blood conveys something extra to those in whose veins it flows. There is an expectation that the son of a king will inherit the skill and strength to rule from his

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[158] *KH, Havelok, Perceval, Troye, William, AM*, and *Degarre* all include this type of plot.
[159] *William*, ll.431, 190-193. *AM*, l.2721. *Landevale*, l.125.
[160] *Perceval*, ll.221-224, ll.161, 315-645. *Troye*, ll.229-306.
[161] *Troye*, ll.217-220. *Athelston*, ll.28-29, 32-34.
[162] *Tristrem*, l.267.
[163] *KA*, ll.1169-1170. *Alex. A*, ll.46-69, 464.

father. In *Arthour and Merlin* Archbishop Brice is troubled by the appearance of Arthur as the new king of England. When Merlin explains his origins, however:

> Þe bischop þonked God so gode
> Þat he was of þe kinges blode.

Later on, before the coronation, some nobles disapprove of this unknown young man and do not want him to rule over them. The archbishop reassures them as he:

> gan to preche to hem alle
> And seyd Arthour was kinges stren
> Of king biȝeten and born of quen[164].

It is not simply the revelation that Arthur is the true heir which is important. It is the fact that he possesses the inherent strength to rule from his royal blood which leads to his acceptance. In *Havelok* physical manifestations of power within the hero are seen on several occasions in the narrative. Havelok is recognised as 'special' because of the miraculous light which shines from his mouth in the night. Grim's wife Leue, Goldboru and Ubbe all recognise him as exceptional after seeing this light. He also bears a birthmark in the shape of a golden cross on his shoulder:

> He [is] kinges sone and kinges eyr -
> Þat bikenneth þat croiz so fayr.[165]

Royal blood therefore had an inherent quality which not only conveyed the power to rule, but was considered to be 'magical'. Even animals seem to sense this and never harm the children of kings. When Josian and her protector Bonefas are attacked by lions in *Beues of Hamtoun* they first eat him and then lie at her feet:

> Þey ne myȝt do hur no shame,
> For þe kind of Lyouns, y-wys,
> A kynges douȝter, þat maide is,
> Kinges douȝter, quene and maide both,
> Þe lyouns miȝt do hur noo wroth.[166]

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[164] *AM*, ll.3039-3040, 3174-3176.
[165] *Havelok*, ll.589-595, 1252-1262, 2111-1214, 2122-2124; 605-608, 1263-1271, here ll.1268-1269.
[166] *Beues*, ll.2390-2394.

The same thing happens when Ywain is confronted by a lion in *Ywain and Gawain*. The animal does not attack him but fawns on him instead for he was the son of a king.[167] In a different scenario, the late king's horse recognises the hero of *William of Palerne* as the king's son, despite his disappearance as a baby, and does not throw him off as he does all others. In the *Alexander A* fragment Philip's horse, who is fed on a diet of men, licks the hands of Alexander and bows to him.[168]

In none of the above examples illustrating the potency of royal blood are the characters already crowned kings. This implies that the unique qualities of kings and the strong belief in their 'specialness' do not originate with the anointing of a candidate. There is no sacral power at work. Nor is this 'specialness' conveyed by the acceptance of a man into the position of king by the people. There is no 'contractually' given power at work either. As surely as any farmer, burgess, knight or noble gained his status and all that he was able to be and do from his family bloodline, so too did a king gain his unique position and qualities through inheritance of blood from his father and forefathers.

Deep and wide-ranging insights into the attitudes of knights and gentry towards kingship are therefore provided by Middle English romance. Expectations of the king in functional terms are revealed in detail in the areas of the provision of justice, good government and military defence and concur with the conclusions of contemporary political philosophers. More interestingly, though, the romances reveal the attitudes and feelings that animated the relationship between king and people. It was viewed in the light of more familiar social bonds and was essentially a 'contractual' understanding of kingship. The whole relationship between king and people was seen in very practical terms, with a clear understanding of mutual obligations and an uncompromising attitude towards any failure to meet them. Romance audiences were well aware of the reversible nature of the relationship with the king and showed no doubt about ending the bond in the event of one party defaulting in their responsibilities. The familiarity with concepts such as the separation of the person and office of the king did not appear to conflict with the emphasis on a personal relationship with the king. If he failed in his duties there was no need to complicate matters with constitutional theory: as the relationship with the king was ended so his holding of office was ended too. However, the contrasting belief

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[167] *YG*, ll.2001-2002.
[168] *William*, ll.3225-3241. *Alex. A*, ll.1112-1139, 1165-1197.

in the special, but not sacral, qualities of kings conveyed by bloodline serves to illustrate just how contradictory feelings could be on the nature of kingship. How was it that people could remove a king while feeling that only such a man, born to his position, could rule a kingdom?

Chapter 3 - The Legendary Histories.

The previous chapter showed that evidence for contemporary expectations of kings and reflections on the nature of kingship was plentiful in Middle English romance. Nevertheless, to substantiate the value of these attitudes and perceptions they still need to be placed in context. To this end, this chapter offers a comparison with those images of kings found in other types of contemporary popular literature. As noted earlier, however, these are unable to match the romances in subject matter and dissemination as well as the reflectivity of the material regarding contemporary thinking on kingship.

One type of literature suitable for comparison with the romances is historical writing. This dealt with the lives and activities of kings and was well known throughout the period. However, not all histories fulfil the same conditions demanded of the romances. Latin chronicles, for example, were not widely accessible, due both to the language in which they were written and their relative restriction to religious houses. They were written for a wide range of purposes, but not to please an audience and although often expressing strong opinions they were not reflective of popular tastes, values and attitudes in the same way that romance literature was.

The type of histories which provide the closest match to the romances are the Brut chronicles. These initially chronicle the legendary history of Britain, beginning with Brutus, the first king of the island. Not only do they deal with similar subject matter, but they were also very popular. They were not written by archivists or by those displaying familiarity with legal, philosophical, theological or classical tracts, but were entertaining, expressive, colloquial and dramatic. They were more accessible than Latin chronicles, being written in Anglo-Norman and Middle English and having a secular circulation.

The potential audience of these histories was very large. Although Brut chronicles could be studied privately, there is much to suggest that they were read aloud to group audiences.[1] Their entertaining style is but one indication of this, with other signs found within the narrative structure and in the use of literary device. The majority of the Bruts, like the romances, are lengthy but composed of smaller narrative sequences. While brevity made learning history easier, it was also ideal for oral transmission. Individual reigns or accounts of groups of kings could be read aloud to please an audience. Another similarity with the romances is the use of the minstrelsy device.

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[1] R. A. Albano, *Middle English Historiography* (New York, 1993), pp.39-40.

Many chronicles begin with the call to listen to the tale of the kings of England, with a blessing upon the head of he who does so.[2] Even those which do not follow this pattern write in an intimate, conversational style, as if the author were recounting his story in person before listeners.

The manuscript survival of these works also supports their popularity. The Middle English *Brut* is extant in at least 172 manuscripts, its Anglo-Norman predecessor in at least forty-seven and the chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft in nine manuscripts, quite aside from the eighteen copies of his account of Edward I made during the reign of Edward II.[3] Their success and breadth of appeal can also be shown by the variety found within the genre. There are full and abridged texts, examples in Anglo-Norman and English and examples in verse and prose. All of these factors point to a wide dissemination of the Brut chronicles.

A further requirement of these chronicles for their use in comparing attitudes to kingship, and the most useful for comparison with the romances, is also fulfilled. The earlier sections of the Bruts depicting the legendary history of Britain are entirely fictional, and so their writers had the same kind of freedom experienced by Middle English romance poets. The past of common knowledge, the 'known' past, is fixed and cannot be manipulated to any great degree. A chronicler can express his opinion virulently, but stories simply cannot be altered. A fictional legendary past, however, can be more easily shaped to the author's desire. It is also very reflective of the contemporary manners, expectations and attitudes of both authors and audiences. Like romance poets, the writers of Brut chronicles described a past which was not 'romantic', but relevant and modern. The depiction of aspects of kingship, such as the nature of royal power and the relationship between king and people, reflected contemporary perceptions of these matters.

There is an additional similarity between the romances and the Brut chronicles in that they were both highly derivative. The main sources for the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century writers of the legendary history of Britain were Geoffrey de Monmouth's *Historia regum britanniae* and Wace's *Le Roman de Brut*, itself an Anglo-

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[2] *SMC*, B ll.1-4. A. Bell (ed.), *An Anglo-Norman Brut (Royal 13.A.xxi)*, ANTS, 21-22 (Oxford, 1969), ll.1-6; this text has been used to supply the Middle English prose *Brut*. F. J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Story of England by Robert Mannyng of Brunne A.D. 1338*, Rolls Series, 87 (1887,), ll.1-4. T. Wright (ed.), *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, Rolls Series, 47 (1866), i.2. The prologue of Thomas of Castelford's chronicle in Göttingen University Library, 2 Codex MS History 740 Cim is illegible.
[3] E. D. Kennedy, 'Chronicles and Other Historical Writings', *Manual*, viii.2629-2630. *Règne d'Édouard Ier*, p.18. *Langtoft*, pp.xxi-xxii.

Norman version of Geoffrey's work.[4] They were completed using a variety of monastic chronicles, such as those of William of Malmesbury and Florence of Worcester, and the writer's own knowledge of events. Despite their derivative nature each Brut chronicle is different from its sources, whether it be a compilation of earlier material or a more sophisticated reworking. Geoffrey of Monmouth provided a genealogy, with good kings and bad, who were noted individually for building certain towns, struggling against certain invaders, being betrayed by friends and family, or being expelled by their barons. Nevertheless, he only provided a blueprint which later writers felt free to use selectively, omitting or embellishing episodes and changing the perception of individual reigns. Even when the retelling of a story is close to the original the effect of the whole is often very different. As with Middle English romance poets, the writers of Brut chronicles were thus not just translators but adaptors. Their works were modern and they wrote for their own purposes as did other, arguably more serious, chroniclers.[5]

The chronicles which will be used to place romance images of kingship in context will be those surviving from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. These include:

1) the anonymous *Short Metrical Chronicle* (*c.*1307)

2) Rauf de Boun's *Le Petit Bruit* (1309)

3) *Le Livere des Reis de Brittanie e Le Livere des Reis de Engleterre* (pre-1306)

4) Robert Mannyng's *Story of England* (completed 1338)

5) Robert of Gloucester's metrical chronicle (*c.*1300)

6) Pierre de Langtoft's chronicle (late thirteenth century)

7) Thomas Bek of Castelford's chronicle (*c.*1327)

8) the Middle English prose *Brut*, which will be included as, although it was translated from the Anglo-Norman *Brut* in the late fourteenth century, it contains so much late thirteenth century material.[6]

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[4] L. Thorpe (ed.), *The History of the Kings of Britain*, by Geoffrey of Monmouth (1969). I. Arnold (ed.), *Le Roman de Brut de Wace*, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 83i, ii (Paris, 1938, 1940).

[5] Discussions of these purposes include L. Johnson, 'Robert Mannyng of Brunne and the History of Arthurian Literature', *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to John Taylor*, eds. I. N. Wood and G. A. Loud (Leeds, 1991), pp.129-147; R. Stepsis, 'Pierre de Langtoft's *Chronicle*: An Essay in Medieval Historiography', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series 3 (1972), pp.51-73; T. Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* Oxford, 1996); T. Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings' Lives: The Design of Past and Present in the early fourteenth-century verse chronicles by Pierre de Langtoft and Robert Mannyng* (Ph.D. Thesis Utrecht, 1995).

[6] 1) *SMC*, p.cxxxv. *Manual*, viii.2622. 2) *LPB*, p.1. 3) J. Glover (ed.), *Le Livere des Reis de Brittanie et Le Livere des Reis de Engleterre*, Rolls Series, 42 (1865). Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p.291. 4) *Mannyng*, i.xii. T. Hearne (ed.), *Peter of Langtoft's Chronicle, (as Illustrated and Improv'd by*

In the romances, images of kings fell largely into two groups: practical expectations linked to the king's role and more abstract thinking on kingship. Evidence of attitudes to kingship found in the histories however, for both groups of images, is not as substantial as that found in the romances. This is due both to a lower number of chronicles and their different narrative structure. They are more episodic, listing the notable achievements, events and disasters of individual reigns. This style was copied from true chronicles and gave credibility to the legendary history of Britain. Their realism was further increased by reflection of contemporary issues in past events, for example fights with the Scots and disputes between king and barons. Unfortunately, these episodes are usually short, a single reign often being described by a few lines or even simply represented by a name in a list of kings. As a result, details on the practical expectations of kings are poorly represented, as in themselves they were not events worth recording for a history. Evidence concerning the more abstract side of kingship also suffers simply because the shortness of the entries does not allow much room for its portrayal.

Images of kings taken from the Bruts are thus not as plentiful or comprehensive as those taken from the romances. Nevertheless, the chronicles still help to determine the value of romance attitudes to kingship either by directly contrasting with, confirming or supplementing them. The area of expectations associated with the king's role in justice and defence will be considered first.

As in the romances, in the chronicles the king is identified as the provider of law and justice. In the *Brut*, for example, Brutus 'made þe lawes þat þe Britouns holdeþ'.[7] Thomas of Castelford particularly emphasises the image of the king as the fountain of justice. He follows the *Historia regum britanniae* closely, but where Geoffrey of Monmouth merely lists the names of kings in order to indicate the passage of time, Castelford chose to give short accounts for each reign. He mainly described these kings

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Robert of Brunne) from the Death of Cadwalader to the end of Edward the First's Reign (Reprinted Oxford, 1810). R. Crosby, 'Robert Mannyng of Brunne: A New Biography', *PMLA*, 57 (1942), pp.15-28. 5) W. A. Wright (ed.), *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, Rolls Series, 86 (1887), i.xi. A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.500 to 1307* (1974), p.433. 6) Gransden, *Historical Writing*, i.476. Modern edition of Edward I section in *Règne d'Édouard Ier*. 7) Constantine to Cadwalader available in F. Behre (ed.), *Thomas Castelford's Chronicle* (Göteborg, 1940). J. Taylor, *Medieval Historical Writing in Yorkshire* (York, 1961), pp.18-19. Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p.75 suggested that this chronicle is much later, however he did not offer any proof of this. 8) *Manual*, viii.2629-2630. J. Taylor, 'The French *Brut* and the Reign of Edward II', *EHR*, 72 (1957), p.434 and *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987), pp.110-132.
[7] *Brut*, p.12.

as good rulers, detailing in a small way what he thought that meant. He repeatedly used the issuing of law by the king as a quality of good kingship, for example in his descriptions of Samuel and Clignele.[8] He also stressed the need for the king to vigorously enforce these laws, as did Robert Mannyng. Mannyng, for example, praised the pursuit of 'ffals [men] & felon' by Julius Caesar, in a manner reminiscent of romance poets' praise for Athelwold in *Havelok* and William in *William of Palerne*.[9] Castelford and Langtoft complement each other in their expectations of the manner in which the king was to conduct justice. Castelford noted a good king's impartiality to rank in his account of Samuel's reign, and Langtoft praised Belinus for his incorruptibility.[10]

Interestingly, the Bruts spell out the link between the purpose of law and the welfare of the people more openly than the romances. Both types of literature agree that the king should govern within the law. Rauf de Boun, for example, approved of Havelok as he ruled 'en reson et ley'.[11] In contrast, the chronicles associate the king's natural concern for his people with the issuing of law. Castelford, for example, identifies Samuel's laws with his care for his subjects.[12] Boun describes Baconus as the first king to give justice to his people because of their distress and 'mult pleez', and later speaks of Alfred who 'bon leys ordeyner pour le commun profit de sa reume'.[13]

The romances revealed the exercise of powers associated solely with the royal position; activities which distinguished a man as a king. This included kings governing their kingdoms with a firm hand, ruling through towns, castles, forests, courts, shire meetings and a host of royal officials. The histories do not focus upon royal government, but several texts stress the connection between lordship and justice. In Castelford's chronicle, when Humber invades Scotland the threat to the lordship of Albanactus is presented in terms of 'hys peace brake'.[14] In *Le Petit Bruit*, when Arthur conquers Wales, Scotland and Ireland, his lordship is declared when he establishes 'tout en sa protection'.[15] When Arthur takes France, Langtoft reports that 'Par my la terre de Fraunce sa pes fet crier'.[16] This is further echoed by the *Brut* when describing the conquest of Wales and Scotland by Edward I. Following the second Welsh war 'Kyng

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[8] History 740 Cim, f.38r, col.2.
[9] *Mannyng*, l.4175. See p.41.
[10] History 740 Cim, f.38r, col.2. *Langtoft*, i.50.
[11] *LPB*, p.15.
[12] History 740 Cim, f.38r, col.2.
[13] *LPB*, pp.6, 14.
[14] History 740 Cim, f.15v, col.2.
[15] *LPB*, p.12.
[16] *Langtoft*, i.168.

Edward lete crie his pees þrouȝ Walys', and after forcing Robert Bruce into exile in Norway 'Kyng Edward þo lette crye his pees þrouȝ al þe land, & his [laws] were vsede'.[17]

The expectation that kings should defend their people was more prominent in the Bruts than those expectations connected with justice and government. Chroniclers were concerned with the deeds of kings, notably their military activities, which form a recurrent theme in both histories and romances. Similar expectations of a king's martial duties are found in both types of literature, but in the chronicles they are less detailed. This is not to say that defence was not seen as an important element of the king's role, rather that it was taken for granted. Castelford described, in addition to law and justice, a second quality denoting good kings in his embellished king-list; namely the defence of their kingdom. He praises Fulgens and Cape, for example, for their protection of Britain.[18] The number of times when kings defend their people from attack in the chronicles reveals the strength of this expectation.

Those details that can be seen in the chronicles support romance images of kings at war. For instance, the Bruts agree in wanting their kings to provide quick and able leadership in the field. In Castelford's chronicle, when Albanactus hears of Humber's invasion he immediately summons his men to drive their enemy out.[19] It is clear from Albanactus's call to arms and the many other instances of the defence of Britain, that the right and responsibility of a king to lead his people for their own protection was unquestioned. There is an additional responsibility attached to the king's defence of the realm in the chronicles, regarding preparation against possible attack. It was felt that the king should guard his people not only on the battlefield, but through the building and maintenance of castles, for example.[20]

As in the romances, kings in the chronicles were expected to be courageous and show personal military prowess. Gloucester, for example, describes Gurguit and Cassibelinus as stalwart and hardy knights. Mannyng praised Julius Caesar as the best knight in the world, who 'Preysed of prowesse, of poer had pris'. The *Short Metrical Chronicle* speaks of Hengist as a 'conquerour of pris' and the *Brut* of Aeneas as 'worthy of body and of his dedes'.[21]

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[17] *Brut*, pp.184, 202.
[18] History 740 Cim, f.37r, col.2; f.37v, col.26.
[19] *Ibid.*, f.15v, col.2.
[20] *Ibid.*, f.38r, col.2.
[21] *Mannyng*, ll.4166-4169, 4186. *Gloucester*, ll.908, 1108. *SMC*, A l.655. *Brut*, p.5.

The chroniclers emphasise personal might further by often choosing conquerors as their model for kingship. Examples include Brutus (to whom Diana promised 'par conqueste la seygnurye averait'), Denewold and Belinus, and latterly Athelstan, Edgar and Edward I.[22] Surprisingly, even alien conquerors such as Cnut and Hengist are included as model kings. *Le Livere des Reis de Brittanie* remarked of the former that 'tut fust il issi ke il par poer e non pas par dreit entrast; nekedent il governa le reaume en grant value e en grant curteisie'.[23] The treatment of Hengist by the *Short Metrical Chronicle* is also most striking. The author sings his praises lengthily, crediting him with the establishment of towns, hundreds and shires, the measurement of furlongs and miles, the holding of parliament, making good laws and the building of Stonehenge or 'Hengist-ston'. He forces King Selmin of France to give him Normandy, Gascony and Brittany. Even London is known as 'Hengist-hom' as a mark of the great love and respect of the people for this remarkable king.[24] In all other chronicles Hengist is the arch-villain in the history of Britain. He is the treacherous ally of Vortigern who manipulates that king and is the means through which the British kings are eventually defeated. The only reason for the praise given to him in this account appears to the value placed upon his active, personal military success.

In contrast to the romances, the Bruts focus on the need for a militarily active king, suggesting that only a conqueror could provide England with peace and security. This is partly due to the nature of the texts. They begin with legends surrounding the origin of the island's people and kingship, such stories being concerned with nation and unity under one ruler.[25] Aside from this consideration, the authors of the Bruts showed persistent support for a Britain unified under English suzerainty. *Le Livere des Reis de Engleterre*, for example, did not always distinguish between England and Britain. The author speaks of 'le isle de Bretaingnie, ki hom apelle ore Engleterre, si ad de denz li le reaume de Engletere e Wales, e tut Escoce'.[26] Whenever the island was divided, as after the death of Lucius in *Le Petit Bruit*, it was disastrous. Kings fought among themselves 'et firunt graunt destruccion du peuple'.[27] This is a reflection of many Brut chroniclers' belief in English overlordship of Scotland in particular as the prerequisite of security.

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[22] *Langtoft*, i.12.
[23] *Reis de Engleterre*, p.100.
[24] *SMC*, A ll. 662-670; 691-694; 673-690; 711-718; 671-672, 833-844, 845-848; 719-734.
[25] T. Turville-Petre, 'The 'Nation' in English Writings of the Early Fourteenth Century', *England in the Fourteenth Century: Harlaxton Medieval Studies III*, ed. N. Rogers (Stamford, 1991), pp.128-139.
[26] *Reis de Engleterre*, p.32.
[27] *LPB*, p.9.

The images of the king in his judicial and military capacities in the Bruts are simple. They do not explore the connected philosophical questions, for example recourse against false judgements by the king, the illimitability of royal power, or the protective influence of a king's military reputation. The chronicles do, however, support the romances in their portrayal of the basic expectations of a king.

Turning now to the more conceptual side of kingship, it was the relationship between king and people which was most deeply revealed in the romances. The same is true for the legendary histories. As in chapter two, the beginning of that relationship will be considered first.

In contrast to the romances, there is frequent reference to the sacral nature of kingship in the chronicles. In accounts of coronations, for example, the *Brut* describes the anointing of Constantine by Bishop Gosselyn and Castelford includes Archbishop Brice's consecration of Arthur.[28] Does the description of royal anointment in the Bruts indicate a belief in *vicarius dei*, in the sacral nature of royal power? If so, does it necessarily conflict with the highly 'contractual' perception of kingship found in the romances? Consideration of the other elements of the coronation described in the chronicles will allow further assessment of the relative importance of these two elements.

As in the romances, the crown is prominent as a physical emblem of kingship. The *Short Metrical Chronicle*, Robert of Gloucester, Thomas of Castelford and the *Brut* all speak of the king's 'cronement'[29], with only occasional reference to a throne.[30] So close is the identification of a king by his crown that the author of the *Brut* even contradicts himself on occasion. He follows Geoffrey of Monmouth in describing Dunwald as the first king of Britain to make and wear a crown. However, he cannot describe the previous kingship of Brutus without saying that 'Brut bare Crowne in þe Cyte of newe Troye xx ʒeer after tyme the Cyte was made'.[31] It seems that the crown was a more evident sign of kingship than even holy oil.

Also prominent in romance coronations was the involvement of the people in the ceremony. They were considered to play a real part in the election and acceptance of a king. This is also the case in the histories, which additionally place emphasis on the role of the barons. Gloucester states that Uther became king 'þoru þe heyemen of þis lond'

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[28] *Brut*, p.46. *Castelford*, ll.19723-19728.
[29] *SMC*, l.1056. *Gloucester*, l.3325. *Castelford*, ll.19726, 24014. *Brut*, pp.12, 23, 33, 47.
[30] *SMC*, l.1061.
[31] *Brut*, pp.23, 12.

and that when he died 'þe heye men alle come' to make his son Arthur king.[32]
Castelford similarly described the barons who:

> bisoght þe Archebischop dubrice
> Þat tim to do solempne office
> And sacer Arthur, kyng vter son,
> Of alle britaine to haf coron[33] .

The chronicles also show the barons involved in the election of kings, acting
against a background of community approval. The *Brut* describes how 'þe lordes of þe
lande, by commune assent, cronede Androgen, Erl of Cornewaile, and made him kyng'.
The author speaks later of Constance who 'was Crouned and made kyng by Assent of þe
Brytouns.'[34] The *Short Metrical Chronicle* reports how the people gathered to give the
crown to Lud on his father's disappearance.[35] In Gloucester's chronicle, after the death
of Carausius, the Britons chose Asclepiod to rule over them and when Constantine was
assassinated, the 'folc' discussed the problem of succession, in that one son was a monk
and the others only children.[36] Castelford also reports on the discussion held after the
death of Constantine, recording the bishops' protests at the crowning of a monk which
were overridden by the agreement of the people so that the ceremony went ahead.[37]
Langtoft explained the substitution of an earlier Constantine for his brother Aldroneous
of Brittany in the kingship of Britain, describing how 'la comune i est assentaunte' to his
coronation.[38] As in the romances, therefore, there is a sense that the people were
involved in the king-making process.

The active 'presence' of the people at the coronation conveys a sense of an
agreement between themselves and the king, of the mutuality of their relationship. This
is reinforced both in the romances and the Bruts by the oaths of fealty made at the
coronation. In the *Short Metrical Chronicle*, for example, at the coronation of Hengist:

> al þe barons þider come
> Þe king made hem swere oþes hold

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[32] *Gloucester*, ll.3225-3226, 3467-3471.
[33] *Castelford*, ll.19723-19726.
[34] *Brut*, pp.33, 47.
[35] *SMC*, A ll.510-515.
[36] *Gloucester*, ll.1775-1777, 2289-2292.
[37] History 740 Cim, f.74r, col.2-f.75v, col.1.
[38] *Langtoft*, p.94.

þat for her lord hem held þei schold[39].

Similarly, in the *Brut*, when Gwendolen becomes ruler of Cornwall she 'vndirfonge feautes & homages of all þe men of þe land'.[40]

Examples of coronation oaths in the Bruts are somewhat sparse in comparison with the romances, but elsewhere in the chronicles there are plenty of instances where fealty and homage are evident. These serve to increase the sense of 'contract' between a king and his subjects. Oaths are made at an individual level, such as when Corineus 'bycome Brutes man, & to hym dede fewte & homage'.[41] More commonly, however, they are made at a national level, for example when Partholoym and his people did homage to Gurguit, when Arthur received fealty from the Irish, Orcadians and French, and when the Picts or Scots paid homage to Locrinus, Arthur and Marius.[42]

Although oaths of fealty are mentioned more frequently outside of descriptions of coronations they still emphasise the 'contractual' nature of kingship. This is especially important as the *Historia regum britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth did not speak of relationships between men in terms of homage and fealty but in terms of tribute.[43] The Bruts' use of such feudal language therefore reflects contemporary social bonds and also supports the contention that knights and gentry perceived their relationship with the king in terms of their social experience. The repeated stress on homage and fealty combined with the evident role of the people in making their king conveys a strong feeling of 'contract' within kingship.

Any consideration of the relative importance of the sacral and 'contractual' elements of royal power is, however, complicated by the style of the histories. There is a tendency to assume that they will record events more faithfully than the romances. Chronicle accounts of coronations might, therefore, be expected to report more elements of the ceremony. In turn, this may distort their perceived importance. In terms of occurrence alone, however, the elements involving the crowning of the king and the agreement of his people are more evident than those involving consecration. While not

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[39] *SMC*, A ll.680-682. NB Hengist is a good king in this chronicle.

[40] *Brut*, p.13. The situation for a woman ruler is different than for a man in the Bruts. Note that *Gloucester* describes Gwendolen ruling as 'king viftene ȝer', and Cordelia ruling 'as king & quene', ll.640, 865.

[41] *Brut*, p.9.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp.77-78, 80. *Langtoft*, i.50, 158, 160. History 740 Cim, f.15r, col.2; f.51v, col.2.

[43] J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britannia and its Earlier Versions* (Berkeley, 1950), p.299.

mutually exclusive, it seems that a 'contractual' view of kingship was stronger than a sacral one in the Brut chronicles.

What about the portrayal of royal power outside of these somewhat sparse accounts of coronations? Are there indications of the divine nature of kings in the reports of their reigns?

The only suggestion of the sacral side to kings comes with their burial. The burial places of kings were important in the cult of kingship. King-making ceremonies often took place alongside the tombs of royal predecessors. Their kingship was unquestioned and new kings could profit by association with such a concentration of royal power. A look at the burial sites of kings in the legendary histories reveals Stonehenge, London and York as the most common, but there is little distinct pattern. Geoffrey of Monmouth rarely associated kings with specific tombs and later writers filled this gap as they saw fit. They apparently did this without design, resting kings in Colchester, Salisbury, Winchester, Leicester, Chester, Carlisle, Grantham, Pickering, Norwich, Caerleon and Aldburgh.[44] The *Short Metrical Chronicle*, in contrast, has a definite scheme behind the burial places of its kings. For example, Aurelius, Uther and Arthur are buried at Glastonbury instead of the usual Stonehenge. The remainder are specifically placed at Westminster, even before the abbey was built.[45] Brutus was buried:

> Wel neye Temes on þe lond
> þer þat Westeminster stond
> Westeminster was nouȝt bigun þo
> No ȝeres after mani & mo[46].

