

**EDWARD AS ARTHUR, ARTHUR AS EDWARD**  
**THE CHIVALRIC, ARTHURIAN-STYLED PROPAGANDA OF EDWARD III**

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## Abstract

Edward III is known as one of England's most chivalric monarchs. Over the course of his fifty year reign, he cultivated ties to Arthurianism, reinventing the Arthurian propaganda of his predecessors. His court became the meeting place of governance and romance known for grand feasts, jousts, and tournaments as well as the illustrious Order of the Garter. At the beginning of his reign, however, Edward's authority was limited by both the failings of his father, Edward II, and his mother's and Roger Mortimer's overbearing regency. In addition famines, crime, and economic depression had left England weakened. Edward's image, then, along with his identity as a chivalric, Arthurian-styled king became key to reinventing the monarchy and ensuring the community of the realm saw him as a 'good king' dedicated to reviving the kingdom's interests.

This dissertation, which explores the Arthurian propaganda used throughout Edward III's reign, discusses the ways in which Edward personally cultivated an Arthurian image as well as the ways in which the chroniclers and other disseminators of second-hand propaganda either forwarded or responded to such an agenda. The chronicles of Jean Le Bel and Jean Froissart are discussed as pro-chivalric in terms of the propaganda they set forth, and eight fourteenth-century Middle English romances are used as points of comparison: *Ywain and Gawain*; *Sir Percevale of Galles*; the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*; the couplet *Arthur*; *The Avowing of King Arthur*; *Sir Launfal*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; and *The Awntyrs of Arthure*. In addition, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* is used to provide context, political prophecy is discussed, and an interest is taken in the fourteenth-century *Perceforest*, which was written with Queen Philippa's father as the named patron.

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‘[Royal Arms of England \(1198 - 1340\)](#)’ by [Sodacan](#) is licensed under the (CC) [Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International](#) license.

Figure 2: Quartered Arms of England and France, c. 1340-67

‘[Royal arms of England and France \(1340-1367\)](#)’ by [Sodacan](#) is licensed under the (CC) Attribution-Share Alike [3.0 Unported](#), [2.5 Generic](#), [2.0 Generic](#) and [1.0 Generic](#) license.

## Timeline, 1312-77

- 13 Nov 1312** Prince Edward of Windsor is born at Windsor Castle.
- 1325** Queen Isabella departs for France with Prince Edward and makes a public stand against her husband, King Edward II.
- 4 Sep 1226** Isabella lands in Essex with Roger Mortimer and Prince Edward to make war against Edward II.
- Oct 1326** Prince Edward is declared Keeper of the Realm.
- 16 Nov 1326** Edward II is imprisoned.
- Jan 1327** Edward II is forced to abdicate.
- 1 Feb 1327** Prince Edward is crowned Edward III, King of England.
- Sep 1327** Edward II is murdered at Berkeley Castle.
- 24 Jan 1328** Edward III marries Philippa of Hainault.
- 1329** Edward III does homage to Philip VI under his mother's and Roger Mortimer's regency and attends the Wigmore Tournament.
- 15 Jun 1330** The Black Prince is born.
- 19 Oct 1330** The Nottingham coup: Mortimer arrested, Isabella removed from power.
- 29 Nov 1330** Roger Mortimer is executed.
- 1331** Edward III and Philippa visit the grave of Arthur at Glastonbury.
- 1333** The English defeat the Scots in the Battle of Halidon Hill.
- Jun 1336** Edward III relieves the garrison at Perth.
- Jul 1336** Edward III rescues the Countess of Atholl.
- 1337** Start of the Hundred Years' War.
- 1338** Edward III is made vicar-general of the Low Countries.
- 1338** Edward III loses his vicar-generalship.
- 29 Nov 1338** Prince Lionel is born.
- 26 Jan 1340** Edward III proclaims himself King of France.
- 24 Jun 1340** English naval victory at Sluys.

- 1344** House of the Round Table at Windsor Castle is commissioned.
- 1345** The Pope asks Edward III to relinquish the arms of France without success.
- May 1346** Edward III assembles soldiers at Portsmouth to attack France.
- Jul 1346** Edward III lands his army in Normandy and marches on Paris.
- Aug 1346** Philip VI offers Edward III sovereignty over Aquitaine in return for peace. Edward rejects the offer and marches toward Flanders.
- 25 Aug 1346** Edward III defeats Philip VI's army at the Battle of Crécy.
- 4 Sep 1346** Edward III begins the siege of Calais.
- 17 Oct 1346** English victory at Neville's Cross; David Bruce captured.
- 3 Aug 1347** Calais surrenders to Edward III.
- 23 Apr 1348** Edward III establishes the Order of the Garter.
- 22 Aug 1350** King Philip VI dies and is succeeded by John II.
- 19 Sep 1356** The Black Prince defeats the French at Poitiers; King John captured.
- 1360** Treaty of Bretigny between England and France.
- 1361-2** Froissart joins Queen Philippa's employ.
- Nov 1362** Edward's III Jubilee; the Statue of Pleadings introduced in Parliament.
- 8 Apr 1364** King John II dies and is succeeded by Charles V.
- Sep 1364** The Battle of Auray is fought in the Breton War of Succession; Breton-Anglo victory.
- 6 Jan 1367** Richard II, son of the Black Prince, is born.
- 3 Apr 1367** John of Gaunt and the Black Prince win the Battle of Najara.
- 7 Oct 1368** Prince Lionel dies.
- 1369** Queen Philippa dies and Edward III takes a mistress, Alice Perrers.
- 8 Jun 1376** The Black Prince dies.
- 1376** The 'Good Parliament' seeks reforms.
- Sep 1376** Edward III suffers a stroke and descends into illness.
- 21 Jun 1377** Edward III, King of England, dies.

## Introduction

Arthurian legend has been imbued with socio-political ramifications since the time of its inception,<sup>1</sup> but in medieval England the legends became an especially potent form of political propaganda.<sup>2</sup> ‘Good kings’ stylized themselves as Arthur figures, using the dynastic overtures of Arthurian legend to justify wars and the mechanisms of their reigns, while ‘bad kings’ called upon his name to levy support when their power was challenged.<sup>3</sup> Arthur became an omnibus symbol — or a propagandic mechanism that appealed to a wide variety of people,<sup>4</sup> adding a romantically heroic element to a monarchy’s overall propagandic scheme. The legends of Arthur, which are now acknowledged as mostly, if not wholly, fictional were considered factual by the majority of people in medieval England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and France. And as a result, Arthur and his retinue garnered a huge amount of popular interest, becoming the focus of romantic literature and a touchstone of socio-political activism. Scotland and Wales saw him as a figure central to their struggle for independence with Wales preserving a long tradition of Arthurian hero comparison, as seen in *Englynion y Beddau* and *Y Gododdin*,<sup>5</sup> as well as a focus on *y mab darogan* or ‘the Son of Prophecy’ who would return to free the Welsh from English rule.<sup>6</sup> England, meanwhile, attempted to negate such prophecies by usurping the figure of Arthur as a means of rewriting insular history with England at its head.

This meant that by the time Edward III took the English throne in 1327, Arthurian propaganda had been in use for centuries. It was, after all, easy and effective to use. Romance culture was prolific, and the use of Arthur as a symbol or ‘case-maker’ held real political resonance. Most of Europe was well aware of his heroism, and his popularity and larger-than-life world could be used to displace ‘a problematic present with an ideal past’.<sup>7</sup> His figure became a mechanism used to control crises, and invoking his name and image could, if received well by the

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<sup>1</sup> Davidson, ‘The Reel Arthur’, pp. 62-68.

<sup>2</sup> Gerould, ‘King Arthur in Politic’, pp. 48-51.

<sup>3</sup> In March 1191 King Richard I presented Tancred of Sicily with ‘Caliburn’, or a sword better known as Excalibur, and King John of England had the sword of Tristram in his regalia. See Ditmas, ‘The Cult of Arthurian Relics’, p. 26 and ‘More Arthurian Relics’, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> McClung Lee, ‘Analysis of Propaganda’, pp. 126.

<sup>5</sup> Padel, *Arthur in Welsh Literature*, p. 4; *The Gododdin*, trans. Clancy, *Earliest Welsh Poetry*, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Henken, *National Redeemer*, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Davidson, ‘The Reel Arthur’, p. 62.

public, enhance one's own — an element of Arthur's socio-political value that Edward III used to manipulate his own image, court, and agendas throughout his reign. Juliet Vale and Karen Lucas have both studied the ways in which romance culture affected Edward's court. Vale discusses the chivalric nature of his tournaments and lifestyle, and Lucas analyzes the ways in which Middle English romance affected attitudes toward kingship and political crisis from 1272-1350.<sup>8</sup> This present dissertation, which discusses the Arthurian-styled propaganda used throughout Edward III's reign, builds upon such scholarship, identifying the ways in which romance and its tropes, *topos*, and motifs were used to provide Edward III with a chivalric, Arthurian-styled image.

Chronicle propaganda, which in Edward's case formed a basis of second-hand propaganda, is discussed with an emphasis on the work of Jean Le Bel and Jean Froissart — two chroniclers who took a special interest in ensuring Edward's image was both romantic and chivalric.<sup>9</sup> In addition, visual, architectural, and cognomen propaganda is identified, and Alfred McClung Lee's designations for propagandic forms and mechanisms are used to analyse incidents in which enough information has survived to draw conclusions on the deployment and effectiveness of Edward's Arthurian propaganda.<sup>10</sup> The entire dissertation sits in the general interest in Edward III that scholars like W. M. Ormrod, Richard Barber, Ian Mortimer, and Clifford J. Rogers have resurrected through their work.<sup>11</sup>

For the sakes of continuity and space as well as clarity and accessibility, the chronicles are quoted from in modern English. Eight fourteenth-century Middle English romances are used as points of comparison: *Ywain and Gawain*; *Sir Percevale of Galles*; the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*; the couplet version of *Arthur*; *The Avowing of King Arthur*; *Sir Launfal*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; and *The Awntyrs of Arthure*.<sup>12</sup> Most were written just prior to, during, or after Edward III's reign and provide a representative flavour of the Arthurian lore present at the time.

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<sup>8</sup> See Vale, 'Aspects of Chivalric Culture c. 1270-1350' and *Edward III and Chivalry*; and Lucas, Karen, 'Middle English romance, attitudes to kingship and political crisis'.

<sup>9</sup> Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> McClung Lee, 'Analysis of Propaganda', pp. 126-35.

<sup>11</sup> See Ormrod, *Edward III and Reign of Edward III*; Barber, *The Triumph of England*; Mortimer, *The Perfect King*; and Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*.

<sup>12</sup> The editions used are the annotated Middle English texts edited by the members of the TEAMS Middle English Text Series from the University of Rochester. See TEAMS Middle English Text Series [online]. Available at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams>.

*The Awntyrs of Arthure*, in particular, provides a view into the complexities and anxieties of life in the war-torn Anglo-Scottish borderlands<sup>13</sup> while *Sir Launfal* offers an illustration of contemporary anti-Celtic sentiments.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the anonymous *Arthour and Merline*, written c. 1250-1300, have been used to provide background and context. The Middle English romances have been quoted in Middle English while the *Historia*, like the chronicles, receives quotation in modern English for the sake of accessibility and space. Chrétien de Troyes' work is alluded to when appropriate, and there is a particular interest taken in the fourteenth-century *Perceforest* which, like the work of Froissart, was most likely produced for Queen Philippa's family.<sup>15</sup> A translated and abridged version of *Perceforest* has been used as the original text is large, unwieldy, and greatly inaccessible, making study of it a subject unto itself and one which would have complicated this particular dissertation, which finds its focus elsewhere.

Appendix I provides a list of the extant copies of the Middle English romances, offering a 'best guess' scenario on circulation and popularity since an accurate estimate is not possible and would also warrant a separate study.<sup>16</sup> The opening chapter includes an overview of the political situation in England in 1327 as well as summary discussion of what propaganda is and why Edward III was in a position to use Arthurian propaganda effectively. The second chapter contains the English precedent for Arthurian propaganda and an analysis of how Edward III used and reworked the propaganda of his forbearers. The third focuses on Edward's career as a soldier and king, discussing the ways in which the chroniclers and his own elite responded to his actions. And the fourth reviews the ways in which Edward influenced romance literature and poetry, providing a view of the effectiveness of his image. The terms 'Arthurian' and 'chivalric' are used interchangeably. The two are not identical, but because chivalry was greatly

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<sup>13</sup> Schiff, 'Borderland Subversions', p. 632.

<sup>14</sup> The character of Guinevere, who is blinded in Chestre's *Sir Launfal*, is from Ireland and bears the Welsh name 'Gwenere', making her a 'threat' to English identity — a sentiment that would have been readily accepted in fourteenth-century England due to anti-Scottish and anti-Irish sentiments. See McLoone, 'Strange Bedfellows,' pp. 3; 13-7.

<sup>15</sup> Philippa's father, William I, Count of Hainault, is the suggested patron in the text itself. See *Perceforest*, trans. Bryant, pp. 24, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Survival rate of a manuscript is not an accurate indication of its popularity but can be used as an estimate, though it is important to remember manuscripts were often read aloud or orally amended in ways which never entered the written record. See Vale, 'Aspects of Chivalric Culture', p. 52.

influenced by Arthurianism and Arthurianism by chivalry, it is not necessary to completely unpack the two terms here. Ties to specifically Arthurian texts, however, have been favoured over ties to non-Arthurian romances, which formed another important aspect of medieval romance culture not largely discussed in this study.

## Chapter 1: Necessity — The ‘King’ and the ‘Crown’

Alfred McClung Lee defines propaganda as the manipulation of symbolism with the express purpose of advancing an agenda.<sup>17</sup> This manipulation need not be good or bad, true or false, inclusive or exclusive, and can take many forms: written, verbal, dramatic, and visual:

Propaganda...is the use of words, symbols, ideas, events, and personalities with the intention of forwarding or attacking an interest, cause, project, institution, or person in the eyes and minds of a public...[It] is the expression of a point of view overtly stated or covertly implied for the purpose of influencing the thought and action of others.<sup>18</sup>

In order for propaganda to succeed, however, it must draw upon the tensions and attitudes underpinning the socio-political environment in which it is deployed. And it must be transmitted emotively — often arousing reactions within its audience that override commonsense or accuracy.<sup>19</sup> Nowhere is this more evident, for the purposes of this study, than in the fourteenth-century concepts of ‘king’ and ‘crown’. By the time Edward III took the throne in 1327, England had seen a long line of kings who had managed to please and alienate the realm in a way haphazard enough to lead to the popular separation of the person of the king from the concept of the crown. The crown, therefore, served as a symbolic manifestation of the authority the king exercised in the interest of the people and could be divorced from his personage when his actions were judged to be to the detriment of the realm.<sup>20</sup> In order to please the *communitas regni*, then, or ‘the community of the realm’, the king was expected to rule in a way that not only upheld his own royal dignity but supported the welfare of the people.<sup>21</sup>

Edward III’s father — Edward II — had failed to maintain the interests of the realm and had been forced into abdication and murdered as a result. This meant that by the time Edward was crowned, the veil of sanctity that had been held around kingship had eroded, and a newer, more mutually dependent relationship between

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<sup>17</sup> McClung Lee, ‘The Analysis of Propaganda’, pp. 126-7.

<sup>18</sup> This definition is one McClung Lee adapted from a memorandum by Irving D. Robbins from the Institute of Public Relations in New York. See, *ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 128.

<sup>20</sup> Burton, ‘Politics, Propaganda and Public Opinion’, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> The term *communitas regni* could refer to the elite upper class — that being the earls and lesser barons — or the people at large, creating multiple groups that saw what constituted their welfare differently. See Matthews, *Writing to the King*, pp. 41-46.

the king and barons had evolved — a relationship summed up by the 1320s anonymous chronicle, the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*:

Let English courtiers henceforth beware lest, trusting in the royal favour, they look down upon the barons. For they are the king's chief member, without which the king cannot attempt or accomplish anything.<sup>22</sup>

This made maintaining the support of the realm something more than a nicety to be considered in times of necessity. It was a prerequisite to maintaining the title of king in a way that would allow Edward III to wield that title's authority. Parliament was already demanding more ready inclusion in governance with popular sentiment claiming 'what touches all should be approved by all'.<sup>23</sup> And the English church was not adverse to standing against a monarch it believed was placing unrealistic requirements upon the clergy.<sup>24</sup> In addition, fourteenth-century England was a backward-looking people, obsessed with their past and the glory of their ancestors. As R. R. Davis explains, even chroniclers describing current reigns often prefaced their work with thousands of lines of pseudo-history because 'in a past-oriented and a past-validating society, claims to empire and supremacy, as to all other forms of power, had ultimately to be located in the past.'<sup>25</sup>

Such past-validation could be found in a number of sources. Chronicles, records, the Magna Carta, and charters were all held up as ways to justify present action. But one of the most sweeping forms of justification was Arthurianism, which,

...argues that the new order the romances propose is actually the old order, the world of an idealized past to which the present must be compared and found woefully wanting. Furthermore, only by returning to this ideal past can the culture in question — whether twelfth-century France, thirteenth-century Wales, nineteenth-century Britain, or twentieth-century America — find its divine mission and heavenly vindication.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> The author of the *Vita* devoted a sharp and unflattering passage to Edward I's clerical taxation, calling him 'Caesar Edward' and extolling Robert Winchelsea, the then archbishop of Canterbury, who had "'set himself up as a wall" for the clergy' under the authority of the *Clericus laicos*. See *ibid.*, pp. 70-3; and Burton, 'Politics, Propaganda and Public Opinion', pp. 230-54.

<sup>25</sup> Matthews, *Writing to the King*, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> From Aronstein's "'Not Exactly a Knight'" as quoted by Davidson. See Davidson, 'The Reel Arthur', pp. 62-68.