He lay alongside the ancestors of contemporary kings and his power was therefore sure to pass on to them. The accumulation and enhancement of kingly authority is not, however, the only reason behind the author's burial scheme. By placing kings at Westminster abbey he enhanced the association between the royal position and sacral power. Yet is it *vicarius dei* that was seen as important, or that kings were Christian?

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[44] *Mannyng*, ll.2227, 2544, 3906, 3941, 5656, 5711. *Langtoft*, i.32, 38, 56, 58, 66, 68, 76. History 740 Cim, f.58v, col.2. *Brut*, pp.16, 20, 29, 30, 37, 39.
[45] More usually, kings are just assigned to London, see *Langtoft*, i.24, 42, 50, 58; *Mannyng*, ll.1950, 2792, 4116; *Gloucester*, ll.541, 1028; *Brut*, pp.12, 16, 21, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 36.
[46] *SMC*, A ll.479-482.

Speaking of Brutus and his successors, Rauf de Boun explained in his chronicle that 'Pur ceo ne fait il mencion de leur enterement, auxi come de ceus qi regnerent depuis la chrestienté.'[47] Christian kings were more important, even if that meant excluding great kings like Brutus. The *Short Metrical Chronicle*'s movement of Aurelius, Uther and Arthur to Glastonbury places them in a Christian abbey. Refining London to Westminster and moving all other royal tombs there does the same thing. It seems that, in this chronicle, one of the few Bruts to consider the issue, it was considered more important for kings to be Christian in some small way than to view them as *vicarius dei*.

Although, as in the romances, the 'contractual' side of kingship is the most prominent in the Bruts, they do not show much of what the relationship between king and people entailed. What little is revealed supports the expectations found in the romances. For instance, it is clear that royal subjects were expected to provide military aid when danger threatened, as the Scots did for Albanactus when Humber invaded. They were expected to provide counsel for the king as he was also obliged to seek it. In Castelford's chronicle, Porrex II saved Britain from invasion by Alexander the Great through the advice of his men, while Robert Mannyng attributed Caesar's success partly to his use of wise counsellors.[48] Personal loyalty between kings and their subjects is also stressed. Many Brut chroniclers use the tale of Cassibelinus to emphasise its importance. Mannyng, for example, believed that for all his might Caesar would always be chased away while the Britons remained loyal.[49] The other chroniclers concurred, with Gloucester further declaring that:

> Þis lond · neuere iwonne nere
> Bote it þoru treson of þe folc · of þe lond were[50].

The histories, like the romances, also reveal expectations of a king in terms of personal lordship. They share, for example, the understanding that kings should support their people materially through *largesse* and furthering of their interests. The *Brut*'s comments on Arthur point out how generosity and an honourable reputation would ensure that a king was surrounded by men well able to defend his kingdom since 'þe

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[47] *LPB*, p.5.
[48] History 740 Cim, f.36v, col.2-f.37r, col.1. *Mannyng*, ll.4166-4169.
[49] *Mannyng*, ll.4156-4160.
[50] *Gloucester*, ll.1303-1304.

beste knyȝtes of al maner landes comen to him forto duelle'.[51] Not all *largesse* should go to attracting foreign allies though. The chronicles agree that a people could not support their king without the means to support themselves. One of the complaints voiced against Constans in Gloucester's account of his reign was that he had given all of his treasure to the Picts and 'he nadde noȝt inou is kniȝtes to soustene'.[52]

The mutuality of the relationship between king and people seen in the romances is confirmed in the histories. That this relationship was considered to be reversible is also evident in both, although more strongly in the Bruts, where there are many tales of rulers removed from power. The *Historia regum britanniae* is the origin of some of this radicalism. It includes five ruling queens and many outcries against bad kings by their people, for example. These failed kings partly serve a literary purpose in making the story credible. However, the overall impression of an almost blasé attitude to deposition in the Bruts is no mere product of their source chronicle.

Like the romances, the chronicles identify two types of abuse of royal power: uselessness and tyranny. Surprisingly, considering their comparative lack of interest in royal administration, there are images of kingly inadequacy in both government and defence. In Castelford's chronicle, for example, Leil falls into feebleness towards the end of his reign. He cannot enforce his own peace and since 'Of hym hys folke þai had no dred', discord and civil war followed.[53] *Le Livere des Reis de Engleterre* comments on later Anglo-Saxon kings like Athelraed that he 'assist plus le reaume ke governa' and Edward the Confessor that he was 'nent mut covenable de estre rey', although he, of course with God's help, was a good king despite this.[54]

None of these inadequate kings were removed from office. Even the situation under the fictional Leil continued until the accession of his son Rud Hudibras who 'As kyng and lord þe folke hym dred.'[55] The sole king to be deposed for uselessness in the Bruts is Pandrasus of Greece, and he only in Langtoft's chronicle. The Greeks were defeated by Brutus and the Trojan slaves and as a result 'Li ray Pandrasius est hors de estage'.[56] This was not because Brutus assumed the kingship himself since he and his men left to seek a land of their own. Pandrasus, as with failed kings in the romances, was removed for military inadequacy.

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[51] *Brut*, p.78.
[52] *Gloucester*, l.2354.
[53] History 740 Cim, f.18v, col.1.
[54] *Reis de Engleterre*, pp.86, 118.
[55] History 740 Cim, f.18v, col.1.
[56] *Langtoft*, i.8.

Uselessness as an abuse of royal power is as hard to pin down in the histories as it proved to be in the romances. The only instance of deposition for inadequacy in the Bruts was that of Pandrasus and it is difficult to determine whether this storyline reflected popular feeling on the important matter of defence or on the uselessness of kings. As pointed out earlier, when discussing the romances, any interpretations must be made cautiously. There are other complicating factors to bear in mind, such as the poor dramatic value of a useless king and the lack of definition of this abuse both in practical terms and philosophical discussions. Popular feeling on the uselessness of kings cannot be dismissed any more than it can be determined.

Tyranny, on the other hand, is much more clearly represented in the histories. However, there is a difference in the emphasis in its portrayal between the histories and romances. The latter present tyranny very much in terms of its definition: rule by will instead of reason and for the tyrant's pleasure rather than the benefit of his subjects. The histories are much more practical in their interpretation of tyranny. For example, they often describe the personal characteristics of a tyrant. The *Brut* describes Artogaile, Morwith, Mempricius and Gratian as 'so wickede and so sterne'; Langtoft calls Artogaile and Gratian 'Feel e orguyllus'. *Le Livere des Reis de Engleterre* also describes the later Eadwy as having an evil disposition.[57]

The Bruts are also more specific about the type of crimes committed by tyrants. One such is oppression of the people. Gratian, for example, is accused of this in the *Brut* and by Mannyng, specifically for dispossessing and killing the poor. Langtoft records complaints of Artogaile that his oppressions would destroy the land, while *Le Petit Bruit* records a more familiar cry against Edmund Ironside that he 'traversaunt le commun profit du realme'.[58] Another common accusation is of plotting against and destroying the baronage. The *Brut*, for instance, speaks of Mempricius as destroying the men of his land. Mannyng describes more fully how Artogaile argued with all his good and noble men, oppressing them while favouring scoundrels. Other tyrants, such as Frederick in *Le Petit Bruit*, tried to kill native barons and replace them with aliens.[59]

These are much more practical complaints than those seen in the romances and are matched by more practical outcomes for the tyrants. The removal of some is directly attributed to God's vengeance. As a result of His anger Mempricius is torn to pieces by

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[57] *Brut*, pp.14, 28, 29, 45. *Langtoft*, i.54, 88. *Reis de Engleterre*, p.70.
[58] *Brut*, p.45. *Mannyng*, ll.6647-6651. *Langtoft*, i.54. *LPB*, p.16.
[59] *Brut*, p.14. *Mannyng*, ll.3826-3832. *LPB*, p.8.

wolves and Morwith is devoured by a sea monster in the *Brut*, for example.[60] Most removals of tyrants, however, are carried out by their subjects and in a very direct manner.

It is interesting that in the Bruts the Britons act in a variety of ways to rid themselves of tyrants, but without the formal renunciations seen in the romances. Some kings are simply murdered. In *Le Petit Bruit* Edmund Ironside is poisoned by his barons and in the *Short Metrical Chronicle* John met the same fate from the cup of a monk. Gratian's subjects raised an army against him and tore him to pieces, according to Langtoft's and Mannyng's chronicles. Similar rebellions resulted in exile for Artogaile and Ermaneus in the same two works and for Frederick in *Le Petit Bruit*.[61]

Some formality in the removal of kings is suggested in the histories. A distinct sense of judgement is revealed by the frequent note of counsel being taken to decide action against the kings. Unlike the romances, the histories do not show the baronial group as instrumental in overthrowing a king. In one exception, Mannyng gives the barons a central role in the exile of Artogaile, describing how:

> Þe barons conseilled þeym bytwene;
> Þe lond þey refte hym quyt & clene.

However, on all other occasions when kings are deposed, public demand and participation in the removal of bad kings is more evident than in the romances. When kings are abusive it is 'þe Britouns', 'Le pople de Brettayne', 'Le pople', 'þe mene folk & þe pedaille' and 'þe comon' who take counsel with each other and decide the fate of their oppressor.[62]

Once judged, another hint of formal process comes with note of the king losing his position. The Britons, for example, would not suffer Artogaile to rule over them any more and 'put him adoune' from his rank. In Langtoft's chronicle Pandrasus is similarly put down from his rank in his deposition. Langtoft's report of Artogaile's deposition is recorded in terms of the people of Britain taking his crown.[63] Perhaps the most practical and obvious sign of the removal of power from a king, however, comes in the election of

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[60] *Brut*, pp.14, 29.
[61] *LPB*, pp.8, 16. *SMC*, B ll.1015-1019. *Langtoft*, i.54, 88. *Mannyng*, ll.3833-3834, 3964-3967, 6654-6660. *Brut*, p.54.
[62] *Mannyng*, ll.3833-3834, 6653, 3971. *Langtoft*, i.54, 88. *Brut*, p.29.
[63] *Brut*, p.29. *Langtoft*, i.9, 54.

a successor. The people simply cease to hold the tyrant as their king and cleave to another.[64]

That the relationship between king and people was seen to be reversible itself supports a 'contractual' view of kingship in the histories. An impression of a ready acceptance of the concept is also obtained from the frequency of depositions and the unconcerned style of their report in the Bruts. Even considering their acknowledgement of a sacral side to royal power, the legendary histories parallel the romances in possessing a dominant perception of 'contractual' royal power.

The romances additionally distinguished kings as something out of the ordinary, in a way that was not sacral but special. The belief that status was linked to blood and inheritance had particular importance for kings. Royal blood conveyed the inherent strength needed by a king to be able to rule well. The histories also portray this extra element of kingship, but in a slightly different manner.

The belief in a connection between certain qualities and abilities and social status is shared by the chronicles. While there are no 'princes in obscurity' to reveal this as clearly as in the romances, the qualities associated with the well born are detailed in the Bruts. For example, Langtoft, Rauf de Boun and the *Brut* shower praise on Arthur for his courtesy, generosity, nobility and humility, and Mannyng describes Caesar as generous, manly and a good knight.[65] Unlike the romances, there are no instances of supernatural signs to distinguish kings from their companions, such as the flame coming from Havelok's mouth while he sleeps or the respect of animals given to Ywain and Alexander, for example.[66]

The strength of the belief in royal blood as conveying something important in kings is revealed in an emphasis on proper inheritance. The chronicles offer careful explanation whenever the kingship does not pass to a direct heir. Constantine's accession is justified by the *Brut* through his marriage to King Coel's daughter 'þat was heire of þe lande'. This chronicle and *Le Petit Bruit* explain Havelok's kingship 'par mariage' with the heiress Goldboru.[67] Yet even when inheritance is direct the histories commonly note that the son follows the father. Indeed the abridged Bruts often insist that this occurs even when this shortens British history to a few hundred years at most.

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[64] *Brut*, pp.15, 29. *Reis de Engleterre*, p.70. *Mannyng*, ll.3835, 3969-3972.
[65] *Langtoft*, i.160. *Brut*, p.78. *LPB*, p.12. *Mannyng*, ll.4166-4176, 4185-4186. *Règne d'Edouard I*er, p.401.
[66] See pp.93-94.
[67] *Brut*, pp.26, 39. *LPB*, p.8.

Rauf de Boun, for example, did not stop at linking legendary kings like Belinus and Cassibelinus as father and son but continued this practice throughout his chronicle. According to Boun the crown passed from Havelok in a direct line of sons through Cnut, Hardicnut and Gormound to Edmund Ironside. It also passed from Henry I to his son Stephen and from Stephen to his son Henry II.[68] However, does this insistence on royal children becoming kings betray a belief in their special qualities or simply contemporary concern for rightful inheritance?

The same condemnatory attitude to usurpers is found in the histories and the romances. In Mannyng's chronicle, for example, Peredur is said to die soon after seizing the kingdom because he 'Wyþ synne hit wan, wiþ sorewe hit fursok'. Similarly Langtoft comments that after Conan kills Constantine to become king 'Il memes cel an morust en dampnacioun'.[69] However, the histories also share the belief seen in the romances that lesser men would be corrupted by power if they occupied the king's position. In the accounts of Arthur's reign Mordred is appointed regent of Britain while the king fights Lucius on the continent. There is no suggestion that he aims to take the kingdom for himself as, for example, Vortigern plots to in the *Brut* and the chronicles of Mannyng, Castelford and Langtoft.[70] Mordred's story is much the same as that of Godrich in *Havelok*, of the good man seduced by power into seizing the throne for himself.[71] Mordred governs Britain in the same way as Godrich does, as a king does. He takes homage and fealty, puts officers into the castles and arrays men to defend the kingdom. It is only much later that he usurps the throne and is 'Raisede to kyng againe reson'.[72] This tale implies that ordinary men could not withstand the lure of power. Perhaps then the insistence in the Bruts on sons following their fathers may have been partly a result of the belief that kings possessed something which made them able to withstand its corruption, even if they did choose to become tyrants on a regular basis.

The images of kings in the legendary histories are very similar to those found in Middle English romance. The Bruts confirm evidence found in the romances for popular attitudes to kingship. They share the same expectations of a king relating to his protective function as the provider of peace, defence and justice for the people of his kingdom. They understand the relationship between king and people in the same light as

[68] *LPB*, pp.7, 15-16, 19.
[69] *Mannyng*, l.3926. *Langtoft*, i.266.
[70] *Brut*, pp.47-48. *Mannyng*, ll.7101-7218. History 740 Cim, f.75v, col.1-f.76v, col.1. *Langtoft*, i.96.
[71] See pp.87-88.
[72] *Castelford*, l.23695.

the romances, through the experience of contemporary social bonds. The powerful perception of the 'contractual' nature of kingship seen in the romances is also portrayed in the histories. Moreover, the images of kings found in the Bruts supplement those found in the romances. The romance interpretation of a mutable relationship between king and people is much more strongly emphasised and there is also additional insight provided on the issue of deposition. The Bruts are also useful in providing an element of balance to some aspects of kingship presented in the romances, such as the sacral side of kings and their special abilities.

The legendary histories of Britain enable the images of kings seen in the romances to be placed in context and show them to be common to fourteenth century audiences. However, the validity of these views still needs to be established in order to determine if they were truly representative of the attitudes of knights and gentry and if they had any influence in shaping expectations of real kings. Should ideas about kingship be dismissed as idealised, for example, because of the fictional nature of the literature?

The legendary histories and Middle English romances have much in common beyond their shared interests, themes and attitudes. Structurally and stylistically, for example, they are very similar. As noted earlier, the nature of chronicle and romance narratives is episodic. The histories are mainly written in four stress rhyming couplets, which is also the dominant metre used particularly for 'historical' romances, for example, *Havelok, Gamelyn, Athelston, Arthour and Merlin, Ywain and Gawain, Roland and Vernagu, Otuel, Kyng Alisaunder* and the *Seege of Troye*.[73] In both types of literature the focus of tales is upon the external actions of the king, mainly on his military activities, and the same kind of conventional descriptions of appearance and abilities appear as well as standardised descriptions of royal courts. The chronicles echo the romances in many places. Mannyng's Duke Eldok kills thirty men with a tree trunk, this immediately bringing to mind the fight scenes in *Gamelyn* and *Havelok*. The capture and punishment of regicides by Cnut in the *Short Metrical Chronicle* follows the same pattern as that in *Kyng Alisaunder* and *Arthour and Merlin*.[74] The significance of fifteen as a 'coming of age' for young men seen in the romances also appears in Langtoft, Mannyng and the *Brut*.[75]

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[73] *Manual*, i.22, 31, 33, 47, 64, 90, 92, 105, 116; viii.2622, 2623, 2624.
[74] *Mannyng*, ll.7898-7904. *SMC*, B ll.785-789. *KA*, ll.4681-4724. *AM*, ll.355-384.
[75] *Langtoft*, i.6, 146. *Mannyng*, ll. 9734-9741. *Brut*, p.69.

Yet there is more than just a broad correspondence between content and style. There are many examples of textual details reproduced in the chronicles and the romances. There are, of course, variations but a clear pattern remains. The most obvious are descriptions of the hero. In the *Short Metrical Chronicle* Edward the Elder and Arthur are described respectively as follows:

> He was boþe war & wis
> In eche batail he hadde þe pris
>
> He was of wer swiþe wise
> Jn ich bateyle he had þe prise.[76]

Compare these to descriptions of Horn in *Horn Childe* and Arthur in *Ywain and Gawain*:

> Hor[n] was boþe war & wise,
> At hunting oft he wan þe priis
>
> Of al knightes he bare þe pryse.
> In werld was none so war ne wise.[77]

When Mannyng adjusts Wace's description of Julius Caesar he rounds off the couplet with the romance formula:

> [Wace]   Hardy Iulius, knyght war & wys,
> [Mannyng]   Preysed of prowesse, of poer had pris[78].

The same pattern appears in descriptions of military prowess. The report of Havelok's abilities from the romance matches that of Arthur from the *Short Metrical Chronicle* following it:

> He was the stalworþeste man at nede
> Þat may riden on ani stede.
>
> He was the best knyȝt at nede
> Þat myghte ride on eny stede[79].

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[76] *SMC*, B ll.497-498, A ll.1065-1066.
[77] *HC*, ll.283-284. *YG*, ll.11-12.
[78] *Mannyng*, ll.4185-4186.
[79] *Havelok*, ll.24-25. *SMC*, B ll.245-246.

It is unlikely that this is the product of scribal reproduction, the 'borrowing' of phrases and details among texts during the production of a manuscript. Brut chronicles are not usually collected with Middle English romances.[80] The famous exception is, of course, the *Short Metrical Chronicle*, one version of which is found in the Auchinleck manuscript. Many instances have been pointed out in this book where scribes have 'borrowed' details of text from one article to another.[81] However, apart from the first quotation, all the above examples taken from this chronicle are from an alternative text in British Museum Additional MS 19677. According to the editor's scheme of manuscript descent this version is totally separate from the Auchinleck text.[82] *Horn Childe* is from the Auchinleck manuscript, but *Ywain and Gawain* and *Havelok* are not, coming from British Museum Cotton Galba E. ix and Bodleian Library MS Laud Miscellaneous 108 respectively.[83] The wide distribution of similar phrases and details across a range of chronicles and romances written by different scribes and transmitted in separate manuscripts suggests that scribal responsibility for this is unlikely. It is more probable that chroniclers were simply familiar with romance style and were deliberately emulating it.

Do the close structural and presentational similarities of the two types of literature have further implications for their shared interpretation of kingship? Could audiences tell the difference between a history and a romance when they heard them?

The distinction between fiction and historical fact rested with Isidore of Seville's maxim *historia est narratio rei gestae*. It has been argued that fourteenth century audiences were aware of what constituted history and were at ease with distinguishing between historical knowledge, folklore and fables even within a single romance.[84] However, was it really that easy to tell what was fact and what was not, especially in the case of more ancient historical figures?

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[80] *Langtoft*, i.xxiv-xxv, this chronicle is collected with the *Lai de Havelok* in College of Arms, Arundel MS. xiv.

[81] Loomis, 'London Bookshop', pp.595-627 and '*Roland and Vernagu* and the *Short Chronicle*', pp.94-97. Jacobs, "Auchinleck' Bookshop', pp.294-301. Guillaume, '*Lay le Freine* and *Sir Orfeo*', pp.458-464.

[82] *SMC*, pp.xi, xiv, xvi.

[83] *HC*, p.11. *YG*, pp.ix-x. *Havelok*, p.xi.

[84] *De inventione* 1.19.27, cited by L. Patterson, 'The Romance of History and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', *Medieval English Poetry*, ed. S. Trigg (1993), p.242, n.6. R. Pensom, 'Inside and outside: fact and fiction in *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*', *Medium Ævum*, 63 (1994), pp.53-60. R. W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing', *TRHS*, Fifth Series 20 (1970), pp.173-196; 21 (1971), pp.159-179; 22 (1972), pp.159-180.

King Arthur, for example, was regarded as a real king of Britain. The opening of the graves of Arthur and Guinevere by Edward I in 1279 was proof enough of that. Were Arthurian romances accepted as *rei gestae* or dismissed as fiction? If chronicle and romance were read aloud could their audience necessarily tell the difference between the two? Would they accept the events of the romances as history? A comparison between accounts of Arthur in the romances and in the chronicles should be able to indicate this. The romances *Arthour and Merlin* and the *Morte Arthure* together cover the story of the House of Constantine. The former spans the reigns of Constance, Vortigern, Aurelius, Uther and the early years of Arthur. The latter focuses on the later Roman challenge and the death of the king. Comparisons are made between elements in several chronicles, but not *Le Petit Bruit, Le Livere des Reis de Brittanie e Le Livere des Reis de Engleterre* and the *Short Metrical Chronicle* because of their abridged nature and contorted genealogy.

Table 1. A comparison between key elements of *Arthour and Merlin* and the chronicles.

Key: B = *Brut*, L = Langtoft, M = Mannyng, C = Castelford, G = Gloucester.

NB The second column of this table will mention only significant differences between the account in the chronicles of the House of Constantine and that provided by the romance. Any blank entries or omission of one or more of the chronicles should be taken to mean that there are no significant differences in the chronicle accounts.

Arthour and Merlin:	Chronicles:
Constance dies. The nobles and steward Vortigern swear to make his eldest son, a monk at Winchester, king. Moyne becomes king. (ll.63-104)	L: Vortigern kills Constance; succession of son undiscussed. BCG: king killed by a Pict. MCG: Vortigern makes the eldest son king against the bishops' wishes.[85]
Angus of Denmark invades. Moyne seeks Vortigern's help as he has no experience of warfare. Vortigern does not help, planning to become king himself. (ll.104-132)	BLMCG: Angus tale missing. Vortigern scares the king by the threat of invasion, into inviting Picts into the kingdom.[86]

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[85] *Langtoft*, i.94-96. *Gloucester*, ll.2281-2319. History 740 Cim, f.74r, col.2; f.74v, col.1; f.74v, col.2-f.75r, col.1. *Mannyng*, ll.7008-7100. *Brut*, p.47.

[86] *Langtoft*, i.96. *Gloucester*, ll.2319-2360. History 740 Cim, f.75v, col.1-f.75v, col.2. *Mannyng*, ll.7101-7166. *Brut*, p.48.

Moyne is defeated and flees to Winchester. Nobles ask Vortigern to lead them in battle. He replies that he can do nothing as he is not their king. (ll.133-225)	LCG: omitted. G: complaints are made against the king's general uselessness. LMC: The Picts prefer Vortigern, who threatens to end their monopoly of patronage. B: Vortigern offers Picts riches if they kill the king.[87]
Moyne is assassinated. Aurelius and Uther are too young to bear arms and Vortigern is elected king. The children are hidden from him. (ll.226-300)	
Vortigern drives Angus out. He executes Moyne's killers, alienating many nobles. Angus is recalled to help him and many barons are exiled or killed. Vortigern gives their lands to Angus and marries his daughter. (ll.301-492)	L: punishments omitted. BLMG: Hengist and Horsa arrive and help Vortigern against the Picts; he rewards them with lands and marries Hengist's daughter. He invites them to stay, to help him reverse the coup which saw his son Vortimer throw him from power. C: all possible supporters of Constance's sons are killed. MCG: Saxons are invited in as Vortigern is unpopular with both Britons and Picts.[88]
Vortigern, worried about Aurelius and Uther, builds a castle, but each night the work is undone. Astronomers recommend smearing the blood of a fatherless child on the stones. Men are sent to find and kill this child. (ll.493-624)	BLMCG: castle is built against Hengist who exiles Vortigern to Wales.[89]
Merlin's history: his conception, the trial of his mother, his birth, protection by a hermit and rejection of the Devil. (ll.625-1170)	BMCG: Merlin and his mother ordered to attended Vortigern; she explains Merlin's history.[90]

[87] *Langtoft*, i.96. *Gloucester*, ll.2361-2364. History 740 Cim, f.76r, col.2-f.76v, col.1. *Mannyng*, ll.7167-7218. *Brut*, p.48.
[88] *Langtoft*, i.98-106. History 740 Cim, f.76v, col.2; f.77r, col.1; f.79r, col.1; f.81r, col.1-f.82r, col.2; f.83v, col.2-f.84r, col.2. *Gloucester*, ll.2399-2624. *Mannyng*, ll.7273-7814. *Brut*, pp.49-53.
[89] *Langtoft*, i.108. History 740 Cim, f.83v, col.2-f.84r, col.2. *Mannyng*, ll.7815-7952. *Gloucester*, ll.2625-2755. *Brut*, p.55.

Merlin persuades the king's men to take him alive as the astronomers are false. He ensures a royal audience by revealing the queen's lover. (ll.1171-1416)	L: audience ensured by Merlin's mother.[91]
Merlin explains the mystery of the castle, revealing the red and white dragons. The white dragon kills the red, meaning that Aurelius and Uther will kill Vortigern. (ll.1417-1706)	
Aurelius and Uther approach, gathering support. Uther burns Vortigern in his castle and Aurelius kills Angus. Danes invade to avenge Angus. Aurelius is killed; Uther defeats them. (ll.1707-2160)	BLMCG: More focus on Aurelius; he is poisoned. BLC: Uther defeats the sons of Vortigern and the Saxons Octa and Ebisa. M: Uther defeats an invasion by the sons of Vortigern and the Irish kings.[92]
Uther becomes overlord of Gascony, Poitou, Boulogne, Champagne, Brittany. Begins the Round Table. (ll.2161-2221)	BLMCG: omitted.
At a feast Uther falls in love with Ygerne who rejects him. She and Duke Hoel are besieged in Tintagel. Merlin disguises Uther as Hoel; he enters Ygerne's chamber and Arthur is conceived. Hoel is killed. (ll.2222-2580)	

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[90] History 740 Cim, f.85r, col.1-f.85v, col.1. *Mannyng*, ll.8031-8092. *Gloucester*, ll.2733-2755. *Brut*, p.57.
[91] *Langtoft*, i.110-112.
[92] *Langtoft*, i.128-130, 132-134. History 740 Cim, f.94v, col.1-f.102v, col.2; f.102v, col.2-f.104v, col.1. *Mannyng*, ll.8309-9028, 8935-8982, 9101-9114. *Gloucester*, ll.2879-3177. *Brut*, pp.59-60.

Uther and Ygerne marry. Her daughters marry Nanters, Lot and Uriens. When born, Arthur is given to Merlin who delivers him to Antour to raise. (ll.2581-2732)	BLMCG: no fosterage of Arthur.
Uther dies. Parliament meets to decide the new king. A mass results in the appearance of Excaliber in a stone. A tournament nearby is attended by Antour, Kay and Arthur. Arthur pulls out Excaliber and Antour reveals his true parentage. (ll.2733-3106)	BLMG: Uther is poisoned by the Saxons. BLMCG: Arthur is elected king immediately.[93]
Protests against Arthur are made at his coronation by eleven kings. Civil war follows. (ll.3107-4066)	BLMCG: omitted; civil war and battles against the pagans is replaced by war against the Saxons.[94]
Pagan invasion. Arthur mainly fights with Leodegan against Rion. Arthur's nephews (Gawain, Gueriet, Galathin, Agravain and Guerheres), seeking to heal the breach between their fathers and uncles, battle the pagans while based in London. Another nephew, Ywain, and Sagramour, newly arrived from Constantinople, aid the besieged Duke of Arundel. All the nephews meet to lift the siege and rescue Lot's queen, Belisent. (ll.4067-8576)	BLMCG: omitted.
Arthur marries Gueneour. Final battle against the pagans. (ll.8577-9938)	BLMCG: battle omitted.

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[93] *Langtoft*, i.146. *Castelford*, ll.19715-19728, 19742-19768. *Mannyng*, ll.9679-9744. *Gloucester*, ll.3443-3476. *Brut*, p.69.
[94] *Langtoft*, i.146-168. *Castelford*, ll.19729-19741, 19807-20438. *Mannyng*, ll.9769-10176. *Gloucester*, ll.3489-3660. *Brut*, pp.69-71.

There are two main differences between the contents of *Arthour and Merlin* and the chronicles. One, the relative lack of information on Aurelius in the romance can be attributed to simple condensation of the story, which is seen in both full and abridged chronicles. Another is that the later part of the romance story, the disputed succession of Arthur and the invasion by the pagans, is simply not represented in the chronicles, although this is not to say that it is not a part of Arthur's reign. Although lacking historicizing elements such as dates and precise details, its chronological nature gives this section legitimacy.[95]

Table 2. A comparison between key elements of the *Morte Arthure* and the chronicles.

Key: B = *Brut*, L = Langtoft, M = Mannyng, C = Castelford, G = Gloucester.

NB The second column of this table will mention only significant differences between the account in the chronicles of Arthur's reign and that provided by the romance. Any blank entries or omission of one or more of the chronicles should be taken to mean that there are no significant differences in the chronicle accounts.

Morte Arthure:	Chronicles:
Recap of Arthur's conquests in Europe. (ll.26-47)	
Arthur holds court at Caerleon. Messengers arrive from the Emperor Lucius to summon Arthur to Rome to account for his lack of homage and tribute. If he does not attend his court Lucius will destroy him. (ll.48-115)	BLM: Arthur is also asked to account for his seizure of France from the Roman Flollo.[96]
Arthur feasts the Romans. (ll.116-242)	BLMCG: omitted.
He consults with his nobles in the Giant's Tower. Their defiance of Lucius is unanimous. (ll.243-410)	
The messengers are told to tell Lucius that Arthur will meet him. (ll.411-442)	L: Arthur tells them he will claim Rome for himself.[97]

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[95] E. Freeman, 'Geffrei Gaimar, Vernacular Historiography, and the Assertion of Authority', *Studies in Philology*, 93 (1996), p.191. C. Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge, 1987), p.30.

[96] *Langtoft*, i.178. *Mannyng*, ll.11502-11506. *Brut*, p.81.

They report to Lucius that Arthur claims the empire for himself and that there is good reason to fear him. Lucius prepares and marches into Germany. (ll.443-624)	B: Arthur demands tribute from Lucius. L: omitted. M: the messengers deliver Arthur's letter claiming the empire..[98]
Arthur prepares for war. He settles the government on Modred and leaves. (ll.625-755)	B: omitted.
Arthur dreams on the ship meaning that he will overthrow tyrants. (ll.756-831)	B: omitted.
Arrival in Normandy. He fights the giant on Mont St Michel. (ll.832-1221)	
News of Lucius's invasion of France. The embassy sent to him regarding his actions ends in battle, in which the Romans are defeated. A Roman ambush is defeated. (ll.1222-1945)	B: expedition against Lucius is condensed into one battle.[99]
Lucius hears the bad news. He decides to wait for reinforcements in Saxony. (ll.1946-1972)	
Arthur gets there first and defeats the Romans, killing Lucius. (ll.1973-2289)	
Lucius's body is sent to Rome for burial. Arthur's knights are buried honourably. He settles the government of all new territories. (ll.2290-2385)	
Arthur besieges Metz. Gawain has an adventure with Priamus, who reveals the ambush laid by the duke of Lorraine. Arthur's army defeat him and the city and all Lorraine surrender. (ll.2416-3093)	BMG: omitted.
Arthur goes through Italy to be crowned	BMG: omitted.

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[97] *Langtoft*, i.182.
[98] *Mannyng*, ll.11650-11744. *Brut*, p.82.
[99] *Brut*, pp.85-87.

emperor by the pope. He dreams of the Wheel of Fortune, meaning that his good fortune has passed. (ll.3094-3455)	
Cradok arrives from England. Modred has seized England and married Waynor. Arthur sets out for home. (ll.3456-3659)	
Sea battle: Modred's Danes are defeated. Land battle: Modred kills Gawain. Repenting of his deeds he flees to Cornwall. Waynor enters a nunnery. (ll.3660-3918)	LMG: no sea battle is described, just the war against Modred.
Arthur pursues Modred and kills him. He is sorely wounded and dies on the Isle of Avalon. He is buried at Glastonbury. (ll.3919-4346)	B: reports the Britons' belief that Arthur lives, but doubts it. L: reports Britons' belief, but cannot say if it is true. M: reports Britons' belief, but says that Arthur died at Avalon. C: states that Arthur is buried at Glastonbury. G: reports Britons' belief, but says that Arthur is buried at Glastonbury.[100]

The events in the *Morte Arthure* are more closely related to those of the chronicles. Any differences seen are very minor, except for those in the *Brut*. These, however, can be put down to the author's condensing of the reign. The accounts of Arthur in the romances and histories are thus very close. It cannot even be suggested that the accounts of the king in the romances have been made more dramatic, more embellished with fictional episodes, in order to help the audience distinguish them as belonging to the realm of entertainment. The histories and the romances also contain the same speeches. For example, Cador, earl of Cornwall's speech in the Giant's Tower welcoming war with Lucius is found in the *Morte Arthure*, Mannyng, Langtoft, Gloucester and Castelford. Gawain's speech to Lucius, threatening the emperor after his invasion of Arthur's kingdom of France, is reproduced by Langtoft, Mannyng and the author of the *Morte*

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[100] *Langtoft*, i.218, 224. *Mannyng*, ll.14285-14306, 14317-14322. *Gloucester*, ll.4582-4594. *Castelford*, ll.23999-24013. *Brut*, p.90.

Arthure.[101] When read aloud to an audience, as both were clearly intended to be, which could be classed as the history and which as the romance?

It is inadequate to dismiss the romances as fiction. The term 'romance' had a wide variety of interpretations. It could be applied to Classical or French stories and the English translations and adaptations of both, to metrical rather than prose works and to adventures whose heroes were depicted as knights. Medieval writers used 'romance' to describe *Beues of Hamtoun*, the *Myrour of Lewed Men*, the *Life of St. Gregory*, *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ* and the *Romaunt of the Rose*.[102]

The prologues of the romances and histories may help to distinguish further between what was considered to be fact or fiction, history or romance. Distinctions can be made between the purely fictional Middle English romances and those with an historical basis by the self-definition found in the prologues.[103] These descriptions can be divided into three different types.

The first introduce stories of a purely fictional origin. *Lay le Freine*, *Sir Orfeo* and *Sir Degarre* promise the hearer tales of adventures and the marvellous, for example. Others choose an historical locus for the narrative to take place in without recounting an historical tale.[104] These romances, such as *William of Palerne* and *Sir Eglamour*, encourage the audience to hear 'Of eldres þat before vs were', much as modern writers begin with 'once upon a time'.[105]

The second type are more clearly historical, offering tales of famous kings, as seen in the Charlemagne and Alexander romances, the *Seege of Troye* and *Richard Coeur de Lion*. Surviving prologues do not state that what follows will be a history, but assume a certain historical knowledge of its audience. For example, the *Seege of Troye* immediately promises that 'þe bataile of Troye y wille telle', *Otuel and Roland* will tell of the conqueror 'that was y-hote syr Charlemayne' and *Kyng Alisaunder* of the noble

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[101] *Morte Arthure*, ll.247-258, 1302-1351. *Mannyng*, ll.11559-11592, 12608-12638. *Langtoft*, i.180-1, 194. *Gloucester*, ll.4017-4031. *Castelford*, ll.21565-21592.

[102] K. Hume, 'The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance', *Philological Quarterly* 53 (1974), p.159. Carl Winters, *Der Begriff 'Romance' in der Mittelenglischen und Frühneuenglischen Litertur*, *Anglstische Forschungen*, 68 (Heidelberg, 1929), cited by P. Strohm, '*Spelle, geste, romaunce, tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives*', *Speculum*, 46 (1971), p.354.

[103] Strohm's categories of self-definition for the romances based on words such as 'storie', 'spelle', 'romaunce', 'lyf', 'geste', 'tragedie' or 'comedie', in 'Generic Distinctions', p.348, did not prove useful.

[104] R. Field, 'Romance as history, history as romance', *Romance in Medieval England*, eds. M. Mills, J. Fellows and C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1991), p.164.

[105] *Eglamour*, Cotton Caligula A. II, l.5.

deeds of 'Alisaundre, þe rich[e k]yng'.[106] The poets do not seem to have felt any need to introduce their heroes any further.

It should be remembered that this group of romances also have chronicle backgrounds. The Charlemagne romances are mainly based on the Anglo-Norman Turpin and 'pseudo-Turpin' chronicles and the Alexander romances on Archpresbyter Leo's *Historia de preliis*.[107] *Richard Coeur de Lion* is not only based on a chronicle (as yet unidentified), but also forms the basis of accounts of that king's reign in several other chronicles including those of Gloucester, Langtoft and the *Short Metrical Chronicle*.[108] There even seems to be some ambiguity about how the romance was perceived. It was included in two major romance collections, the Auchinleck manuscript and Egerton 2682, but also in two historical manuscripts, the College of Arms 58 and Harley 4690. The poet himself ranks Richard against other historical figures such as Charlemagne and Roland, Alexander, Hector, Arthur and Gawain.[109]

There are finally also prologues which make a direct claim to be introducing historical tales. These prologues are identical or very close in manner to those of the chronicles. Mannyng, for example, firmly states his historical intentions at the start of his work, calling on folk:

> to here þe dedis of kynges,
> whilk were foles, & whilk were wyse,
> & whilk of þam couthe most quantyse,
> and whilk did wrong, & whilk ryght,
> & whilk maynten[e]d pes & fyght.
> Of þare dedes sall be my sawe;
> & what tyme, & of what lawe[110].

The prologues of the other Bruts are very similar. The *Brut* lacks opening lines but those supplied from a thirteenth century Anglo-Norman version compare well to those of the *Short Metrical Chronicle*:

Ki volt oïr e volt saver   Herkeneþ hiderward ʒe lor[d]lynges

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[106] *Troye*, l.6. *OR*, l.4. *KA*, l.31.
[107] *Manual*, i.88. Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, pp.48-49.
[108] *Richard*, pp.69-70. J. Finlayson, '*Richard, Coer de Lion*: Romance, History or Something in Between?', *Studies in Philology*, 87 (1990), pp.156-180. Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings' Lives*, p.142.
[109] *Richard*, pp.69-70; A ll.13-18. Weber, *Richard*, ll.11-19.
[110] *Mannyng*, ll.16-22.

De reis en reis de ais en air   ȝe þat wollen ihure of kynges
Ki cu furent e dunt il vindrent   & ich [wolle] ȝou tellen anon
Ki Engletere primes tindrent,   Hou Engelon furst gon
Quels reis i ad en ordre eü,
E ki ainceis e ki puis fu[111].

The introductions of the legendary histories are quite standardised, promising the audience that they would learn of the kings of England and how the kingdom has fared through the ages. Compare them to *Horn Childe* and *Arthour and Merlin* which begin:

Mi leue frende dere: And y schal telle, ȝow byfore,
Herken & ȝe may here,   How Merlyn was geten and bore
& ȝe wil vnderstonde,   And of his wisdoms also
Stories ȝe may lere   And oþre happes mony mo
Of our elders þat were   Sum whyle byfeol in Engelonde.
Whilom in þis lond.   ȝe þat wol þis vndurstonde -
Y wil ȝou telle of kinges tvo   In Engelond þer was a kyng
(Hende Haþeolf was on of þo)
Þat weld al Ingelond[112].

There is little difference between these introductions and those of chronicles. While both speak specifically of their subjects, they also promise to tell of kings and their deeds in England. It has been pointed out that none of the manuscripts of Langtoft's and Mannyng's chronicles actually used the term 'chronicle' to describe their work.[113] Did the audiences of *Horn Childe* and *Arthour and Merlin* believe that the romances were historical and therefore true from their familiar pattern of opening lines?

The answer to whether romances with English heroes were perceived as historical or not could also help to indicate the validity with which romance images of kingship were received. If these fictional heroes were seen as real then surely the expectations and beliefs concerning fictional kings in the romances as a whole would have been taken seriously.

There is a concern amongst Brut writers to place romance personalities unmentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth in an appropriate period of British history. An example of this is Castelford's unique account of the effect of Alexander the Great's campaigns on Britain. He writes about the dilemma facing Porrex II whether to submit to the conqueror of the world or to stand against him. For his prudent decision

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[111] *Anglo-Norman Brut*, p.1; p.xxxiv for dating of the text. *SMC*, B ll.1-4.
[112] *HC*, ll.1-9. *AM*, Hale MS 150, ll.5-11.
[113] Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings' Lives*, p.6.

Alexander rather generously rewards him with exemption from annual tribute.[114]
English heroes received the same treatment by the chroniclers.

The Arthurian romances are distinct in that Arthur was genuinely believed to
have been a real king of the Britons, one who was written of in the chronicles. The
accounts describe his wartime activities, but omit the twenty-one peaceful years of his
reign. It is in these years that many Arthurian romances are based. Mannyng's
comments that the period of peace following Arthur's establishment of his power in
Britain were filled with adventures found written in romance does not even hint that
these tales were any less 'true' than his wartime activities.[115] Indeed the filling in of the
chronology of Arthur's reign only ensured the legitimacy of romances dealing directly
with that king as well as those ancillary romances such as *Sir Tristrem*, *Sir Perceval*,
Joseph of Arimathie and *Ywain and Gawain*.[116]

For the other romance heroes of the English past the situation was not so
straightforward. The prologue of *Guy of Warwick*, for example, promises the audience
adventure without any suggestion of historicity. Yet fourteenth century earls of
Warwick were convinced that he existed and he appears in the histories during the reign
of Athelstan when he saved England from the Danes by fighting the giant Colbrond.[117]
Horn's 'castle in Lindsey' is referred to in the *Short Metrical Chronicle*, conveying
validity to *King Horn* and the associated *Horn Childe*.[118] Besides appearing on the seal
of Grimsby Havelok figures in many chronicles, being used to explain the end of Danish
tribute paid to England in the *Brut*, or the ceasing of Danish attacks on England and the
rule of both kingdoms by Cnut in *Le Petit Bruit*, for example.[119] It is not so clear as to
whether Gamelyn or Beues were believed to be true historical figures, however. Beues's
prowess is ranked alongside that of Guy of Warwick in his romance but, perhaps because
his adventures take place mainly outside of England, Beues is not mentioned in the Brut
chronicles. His association with Southampton though may well have meant that he was
accepted as a real hero.[120] Although the tale of Gamelyn passed eventually into the

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[114] History 740 Cim, f.36v, col.2-f.37r, col.1.
[115] A. Putter, 'Finding time for romance: mediaeval Arthurian literary history', *Medium Aevum* 63
(1994), pp.3, 7. *Mannyng*, ll.10579-10582.
[116] *Mannyng*, for example, refers audiences to the romance of Tristrem, ll.93-98, and God's voice in a
dream in *Joseph* refers to Galahad and 'þe Auentures of Brutayne', ll.231-232.
[117] *Langtoft*, i.330-332. *SMC*, B ll.595-602. *LPB*, p.17. Wilson, *Lost Literature*, p.119.
[118] *SMC*, A l.1318.
[119] *Brut*, pp.25-26, 91-91. *LPB*, pp.8, 15. Hearne, *Mannyng*, pp.25-56. Crane, *Insular Romance*, p.85.
[120] *Beues*, p.123. Crane, *Insular Romance*, p.85.

emerging legend of Robin Hood, it is also unclear whether he too was thought of as an historical figure.[121]

That so many romance heroes found their way into Brut chronicles shows that their authors obviously saw no disparity between the material required for the composition of a history and the 'historical' material found in the romances. It has been pointed out that Mannyng, for example, did not distinguish the differences between the chronicle and romance accounts of Arthur's reign in terms of genre or artistic preference. He simply saw that information about Arthur's campaigns could be found in chronicles while information about more peaceful times could be found in romances.[122] It was not only the writers of the legendary history of Britain who saw both types of literature as legitimate sources for historical knowledge. It seems that Dindimus's explanation in the *Alexander B* fragment that his people had no formal education, but instead:

> We raiken to oure romauncus · & reden þe storrius,
> Þat oure eldrene on erþe · or þis time wroute

may well have been true of many late thirteenth and early fourteenth century knights and gentry.[123]

Middle English romances, filled as they are with the preoccupations, values and attitudes of knightly society, would have been a reference point against which to measure contemporary kings and their performances. They could have influenced their audience, stirring men with their ease of style and emotiveness to a certain knowledge of what was to be expected from their kings and with the constant reminder that the people had the right to do something about kings who failed to live up to these standards. They were not alone in this. The legendary histories of Britain shared this potential and aimed at a breadth of audience and success already achieved by the romances by emulating their style of presentation and narrative designs. Their success was already proven by the range of men who copied romance style, such as the writers of devotional works like *Cursor Mundi* and of saints' lives like those in the *South English Legendary*.[124] Their tactics were used by writers both as a guarantee of popularity and as a means of communication.

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[121] R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor (ed.), *Rymes of Robyn Hood* (Oxford, 1976), see introduction.
[122] Putter, 'Finding Time', p.12.
[123] *Alex. B*, ll.467-468.
[124] See pp.6-8.

Even political poetry was not above tapping into the style and content of romance. Poems such as *On the King's Breaking his Confirmation of Magna Carta* and *þe Simonie* are found in the Auchinleck manuscript alongside both romances and a Brut chronicle.[125] Characters from romance and legendary history are cited in them. There is a reference to Albin in the poem *On the death of John Balliol*, while Arthur, Constantine, Brennius and Broinsius are proclaimed the four great commanders of the nation in the *Song of the Welsh*.[126] The poet who composed the song of praise for the new King Edward I deliberately imitated romance style.[127] Although this was only written at the beginning of his reign, Edward's adventures were well known and showed marked similarities with those of Richard I. Edward had done 'florida gesta' which forced the poet to take up his pen and treat him as a romance hero. Perhaps most interesting, however, is the *Elegy on the death of Edward I*.[128] This contains textual phrases matching those already noted between the *Short Metrical Chronicle*, Mannyng, *Horn Childe*, *Havelok* and *Ywain and Gawain*. The *Short Metrical Chronicle* said of Arthur that:

> He was of wer swiþe wise
> Jn ich bateyle he had þe prise

whilst the *Elegy* said of Edward I that he was:

> trewest mon of alle þinge
> and in werre war & wys,

> kyng, as þou art cleped conquerour,
> In vch bataille þou hadest pris.[129]

Even 'highbrow' political poetry had a place within the many types of popular literature of the time.

The images of kingship found in the romances are thus supported and supplemented by those in the legendary histories. They provide valid evidence on the

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[125] Loomis, 'Auchinleck Bookshop', p.606. *Wright's Political Songs*, pp.253-258, 323-345.
[126] *Wright's Political Songs*, pp.181, 58.
[127] *Wright's Political Songs*, pp.128-132.
[128] I. S. T. Aspin (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Political Songs*, ANTS, 11 (Oxford, 1953), no. 8A.
[129] *SMC*, B ll.497-498. *Elegy, Anglo-Norman Political Songs*, ll.12-13, 85-86.

political attitudes of their audiences, of the knights and gentry of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. It was these attitudes that would have been targeted by kings and their opponents in their appeals for support, and that also formed the background against which these appeals were received. In order to see if kings and/or their enemies during this time were aware of the political expectations and understandings of royal subjects, as well as their possible use of this knowledge, three political crises from this period will now be examined.

The crises of 1297, 1326 and 1340-41 have been chosen for a variety of reasons. There were many political conflicts during the time under study, but arguably the most dominant was that which produced the first formal removal of an English king; this alone is sufficient reason to include the deposition of Edward II. Since the literary evidence spans the reigns of Edwards I, II, and III it was decided to choose a crisis either side of the deposition so that the time frame for the political events matched the flourishing of the literature. The conflict between Edward I and his barons and clergy in 1297 was chosen as it was the major crisis faced by that king during his reign. That of 1340-41 was selected as the first crisis of Edward III's personal government.

These three crises present different political situations and personalities. This means that the approaches of different kings and their various political opponents can be considered. Whereas, for example, 1297 saw the king appealing to his subjects for support, in 1326 it was the enemies of the king who did so, and in 1340-41 both the king and his opponents made substantial public appeals. Together these crises should allow for investigation into the level of awareness of the opinions of royal subjects possessed not only by the kings but also by their prelate and noble opponents. The crises together also involve a variety of themes that it would not be possible to see in the events of a single reign, for example that of Edward II. While this king's rule saw many political conflicts it was only certain issues which raised their heads time and again. Even if facing similar circumstances, as Edward III did in 1340-41 compared to his grandfather in 1297, different kings focused on different political ideas. Together, the crises of 1297, 1326 and 1340-41 allow for discussion of different themes which are prominent in the literary evidence of royal subjects' attitudes towards their kings, including the king's duties with regard to defence and justice, the understanding of the relationship between king and people, the perception of evil counsellors, the fallibility of kings and their removal. These particular crises should therefore provide material for a meaningful

interpretation of statements and actions by kings and their political opponents against a background of popular attitudes and expectations provided by the literature.

Chapter 4 - Political Crisis 1297.

Having established some of the wider attitudes to kingship held by royal subjects, it is now time to explore the possible ties between these ideas and the events of certain political crises. The first such crisis to be considered is that which took place between Edward I and his earls and the archbishop of Canterbury in 1297.[1]

Following the confiscation of Gascony by Philip of France in 1294, all attempts to recover the duchy had been plagued by war within Britain. The 1294-95 Welsh rebellion and John Balliol's alliance with Philip and denial of English overlordship during 1295-96, meant that Edward could not turn his full attention to the task. War on all sides, combined with the costly alliances Edward engineered against France, the last in January 1297, resulted in an enormous demand for men, money and supplies. Royal exactions included the maltot on wool, wool prises and heavy purveyance taken on a national scale. Annual taxes were also raised from 1294 onwards. These demands were extremely oppressive and led firstly to conflict between the king and the church.

There had been little protest against Edward's demands for aids from the clergy while seats at Canterbury and Rome were empty. In 1296, however, the situation changed completely. Boniface VIII issued *Clericis laicos* in February, forbidding the clergy to pay taxes to lay powers without papal permission. This bull was upheld in the face of the king's demands by the strong Archbishop Robert Winchelsey. At the November parliament at Bury St Edmunds Edward requested a clerical tax of a fifth. He refused to accept the answer that papal agreement had to be sought first, and allowed the clergy further time in which to come to a more suitable reply. In January 1297 in London, however, their answer was unchanged and the king outlawed them. Their goods were seized, no writs were to be issued on their behalf and no justice done to them. Restoration of royal protection was available to those who made a fine equivalent to the value of the fifth previously requested.

The northern clergy submitted straight away, as did royal ministers such as the bishops of Bath and Wells, Coventry, Winchester and Ely. After threats from the king to sell seized ecclesiastical property and to appeal to the pope against him, Winchelsey

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[1] Detailed discussions of the crisis can be found in M. Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance Under Edward I* (1972), chapter 11, *Edward I* (1988), chapter 16, *Documents 1297-98*; J. H. Denton, *Robert Winchelsey and the Crown 1294-1313: A Study in the Defence of Ecclesiastical Liberty* (Cambridge, 1980); H. Rothwell, 'The Confirmation of the Charters, 1297', *EHR*, 60 (1945), pp.16-35, 177-191, 300-315; J. G. Edwards, '*Confirmatio Cartarum* and Baronial Grievances in 1297', *EHR*, 58 (1943), pp.147-171, 273-300; Harriss, *Public Finance*, chapter 3.

allowed the clergy to make their own decision regarding the king's fine. Most paid it as soon as possible. Edward and his archbishop were formally reconciled on the 11th of July.

Just as the clergy appeared to be submitting to his will, the barons began to cause the king problems. Discord was sparked by the military summons of the 15th of May. In this, not only was the call widened to include those with twenty librates of land, but the destination of the army was not stated. Suspicious that Edward intended to send men overseas without him and of his new attempt to widen the basis of service, the earls of Norfolk and Hereford objected to the summons and refused to organise the muster in London that July. In response Edward replaced them as constable and marshal and proceeded with his plans for the expedition.

The earls led complaint against the military and financial demands of the king, protesting at the hardship and oppression he was causing his people. At the end of July they drew up the Remonstrances, arguing against the recent unconventional call to arms and the impoverishment of the kingdom and expressing fears of a Scottish invasion should the king go overseas. Edward, meanwhile, was in the final stages of preparation before leaving for Flanders. He needed still further financial support for the campaign and, with the consent of the barons surrounding him, levied an eighth on moveables. When the clergy returned the old answer that they would first have to seek papal agreement to any levy, he imposed a fifth on them by right of royal authority. The king issued a proclamation explaining his position and his requirements for more money, denying rumours that he had refused any grievances presented to him by the barons. When the Remonstrances were given to him, however, he postponed their consideration on the grounds that he could not consult his presently scattered council and set sail for Flanders.

The earl of Hereford protested at the exchequer on behalf of the barons and 'the community' against the collection of the eighth, saying that it had not been properly consented to. In September a parliament was called to which the king promised to confirm Magna Carta and the Forest Charter in return for consent to this tax. Reconciliation of the barons and the king was achieved in the form of *Confirmatio cartarum*, reluctantly issued by Edward on the 10th of October. This document by no means settled all grievances felt by the kingdom, but further confrontation was put aside in order to deal with the Scottish invasion of England.

Edward thus faced twin tasks in 1297. He had to raise both an English army and the money necessary for an allied campaign against France from Flanders. The difficulty of these tasks was exacerbated by the discontent already felt from the burden of previous financial demands, which had been made worse by the rampant corruption of royal officials.[2] Recent royal financial 'innovations', such as the maltot on wool and the taking of purveyance on a national scale, had also served to increase ill will towards future demands for money and supplies. People were also suspicious that the king intended sending the army overseas without him, and were uncertain whether service was owing in Flanders where it had not been performed before.[3]

In mounting his campaign, Edward faced an uphill struggle in order to meet his requirements. To persuade his people to be forthcoming with money, supplies and fighting men he used many of his letters and orders for propaganda purposes, including proclamations, orders to officials, requests for prayers and summons to parliament and the muster. Some of these documents were intended to reach large numbers of people, such as the Udimore proclamation and the requests for prayers. Many others were sent to royal officials, especially sheriffs and the barons of the exchequer and were often accompanied by explanatory statements and sometimes orders to instruct officials to speak on the king's behalf while conducting their business.[4]

What approaches did Edward take in trying to persuade his subjects to give him the support he needed? In particular, this chapter aims to determine whether Edward specifically appealed to those attitudes revealed in the romances and legendary histories as being those of the knights and gentry.

It has been pointed out that the style of language used by Edward during the crisis was old-fashionedly feudal.[5] Indeed, apart from a few letters, his use of feudal language is pervasive. It is apparent from the Middle English romances and vernacular legendary histories that knights and gentry understood their relationship with the king in

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[2] W. S. Thomson (ed.), *A Lincolnshire Assize Roll for 1298*, Lincoln Record Society, 36 (Lincoln, 1944). *Documents 1297-98*, p.22. D. Crook, 'Thieves and Plunderers: an anti-ministerial protest of 1296', *Historical Research*, 67 (1994), pp.327-336.

[3] Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance*, p.251.

[4] *Documents 1297*-98, nos. 104, 111, 127, 129. B. C. Keeney, 'Military Service and the Development of Nationalism in England, 1272-1327', *Speculum*, 22 (1947), pp.534-549. D. W. Burton, *Politics, Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Reigns of Henry III and Edward I* (Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis Oxford, 1985) and 'Requests for Prayers and Royal Propaganda Under Edward I', *Thirteenth Century England III: Proceedings of the Newcastle Upon Tyne Conference 1989*, eds. P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge, 1991), pp.25-35.

[5] M. Prestwich, *English Politics in the Thirteenth Century* (1990), p.15.

terms of their own experience, in terms of personal lordship. Edward's use of feudal language thus evoked this particular perception of kingship in a comprehensive manner.