In this sense, then, Arthurian propaganda formed a plausible solution to the validation of Edward's monarchy. But any acquisition of power it allowed would be seen as a detriment if the *communitas regni* did not believe it was coupled with 'good laws' and the other mechanisms of 'good kingship'. *Sir Launfal*, written toward the end of Edward's reign or shortly thereafter opens with the words: 'Be doughty Arthours days | That helde Engeland yn good laws,'<sup>27</sup> providing a brief, romantic definition of what constituted as 'good' by equating the idea of 'goodness' with the style of Arthur's rule. But a half-century earlier when Edward III first took the throne, his administration was languishing under his mother's and Roger Mortimer's regency; fiscal demands and famines from the 1320s had eroded the economy; and bands of thugs had set up protection rackets and were terrorizing their neighbors, leaving the *communitas regni* skeptical of the efficiency of the king's good laws.<sup>28</sup> As W. M. Ormrod states,

Edward III therefore had to do much more than win a few noble allies. He had to re-establish some respect for himself and some sense of order in the society over which he theoretically ruled.<sup>29</sup>

Political prophecy aided toward this end. As early as 1312 the *Prophecy of the Six Kings to follow King John* had placed Edward III fourth in its line of symbolically Galifridian kings, calling him the 'Boar of Prosperity, Nobility, and Wisdom' and the Lion who would rampage Europe and regain the lands his ancestors had lost. He was prophesied to go to the Holy Land, 'whet his tusks against the gates of Paris', and wear the crowns of Spain, France, and Aragon<sup>30</sup> — all statements derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's prophecies of Merlin.<sup>31</sup>

The *Vita Merlini*, which Monmouth had written in the twelfth century and which had remained immensely popular into the fourteenth century, had prophesied a 'Boar of Cornwall' would appear and lead his followers to freedom.<sup>32</sup> This particular reference alluded to Arthur, but it also formed a solid basis upon which Edward III could build his own Arthurian propaganda. His father's oppressive reign, along with the realm's subsequent hopes that Edward III would embody a better

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<sup>27</sup> *Sir Launfal*, lines 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp. 49-50; Smallwood, 'The Prophecy of the Six Kings', pp. 572-7.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Monmouth, *The History of the British Kings*, p. 171.

style of monarchy, made it comparably easy for the *communitas regni* to find him compatible with a ‘Boar’ who would provide freedom and a ‘Lion’ who would rampage Europe.<sup>33</sup> But in order for such beliefs to be upheld, Edward III needed to reinforce the idea that the political prophecy surrounding his birth and future was legitimately inspired. And this meant meeting, or at least being perceived as having met, the heroic ideals of an Arthur figure — parameters which held his image in the culturally accepted bounds of masculinity and ‘good kingship’.<sup>34</sup> As Ian Mortimer states, Edward III had to become the ‘Perfect King’ — not in actuality but in the maintaining of a rule creative enough to match his concept of kingship to that of his subjects.<sup>35</sup>

Personality and interests aided toward this end. Edward’s birth had been hailed with the hope that he would embody the virtues of his forefathers: the industry of Henry II, the valour of Richard the Lionheart, the long life of Henry III, the wisdom of Edward I, and the handsome appearance of Edward II.<sup>36</sup> And he had been born into a court culture that valued Arthurianism. His grandfather, Edward I, had been a noted Arthurian enthusiast and his mother, Isabella, was a reader of romance. The wardrobe accounts of John Fleet from 1322-41 record that on 5 March 1327, Isabella had a *Le Romant de Perceval* in her possession, along with some other titles of romance.<sup>37</sup> And a second inventory of her goods made after her death include a bound *Brut* and ten titles listed under ‘Libri romanizati’, including *de gestus Arthuri*, *de Tristram et Isolda* and *Perceval et Gauwayn*.<sup>38</sup> Edward III, who was with her in March 1327 and who was known to borrow books when he wished,<sup>39</sup> would have had ample access to these and any of the additional 59 *libri de romanciis*

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<sup>33</sup> Iolo Goch refers to Edward III as a ‘boar’, as did the anonymous writer of a piece of praise poetry written after Edward’s victory at Crécy. See Goch, *Poems*, trans. Johnston, pp. 2-4 and *Political Poems and Songs*, ed. Wright, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Wheeler, ‘The Masculinity of King Arthur’, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, p. 63.

<sup>37</sup> Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>39</sup> As Ormrod has noted, books rarely remained in Edward III’s personal possession for long. Instead they were passed around between his nobility and sometimes broken up so they could be disseminated more easily. Ormrod has suggested this means books were of less value to Edward than relics, which he tended to hoard and keep under lock and key, but such a suggestion fails to account for the influence of a library culture. Both Juliet Vale and Ian Mortimer suggest that, rather than keeping books to himself, Edward III fostered a library culture, promoting the circulation of his books for the very reason that they were of great value to him. See Ormrod, ‘Personal Religion of Edward III’, p. 857; Vale, ‘Aspects of Chivalric Culture’, p. 140; Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, p. 289-90.

Fleet records as being kept in the Tower throughout his rule.<sup>40</sup> In addition, a 1335 extract from the issue rolls notes that Edward purchased of ‘a book of romance...for the king’s use, which remains in the chamber of the king’.<sup>41</sup> And by 1344 the accounts of Walter Wentwage show Edward’s interest in romance to have extended beyond the literary to include the support of at least nineteen minstrels — more than his father, whose Household and Wardrobe Ordinances for 1323 read ‘There shall be trumpeters and two other minstrels and sometimes more and sometimes less, who shall play before the king when please him’, had kept.<sup>42</sup>

Why Edward III employed so many minstrels has been a point of some discussion. By the fourteenth century, minstrelsy had, as Clair C. Olsen states, passed ‘the time of it greatest glory’.<sup>43</sup> But it harkened back to a romantic period in which the courts of kings were the centres of music and entertainment. In this sense, then — in the sense of past-validation — it created an atmosphere that visually and audibly proved Edward III was maintaining a court that reflected Arthur’s. By the forty-fourth year of his reign, the Issue Roll of Thomas de Brantingham records that Edward III kept twelve men, all styled as ‘the king’s minstrel’<sup>44</sup> — a number which could be raised or tailored for important occasions. The 1345 Feast of the Round Table and the 1358 Feast of the Order of the Garter, for instance, involved twenty-three and sixteen minstrels, respectively, while the 1342 jousts at Northampton included at least three minstrels who were provided with tunics and hoods ‘of the same suit’ as those made for the king and his knights.<sup>45</sup>

Minstrelsy, however, was not the only Arthurian-styled pastime that Edward’s court culture fostered. In addition to the patronage of musical artists, Edward III hunted and engaged in falconry — two activities that were even more compatible with Arthurian romance. Both *The Avowing of King Arthur* and *The Awntyrs of Arthure* begin with a hunting scene, *The Avowing* describing the men of the Round Table as:

Chevetan [paragons] of chivalry,

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<sup>40</sup> Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Olson, ‘The Minstrels’, p. 602.

<sup>43</sup> Olson, ‘The Minstrels’, p. 601.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 602.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 602, 605.

Kyndenesse and curtesy,  
Hunting full warly,  
As wayt men and wise. (lines 21-4)<sup>46</sup>

This meant that part of a king's regal and chivalrous image revolved around his ability to hunt — a talent Edward III was more than willing to exhibit. By 1360 he and Queen Philippa maintained a staff of thirty-one huntsmen and twenty-three falconers with hunting parks attached to most of the royal residences and as much as £80 per year spent on hunting dogs alone.<sup>47</sup> A simple enthusiasm for Arthurianism, however, and its styles of patronage and pastimes were not enough to ensure Edward III deployed Arthurian-styled propaganda successfully. A king could, after all, hunt 'full warly' and still be seen as a coward or a misguided tyrant, which meant that in addition to pursuing Arthurian pastimes Edward III needed to show the *communitas regni* he was a king dedicated to reviving the royal honour, instituting 'good laws', and protecting the realm.<sup>48</sup> His 1330 coup against his mother's and Roger Mortimer's regency, and an additional, earlier episode involving a possible reenactment by the society of Craddok stands as cases in point.

By 1330 Edward III and much of England had become disenchanted with the ways in which Mortimer and Isabella sought self-advancement through their governance. In October 1328 Mortimer had been created earl of March, an extraordinary title considering it corresponded to no previous land boundaries, and had since been using the king's funds to build his own territories and power while continuing his affair with the Queen mother, Isabella.<sup>49</sup> The royal accounts for 1328, then, show an episode Richard Barber sees as a potential deployment of Arthurian propaganda meant to speak out against Mortimer and Isabella. An entry in the royal accounts states the issuance of special costumes for the king and his knights:

...red cloth for the king and his twelve knights for the performance of a game which is called the game of the society of Craddok, and coloured cloth for half-tunics for fourteen valets, servants to the knights at the said game.

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<sup>46</sup> *Avowing of Arthur*, lines 21-4.

<sup>47</sup> Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, p. 358.

<sup>48</sup> McClung Lee, 'The Analysis of Propaganda', p. 126.

<sup>49</sup> Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 51.

...for lining thirteen tunics for the king and twelve knights of the society of the Craddok...<sup>50</sup>

Barber suggests the reference to Craddok is connected to the Arthurian story of Caradoc, which first appeared around 1300 and was well known in the Marches by 1328. He argues the story, which features a mantel said to detect ladies who have been unfaithful, could have been used by Edward III as a public or private reenactment meant to decry Isabella's affair with Mortimer — a theory that contains definite possibility.<sup>51</sup> Re-enactments were a well known mechanism of royal display<sup>52</sup> and would have been one of the ways in which the boy king could have shown royal displeasure in a time when his power was otherwise severely limited by his mother and Mortimer. The dramatic coup at Nottingham two years later, though, would prove that Edward III was only willing to languish under limitation for so long before taking decisive action.

On 19 October 1330, the young king, Isabella, and Mortimer were staying at Nottingham Castle in supposedly secure conditions, but growing dissent between Edward III and Mortimer had made the situation dangerous. A secret tunnel into the castle had been located, and under Edward III's orders his supporters, who were mostly young knights in his household, used the tunnel to infiltrate the castle and arrest Mortimer. Edward III, whose life might have been in danger if he had personally participated in the fighting that broke out between the entrance and Mortimer's arrest, chose to remain at a safe distance in his chamber, perhaps opening the tunnel that had let in his followers.<sup>53</sup> The result was a coup that appeared both daring and romantic and which, as a piece of propaganda, held strong parallels to the early fourteenth-century verse version of *Ywain and Gawain*. In *Ywain*, the character of Ywain pursues a knight he has wounded, infiltrates his castle, and is hidden in a chamber while the castle is searched in much the same way Edward's followers infiltrated Nottingham while Edward hid at a distance.<sup>54</sup> Even the corresponding damsels — Alundyne in *Ywain* and Isabella in the coup — are in some sense 'rescued' with Alundyne marrying Ywain and Isabella being brought under the authority of Edward III, who executed and replaced Roger Mortimer as

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-2.

<sup>52</sup> Vale, 'Aspects of Chivalric Culture c. 1270-1350', pp. 99-100.

<sup>53</sup> Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, pp. 81-3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ywain and Gwain*, lines 611-814.

acting leader of England. The point here is not to suggest Edward III modeled his coup after a series of scenes from romance. *Ywain* does function as a *translatio* of Chrétien de Troyes twelfth-century *The Knight of the Lion* with which Edward III may have been familiar, but evidence for a literarily-based coup proves unsatisfactory. Rather the point is to note that though a simpler, less romantic coup may have also been effective, Edward III did not use an unromantic coup. He used the *topos* of infiltration, escape, and recompense to create a dramatic rescue of the English crown that mirrored the tropes found in Arthurian romance.

The reasons for this are debatable but most likely involve a combination of logic and identity — the tunnel was there and accessible and Edward III identified himself as a ruler who would employ such an entrance. McCall and Simmons, in their study on identity, call the dramaturgical language an individual uses to adopt a sense of character and create accompanying action plans ‘roll identity’ — or an identity derived from ‘the preferred perceptions...one has of oneself’.<sup>55</sup> In other words, Edward III may or may not have seen the coup as Arthurian, but he did see himself as a chivalric king and assumed the role(s) he played in the coup accordingly — role(s) which would not be without propagandic value. The chronicles, ever interested in the sensational, responded favourably with Thomas Grey’s *Scalacronica*, written beginning in 1355, describing the coup at length and ending with the pronouncement that Edward III had immersed into chivalric circles:

At this time and for a long while after, the king was advised by William de Montague [the coup’s leader], who always encouraged him to virtue and honour, and to a love of arms, and they led a jolly young life, awaiting a greater season for greater affairs.<sup>56</sup>

Grey, writing decades after the fact, is using the coup to allude to the victories Edward III would eventually enjoy in Scotland and on the Continent, but the fact that Grey retrospectively ties the coup into further chivalric escapades is, in and of itself, telling. As McClung Lee explains: ‘A propagandist naturally tries to capitalize upon his own good points, and he has to work within his own limitations or at least find

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<sup>55</sup> ‘Three Faces of Identity’, p. 478-9, 481.

<sup>56</sup> Grey, *Scalacronica*, pp. 106-7.

ways of adjusting to them' — a feat Edward III accomplished through the coup, which set him up to appear the budding, young, chivalric monarch.<sup>57</sup>

A sense of self-fulfilling prophecy was created, each successive piece of Edward's chivalric image building upon and magnifying the last.<sup>58</sup> But in order for Edward III to continue to maintain such an image he needed to remind the people of his Arthurian qualities with a degree of frequency. In terms of precedent, there was plenty to draw upon. English history and pseudo-history were full of Arthurian lore. And Edward III needed to look no further than his predecessors, specifically Roger Mortimer, Edward I, and Henry II, to find other Arthurian enthusiasts whose propagandic approaches he could study, reconstruct, or subvert. In 1330, however, with power but newly in his grasp, Edward III's image was a tenuous thing — a creation of prophecy, passing action, and circumstances that would be too easily forgotten if further chivalric episodes and propaganda were not put forward.

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<sup>57</sup> McClung Lee, 'The Analysis of Propaganda', p. 131.

<sup>58</sup> Wilkins, 'The Concept of the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy', p. 176.

## Chapter 2: Precedent — ‘Arthurs’ over the ages

By the fourteenth century many English kings, including Henry II, Richard the Lionheart, King John, and Edward I, had used Arthurian propaganda, as had Geoffrey II, Duke of Brittany; several Welsh princes; and Roger Mortimer. But a simple replication of their propagandic efforts was not necessarily of direct use to Edward III. Some of their approaches still held real political relevance in the fourteenth century but others needed to be reinvented or inverted before they could be of use. Henry II’s reactionary use of Arthurian propaganda, for instance, was something of which Edward III was well aware but which needed to be modified before it could be redeployed. During the twelfth century, Henry II had set out to use the figure of Arthur as a means of legitimizing his rule and putting down rumours of a better, truer king who was destined to free the Britons.<sup>59</sup> His planned exhumation of the bones of Arthur and Guinevere at Glastonbury Abbey, which had been carefully orchestrated to ensure appropriate bodies were found, was meant to ‘bury’ the idea of a Celtic Arthur once and for all.<sup>60</sup> As Gerald of Wales prefaced his account of the exhumation:

Furthermore, tales are regularly reported and fabricated about King Arthur and his uncertain end, with the British peoples even now contending foolishly that he is still alive. True and accurate information has been sought out, so the legends have finally been extinguished; the truth about this matter should be revealed plainly, so here I have endeavored to add something to the indisputable facts that have been disclosed.<sup>61</sup>

Numerous other sources, including Ralph of Coggeshall’s *Chronicon Anglicanum* and the *Annales* of the Welsh monastery of Margam, repeated the account, ensuring that by 1205 the exhumation was recorded at Canterbury as an item of interest.<sup>62</sup>

Close to a century and a half later, though, Edward III was not facing the threat of a Celtic uprising. The Welsh had been subdued, Scotland was largely Anglicized, and

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<sup>59</sup> The Celtic peoples were not by any means pleased that Henry II was king. Gerald of Wales relates an anecdote in which Henry II was heckled by a Welsh woman who insisted divine vengeance was due him. The woman recited a prophecy of Merlin, claiming the English king, having conquered Ireland, would be mortally wounded at the Stone of Lechlaver — at which point Henry II supposedly jumped onto the stone and defied anyone to call down Merlin’s lies against him. See Awell, ‘Henry II and Arthurian Legend,’ p. 391.

<sup>60</sup> Lagorio, ‘The Evolving Legend of St Joseph of Glastonbury,’ p. 217.

<sup>61</sup> Gerald of Wales, trans. John William Sutton, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Nitze, ‘The Exhumation of King Arthur at Glastonbury,’ pp. 359-60.

war with France was looming on an ongoing horizon, making a reinvention of Henry II's propaganda necessary if Edward III wanted it to serve his own purposes.

What the excavation at Glastonbury had done, then, in a usefully replicative sense was to inspire pro-English excitement — a thing which Edward III needed to gain support for his wars and agendas. As Valerie M. Lagorio states: '...the burial of Arthur, England's national hero, at Glastonbury, would not only be within the realm of possibility, but would appeal immediately to the imagination and chauvinism of the English people'<sup>63</sup> — an imagination and chauvinism that Edward III needed to support him in his campaigns in Scotland and France. This meant that on 10 June 1345, Edward III or his Chancellor gave a royal writ to John Blome of London to search for the body of Joseph of Arimathea<sup>64</sup> — another saint Glastonbury had incorporated into its pantheon who possessed strongly Arthurian ties through the Grail Cycle. The reasons behind this exact choice of corpse are obscure, but there is no doubt Edward III hoped to replicate the excitement of his ancestors' findings. And it is likely he entertained the idea of making Joseph another Anglicized, chivalric saint like St George, though little can be said of the effectiveness of the endeavor.<sup>65</sup> St Joseph never achieved the same levels of national recognition as St George. And while an anonymous late fourteenth-century chronicler from East Anglia wrote that Joseph's body was discovered in 1367, Lagorio points out that the monks' overall silence on the matter most likely meant a body was never found.<sup>66</sup> Edward and Glastonbury would have been sure to make use of a body had it been found, but instead this particular reworking of Arthurian propaganda seems to have vanished. Even the Grail Cycle, which was immensely popular in France, did not gain the same notoriety in England. As Mary Flowers Braswell suggests perhaps the Grail and its accompanying characters did not fit well into Edward's ultimate agenda:

The events of Edward's reign included the recurrent Black Plague, the Battle of Poitiers, the Hundred Years' War, and the struggle with the papacy, all of

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<sup>63</sup> Lagorio, 'The Evolving Legend of St Joseph of Glastonbury', p. 217.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 217-8.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon Hall Gerould also makes the connection between the rise of Arthurian lore during Henry II's time and the need to find a pro-English hero-saint that rivaled the French's claim to Charlemagne. See Gerould, 'King Arthur and Politics', p. 45.

<sup>66</sup> Lagorio, 'The Evolving Legend of St Joseph of Glastonbury', pp. 217-8.

which required a fighter king, not one who guarded the home front while his best knights pursued the quest and came back empty handed.<sup>67</sup>

Finding St Joseph, then, would not have proved as helpful to Edward III as finding the corpse of a warrior knight of romance, and the fact that he did not ‘plant’ a corpse, as Henry II had, is telling of both Edward’s propagandic style and the ways in which he used sainthood to further his Arthurian agendas. As Ormrod states,

Edward’s ambitious building program at Windsor Castle, his extravagant tournaments and feast, and even his sumptuous clothes can all be seen as attempts to promote the cult of kingship. It is natural to suppose that the king’s private religion was also put to work in the service of the Plantagenet propaganda machine.<sup>68</sup>

But by 1345 — a time in which Edward’s other uses of Arthurian propaganda were flourishing — he had already identified himself with a number of exclusively English saints as well as the Virgin,<sup>69</sup> who was the singularly most-mentioned patron in Arthurian romance, making additional connections with Joseph of Arimathea of little value outside of the initial excitement the search for the body would have gathered.