In the literature the focus of this portrayal of kingship was the bond between king and people. Romances, in particular *Havelok* and *Arthour and Merlin* with their descriptions of the coronations of Havelok and Uther, symbolised the relationship by the homage and fealty rendered to the king at his coronation with his returned promises to rule for their well-being. Edward's letters too often reminded people of the bond between them in their use of language. He frequently described himself as the 'liege lord' of his subjects and he spoke of his connection to them.[6] He expressed concern for their well-being while taking their property for the war effort, for example. Edward ordered that the grain prise collected in the spring was to be taken 'santz trop grever le poeple'.[7] He assured his subjects in July that a wool collection was the only way he and his council could find to pay his allies that was 'au meindre grevaunce de poeple, e meindre damage de eux'.[8] In his proclamation issued from Udimore in August he spoke of the burdens his people had endured and promised to amend the situation 'au gre de son peuple' on his return from Flanders, 'car il seit bien qe nul nest taunt tenuz au reaume ne de amer les bones gentz de sa terre come il meismes'.[9] If he failed to return he promised that his heir should alleviate their hardship, since he too would be intimately bound to care for their welfare. When his subjects' grievances were finally attended to in October with *Confirmatio cartarum*, all had been done 'au mendement de nostre pople'.[10]

A further example of Edward's language reflecting his bond with his people comes with his struggle against the sentences of excommunication published by Winchelsey against those handing over or taking church property in the face of *Clericis laicos*. The king's appointment on the 24th of March of Itier d'Angoulême as proctor to the curia was to protest anything prejudicial 'pur nous e pur les noz, qui sont de nostre foi e a nostre pees e suz nostre protection, e pur toutz nos aherdauntz'.[11] The king was protecting those to whom he was bound and who were bound to him.

He also spoke in terms of his subjects' bond with himself, commonly by referring to their oaths of fealty. Military summons were often accompanied by this reference.

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[6] *Documents 1297-98*, pp.68, 122, 126, 140.
[7] *Ibid.*, pp.64, 85.
[8] *Ibid.*, p.114.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp.127-128.
[10] *Ibid.*, p.158.
[11] *Ibid.*, p.56.

For example, while calling for the aid of his Irish subjects on the 4th of May he appealed to 'the constancy of your fealty'.[12] In summoning men for the expedition overseas in writs of the 26th of October and the 24th of November he reminded royal subjects that they should accompany him as they were 'bound to him by duty' and 'bound to him by fealty'.[13] The appeal for obedience to the slightly dubious collection of the eighth in August was supported by a similar reminder of the bond with the king. The regency council was instructed to charge people to pay the tax 'sur lomage e la foi quil nous deivent'.[14] Royal officials themselves were also often reminded of their oaths of fealty when given instructions. Letters to the exchequer on the 13th, 25th and 29th of March, to the men of Winchelsea and the warden of the Cinque Ports in April and to the regency council on the 18th of September, all included orders which were to be carried out 'en la foi qe vous nous devez' and 'en la foi e la loiaute qe vous nous devez'.[15]

Such language also emphasised the importance of loyalty and obedience to a sovereign lord, in a manner seen in tales such as *Kyng Alisaunder*, *William of Palerne*, *Sir Tristrem*, *Guy of Warwick* and *Horn Childe*. Edward was clearly relying on his subjects to do as requested at a time when his demands became increasingly difficult to comply with. His feudal language appealed to the loyalty owed to him as king and lord. His letters to officials mentioning 'la foi e la loiaute qe vous nous devez' obviously did this, as did additional phrases such as 'as the king trusts in them', this example accompanying a request on the 4th of May that the Dublin exchequer send corn to Gascony with all speed. Edward often spoke of loyalty when relying on his subjects to do things for him. For example, when requesting his Irish subjects to serve in his army he said that he 'trusts in the constancy of their fealty', and when depending on Donald Can and others to maintain the king's peace he asked them 'to continue faithful in their love towards him'.[16] When depending on local men to act as inspectors of the king's debts and tax assessors he gave orders to select 'les plus leaux'; when choosing men to deliver the wool prise overseas similarly he gave orders to choose the most 'sages e leaux', and when relying on the payment of the eighth he asked that his subjects do so 'leement' and 'sicome bones gentz e leaux deivent'.[17]

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[12] *CPR 1292-1301*, p.248.
[13] *CCR 1296-1302*, pp.75, 187.
[14] *Documents 1297-98*, p.140.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp.50, 58, 59, 74, 149.
[16] *CPR 1292-1301*, pp.248, 253.
[17] *Documents 1297-98*, pp.102, 111, 113, 122. *CCR 1296-1302*, p.106.

Other romance expectations of the king as a lord are echoed in the themes of fealty and loyalty. The anticipation of material reward for faithful service seen so clearly in the romances with the generosity of Alexander, Lot, Haþeolf, Thurston and Charlemagne and in the histories with the liberality of Arthur, is present in Edward's letter of the 13th of June to Donald Can and his fellows. The king promised that if they 'continue faithful in their love towards him as vigorously as they have begun, ...they will find him kindly disposed and also gracious towards them'.[18] Of course the reverse was also true: unfaithful service would be punished. In July, for example, Edward wrote to port bailiffs to ensure the speedy emptying of ships for the embarkation of troops for Flanders. He warned the bailiffs 'not to neglect this in any way as they would wish to avoid the king's wrath'.[19] The same threat was included in letters to the sheriffs in the following month, when they were instructed to publish an ordinance for peace in the realm.[20]

The punishment for disloyalty or lack of service in the literature was unequivocal. The relationship between king and people was viewed as one of mutual obligation, and would be ended if either party did not meet their responsibilities. Edward's language indicated that he perceived their relationship in the same light, and his actions during the crisis confirmed this. The assumption behind Edward's letters was clearly that since his actions for the recovery of Gascony were legitimate, then loyalty was synonymous with obedience to his orders. Disobedience, or disloyalty, was an offence against the bond between king and people. For example, in a letter of the 16th of September to the sheriff of Northampton, the king described the men planning to hold an assembly there as 'forgetful of their fealty'.[21] Edward felt completely justified in severing the bond in the event of disloyalty and the failure to fulfil obligations toward himself. On the 24th of August, for example, he ordered it publicly proclaimed that 'toutz ceaux qui a nostre foi sount e voelent estre sueffrent qe la levee e la prise avantdites se facent'.[22] The threat behind these words had, of course, already been fulfilled with the outlawry of the clergy, which will be discussed more fully later on.

Edward's feudal language evoked the 'personal lordship' interpretation of kingship seen so prominently in the romances and histories. His presentation of himself

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[18] *CPR 1292-1301*, p.253.
[19] *CCR 1296-1302*, pp.121-122.
[20] *Ibid.*, p.123
[21] *Ibid.*, p.129.
[22] *Documents 1297-98*, pp.139-140.

in this 'popular' image conveyed messages that he was committed to his relationship with his people and that they were under certain obligations to him. Assuming this image also made sure that more direct appeals to specific 'popular' attitudes would fall onto prepared ground.

The king's personal tone was continued in his attempt to secure support for the expedition to Flanders. This task was made more difficult because the campaign presented certain challenges to the principle of service owed in defence of the realm. Firstly while service may have been owed in Gascony to defend the territory, was it owed outside of the realm in attack against France? Secondly, since service had not previously been performed in Flanders, was it owed there at all?[23] In this situation it seems reasonable to expect some royal argument for the expedition as one aiming to put an end to the disinheritance of the king and his heirs, and to recover the rights of the crown and its honour and dignity. Such had been the argument in November 1296 in the military summons to the earl of Ulster, for example, who was charged to be ready to fight 'in that which the king intends to do for the preservation of the right of his realm and the honour of his crown'.[24] However, this type of political language was only infrequently used by the king during the year of the crisis and within specific contexts demanding its use. His statement to the exchequer on the 20th of August that he had received the government of the realm 'par lordinaunce de dieu' was an isolated one.[25] He made several references to the recovery of 'sun dreit heritage', but always accompanied these with basic appeals for aid to defend the realm.[26] An early letter addressing the Canterbury bishops on the 27th of February claimed that publication of excommunication sentences 'nostra exheredatio et tocius regni subversio possit versimiliter ex hoc sequi' and 'in corone vel dignitatis nostre lesionem et preiudicium possint cedere'.[27] The excommunication sentences demanded by *Clericis laicos* formed a particular aspect of the struggle with Winchelsey which saw the king appointing Itier d'Angoulême and Hugh of Yarmouth to argue against them at the curia. This was a challenge against canon law at a papal court and therefore warranted terms which were themselves a part of canonical and Roman legal discussion.

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[23] Harriss, *Public Finance*, pp.62-63.
[24] *CPR 1292-1301*, p.181.
[25] *Documents 1297-98*, p.134.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp.125, 134.
[27] *Ibid.*, p.44.

It has been pointed out that it was doubtful that those receiving royal propaganda heard it with the discussions of legal theorists in mind.[28] Indeed their attitudes to Edward's propaganda were more likely to reflect those of popular literatures such as Middle English romance and vernacular legendary histories. These would have provided the context in which royal subjects heard the king's messages. It has also been recognised that the king avoided using specific legal principles in his letters, such as his right to levy taxes to defend the kingdom, in favour of broad statements about defence.[29] This was partly the case because of the king's practical and honest explanations of the needs of the kingdom and his current circumstances. Was it also because Edward knew that these broad appeals matched the expectations of him held by his people? Further examination of the themes revealed in his letters should help to answer this question.

Edward's approach to his subjects was not based on abstract terms but on personal appeals which would have been, of course, harder to ignore. Instead of encouraging men to provide and support an army sent overseas to recover the rights of the crown, it has been shown that the king tried to identify the interests of his people with the interests of the realm.[30] When asking for men, money and supplies he emphasised that everyone was threatened by the same dangers from the war. For example, in the military summons of the 15th of May Edward explained that he had included those holding twenty librates of land because 'the matter is so great and touches all and each of our said realm'. He called on them to serve in his army 'for the salvation and common utility of the realm'.[31] The wool collection ordered late in July to pay Edward's allies was accompanied by instructions that merchants tell dissatisfied people that 'le facent si grant busoigne come le rey ad ore a fere pur ly e por le commun profit de tot le reaume'.[32]

In seeking this 'common aid for a common cause', however, Edward also identified the king with the realm. He often spoke of king and kingdom together. For example, regarding ship service he spoke in April of the 'grant busoignes qui touchent nous e nostre roialme'.[33] In July he stated that it was fitting 'por sauvete de ly e de touz

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[28] *Ibid.*, p.29.
[29] *Ibid.*, p.29.
[30] Keeney, 'Military Service', pp.534-549.
[31] *Parliamentary Writs*, ii.140-141, cited by Keeney, 'Military Service', pp.541, 543.
[32] *Documents 1297-98*, p.134.
[33] *Ibid.*, p.75.

ses aliez e de tut son reaume' that he fulfil his obligations to his allies.[34] Seeking the means to do this he ordered the exchequer on the 11th of August to forward collected wool quickly for sale in aid of 'le profit de nous e de nostre reaume'.[35] On the following day he begged forgiveness from his people for the burdens he had placed on them, for he had only done so 'pur defendre lui e eux meismes e tut le reaume'.[36] Towards the end of the month he was proclaiming that the eighth had been levied 'pur la beusoigne qest si grande e si hastive e pur la sauvacion de nous e de tut nostre reaume' and taking measures to prevent Winchelsey and the bishops from making 'any promulgations prejudicial to the king and the realm'.[37]

Edward personified his realm in royal letters during the crisis. When the king was attacked, the realm was attacked. Edward made this identification particularly strongly with regard to internal dissensions. Threats to the realm and thus the king were often made on a small scale, such as the corruption of local officials. On the 1st of May, for example, Edward wrote to the sheriff of Yorkshire regarding the collection of the fifth granted by the northern clergy. The 'diversion' of money collected in the area was condemned as placing the whole realm 'in dampnum et periculum'.[38] Similarly, on the 9th of September, the king wrote to the sheriff of Huntingdon to order the seizure of land belonging to tax collectors Walter de Mellesworth and William de Walsingle. He protested that they were hindering collection of the fifth and eighth 'in nostrum contemptum manifestum' by which 'non solum nobis verum eciam toti regno nostro' were endangered.[39] More usually, however, this type of language was directed at potential groups of opponents to the king. For example, in September, Edward wrote to the sheriff of Northampton and the town of Bristol on the subject of men holding assemblies to speak against the king. He warned them to secure their towns 'so that no danger may arise to the king, them, or the town... This they are charged to do as they would wish to avoid danger to themselves and the whole realm'.[40] Enemies of the king's peace threatened the king and his people. Edward's proclamation made at Udimore in August also supported this idea. In this document he spoke of the civil wars that had marred his father's reign. If his opponents were successful in their rumours,

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[34] *Ibid.*, p.113.
[35] *Ibid.*, p.125.
[36] *Ibid.*, p.127.
[37] *Ibid.*, p.140. *CPR 1292-1301*, pp.307-308.
[38] *Documents 1297-98*, p.79.
[39] *Ibid.*, p.146.
[40] *CCR 1296-1302*, p.129.

saying that he had refused baronial grievances, then this would result in an even more dangerous situation than that faced in the previous reign.[41] The message was clear: if the king was attacked in this way it was really the kingdom that was attacked, for civil strife could only cause great harm to the people and perhaps even lay the country open to foreign invasion. The king obviously had this latter danger in mind when dealing with the threat of any clerical action against him during the struggle with Winchelsey. He protested in February against the publication of excommunication sentences saying that these would disinherit himself and subvert the realm.[42] Later in the year, at the end of August, he took measures to try and prevent any action to his prejudice being taken by the clergy because of the danger occasioned by 'the necessity in which the realm is placed'.[43] Any blow against the king or his policies in a wartime situation was a blow against the safety of the realm.

The unity of king and people is thus emphasised by Edward in his letters. This idea is one which is prominent in the romances and histories and especially so in the latter. The Brut chronicles contain a strong theme concerning the need for the king and his people to stand together against their enemies. If they were united against those seeking to invade (as it was feared that the French and the Scots might do in 1297) then the English should never be defeated. The emphasis by the authors of the Bruts of the troubles faced by Cassibelinus is a good example of this. Caesar, who was repeatedly kept out of Britain while king and barons stood together, succeeded in his conquest in the end not by force of arms, but because of the dispute between Cassibelinus and Androgeus. The writers believed, as sourly commented upon by Robert of Gloucester, that England could only ever be beaten when divided from within.[44] The romances tend to view the issue in a more positive light, choosing to show the successes of kings like Aurelius and Uther in *Arthour and Merlin*. Their success against Vortigern and the Danes was as a result of their unity with their people. In comparison Vortigern lost his crown, having alienated his barons and allied himself with foreigners. Edward's images of king and kingdom as one made a subtle but positive appeal to the belief that together he and his people would defeat the French, as well as a reminder of the consequences of division should they not fully support him in the forthcoming campaign.

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[41] *Documents 1297-98*, p.128.
[42] *Ibid.*, p.44.
[43] *CPR 1292-1301*, pp.307-308.
[44] See p.107.

Nevertheless, this encouragement would only be effective if supported by a king who fulfilled 'popular' expectations of him as a martial figure. He was, of course, expected to be the strongest and most skilled fighter of his kingdom, as were Athelwold, Birkabeyn and Havelok in the latter hero's romance, or the king of Little Brittany in *Sir Degarre*. In addition to this he was expected to be quick to respond to danger to his kingdom and to lead his people skilfully against the enemy. Such qualities were highlighted, for example, by the poet of *Richard Coeur de Lion*.[45] This very popular romance has been assigned to the close of the thirteenth century and could therefore have been circulating at the time of the crisis, if not for some years before.[46] The qualities of leadership shown by this hero were those expected of Edward. He, of course, had been compared to his predecessor even before his coronation, for example in the song *Praise of the Young Edward* which was probably written some time between the death of Henry III and the return of his son to England in 1274. In this song Edward's martial vigour is said to make him into a new Richard, his wars to make him the equal in valour of Richard and that together the two kings had brought equal honour to their people.[47] In the romance about Richard I this king is always first in the field and his courage and prowess inspire his army to great exertions. It is the king's presence and abilities which enable his Englishmen to win their battles. When, for example, Richard is ill and absent from the fray, his men falter. On his return to action they recover ground and when the king defeats his individual opponent then victory in battle is assured.

In royal letters that aimed to secure military and monetary support for the war against France, Edward stressed that he would be fulfilling 'popular' expectations of himself in the field. For example, in early May he issued military summons to his men in England and Ireland. Addressing holders of twenty librates of land for the first time, he emphasised that they should be willing and ready 'to come to the king and to accompany his person' in battle.[48] Summoning the earls of Kent and Ulster to the muster Edward promised that the earls would be going into battle 'cum corpore nostro' and he similarly emphasised to his Irish subjects that they would be going to fight 'with him in his own person', repeating that he 'desires them to know that he proposes to retain them by his side'.[49] Of course, Edward made such statements partly because of general fears that he

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[45] See pp.52-53.
[46] See p.13 and p.14 n.36.
[47] *Wright's Political Songs*, pp.128-132, p.128 for dating.
[48] *CCR 1296-1302*, p.105.
[49] *Foedera*, ii.767. *Parl. Writs*, i.280. *CPR 1292-1301*, p.247.

should send men abroad without him, as he had done previously during the war. The king's successful campaigns in Wales and Scotland since 1294, and the failure of those conducted in France without him, had surely served to confirm the association between the presence of the king and the success of any military endeavour. His reassurance that he would be leading his men on this occasion was supposed to allay fears of another unaccompanied campaign doomed to failure. This intention was clearly stated in a supporting letter for the Irish summons sent to the justiciar John Wogan. He was told to tell men 'que nous ne le beioms nule part enveier de nous, mes qil serront ovesque nostre cors par quei il se deivent prendre de plus pres de venir et daler de nous en la forme susdite, de puis qil veient que nous meismes y irroms en nostre propre persone'.[50]

Such reassurance served an additional purpose, however. It has been seen that in the romances, such as the previously discussed *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the 'popular' imagination linked the king's presence and prowess with his army's military success. Alongside Edward's message of victory through unity, his insistence on his leadership of the campaign in Flanders provided further encouragement for his people to support him. That the king would not only be present, but dedicating all of his courage, strength and skill to the fight in example to his men is also stated in royal letters. For example, in letters concerning the prise taken in June, Edward reminded people that he intended to go boldly overseas where the business was 'arduum et vigens'.[51] His instructions regarding the issue of writs for levying the eighth, sent on the 4th of August, also show how the king was leading by example. He ordered officials to tell people to pay the tax willingly 'depuis qe le rei mette son cors, e quant quil ad e tut son aveir e quant quil prent de son reaume, pur sauvete de eaux e de son reaume. E semble a nostre seigneur le rei qe plus ne purreit il pur eaux faire qe mettre son cors e sa vie en aventure pour eaux, come pur ceaux quil eyme leaument e les voet gardier e meintenir en honeur a tut son poeir si avaunt come son cors demeine le purra suffrir ou suffire'.[52] A week later, in the Udimore proclamation, he repeated the personal role that he was to take in the forthcoming expedition. In this letter he asked that people should not let the new tax annoy them, 'puys quil veient bien quil ne esparnye son cors, ne ceo qe il ad, pur alegger eux e ly de grauntz suffreytes quil unt suffert e suffrent uncore a graunt meschief de iour en autre'.[53] During the approach to his departure for Flanders, Edward took care to

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[50] *Parl. Writs*, i.280. *CCR 1296-1302*, p.105.

[51] *Documents 1297-98*, p.92.

[52] *Ibid.*, p.122.

[53] *Ibid.*, p.128.

emphasise that he would be at the head of his army. He would be courageously leading his men into battle and daring his life for his people. In putting forward this image he stressed that he was doing what was expected of him by his people. He was doing his utmost in their service and the suggestion naturally followed on from this that his people could do no less for him. As he rather irritably pointed out, if he was risking his life for his people then the least they could do would be to pay his tax.[54]

That he was making demands of them in a legitimate cause, that of their own defence, was the dominant theme of Edward's letters during 1297. The king spoke of his defence of England almost constantly. For example, he names defence of the realm as the reason behind calls to parliament and to arms, the taking of prises and the levying of taxes, the requests for prayers, and orders to the exchequer, sheriffs and other officials.[55] This is only to be expected in view of the state of war that the country was in at the time. However, Edward's repeated reference to his defence of the realm had additional interpretations and meanings for both king and people. As has been shown previously, in the romances and histories, there were many 'popular' expectations of kings and their people associated with the issue of defence. Indeed, such was the strength of these particular attitudes that they might be called convictions instead. They involved a belief in the mutual responsibility of king and people in the defence of the kingdom, as well as the particular commitments connected with both parties.

Firstly, the king was expected to defend his people from their enemies. Edward could not have stated his intention to fulfil this role more strongly during the crisis. On the 20th of August he wrote to explain the taking of a fifth from the clergy, saying that 'come le reis par lordinaunce de dieu eit resceu le governement du reaume par quei il est tenuz a defense de meisme le reaume e de toutz ses sozmis, clers e lais'.[56] He also made it clear that he was shouldering the responsibilities that this task entailed.[57] He alerted his knights to be prepared to fight at any time, since 'something might happen through the wiles of his enemies that might be full of damage and perilous to him and his subjects and all his realm' unless they were ready to meet that danger.[58] Fearing 'destruction e perdicion' he made military alliances 'soun reaume defendre e ses enemis rebotier, e son

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[54] *Ibid.*, p.122.
[55] *Ibid.*, pp.113, 119, 120-121, 139-140. *CCR 1296-1302*, pp.105, 124. *CPR 1292-1301*, pp.247, 307. *Parl. Writs*, i.280-285. *Foedera*, ii.766-768.
[56] *Documents 1297-98*, p.134.
[57] Also Rothwell, 'Confirmation of the Charters', p.32.
[58] *CCR 1296-1302*, p.105.

dreit recoverir'.[59] He took care to secure the kingdom against possible invasion so 'that the land after their departure shall remain well guarded' and 'damage, loss and danger by the king's enemies shall not threaten the king or his realm in any way'.[60]

Secondly, royal subjects were expected to provide their king with the means to defend them. They were obliged to supply him with fighting men and aids of money and supplies. On many occasions in the romances kings called on their people for their help in defeating their enemies. Armies were raised to aid Charlemagne against Ebrahim in *Roland and Vernagu*, for example, as they were for the Christian king against his Muslim neighbours in the *King of Tars*, for the emperor against the duke of Saxony in *Guy of Warwick*, and for Haþeolf against the Danes and Irish in *Horn Childe*. Kings in the romances received complete support from their subjects in times of danger, this representing an ideal of unity in response to a threat to the kingdom. There is no dispute over the necessity of supplying an army in the literature, but as there were never any grey areas such as those revealed by the expedition to Flanders in 1297, nor was it a very entertaining subject, perhaps it is not surprising that this is the case.

Edward's strongly repeated image of himself shouldering his responsibilities was accompanied by a reminder that his people were to do the same. For example, his military summonses of early May explained that the king expected 'to need shortly his good men for the war with the king of France'. He called on them 'to come to the king and accompany his person for the defence of them and the whole realm'.[61] Financial support for a king defending his people was not explicitly present in the romances. It could be inferred as part of the successful provision of an army, but again it seems unlikely that such a mundane aspect of defending a kingdom would be included in the literature. Nevertheless, it was a part of a people's contribution to their own protection and Edward made many demands for such aid. He received grants of the eighth (and later the ninth) 'made for the defence of the realm'.[62] In August he explained how he needed the eighth to be paid 'pur lui e son pueple, e ses aliez defendre e sauver'.[63] He later urged the quick collection of the ninth to the archbishop-elect of York 'as it was necessary to provide money speedily for the expenses of the earls, barons and others of the realm who are setting out against the Scots'.[64]

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[59] *Documents 1297-98*, p.134.
[60] *CCR 1296-1302*, pp.105, 74.
[61] *CPR 1292-1301*, p.247. Also *CCR 1296-1302*, p.105.
[62] *CPR 1292-1301*, p.307. *CCR 1296-1302*, p.137.
[63] *Documents 1297-98*, p.122.
[64] *CCR 1296-1301*, p.141.

The expectations of king and people in the defence of the realm were depicted in the romances as perhaps the most obvious indications of the mutuality of their relationship. This mutuality was strongly emphasised in royal letters written during 1297. Not only were the commitments of both parties presented, but their dependence on each other in the matter of defence was firmly recognised by the king. In the Udimore proclamation, for example, Edward spoke of the financial burden felt by the country, which he was well aware of 'com des eydes quil ad demaunde sovente foez de ses gentz, la quele chose lui ad convenu fere par encheison des gueres qui lui unt este meues en Gascoyne, en Gales, e en Escoce e ayllurs, des queles il ne poeyt lui ne son reaume defendre saunz eyde de ses bones gentz'.[65] This understanding was echoed almost a fortnight later when the king 'prie a tutes les bones gentz e a tut le pueple de son reaume, qui unques ne lui faillent' to pay the eighth.[66] He was dependent on their support to be able to defend them.

Of course, as seen previously in the romances and histories, such a mutual relationship could only exist when both parties met their responsibilities. The dominant interpretation of the relationship was that of personal lordship, it was 'contractual' and both parties performed their obligations to each other or the relationship was nullified. This conviction was revealed pointedly in 1297 with the king's outlawry of the clergy.

Clerical refusal to grant the fifth requested by Edward for the war was seen by the king as a failure to meet the responsibilities owing to him. He condemned them in letters to the sheriffs on the 1st of March, saying that 'some clerks and persons have, to the king's rancour and indignation, refused to aid in the defence of the whole realm and of the church of England'.[67] They were judged 'quil ont failly a leur seignur lige e a leur nation propre e au roiaume en plus grant bosoigne'.[68] Their betrayal was a breach of the 'contract' with the king and 'pur la desobedience avantdite' Edward ordered the seizure of all lay fees with the goods and chattels in them.[69] His responsibilities regarding the clergy were dissolved and he was no longer obliged to protect them.[70] To enter into the relationship with the king again, as Thomas vicar of Mercham did who 'vint a la fey nostre seignur le rey' on the 9th of April, entailed the shouldering of expected

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[65] *Documents 1297-98*, p.127.
[66] *Ibid.*, p.128.
[67] *CPR 1292-1301*, p.239.
[68] *Documents 1297-98*, p.68.
[69] *Ibid.*, p.107. *CCR 1296-1302*, p.14.
[70] *Documents 1297-98*, p.39.

commitments to the king as well as the king's renewal of his obligations to them.[71]
Clergy 'who wish to have the king's protection for the future' would pay the fifth by way
of a fine.[72] They would fulfil expectations of them by contributing to 'defensionem regni
et ecclesie Anglicane'.[73]

The outlawry of the clergy was presented very much in feudal terms, in the
personal lordship image of kingship which the king promoted of himself during this
crisis. His relationship with his people as portrayed in his letters and actions was a
strongly 'contractual' one, involving mutual obligation which had to be fulfilled or else
the relationship would cease to exist. This was the central message of Edward's
propaganda in 1297. He achieved it in several ways. He assumed the personal lordship
understanding of kingship which was so popular with his subjects, with its attendant
belief in mutual obligations. He showed his people that he was fulfilling all of their
expectations of him as their king who was defending them. He spoke constantly of his
role as defender of his subjects, reminding them that his commitment should be matched
equally by their shouldering of their responsibilities. He also included a positive message
about the forthcoming campaign to Flanders that, with a unified effort led by the king in
person, Gascony would be recovered and no further demands would need to be made.

Whilst Edward's letters in 1297 were thus clearly honest and practical, they also
contained many images and expectations of his knights and gentry (the probable audience
of Middle English romances and vernacular histories). This group's support was vital for
the expedition to Flanders as it formed the source of fighting men for Edward's armies,
of tax payers, of suppliers of prise goods and of the facilitators of his demands through
their role as administrators in the counties. His strongly persuasive letters with their
coherent message could be assessed as a concerted assault on the sensibilities of a broad
swathe of his subjects, but particularly of the very group whose support he had the most
need of.

How effective was Edward's persuasion in raising support for his campaign?
This is obviously difficult to determine, even in terms of the practical achievement of the
king's immediate aims, that of the summer's money-raising. It has been pointed out that
maladministration and corruption, as well as general impoverishment and possible
passive resistance to the wool collection, all had a detrimental effect on the king's

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[71] *Ibid.*, p.68.
[72] *CPR 1292-1301*, p.239.
[73] *Documents 1297-98*, pp.53-54, 65, 66, 78, 85, 90. *CPR 1292-1301*, p.237. Also Harriss, *Public Finance*, p.58.

attempts to secure money for his expedition. After the earls' protest at the exchequer little wool was collected, but despite the protest there were few refusals to pay the eighth. However, its success and that of the new clerical fifth imposed by royal authority cannot be determined because both were so quickly replaced by the ninth that little assessment or collection had had time to take place.[74] As regards the assembly of an army, it has been shown that although the king finally raised a substantial fleet it is clear that Edward's call to arms was not a complete success. The evidence is insubstantial, but it seems that he sailed in the company of perhaps only sixty-three squires. It is impossible, however, to tell whether this was because of the widespread impoverishment, the general unwillingness to serve in Flanders, or antipathy to the king and his policies.[75]

It is difficult too to judge the level of public support that the king and his policies maintained during the crisis. Previous studies have determined that the disputes with the clergy and the earls were the product of the demands of war, rather than a clash of principles or rebellion against the king's policies.[76] Opposition to the king therefore was a feeling of grievance against circumstances which became a protest, rather than any objection to the king himself. This was reflected in the nature of the opposition to Edward in the summer of 1297. It was very much of the moment, appearing and disappearing as the earls voiced the discontent felt in the kingdom at the time and being composed largely of their own political and tenurial connections.[77] Bad feeling did exist against Edward, as an outburst by William of Gloucester showed. He passed the head of Llywelyn on its pike and declared that he would like to see the head of the king alongside it. More people remained loyal, however, as the local goldsmith John Paternoster and his friends showed by beating William to death for his opinion.[78] Royal subjects may have felt overburdened and disgruntled but it also seems that they did not dispute why Edward placed such demands upon them. They must have felt, surely as a result of the king's persuasion, that he was doing as was expected of him.

Of course, one group did make a determined stand against Edward in 1297. Clerical resistance to granting a fifth was met in an abrupt and unprecedented manner with Edward's withdrawal of his protection. This situation presented real opportunities

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[74] *Documents 1297-98*, pp.7-11, 18-21. Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.419. Denton, *Winchelsey*, p,152. E. B. Fryde, 'Financial Resources of Edward I in the Netherlands, 1294-1298', *Studies in Trade and Finance* (1983), pp.1181-1183.

[75] *Documents 1297-98*, p.7. Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.424. Keeney, 'Military Service', p.547.

[76] *Documents 1297-98*, pp.22, 27-30, 37. Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.434, and *War, Politics and Finance*, p.259. Rothwell, 'Confirmation of the Charters', pp.22-23.

[77] *Documents 1297-98*, p.7. Prestwich, *Edward I*, pp.433-434, and *War, Politics and Finance*, p.250.

[78] *Documents 1297-98*, nos. 137, 138. Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.435.

for rebellion against the king because of the potential clash of loyalties owing to him and the church. No such danger occurred though. Indeed it has been noted that there was very little protest against the outlawry of the clergy at all. Even among the clerics in the king's service only John de Craucombe, archdeacon of the East Riding, made any open complaint.[79] Perhaps everyone feared the king's temper, but the lack of reaction suggests that people were convinced that the clergy should share the responsibility of contribution to their defence as did other royal subjects. The breaking of a feudal relationship by a lord whose men failed to meet their obligations to him at a time of need accorded well with the ideas about kingship of knights and gentry. It is likely that these ideas and, no doubt, some resentment at clerical refusal to share the burden of their defence, prevented the outlawry from becoming a rallying cry for rebellion against Edward.

What of contemporary comment on the level of public support for the king? What do the chronicles have to say on this matter, for example? Many chroniclers, being clerics, concentrated on the clash between Edward and Winchelsey, paying particular attention to the outlawry. As would be expected, these authors condemned Edward for his action in no uncertain terms. Most, as in the annals of Worcester and Dunstable, the chronicle of Bury St Edmunds and the *Flores Historiarum*, spoke of the king's cruelty. They accused him of harassing and molesting the clergy and despoiling the church.[80] Others were more vitriolic. Walter of Guisborough accused the king of enslaving the church. The *Flores Historiarum* charged Edward with persecuting the clergy as if he were Nero, while the 'Merton' *Flores* accused him of tyranny and likened him to Pilate, and the 'Rochester' *Flores* compared the king to a wolf in sheep's clothing.[81]

Many chroniclers, perhaps inevitably, devoted less attention to events other than the outlawry. Despite some detailed accounts of the dispute with the earls, such as those written by Bartholomew Cotton and Walter of Guisborough, there is little direct comment on public feeling about the king. The *Flores Historiarum* did record the earls protesting at the exchequer noting that 'comitibus itaque et baronibus pariter conglobatis, necnon majoritate populi eis inclinante, factus est timor super habitores

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[79] *Documents 1297-98*, p.22.
[80] *Annales Prioratus de Dunstaplia, Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series, 36iii (1866), iii.405. *Annales Prioratus de Wigornia, Annales Moastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series, 36iv (1869), iv.529. H. R. Luard (ed.), *Flores Historiarum*, Rolls Series, 95iii (1890), iii.99. A. Gransden (ed.), *The Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds 1212-1301* (1964). pp.135-137.
[81] H. Rothwell (ed.), *The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, Camden Society, Third Series 89 (1957), p.297. *Flores*, iii.99, 291, 292.

patriae'.[82] Walter of Guisborough, though, was perhaps the most revealing. He spoke of the messengers who were to carry news of the clergy's refusal of the fifth to the king as being too frightened of Edward's temper to do so. He described how the king imposed the maltot and prises of corn and meat 'et multe fiebant oppressiones in populo terre', as well as the confrontation between Edward and Bohun in the Salisbury parliament sparked by the king's order to go to Gascony without him. Later on, when the king asked for prayers for the success of his expedition at the swearing of fealty to Edward of Caernarfon, Guisborough remarked that 'orabant quidam publice, alii autem maledicebant in occulto'.[83] Guisborough's reliability has been called into question, however, especially with regard to the defiance of Bohun at the Salisbury parliament.[84] The value of this evidence in determining the success of Edward's propaganda suffers because of this.

The way in which the crisis was presented in the chronicles could provide an indication of the effectiveness of Edward's propaganda. Did it influence the way in which the crisis was perceived, for example? Even pro-baronial chroniclers like Walter of Guisborough spoke in feudal terms which echo the tone and content of Edward's letters. In Guisborough's famously dramatic scene between the king and Bohun where Edward demanded that the earl go to Gascony without him, Bohun refused and the king shouted at him that '"Per deum, O comes, aut ibis aut pendebis". The earl shouted back '"Per idem iuramentum, O rex, nec ibo nec pendebo"', before storming out of the chamber. The oath of fealty and the obligation to fight with the king in defence of the realm would have been familiar from Edward's statements and themes during 1297. Guisborough invented this exchange, and it was possible that he was influenced in his choice of words because of the king's propaganda.

An even more elaborate and dramatic depiction of the crisis is that of Pierre de Langtoft. He invented a speech by Edward whose sentiments would not have been out of place among the king's own writs. Edward addressed the earls, saying:

> <<Jeo suy castel pur vus et mur et mesoun;
> Et vus la barbecane et porte et pavillyoun.
> Recoverer la m'estut u perdre accioun.
> L'aler ay enprys, le voue ay fet ensoun,
> Passer ouf mey covent chascoun de vus par noun.

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[82] *Flores*, iii.103.

[83] *Guisborough*, pp.289-291.

[84] Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.416.

Langtoft focused on the issue of military service in his account of the crisis and both his preoccupation and report of Anthony Bek's speech to the earls reflect Edward's arguments on this matter. For example, he recounts how the bishop:

> les barouns prier
> Qe ad lour seygnur lyge se deynent replyer
> De si cum de lure ayde or en ad mester.

Later, when discussing the king's departure for Flanders, Langtoft commented that:

> Unkes tel seygnur fu servysça en arer
> Issint de son pople qant devoyt gwerroer.
> Trop est recreaunt qe se recoit arer,
> Qant vait son seygnur vers tel peril mover.[85]

Langtoft paid less attention to the outlawry of the clergy and presented the crisis mainly as that between the king and his barons. He showed particular interest in the issue of service and presented it in feudal terms, in terms which the king himself used to try and persuade his people to materially support his expedition to Flanders. Statements in Langtoft's chronicle that the king's people were bound to accompany him in defence of the realm, that their liege lord had need of their aid and should be obliged and that a sovereign lord should be surrounded by his men when he goes into danger, are all those made by Edward in 1297. It should be remembered that Langtoft wrote for a lay, probably knightly audience and his chronicle was thus influenced by the tastes of that audience. Was the closeness of his interpretation of the crisis to the themes and images of Edward's letters a result of the king's propaganda or the dictates of his audience? Although it is impossible to determine this, in many ways it does not matter. If the intense similarity between Edward's propaganda and Langtoft's view of the crisis was a result of that propaganda, then the king managed to successfully influence people to support his policies. If the similarity was a result of the tastes, opinions and attitudes of a knightly and gentry audience, then the king would also have managed to influence people to support his policies simply by having appealed so strongly to their own convictions. If Edward did not have much success in his practical aims, he certainly did

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[85] *Le Règne d'Édouard I*, pp.382-383, 384.

so in tapping into the ideas and political attitudes of his people. He obviously knew how best to appeal to them. That he did not achieve all he set out to in 1297 and was forced to agree to *Confirmatio cartarum* in October, must surely be an indication of the depressed situation his subjects found themselves in. The arguments of the barons were based on the irrefutable depressed condition of the kingdom, which made their arguments so strong as to be impossible to ignore.

Chapter 5 - Political Crisis 1326.

The second crisis to be considered in the light of evidence concerning the attitudes of knights and gentry, obtained from Middle English romances and legendary histories, is the deposition of Edward II.[1]

On the 24th of September 1326, Queen Isabella arrived in Suffolk to relieve the state of the kingdom and to take action against the Despensers and their adherents, who were described as enemies of both herself and the realm. She brought with her her eldest son the earl of Chester and her brother-in-law the earl of Kent, Roger Mortimer and other disaffected barons and clergy and a small army of Hainaulters. This party was swiftly joined by many magnates and prelates. Although she promptly sent a letter to London seeking its support for her cause, the city could not initially answer because of the presence of the king. Following Edward's flight westwards on the 2nd of October, however, the way became open for a second approach for aid against the Despensers. Her letter of the 6th of October, posted in Cheapside and on windows in the city, was warmly received. The Londoners declared for her and sacked the houses of Robert Baldock, the earl of Arundel and others associated with the Despensers. Edward's treasurer Bishop Stapledon was killed on the 15th of October as he arrived to try to raise the city for the king, as were two of his squires and John le Marshal, *secretarius* of the younger Hugh Despenser.

The queen moved westwards after the king, pausing at Oxford where Bishop Orleton justified her actions in front of the university. On the 26th of October Bristol surrendered to Isabella, turning over to her the elder Hugh Despenser for a prompt trial and execution. Edward fled into Wales and the queen and her company elected the earl of Chester as guardian of the realm to rule in the name of the king during his absence. On the 16th of November Edward was captured near Neath, and Orleton was sent to ask him to do what was necessary for the peace and justice of the kingdom. He returned to the queen bearing the Great Seal. Edward was taken to Kenilworth castle and the

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[1] Detailed discussions of the crisis can be found in M. Buck, *Politics, Finance and the Church in the Reign of Edward II: Walter Stapeldon Treasurer of England* (Cambridge, 1983). M. V. Clarke, 'Committees of Estates and the Deposition of Edward II', *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait*, eds. J. G. Edwards, V. H. Galbraith and E. F. Jacob (Manchester, 1933), pp.27-45. N. Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II 1321-1326* (Cambridge, 1979). R. M. Haines, *The Church and Politics in Fourteenth-Century England: The Career of Adam Orleton c.1275-1345* (Cambridge, 1978), and *Archbishop John Stratford: Political Revolutionary and Champion of the Liberties of the English Church ca.1275/80-1348* (Toronto, 1986). G. A. Williams, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (1963).

younger Hugh Despenser was tried and executed at Hereford. The Tower of London was finally forced to surrender to the mob on the 17th of November.

Isabella issued writs in the king's name on the 3rd of December, summoning a parliament to be held at Westminster. When it met four days later members took an oath to maintain her quarrel with the Despensers as well as whatever was determined during the present parliament. The archbishop of York and other bishops objected to the king's absence at such a time and as a result Bishops Orleton and Stratford were sent to Kenilworth to request Edward to come and agree to suitable arrangements for the crown.

While the queen and her company celebrated Christmas at Wallingford, Orleton preached on the enmity felt by the Despensers for the queen and her son and detailed the reasons why she felt she could not return to her husband. By the 30th of December all the citizens of London had taken an oath to uphold her cause, willing or otherwise.

Parliament met again on the 7th of January 1327, at which time Orleton described the queen's fear of the king and asked if Edward should be allowed to continue to rule. He and Stratford reported to the assembly on Edward's refusal to attend parliament and on his continuing to be filled with evil intent. The Londoners issued a letter of ultimatum to the prelates and magnates asking them to join in their determination to maintain the queen's cause, depose the king and crown his eldest son. On the following day, the 13th of January, Mortimer explained to parliament that the magnates had decided to depose Edward II. Archbishop Reynolds laid articles of accusation against the king before the assembly and the proposal that the king be replaced with his son. The decision was taken, homage performed and Orleton preached on the dangers to the realm of a childish king. That afternoon Mortimer and others went to the Guildhall to tell the Londoners of the resolution of parliament and many citizens, prelates and magnates swore oaths to maintain it.

Meanwhile, an embassy of earls and barons, prelates and clergy, knights and burgesses arrived at Kenilworth. Orleton told Edward that his continued government of the kingdom was unacceptable and that his son would take his place if he consented. Edward initially refused but, with the threat of another king being chosen rather than his son, he later agreed. William Trussell then renounced all homage and fealties owing to him and announced him relieved of the government and a private person once more. All of this was reported to parliament on the embassy's return to London. Stratford preached on 'caput meum doleo' and he asked for the public assent of the people to the

crowning of the earl of Chester. This he loudly received. Archbishop Reynolds then preached on 'vox populi, vox dei' and the peace of Edward III was proclaimed.

In contrast to the study of Edward I's crisis in 1297, this chapter aims to examine how the king's opponents used 'popular' feeling on kingship to gain support for their actions. The crisis itself will be considered in two sections. As it has been doubted whether Isabella invaded with the intention of deposing her husband, a division will be made between the events following the queen's landing in Suffolk and the proceedings of the deposition 'parliament'.[2] The crisis in 1326 differs from that in 1297 in that few documents survive. As a result while discussion of the earlier events will tend to focus on statements made by the queen, consideration of the deposition itself will focus upon the process by which Edward II was removed from the kingship.

Although many people moved to join the queen on her arrival in England, she could not rely on full support for her cause. The Lanercost chronicler, for example, recorded confusion among the people on the question of whether to support the king or the queen. He reported that 'there were contradictory rumours in England about the queen, some declaring that she was betrayer of the king and kingdom, others that she was acting for peace and the common welfare of the kingdom, and for the removal of evil counsellors from the king'.[3] Support for the queen was by no means assured at this time and from Isabella's arrival to her summoning of parliament she produced several propagandist letters and judgements aimed at raising support for the removal of the Despensers and inevitable reform of the state of the realm. Her approach focussed on the issue of evil counsellors.

Isabella came saying that she did not intend to upset or destroy the kingdom, but to relieve the oppressed state of the church, the king and the realm. To achieve this she sought to remove the authors of the country's troubles, namely the Despensers and their adherents.[4] As pursuit of the king began she enhanced her initial reassurances that she intended only to destroy the Despensers by greatly stressing the theme of evil counsel in a statement made at Wallingford on the 15th of October.[5] The church and realm of England had been oppressed 'par mavoys consail & abet Hugh le Despenser'. It was

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[2] Fryde, *Tryanny and Fall*, p.195.
[3] H. Maxwell (ed.), *The Chronicle of Lanercost 1272-1346* (Glasgow, 1913), p.250.
[4] Isabella's letters to London: V. H. Galbraith, 'Extracts from the Historia Aurea and a French Brut', *EHR*, 43 (1928), pp.211-212; G. J. Aungier (ed.), *Croniques de London, depuis l'an 44 Hen. III jusqu'à l'an 17 Edw. III*, Camden Society, 28 (1844), p.51.
[5] *Foedera*, II.ii, pp.645-646.

because of him and 'le mavoys consail R[obert] de Baldock, & autres adherdans a ly, que seinte eglise est de lour biens, countre Dieu & dreiture, despoilez, & en trops des maneres ledenges & dishonurez' and the crown of England was 'destrue en divers maneres' to the disinheritance of the king and his heirs. Through the cruelty and envy of Hugh Despenser the great men of the land had been killed, imprisoned, disinherited and exiled; widows and orphans were deprived of their rights. His evil counsel had caused the people of the land to be grieved by the relentless imposition of tallages, exactions and other oppressions. Worst of all, 'par la fause suggestion & mavoys procurement des avaunt dits Hugh & Robert, & lour adherdaunts' the good will of the king had been turned away from his wife and the good men of the realm now accompanying her.

Political complaint against evil counsellors had often been used previously to justify rebellion against a king, for example in the conflict between Henry III and the barons in 1258-1265.[6] Its successful but 'monotonous use' throughout Edward's own reign has also been commented upon. The accusations of evil counsel had already resulted in the expulsion of Piers Gaveston and the removal of four other men from the king's side in 1308. Similarly, such politics had secured the 1311 Ordinances which replaced evil counsellors with baronially appointed ministers. The issue of evil counsel reappeared in 1313, as the supposed reason behind the king's failure to meet with his barons in parliament. In 1321 the cry produced the exile of the Despensers themselves.[7]

The accusation of evil counsel, therefore, was a powerful political tool in justifying opposition to the king, and in view of Edward's notorious attachment to the Despensers and intense public hatred of them, it was guaranteed to attract support for the queen.[8] However justified its use was though, this accusation was much more than a political tool. As the romances have shown there was extremely strong public feeling on this issue.[9] In the literature, hatred of men, such as Godard and Godrich in *Havelok*, who committed the crime of treason, is almost eclipsed by the hatred of those evil counsellors who misinformed and manipulated the king for their own purposes. Evil counsellors were considered to be truly traitorous in the eyes of romance poets and audiences. The reason behind this did not appear to be because such people served their own interests rather than that of king or country, but because they unleashed the ill will

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[6] *Song of Lewes*, pp.10, 18, 19, 25. R. F. Treharne (ed.), *Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform and Rebellion 1258-1267* (Oxford, 1973), no. 37C.
[7] J. Conway-Davies, *The Baronial Opposition to Edward II* (Cambridge, 1918), pp.28-29.
[8] N. Saul, 'The Despensers and the Downfall of Edward II', *EHR*, 99 (1984), pp.1-33.
[9] See pp.83-85.

of the king upon the innocent. This interpretation was certainly included in Isabella's Wallingford exposition. In this letter it was said that Hugh Despenser had caused the church to be despoiled, the great men of the realm to be removed from their rightful position or killed and the queen to be separated from her husband. 'La bone voillaunce nostre dit seigneur le Roy' had been turned away from the church and the innocent people of the realm by his 'fause suggestion & mavoys procurement'.

In romances such as *Beues of Hamtoun, Athelston, King Horn* and *Horn Childe*, evil counsellors are passionately condemned. Their deceit in posing as faithful subjects of the king while releasing disruptive forces from the throne is abhorred. In turning the king to tyrannous ways they were enemies of king and kingdom and traitors of the worst kind. Such hatred as was felt for the Despensers could only have been ignited into a fury by the queen's address in October. What seems on the face of it to be an old political complaint was really something which involved strong public passions; Isabella thus could hardly have chosen a better approach to gather the people to her side after her invasion.

'Popular' feeling against evil counsellors can also provide additional insights into the trials of the Despensers. When the earl of Winchester, the elder Hugh Despenser, was tried at Bristol at the end of October he was condemned for returning to the realm despite the sentence of banishment still standing against him, and for accroaching royal power to himself. It was found that he had 'conseilant le rey a desheriter et defere ses leys' and thus secured the execution of Thomas earl of Lancaster without reason. He had robbed the land and 'conseile le roy traiterousement a defere les prelas de seinte eglise, nient suffrant a seinte eglise lur franchises dues'.[10] Included among these condemnations were actual crimes of treason: the accroachment of royal power being the most significant, and treason was the judgement of William Trussell's court upon both the elder and younger Despensers. In his opening statement Trussell told the earl that he would be allowed no response to his crimes, as none had been accorded to the earl of Lancaster at his trial, and that he had been attainted as a traitor. In the following list of his crimes, however, it was not the accroachment of royal power but his evil counsel which was described as traitorous, Despenser being condemned for 'vous avetz conseile le roy traiterousement'. That the Despensers were widely considered to have been executed for their evil counsel to the king was perhaps the influence of the queen's

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[10] *Annales Paulini*, pp.317-319.

propaganda, but was certainly in keeping with the view of knights and gentry that evil counsellors were traitors of the worst kind.

Although the king had been led astray by evil counsellors Isabella's propaganda stressed his innocence. In the literature the vehemence directed toward these men is matched by a belief that the king was not responsible for his acts of ill will against his people. Despite acting in a tyrannical manner, by departing from the rule of law as occurs in the tales of *Athelston, Amis and Amiloun, Horn Childe, King Horn* and *Beues of Hamtoun* for example, the king is not judged to be a tyrant.[11] Evil counsellors cause the abuse of royal power and it is they who are at fault and not the king.

This idea is, of course, the reason behind the frequent use of this justification for opposition to the king in real life. Those resisting him could claim that they were not rebelling against the king, which would have been treasonous. In acting against evil counsellors they were proving themselves to be his loyal subjects. Isabella's use of this political fiction was repeated in the months prior to the summoning of parliament. It was used right from the start, in her letters to London and other towns and formed part of her reassurances that she intended no harm to England despite arriving with an army of foreigners. In these letters she sought aid for the honour and ease of the church and the kingdom - and for the king. She asked that if Hugh Despenser came into their power people should arrest him 'in fide qua domino nostre regi et nobis tenemini et super quantum nobis forisfacere poteritis'.[12] Thus she not only claimed to have come to aid the king, but even charged his subjects to help her on the fealty which they owed to him!

The Wallingford letter, issued nine days later, expanded on this theme. In the letter, Isabella absolved the king of blame in the opening statement, saying 'que conue chose est notoirement, que l'estat de seinte eglise & del roialme d'Engleterre est en moult des maneres durement blemy, & abesce par mavoys consail & abet Hugh le Despenser'. It was Despenser who had despoiled the church, destroyed the crown, disinherited the king, caused the death and destruction of noble men and oppressed the people. It was he who was branded 'tyrant & enemy de Dieu & de seinte eglise, de nostre treschier seigneur le Roy, & de tout le roialme'. Again, she asked for royal subjects to give their aid 'bien & leaument' in order to capture this 'tyrant'.[13]

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[11] See pp.47-48.

[12] Galbraith, 'Historia Aurea', p.212.

[13] *Foedera*, II.ii, pp.645-646.

At the same time as disavowing the king's involvement in the wretched state of the kingdom, the queen further dissociated Edward from blame by presenting the image of a just king who would act to preserve his subjects' best interests. For example, following Bishop Stapledon's murder on the 15th of October Isabella issued a proclamation in London to calm the situation. She ordered that no-one should do anything against the king's peace and that the 'king's places' and their officials should be free to do right to all men. Anyone with grievances against another should seek redress through the law. Good men of the city and the realm should be allowed to enter the city safely 'for the common profit of the king and the land', even 'enemies of the king' should not be attacked but arrested and dealt with according to the law.[14] All of these commands, even though they were made by the queen, show the king as protecting his people through the continuance of his peace and the administration of justice. This image was repeated in the record of Edward's surrender of the Great Seal on the 20th of November.[15] He was supposed to have sent it to the queen and his son to enable them to carry out 'what was necessary for right and peace'. Even on the eve of summoning the parliament that was to depose the king, Isabella wrote to the sheriff of Glamorgan to allow the sons of Llywlyn Bren, Rinus Vaghan, Griffith ap Howel, Yevan ap Rini and Howel ap Rees to hold their fathers' lands until the next parliament where, she informed him, 'the king may then cause to be done what shall seem fit by his common council'.[16] As further proof that the king was innocent of the acts of tyranny that he had committed, now that he was free from evil counsellors he would begin to fulfil his function in administering law and justice so that his people could live in peace and safety. The romances showed that the idea that evil counsellors were responsible for any tyrannical acts by a king was more than a traditional political justification for rebellion. The issue involved such strong 'popular' feelings that the queen's reasoned use of them in generating public support was likely to have been an highly effective contribution to her success.

It is unlikely that the means by which Edward was removed from the kingship would have been directly influenced by the attitudes of knights and gentry, as revealed in Middle English romances and legendary histories. Isabella and her advisors would have

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[14] A. H. Thomas (ed.), *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved Among the Archives of the City of London at the Guildhall Rolls A1a-A9 a.d. 1323-1364* (Cambridge, 1926), pp.15-16.
[15] *CCR 1323-1327*, p.655.
[16] *CCR 1323-1327*, p.622: issued on the 2nd of December.

looked to recent threatened as well as accomplished depositions of kings, for example the removal of Sancho II of Portugal and of John Balliol of Scotland, as well as the threats contained within the declaration of Arbroath and the attacks of Philip the Fair on Boniface VIII.[17]   Their main concern would have been to make the removal of the king a comprehensive, seemingly legal process which involved as many people as possible.[18] However, there existed a familiarity with the removal of kings in the literature which would have been significant in the acceptance of the deposition by royal subjects. This familiarity with the deposition of kings would have been enhanced by the credibility of most romances and of all of the histories.[19]   Particularly stories of British and English kings who had been removed in the past must have been perceived as precedents for the proceedings against Edward II. In addition, there is an uncompromising attitude present in the literature regarding kings who failed to fulfil their duties. They were always removed from their position, by fair means or foul, or by sea monsters and wild animals as a result of the wrath of God.[20]   There is no faltering in the face of loyalty to the king, respect for the position of the king, nationalism, or simple fear of retribution. The view expressed in the literature is overwhelmingly that if a king abuses his power, through ill will or otherwise, there should be no hesitation over his removal.

Although Isabella's party would probably not have consulted Middle English romances or legendary histories as to the removal of Edward, there are many parallels between the means by which the king was deposed and ideas present in the literature. There are similarities, for example, in the role of the barons and the participation of the people in the removal of a king.

In 1326-27 the baronial group took a significant part in deposing Edward. These were the people who had taken the decision to remove the king and elect his son to rule in his place. They were the 'wise men of the kingdom' who Archbishop Reynolds said had advised the people on these matters.[21]   Action by the baronial group against a king is an especially strong feature in the romances. Indeed baronial resistance to the king forms

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[17] Peters, *Shadow King*, chapter 4. G. Donaldson (ed.), *Scottish Historical Documents* (New York, 1970), pp.55-57. J. R. Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1980), pp.248-279. J. Le Goff, 'Le Roi dans l'Occident médiéval: caractères originaux', *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. J. Duggan (1993), p.5.

[18] Clarke, 'Committees of Estates', pp.27-45. Fryde, *Tyranny and Fall*, pp.195-198. J. Brigstocke (ed.), *Literae Cantuarienses*, Rolls Series, 85 (1887), no.201.

[19] See pp.75-80, 108-111.

[20] See pp.76-79 for removals of kings in *AM, Richard, Guy, Eglamour, Sages, Isumbras*. See pp.110-111 for removals of Pandrasus, Edmund Ironside, John, Artogaile, Ermaneus, Frederick, Mempricius and Morwith.

[21] Fryde, *Tyranny and Fall*, p.200, part of Reynolds's sermon on 'vox populi, vox dei'.

a consistent theme in the tales, where this group acts as a buffer between the ill will of the king and his people, often persuading him to return to the rule of law when he abuses his power.[22] It thus followed on that it is they who also removed a king from power when his rule became intolerable, as they did in *Richard Coeur de Lion* and *Sir Isumbras*.[23]

In the histories, however, the emphasis is upon the participation of the people in the deposition of their king. When kings become abusive in the *Brut* and the chronicles of Langtoft and Mannyng it is the ordinary folk who decide to put them down. This strong element of public participation was matched by the political events. Aside from business in parliament it was the Londoners who dominated the proceedings. They filled the chamber when parliament assembled and later issued letters of ultimatum to all prelates and magnates demanding that they depose the king and replace him with his son. They forced many of these men to take oaths to that effect at the Guildhall on the 13th of January, after Mortimer's explanations to the citizens on parliament's undertakings regarding the king.[24] Later on, following Trussell's report to parliament on the embassy to Kenilworth, the archbishop of Canterbury asked for public assent to the crowning of Edward's eldest son, saying that 'you have fervently acclaimed the proceedings here... Your voice has been clearly heard here, for Edward has been deprived of the government of the kingdom and his son made king as you have unanimously consented'.[25]

Another area of comparison includes the crimes for which the king was deposed.[26] A variety of offences warranting deposition are detailed in the legendary histories. For instance, Artogaile, in Langtoft's chronicle, and Gratian, in Mannyng's and the *Brut* chronicles, were removed for having oppressed their people. The same charge was levied against Edward II. He stood accused of governing for evil counsellors 'a deshoneur de ly & destruction de seint eglise, et de tout son poeple'. Mempricius was deposed in the *Brut* for destroying the great men of his realm. Edward was charged with the same crime, having 'plusours graunts & nobles de sa terre mys a hountouse mort, enprisones, exuletz & desheritez.' Artogaile, in Mannyng's chronicle, and Frederick, in *Le Petit Bruit*, were put down for favouring evil counsellors and scoundrels at court. Yet again Edward stood condemned for the very same reason. The articles against him

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[22] See pp.47-49, 78-80.
[23] See pp.78-80.
[24] *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls 1323-1364*, p.12.
[25] Fryde, *Tyranny and Fall*, p.200.
[26] Articles of accusation against Edward in *Foedera*, II.ii, p.650.

stated that 'ad il esté mené & governé par autres, qi ly ount mavoisement consaillez',

that 'il ne se voloit doner a bon counsail, ne le croire'. By favouring evil counsellors he

had destroyed the church, imprisoned clergymen and others and destroyed his baronage.