It was in Edward I’s proactive use of Arthurian legend, then, that Edward III would find the best grounds for replicating propaganda in ways that ensured tangible, or at least visible, results. During Easter 1278, Edward I and Queen Eleanor had gone to Glastonbury to have the now famous tomb of Arthur and Guinevere reopened so the bodies could be reinterred per Edward I’s instructions. Great pomp and circumstance surrounded the event. A local chronicler reported the bodies were lavishly reinterred and the skulls left out on permanent display ‘on account of popular devotion’.<sup>70</sup> But the main reason for the skulls’ continued visibility was the fact that Edward I, like Henry II, had been engaged in ongoing struggle with the Welsh and wanted to remind them that Arthur was, in fact, dead, and that his skull stood as a permanent monument to English ascendancy. Where Henry II, then, had set out to ‘bury’ the idea of a Celtic Arthur, Edward I had opted to resurrect Arthurianism as a decidedly English medium and had met with enough

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<sup>67</sup> Braswell, ‘Arthurian Lacunae’, p. 486.

<sup>68</sup> Ormrod, ‘The Personal Religion of Edward III’, p. 853.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 858.

<sup>70</sup> Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, pp. 165-6.

success that upon his death the virulently anti-Scottish, pro-Norman chronicler Pierre Langtoft wrote of Edward I as the epitome of the chivalric, Arthurian tradition:

Of chivalry, after king Arthur, was king Edward the flower of Christendom. He was so handsome and great, so powerful in arms, that of him may one speak as long as the world lasts. For he had no equal as a knight in armour for vigour and valour, neither present nor future.<sup>71</sup>

This provided Edward III with a successful template on which to base his own Arthurian propaganda — one in which chivalry, ‘power in arms’, and valour were to be highly valued. In 1331, shortly after his iconic coup and rise to power over his mother and Roger Mortimer, Edward III took his own wife to Glastonbury to see the reinterred bones of Arthur and Guinevere in direct imitation of the pilgrimage his grandfather had made in 1278. Caroline Shenton suggests Edward ‘wished to associate himself with Arthur in order to legitimize his position by associating his reign with that of the most successful of his forebears’.<sup>72</sup> And this is in no doubt true. Edward III cultivated links with his grandfather throughout his reign,<sup>73</sup> using Edward I to garner respect and political power by reminding the English of their ‘glorious’ history.<sup>74</sup> His pilgrimage, then, became a double sort of validation — not only was he using Edward I to justify his image, he was using the Arthurian trappings of the monastery to garner additional connections between himself and Arthurian lore.

Even closer to Edward III’s own personal experience, however, was the negative reminder that Arthurian propaganda could backfire, as it had for Roger Mortimer in 1329. Mortimer’s descent from Llywelyn the Great had given him opportunity to claim Welsh ancestry as well as English — a significant fact because the *Annales Waverlienses* contained an amended but popular prophecy of Merlin still in use during Mortimer’s regency: ‘When English money is made round, a Welsh prince in London shall be crowned.’<sup>75</sup> Several English chroniclers had been quick to interpret this prophecy as fulfilled when Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s rebellion was put

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<sup>71</sup> Langtoft, Peter, *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. Wright, pp. 380-1.

<sup>72</sup> Sherman, ‘Royal Interest in Glastonbury and Cadbury’, p. 1250.

<sup>73</sup> Edward III admired Edward I’s reign openly. Instead of being buried in Cologne, Edward III stated he wished to be laid to rest near Edward I, describing his grandfather as ‘that most illustrious and courageous soldier, and the most prudent statesman’. See Spencer, ‘Royal Patronage and the Earls’, p. 43.

<sup>74</sup> Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III*, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Mortimer, *The Greatest Traitor*, p. 9; Ruding, *Annals Of The Coinage*, p. 195.

down and his head stuck on a spike above the Tower of London in 1282 and crowned with a mocking ‘crown’ of ivy.<sup>76</sup> But this posthumous ‘crowning’ did not negate the prophecy’s potency. The very reason political prophecy was so popular was that it could be adapted and reused as often as an astute propagandist wished, leaving Mortimer, who in and of himself held no royal power by blood, in a position to exploit the figure of Arthur for his own personal gain.

In 1329, not long into Edward III’s minority regency, Mortimer held a great tournament at Wigmore Castle, presiding over the festivities in the guise of Arthur with Isabella at his side dressed as Guinevere. The display was lavish but did not achieve its desired effects. Instead of seeing Mortimer as an heir of Arthur and a kingly figure in his own right, his association with the figure of the ‘Once and Future King’ when he, himself, was not a king made his display seem perverse. His own son, Geoffrey, declared him ‘the King of Folly’,<sup>77</sup> and the author of the *Brut* chronicle claimed Mortimer,

...imitated the manner and customs of King Arthur’s table, but totally failed in his intention, for the noble king Arthur (unlike him) was the most worthy and famous lord in the whole world in his day.<sup>78</sup>

This set a precedent of boundary on who, how much, and what types of Arthurian propaganda could be used — a precedent Edward III followed, especially in his early reign, by associating himself with the figures of Sir Lionel or the anonymous knight errant over that of Arthur himself. The general use of tournaments, however, was one which Edward III replicated for propagandic display, fostering an imitation of Arthurian romance, which placed a heavy importance on chivalric exhibitions.

In the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, for instance, Guinevere proposes Arthur host a tournament as soon as his chivalric image is seen to flag, stating,

“Yif ye your honour holde shall,

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<sup>76</sup> Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, p. 186.

<sup>77</sup> Others of Mortimer’s class played at being Arthur during tournaments, including an Austrian knight, Ulrich von Lichtenstien, who in 1240 made a tour of Austrian and Styrian jousting under the pseudonym of ‘Künig Artus’. He did not, however, carry this charade out in close proximity to a royal family, so while it would have been appropriate enough for Mortimer to pretend to be a king with his own wife at his side, it was quite another matter to play at Arthur with the queen and the real king present. See Mortimer, *The Greatest Traitor*, pp. 225-7; and Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 76-91.

<sup>78</sup> Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 165.

A tournament were best to bede,  
“For-why that aunter [adventure] shall begin  
And bespoke of every side,  
That knightes shall there worship win  
To deed of armes for to ride...” (lines 31-8)<sup>79</sup>

Tournaments, then, were not only a place to display or regain royal honour and chivalry, they were a platform from which later adventures could be launched. In the fourteenth-century romances, these adventures often contained anonymous knights, knights errant, or knights-in-disguise with one or more of each appearing in *Ywain and Gwain*; *Perceforest*; *Sir Percevale of Galles*; the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>80</sup> Within these stories their function was to build suspense and hide the identity of key characters who needed to remain anonymous for thematic purposes. But Edward III used their personas to further his own ‘role-identity’, or self-appointed image as an Arthurian-styled king.

At the Dunstable jousts of 1342, for instance, Edward III appeared in the garb of a ‘simple knight’,<sup>81</sup> and at the Stepney tournament in 1331 he rode visored and dressed in the same colours as his team so he could merge with them seamlessly.<sup>82</sup> Whether he expected such instances to be seen as Arthurian is moot. Barber has noted that the majority of the costumes Edward III commissioned throughout his reign did not relate to specific characters within Arthurian romance,<sup>83</sup> but to a watching England familiar with the ‘simple knights’ of Arthurianism, connections would have been made regardless of whether the costumes at Dunstable and Stepney were specifically commissioned to forward Arthurian propaganda or not. In addition, appearing in the same colours as his team at Stepney forwarded Edward’s image as a comrade of his own elite — one humble enough to appear an equal to his men in garb but regal enough that his and his companions’ costumes were lined with red and embroidered with arrows of gold.<sup>84</sup> Clothing was, after all, very important in royal pomp as well as in Arthurian romance. In *Sir Launfal*, Launfal is disgraced

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<sup>79</sup> *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, lines 31-8.

<sup>80</sup> *Ywain and Gawain*, lines 3400-3; *Perceforest*, pp. 85-90; *Percevale*, line 1887; *Morte Arthure*, lines 100-4; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 179.

<sup>81</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, p. 104.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>83</sup> Barber, *Triumph of England*, pp. 156-7.

<sup>84</sup> Gransen, *Historical Writing in England*, p. 63.

when he becomes too poor to maintain his knightly appearance.<sup>85</sup> But upon recovering his wealth, he immediately provides ‘fyfty yaf riyche wedes [fine sets of clothes]’ to the knights and squires around him before going on to clothe fifty minstrels.<sup>86</sup> Gifts of clothing, then, while not Arthurian in and of themselves, were not unconnected to romance and, in addition to being a sign of royal generosity, could function as real life equalizers much the same way costuming functioned as an equalizer in Arthurian lore. The stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, for instance, features Lancelot using a number of costumes to prevent his opponents from refusing to fight him because of his prowess — that of an old knight, that of a young knight, and that of a ‘strange’ or foreign knight.<sup>87</sup> And *Ywain and Gwain* includes the two title knights fighting each other in the visored costumes of ‘unkouth’ or unknown knights.<sup>88</sup>

Edward III’s use Arthurian-styled imagery, though, did not stop at costuming, tournaments, or display. He also surrounded himself with Arthurian iconography that included images of the Nine Worthies and the lion as mentioned in romance, heraldry, and political prophecy. The Nine Worthies were a pantheon of historical and mythic heroes that included Arthur, Gawain, and Lancelot and were a facet of the chivalric decoration with which Edward III associated. The records for 1332 show Queen Philippa presenting Edward III with a silver cup decorated with images of the Worthies. And a later commissioning of a bed-set decorated with scenes from the life of another Worthy incorporated into the Arthur cycle in *Perceforest* — Alexander the Great — furthered Edward’s association with the mythic figures.<sup>89</sup> But Edward III’s affinity toward the figure of Sir Lionel is perhaps the best noted. At the 1329 Wigmore tournament, Roger Mortimer had presented Edward III with a cup decorated with the arms of Sir Lionel<sup>90</sup> — a gesture which effectively relegated the boy king to a status below that of Mortimer, who had adopted the tournament persona of Arthur. But Edward III still went on to take the

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<sup>85</sup> *Sir Launfal*, lines 140-4.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 425-30.

<sup>87</sup> *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, lines 100-4, 267-8, 1495.

<sup>88</sup> Gawain even goes so far as to bear arms other than his own — ‘So that no man sold se his face; | The armes he bare war noght his awn | For he wald noght in court be knawyn’ — something Edward III was known to do when he fought under the guise of Sir Lionel. See *Ywain and Gwain*, line 3400-3, 3474; and Ormrod, *Edward III*, p.99.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

figure of Sir Lionel as one of his own personal tournament personas with the first decade of his reign seeing a concerted interest in the figure of the lion-hearted knight and his trappings.

In February 1333 embroidery of the arms of Sir Lionel was created for Edward III's own particular use, and in 1334 he appeared at the Dunstable tournament in the guise of Sir Lionel.<sup>91</sup> In 1337 a royal seal 'with the arms of Lionel' was created, and by 1338 Edward III had taken the extraordinary step of naming his third son Lionel after the knight of romance.<sup>92</sup> This was a deliberate attempt to garner Arthurian affiliation under the political prophecy that had given Edward III the title of 'Lion' in the *Six Kings* around his birth.<sup>93</sup> By adopting the persona of Sir Lionel, then, and bestowing the name upon his son, Edward III was appropriating the heroic qualities of the knight under the precedent of political prophecy. After all, Monmouth's Merlin had claimed that at the Lion of Justice's roar 'the towers of Gaul shall shake and the island Dragons tremble'<sup>94</sup> — a prophecy which had special importance at the time of Prince Lionel's birth as the previous year had seen Edward III reassert his right to the French crown in a land everyone recognized as having once been Gaul.<sup>95</sup> In addition, the use of an Arthurian name for a royal prince was not without precedent. In 1187 Prince Geoffrey, son of Henry II, had named his own son and heir Arthur after the mythic king in an effort to garner Breton support in his rebellion against his father.<sup>96</sup> The Chronicle of William of Newburgh, c. 1136-98, records of Arthur of Brittany:

The King [Henry II], his grandfather, who had ordered that the child be given his own name, was opposed by the Bretons, and by solemn acclamation the child was named Arthur when he was held over the sacred font. Thus the Bretons, who are said to have been long waiting for an imaginary Arthur, are now raising up one who is quite real, and they do so in great hope, in accordance with the opinion that certain prophets express in their long and celebrated Arthurian legends.<sup>97</sup>

Edward III's use of the name Lionel, then, can be seen as similarly propagandic and appealing to the more recent prophecy that surrounded his reign. He, too, held

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<sup>91</sup> Edouard Sandoz, 'Tournaments in the Arthurian Tradition', 408-9; Ormrod, *Edward III*, p.99.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.99.

<sup>93</sup> Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p. 49.

<sup>94</sup> Monmouth, *The History of the British Kings*, p. 174.

<sup>95</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 124.

<sup>96</sup> Awell, 'Henry II and Arthurian Legend', p. 387.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

interests in Brittany and cultivated the idea that he was a ‘second Arthur’, making the naming of his son not only a reinforcement of his own chivalric pretensions but a cognomen-derived example of second generation, chivalric, Arthurian-styled royalty.

In addition, his use of the name Lionel was not without heraldic precedent. The lion, or leopard, held great significance in English royal heraldry with the royal arms of the Plantagenet kings bearing three lions passant guardant on a red background (see Figure 1).<sup>98</sup> By associating himself with a knight whose name meant ‘little lion’, then, Edward III was effectively combining the symbolism that surrounded the monarchy with the heroism contained in Arthurian lore. Sir Lionel was, after all, one of the greatest knights of the Arthur-cycle with *Perceforest* describing his ancestor, also called Lyonnel, as the ‘greatest knight of the realm’.<sup>99</sup> He was, therefore, an attractive figure with which to cultivate



Figure 1: Arms of the Plantagenet kings, c. 1198-1340

connection, giving Edward III the opportunity to combine the past and the present — the real and the romantic — in ways which provided visual reminders of the fact that the Plantagenet lions were in some sense synonymous with the lions of romance — an idea bolstered by the way Edward III kept real lions and leopards in the royal menagerie. Records from 1333 show a payment given ‘to the keeper of the king’s leopards’, and in 1334 Edward III purchased two additional lions, three leopards, and a mountain cat from an Italian merchant.<sup>100</sup> 1331-2, meanwhile, saw Queen Philippa gifting Edward III a silver cup and stand decorated with enameled leopards clothed in the royal arms, and 1338 saw the inclusion of the heraldic leopard on the new great seal.<sup>101</sup> In 1342 Edward III made another appearance in the arms of Sir Lionel

<sup>98</sup> Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 101-2.

<sup>99</sup> When Lyonnel is dubbed a knight by the king, the king is sure that of all of the knights he dubs, Lyonnel ‘would prove the most valiant’. *Perceforest*, ed. Bryant, p. 111; Hout, *Postcolonial Fictions*, p. 94.

<sup>100</sup> Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, p. 290.

<sup>101</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, p. 90.

at the Dunstable tournament.<sup>102</sup> And in 1344 the heraldic lion was introduced as part of the imagery present on the new gold half-florin.<sup>103</sup>

Prince Lionel's dukedom of Clarence can be seen as similarly propagandic. Within the Arthur cycle Sir Lionel and Sir Galeschin, the Duke of Clarence, are two separate heroes who both maintained an association with the real-life prince Lionel thanks to his name and title. The alliterative *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, possibly written as a propaganda and patronage piece for a member of court connected with Edward III, shows the two knights together in a way that is telling:

Penne þe best of þe burȝ boȝed toȝeder,  
Aywan, and Errik, and oþer ful mony,  
Sir Doddinaul de Sauage, þe duk of Clarence,  
Launcelot, and Lyonel, and Lucan þe gode,  
Sir Boos, and Sir Byduer, big men boþe,  
And mony o er menskful, with Mador de la Port. (lines 550-5)<sup>104</sup>

Of the heroes listed only the Duke of Clarence is referred to by title, making it possible the anonymous author meant the reference as a camouflaged allusion to Prince Lionel or at least a conflation of the real prince and the Arthurian knight.<sup>105</sup> Such allusion would, after all, greatly increase the prince's and subsequently Edward III's prestige, but because propaganda need not be concrete or even accurate, it matters little if the conflation was purposeful. Anyone familiar with the duke's title would have seen the connection — a correlation Edward III most likely saw and fostered. As Carruthers points out, the title 'Duke of Clarence' is not derived from a royal demesne or important territory. It is a fiction with its closest equivalent in the manor of Clare, which Prince Lionel controlled through his wife. The dukedom, then, though a derivative of Clare, can also be seen as a wordplay — a direct conflation of the Arthurian Dukedom of Clarence with the real life manor of Clare.<sup>106</sup> Such a use of words would not have been out of character for Edward III.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Carruthers, 'The Duke of Clarence', p. 70.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 72-3.

He used mottos and word-play extensively throughout his reign,<sup>107</sup> so it is reasonable to assume that even if this particular instance was not purposeful, it would not have gone unnoticed. After all Edward III was, as Ormrod describes, ‘one of the most image-conscious kings of the later Middle Ages’<sup>108</sup> But in order for his people to share, appreciate, and understand the image of himself he put forward, Edward III had to do more than play with words, names, and imagery. He needed to provide the *communitas regni* with heroic deeds and victories that matched his image as an Arthurian-styled king.

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<sup>107</sup> Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, p. 65.

<sup>108</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 45.

### Chapter 3: Imagery — An ‘Arthur’ is not born; he is made

As king, Edward III controlled or at least had access to all of the usual venues of royal propagandic distribution: the sheriffs, the county courts, the marketplaces, and a number of pulpits. But he did not control the chronicles, the totality of the clergy and elite, or the popular songs, ballads, and stories written by those not under his employ or committed to his cause.<sup>109</sup> In addition, a great deal of his popularity depended upon his success as a military leader.<sup>110</sup> The Nottingham coup had given him a good basis upon which to build, but if Edward III wanted secular, church, and other outside forms of propaganda to align with his image as a chivalric, Arthurian-styled king, he had to provide the disseminators of such propaganda with words and deeds to which they would react appropriately.<sup>111</sup> As A. K. McHardy states, Edward III did not attempt to influence public opinion of himself by lecturing in parliament, writing his own chronicles, or commissioning an official chronicle.<sup>112</sup> Rather he relied upon the second-hand propaganda that grew up around the recordings of his actions, imagery, reputation, and display. And at no one point did his own propaganda machine limit itself to Arthurian propaganda alone. Instead it functioned in layers, building upon a vast number of sources, including the cults of St Thomas, St George, and Edward the Confessor; the Virgin Mary; the mythic English past; and the secular appreciation of the heroic deeds of previous kings, such as Edward I, Henry II, and Richard the Lionheart.<sup>113</sup>

In terms of specifically second-hand propaganda, though — or propaganda not officially sanctioned by the crown — two fourteenth-century chroniclers stand out as better creators and disseminators than the rest: Jean Froissart and Jean Le Bel. Both wrote during Edward’s reign and both were, at times, more interested in portraying Edward as Arthurian than Edward’s own propaganda machine.<sup>114</sup> Froissart was connected to Queen Philippa’s household, entering her employ in

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<sup>109</sup> Matthews, *Writing to the king*, p. 88.

<sup>110</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 44.

<sup>111</sup> The *Brut* chronicles, in particular, are what Claire Valente calls ‘one of the best records of rumours and propaganda, if not of the events themselves’. See Valente, ‘The Deposition of Edward II’, p. 854; McClung Lee, ‘An Analysis of Propaganda’, pp. 129-30.