Worst of all, he had ignored his oath to do justice to all 'pur son propre profyt, &

covetyse de ly, & de ces mavoys counsailires qi ounte esté pres de ly'. Even the personal

characteristics of the abusive king found in the histories were repeated in the articles

declared against Edward by the archbishop. Kings such as Artogaile, Morwith,

Mempricius, Gratian and Eadwy were commonly described as stern, wicked, cruel and

having an evil disposition. Edward was portrayed as filled with the same evil intent as

ever before by Orleton and Stratford when they reported on his refusal to attend

parliament. In the accusations against him he was repeatedly condemned for ruling for

'son propre profyt, & covetyse', for refusing to govern well for the people's benefit so

that they and the church were oppressed and the nobles of the realm destroyed. For 'la

cruelte de ly & defaute de sa personne, il est trové incorrigible sauntz esperaunce de

amendement.'

The means by which a king was removed from power in the literature also echo

those directed against Edward. In the histories one element of deposition is the stripping

of the king's rank, for example kings are put down from their position and have their

crowns taken away from them in Langtoft's chronicle.[27] Edward was pronounced by

Trussell to have been removed 'from his pristine dignity', so that 'fro þis day afterward

ӡe shulle nouӡt be cleymede Kyng, neiþer for Kyng bene holde; but fram þis tyme

afterward ӡe shul bene holde a singuler man of all þe peple.'[28]

Perhaps the most significant step, though, was the revocation of homage and

fealty. It has already been shown that the dominant perception of the relationship

between king and people followed the example of personal lordship bonds.[29] This

relationship began with homage and fealty performed to the king and the king's returned

promises to rule for the well-being of his people. It involved mutual responsibilities

which, if ignored, would result in the ending of the relationship. In the case of the king's

failing to meet his obligations the ties between him and his people would be cut, in the

romances by the removal of homage and fealty from him. In Edward's case he was

accused of breaking the oath made to this people at his coronation. William Trussell,

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[27] See p.110.

[28] *Lanercost*, p.255. *Brut*, p.242.

[29] See pp.60-82, 105, 107-108, 133-146.

speaking in front of an embassy of prelates and clergy, earls and barons and knights and burgesses, took back the homage and fealties made to him declaring that by this action his people no longer held him as their king. As the barons in *Richard Coeur de Lion* had renounced their homage to the emperor of Cyprus, saying that because of his evil will they should not hold of him nor owe him homage any longer, so had Trussell spoken to Edward.[30]

What do the similarities between the political steps taken against Edward and the presentation of depositions in the romances and histories signify? It obviously made sense for the queen and her party to change direction and blame Edward for the wretched state of the country and point to his many refusals to change for the well-being of his people during his reign. Having established the reasons for his removal it then made sense to reverse, as far as possible, the elements which contributed to the original making of a king: the assent of the nobles and public acclamation of his rule, the performance of homage and swearing of fealty and the crowning. The only element that could not be reversed was the anointing of the king, but considering the relative lack of importance of the sacral nature of kingship in the eyes of royal subjects, as revealed by the literature, and the close involvement and support of the clergy in the deposition process perhaps this was a less consequential matter to deal with at the time.

How do the attitudes of knights and gentry fit into this process? While the events of parliament were dictated by the requirements of the deposition process, they also had significant meaning for royal subjects. If nothing else the crimes of the king, which Isabella had been so pointedly denying until the meeting of parliament, the descriptions of his personal faults and the steps taken against him were all familiar to the audiences of Middle English romances and legendary histories. Kings in the literature, accepted as part of England's past, had been deposed for the same crimes and in the same manner. In itself this must have created a receptive background for the acceptance of the first formal removal of an English king. That the crimes of which Edward was accused and the process by which he was removed matched the 'experience of history' and the political ideas familiar to so many from the literature could only have generated support for and acceptance of his deposition. That the process of removal was in accordance with the 'popular' perception of the relationship between king and people and uncompromising attitudes towards failing kings could only have done the same. Much as

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[30] See pp.78-79.

Edward I had outlawed his clergy without hesitation for their failure to fulfil their responsibilities to him in 1297, the barons and people showed the same hard attitude in deposing his son for the same failure.

Chapter 6 - Political Crisis 1340-41.

The third crisis to be discussed with regard to the 'popular' attitudes to kingship found in Middle English romances and legendary histories is that provoked by Edward III's dramatic return to England in December 1340.[1] The king had been in Flanders, conducting a campaign in pursuit of his claim to the French crown. He was in terrible financial difficulties, having made costly alliances with princes in the Low Countries and the German emperor, which eventually forced him to break off his siege of Tournai and make a truce with Philip VI.

The king had tried to anticipate the political and financial support he would need for the war with France early on. Before laying his claim to the crown he had turned to parliament in 1337 to obtain taxes and public support for his venture. He prepared a regency council headed by John Stratford, archbishop of Canterbury, to oversee the running of the government in his absence. In accordance with the Walton Ordinances, this council had no executive power since the king would be only a few days journey from London and its main purpose would be to forward collected taxes to him.

However, by as early as December 1338 the king's financial arrangements had proved to be inadequate for his needs. With the additional collapse of the wool collection scheme matters became even worse and Edward ordered his son and his council to obtain further taxes from a parliament to be held in his name in October 1339. There was widespread discontent in the country at this time, especially against oppressive and corrupt officials administering the taxes and the Commons refused to grant further aids, claiming the need to consult with their counties first. The king was forced to return to England to hear their petitions in February 1340. He obtained the grant of a ninth after making several concessions, including promises that all accounts should be checked thoroughly and measures be put in place to ensure that future funds would be spent properly.

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[1] Detailed modern discussion includes E. B. Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War, 1336-1340', *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, eds. T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (Toronto, 1969), pp.250-269 and 'Financial Resources of Edward III in the Netherlands, 1337-1340', *Studies in Medieval Trade and Finance*, pp.1142-1216. N. M. Fryde, 'Edward III's Removal of His Ministers and Judges, 1340-1341', *BIHR*, 48 (1975), pp.149-161. Haines, *Stratford*, pp.278-328. Harriss, 'The Commons Petitions of 1340', *EHR*, 78 (1963), pp.625-654 and *Public Finance*, pp.233-308. D. Hughes, *A Study in Social and Constitutional Tendencies in the Early Years of Edward III* (Reprinted Philadelphia, 1978), pp.100-152. W. R. Jones, '*Rex et Ministri*: English Local Government and the Crisis of 1341', *Journal of British Studies*, 13 (1973-74), pp.1-20. T. F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England* (Manchester, 1928), iii.67-140. B. Wilkinson, 'The Protest of the Earls of Arundel and Surrey in the Crisis of 1341', *EHR*, 46 (1931), pp.177-193.

The new tax did not fulfil expectations, however, because of problems of collection and the market place. Despite borrowing heavily Edward became overwhelmed by his debts and could no longer afford to pay his allies or his own army. This was the situation that forced Edward into a truce with France just when his siege of Tournai was on the verge of success. With his temper already frayed by misunderstandings with the home council, inflamed by anti-Stratford factional disputes, he was frustrated and furious. Leaving the earls of Derby, Northampton and Warwick as hostages against his debts he set out immediately for London.

Returning early in the morning of the 1st of December 1340 to the Tower of London, he rounded up the absent constable of the Tower Nicholas de la Beche, the merchants Richard and William de la Pole, his chancellor, treasurer and several chancery and exchequer officials including Michael Wath, John de St Paul, John Thorp, Henry Stretford, Robert Chigewell and John de Pulteney. He also arrested the keeper of the Channel Islands Thomas Ferrars, the keeper of the Chamber of Estates John Molyns and as many justices as he could lay his hands on, namely Richard Willoughby, John Inge, John de Shardelowe, John Stonor and William de Shareshull. All of these men were removed from office and, apart from the bishops, were imprisoned in various strongholds throughout southern England.[2]

The king ordered an inquiry into the malpractices of ministers, officials and justices during his absence, as well as earlier in his reign and even during that of his father.[3] The invitation for complaints against his ministers was partly due to the state of the king's temper.[4] In the midst of this activity a confrontation arose between the king and Stratford. Stratford had been at Canterbury when the king arrived home. He knew that the attitude of the king towards him was harsh, Edward having already complained to the pope that the archbishop was trying to betray and kill him.[5] Stratford knew that he would be held culpable for the failed financial situation and took steps to avoid becoming a scapegoat. He refused to attend court on the grounds of fears for his own safety, even when accorded a safe conduct, giving a sermon at Canterbury associating his position with that of Thomas Becket and publishing sentences of excommunication

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[2] *Croniques*, pp.85-86.
[3] *CPR 1340-1343*, pp.76, 106, 111-112. *CCR 1339-1341*, p.604.
[4] E. Maunde Thompson (ed.), *Adae Murimuth Continuatio Chronicarum*, Rolls Series, 93 (1889), p.118: 'Qui justiciarii tam rigide et voluntarie processerunt quod nullus impunitus evasit, sive bene gesserit regis negotia sive male, ita quod sine delectu omnes, etiam non indictati nec accusati, excessive se redemerunt, qui voluerunt carcerem evitare'.
[5] *Cal. Pap. Reg. 1305-1342*, pp.584-585.

against the (nameless) enemies of the realm. He wrote a sad letter to the king as if to a wayward son, warning him of the perils of evil counsel and reminding him of the fate of Edward II.[6]

In response Edward circulated the *libellus famosus*, which accused Stratford of making himself into a second king when Edward had been a young man, of breaking promises and oath of office to the detriment of the king and his realm and hindering the present investigation into the people's oppression. He accused Stratford of endangering his life, defaming his honour and inciting sedition by destroying the loyalty of the people to their king.[7] Stratford retaliated by distributing a detailed rebuttal of these accusations in his *excusaciones*. Among his arguments he asserted the supremacy of spiritual power over temporal, described his enemies at court as tyrants ruling England and the people as pressed to poverty to the disgrace of the king.[8]

The king was incensed and had him publicly denounced for treason. He restated his charges in a second minor *libellus*, the *Cicatrix cordium superbia*. This letter concentrated on Stratford's attempts to dishonour the king and repeated the accusations of treason against the archbishop.[9] Meanwhile, Edward threatened others, such as the bishops of Exeter and London, with punishment for treason if caught being derogatory about the king and his actions.[10]

By this time parliament had assembled, though Stratford was refused entry by royal guards for a week, before being admitted on the protests of the earls of Surrey and Arundel. Even then he was kept very much in the background by the charges still standing against him. Several concessions were made by the king at this meeting, including the agreement that officials and justices should swear their oath of office in parliament and should be accountable there for their misconduct. In return he gained the promise of more money.

The imprisoned justices were soon released and re-employed upon payment of hefty fines and the king and the archbishop were reconciled.[11] Edward turned away from his costly alliances and began to achieve sustained success in the war. He was soon

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[6] E. Maunde Thompson (ed.), *Robertus de Avesbury de Gestis Mirabilibus Regis Edwardi Tertii*, Rolls Series, 93 (1889), pp.324-327, 1st of January 1341.
[7] *Historia de Vitis Archiepiscoporum Cantuariensium, Anglia Sacra*, ed. H. Wharton (1691), i.23-27, 12th of February 1341.
[8] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, pp.27-36, 10th of March 1341. Haines, *Stratford*, p.309.
[9] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, pp.36-38, 31st of March 1341.
[10] *CCR 1341-1343*, pp.112, 122-123.
[11] *Rot. Parl.*, ii.129, no. 21.

able to repeal the concessions made during the crisis, a move which was confirmed without protest by the next parliament in 1343.[12]

On his return to England in December 1340, Edward thus needed to sustain public support for the war with France and to obtain further grants of aid to be able to return to the continent and pursue Philip VI. He was desperate for money, a fact that was not lost on contemporary chroniclers. Murimuth, for example, recorded that the king returned home after 'pecuniam de Anglia quae non venit'.[13] Geoffrey le Baker determined the king's removal of his treasurer and chancellor to be caused by the king's shortage of cash and this chronicler's understanding of the purposes of the royal inquiry were that it was primarily concerned with the collection of taxes and wool and only after this with the corruption of ministers.[14] The *French Chronicle of London* similarly attributed the king's return to his financial troubles, linking it with a letter from an anonymous councillor in England promising that should the king return and arrest Stratford he would find plenty of missing money with which to pursue his expedition.[15]

Finding the money that he needed would not be an easy task. The country was already labouring under a heavy financial burden which was made even heavier by the rapaciousness of royal officials. To try and meet his requirements Edward set out to recover money which he felt he had been illegally deprived of. For example, he investigated the activities of merchants such as John Goldbeter and his cousin Henry in York.[16] He also appointed Henry Percy, Ralph Neville and others on the 18th of December 1340 to inquire into the secret export of wool from Newcastle-upon-Tyne.[17] In addition, he launched his inquiry into the activities of his officials in order to stop their 'diversion' of collected taxes, wool and supplies. Despite providing a potentially lucrative sideline, the financial returns from these two approaches would never have provided for the future needs of the war, let alone cleared the king's debts.[18] Edward

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[12] *Foedera*, v.282.

[13] *Murimuth*, p.116.

[14] E. Maunde Thompson (ed.), *Chronicon Galfridi Le Baker de Swynebroke* (Oxford, 1889), pp.71-72, 73.

[15] *Croniques*, pp.82-85, especially p.83.

[16] E. B. Fryde, 'Some Business Transactions of York Merchants John Goldbeter, William Acastre and Partners, 1336-1349', *Studies in Medieval Trade and Finance*, p.9.

[17] *CPR 1340-1343*, p.105.

[18] P. A. Brand, 'Edward I and the Judges: the 'State Trials' of 1289-1293', *Thirteenth Century England I: Proceedings of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Conference 1985*, eds. P. R. Coss (Woodbridge, 1986), p.38, noted that the fining of the judiciary by Edward I in 1290 had brought the king £20, 000. W. N. Bryant, 'The financial dealings of Edward III with the county communities, 1330-1360', *EHR*, 83 (1968), p.763, determined that in early 1341 the county communities made fines for their transgressions (Norfolk and Essex 4,000 marks each, Hertfordshire 3,000 marks) which were in excess of the county assessment for taxes of a 1/10 or 1/15. Harriss, *Public Finance*, pp.283-287.

needed new taxes, but considering the state of the country any requests for such aid were unlikely to be popular.

In order to persuade his subjects to be forthcoming with additional grants Edward looked to make himself more popular with his people in order to make them more receptive to his requests. He did this in a number of ways. He was active, for example, in touching for the king's evil. Figures for his reign are problematic, but the highest rate of blessings came between December 1340 and November 1341 when 355 people were touched.[19] It has been pointed out that any absence of the king would naturally produce a surplus of people coming forward on his return, but the lack of sustained touching by this king for the rest of his reign indicates that there was a political motive behind his activity during this period.[20] However, the main approach of the king to raising his popularity with his people was through his inquiry into the activities of royal officials.

Such an inquiry was bound to make the king popular since there was a real need for such an investigation. There had been protests against the greed of royal officials from the very start of the war with France.[21] As early as 1337 such complaints and rebukes by, for example, William of Pagula, vicar of Winkfield, had prompted Edward to order abusive purveyors to be hanged as thieves.[22] An inquiry into the iniquities of wool and purveyance officers made in July 1338 had failed to stop their abuses and in the following year the scale of official corruption was so great that Edward was forced to give the guardians of the realm powers to restrain all malices.[23] The commissions of the infamous William of Wallingford and other 'purveours notoirement mauveis' were revoked and they were ordered to be imprisoned because 'de les extorsions fautes'.[24] In the February meeting of parliament in 1340 the king promised that abusive purveyors would be punished, while in the July parliament Edward was forced to repeat orders against the buying and selling of the king's wool.[25] None of these actions seemed to deter officials though. Those in Norwich in August 1340 were still openly defrauding

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[19] W. M. Ormrod, 'The Personal Religion of Edward III', *Speculum*, 64 (1989), pp.862-863.

[20] M. C. Prestwich, 'The Piety of Edward I', *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 1985), p.126.

[21] Harriss, *Public Finance*, pp.247-265. Harriss, 'Commons Petitions', p.644. Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War', pp.259-265

[22] Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War', p.259. *De Speculo Regis Edwardi III*, p.19 for dating of recension A.

[23] *Rot. Parl.*, ii.104, no.10.

[24] *Rot. Parl.*, ii.105-106, no. 19. Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War', p.265.

[25] *Rot. Parl.*, ii.120, no.18. Harriss, *Public Finance*, p.265. Harriss, 'Commons Petitions', p.644.

the wool collection and wool collectors in Newcastle and Hartlepool were defrauding a group of merchants of the wool duties assigned to them towards repayment of a loan previously made to the king. [26]

That corruption of officials was still rife in 1340-41 is borne out by the assize rolls for the inquiry. The Lincolnshire roll, for example, revealed that 64% of those accused of wrongdoing were royal officials. The most significant single group among them were purveyors who made up 19% of officials complained of, then wool collectors (13%) and a host of local and royal household officials such as sheriffs, bailiffs, coroners, jurors, customs collectors, marshals, sensechals and keepers of the king's horses (25%).[27] Offences connected with prise and wool collection attracted the highest number of complaints, comprising 16% of the total. In comparison to these accusations of other kinds of official corruption were minimal.[28] The Hertfordshire roll revealed a similar range of officials being accused of abusing their position including purveyors, sheriffs, bailiffs, coroners, taxors, escheators, hobelars, marshals, seneschals and keepers of the king's horses.[29] It also revealed a similar variety of complaints against these officials such as taking money to perform their office, false imprisonment and false dispossession, as well as the inevitable prise and wool offences.[30]

In the light of the background of protest and the obvious rapaciousness of royal officials, the institution of this inquiry was bound to make Edward popular with his people. This was not just because it promised to alleviate abuses felt in the counties but

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[26] *CCR 1339-1341*, 3rd August 1340, to the Prior of Holy Trinity, pp.521-522. C. M. Fraser (ed.), *Ancient Petitions Relating to Northumberland*, Surtees Society, 176 (1966), no.192, pp.213-315.

[27] B. W. McLane (ed.), *The 1341 Royal Inquest in Lincolnshire*, Lincoln Record Society, 78 (Lincoln, 1988). Using this assize roll, following similar rules as McLane, p.xxvi. The basic unit of measurement is the entry, which counts multiple times if more than one type of officer was included in the accusation, but only counts once if there were several men of the same office. Of the accused, 25% are of unknown status, 19% purveyors, 13% wool collectors, 7% escheators, 25% miscellaneous officials including sheriffs, bailiffs, constables, clerks, jurors, customs collectors, king's sergeant at arms, keepers of the king's horses, marshal of the king's household, tax collectors and coroners. Clergy made up 5%, while private individuals comprised only 6%. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.

[28] Using the *1341 Royal Inquest in Lincolnshire*, but not the same kind of analysis as McLane, pp.xxiv-xxviii, as the offences have not been considered in terms of felonies and trespasses but as type of offence, for example murder, theft (including burglary), unpaid prise and bribery. Following the same rules as above, except that for this case an entry counts multiple times if more than one type of offence was included in the accusation, but not if, for example, it includes three instances of the same offence. Complaints against officials include prise and wool offences 16%, bribery 7%, general corruption 4%, smuggling 1%, fraud 1%, unknown 2% and extortion 41%. Extortion could equally be an offence by itself or connected to office and therefore this figure is not ascribed to corrupt official or private individuals. However, out of 505 accusations of extortion 415 involved public officials, 45 the clergy and 45 private individuals. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.

[29] PRO, JUST 1/337, m.6, no.17; m.7, nos.13, 17; m.8, nos.13, 14, 16; m.9, no.3; m.10, nos.2, 7; m.11, no.2; m.12, nos.10, 18; m.13, nos.1, 5, 11, 12, 13.

[30] JUST 1/337, m.6, no.17; m.8, nos.13, 14, 16; m.9, nos.1, 2, 3, 7; m.12, no.2; m.13, nos.5, 13, 19.

because in making this inquiry Edward fulfilled certain powerful expectations of the king held by his knights and gentry.

Middle English romances reveal that the king was expected to be active in overseeing his government.[31] The poets praise kings like William in *William of Palerne* and the king of Little Brittany in *Sir Degarre* for their strong and thorough approach to the business of running their kingdoms. The king's control of his government was considered to be important in the romances because of their conviction that whenever the opportunity arose royal officials would abuse their position. The cautionary tale of the Emperor Herowde in the *Seven Sages of Rome* is a fine example of this belief. While Herowde is inattentive to the affairs of government his ministers judged against the law and introduced new customs in order to exploit the people. Even the example of the good and faithful steward in *Sir Orfeo* conveys the same anxiety about the proclivities of officials. In this tale Orfeo wanders searching for his missing queen for many years. On his return to his kingdom he keeps to his disguise as he expects his steward to have abused his position as guardian of the realm, perhaps even to the extent of usurpation. A king needed to be vigilant in matters of government or his people would suffer.

Such had been the experience of royal subjects during the war years. They had suffered at the hands of royal officials while the king was away. By coming home and conducting an inquiry into their activities Edward resumed his control of the government and showed himself to be vigilant on behalf of his people.

In addition to the widespread corruption of royal officials the kingdom had been plagued by general lawlessness and a breakdown of order during the absence of the king. Robber bands were terrorising the north and in South Wales burgesses were unable to prevent the escape of thieves and felons.[32] The Lincolnshire assize roll revealed a plenitude of crimes of which murder, assault and theft (including burglary) all figured significantly. These, together with vandalism, rape, poaching, breaking the peace and the law, riot, kidnap and arson, made up 28% of offences reported in the county.[33] The

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[31] See pp.50-51.

[32] Dean of Durham (ed.), *Richard d'Aungerville, of Bury: Fragments of His Register, and Other Documents*, Surtees Society, 119 (1910), pp.141-142. *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous 1307-1349* (1916), p.420, no.1704. E. L. G. Stones, 'The Folvilles of Ashby-Folville, Leicestershire, and their associates in crime, 1326-1347', *TRHS*, Fifth Series 7 (1957), pp.117-136.

[33] Using the *1341 Royal Inquest* as above. Included among the alleged offences were murder 12%, assault 9%, theft 5%; vandalism, rape, poaching, breaking of the peace and the law, riot, kidnap and arson together make 2%.

Hertfordshire roll showed a similar range of offences including murder, assault, theft and disturbance of the peace.[34]

By punishing the wrongdoing of officials and widening the scope of the inquiry to include a general oyer and terminer Edward fulfilled another 'popular' expectation of kings. Both the romances and legendary histories greatly stress the role of the king as the source of law and the provider of justice. He was expected to enforce the law vigorously and with complete impartiality. Romance kings, such as William in *William of Palerne*, were described as tireless in the pursuit of criminals and, for example in the case of Athelwold in *Havelok*, detached from thoughts of their own profit. Athelwold was particularly praised for ignoring considerations of wealth and social status in his punishment of wrongdoers. His strict and impartial maintenance of law and order ensured that his people could walk abroad with full purses, or merchants with their wares, and fear nothing.[35] The writers of the histories similarly praised Julius Caesar, Samuel and Belinus for their dedication to the provision of justice.[36] Edward's inquiry clearly showed him to be fulfilling his role as the protector of his people, against abusive officials and against more ordinary criminals.

The king seems to have done as much as possible to remind people of this. As early as the 1st of December 1340, the very day that he arrived back in England, the king issued a proclamation that whoever 'had been aggravated by the various officers of the exchequer in levying of aids, &c., were to make known their grievances to the king in writing'.[37] The royal inquiry into 'alleged oppressions and extortions', 'the misdoings' and 'any oppressions by ministers of the king and of Edward, duke of Cornwall, late keeper of the realm' was ordered on the 10th of December.[38] Edward had sent out justices of assize to determine complaints against every kind of royal official including, according to the *French Chronicle of London*, justices of the Bench, Forest and assize, escheators and sub-escheators, coroners and sheriffs, taxors and sub-taxors, admirals, guardians of wards, castellans, receivers of laws, the barons of the Exchequer and their clerks, chancery clerks, keepers of the Forest and other Forest officials, customs

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[34] JUST 1/337, m.7, no.19; m.8, nos.10, 11, 14; m.9, no.17; m.10, no.15; m.12, no.9.
[35] See p.41.
[36] See pp.99-100.
[37] R. R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter Books Preserved Among the Archives of the City of London at the Guildhall, Letter-Book F c.A.D. 1331-1352* (1904), p.58.
[38] *CPR 1340-1341*, pp.106-108, 111-112. *Calendar of Letter Books, Letter Book F*, p.59.

collectors and controllers, seneschals, marshals, keepers of houses and gaols, men at arms, archers, hobelers and bailiffs in eyre, right down to the keepers of horses.[39]

Throughout December and January Edward repeatedly stressed the evils done by his officials during his absence and his own current vigilance in rooting out these corrupt men. Following the initial commissions to hear complaints, the king appointed more men to hear complaints against the keepers of the peace and the justices in the counties on the 19th of December.[40] After Christmas, in his letters to justices out on their circuits he again emphasised his great concern and activity in delivering justice to his people. For example, when he wrote to Henry of Lancaster and Robert Clifford on the 13th of January 1341 to order them to replace the sheriffs of Lancaster and Westmoreland respectively, he took the opportunity to repeat that 'the king has appointed certain magnates and other lieges in every county of the realm, to enquire into the trespasses, contempts, extortions, oppressions and damages inflicted on the king by sheriffs, escheators and other ministers of the king'.[41] Two days later, writing to the sheriff of Hertfordshire and Essex regarding the expenses of Thomas Wake of Lydell, he described the latter's commission 'to hear and determine certain damages, oppressions and grievances inflicted by the king's ministers and others on his people'.[42] In Lincolnshire that January, Thomas Levance and Hugh Cokheved, two wool collectors, had been falsely accused of keeping the wool they had collected for themselves. The king wrote to Nicholas Cantilupe and his fellow justices to tell them of the false accusation on the 26th of that month, again addressing them as those appointed to deal with 'certain oppressions, damages and grievances inflicted upon the king and his people by his ministers and others'. Edward enclosed a certificate from the exchequer to prove the men's innocence, again taking the opportunity to stress that he sought only 'what is just and reasonable to be done'. The same formula was repeated in similar letters to justices on other circuits.[43]

The king was obviously ensuring that he was seen to be protecting his people against their enemies through the provision of justice. He was fulfilling the expectations of royal subjects in a grand manner. However, instituting the inquiry and fulfilling 'popular' images of himself was not the extent of Edward's ambition in 1340-41. This

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[39] *Croniques*, pp.88-89.
[40] *CPR 1340-1343*, p.105.
[41] *CCR 1339-1341*, p.660.
[42] *CCR 1339-1341*, p.604.
[43] *CCR 1341-1343*, pp.2-3.

political crisis was not caused by dissatisfaction with the king or the king's policies, but was provoked by the king himself. He arrived home in December 1340 and arrested his chief ministers and invited complaints against them, even encouraging people to come secretly to the king in London to present their grievances if they felt threatened in any way.[44] Edward's temper may have been inflamed when he arrived in London, but his actions were the result of plans laid well in advance. He always intended to create a forum for accusations against his ministers.[45] While men like John Molyns were engaged in all manner of criminal activities, was this also true of the justices?

Edward's action against the justices was continued persistently after the original arrests in early December 1340. The first commissions of the royal inquiry into official misconduct expressly included them. Indeed, justices were specifically singled out in the commission or given special prominence by being first in the list of those to be investigated. No other group of officials were singled out in this way. Even purveyors, those arguably most guilty of corrupt practices, were not mentioned by name in the king's letters. Those appointed to the inquiry were to investigate 'alleged oppressions and extortions by justices and any other ministers of the king' and 'the bearing of the justices, and also other ministers, from the time the king assumed the governance of the realm both towards the people and towards the king himself'.[46] Supplementary commissions were made on the 19th of December to inquire into complaints against the justices and the keepers of the peace.[47] Edward's statement issued on the 13th of January 1341 and later on the 28th of February again gave prominence to the guilt of the justices. He explained that:

> on his departure beyond seas for urgent business affecting
> him and the estate of the realm, the king lately appointed
> Richard de Willoughby, John de Stonore, John de Shardelowe,
> William de Shareshull, Thomas de Ferrariis, Nicholas de la
> Beche, John de Pulteneye, William de la Pole, John de Sancto
> Paulo, Michael de Wath, John de Thorpe, Henry de Stretford
> and Robert de Chigewell to certain offices, and that afterwards,
> when by the common report and clamour of the people and
> divers petitions shewn before him and the council against some
> of them, as well as beyond seas as within, it came to his ears

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[44] Fryde, 'Removal of Ministers', pp.148-149. Kaeuper, *Public Order*, pp.276-277.
[45] N. M. Fryde, 'A Medieval Robber Baron: Sir John Molyns of Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire', *Medieval Legal Records Edited in Memory of C. A. F. Meekings*, eds. R. F. Hunnisett and J. B. Post (1978), pp.202-205: a letter of Edward of 1st December 1340 showing intent to start an inquiry.
[46] *CPR 1340-1343*, pp.106-108, 111-113.
[47] *CPR 1340-1343*, p.105.

that they had borne themselves in divers manners fraudulently
and unfaithfully in their offices, he caused them to be arrested
and kept in safe custody until the matter could be more fully
enquired of and justice done[48].