<sup>112</sup> Braswell, ‘The Search for the Holy Grail’, p. 482.

<sup>113</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 44-5.

<sup>114</sup> Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 157.

1361-2 and remaining there until her death in 1369.<sup>115</sup> Le Bel, on the other hand, participated in Edward III's 1327 Scottish campaign, fighting on the English side. Each chronicler wrote in ways that were heavily chivalric, focusing on war, tournaments, and courtly splendours — all highly visual subjects in keeping with the thematic preoccupations of romance literature, of which Froissart was also a writer.<sup>116</sup> Their chronicles, though uncritical and inconsistent, held great appeal to their fellow aristocrats and created paeanic accounts of Edward III that often mirrored Arthurian romance. During Edward's 1346 campaign in France, for instance, Froissart relates a tale in which Edward III arrives at two castles of Poix and finds 'nobody in them but two fair damsels, daughters to the lord of Poix'.<sup>117</sup> The castles are 'soon taken', and Froissart relates that the women would have been 'violated' had they not been defended by two English knights<sup>118</sup> — information so like the *topos* of romance it stands suspect as accurate record keeping but makes an excellent piece of propaganda in which Edward III is set up to be the hero and damsel rescuer.<sup>119</sup> The story concludes with Froissart relating how Edward,

...for his honour made them [the women] good cheer and demanded of them where they would go. They said, 'To Corbie,' and the king caused them to be brought there without peril.<sup>120</sup>

Women were, of course, integral players in chivalry with real political and diplomatic value and were known to hold and defend castles on their own, especially in times of war.<sup>121</sup> The lacking equivalence of lords, then, is not what skews Froissart's account toward propaganda. Rather it is the way in which he is largely uninterested in the women's contributions, framing the account, the characterization of the damsels, and Edward III's own subsequent actions as features of romance. *Perceforest*, for instance, contains a number of similar rescues, typically involving

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<sup>115</sup> Froissart, *The Chronicles of Froissart*, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> Froissart's romance, *Méliador*, written after Queen Philippa's death, dealt with the *topos* of courtly love, amongst others themes. See Morris, 'Machaut, Froissart, and the Fictionalization of the Self', pp. 552-5.

<sup>117</sup> Froissart, *The Chronicles of Froissart*, p. 17.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Poix was, in fact, highly fortified and had to be undermined by assaults of artillery and scaling ladders — exploits undertaken by English and Welsh soldiers despite Edward III's express instructions that his army was not to take Poix because doing so would cause the French army to overtake them, which it did. See Barber, *Edward III and the Triumph of England*, p. 206; Sumption, *Trial by Fire*, p. 521.

<sup>120</sup> Froissart, *The Chronicles of Froissart*, p. 17.

<sup>121</sup> Gillespie, 'Ladies of the Fraternity of Saint George', p. 278.

damsels who have or will be violated and have been left in the woods or a castle alone. In most of these episodes, the violation is diverted. One or two chivalric knights intervene, not only saving the women's honour but increasing their own in the effort.<sup>122</sup> By framing the account of Poix like a romance, then, Froissart is doing the same thing to Edward's honour, framing an actual episode of war in the tropes of romance to sanitize it of any unpleasantness and maximize Edward's chivalric image in regards to the event.

Froissart's way of handling history, however, is largely exceptional. Most chroniclers stood at a farther remove from court and, barring Le Bel, did not feel the same need to flatter Edward's image.<sup>123</sup> Monastic chroniclers, especially those uninfluenced by royal patronage, were far more likely to criticize, hiding behind vagaries, generalizations, and the suggestion that the king may have fallen prey to 'bad counsel' regardless of whether such bad counsel existed.<sup>124</sup> In order to avoid these, then, and other propagandic pitfalls, Edward III had to be proactive in ensuring his reign was not seen as stagnant or misled. And one of his first steps toward this end was to militarily reverse the 1328 'Shameful Peace' of the Treaty of Northampton, which he and the English had suffered under his mother's regime. This had the immediate effect of renewing hostilities with Scotland but also showed Edward III to be his own man and a king devoted to reviving his royal honour. The success of the English at the Battle of Halidon Hill on 19 July 1333, along with Edward III's placement of Edward Balliol on the Scottish throne, sent the young Scottish king, David Bruce, into exile and secured Edward III full sovereign control over eight Lowland shires.<sup>125</sup> The chroniclers — even those less interested in chivalry or Edward's Arthurian-styled image — responded with enthusiasm. After

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<sup>122</sup> *Perceforest*, pp. 63-8, 71.

<sup>123</sup> David Matthews likens most monastic chronicles to the modern day bumper sticker, stating that while a man may place a sticker of presidential support on his vehicle, he doubts the president will ever come into contact with him, his vehicle, or his badge of support. See Matthews, *Writing to the King*, p. 78.

<sup>124</sup> Monastic writers whose houses were patronized by monarchs or their extended families were far more likely to show favour to kings than those who were unconnected to royal patronage. Henry Knighton is an example of this. He was connected to the Augustinian abbey of St Mary of the Meadows in Leicester, and the abbey's principle political heroes during his lifetime included Henry of Grosmont and John of Gaunt, giving precedence to his highly patriotic accounts of Edward III. See Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, p. xv.

<sup>125</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 8-9.

all, rancor against the Scots was prevalent.<sup>126</sup> Edward I's Great Cause, which had used Arthurian propaganda to justify English supremacy,<sup>127</sup> had fostered a sense of English preeminence that appealed to chivalric and non-chivalric chroniclers alike. By forwarding the Balliol claim, then, Edward III was following his grandfather's precedent and acting as an Arthur figure. Monmouth's *Historia* had, after all, described how Arthur had led his army to Moray, claimed over-lordship of Scotland, and magnanimously granted the Scots back their rights under his English-styled oversight,<sup>128</sup> creating a misconception regarding English superiority which even Balliol was not above acquiescing to in order to maintain power.

A patent letter issued by Balliol on 23 November 1333 offers a view of how thoroughly the idea of English over-lordship had saturated his and consequently Edward III's propaganda:

We, knowing the ancient right by which the realm of Scotland, and the Isles appertaining thereto, is, and has been, held of the Kings of England, as from a sovereign lord, have entered into the liege homage and fealty of the King of England...<sup>129</sup>

A similar ideology can be seen in the fourteenth-century romances — *Ywain and Gawain*, for instance, describes Arthur as,

Arthure, the Kyng of Yngland,  
That wan al Wales with his hand  
And al Scotland, als sayes the buke,... (lines 7-9)<sup>130</sup>

And *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, written after Edward III's 1333 Scottish campaign, declared even more resolutely,

England & Scotland one was,  
& Wales stood in the same case,  
The truth itt is not to layne. (lines 4-6)<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Galloway, 'The Borderlands of Satire' in *The Anglo-Scottish Border*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>127</sup> During his reign, Edward I sent two 'proofs' to the pope, one claiming the right to Scotland through Edward the Elder, who had reigned c. 901, and the other using Galfridian methodology to claim Brutus and Arthur as proof of English ascendancy. See Fisher, 'Once Called Albion', pp. 14-5.

<sup>128</sup> Monmouth, *The History of the British Kings*, pp. 218-9, 221.

<sup>129</sup> Clifford J. Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 51.

<sup>130</sup> *Ywain and Gawain*, lines 7-9.

<sup>131</sup> *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 4-6.

It was ultimately in Edward III's Anglo-Scottish victories, though, and not in the precedent set by Edward I and the Great Cause that Edward III would find the best catalysts for Arthurian-styled propaganda. Jean Le Bel wrote that upon Edward's victorious return to England after the Battle of Halidon Hill he held,

...many great feasts and courts attended by all the barons and lords of the land; and these great feasts and tourneys and jousts and assemblies of ladies earned him such universal esteem that everyone said he was the second King Arthur.<sup>132</sup>

Of interest here is the fact that the feasting, jousting, and set-pieces of romance are what Le Bel uses to qualify Edward as a 'second Arthur'. The victories in Scotland are not immediately mentioned. But within three more paragraphs, Le Bel has amended this, stating:

After the noble King Edward of England had won back the fine city of Berwick as you've heard, and laid waste all the lowlands of Scotland and posted guards and garrisons everywhere he pleased and joyfully returned to his kingdom, he was so loved and honoured by all his people, great and small alike, for the high nobility of his deeds and words and for his great heart and glorious festivities and assemblies of ladies and damsels, that everyone said he was King Arthur.<sup>133</sup>

The difference is slight but highly relevant. The tourneys, feasts, jousts, and assemblies of ladies made Edward III appear a *second* Arthur, comparing him to Arthur in much the same way as the Welsh's tradition of hero comparison.<sup>134</sup> But the ways in which he laid waste to Scotland and returned home under the banner of nobility caused everyone to say he *was* Arthur. The correlation is clear: Edward III may have been *like* Arthur in his pageantry and display but he only *became* Arthur when he protected his kingdom as a conquering ruler.

The English victories in Scotland, however, did not come without a price. The French were at least nominally supportive of the Scottish cause, so when the Bruce regime was threatened, the French king saw an opportunity to use the Anglo-Scottish hostilities to his own advantage. He stalled Anglo-French talks concerning Edward III's rights on the continent, took David Bruce under his protection, and

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<sup>132</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 65.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Padel, *Arthur in Welsh Literature*, p. 4.

incited the Scots against the English in order to keep Edward busy in the north.<sup>135</sup> This, of course, brought England and France closer to open hostility. But Edward III could not renege on the advances he had made in Scotland without wounding his personal pride and causing the community of the realm to see his actions as negligible, so he continued his *chevauchées* in Scotland, pressing further and deeper into Scottish territory. Thanks to several sensational rescue missions that arose as the direct result of the English presence making its way so deeply into Scottish territory, Edward III's propaganda machine was able to make the most of the campaign. In June 1336 the English garrison at Perth came under severe danger of being overrun by the Scots, so Edward III made a lightning ride to the north in order to relieve his troops.<sup>136</sup> By 26 June he had reached Berwick with fifty men-at-arms. And from there he rode to Perth 'in the greatest danger', arriving to the joy of his beleaguered soldiers who were 'amazed at his arrival, and that he should have dared to consider doing it in this manner'.<sup>137</sup> As Clifford J. Rogers writes:

It was perhaps foolish to have ventured into hostile territory with such a small escort...but the adventurous, courageous nature the king demonstrated won him much admiration in chivalric circles.<sup>138</sup>

Once at Perth Edward III received word that the Countess of Atholl and 'other ladies, that were lovely' were under siege in the castle of Lochindorb, giving him yet another opportunity to act as an Arthurian-styled rescuer.<sup>139</sup> True to romantic form, Edward set out 'over the mountains' to rescue the women,<sup>140</sup> and by mid-July, he had reached the countess, who greeted him with thanks. The castle had been down to its last four bushels of grain,<sup>141</sup> greatly enhancing his image as a king who protects and provides for his people as well as a romantic hero.

In 1337, however, with disputes in Gascony on the rise and Anglo-French relations deteriorating, the Hundred Years' War finally broke out.<sup>142</sup> Since at least January, Edward III had been considering the possibility of reasserting his claim to

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<sup>135</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, pp. 74-5.

<sup>136</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, pp. 116-7.

<sup>137</sup> Grey, *Scalacronica*, p. 123; Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 116.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> In romance, besieged women typically need to be rescued by a great knight or warrior. For example, in *Sir Perceval*, Lady Lufamour sends a messenger to Arthur to ask for his help when the Sultan besieges her. See *Sir Perceval*, lines 973-80.

<sup>140</sup> Grey, *Scalacronica*, p. 123; Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, pp. 116-7.

<sup>141</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 118.

<sup>142</sup> Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Battle.*, p. 168-9.

the French throne, which had been raised but also dropped during his minority in 1328.<sup>143</sup> His magnates had advised him that seeking the crown of France would be difficult — most likely impossible — and had urged him to send one last embassy to France to seek peace while simultaneously giving their approval of a Continental confederation against France if peace attempts failed.<sup>144</sup> Anticipating war, Edward III hosted a magnificent ceremony at which he made his oldest son, the Black Prince, the Duke of Cornwall and created six other men earls: William Montague, William Clinton, William Bohun, Robert Ufford, Henry of Lancaster, and Hugh Audley.<sup>145</sup> All of these men had fought with Edward III during his Scottish campaigns and most had been personally involved in the Nottingham coup.<sup>146</sup> The propagandic message was clear: with war with France looming, the fastest way to rise in prestige and wealth was in military service to King Edward III.

Foreign support on the Continent was quick to follow. Flanders, wanting to maintain trade links with England, forced their pro-French count into exile, and in 1338 Emperor Louis IV created Edward imperial vicar-general, giving him extensive power in Germany and the Low Countries.<sup>147</sup> Jean Le Bel describes the occasion incorrectly but romantically, placing the event in the wrong city but providing a detailed account of how the marketplace was ‘decked with fine drapes as if it had been the king’s own chamber’.<sup>148</sup> No explicit mention of Arthur is made, but within Arthurian lore Arthur is often portrayed as an ‘emperor’, and Le Bel makes a direct connection between Edward III and the duties of an emperor, stating that upon receiving his title of vicar-general he began bestowing justice ‘right there and then’ as if he were the emperor himself.<sup>149</sup> An avid reader of romance would not have failed to see the connection. Edward III was beginning to fulfill the Arthurian-styled expectations of the political prophecy that had surrounded his birth.<sup>150</sup> Even Henry Knighton, the largely unromantic albeit highly patriot fourteenth-century canon writing from the abbey of St Mary of the Meadows, took an impressed view of the

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<sup>143</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Shar.*, p. 124.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>145</sup> Sumpton, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Battle*, p. 183.

<sup>146</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 125.

<sup>147</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 10-1.

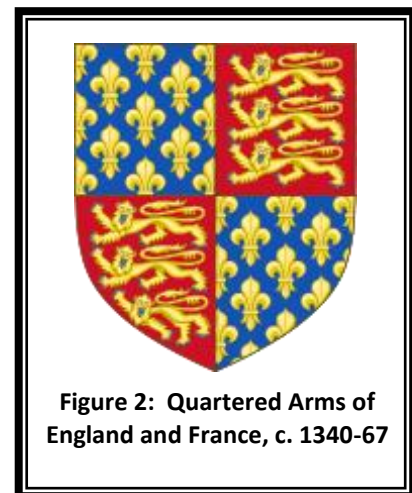
<sup>148</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 75.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Edward was, in fact, given the chance to be made Emperor of the Germans in 1348 but refused because it would have jeopardized his claim to the throne of France. See Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, pp. 91-3.

event. His typically austere account broke tone to mention thrones ‘richly decked’ for the emperor and Edward; pageantry involving a scepter, golden orb, and unsheathed swords;<sup>151</sup> and an oath sworn to Edward by the emperor and gathered lords to ‘at once rally to the king of England’ and ‘always be ready to come to him, whenever he called them out against the king of France’.<sup>152</sup>

Despite an auspicious start, however, the excitement for the war with France waned. Heavy taxes in the late 1330s, along with an economic recession, provoked criticism of Edward’s failure to make use of the funds raised for war.<sup>153</sup> And purveyance, always an inflammatory issue, caused Knighton to remark on how ‘much evil would have come...if the king had not listened to more wholesome counsel’.<sup>154</sup> As Clifford J. Rogers explains: the young Edward III ‘consistently underestimated the difficulty of using royal power to coerce his subjects into doing what they had no desire to do’.<sup>155</sup> After all, an emperor in image did not equate to an emperor in fact, and Edward III was confined by the reality that life and chivalric deeds occurred in a world in which men and women did not always act as or respect the characters of romance. Nevertheless, he pressed on with his goals. By October 1337 Edward III had begun styling himself ‘Edward, by grace of God King of England and France’ while referring to the Valois King as ‘Phillip, calling himself King of France’.<sup>156</sup> Le Bel records how, at the urgings of the Flemish, Edward ‘took the arms of France and quartered them with those of England, and called himself thenceforth King of France and England’ (see Figure 2)<sup>157</sup> — an action Knighton justifies with the king’s ‘nobility and boldness, and his bravery’.<sup>158</sup> Though the quartering of the French arms was a good deal less a matter of bravery and



<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>153</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 10-1.

<sup>154</sup> Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, p. 7.

<sup>155</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 139.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>157</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 82.

<sup>158</sup> Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, p. 23.

a good deal more a visual appropriation of what had been traditionally French symbols. Criticism would follow,<sup>159</sup> but in July 1339, with excitement high, Edward sent an open letter to the Pope and the cardinals taking the monumental step of stating that France ‘is known by all to belong to us by legitimate right’.<sup>160</sup>

There was, of course, some legal precedent for this. Edward did have a viable, if unlikely claim to the French throne through his mother.<sup>161</sup> But popular precedent swayed between the legal and the romantically fictional. Knighton believed Edward III deserved to be king because he had supposedly placed his claim to France first and France ‘ought not be divided between sisters’, which meant the whole crown should have fallen to Edward by right.<sup>162</sup> And the fourteenth-century chronicler of Canterbury followed, calling John II, who took the throne after his father Philip’s death, the ‘self-styled king of France.’<sup>163</sup> But Le Bel, though staunchly pro-Edwardian, was willing to admit Philip, at least, had been unanimously elected by the French barons as ‘the most rightful claimant’.<sup>164</sup> Precedent for Edward III’s claim, then, rested on the circumstantial and was open to debate. Le Bel, in an attempt to explain why he supported Edward over Philip, wrote:

Some people, when they hear this story read, may wonder why I call the King of England ‘the noble King Edward’ but the French king simply ‘King Philip of France’; they might well imagine I’m biased or partisan. Saving the grace of all listeners, it’s not a question of taking sides; I do this to honour the one who behaved most nobly in this story, and that’s King Edward, who cannot be honoured too highly, for all his deeds he always followed sound advice,

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<sup>159</sup> This appropriation did not fail to draw criticism. In 1345 the pope sent two bishops to Edward, ordering him, without success, to relinquish the arms of France. And in 1355 the French asked the same thing, receiving the reply: ‘that the king bore the arms of France upon the advice of his liege men of France, and that he would not give them up for anyone alive...’ See, *ibid.*, pp. 53, 127.

<sup>160</sup> There is debate as what Edward III hoped to accomplish by asserting his claim to France. Some scholars have argued the claim was a bluff, and he was hoping for little more than full sovereignty of Aquitaine. Others have suggested he had too much at stake to risk declaring himself the King of France only to give up for lesser gains. In addition, his letters and actions do not read as a bluff and have often been misinterpreted simply because England was a smaller country than France and therefore deemed less likely to succeed in an all-out war. See Patroul, ‘Edward III and the Kingdom of France’; and Rogers, ‘Edward III and the Dialects of Strategy: 1327-1360’ and *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 177.

<sup>161</sup> Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, p. 17.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>163</sup> *Anonymous of Canterbury*, p. 19.

<sup>164</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 55.

and loved his men and knights and squires, and honoured each man according to his degree, and defended his land well against enemies...<sup>165</sup>

Le Bel then goes on to further explain why Edward III is a ‘good king’ and Philip is not, using the propagandic techniques of ‘glittering generalities’ and ‘name-calling’ to short-cut discussion by associating Edward with the ‘virtue word’ *noble* and Philip with a lack of nobility.<sup>166</sup> Le Bel’s argument, however, hinges on one, basic point: Philip consistently appeared a coward, unable to defend his people and uphold his own honour.<sup>167</sup> Such an image, of course, was not in keeping with either the Arthurian ideal of bravery or the real-life equivalent of ‘good kingship’ the people of England and France so desperately craved.

Philip’s departure from the chivalric ideal, then, made it comparably easy for the English, and some of the French,<sup>168</sup> to justify Edward’s claim. Not only did his proclamation of his right to France have hints of legality, but the literary precedent for an English king of France highlighted the fact that he would be a hero like Arthur — a hero like Edward. After all, Monmouth’s *Historia* had declared the Boar of Cornwall would ‘lord it over the forests of Gaul’,<sup>169</sup> and the *Six Kings* had stated Edward III would ‘whet his tusks on the gates of Paris’.<sup>170</sup> But it was in the late fourteenth-century couplet version of *Arthur* that the most striking example of an English-styled king in France was forwarded. In *Arthur*, the character of Arthur invades France, besieges Paris, and defeats the Roman governor Frolo in single combat.<sup>171</sup> He then distributes his conquered lands to his friends and allies and returns to Britain where there is much feasting.<sup>172</sup> Before long a letter from the Roman Emperor arrives, stating Arthur should not have taken France, but Arthur is able to defend his claim through descent from Emperor Constantine.<sup>173</sup> A very pro-Edwardian picture is created, the parallels between *Arthur* and Edward’s own campaigns in France so tight they cannot be entirely coincidental. After all, Edward

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>166</sup> McClung Lee, ‘The Analysis of Propaganda’, p. 134.

<sup>167</sup> Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, pp. 19, 21, 79-85.

<sup>168</sup> Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, pp. 79-85.

<sup>169</sup> Monmouth, *History of the British Kings*, pp. 171-2.

<sup>170</sup> Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp. 49-50; Smallwood, ‘The Prophecy of the Six Kings’, pp. 572-7.

<sup>171</sup> *Arthur*, lines 61-100.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., lines 117-35.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., lines 194-270.

III besieged cities and brought danger to Paris.<sup>174</sup> He involved himself in schemes to use tournaments and small group combats to determine the outcomes of battles.<sup>175</sup> He awarded lands and ransoms to his generals and friends, returned to England after claiming France through descent and birth, and had his claim challenged by Rome when the pope placed a complaint in 1345 without success.<sup>176</sup> The significance, of course, is not whether *Arthur* was, in fact, written as a covert parallel for Edward III's campaigns. Ascribing motives to Middle English romance is next to impossible because they were influenced by history, literature, and current events in ratios which can no longer be determined, if they could have ever been determined at all. The significance is that, regardless of intent or source material, *Arthur* does mirror Edward's activities in France and therefore provides an indirect propagandic link between his own campaigns and those of Arthur. In one sense, then, the author of *Arthur* is following the tradition of the conquering English king found in previous literature and political prophecy and in another he is forwarding the idea that Edward III and his descendants have a right to France even the power of Rome cannot stop. In 1340, however, with his French campaigns just at a start and his victories yet unaccomplished, Edward III's relationship with the then unwritten *Arthur* as well as with the broader baronage of England was still uncertain.<sup>177</sup>

Since the mid-1330s, Edward had been spreading his patronage more widely and had revived the lapsed earldoms of Devon and Pembroke as well as cultivated the support of the Lancastrians.<sup>178</sup> But the majority of the recipients of his generosity were still close friends and household knights — many of whom had participated in the Nottingham coup, which was no longer of pressing political importance. Grey may have mentioned it the *Scalacronica*, but Le Bel, also writing in the 1350s, made no mention of the coup, merely stating Edward was 'upset and angry' and 'had

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<sup>174</sup> On 6 April 1360, Edward III set up camp outside Paris. See Knighton, *The Chronicle of Knighton*, p. 177.

<sup>175</sup> During the siege of Calais, Knighton records how the French proposed a tournament to settle matters without full war and were turned down, and Thomas Grey in the *Scalacronica* records how Edward attempted to convince Philip of Valois into single or group combat at the siege of Tournai. See *ibid.*, p. 83; and Grey, *Scalacronica*, p. 131.

<sup>176</sup> Knighton, *The Chronicle of Knighton*, p. 53. Of note is the fact that year 1345 is the same year Edward III or his Chancellor instigated the search for St Joseph of Arimathea, lending credibility to the idea that Edward hoped to oppose the papacy's request for his relinquishment of the France title though the finding an Arthurian saint. See Lagorio, 'The Evolving Legend of St Joseph of Glastonbury', pp. 217-8.

<sup>177</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

Mortimer arrested at once and taken to London before a great gathering of his kingdom's barons'.<sup>179</sup> When Edward's campaign in France, then, went effectively bankrupt in 1341, it became obvious he had been requesting unrealistic financial concessions from his regency council and had failed to maintain sufficient support on the home front. A Rochester chronicler related how, upon the financial breakdown of Edward's campaign, the English king 'could not salvage his reputation when by instigation of the Flemings he had assumed the arms of the King of France and styled himself King of France in letters sent everywhere, and had not obtained the kingdom'.<sup>180</sup> Patience with Edward III and his claims to France had run dry, making a quick and effective restyling of his campaign necessary. An attempt was made to draw Philip of Valois into single combat at the siege of Tournai with Edward sending a provocative letter to Philip on 26 July:

Philip of Valois, for a long time we have importuned you, by embassies and all other reasonable ways that we know, to render us our rightful heritage of France, which you have detained from us for a long time, and very unjustly occupied...considering the right that we have to the heritage which you wrongfully keep away from us, we are drawing toward you in order to bring our rightful challenge to a quick conclusion, if you will approach. And because such a great force of men as we have assembled (as we think you have as well) cannot long hold together, without causing harm and destruction to the people and the land,...we greatly desire that the matter be concluded soon, and that, to avoid the death of Christians, as the quarrel is between you and us, that the debate of our challenge be conducted by our two bodies.<sup>181</sup>

The *Scalacronica* went on to explain that Edward then,

offered him [Philip] the choice of a set-piece battle, force against force in a suitable place and on an appointed day; or of 100 knights against 100 on firm assurance...<sup>182</sup>

But Edward III was much younger than Philip, and Philip was disinclined to offer battle, much less single combat. The siege at Tournai collapsed and the propagandic value of the proposed chivalric combats acquired little outside of the attention it

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<sup>179</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicle*, p. 59.

<sup>180</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 215.

<sup>181</sup> For an unabridged version of the first part of the letter, see Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>182</sup> Grey actually records the events in reverse order: Edward offered single combat first and failing that a battle of 100 and failing that a set-piece battle. See Grey, *Scalacronica*, pp. 131; 243.

drew,<sup>183</sup> forcing Edward III to return to England, his campaigns in financial disarray and his image tenuous.

John de Stratford, the archbishop of Canterbury, who had been one of the leaders of the regency council, became Edward's main scapegoat. He accused Stratford of advocating extravagant policies and failing to supply funds across the channel, thereby reducing Edward's campaign to a mockery. Stratford, however, declared he was not at fault and preached a sermon at Canterbury, comparing himself to Thomas Becket. A war of words ensued with Edward refusing to let Stratford into Parliament.<sup>184</sup> The assembly was shocked — the compiler of the *Chronicle of London* enough so to record the Earl of Surrey's outraged response:

Sir king, how goes this parliament? Parliaments were not wont to be like this. For here those who should be foremost are shut out, while there sit other men of low rank who have no business to be here. Such right belongs only to the peers of the land. Sir king, think of this.<sup>185</sup>

What had began as an attempt to shift blame had turned into an unfortunate parallel of the favouritism that had laid so heavily upon Edward II's reign. As Ormrod explains: 'Edward III's disregard for the welfare and rights of his subjects had produced a powerful coalition of disaffected parties drawing strength and inspiration from their support in the country'<sup>186</sup> — a coalition which would become the focus of Edward's pro-Arthurian propaganda as he attempted to divert Stratford's supporters and minimize harm to his own position as king.<sup>187</sup>

Thanks to some clever maneuvering on the part of Edward III and his administration, he secured what ended up being a remarkable political recovery. He dismantled Stratford's coalition by appointing laymen to the positions previously held by the archbishop's followers and isolated Stratford to the point where within

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<sup>183</sup> Edward's letter proposing single combat made its way, in summary or in totality, into several chronicles, including the *Scalacronica* and the *Historia aurea*, as did Philip's reply, providing account of the offer and Philip's refusal. See *ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>184</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 14-5.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>187</sup> In terms of romance, the *Morte Arthur* shows how Arthur's kingdom and life come under risk when he and his knights fight amongst themselves — a situation Edward III would not have wanted to see paralleled in England in the ways it had been under King John and Henry III. See *Morte Arthur*, parts 2-3.

weeks he and the king had made peace.<sup>188</sup> On the military front, too, Edward's fortunes had begun to revive. The English victory in the naval Battle of Sluys on 24 June 1340 was a great triumph and an opportunity for further propaganda. Edward III was personally involved with Le Bel recording he 'displayed such valour and performed such personal feats of prowess that he cheered and gave heart to all the rest'.<sup>189</sup> More importantly, though, the victory gave the English the ability to claim supremacy of the seas. And the fact that Edward III was wounded in the leg reinforced his image as a heroic comrade of his own men-at-arms — an image that had been built in tournaments but needed real-life equivalents.<sup>190</sup>

On the Continent, however, Edward's fortunes were declining. His allies in the Low Countries had begun to pull back, and by the end of 1338 he had lost his imperial vicariate.<sup>191</sup> The return of David Bruce to Scotland similarly reopened hostilities, and by 1341 a new front in the north was seeing engagement, though this worked largely to Edward's advantage. The English were typically more hesitant to fight on the Continent. 'Just wars' were supposed to be fought in defense of the realm or, more occasionally, to redress a wrong.<sup>192</sup> And it could be difficult for the inland English lords, who their own contemporary Froissart called 'fickle, dangerous, arrogant, and rebellious',<sup>193</sup> to see how war with France was 'just' when it happened across the Channel, posed little direct threat to their personal property, and offered but semi-permanent advancement.<sup>194</sup> War with Scotland, however, was different. It offered immediate danger and the promise of more permanent, or at least more easy, advancement on the home front, thereby binding the community of the realm together against a common enemy who could be construed as an obvious threat.<sup>195</sup> As a result, though tension remained between Edward III and the nobility who had opposed him during the Stratford crisis, most of the disaffected nobles were still willing to supply troops to Edward's newest Scottish campaign, thereby

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<sup>188</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 15.

<sup>189</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 86.

<sup>190</sup> Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, p. 199.

<sup>191</sup> Knighton, *Chronicle of Knighton*, p. 37.

<sup>192</sup> Burton, 'Politics, Propaganda and Public Opinion', pp. 16, 202.

<sup>193</sup> Sumption, *Trial by Fire*, p. 50.

<sup>194</sup> The port cities were often at risk of raids but inland England was less so, and as a result, the inland nobles often saw less advantage in pursuing interests on the Continent if they did not already have a previous claim they wished to forward. See *ibid.* pp. 50-1.

<sup>195</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 16.

beginning or furthering their mutual rehabilitations.<sup>196</sup> The 1341 succession crisis in Brittany created similar opportunities. By backing John de Montfort over the French-backed Charles of Blois, Edward employed his so-called ‘provincial strategy’ — a technique which allowed him to intervene in private disputes between the French king and his vassals.<sup>197</sup> It also opened up battle on multiple fronts. But instead of debasing Edward’s position as a commander-in-chief and king, it provided multiple lieutenancies, the majority of which went to earls who, thanks to the binding effect of war with Scotland, were now eager to vent their energies and prove themselves under Edward’s banner instead of criticizing his administration.<sup>198</sup>

This meant that within five years of the Stratford crisis, Edward III had immersed as the centre of numerous military engagements with his court serving as a chivalric hub from which his barons left to engage in adventure, receiving land, prizes, and honour in return for their service.<sup>199</sup> He promoted a ‘new elite’, deploying propaganda around them which stressed their competence and ability in real-life equivalents to the ways in which new knights were built up as noble and honourable via word of mouth and deed in romance.<sup>200</sup> And he and his administration created the specialized conciliar Court of Chivalry, which dealt with heraldic and military disputes, further tying the symbolism of heraldry and the recompenses of war to Edward III.<sup>201</sup> In January 1344 a truce was drawn between England and France, and Edward III returned to England and held a great Round Table festival at Windsor Castle. Leland’s Abstract, found in Grey’s *Scalacronica*, offers a conflated account of the event:

King Edward made a great feast at Windsor at Christmas when he renewed the round table and the name of Arthur and ordained the order of the garter making Saint George the patron thereof.<sup>202</sup>

The Order of the Garter was not, in fact, announced at this particular ‘renewing of the Round Table’. It would follow in 1348. But it was at this particular festival that

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>199</sup> Jones, ‘Edward III’s Captains in Brittany’ in *England in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 99-118.

<sup>200</sup> This propaganda appears in the preambles to charters as well as in connection to the Order of the Garter, which stated the worth of the ‘new elite’ and justified Edward III’s ‘elevation programme’ through parliamentary matters as well as the Garter. See *ibid.* and Bothwell, ‘Edward III and the “New Nobility”’, pp. 1127-8.

<sup>201</sup> Ormrod, ‘Edward III’s Government of England’, pp. 126-30.

<sup>202</sup> Grey, *Scalacronica*, p. 135.

Edward III commissioned the building of the large, circular House of the Round Table, which was intended to house the Order of the Round Table — an aborted, secular order of chivalry that was to contain 300 knights.<sup>203</sup> Jean Le Bel, ever enthusiastic about all things chivalrous, describes the festival and commissioning of the order at length,

Once he [Edward] was back in England his noble heart inspired him not only to restore and improve the castle at Windsor, which King Arthur had built and where the Round Table was first established in honour of the worthy knights of that time, but also to create a counterpart to that Round Table for the greater honour of his own knights; for they'd served him so well and he considered them most worthy; their like were not to be found in any kingdom, and he loved them so dearly that he felt he couldn't honour them too much. So he announced a great feast and a plenary court for the founding of this Round Table, summoning ladies and damsels, knights and squires from all parts of his kingdom, insisting that no one on any account should fail to attend this great feast at Windsor, at Pentecost in the year of grace 1344.<sup>204</sup>

Similarly Adam Murimuth, in his late 1340s *Continuatio Chronicarum*, described the commissioning of the house at length:

On the following Thursday, after the squires had jousted, the king gave a great feast at which he announced the foundation of his Round Table, and took oaths of certain lords, barons and knights who wished to be members of the said Round Table. He fixed the day for the holding of the Round Table as the Whitsun following, and dismissed the company thanking them for all they had done. He afterwards commanded that a most noble building should be built, in which to hold the Round Table on the day assigned, and instructed masons, carpenters and other workmen to carry out the work, providing both wood and stone, and not sparing either labour or expense.<sup>205</sup>

Of the two, Murimuth's account is the more accurate. Le Bel, like LeLand, makes a number of errors: the meeting at Pentecost never took place, Arthur did not build Windsor castle,<sup>206</sup> and, again, there is conflation of the Order of the Round Table with the Order of the Garter. But these inconsistencies are entirely in keeping with Le Bel's style — he regarded Arthur as a real-life hero and attributed the building of many castles to him, taking pains to identify locations by the names he was

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<sup>203</sup> Barber, 'Why did Edward III hold the Round Table?', in *Edward III's Round Table*, pp. 77-83.

<sup>204</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 153.

<sup>205</sup> Murimuth's *Continuatio Chronicarum* in Barber et al, *Edward III's Round Table*, p. 182.

<sup>206</sup> Froissart, most likely following Le Bel, makes the same error, claiming 'At that time, [1344] king Edward of England wished and decided to restore and rebuild the great castle of Windsor, which king Arthur founded and built in times gone by, and where the Round Table was established.' See Barber et al, *Edward III's Round Table*, p. 188.

convinced they had held during Arthur's time.<sup>207</sup> The result is a chronicle that follows the popular view of Arthur as historical, making the comparisons Le Bel draws between Edward III and Arthur all the more potent.

Work on the House of the Round Table began in February 1344 with construction reaching a wide-ranging scale. Stone was gathered from a variety of areas,<sup>208</sup> and carpenters were brought in from around England while masons were hired from Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire.<sup>209</sup> This meant that large portions of England were well aware of the building and its construction, and news of the proposed order would have spread as well. The building itself, though, was never completed, and the order was aborted as hostilities with France reopened. The significance, then, is not in either the use of the house or the ongoing existence of the order. It is in their temporary but dramatic propagandic value. The chroniclers reported on their creations widely — in addition to Le Bel and Murimuth, Froissart, Thomas Walsingham, the St Omer Chronicle, and the Continuation of Nicholas Trivet all discussed the 1344 Round Table at Windsor.<sup>210</sup> And Richard Barber has noted in his study of the house that the number of knights in the order — 300 — along with the construction of the house itself mirrored the knightly orders in *Perceforest* as well as *Perceforest*'s 'Franc Palais', or 'Noble Palace'<sup>211</sup> — a similarity the Continuation of Nicholas Trivet also saw:

The king, having touched the holy books, swore a solemn oath that he himself at a certain time, provided that he had the necessary means, would begin a Round Table, in the same manner and condition as Arthur, formerly king of England, and established it, namely to the number of 300 knights...<sup>212</sup>

This reinforced the idea that Edward III was strongly influenced by romance literature in this particular manifestation of Arthurian propaganda.<sup>213</sup> It was, after all, the most blatant step he ever took in associating himself with the figure of Arthur

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<sup>207</sup> Examples include Blanchland Abbey in Northumberland, which Le Bel states was 'known in King Arthur's time as the Blanche Lande', along with 'the castle and city which the Welsh call Carduiele [Carlisle] and which was formerly held by King Arthur'. Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, pp. 39, 45.

<sup>208</sup> Records show orders of Totternhoe, Caen, Wheatley, Reigate, Bentley, and Stapleton stone; chalk; Kentish rag; and Purbeck marble all being shipped to Windsor Castle for the completion of the House. See Tatton-Brown, 'The Building Stone', in *Edward III's Round Table*, pp. 53-9.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Barber et al, *Edward III's Round Table*, pp. 180-9.

<sup>211</sup> Barber, 'Imaginary Buildings', in *Edward III's Round Table*, pp. 100-15; *Perceforest*, pp. 244-60.

<sup>212</sup> Trivet, *The Continuation of Nicholas Trivet* in Barber et al, *Edward III's Round Table*, p. 186.