Edward could not have tried harder to convince people of the corruption of the judiciary, of a widespread 'perversion of justice' which the king was now in the process of rescuing his people from, but was this true?

The sequence of events surrounding the inquiry does not suggest so. Edward had already arrested his justices before issuing the writs to begin his investigation into their activities. This distorted order of events would not have been so significant if, as Edward claimed, he had received reports of their dishonesty before returning to England. However, the royal inquiry, including the investigation into judicial corruption, was launched well before the appointment of new justices. Edward had replaced key ministers such as the chancellor and treasurer within days and although some new justices, such as William Scot, Robert de Scardeburgh and Robert de Baukwell, were selected quite quickly it was not until after Christmas that these appointments were confirmed. Confirmations of office began on the 8th of January 1341 and continued with the additional appointments of Roger Hillary, Richard de Aldeburgh, William Basset and later Thomas Heppescotes.[49] Even though the benches may not have been sitting over Christmas, it did mean that the judicial body was depleted for over a month after the inquiry had begun. This inaction does seem incongruous in a time of supposed judicial crisis.

What about the level of complaints made against the justices? In the Lincolnshire roll only three out of 1230 entries even mentioned judges, two of which seem to be the same complaint. In the first case Richard de Willoughby was noted to have been present when a fight broke out between two men (who were those against whom the complaint was brought) and in the second John de Stonor was mentioned as having had previous contact with a case then being discussed.[50] In the Hertfordshire roll John de Shardelowe was accused of taking bribes in one case.[51] Richard de Willoughby was indicted in one

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[48] *CPR 1340-1343*, pp.110-111. *CCR 1341-1343*, p.11.
[49] *CCR 1339-1341*, p.592. *CPR 1340-1343*, pp.71, 75, 80. *CCR 1341-1343*, pp.595, 663.
[50] *1341 Royal Inquest*, case no.1121 is the repeat of no.399 involving Stonor, case no.547 is the one referring to Willoughby. In addition, no.1131 mentions Thorp acting as a pledge; no.543 is the only case involving actual corruption by any of the people arrested by Edward III on his return home, concerning extortion carried out by St Paul and Wath.
[51] JUST 1/337, m.13, no.17.

case of extortion in Essex and John Inge faced the same charge involving a case in Somerset.[52] In all surviving rolls for the 1341 inquiry there are no indictments of William de Shareshull or John de Stonor at all.[53] There is clearly not much evidence of a 'crisis of judicial corruption' in 1340-41.

The punishment of the judges by Edward was generous considering his conviction of their guilt. Not only were most released within a month or two but they were also re-employed by the king almost immediately. On the 17th of January 1341 Richard de la Pole was appointed as one of the justices in eyre for London, working on the very inquiry he had supposedly been worthy to be a subject of![54] By the Easter term of 1341, Shareshull and John de Pulteney were active in the courts and in April the former became a justice for Northumberland.[55] Shareshull, Stonor and Shardelowe were all sitting on the Common Bench in the Easter term of 1342.[56] Before this Shardelowe had been acting as a gaol delivery judge in July 1341, followed by time on the bench in September of that year. Even Willoughby received great favour from the king. He was supposedly the most corrupt villain of the judiciary, who was described as having sold justice as if it were oxen.[57] He was dragged from county to county to face charges against him. Yet he was awarded the most generous pardon of all, being excused from all 'appointment as sheriff, escheator, justice or other minister of the king, against his will' before joining the bench in the Hillary term of 1344.[58]

Edward seems to have been manufacturing a 'crisis of justice' in 1340-41, where he and his people laboured under widespread perversion of justice by corrupt justices. What was his plan?

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[52] Hughes, *Constitutional Tendencies*, pp.183-184. J. R. Maddicott, *Law and Lordship: Royal Justices as Retainers in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century England*, Past and Present Supplement, 4 (1978), p.43.

[53] B. H. Putnam, *The Place in Legal History of Sir William Shareshull: Chief Justice of the King's Bench 1350-1361* (Cambridge, 1950), p.139. C. Carpenter (ed.), *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers 1290-1483* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.35-38 on Stonor's dull but trustworthy career.

[54] *CPR 1340-1343*, pp.79, 280. *CPR 1340-1343*, p.209.

[55] Shareshull: L. O. Pike (ed.), *Year Books of the Reign of Edward III, Year 15*, Rolls Series, 31 (1891), nos.29, 45, pp.78, 119. *CCR 1341-1343*, pp.433, 521. *CPR 1340-1343*, p.427. Pulteney: *Year Books, Year 15*, no.45, pp.106-127. *CPR 1340-1343*, p.314.

[56] Stonor: *CPR 1340-1343*, p.427. Shardelowe: *CPR 1340-1343*, pp.233, 436. *CCR 1341-1343*, p.646.

[57] L. O. Pike (ed.), *Year Books of the Reign of King Edward the Third: Years XIV and XV*, Rolls Series, 31 (1889), p.258.

[58] *CPR 1340-1343*, pp.151, 229. Discussion of a few of these individuals can be found in Putnam, *Shareshull*, p.139; G. O. Sayles (ed.), *Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench Under Edward III vi*, Selden Society, 82 (1965), pp.lxvi-lxvii; Jones, *'Rex et Ministri'*, p.8; M. Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England 1272-1377* (1980), p.221.

The king was certainly aware of Edward I's popular reputation for justice, which had been enhanced so much by the so-called 'state trials' of 1289-90. In August 1289 Edward I had arrived home after three years in Gascony. During the journey to London a scandal broke out. Thomas Weyland, chief justice of the common bench, had been sheltering two known murderers and had fled on the king's return.[59] This prompted Edward I to commission the bishops of Winchester and Bath and Wells, the earl of Lincoln, John de St John, William le Latimer, William de Louth, and William de March to hear complaints concerning the activities of his officials during his absence.[60] While 49% of complaints concerned bailiffs and sheriffs, charges brought against the judiciary were unusually high, with justices being involved in 10% of alleged infractions.[61] Many accusations were unfounded and the scale of judicial corruption was not as great as it had appeared.[62] The level of corruption was minimal in comparison to the number of cases that justices were involved in. The situation became exceptional because of the king's actions against the judiciary. As more and more judges began to be accused of wrongdoing, their arrest and removal from office swiftly followed.[63] From the benches Weyland was arrested (and later exiled) along with William de Brompton, William de Saham, Ralph de Hengham, John de Lovetot and Roger de Leicester, as were the surviving eyre justices; namely Solomon de Rochester, Richard de Boyland, Thomas de

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[59] Recent discussions include T. F. Tout and H. Johnstone (eds.), *State Trials of the Reign of Edward the First 1289-1293*, Camden Society, Third Series 9 (1906), pp.xi-xxxiii. Brand, 'Edward I and the Judges', pp.31-40 and 'Chief Justice a,nd Felon: The Career of Thomas Weyland, 1278-1289', *Proceedings of the British Legal History Conference 1985*, pp.26-47. Prestwich, *Edward I*, pp.339-343. A. L. Spitzer, 'The Legal Careers of Thomas of Weyland and Gilbert of Thornton', *Journal of Legal History*, 6 (1985), pp.64-66.

[60] *CCR 1288-1296*, p.55. *Foedera*, I.ii, p.715.

[61] Using *State Trials*, where the basic unit of measurement was the entry. Entries were counted more than once if more than one type of official were complained of in the case, but not if more than one official of the same type were accused. 30% of officials were bailiffs, 19% sheriffs, 13% unknown, 10% justices, 7% clerks, 4% subbailiffs, miscellaneous officials of 2% or less made up 17%. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.

[62] Brand, 'Edward I and the Judges', pp.36-38, also 'Chief Justice and Felon', pp.40-44.

[63] For example Henry de Bray was still in office in May and June 1290, *CPR 1281-1292*, p.357; *CCR 1288-1296*, p.87. Adam de Stratton was on the Wiltshire eyre on the 25th of November 1289, *CCR 1288-1296*, pp.29-30. Ralph de Hengham was involved in cases in London on the 20th of November 1289 and the 7th of January 1290, *CPR 1281-1292*, p.395, and in a Kent inquisition with William de Saham on the 18th of January 1290, *CPR 1281-1292*, pp.395-396. Richard Preston was a tax assessor for Westmoreland on the 26th of October 1289, *CPR 1281-1292*, p.408. Richard de Boyland delivered Newgate and Guildford gaols on the 20th of November 1289 and the 18th of February 1290, *CPR 1281-1292*, p.395, *CCR 1288-1296*, p.71. *Annales Londonienses, Chronicles of Edward I and Edward II*, records Adam de Stratton accused before John de Lovetot, William de Brompton, Robert de Littlebury and Richard de Leicester in February 1290, p.98, although the order to seize the lands and goods of these four was issued on the 14th of January 1290, accompanied by a similar writ to the Bishop of London to take possession of their ecclesiastical goods on the following day, *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1272-1307* (1911), pp.268, 269. A letter of the 13th of November 1289 to Prior Henry Eastry records William de Saham still hearing pleas as part of the inquiry, *HMC*, 55i.256-257.

Southend, Walter de Hopton and Richard Preston. Other officials also removed were Robert de Littlebury, Adam de Stratton and Henry de Bray.[64]

Edward I's actions, appealing to similar attitudes to kingship and justice as Edward III did in 1340-41, were hugely popular and seized the public imagination. Chroniclers emphasised the investigation of the judges to the virtual exclusion of the numerous other officials accused. Some were vitriolic in their condemnation of the judges, for example the Lanercost chronicler spoke bitterly of 'the corruption of the justiciaries of the province, who, in the king's absence, and blinded by bribes, had betrayed the justice of their country.'[65]

The strength and depth of the 'popular' expectations of justice that Edward III was attempting to rouse in his favour in 1341 can be seen reflected in the disappointment expressed at Edward I's punishment of his judges. Weyland was exiled, but the rest, although removed from office, were pardoned upon the payment of large fines.[66] Perhaps the most revealing criticisms of that time are those found in the *Mirror of Justices* and the *Passio Justiciariorum* which were written in reaction to Edward's failure to meet public desire for revenge on corrupt justices.

The bitter author of the *Mirror of Justices* claimed to be falsely imprisoned himself while writing 'en eide de vous e del comun del poeple e en vergoigne de faus juges'. He demanded that judges who had been proven corrupt should be removed from office forever. He then began a savage diatribe against Edward I's leniency through pointed comparison with King Alfred who, supposedly, also found his judges to be filled with evil and cast them down 'e de mortal jugement faus sunt il pendables al foer dautres homicides, e pur mahaim mahaim, pur plaie plaie, e pur enprisonement, tieus pur tieus, en meme le lu, e en meme lestat.' It is a measure of the expectations aroused by Edward I in 1290 that each of Alfred's forty-four judges were named and their offences and punishments described in detail.[67]

The *Passio Justiciariorum* is a closer and piercing attack on the handling of the 1290 crisis disguised as a Biblical satire. In this work, judges took bribes and plotted against the innocent while the king was overseas and on his return, Dindimus (Thomas Weyland), the chief justice, fled in terror. An inquiry was launched by the king, who

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[64] *Bury St Edmunds*, pp.93-94. *State Trials*, pp.xxix-xxxiii.
[65] *Lanercost*, p.56.
[66] Details in *State Trials*, pp.xxix-xxxiii. Brand, 'Edward I and the Judges', p.35. *Règne d'Édouard Ier*, p.248, comments that 'li rois est tros pitouse e tuz jors ad este'.
[67] *Mirror of Justices*, pp.xxii-xxv, 3, 44, 143-144, 148, 166-170.

announced 'propter miseriam inopum et gemitum pauperum nunc exurgam et reddam ultionem hostibus meis et hiis qui oderunt me retribuam.' The king was distraught, but distracted by money. When his men questioned the fate of Dindimus's seized possessions, he replied that this treasure and money were none of their business. The accused judges gave rich gifts to the king and were never truly punished. The author sourly commented that these men are left to await divine retribution: 'veniat dominus ultionum, dominus qui reddet unicuique iuxta opera sua.'[68] For all the king's fine words the people could only rely on God for the punishment of their enemies.

If the bitterness of these authors shows the disappointment felt as Edward I failed to follow through on the expectations he had aroused, they surely illustrate the strength and depth of 'popular' feeling regarding the king and justice which his grandson was trying to use to gain support in 1341.

The popularity of Edward I as a result of his removal of a corrupt judiciary did not fade away. Indeed the disappointment felt as a result of the eventual outcome of the 'state trials' was forgotten and only the initial euphoria concerning the king's actions remained. The author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* relished recalling how:

> our famous king, Edward I, most experienced of
> kings, for certain crimes and oppressions done to the
> people deprived Thomas de Weyland, the chief justice,
> of every honour, benefice and dignity... At the same
> time, many great men amongst the king's high officials,
> found guilty of disgraceful crimes, were driven from
> office and honour to their great loss and disgrace[69].

The memory of the occasion lived on beyond even those who had lived through the experience. When Sir Thomas Gray wrote the *Scalacronica* in 1355, he used the memories passed on to him by his father for his account of Edward I's reign.[70] Detail is generally sparse in this chronicle, except when introducing the exploits of the author's father, which makes Gray's account of the 'state trials' notable because of its length:

> En quel temps de sa absence il troua tiel de faute en sez
> justices et officeris qe lez uns fist eviler, com Thomas de
> Weyland, Rauf de Engham, et Hughe del Chauncelery, Adam

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[68] *State Trials*, appendix 1, pp.94, 95-96, 97-98.
[69] *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp.91-92.
[70] J. Stevenson (ed.), *Scalacronica, by Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, Knight* (Edinburgh, 1836), p.iv for dating; p.xii on the original source of the Edward I section, pp.xv-xxx on family history.

de Stratton enraunsonez, lez droiturelis denuirez en lour officez,
com Elys de Ethingham et Johan de Mechingham.[71]

The events of 1290 obviously impressed themselves on both Gray and his father.

As a result of the 'state trials' Edward I fulfilled and subsequently became strongly associated with 'popular' images of the king as a vigilant governor and active provider of justice. If Edward III could manipulate a parallel in the minds of his subjects between himself and Edward I as the preserver of justice and protector of his people he would do well. Not only would he generate public support by his fulfilment of 'popular' expectations, but he would profit from the reflection onto himself of Edward I's image as a just king. Any support gained from his own actions as a king concerned for the provision of justice would be intensified by association with his grandfather's image. Parallels with Edward I could be politically very useful to his grandson.

In many ways Edward I fulfilled the 'popular' image of the ideal king, on a par with the heroes of legend and romance.[72] He was pious, a crusader, a successful military leader and a law-giver with a concern for good government. During the reign of his son Edward I had been continually put forward as the type of king that Edward II should have been. The author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* regretted that Edward II 'did not achieve the ambition that his father had set before himself, but directed his plans to other objects' and hoped at the birth of the future Edward III that he would 'revive the wisdom of King Edward [I]'.[73] The *Anonimalle* chronicler condemned Edward II for 'forslisna de les tetches et de la manere son pere' and the *Brut* lamented the inexplicable failure of that king to be like his father, saying that 'he were ladde & reulede þrouȝ false conseile, ȝitte he was Kyng Edwardus sone, & come of þe worþiest bloode of al þe worlde'.[74]

Knowing that the image of Edward I could be politically useful for himself, Edward III kept the memory of his grandfather alive.[75] He treated the older king's tomb almost as a shrine, covering it in cloth of gold during his coronation. In addition, in 1340

[71] *Scalacronica*, pp.109-110.
[72] Contemporary chroniclers identified him with Brutus, Arthur, Edward the Elder, Athelstan and Richard I. See *SMC*, II.121-122; *Mannyng*, i.69, ii.279; *Règne d'Édouard Ier*, pp.230, 428; *Brut*, p.113.
[73] *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp.1, 36-37.
[74] W. R. Childs and J. Taylor (eds.), *The Anonimalle Chronicle 1307 to 1334*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series 147 (Leeds, 1991), p.80. *Brut*, p.249.
[75] Ormrod, 'Personal Religion', pp.849-877 and 'Edward III and His Family', *Journal of British Studies*, 26 (1987), pp.398-421. Vale, *Chivalry*, p.93. Prestwich, *Three Edwards*, pp.2, 294-296. Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War', p.251. R. Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots: The Formative Years of a Military Career 1327-1335* (Oxford, 1965), pp.100, 158.

while following his grandfather's practice of ordering prayers from the archbishop of Canterbury for 'a happy issue to the expedition' against the French, he ordered that wax be removed from the tomb as the candles around it melted.[76] The anniversary of the death of Edward I was celebrated not only at Westminster but also at court, even when overseas.[77] Examples of the earlier king's life were to be found painted on the walls of the royal palace at Westminster.[78]

There were also close similarities in behaviour between the two kings. Both men were pious and Edward III's devotional patterns were often close to those of his grandfather. Edward I was a very generous almsgiver, so generous in fact that at Easter 1291 'many persons of means, attracted by so liberal a distribution, blushed not to pose as paupers'.[79] He gave alms on the feast days of many saints as well as making regular gifts to the Virgin and the Apostles.[80] Wherever he stayed in the kingdom he would go or send alms in his name to local shrines. For example, in Canterbury he visited the shrines of SS. Thomas, Adrian, Mildred, Dunstan, Blasius, Alphegus and Augustine.[81] In London he went to the shrine of St Edward, the image of St Gregory and the holy crosses at Greenwich.[82] Passing through Pontefract he sent alms to St Wilfred at Ripon and passing through Durham he sent them to St Godric at Finchale and St Oswin at Tynemouth.[83] Edward III did the same, visiting the same saints at Canterbury, St Edmund at Bury St Edmunds, St Edward at Westminster, St William at York and St Cuthbert at Durham.[84]

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[76] For examples of requests for prayers made by Edward III see J. Raine (ed.), *Historical and Other Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers*, Rolls Series, 61 (1873), nos.66, 75, pp.108, 120. For Edward I and prayers as propaganda see Burton, *Politics, Propaganda and Public Opinion* and 'Requests for Prayers', pp.25-35. For Edward III see W. R. Jones, 'The English Church and Royal Propaganda During the Hundred Years War', *Journal of British Studies*, 19 (1979-1980), pp.18-30. *CCR 1339-1341*, p.488. *Foedera*, v.196.

[77] Ormrod, 'Personal Religion', pp.871-872. M. Lyon, B. Lyon and H. S. Lucas (eds.), *The Wardrobe Book of William de Norwell 12 July 1338 to 27 May 1340* (Brussels, 1983), p.207.

[78] H. M. Colvin, *The History of the King's Works* (1963), i.508. Vale, *Chivalry*, p.93.

[79] *Lanercost*, p.81. Prestwich, 'Piety', pp.120-128. A. J. Taylor, 'Edward I and the Shrine of St Thomas of Canterbury', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 132 (1979), pp.22-28, and 'Royal Alms and Oblations in the Later Thirteenth Century', *Tribute to an Antiquary: Essays Presented to Marc Fitch by Some of His Friends*, eds. F. Emmison and R. Stephens (1976), pp.93-125.

[80] For example he celebrated 127 feast days in 1288-89, B. F. Byerly and C. R. Byerly (eds.), *Records of the Wardrobe and Household 1286-1289* (1986), pp.273-302; 118 feast days in 1299-1300, J. Topham *et al* (eds.), *Liber Quotidianus Contrarotulatoris Garderobe: Anno Regni Regis Edwardi Primi Vicesimo Octavo* (1787), pp.16-31; 78 feast days in 1303-4, BL Addit. MS. 8835, ff. 1r-3v.

[81] *Wardrobe 1286-1289*, p.291. E. W. Safford (ed.), *Itinerary of Edward I: 1272-1290*, List and Index Society, 103 (1974), pp.274-275.

[82] *Liber Quot.*, p.30; E. W. Safford (ed.), *Itinerary of Edward I: 1291-1307*, List and Index Society, 132 (1976), p.153.

[83] *Liber Quot.*, pp.25, 40; 39. *Itinerary 1291-1307*, pp. 146, 156, 157.

[84] PRO, E101/388/5, m.6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15.

Edward I showed particular interest in the English saints, attending the translation of St William of York in 1284, presenting Welsh relics to the shrine of St Edward in 1285 and the Scottish regalia to St Thomas in 1296.[85] Edward III similarly attended such events, being present at the translation of Thomas Cantilupe in Hereford in 1349.[86]

In times of war, especially against the Scots, Edward I paid English saints even closer attention.[87] Events in 1299-1300, in particular, revealed him to have been a strong nationalist. The campaign following the siege of Stirling in November 1299 failed miserably and a further expedition was planned for the following summer.[88] In the intervening period Edward showed marked attention to the English saints. While in and around London and on the slow march back to Scotland he sustained a constant supplication to an extraordinary number of English saints. He visited the shrines of SS. William of Rochester, Thomas Becket, Dunstan, Alphegus, Edward the Confessor, Alban, Amphibalus, the Anglo-Saxon royal women at Ely: Ethelride, Kirburga, Kireswide, Tibba, Sexburga, Werburga and Ermenild, King Edmund, Botulph, Hugh of Lincoln, John of Beverley, Oswald, William of York, Cuthbert, Oswin, and Godric. In addition he sent gifts in his name to SS. George, Richard of Chichester, Wulfstan and Wilfrid, as well as celebrating in honour of SS. Thomas, Edward, Wulfstan, Cuthbert, Oswald, Botulph and Edmund in his private chapel.[89] He even paid attention to Englishmen who had not been canonised but were popularly believed to be saints, giving alms to the tombs of Little St Hugh and Robert Grosseteste in Lincoln.[90]

Edward III has been considered to have been the king to have made his piety nationalistic, having used his attention to the saints as a means to inspire loyalty and support for his campaigns both against the Scots and in his pursuit of the French crown. Apart from his devotion to the Virgin he has been shown to have paid attention only to

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[85] C. M. Fraser, *A History of Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham 1283-1311* (Oxford, 1957), p.27. Taylor, 'Royal Alms', p.100 and 'St Thomas', pp.22-25.

[86] Ormrod, 'Personal Religion', p.859.

[87] Prestwich, 'Piety', p.124. Ormrod, 'Personal Religion', p.859. See also references to particular English saints as protectors of Edward I in *Règne d'Édouard I*, pp.230, 375, 394 and *Bury St Edmunds*, pp.83, 156. Hearne, *Mannyng*, gives allusions to Edward I in this context while discussing Athelstan's journey north to fight Constantine of the Scots, i.29.

[88] Prestwich, *Edward I*, pp.483-484.

[89] *Liber Quot.*, pp.28-30, 33, 35-40; pp.34-35, 38; pp.26, 41 for Thomas; 27, 31, 43 for Edward; 28, 31, 38, 39, 43 for the others respectively. In comparison, during 1288-89 the king had showed interest in only nine English saints.

[90] *Liber Quot.*, pp.37, 39 for Edward I and Prince Edward separately giving oblations to the tomb, the latter 'ad tumbam Sancti Roberti'. For the king's support for Grosseteste's canonisation see C. M. Fraser (ed.), *Records of Anthony Bek: Bishop and Patriarch 1283-1311*, Surtees Society, 163 (1953), no.11, pp.15-16.

English saints.[91] He was noted by chroniclers for his pilgrimages to them, in 1333 'cum modica familia loca devota Angliae, ad quae sua devotio eum duxit, peregre est profectus' and in 1340 he 'devota loca Anglie visitavit, in quibus gracias Datori victoriarum suppliciter persolvit'.[92] Even when visiting the Low Countries to secure allies against France during 1338-40 he concentrated only on the major cult centres of the area, such as the shrine of the Three Kings in the cathedral in Cologne, the shrines of the Virgin in the churches at Vilroorde, Ghent and the parish church of Halle.[93] Even when seeking support from foreign allies he did not support saints other than those connected with England.

Edward III also used the experiences of his grandfather's reign in order to ensure the success of his own endeavours, by searching the records of Edward I's government. He used them, for example, for diplomatic purposes.[94] In 1334 when Philip VI asked why the king should turn against his own brother-in-law David Bruce and place Edward Balliol on the Scottish throne, Edward turned to records left by his grandfather for a reply detailing the history of the Great Cause.[95] The king had notably compiled a large collection of memoranda about his grandfather's French wars which he used to anticipate problems for himself in his expedition there. This collection included the complaints made to Edward I of the burdens and injuries placed upon the country by his financial exactions.[96] This may have been the cause of the noted close similarity between an ordinance of 1297 regarding the collection of debts by justices and clerks and stipulations made on this matter in the Walton Ordinances.[97]

In the light of Edward III's public dedication to his grandfather's memory and the many existing parallels between the two kings (engineered or coincidental), Edward III's recreation of the 'state trials' of 1290 would have been very likely to succeed in generating extra support for himself. This was lucky for the king, because in the course of events following his return to England it became necessary for him to raise support

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[91] Ormrod, 'Personal Religion', pp.857-858.

[92] *Murimuth*, p.69, and adapted from this in the *Annales Paulini*: 'rex Angliae cum modica familia loca devota Angliae causa devotionis magnae ac peregrinationis est profectus', p.359. *Le Baker*, p.70.

[93] *Norwell*, pp.206, 208, 209,

[94] See Fryde, 'Financial Resources of Edward I', pp.1168-1169. H. Rothwell, 'Edward I's Case against Philip the Fair over Gascony in 1298', *EHR*, 42 (1927), pp.572-582.

[95] PRO, C47/28/3, nos.8-10. Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, p.158.

[96] C47/28/5, nos.9, 17, 18. C47/30/7, no.9. Fryde, 'Parliament and the French War', p.251.

[97] J. R. Maddicott, *The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown 1294-1341*, Past and Present Supplement, 1 (Oxford, 1975), p.11.

not only to enable him to raise taxes but to withstand the opposition of the archbishop of Canterbury.

Although the crisis in 1340-41 was not the product of dissatisfaction with the king or his policies, the situation facing Edward was potentially a very dangerous one. The state of the country was such that contentious issues like purveyance or the wool collection could have ignited his subjects against him, particularly when he was about to levy additional taxes on them. Edward had laid clever plans for his return to England and taken an approach through his inquiry and persecution of the judges that was bound to make him popular. However, he made a mistake in thinking that Stratford would make as easy a scapegoat as his other ministers. In the opinion of one of Edward III's advisors Edward I had been a short step away from a reappearance of civil war in England in 1297.[98] The same depressed state of the country and dangerous issues existed in 1340-41 as had then. If there was again an archbishop of Canterbury willing to stand against the king and attract an opposition party, Edward III could have come as uncomfortably close to civil war.

Stratford had no intention of becoming the king's scapegoat for the failed financial arrangements or the poor state of the country. He was fortunate in that he was in Canterbury when the king arrived in London and was determined to stay there. In his letters he aimed at least to find someone else to be the scapegoat and if necessary to gather support for his defiance of the king.

The first blow in the 'pamphlet war' between them was struck by Edward. In the *libellus famosus*, in making charges against the archbishop, he used several 'popular' political attitudes seen in the literature.[99] He presented Stratford as an evil counsellor of the kind seen in the romances.[100] The archbishop was described as having planned the entire expedition to France, promising full financial support and the continuing love of the people. However he betrayed Edward by getting him into a dangerous position and then sending him 'frivolis excusationibus' instead of supplies. As with the examples of Wymound in *Athelston*, Wikard in *Horn Childe*, Vortigern in *Arthour and Merlin* and Godard in *Havelok*, Stratford pretended to be a good and loyal servant of the king but in reality he was truly traitorous and had been even in the early days of the king's reign. Edward additionally accused Stratford of depleting the treasury through his bad advice

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[98] C47/28/5, no.44.

[99] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, pp.23-27. *CCR 1341-1343*, pp.102-103, 10th of February 1341, *libellus famosus* sent to all bishops.

[100] See pp.83-85, 154-157.

while the king had been a child. He was presented in these earlier times as corrupt and self-seeking, squandering the king's wealth with no thought for Edward or his subjects.