<sup>213</sup> Barber, 'Imaginary Buildings', in *Edward III's Round Table*, pp. 100-15.

and the Round Table, making a sort of ‘band wagon’ effect necessary in order to keep his image from suffering as Mortimer’s had in 1328.<sup>214</sup> The chroniclers’ enthusiasm, however, worked to ensure such an effect was achieved, and most of the elite were, by this point, more than willing to follow Edward III’s programmes and agendas as regarded chivalric orders and building schemes.<sup>215</sup>

Edward III went on to launch several major offensives in France, which were met with similar enthusiasm. The resounding English victory at Crécy in 1346 inspired an anonymous poet to compare Edward III to Arthur using Galfridian-styled political prophecy:

Est nobis murus, virtus, valor, absque pavore; Rex bonus Arthurus,  
Francos replendo dolore.

Dentes aprini fient clavi Parisini; Rex leopardinus est juste rex  
Parisinus.

Jure dati nati belli meriti probioris,

Simus ei grati, solus regnat vir honouris.<sup>216</sup>

[We have a wall, power, virtue, one without fear [in Edward]; Good King Arthur, | France will be resplendent with pain. | The boar will sharpen his teeth on Paris; the King Leopard is justly king | Of Paris. | Right has been given to children of worthier merit, | Let us be grateful that a man of honour alone reigns.]

And the poet Laurence Minot, also celebrating Edward III’s 1340s victories, ascribed Edward’s success to the prophecies of Merlin:

Merlin said thus with his mowth:

Out of the north into the sowth

Suld cum a bare over the se

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<sup>214</sup> The author of the *Brut* chronicle records that at the Wigmore Tournament of 1328 Geoffrey had ‘imitated the manner and customs of King Arthur’s table, but totally failed in his intention, for the noble king Arthur (unlike him) was the most worthy and famous lord in the whole world in his day’. See Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 165.

<sup>215</sup> Some of the clergy, though, and the lower levels of society were less convinced of Edward III’s Arthurian qualities. Complaint poetry from the 1340s, including the *Song against the King’s Taxes*, showed that Edward’s Arthurian image did not come close to convincing the poor he unquestionably governed in their favour. Rather the poetry complained about how he had handled the Stratford crisis, denouncing the rich and appealing to God while claiming the taxes for the war in France did ‘harm to all’. See Maddicott, ‘Poems of Social Protest’, in *England in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 141.

<sup>216</sup> *Political Poems and Songs*, ed. Wright, p. 31.

That suld make many man to fle.  
And in the se, he said ful right,  
Suld he schew ful mekill might,  
And in France he suld begin  
To mak tham wrath that er tharien. (lines 7-14)<sup>217</sup>

In Scotland, too, Edward's fortunes were on the rise. Encouraged by the fact that Edward III was away on the continent, David Bruce had invaded north England only to suffer a devastating defeat at Neville's Cross.<sup>218</sup> David was taken prisoner, and the English rallied around Edward III with Le Bel claiming they hoped 'to win their king's approval, so that even the lowliest was worth a knight' — an anecdote too romantic to be fact but which functioned as an effective piece of propaganda, once again placing Edward III in the position of an Arthur figure from whom and for whom every fighting man wished to win knighthood.

The siege of Calais afforded similar propaganda. It was a long and disenchanting affair, taking one month shy of a year with King Philip never appearing to give the English battle. Feeling abandoned by their king, the people of Calais submitted to Edward III in August 1347 and begged for mercy. Both Froissart and Le Bel record that Edward was disinclined to give such mercy but was moved by the pleadings of Queen Philippa and spared 'all the people of Calais from death out of love for her'.<sup>219</sup> Knighton makes no mention of this, simply stating Edward III felt compassion for the people and 'took them into his grace, and graciously treated them'.<sup>220</sup> But if Philippa's pleadings did, in fact, occur, they were most likely a carefully orchestrated piece of chivalric propaganda. England had, after all, been growing increasingly concerned about the time and resources being deployed at Calais, making it imperative the victory there be worthwhile.<sup>221</sup> The romantic trope of the conquering hero, then — especially one urged to mercy by his lady love — gave the people of Calais an appropriately visual manifestation of English chivalric glory and scared them into feeling incredible relief and gratitude

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<sup>217</sup> Minot, *How Edward at Hogges unto land wan*, in *TEAMS Middle English Texts Series* [online], lines 7-14, available at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/osberg-poems-of-laurence-minot-1333-1352>; Moranski, 'The *Prophetie Merlini*', p. 58.

<sup>218</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 17.

<sup>219</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>220</sup> Knighton, *Chronicles of Knighton*, p. 85.

<sup>221</sup> Roger, *War Cruel and Sharp*, pp. 276-7.

when immanent slaughter was diverted. Appropriately awed, the city of Calais went on to become a steady foothold of English power on the Continent, more than justifying the long siege and Edward III's insistence that it be continued.<sup>222</sup>

The appropriation of Calais, however, was far from perfect. A brief scuffle over Calais castle in 1348 forced Edward to undertake what Le Bel calls 'a bold mission, such a one as no other prince would dare'.<sup>223</sup> The castle, which had been on the verge of being sold to the then steward of France for seven thousand écus, had needed to be saved,<sup>224</sup> so Edward III had engaged in a complicated plan of 'ruse and counter-ruse' to expose the castle's traitorous steward and divert the situation back into his and English favour.<sup>225</sup> The anonymous chronicler of Canterbury, a highly patriot but unromantic writer, reveals with little embellishment that the steward was 'captured by the king of England...eventually being ransomed for a large sum of money'.<sup>226</sup> Le Bel, on the other hand, provides a good deal more detailed account: in a nighttime sting operation, Edward III and the Black Prince set out to ambush and trick their enemies before their enemies can ambush and trick them. Le Bel records how the traitorous steward and his followers were 'dumbstruck' by the king's sudden appearance in a place they had not expected him to be, making the rescue of the castle 'daring' and an 'extraordinary adventure'.<sup>227</sup> The result, of course, is that Edward III is once again provided with a chivalric episode of personal daring — something necessary to carry on his image as a chivalric, Arthurian-styled king and which was enhanced by the fact that the traitorous steward was sent back to England and given 'a splendid welcome' much to the chagrin of King Philip of France, who Le Bel describes as 'stunned and dismayed'.<sup>228</sup>

The immediate success of this, however, and of Edward III's other episodes of personal daring depended a good deal less on the chroniclers' second-hand propaganda, often written years or decades after the fact, and a good deal more upon pleasing the *communitas regni* at the time in which the deeds were undertaken. A few natural incidents made this job easier. In 1344 the Earl of Salisbury died after

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>223</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 207.

<sup>224</sup> *Anonymous of Canterbury*, p. 17.

<sup>225</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 207.

<sup>226</sup> *Anonymous of Canterbury*, p. 17.

<sup>227</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, pp. 207-8.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

participating in a tournament, and in 1345 and 1347 the old Earls of Lancaster and Surrey passed on and were replaced by younger men who were inclined to appreciate Edward III and his expansionist policies. It was in the Order of the Garter, however, that Edward III was to make his most successful plays at chivalric propaganda. This new, knightly confraternity appealed not only to the chivalric pretensions of his nobility by rewarding his adherents and romanticizing the close relationship these select men would enjoy with the king — it put a whole new urgency on his agendas, creating competition for recognition and reward.

## Chapter 4: Legacy — A king rises, declines, and rises again

The Order of the Garter, which replaced the aborted Order of the Round Table in 1348, included a far more manageable number of knights — twenty-six, including Edward III and the Black Prince — and was far more exclusive. Most of the remaining seats were given to men who had fought with Edward at Crécy.<sup>229</sup> The order's motto, which has become obscure — 'Honi soit qui mal y pense [Shame be to him who thinks evil of it]'<sup>230</sup> — has any number of explanations, but Carruthers suggests it refers to Edward III's claim to the French throne.<sup>231</sup> This is certainly possible. In 1345 the pope had, after all, sent two bishops to Edward, ordering him, without success, to relinquish the arms of France.<sup>232</sup> But for the purposes of this study, the exact meaning of the motto is of less importance than the lasting effect the Order of the Garter was to have on Edward's chivalric reputation.

A slightly altered version of the motto appearing as 'Hony soit qui mal pence' is penned into the only extant copy of the fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The insertion exists in a different, somewhat later hand, and its inclusion has been the opportunity of much discussion.<sup>233</sup> The amender clearly wished to draw a parallel between the poem and the order, but there is debate regarding whether the anonymous author had already done so with the contents of the poem. Carruthers asserts the similarities between Sir Gawain's green sash and the Garter's symbol are too close to be ignored: 'The poet is not describing the real garter but alluding to its moral significance, drawing a parallel between its real-life symbolism and its deeper meaning in his own [story].'<sup>234</sup> Indeed, Gawain's refusal of the advances of the lady of the castle and his acceptance of her girdle instead of her sexual offers,<sup>235</sup> mirrors and inverts the erroneous story about the Countess of Salisbury dropping her garter in front of Edward III.<sup>236</sup> But more importantly, Carruthers brings up the point that if the text's amender was able to draw a parallel between *Gawain* and the Order of the Garter, other people could have done so as

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<sup>229</sup> Carruthers, 'The Duke of Clarence', p. 69.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.; Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 471.

<sup>231</sup> Carruthers, 'The Duke of Clarence', p. 69.

<sup>232</sup> Knighton, *The Chronicle of Knighton*, p. 53.

<sup>233</sup> Carruthers, 'The Duke of Clarence', p. 66.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>235</sup> Larrington, 'English Chivalry', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, p. 6.

<sup>236</sup> Barber, *The Triumph of England*, p. 471.

well, uniting Edward's court with the court of King Arthur.<sup>237</sup> In addition, the Order of the Garter significantly bolstered Edward's chivalric image — so much so that King John II of France attempted a failed copy cat order: the Company of the Star.<sup>238</sup> The interesting thing about the Arthurian connotations that grew up around the Order of the Garter, however, was that fact that, in and of itself, the Order was not Arthurian. Unlike the aborted Order of the Round Table, the Garter was a religious order linked to St George and a number of other religious patrons and did not possess strongly Arthurian overtures. Thanks to the conflation in the chronicles, however, which more often than not combined the Orders of the Round Table and the Garter in some way, shape, or form, the two became somewhat synonymous in the public mind.<sup>239</sup> Intention was out-weighed by popular thinking, linking the Garter to Arthurianism in unplanned ways — something the second-hand propaganda of romance writers would also do for Edward III at this point in his reign.

During the 1340s — most likely between 1345-7 — Edward III became the protagonist of the anonymous *King Edward and the Shepherd* — a story that refers to numerous members of his court and inverts the Middle English *Sir Percival of Galles*.<sup>240</sup> In *Edward and the Shepherd*, Edward, disguised as a merchant, meets a hapless shepherd who believes he has been wronged by the king's administrators. Edward questions him, soon befriend him and making merry. The shepherd, good-natured but ignorant, invites Edward to his house where he unknowingly admits to poaching and ends up invited to the castle for a feast where everyone but the shepherd has a good laugh at his expense.<sup>241</sup> The author, though somewhat critical of purveyance and other 'bad customs', allows the character of Edward to make restitution to the shepherd, creating a literary Edward who is jolly, fair, and fits the parameters of a 'good king' — a fact enhanced by the ways in which the story inverts the tropes of *Sir Perceval*. In *Sir Perceval*, a naïve Perceval seeks out King Arthur's court with levels of ignorance that mirror the shepherd's. When he meets Ywain, Gawain, and Kay in the woods, their fine clothes and appearance cause him

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.; Carruthers, 'The Duke of Clarence', p. 66.

<sup>238</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, pp. 216-7.

<sup>239</sup> Barber, *The Triumph of England*, pp. 468-70.

<sup>240</sup> Matthew, *Writing to the King*, pp. 113-115.

<sup>241</sup> *Edward and the Shepherd*, in *TEAMS Middle English Texts Series* [online] available at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/furrow-ten-bourdes-king-edward-and-the-shepherd>.

to mistake them for God and he asks, ‘Wilke of yow alle three | May the grete Godd bee’<sup>242</sup> before going on to show how little he understands the process of becoming a knight.<sup>243</sup> Anyone familiar with both texts would have seen the ways in which the mistaken identities and tendencies to speak too quickly mirror each other, linking the two narratives in matter of theme. As a piece of propaganda, then, Edward’s inclusion in *Edward and the Shepherd*, while never gaining the same popularity as stories of Richard the Lionheart and Charlemagne, can be seen a step toward inclusion in a genre that provided a positive entry into the collective thinking.

Iolo Goch, a Welsh poet with likely ties to the Mortimer family, wrote a similarly approving poem of Edward III sometime after 1347. His poem *I’r Brenin Edward y Trydydd* follows Arthurian-styled political prophecy, calling Edward III a ‘llewpart llwyd [brown leopard]’, ‘eryr Gwynsor [Windsor’s eagle],’ and the ‘Baedd y gyfnewid ddidwyll [Boar of honest commerce]’ with ‘Calon a llawfron y llew [the heart and breast of a lion]’.<sup>244</sup> The poem reiterates the claim that Edward III will one day wear ‘y tari coron cywari cain [the three, fine, well-adorned crowns]’, namely the crowns of England, France, and Rome,<sup>245</sup> and urges Edward to go on crusade to the Holy Land and conquer Rome, following the motifs set up in Monmouth’s *Historia* and the *Six Kings*.<sup>246</sup> This is significant not only because of its Arthurian undertones but because Edward III ultimately eschewed going on crusade and never showed an interest in conquering Rome. The poem, then, which maintains the Galfridian hope that he would embody the figure of the conquering crusader king, stands as a reminder of how the prophetic themes surrounding his birth had carried through to adulthood, permeating the views his subjects held of him.

Indeed, by the mid-1350s, Edward III enjoyed at all levels of English society a generally better reputation than that of any other monarch since the 1280s.<sup>247</sup> 1356 saw the anonymous *Saint Thomas of Canterbury* posthumously crediting Thomas à Becket with a prophecy regarding the two Boars of England — Edward III and the Black Prince — who were predicted to do damage to the king of France and put him

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<sup>242</sup> *Sir Percival*, lines 281-2.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 313-6.

<sup>244</sup> Goch, *Poems*, p. 2.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4; Monmouth, *History of the British Kings*, pp. 171-6.

<sup>247</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 25.

to flight as Edward III and the Black Prince had, in fact, already done.<sup>248</sup> And the years of 1354-6 saw Edward III chivalrously take up the case of his cousin, Lady Wake, in a way which might have damaged his reputation had it not been so high. In 1354 Lady Wake had brought charges against the Bishop of Ely, claiming he had taken a portion of her land and overseen the murder of one of her retainers. She had then gone on to send a petition to Edward III, asking for his justice and presenting herself as one 'hounded daily by the bishop's men'.<sup>249</sup> As John Aberth states, the ordeal 'probably appealed to Edward's chivalric sensibilities',<sup>250</sup> giving him another opportunity to 'rescue' a beleaguered damsel. But his biased handling of the case, along with his staunch adherence that the bishop's temporalities be seized despite papal intervention, made his barons' largely approving response to his commitment against the bishop a testament, not only to Ely's unpopularity, but to the strength of Edward's own chivalric image, which might have otherwise been damaged.<sup>251</sup>

His reputation on the Continent, however, was not as secure. Edward III may have inspired John II to create the Company of the Star, but his chivalry did not extend to cover the full expanse of the propaganda deployed around him. Both the 1340s French poem *Les Voeux de Héron* and a 1350s Breton lay describing the Combat of the Thirty stand as cases in point. *Les Voeux*, which was written shortly after the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War, describes a supposedly chivalric episode from September 1338 in which Edward III and his nobles made increasingly ridiculous and dangerous vows over a roasted heron.<sup>252</sup> The vows, which are the direct result of Robert d'Artois accusing Edward III of cowardice, state that Edward III must go to war with France or face dire consequences. However, when it is Queen Philippa's time to take a vow, she announces she will kill herself and the unborn Prince Lionel with a great steel knife if Edward does not go off to fight,

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<sup>248</sup> Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp. 58-60.

<sup>249</sup> Aberth, 'Crime and Justice', p. 288.

<sup>250</sup> The fact that Edward III was generally disinclined to favour the church over his own agendas cannot be discounted as motive either. Indeed, in this particular case, Edward's anti-papal stances and his desire to protect his female cousin fit well under both the parameters of romance and his style of legislation. See *Ibid.*, pp. 288, 301; Wilkinson, 'A Letter of Edward III', p. 248; and Ormrod, 'Personal Religion', pp. 852-3.

<sup>251</sup> As Aberth explains, the fact that Edward III was unable to keep a personal distance in the case shows that his style of intervention had matured little since the Stratford crisis. See Aberth, 'Crime and Justice', pp. 288, 301.

<sup>252</sup> No historical evidence of the events related in *Les Voeux* exists, and as B. J. Whiting points out, the vows are almost burlesque and grimly satirical. See Whiting, 'The Vows of the Heron', p. 278.

shocking the character of Edward so badly he refuses to hear more vows and the poem ends.<sup>253</sup> Recent years have seen a number of reviews of *Les Voeux*, which has been described as both a satirical farce and a total condemnation of warmongering.<sup>254</sup> The Edward III portrayed in the poem, however, is less of a warmonger and more of a reactionary obsessed with his chivalric image and goaded to war by Robert d'Artois. This creates a secondary line of history — inaccurate, as it turns out — but one in which Edward III's French campaigns are reduced to a mockery by the suggestion that they are built upon wounded pride and someone else's vengeance<sup>255</sup> — an idea that negates any justice in the war and is paralleled in the Breton lay *Le Combat de Trente Bretons Contre Trente Anglais*.

Both le Bel and Froissart record the combat described in the lay, which took place in Brittany on 26 March 1351 and included thirty French knights who offered chivalric battle to thirty English and German knights. The two chroniclers are, as ever, enthusiastic with Froissart claiming 'They held themselves valiantly on both sides as if they had been all Rolands and Oliviers'.<sup>256</sup> But the fight was ill-fated for the English and Germans, who were defeated, and the lay, which is quoted here in the translation of William Harrison Ainsworth, sums up the ordeal in a way a good deal less favourable to Edward III and those who believed he was prophesied to hold France. The lay, which begins with the Earl of Pembroke mistreating captives, shows Pembroke calling upon his companions to capture various French territories under the nebulous goal of extending 'English mastery'.<sup>257</sup> His odious character and staunch adherence to false prophecy, however, taint the poem with anti-Edwardian sentiment, and Pembroke's pre-combat speech creates a sense of dramatic irony:

'My magic books I've caused to be read, and Merlin unto me

Doth prophesy, upon this day, a signal victory, claiming that 'In his name, shall to Edward good, our sovran lord, be tax en.

An earnest shall they be to him, that not alone Bretagne

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<sup>253</sup> *Vows of the Heron* [online], ed. University of York, available at <https://www.york.ac.uk/teaching/history/pjgg/heron.pdf>.

<sup>254</sup> Whiting, 'The Vows of the Heron', p. 278; Lacy, 'Warmongering in Verse' in *Inscribing the Hundred Years War*, pp. 22-24.

<sup>255</sup> DeMarco, 'Inscribing the Body' in *Inscribing the Hundred Years War*, p. 37.

<sup>256</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, in *Deeds of Arms* [online] available at <http://faculty.nipissingu.ca/muhlberger/CHRONIQU/texts/thirty.htm>.

<sup>257</sup> *The Combat of the Thirty*, trans., William Harrison Ainsworth, Fytte ȝ First, IV.

But all the realm of fertile France shall to his crown pertain'.<sup>258</sup>

Unfortunately Pembroke's confidence is unfounded. The English lose, the poem gleefully lamenting:

Too true it is — alack! too true — no longer Pembroke lives.

His magic books by Merlin writ, in which he put his faith,

Have played him false, since they could not forewarn him of his death.<sup>259</sup>

As such, no confidence is placed in the Arthurian tradition of a victorious English king in France, and the poem sums up with the pronouncement 'Shame on those envious Englishmen'.<sup>260</sup> Edward III's image is not directly attacked, but because he is English — and the king for whom his men are fighting — he can be equated with such shame. His victories in France, which Minot and Iolo Goch had been quick to equate to Merlin and political prophecy, can be seen as countered within the lay's narrative, producing an unflattering image of Edward to the lay's anti-English readers.

The rescue and rape of the Countess of Salisbury, as described in Le Bel's chronicle, can be seen as something similar. Like *Le Combat*, the rescue and rape do not provide a positive representation of chivalry — or of Edward III — though the account draws enough Arthurian parallels to mitigate some of the damage it could have otherwise done. The rescue, which occurs in a series of misdated entries, is now thought to be mostly if not wholly fictionalized but was mistaken for fact often enough in the centuries that followed its creation. A copy of Le Bel's chapters regarding the rescue can be found in Appendix II, but a cursory summary is necessary for analysis here. Under the date 1341 Le Bel describes how young William Montague, the countess's nephew,<sup>261</sup> sees disaster will befall his aunt's castle if Edward III does not arrive and drive off the Scottish king who is besieging them. Since none of the other men present are willing to 'leave the defense of the

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., Fytte y Second, III.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., Fytte y Second, XI.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., L'Envoy.

<sup>261</sup> There is some conflation at this point in the account. As Antonio Grandsen points out in her article on the rape of the Countess of Salisbury, Le Bel seems confused about the character of the nephew. It is more than likely the William Montagu he is thinking of is the son of the Countess and the Earl of Salisbury, not a nephew who bears the same name. See Grandsen, 'The Alleged Rape', p. 336.

castle and the fair lady’,<sup>262</sup> Montague volunteers, undergoing adventure along the way.<sup>263</sup> When he reaches Edward III, the king states that ‘nothing would stop him helping the lady’,<sup>264</sup> and after a lightning ride north, Edward succeeds in frightening the Scottish king away.<sup>265</sup> Here, however, the tone of the narrative changes. Most of Le Bel’s chronicle is laced with romance, but the actual narrative tends to maintain a remove, typically providing dialogue only when Le Bel wishes to enhance specifically chivalric episodes. In the chapters featuring the countess, however, there is a marked change. Montague’s ride toward Edward begins in the same way as most of Le Bel’s chivalric episodes — with light, but chivalric dialogue interspersed with narration — only to turn into what reads essentially as fiction. Upon seeing the countess, who Le Bel describes as so ‘gloriously attired that everyone was stunned’,<sup>266</sup> Edward III falls instantly in love with her:

As he [Edward] gazed, a spark of love [‘fin amour’] was struck in his heart, and it stayed burning there: he was convinced there was no lady in the world more worthy of being loved.<sup>267</sup>

The term Le Bel uses to describe this love — ‘fin amour’ in the original French — is the same term used to describe courtly love in medieval literature.<sup>268</sup> And the way in which Edward’s ‘fin amour’ subsequently distracts him from his friends, accomplishments, and knightly pursuits to the point where the countess has to remind him of them is not unlike the way Erec in Chrétien de Troyes’ *Erec and Enide* becomes distracted from his own chivalric pursuits because of his love for Enide.<sup>269</sup> Tense moments follow. The king broods, wholly unable to enjoy the festivities the countess has provided, and the countess becomes distressed and asks what is wrong. Edward replies,

“Ah, my dear lady, the weight on my heart is not what you imagine! I tell you truly: the elegant bearing, perfect wit, high nobility, grace and wondrous, peerless beauty of your sweet self have taken such a hold of me

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<sup>262</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 124.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*; Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec and Enide*, pp. 115-9.

that I have to be your lover! And I pray you, if you are willing, grant me your love — though truly no refusal will quench my desire!”<sup>270</sup>

The countess, however, is horrified, citing the king’s close friendship with her husband:

“I don’t believe you mean this, or that a prince as noble as you would dare make such an unworthy proposition, especially when you know my husband has served you so loyally, and is still suffering imprisonment for your sake.”<sup>271</sup>

Edward III, however, is wholly unable to give up his ignoble desire for the countess. A rape scene follows<sup>272</sup> with Antonia Gransden suggesting it is only included in the chronicle because Le Bel unknowingly copied a now lost anti-English poem that contained anti-Edwardian propaganda.<sup>273</sup> This is plausible — Le Bel seems to have borrowed several of his scenes from other sources — but the rape scene’s inclusion is still an oddity considering there is little immediate justification for why Le Bel would have included a scene that portrayed his hero, Edward, so badly. Nigel Bryant explains this away by stating that as a ‘truthful’ chronicler, Le Bel felt compelled to include the scene in detail, believing it had come from a trustworthy source.<sup>274</sup> But this not only reads the sentiments of modern journalism into the writing of a medieval chronicler — it fails to fully account for the fact that Le Bel was incredibly pro-Edwardian and obviously familiar with romance, fiction, and propaganda, so if as Gransden suggests the rape scene was copied from a piece of anti-Edwardian propaganda would Le Bel not have recognized it as such? And if it was copied from a ‘trustworthy’ source, as Bryant suggests, why did Le Bel include such graphic detail, knowing that the inclusion of such would debase his ‘noble’ King Edward? Generalizations or euphemisms — both stock ways of sanitizing unfortunate events — would have been equally as appropriate. But Le Bel does not use either — an issue further compounded by the fact that Froissart, who is otherwise known to have borrowed heavily from Le Bel, was vehemently opposed to the scene, which he did not consider credible:

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<sup>270</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 126.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Interestingly, in the scene Le Bel does not get the countess’ name correct. He calls her Alice rather than Catherine perhaps due to a conflation with the king’s actual mistress, Alice Perrers, or an earlier Countess of Salisbury. See Ibid., pp. 144-6.

<sup>273</sup> Gransden, ‘The Alleged Rape’, p. 341; Whiting, ‘The Vows of the Heron’, p. 278.

<sup>274</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, pp. 8-9.

You have heard me speak above of Edward's love for the countess of Salisbury. The chronicle of Jean le Bel speaks of this love less properly than I must, for, please God, it would never enter my head to incriminate the king of England and the countess of Salisbury with such a vile accusation. If respectable men ask why I mention that love, they should know that Jean le Bel relates in his chronicle that the English king raped the countess of Salisbury. Now, I declare that I know England well, where I have lived for long periods mainly at the royal court and also with the great lords of that country. And I have never heard tell of this rape although I have asked people about it who must have known if it had ever happened. Moreover, I cannot believe and it is incredible that so great and valiant a man as the king of England would have allowed himself to dishonour one of the most noble ladies of his realm and one of his knights who had served him so loyally all his life.<sup>275</sup>

The problem according to Froissart, then, is not the fact that Edward III may have harboured an admiring but chivalrously, platonic love for the countess. Rather Le Bel's own ignorance is to blame — a fact that might explain away the rape scene's inclusion but still fails to account for the graphic way in which Le Bel describes the event. After all, most of Le Bel's chronicle is preoccupied with expounding upon Edward's honour, calling him 'the noble King Edward' while refusing to apply the label to Philip. But it is important to remember that Le Bel is also the chronicler who took pains to identify castles by the names they had held in Arthur's time, making romance a heavily invested part of his narrative. In light of this the rape scene becomes more understandable. Numerous rape scenes feature in romance, some skimmed over and some described in great detail like the rape scene in the Sleeping Beauty chapter of *Perceforest* and the additional *Perceforest* episodes in which the knight Estonné roughly takes his pleasure of women without first securing adequate permission.<sup>276</sup>

By creating a love triangle with a graphic rape scene, then, Le Bel is making the Edward of history into the Edward of romance, though whether this was his original intent or not is moot. Without a self-explanatory passage, it will always be impossible to reconstruct his thought process, though the language he uses to allude to the rape — 'and finally Love's dart was to spur him to a deed that earned him bitter reproach and blame'<sup>277</sup> — are the words of a romance and not a chronicle. And the ways in which Edward wrestles with his thoughts — 'At times he

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<sup>275</sup> Grandsen, 'The Alleged Rape', p. 334.

<sup>276</sup> *Perceforest*, pp. 160, 391-2.

<sup>277</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 127.

reconsidered, as Honour and Loyalty reproved him for these shameful thoughts... but then back would come Love, so insistently that She overwhelmed and vanquished Honour<sup>278</sup> — have a near exact parallel in *Perceforest*'s Sleeping Beauty scene. Within the scene, Troylus, a young and besotted knight, wrestles with 'Love', 'Honour', 'Desire', and 'Reason' in an attempt to decide whether to make love to the sleeping Zellandine:

He was about to do the very thing when Reason and Discretion marched forward and said: "Sir knight, no man should breach a girl's privacy without her leave, and he certainly shouldn't touch her while she sleeps!"<sup>279</sup>

Hearing this he drew back from her face, so close to his; but Desire was beginning to prick him in earnest, and told him her privacy was no reason to desist — Reason had no place in such matters! — and Honour was not in danger because a kiss could cure all manner of ills...<sup>280</sup>

The scene then goes on to describe how human sexuality overrides 'Honour', and Troylus consummates his relationship with Zellandine, paralleling the ways in which the countess, like Zellandine, grieves for her lost honour.<sup>281</sup> By following such a pattern, then,<sup>282</sup> Le Bel has placed Edward III securely within the tradition of the Arthurian love-triangle, idolizing 'Love' and personifying 'Honour' so a king who functions as the pinnacle of chivalry falls to a human level in a way expected in romance. This means that while, on the surface, little can redeem the episode from tarnishing Edward's image, the way in which the rape is framed sets Edward up for recovery by removing the act from life and placing it within the motifs of literature. He is, in a sense, held at a remove, and the shift in tone that occurs around the event marks it out as 'other'. How aware readers, or even Le Bel, would have been of this shift and the 'otherness' of the scene, however, is impossible to say. Froissart took the rape scene seriously enough to refute it, and the story of the rape was repeated in the *Chronographia Regum Francorum*, a fifteenth-century, anti-English chronicle compiled at the abbey of St Denis in Paris.<sup>283</sup> But pro-Edwardian chronicles were

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> *Perceforest*, p. 391.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, pp. 154-6.

<sup>282</sup> Le Bel even goes so far as to have the countess' husband, in anger and grief, die fighting the Saracens, which is a standard but honourable way to die in romance, when in reality he attended the 1344 Windsor tournament, competed poorly because he was in bad health, and died a few days later. See Le Bel, *True Chronicles*, p. 156.

<sup>283</sup> Gransden, 'The Alleged Rape', p. 333.

far less likely to repeat the account, and Edward's own chivalric actions outweighed it, offering real propagandic value of their own.

On 19 September 1356, the battle of Poitiers was fought and became another great stroke of propagandic luck. Edward III was not personally present, but the Black Prince was, and Froissart describes the fight as 'right great and perilous' stating that 'many deeds of arms there was done'.<sup>284</sup> King John of France was captured, giving Edward III ample opportunity to secure not only a monumental ransom but a chance to display his chivalric hospitality to the hostage king. Froissart records a supper directly after John's capture in which the Black Prince praises the French king, stating John has 'won the high renown of prowess' and 'passed this day in valiantness'.<sup>285</sup> The words are met with shock because John has, in fact, been captured. But the prince explains he is in earnest, and soon the other French hostages believe him, stating he has 'spoken nobly, and that by all estimation...should prove a noble man'.<sup>286</sup> This, of course, was not propaganda that directly magnified Edward III, but because chivalric kings were supposed to produce chivalric offspring, the Black Prince's nobility reflected well on Edward and his own chivalric image.

The Chandos Herald, writing a paeanic account of the Black Prince's life, tells how King John was then brought to England where the Black Prince was met by his 'noble and puissant' father, his mother, and 'many a lady, many a damsel, right amorous, sprightly, and fair'.<sup>287</sup> Celebration followed with Edward III ordaining 'dancing, hunting, hawking, feasting, and jousting, as in the reign of Arthur'.<sup>288</sup> And even the anonymous chronicler of Canterbury, who typically took a dour and disapproving attitude toward jousting<sup>289</sup>, spoke well of the occasion:

Also, in the year of Our Lord 1358, on the feast of St George the martyr, Lord Edward king of England held a solemn banquet and round table such as had never been held in England since the time of King Arthur, at which banquet or round table there were present the said two kings, of the French

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<sup>284</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles of Froissart*, trans. Berners, p. 51.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> Chandos Herald, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 20.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> The anonymous of Canterbury in 1361-2 warned of the dire consequences of jousts, preferring to report on the fires, injuries, 'evil things', and other forms of destruction that accompanied them rather than their chivalric grander. See *Anonymous of Canterbury*, pp. 119, 121.

and the English...as well as virtually all the nobility and magnates of England.<sup>290</sup>

Edward III had, at least temporary, swayed his more harsh critics. And the Chandos Herald went on to describe the way in which King Pedro of Castille subsequently sought out Edward III's aid, sure Edward would send him succour because Edward was 'of such noble disposition, for God had given him such virtue that since the time of King Arthur there was no king of such power'.<sup>291</sup> Despite this assertion, though, and the obvious awe of Edward's display, the end of his reign did not see an increase in power; it saw a stagnation.

The treaty of Brétigny in 1360 marked what was to become the longest period of Anglo-French peace since 1337. But this peace did not prove helpful to Edward III, and his use of Arthurian propaganda floundered. The reasons for this were twofold: first, King John II of France died in 1364 and was replaced by his son, Charles V — a chivalric rival Ormrod describes as being of 'considerable vision and talent'.<sup>292</sup> And second, Edward III was fast outliving the age from which successful chivalric propaganda could be deployed. He had by nature of supporting his sons made some provision for this. The princes had been groomed to take over lieutenancies, territories, and the mechanisms of government, but Edward III's plans surrounding them collapsed.<sup>293</sup> The duchy of Aquitaine, which had been awarded to the Black Prince, proved too large and unwieldy for the Black Prince to govern with his limited resources. And Ireland, of which Lionel had been made lieutenant, proved too resilient, bouncing back to its previous Anglo-hostility as soon as the young prince left.<sup>294</sup> The gains Edward III had made, then, were shrinking, and where he had once been good at filling the comital ranks with men who would support his agendas, he began to flag — the only new creations of the 1360s favoured his children and their spouses.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>291</sup> Chandos Herald, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 24.

<sup>292</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p. 27.

<sup>293</sup> Ormrod, 'Edward III and his Family', pp. 400, 403, 416-20.

<sup>294</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 27-9.

<sup>295</sup> This, no doubt, had something to do with his attempt to transfer his 'empire' into his children's hands, but it did not prove successful. The new familial allies were often gone on campaign, leaving the aging king isolated. See Ibid., pp. 29-30.

This meant that Edward III needed to turn to other propagandic mechanisms, so he spent a good deal of time hunting. It was, after all, one of the few Arthurian sports he could still pursue since he was past the age for participating in tournaments and had become too old to personally campaign. The 1360s saw a dramatic increase in the number of hunting staff he kept,<sup>296</sup> and in 1367-8, Edward spent £600 on his falcons — easily the amount of the average baron's annual income and far more than any of his predecessors had spent on their birds.<sup>297</sup> By 1368, however, tragedy had struck. Prince Lionel died, and in 1370, the Black Prince led a force against Limoges, plundered the city, and destroyed not only the vestiges of English sympathy that had remained in the area but his own health as well. Unable to continue fighting, his chivalric image crumbled and he returned to England, only to die on 8 June 1376.<sup>298</sup> Rumours abounded as to whether John of Gaunt, Edward III's oldest surviving son, would allow the Black Prince's son to take the throne upon Edward III's death.<sup>299</sup> And Edward's own decision to take a mistress, Alice Perrers, and allow her and her circle to dominate the Crown's financial decisions further eroded the already shaky trust the public had in the royal family. Just like his father before him, Edward III was seen as languishing under the influence of unsuitable favourites. And the fact that he had lost almost everything he had gained up to 1360, spent the funds accumulated over his reign, and allowed John of Gaunt to run up enormous debts to no military advantage did not inspire confidence.<sup>300</sup>

The so-called 'Good Parliament' of 1376 sought to rectify this. Alice Perrers, along with a number of others, were expelled from Edward's household, and a comprehensive reform of government was announced. But the long and great respect Edward III had cultivated for himself saw parliament's efforts and reforms come to little. The courtiers banned from his household returned within months, and an unofficial truce had to be arrived at between his household and parliament due to

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<sup>296</sup> During the 1350s, Edward had kept six huntsman and seven falconers, but by 1360 he and Philippa had increased that number to thirty-one huntsmen and twenty-three falconers. See Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, p. 358.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>299</sup> England worried John of Gaunt would usurp the throne — a worry exacerbated by the fact that Edward put very little planning into the regency government of Richard II. John of Gaunt, however, never showed any inclination in stealing the crown, standing as a testament to the positive familial relations Edward III had cultivated between his sons. See Ormrod, 'Edward III and His Family', pp. 417-20.

<sup>300</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 34-5.

Edward's increasingly failing health. By September 1376 he was seriously ill and remained so, virtually incapacitated, for five months. February saw parliament notified that Edward's health was improving and a general amnesty was given to celebrate his jubilee. But within months Edward was ill again, and on 21 June 1377, he died of a stroke at Sheen.<sup>301</sup> Froissart, who had always been predisposed to look fondly upon Edward, wrote:

The gallant and noble King Edward III departed this life to the deep distress of the whole realm of England, for he had been a good king for them. His like had not been seen since the days of King Arthur.<sup>302</sup>

And Knighton similarly praised him, claiming,

He [Edward III] was the flower of this world's knighthood...To secure the crown of the kingdom [France], what perils he survived upon the sea, what shocks of battle he withstood, what valiant warriors he subdued, the writer forebears to relate, fearing that he might obscure the truth with a veil of mere adulation.<sup>303</sup>

The true test of Edward III's chivalric image, though, would be whether it stood the test of time and continued to produce positive imagery after his death. An epitaph on his tomb, which was under construction in 1386, bore the words:

Here lies the glory of the English, the flower of kings past, the pattern for kings to come, a merciful king, the bringer of peace to his people. Edward III, who attained his jubilee. The undefeated warrior, a second Maccabeus, who prospered while he lived, revived sound rule, and reigned valiantly, now may he attain his heavenly crown.<sup>304</sup>

And an eulogy contained in the 'Cronica bona et compendiosa de regibus Noe usque in hunc diem' found in a number of late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts, states:

He [Edward III] was the flower of earthly warriors, under whom to fight was to rule, to go forth was to prosper, to contend was to triumph...Against his foes he was as grim as a leopard, toward his subjects as mild as a lamb.<sup>305</sup>

For the most part, then, the official, popular, and monastic records composed in the years following Edward III's death continued to look upon him fondly, though, the

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-9.