The king also accused Stratford of being a traitor. He abandoned the charge that the archbishop deliberately endangered the king's life early on and concentrated instead on accusing Stratford of defaming the king's honour and encouraging irreverence and contempt for the king among his subjects.[101] Edward's insistence that irreverence to the king was a treasonable offence is more important than it may seem. He accused Stratford of 'derogationem honoris & juris Regii contra fidelitatis juramentum nobis'. Attempting to spread contempt for the king was an offence against the bond between king and people since the archbishop was encouraging royal subjects to move away from the loyalty they owed to him and had pledged to him by their homage and fealty. This was why the romances and legendary histories perceived evil counsellors to be traitors. By unleashing the king's ill will onto his people these men jeopardised the loyalty felt towards the king and encouraged them to end their relationship with him. Note for example, the extreme case shown in *Athelston* where the king's barons declare that they will march in arms against Athelston, tear down his castles and towers and throw him in prison.[102] That Edward felt this issue to be important can be seen with his letters to the bishop of London, sent on the same day as the minor *libellus*, and the bishop of Exeter ordering them not to spread anything derogatory to the king or he would denounce them as rebels for exciting the people against him.[103]

Looking at the king's accusations that Stratford was inciting rebellion by defaming the king it is clear that the main issue Edward wished to emphasise was loyalty. In the minor *libellus* he said that the archbishop had not only become arrogant and ungrateful to the king, but that he actively spread contempt and contumely for him. This was an offence against the king personally. It is notable that Edward barely spoke in terms of the crown at this time, but in terms of 'dignitas & famae Regiae', 'honoris & juris Regii' and of the conservation of 'jurium & praerogativarium nostrarum Regalium'.[104] In describing the archbishop's treason he used the terms sedition and rebellion.[105] Edward's language was personal and with his accusations of defamation

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[101] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, pp.36-38. *Cal. Pap. Reg. 1305-1342*, pp.584-585.

[102] See p.48.

[103] *CCR 1341-1343*, pp.112, 122-123. *Foedera* II.iv, p.94. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (ed.), *The Register of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter* (1897), i.943-945.

[104] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, pp.27, 36, 37.

[105] Bellamy, *Treason*, pp.1-2 determines sedition and rebellion as having their roots in the Germanic interpretation of treason as a breach of trust or betrayal. This is more personal than the Roman element termed *laesa maiestatis* which focuses more on the state.

and breeding contempt for the king the focus, particularly of the minor *libellus*, was the personal loyalty owing to Edward as king and lord. The romances and legendary histories viewed the relationship between king and people in terms of a personal lordship. In consequence they set great store on the personal commitment between these two parties. This was symbolised, of course, at the coronation of the king by the performance of homage and fealty to him and the oath made by him promising to rule for the well-being of his people.[106] One of the undertakings of a vassal on performing homage was to defend the honour of their lord and in focusing the attack on Stratford in terms of the defamation of the king's honour, the king was stressing the faithlessness of the archbishop. Edward aimed at persuading potential supporters of Stratford and maybe even the archbishop himself, to think in terms of the faith which they owed him.

This form of persuasion would have been particularly advantageous to Edward considering that he was currently being seen to be active in fulfilling 'popular' expectations. It is notable that during his conflict with Stratford he renewed his propaganda connected with the royal inquiry. He seized the opportunity provided by the pamphlet war to reiterate the guilt of his officials in oppressing the country and his own dedication to governing his subjects 'clementia & lenitate cum moderamine justiciae'.[107]

Stratford could not, therefore, take a stance against the king on the grounds of dissatisfaction with his rule. Edward was the very picture of the concerned king at the time. The archbishop could not attack the king directly and turned instead to the old political fiction of evil counsellors.[108] Much as Isabella had done in 1326 against Edward II, Stratford appealed to 'popular' political attitudes on this matter. He described the behaviour of evil counsellors surrounding the king with marked similarity to the behaviour of those in the literature. For example, he stated that Edward's evil counsellors had made false accusations about the archbishop and had been responsible for the *libellus famosus*. Whispering villains in the romances, like Wymound in *Athelston* and Wikard in *Horn Childe*, similarly fed false accusations about good men into the ears of their kings. They portrayed themselves as loyal servants of their kings while destroying the reputations of true men. Stratford presented attacks on himself in the *libellus* in the same light. He described himself and other ministers left in England during the king's absence 'non ergo dici potuerent illusores consiliari vestri dicentes...

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[106] See pp.60-64.
[107] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, p.26.
[108] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, pp.27-36. See also pp.154-157.

sed servi veraces & perfecti'. He also reported how evil counsellors had caused the king to act wilfully in the recent past, a misery which romance audiences particularly connected with the actions of these men. The archbishop claimed that they had advised the recent arrests which were against Magna Carta, and that they had ensured that he had been condemned by the king without the due process of law.[109] This, he warned, meant danger to the great men and the people of the realm, as well as to the king's own soul. It is interesting to note that in one very popular romance, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the fear occasioned by the emperor of Cyprus's display of ill will causes his barons to renounce their homage to him.[110]

As the reign of Edward II had shown, 'popular' feeling on the subject of evil counsellors was very strong indeed. Stratford had himself sided with Isabella soon after her invasion of England in 1326 and became a key figure in the deposition process. Perhaps in consequence of this, he tied his appeals to these particular popular attitudes to the example of the past in his letters to Edward III. His initial letter of the 1st of January was the most blunt, where he stressed the perils of evil counsel using the story of Rehoboam.[111] Edward II was commonly compared to Rehoboam who had lost his throne through ignoring wise counsel.[112] When Stratford told this anecdote to Edward III in 1341 it was not just a warning story from the Bible. The meaning of the archbishop's dark hint to Edward of what happened to his father, 'et qest avenutz de lui par cele cause vous, sire, le savetz' was blatant.[113]

The next letter, the *excusaciones*, was much less bald in comparison, but in it Stratford played on public fears connected with the previous reign and notably those associated with the deposition. According to Stratford Edward was surrounding himself with his favourites and the archbishop evoked fears associated with previous royal favourites Piers Gaveston, the Despensers and Roger Mortimer. Stratford, in particular, singled out the possible accroachment of royal power. He called those surrounding the king tyrants, who ruled like many kings while Edward, wearing the crown, took second place.[114] This was a direct echo of the way people had felt about previous favourites. Gaveston had been deplored because while the king favoured him there had been 'two

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[109] *Avesbury*, p.325.
[110] See pp.78-79.
[111] *Avesbury*, p.325.
[112] *Lanercost*, p.183: 'Thus Edward the younger succeeded the elder, but in the same manner as Rehoboam succeeded Solomon, which his career and fate were to prove'. *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, p.18.
[113] *Avesbury*, p.325.
[114] *Vitae Arch. Cant.*, p.29.

kings, one metaphorically and one in reality should rule together in the realm'.[115] When the younger Despenser was made chamberlain to the king the Anonimalle chronicler noted how he 'acrocha a lui roial poer, si qe le roi ne voleit rien faire countre sa volunte'.[116] In 1330 Roger Mortimer had been described as 'more than king in the kingdom'.[117]

Public feeling on the issue of evil counsel had been heightened by the expert manipulation of Isabella and Mortimer in 1326-27 and, like public feeling on the just king, had become associated with a particular king. The fears of evil counsel were still a powerful force in 1340-41 because of their connection with the deposition of Edward II. In addition to fulfilling people's expectations of him, Edward III tried to create a parallel between himself and the 'just' image of Edward I to make himself even more popular. Similarly, whilst appealing to people's fears of evil counsel Stratford tried to create an association between Edward III and the tarnished image of Edward II in order to make his attempts to gain support for his stand against the king even more persuasive. The attitudes to kingship of royal subjects were thus a powerful propaganda tool in the hands of both the king and his opponents and they became strengthened by association with particular kings and events.

How successful were the king and the archbishop in attracting public support for their causes? Stratford did not attract an opposition group to stand against Edward and the chroniclers, except the very pro-Canterbury Robert of Avesbury, largely seem to have been unconcerned by their confrontation. The king achieved his objective in gaining money he felt was owing to him, securing further grants with ease. He completely ignored the concessions that he made to parliament in 1341 and subsequently had them repealed without encountering any protest. Considering the potentially dangerous situation facing Edward in 1340-41, his appeals to the attitudes to kingship of his people were thus skilful indeed.

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[115] *Annales Paulini*, p.259.
[116] *Anonimalle 1307-1334*, p.92.
[117] *Lanercost*, pp.265-266. This chronicler even went so far as to say that he was accused of aspiring to the throne. *Anonimalle 1307-1334*, p.144.

Conclusion.

The political crises of the 'long thirteenth century' and the early years of Edward III's reign have traditionally been interpreted against a background of contemporary political philosophy. The portrayal of kingship found in Middle English romances, though, forms a much more appropriate and relevant background for looking at these events. These popular stories, which were widely disseminated, accessible and focused on kings, make an ideal source for more representative images of kings. These images involve the political attitudes and expectations of their audience, which is notoriously difficult to define but which was probably made up of knights and gentry: lesser landowners, professional men and local administrators with their friends, neighbours and associates.

Some of the dominant themes concerning kingship contained within these tales are familiar and very much in line with the views of political philosophers. These themes involved the practical side to kingship, for example the provision of good government, justice and defence. Images of kings concerned with the more theoretical side of kingship, however, reveal some interesting points. For instance, the king's relationship with his people was not seen in the light of *vicarius dei* but with the experience of lesser lordship bonds in mind. The relationship was seen as 'contractual'. It entailed mutual obligations and could be ended if one side defaulted on these obligations. The fallibility of kings was fully recognised and an uncompromising attitude was revealed towards failing kings. When this situation occurred royal subjects would put an end to their relationship with their king and cleave to another. The perception of kingship in terms of personal lordship obviated the need for 'constitutional' justifications and political theories when acting against a king: if that king had failed to shoulder his responsibilities the relationship between king and people would simply be ended. Another interesting area revealed in the romances is that of evil counsellors who, it seems, were deeply hated and regarded as the worst kind of traitor because they unleashed unreasoning power from the throne against innocent people. When the king failed to listen to good and wise counsel it was the baronial group who, endowed with a sense of 'community', would act as a buffer between the king's ill will and his people, trying to persuade him to return to the path of justice and reason and, if that failed, removing the abusive king from power.

The comparison of the images of kingship found in the romances with those found in another form of popular literature, the legendary histories of Britain, reveal that they were not genre-specific, but provide valid evidence of the political attitudes and expectations of the knightly and gentry social group. Neither romances, nor their images of kings, can be dismissed as idealised fiction which had no significant meaning to its audience. The relationship between 'meaningful' and influential histories and the historical and even pseudo-historical material in the romances is extremely close. As even contemporary historians, such as Robert Mannyng, made no distinction between the two types of literature it is unlikely that romance audiences behaved any differently. The images related to kingship that are present in the romances provide real evidence on the attitudes and expectations of knights and gentry. As such they can be seen as a reference point to which this social group may have turned when considering the actions and statements of contemporary kings, affirming their own political expectations and understanding of kingship and also their place in the relationship between themselves and their kings.

The political crises of 1297, 1326 and 1340-41 provide good material for the investigation of the actions of the crown and opposition, and of the appeals made for public support during times of political struggle. They brought into sharp focus consideration of the awareness of kings and their opponents of the attitudes and opinions of royal subjects. They demonstrate how far manipulation of these attitudes was possible, and enable an assessment to be made of the success of both sides in obtaining both practical and political support.

The dominant themes concerning kingship seen in the literary sources appeared in each of these political crises. In 1297 Edward I constantly spoke of his attempts to defend his people from danger, reminding them that as it was his duty to protect them so they too had obligations to help him to succeed in his task. He assumed the image of the king seen in the romances as a personal lord to his subjects. He appealed to their loyalty and reminded them of their obligations to him, while stressing that he was doing everything that he could to defend his people, even being preparing to sacrifice his own life in their service. His outlawry of the clergy was in accordance with and confirmed the reversible nature of the relationship between king and people - a confirmation which was used to the disadvantage of his son in 1326. Isabella and Mortimer, after profiting from their early stress on evil counsellors, adopted the same uncompromising attitude

towards their failing king as was seen in the literature. They used the same belief in the reversibility of the relationship between king and people as Edward I had in 1297, a belief which seemed to be confirmed not only by this former king's actions but by the stories of past depositions of British and English kings in the literature. The strikingly close parallels between the characteristics of an abusive king, his crimes and the means of his removal present in the literature and the articles of accusation levied by Archbishop Reynolds against Edward II are surely not coincidental. In 1340-41 Edward III and Archbishop Stratford also used themes highlighted in the literature in their propaganda. Edward III assumed the image of the king as the protector of his people through strong government and justice, echoing the popular image of his grandfather as the just king. Both he and his archbishop talked extensively about the perils of evil counsellors to try and sway people to take their part; the king particularly talking of the personal loyalty which was owing to him as his people's lord. All of the kings and their political opponents in these three crises made appeals and took actions in order to generate public support for their practical and political aims. These actions and appeals were in line with the most prominent expectations and understandings of kingship portrayed in the literature, namely the provision of justice, strong government and defence, the 'contractual' nature of the relationship between king and people that entailed obligations for both parties, the dissolubility of that bond, the treason of evil counsellors, the protective role of the barons and the removal of abusive kings.

The parallels between royal and opposition propaganda during 1297, 1326 and 1340-41 and the understanding of kingship in the literature are significantly close. The literary images of kings were used by both political parties to enable them to further their practical and political aims. Neither party was consistent in the choice of particular attitudes for its propaganda efforts. As has been seen, the same uncompromising perspective on the failure to meet obligations entailed in the relationship between king and people was used in 1297 by one king and in 1326 against another. The approaches taken by kings and their opponents were always dictated by the needs of the moment, by what best suited their purposes. One side could take up a 'popular' theme on kingship to generate support as the other put it down. It even happened sometimes that certain themes were being used in the same conflict and at the same time by both parties. The pamphlet war between Edward III and John Stratford in 1341 is one such example, where the king and the archbishop both took up the theme of

evil counsel and used it to present themselves in a good light and their opponent as the worse man.

The literary images used for propaganda were representative of the political expectations and attitudes of knights and gentry, but how influential were the opinions of this social group during times of political crises? This is very difficult to judge. Many of the letters and writs which have been considered in this study in the light of 'popular' attitudes were concerned with practical measures, such as the need for an inquiry into the illegal activities of officials, or with traditional political fictions such as the opposition to the king being justified in terms of action against evil counsellors. Further complication occurs as although on occasion kings and their opponents used such propaganda with the aim of obtaining a practical response, for example military service by owners of twenty librates of land in Flanders in 1297, more often the aim was one of acquiescence to for example the payment of extra taxes or the deposition of Edward II.

However, it seems certain that the propaganda of Edward I in 1297 helped him to avoid civil war. Isabella's manipulation of feeling in 1326 helped her to avoid confusion over her arrival from turning into support for the king. Edward III's appeals helped him to continue to squeeze an already wretched England for more money for the French war and to avoid the possible build-up of an opposition party around John Stratford. It may be impossible to demonstrate conclusively that knightly political attitudes aided the successful outcomes of these three crises. However, the significant parallels drawn between these attitudes and crisis propoganda reveal that the political opinions of this social group were considered to be important enough to be used to generate practical and political support in those crises. This is surely a reflection of the growing political importance of those knights and gentry, whose political opinions were being appealed to. On the evidence of the romances and royal and opposition propaganda it is fair to say that kings and their enemies felt it necessary or desirable to persuade these men to support them, be it to pay new taxes or go overseas with Edward I in 1297 or to accept the deposition of Edward II. The need for the support of knights and gentry means that their practical and political worth must have been important. So too, therefore, must have been the perceptions and attitudes which formed their political opinions regarding kingship.

Appendix A - Armour details and weaponry in Middle English Romances.

This appendix provides examples of weapons, armour and mounts found in the Middle English romances under consideration, see the discussion in chapter one, pp.33-34. The following list is not exhaustive, but should serve to illustrate some of the range of detail employed in the tales. Due to considerations of space only two line references per romance have been included. In addition the commonplace mention of helmet, sword, shield, and lance or spear have been left out unless they are further detailed in the romance as a specific type. For example swords are not included, even when identified by several different terms such as 'brond'[1] or 'gare'[2], unless this term indicates a particular type of sword, such as the falchion. Similarly, different words used to describe the same weapon will still be grouped under one heading with the individual terms included in brackets for ease of reference.

Definitions are taken from the *Middle English Dictionary* unless otherwise indicated.

Arbalest - crossbow. *KA*, ll.1211, 1592; *Alex. A*, l.268; *Troye*, ll.147, 1069; *AM*, ll.456, 1848; *Richard*, L l.2123, A ll.1714, 2241; *OR*, l.1591; *Sages*, l.1967.

Arrows - *Richard*, A l.1770; *Seege*, l.1153; *YG*, ll.1602, 1666; *AM*, ll.313, 4136; *KA*, ll.2178, 5274; *Alex. A*, l.270; *Tristrem*, l.3343; *Degarre*, l.771. (flon) *KA*, ll.784, 2777.

Aventail - chain mail protecting the neck. *Guy*, ll.115:9, 208:8; *Beues*, ll.2835, 4236; *Perceval*, l.1722.

Axe - *Richard*, L l.1816, A ll.1747, 2257, 2924; *Havelok*, ll.1777, 1865; *AM*, ll.336, 3343; *KA*, ll.1191, 1900; *Sages*, l.370; *Guy*, ll.3551, 6894; *RV*, l.657.

Banner - *Richard*, A ll.2158, 2917; *Beues*, ll.574, 962; *KT*, ll.158, 542; *OR*, ll.1048, 1578; *YG*, l.1472; *AM*, ll.3841, 3867; *KA*, ll.927, 1605; *Troye*, l.1954; *Alex. A*, l.138; *Reinbrun*, ll.50:5, 64:11; *KH*, l.1374; *Orfeo*, l.294. (pensel) *Richard*, A l.2163; *AM*, l.5641; *OR*, l.1574; *KA*, ll.2684, 2703. (stremours) *Eglamour*, l.1332; *Beues*, l.3042.

Barbel - part of helmet protecting the chin. *Guy*, l.4539.

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[1] *AA*, l.1115; *YG*, ll.1933, 2458; *OR*, l.253; *KA*, ll.1981, 5286; *William*, ll.1192, 3864; *Guy*, ll.2228, 3003: *Reinbrun*, ll.92:7, 15:7; *Beues*, ll.249, 1632; *Tristrem*, ll.1074, 2353; *Perceval*, l.1185.

[2] *HC*, l.213; *RV*, ll.471, 579; *Otuel*, ll.165, 209..

<u>Bascinet</u> - helmet under fighting helmet, later pointed with a visor. *Beues*, ll.2848, 4164; *AM*, ll.1859, 3484; *KT*, ll.200, 542; *KA*, ll.2329, 3704; *OR*, l.243; *Guy*, l.257:2; *RV*, l.833; *Degarre*, l.959.

<u>Bill</u> - battle axe, with spikes protruding from the blade on all sides.[3] *YG*, l.3225; *KA*, l.1623.

<u>Bow</u> - *Troye*, ll.147, 1069; *YG*, l.1602; *AM*, ll.313, 3343; *KA*, ll.1210, 2671; *Guy*, l.3487; *Havelok*, l.1749; *Beues*, l.4346; *Degarre*, l.771.

<u>Bridle</u> - *AM*, ll.1319, 4937; *Joseph*, ll.551, 575; *HC*, ll.380, 915; *KA*, ll.951, 2719; *Perceval*, ll.1150, 1166; *Landevale*, l.388. (bridle rein) *Guy*, ll.923, 6801. (lorein) *HC*, l.905.

<u>Buckler</u> - round shield. *KA*, l.1190; *Gamelyn*, l.136.

<u>Chacer</u> - hunting horse. *Guy*, l.3210.

<u>Champe</u> - field of shield or banner. *Beues*, ll.973, 3785.

<u>Coronal</u> - steel head of spear. *Degarre*, ll.568, 1023.

<u>Corselet</u> - piece of body armour. *OR*, l.1220.

<u>Courser</u> - large battle horse. *Troye*, l.436; *KA*, l.4052; *Guy*, l.720; *Gamelyn*, ll.176, 609; *Landevale*, l.31.

<u>Crowbar</u> - (levour) *Beues*, l.1861; *YG*, l.2386.

<u>Cuisses</u> - thigh armour. *AM*, l.2976.

<u>Dagger</u> - (knyf, kniiues) *Troye*, l.1753; *Joseph*, l.577; *AM*, ll.336, 3165; *KA*, ll.1059, 7188; *Guy*, l.4389; *Havelok*, ll.498, 1770; *KH*, l.108; *RV*, ll.81, 657; *Otuel*, ll.147, 157; *Isumbras*, l.135; *Perceval*, l.563.

<u>Destrier</u> - knight's mount. *AM*, ll.1370, 2565; *Sages*, l.402; *KA*, ll.850, 1798; *Guy*, l.2356; *Reinbrun*, l.104:12; *Beues*, l.4068.

<u>Falchion</u> - broadbladed short sword. *AM*, l.8947; *Beues*, ll.1768, 3810; *OR*, ll.529, 1824; *KT*, l.1114; *AA*, ll.809, 1310; *Guy*, l.3556. (swerd kerdeing) *Guy*, ll.4058, 4020; *Reinbrun*, ll.51:4, 126:8, l.49:8; *RV*, ll.457, 831; *Otuel*, l.1119; *Tristrem*, l.1466.

<u>Gambisoun</u> - quilted jacket under armour. *Guy*, ll.92:7, 118:4; *KA*, l.5142.

<u>Gavelok</u> - javelin dart. *KA*, ll.1353, 1619; *AM*, l.9161.

<u>Gauntlet</u> - *KA*, l.2033; *Guy*, ll.182:3, 250:5; *OR*, l.1202.

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[3] Editor's glossary. K. DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology* (Peterborough, Ontario, 1992), p.30.

Gonfanoun - knight's pennon. *AM*, ll.440, 1759; *Beues*, l.976; *Reinbrun*, ll.41:6; *KA*, l.1963; *Richard*, A l.2163; *HC*, ll.66, 773; *OR*, ll.430, 2645; *RV*, l.843; *Tristrem*, ll.146, 1392.

Gorget - piece of throat armour. *KA*, l.3631.

Habergeon - (haberioun) small mail coat. *OR*, ll.1218, 1506; *AM*, ll.2975, 5442; *AA*, l.2464; *Guy*, ll.104:8, 117:8.

Hachet - battle axe. *Joseph*, ll.544, 587.

Hackney - (hakkanaus) small saddle-horse. *Beues*, ll.1255, 1259.

Haketon - (aketoun) quilted or padded jacket under armour. *YG*, l.2616; *OR*, ll.282, 1217; *AM*, l.2976; *KA*, l.2149; *Beues*, ll.979, 1002; *Perceval*, l.1102.

Halberd - combination of axe and spear.[4] (aunlaz) *Havelok*, l.2555. (gisarm) *Havelok*, l.2554; *AM*, l.6103; *Guy*, ll.3552, 3571; *KA*, ll.2283, 2293. (gleiue)[5] *Havelok*, ll.1771, 1865; *Joseph*, l.497.

Harness - (i) personal fighting equipment. *HC*, ll.595, 616; *YG*, l.589; *AM*, l.4644; (ii) horse harness. *KA*, l.4542; *William*, l.4281; *Perceval*, ll.827, 1435.

Hauberk - coat of mail. *Tristrem*, l.2777; *KT*, ll.141, 1148; *OR*, ll.199, 765; *AM*, ll.321, 3302; *Beues*, ll.1002, 1761; *Troye*, ll.1274, 1458; *Joseph*, l.509; *YG*, ll.649, 653; *KA*, ll.2368, 3906; *Guy*, ll.880, 1438; *Reinbrun*, ll.44:2, 55:11; *Otuel*, l.552. (brini) *KH*, ll.717, 841; *Havelok*, ll.1776, 2552; *Guy*, ll.4024, 5208; *Beues*, l.4156; *AM*, l.2975; *HC*, ll.64, 174; *KT*, l.1012; *Tristrem*, ll.191, 3264; *OR*, ll.425, 1573; *AA*, l.1244; *KA*, ll.1247, 1868; *Reinbrun*, ll.41:7, 44:2.

Hinder-arsown - uptilted back of saddle. *YG*, l.681.

Jambers - (gaumbers) leg armour for below the knee. *AM*, l.2976; *Guy*, l.117:8

Lainer - thong on which shield is suspended around the neck. *Degarre*, l.569.

Mace - club used in warfare. *AM*, l.6102; *KA*, l.1900; *Beues*, l.443; *Otuel*, l.1112; *OR*, l.2137; *KT*, l.539; *YG*, l.266; *KA*, ll.1900, 3897. (masuel) *Beues*, l.4508.

Mule - *Guy*, l.1330; *Landevale*, l.387.

Oyllier - eye piece on helmet. *KA*, l.2355.

Packhorse - (somer) *Guy*, ll.3258, 4673; *KA*, ll.826, 1410; *Beues*, l.1487.

Palfray - riding horse (as opposed to a war horse). *YG*, ll.568, 1592; *AM*, l.311; *Troye*, ll.436, 861; *KA*, ll.1379, 3203; *Sages*, l.1031; *Guy*, ll.720, 3268; *Havelok*, l.2061; *Orfeo*,

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[4] *Ibid.*, p.30.
[5] Editor's glossary.

l.156; *Beues*, ll.1353, 1608; *Tristrem*, l.3074; *LLF*, l.58; *FB*, l.364; *Degarre*, ll.411, 751; *Landevale*, ll.352, 495.

Panele - cloth under saddle. *YG*, l.473; *KA*, l.176 (sambu).

Peytrelys - breast plates of a horse.[6] *OR*, l.1404.

Pike - *Beues*, l.3856.

Pizaine - (pisan) piece of metal or mail attached to helmet and extending over neck and upper breast. *Perceval*, l.1722.

Plate armour - *Beues*, l.1761; *HC*, l.629; *AA*, l.1244; *KA*, l.5142; *Guy*, ll.91:1, 104:8.

Poleaxe - similar to halberd, with smaller 'axe' part.[7] *Joseph*, l.499.

Pomel - knob at the end of the hilt of a sword. *Guy*, l.167:3; *YG*, l.2066.

Quarrel - bolt for a crossbow or a siege engine. *KA*, ll.1592, 2179; *AM*, ll.456, 1848; *Richard*, A ll.1714, 1740.

Quarre - rectangular shield. *AM*, l.2977.

Queintise - ornamental battle trappings for man or horse. *AM*, l.5656; *Beues*, l.4104; *HC*, ll.1044, 1082; *KA*, ll.173, 1429.

Sadle - *Troye*, l.1401; *OR*, ll.318, 777; *KT*, ll.201, 1150; *HC*, ll.380, 631; *YG*, ll.422, 682; *AM*, ll.2112, 3272; *KA*, ll.176, 2274; *Guy*, ll.5363, 186:6; *KH*, l.715; *Otuel*, l.793; *RV*, l.548; *Beues*, ll.233, 989; *Tristrem*, l.2888; *Gamelyn*, ll.187, 733; *Perceval*, ll.62, 345; *FB*, l.364; *Degarre*, ll.14, 515.

Sadlebow - *YG*, l.2462; *Guy*, l.100:10; *Beues*, ll.1778, 4508. (arsoun) *Guy*, ll.5361, 5420; *Beues*, l.1762; *AM*, l.5218; *OR*, l.830; *KA*, ll.3254, 2360.

Scabbard - (shawebereke) *Guy*, l.167:4.

Spurs - *Beues*, ll.999, 3528; *OR*, ll.382, 1245; *YG*, ll.683, 689; *AM*, l.3246; *KAr*, ll.2218, 2384; *Guy*, ll.147, 6648; *KH*, l.500; *Otuel*, ll.439, 779; *Gamelyn*, l.187. (broche) *KA*, ll.2456, 3936.

Stirrups - *AM*, ll.3249, 3250; *KH*, l.758; *Tristrem*, l.3261; *Guy*, ll.3864, 5274; *HC*, l.379; *YG*, l.1415; *KA*, l.1958; *Beues*, ll.1946, 2178; *Gamelyn*, l.188; *Degarre*, ll.15, 332.

Talevace - type of shield, usually circular, often wooden. *Havelok*, l.2324; *Beues*, l.3960; *YG*, l.3158.

Targe - small, light, round shield. *Troye*, l.1096; *Guy*, ll.92:8, 250:9; *Richard*, A l.2180; *KA*, l.2781; *OR*, l.1503; *YG*, l.832; *RV*, l.843.

Visor - *Beues*, l.4179.

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[6] Editor's glossary.
[7] DeVries, *Military Technology*, p.30.

Heraldry details on shields and banners are present in *OR*, ll.297-300, 2272-2273; *Troye*, ll.1312-1313; *AM*, ll.1767-1768; *KA*, ll.1963-1964, 2721, 4293; *Eglamour*, ll.1033-1039, 1199-1209; *William*, l.3216-3220; *Beues*, ll.3783-3786; *Tristrem*, ll.1042-1043; *Degarre*, ll.995-997; *Beues*, ll.45, 974.

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