<sup>302</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Brereton, available at [https://archive.org/stream/chroniclesoffroi00fro/chroniclesoffroi00fro\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/chroniclesoffroi00fro/chroniclesoffroi00fro_djvu.txt).

<sup>303</sup> Knighton, *Chronicle of Knighton*, p. 197.

<sup>304</sup> Morgan, 'The political after-life of Edward III', p. 861.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 866.

St Albans chronicler, Thomas Walsingham, stood as a notable exception. Instead of praising Edward III's chivalry, he pronounced that the dying king's mind had turned constantly to 'hawking, hunting, and other such trivia: nothing which concerned his salvation' — the hallmark of a priest willing to assert Edward made a 'good death' only after a thorough repentance.<sup>306</sup> Romance literature, which was less concerned with such nuances of religion and more impressed by hawking and hunting, would be more kind.<sup>307</sup>

*The King and the Hermit*, another ballad-romance like *Edward and the Shepherd*, portrayed Edward III as a ruler willing to magnanimously revel with his subjects.<sup>308</sup> And Thomas Malory, writing in the fifteenth century, modeled his *Le Morte d'Arthur* in a way that caused Roger Sherman Loomis to state: 'Who can help...recognizing in its hero a strong resemblance to Edward, third of the Plantagenet line?'<sup>309</sup> Edward III had, after all, provided a sense of stability to English politics and given England the taste of victory on the Continent it had craved since the 1200s. His last, less effective years were soon forgotten and nostalgia for his greatest victories reentered the popular imagination.<sup>310</sup> Before long his chivalric cult was well-established, and his forms of Arthurian propaganda, which had found basis in those of his predecessors, were repeated with varied success. Owain Glyndŵr, fighting for the Welsh in the fifteenth century would also draw upon the idea of the 'Once and Future King' in his rebellion against the English,<sup>311</sup> and Henry Tudor, in attempting to justify his own reign, would use Arthurian propaganda

<sup>306</sup> Given-Wilson, 'The Exequies of Edward III', p. 260.

<sup>307</sup> Edward III has often been named as a possible inspiration for the literary kingly figures that appeared in romance in the fifteenth century. And while it is difficult to substantiate these claims, many of the English romances written in the aftermath of his death do portray largely positive kings with imperialist ambitions. Some, however, like the *The Awntyrs of Arthure*, also express a mounting tension between this imperialism and the wellbeing of the country — a sentiment mirrored in *Piers Plowman's* concern for the victims of war. See Schiff, 'Borderland Subversions', pp. 618, 632; Baker, 'Meed and the Economics of Chivalry', in *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War*, pp. 66-7; and *The Awntyrs of Arthur*, lines. 265-93.

<sup>308</sup> *The King and the Hermit*, in *TEAMS Middle English Texts Series* [online] available at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/furrow-ten-bourdes-king-and-the-hermit>.

<sup>309</sup> Some of this resemblance, of course, could and surely was coincidence or the direct result of audience interpretation and not true allusion. But in terms of propaganda, coincidence and audience interpretation are expected, and there is always the possibility that they will further the original agenda. In that sense, then, in the sense of authorial intent, it did not matter how much of Malory's work or the work of other writers of romance was influenced by Edward III. Even a shadow of pro-Edwardianism could, and did, further Edward's Arthurian image. See Keiser, 'Edward III and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', p. 37.

<sup>310</sup> Morgan, 'The political after-life of Edward III', p. 866.

<sup>311</sup> Henken, *National Redeemer*, p. 55.

extensively, going so far as to name his first son Arthur.<sup>312</sup> A brief lapse in kindness toward Edward III, however, occurred in Victorian times when historians began reading the morality of their own era into Edward's life.<sup>313</sup> But by the 1940-50s, scholars such as Edouard Perroy, May McKisacks, and Ranald Nicholson had set out to redeem his image, reevaluating his reign in ways that caused him to become seen as one of England's greatest monarchs.<sup>314</sup> W. M. Ormrod describes the totality of Edward's reign nicely:

It is not easy to sum up the achievements of Edward III. His reign was too long and his fortunes too changeable to allow for any bold generalizations. Had he died in 1340, he would undoubtedly have been judged a failure; had he died in 1360, he would probably have been seen as one of the most successful men ever to sit on the English throne.<sup>315</sup>

But Edward III lived until the end of the 1370s, creating an image that managed to be both greatly chivalric and imperfectly human — an inextricable blend of Arthurianism and reality that was open to interpretation and reinterpretation in own his time as it is today.

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<sup>312</sup> Carlson, 'King Arthur and Court', pp. 147-8; 152.

<sup>313</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 38-9; Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, pp. 7-10

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

<sup>315</sup> Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp. 38-9.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, then, the fourteenth-century chroniclers were, by and large, generous to Edward III and pleased by his acts as king. His own personality, coupled with his propensity for adventure and the ways in which he won the support of his nobility, set his reign up for far greater success than that of his father. And throughout most of his life, Edward III managed to portray himself as a ‘good king’ pursuing ‘just causes’ — his own records, along with the second-hand propaganda of those writing about him, leaving greater evidence of Arthurianism and Arthurian-inspired propaganda than the majority of his predecessors. His court became known a place where romance and reality mixed — a location in which the fantasy of literature and the actual grind of governance met.

In the end, though, it was reality that guided Edward’s Arthurian propaganda schemes, as well as his other facets of governance. Edward III never followed political prophecy to Rome, and he gave up on the House of the Round Table and followed rational thought in regards to the romantic nature of tournaments and chivalric orders. His forms of governance, then, drew upon fiction to create a past-validating form of fact, his Arthurian-styled propaganda effective, though never perfect. His image as a chivalric monarch was always best accepted among his own elite. On the Continent his reputation was too much in flux — a problem repeated in the lower levels of society where romance mattered less than food, shelter, and clean water and where the civilian victims of war saw the bloody side of so-called ‘chivalry’ too clearly.<sup>316</sup> The more religious chroniclers, too, tended to take a more critical view of Edward, preferring to ascribe his victories to God over Arthur or Merlin. This meant that while chroniclers like Le Bel and Froissart created romantic episodes out of a great number of Edward’s actions, chroniclers like Knighton and the anonymous of Canterbury tended to only equate him with Arthur in regards to his Round Table festivals, the Order of the Garter, and tournaments and jousts.

What is undeniably true, however, is Edward III’s ability to live on in the collective memory. By 1776 Alexander Bicknell’s history of the Black Prince had described Edward III as one to whom the heroic virtues and military spirit of Arthur had descended, writing of how Edward had formed the design to restore Arthur’s

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<sup>316</sup> Baker, ‘Meed and the Economics of Chivalry’, in *Inscribing the Hundred Years’ War*, pp. 66-7.

Round Table.<sup>317</sup> And in 1875, *Oliver Optic's Magazine* reported Edward III had built the Round Tower at Windsor 'we are told, for the purpose of assembling a fraternity of knights', which were 'to sit together on a perfect equality, as knights at the Round Table of King Arthur' — an account ending with a note on how Edward went on to build 'an immense Round Table' from fifty-two oaks.<sup>318</sup> In that sense then — in the sense of perpetuity — Edward III's Arthurian propaganda was, and continued to be, startlingly effective. He and his propaganda machine had created a 'Once and Future King' who lived and died in the fourteenth century but continued and continues to find his way onto the pages of history, scholarship, and fiction today.

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<sup>317</sup> Bicknell, *The History of Edward Prince of Wales*, p. 122.

<sup>318</sup> *Oliver Optic's Magazine*, p. 208.

## **Appendix I: Extant Manuscripts**

Information regarding the extant copies of the fourteen-century Middle English romances has been found online at:

*Database of Middle English Romance* [online], University of York

<http://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk>

### **Arthur and Merlin, c. 1250-1300**

Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (Auchinleck) (folio: 201r-256v)

c. 1330, London. 9938 lines. The last 6774 lines of the poem are extant only in this MS.

London, British Library, MS Additional 27879 (Percy Folio) (folio: pp. 145-178)

c. 1650, Lancashire. 2378 lines, corresponding to lines 1-2160 of Auchinleck.

London, British Library, MS Harley 6223 (folio: 2r-v)

c.1560, London, written by John Stow. Opening 62 lines.

London, Lincoln's Inn Library, MS 150 (folio: 13r-27v)

Late 14th (Kyng Alisaunder) and 15th centuries, Midlands, Shropshire.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 124 (folio: 1r-141v)

Transcript of Auchinleck, made c.1800 for Sir Walter Scott.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 236 (folio: 1v-36v)

Late 15th century, Dorset. Text corresponds to lines 28-1834 of Auchinleck.

### **Sir Landevale, c. first half of the fourteenth century?**

Cambridge University Library, MS Kk.5.30 (folio: 11r-11v)

Seventeenth century. Sometimes known as 'Sir Lamwell'. (IMEV 1367.1)

London, British Library, MS Additional 27879 (Percy Folio) (folio: pp. 60-66)

c. 1650, Lancashire. Sometimes known as 'Sir Lambewell'. 632 lines. (IMEV 689)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 86 (folio: 119v-128v)

Late fifteenth century, London area. 535 lines. (IMEV 3203)

### **Ywain and Gawain, c. first half of the fourteenth century**

London, British Library, MS Cotton Galba E. ix (folio: 4r-25r)

1400-1425, Northern. Unique copy. 4032 lines.

**Sir Percevale of Galles, c. first half of the fourteenth century**

Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91 (Thornton Manuscript) (folio: 161r-176r)  
c. 1440, North Yorkshire. Unique copy. 2288 lines.

**Stanzaic Morte Arthur, c. 1350**

London, British Library, MS Harley 2252 (folio: 86r-133v)  
Early 16th century, London. Unique copy. 3969 lines.

**Arthur, c. second half of the fourteenth century**

Longleat House, MS 55 (folio: 42v-46r)  
1412-28; Bath Cathedral Priory? Unique copy, 642 lines.

**Avowing of King Arthur, c. 1375-1425**

Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 9 (Ireland Blackburn MS) (folio: 35r-59r)  
1450-60, Lancashire. Unique copy. 1152 lines.

**Sir Launfal, c. late fourteenth century**

London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ii (folio: 35v-42v)  
1446-60, Southeast Midlands. Unique copy. 1044 lines.

**Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, c. late fourteenth century**

London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero A.x (folio: 91r-124v)  
Late fourteenth century, North-West Midlands. Unique copy. 2530 lines.

**Awntyrs of Arthure, c. late fourteenth century**

Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91 (Thornton Manuscript) (folio: 154r-161r)  
c. 1440, North Yorkshire.

London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491 (folio: 275r-286v)  
First quarter of the fifteenth century, London area (LALME LP 6030)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 309 (folio: 1r-11v)  
19th C. transcript of Douce 324 by Francis Douce

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 (folio: 1r-11v)  
Third quarter of the fifteenth century, Northwest Midlands.

Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 9 (Ireland Blackburn MS) (folio: 1r-15v)  
1450-60, Lancashire.

## Appendix II: The Rescue of the Countess of Salisbury

Selected chapters are reprinted from: Jean Le Bel, *The True Chronicles of Jean Le Bel, 1290-1360*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 124-7.

### Chapter XLIX

*How the Countess of Salisbury sent Sir William Montagu to King Edward for help against the King of Scotland who was besieging her.*

The men of the castle, very tired and with many wounded, realized that if King David kept his resolve they'd be in trouble. They decided to send word to the King of England, but none of them was willing to go and leave the defense of the castle and the fair lady: it led to a fierce argument. Sir William Montagu saw his companions' commitment but also the disaster that could befall them if they didn't get help, and he said:

"Sirs, your courage and your loyalty are clear. For my lady's sake and yours I shall go as messenger; I have such faith in you that I know you'll hold the castle safely till I return, and I have such trust in the King of England that I'll bring you good and speedy help."

When darkness fell Sir William prepared to leave as quietly as he could, making sure he wasn't seen by the besiegers. Luckily for him it rained so heavily all night that none of the Scots dared stir from their shelters, so he left the castle at midnight and slipped right through the enemy lines without being spotted. Once he was through and dawn broke he rode carefully on until, some half a league beyond, he met two Scots who'd found a pair of oxen and a cow in a wood and were taking them back to the army. Sir William realized they were Scots and wounded them both and killed the cattle, not wanting their army to enjoy them, and said:

"Go and tell your king that I, William Montagu, have wounded you out of hatred for him; and you can tell him that I'm going to find the noble King Edward, who'll soon send him packing!"

The pair promised to take his message if he'd let them go. So he set off then and made his way to the noble King Edward at York, where he'd already assembled

a fine company and was daily expecting still more. He bowed to the king most humbly and gave his message on behalf of the noble Countess of Salisbury, explaining the plight faced by her and her men. The noble king replied that nothing would stop him helping the lady, and gave orders for everyone to make ready to leave the next day. And in the morning the noble king set out in high spirits from the city of York to respond to Sir William's appeal; right behind him were fully six thousand men-at-arms, ten thousand archers and eighty thousand foot, and more were joining constantly.

When the Scottish barons and King David's chief counselors learned that Sir William Montagu had slipped through their lines and was going to seek help from the King of England, who they knew was at York with a huge army and was of such great courage that nothing would stop him riding to the aid of the lady and the castle, they came together to discuss their position. It was clear to them that their king was sacrificing his men for nothing and the King of England would be upon them before the castle could be taken. With one voice they told the king that staying there would bring him neither profit nor honour. Their campaign, they said, had been a notable success: They'd inflicted great harm upon the English, who'd seen them burn, destroy and ravage their land for twelve days and storm and sack the city of Durham; but they advised him to return to Scotland now, to the forest of Jedburgh, for they knew for certain that the King of England was coming with a massive army and they wouldn't be able to face him in open battle, and delay might be disastrous. The young king would gladly have awaited battle and the will of God, but his men put forward so many arguments — too many to recount — that the army decamped and made for the forest of Jedburgh, to wait and see what the King of England would do.

## Chapter L

*How King Edward came to Wark Castle, expecting to find the Scots, but they had already gone; and how he fell in love with the beautiful Countess of Salisbury.*

King David of Scotland left the castle in the morning; on the very same day, at noon, the noble King Edward arrived. He was enraged to find that the Scots had gone; he would have gladly done battle. He'd come with such speed that his men and their horses were very tired, and he gave orders for everyone to make camp

there, for he wanted to go and see the castle and the noble lady: he hadn't seen her since her wedding day. As soon as he was disarmed he took ten or twelve knights and rode to the castle to visit the noble lady and to see how the Scots had mounted their attacks and how the defenses had been managed.

The moment the noble countess knew of the king's arrive she commanded that all the gates be opened; then she came out to meet him, so gloriously attired that everyone was stunned: no one could have his fill of gazing upon the lady's stately splendour and gracious bearing. When she reached the king she bowed down to the ground before him, thanking him for the great favour he had show her; then she left him into the castle to entertain and honour him like the fine hostess she was.

Everyone was gazing at the countess in admiration, and the king in particular couldn't take his eyes off her: he was sure he'd never seen a more beautiful lady. As he gazed a spark of love was struck in his heart, and it stayed burning there: he was convinced there was no lady in the world more worthy of being loved. They entered the hall hand in hand, and her chamber likewise — which was so gorgeously bedecked that it was a wonder to behold. And all the while the noble king's gaze seemed so impassioned that the lady felt embarrassed and unsettled. Eventually he went and leaned, distracted, at the window while the lady, thinking no more of it, went to entertain and welcome the knights and lords in her eminently gracious way, and gave orders for all necessary arrangements to be made and for dinner to be prepared.

Once she had given the requisite instructions she returned smiling to the king, still deep in thought, and said: "Dear lord, why are you so preoccupied? You've no reason to be troubled; saving your grace, I'd say you've every cause to celebrate — you've driven off your enemies who didn't dare await you. Let someone else worry about the rest!"

"Ah, my dear lady!" the noble king replied. "I tell you, since I arrived here an unexpected trouble has appeared! I can't stop thinking about it: I don't know where it's going to lead me, but it's taken hold of my heart!"

"Ah, dear lord," said the countess, "you need to stay cheerful to keep your followers in good heart. Leave all this worrying and fretting. God has been so kind to you in all you've undertaken hitherto that you're the most feared and respected prince in Christendom, and if the King of Scotland has done you offence and harm

you'll be able to avenge it whenever you please. So stop all the brooding, I pray you, and come and join your knights in the hall: dinner will soon be ready."

"Ah, my dear lady, the weight on my heart is not what you imagine! I tell you truly: the elegant bearing, perfect wit, high nobility, grace and wondrous, peerless beauty of your sweet self have taken such a hold of me that I have to be your lover! And I pray you, if you are willing, grant me your love — though truly, no refusal will quench my desire!"

The noble lady was aghast, and said: "Dearest lord, don't test or mock me! I don't believe you mean this, or that a prince as noble as you would dare make such an unworthy proposition, especially when you know my husband has served you so loyally, and is still suffering imprisonment for your sake. Such an act would earn you little respect! And truly, dearest lord, such a thought has never entered my heart and never will, if it please God, for any man born; and if I were guilty of the deed you should revile me — no, not revile, but cut me limb from limb!"

With that the spirited lady turned and left the king crestfallen, and went back to the hall to see that dinner was ready. Then she returned to the king with some of his knights and said: "Come and dine when you wish, my lord; the knights are waiting for you so that they can begin: they have fasted long enough."

The king went into the hall and sat down to dine, as did the lady. But the king ate and drank little, for his heart craved something else; all he could do was gaze, brooding, at the lady. His men were astonished: they weren't used to see him like this; some said it was because the Scots had escaped him, but that wasn't the problem! Love of the lady had taken such a grip upon his heart that no argument or refusal could set it free; and finally Love's dart was to spur him to a deed that earned him bitter reproach and blame, for when he couldn't have what he wished of the noble lady through love or entreaty he took it by force, as you'll hear later on.

## Chapter LI

*How King Edward left Wark Castle with all his army and pursued the Scots to the forest of Jedburgh.*

In any event, the king spent the whole day at the castle in a deeply troubled state, not knowing what to do. At times he reconsidered, as Honour and Loyalty

reproved him for these shameful thoughts which would dishonour such a worthy lady and such a noble knight; but then back would come Love, so insistently that She overwhelmed and vanquished Honour. The noble king wrestled with his thoughts all day and all night.

Next morning he ordered his army to strike camp and head after the Scots to drive them from his land. And he took his leave of the countess, saying:

“Dear lady, I commend you to God till my return; and I pray that you’ll decide to change your mind.”

“Dear lord,” she replied, “may the King of Heaven guide you and wash away all base thoughts; I shall always be ready to serve you to your honour and my own.”

With that the king departed, and went after the Scots and followed them beyond the city of Berwick and camped four short leagues from the forest of Jedburgh: that’s where King David and his men had gone, because of the great fortresses in those parts.

[Chapter continues but is not included further here.]

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