MANHOOD, KINGSHIP AND THE PUBLIC IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND[*]

Virilidad, dignidad regia y lo público en la Inglaterra bajomedieval

Christopher FLETCHER[**]
Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne)

RESUMEN: Los Reyes de Inglaterra durante la baja Edad Media actuaban en el marco de una sociedad política cada vez más abierta. Los monarcas consideraban oportuno persuadir a su gente de la rectitud de su política, y el público inglés encontró mecanismos para expresar sus opiniones, desde la elevación de peticiones, a la murmuración y la rebelión. Este artículo examina algunas de las implicaciones que estas cuestiones plantean. En particular: ¿que efecto tuvo la naturaleza pública de la monarquía sobre la relación entre los ideales de comportamiento aplicables a los reyes y las normas de masculinidad aplicables a todo hombre? Trataré de responder a esta cuestión comparando las proclamaciones de Eduardo III (1327-77) y las acusaciones de injurias al rey durante el reinado de Enrique VI (1422-61), con algunos ataques efectuados con anterioridad contra Eduardo II (1307-27). Los dos primeros fueron juzgados con arreglo a ideales de virilidad aplicables a todo hombre. El último fue criticado por conductas potencialmente masculinas que sin embargo eran inadecuadas para un rey. De todos modos, sería imprudente aplicar una narrativa secuencial a estas circunstancias políticas diferentes. La variedad de las interpretaciones disponibles sobre la virilidad posibilitaba la crítica o el elogio de los reyes por su hombría o su falta de ella, dependiendo de las circunstancias políticas concretas. Lo que es seguro, sin embargo, es que la naturaleza pública de la monarquía hizo de la hombría del rey un poderoso instrumento político a lo largo de este período.

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PALABRAS CLAVE: Virilidad. Masculinidad. Opinión pública. Ámbito público. Realeza. Inglaterra medieval.

ABSTRACT: Late medieval English kings operated in an increasingly public political society. Monarchs found it expedient to persuade their people of the rectitude of their policies, and the English public found ways to express their opinions, from petitioning to gossip and rebellion. This article examines some of the consequences of this state of affairs. In particular: What effect did the public nature of kingship have upon the relationship between ideals of conduct applicable to kings and norms of masculinity which applied to all men? This question is addressed by comparing proclamations of Edward III (1327-77), and reports of treasonous words under Henry VI (1422-61), with earlier attacks on Edward II (1307-27). The first two were judged by ideals of manhood which applied to all men. The latter was criticized for potentially manly pursuits which were nonetheless inappropriate for a king. Still, it would be unwise to impose a developmental narrative on these diverse political circumstances. The variety of interpretations of manhood available made it possible to criticize or praise kings as manly or unmanly according to particular political circumstances. What is certain, however, is that the public nature of kingship made the king's manhood a powerful political tool throughout this period.

KEYWORDS: Manhood. Masculinity. Public Opinion. Public Sphere. Kingship. Medieval England.

Were medieval kings like other men? A century's work on the sacrality of kingship has tended to stress how kings differed from their fellow adult males, even fellow nobles. In England, by William Conqueror's time at the latest, the king's crowned presence was celebrated by the singing of the *laudes regiae*, which linked and confused divine and earthly power[1]. Even the noble rebels of the twelfth century were careful to avoid raising arms against the king in person, knowing that

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[1] KANTOROWICZ, E. H., *Laudes Regiae: A Study of Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1958; ID., *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, esp. ch. 3. For the view that the *laudes* arrived with William I, see COWDREY, H. E. J., «The Anglo-Norman *Laudes Regiae*», *Viator*, 1981, nº 12, pp. 37-78. For the possibility that they were introduced slightly earlier, see HARE, M., «Kings, Crowns and Festivals: The Origins of Gloucester as a Royal Ceremonial Centre», *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 1997, nº 115, pp. 41-78; LAPIDGE, M., «Ealdred of York and MS Cotton Vitellius E.XII», *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 1983, nº 55, pp. 11-25.

one should not touch the Lord's anointed[2]. By the end of the thirteenth century the king's curing touch was sought after by those afflicted by disease[3]. The royal person, standing above other men, was different from them[4].

Yet still the king remained a man. One challenging aspect of recent work on the history of masculinity has been the suggestion that ideas about what a man ought to be must often be reconciled with other ways of determining right action. As a result, ideas about manhood have sometimes influenced otherwise independent social, cultural and political phenomena[5]. Could something like this be true of late medieval kingship? I have argued elsewhere that concepts of manhood played an important role in the reign of Richard II of England (1377-1399)[6]. In the present article I would like to explore how these findings might be generalised. Outside of the particular circumstances of the late fourteenth century (a king crowned at the age of ten; an intractable military situation; a population driven to rebellion by war taxation amongst other things), how far did concepts of manhood which applied to other social groups apply to kings too?[7] What changes over time can we discern as political society evolved?

One central development which changed the nature of the relationship between kingship and manhood in late medieval England was the gradual expansion of the public, one aspect of the development of what have been called "political" states or

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[2] STRICKLAND, M., «Against the Lord's anointed: aspects of warfare and baronial rebellion in England and Normandy, 1075-1265», in GARNETT, G. and HUDSON, J. (eds.), *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 56-79.

[3] BARLOW, F., «The King's Evil», *English Historical Review*, 1980, vol. 95, pp. 3-27; BLOCH, M., *Les rois thaumaturges*, new ed. with preface by J. Le Goff, Paris, Gallimard, 1983.

[4] For the argument that Carolingian kings were not assessed by the same moral criteria as other men, see STONE, R., «Kings are different: Carolingian mirrors for princes and lay morality», in LACHAUD, F. and SCORDIA, L. (eds.), *Le Prince au miroir de la littérature politique de l'Antiquité aux Lumières*, Mont-Saint-Aignan, Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2007, pp. 69-86.

[5] See e.g. on Roman ideals of manhood and the Christianisation of the Empire: KUEFLER, M. , *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, gender ambiguity and ideology in late antiquity*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2001; for the debate about the late medieval clergy, masculinity and sexual activity, see SWANSON, R. W., «Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation», in HADLEY, D. M. (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe,* London, Longman, 1999, pp. 160-177; NEAL, D. G., *The Masculine Self in late medieval England,* Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2008, pp. 89-122; FLETCHER, C. D., «The Whig Interpretation of Masculinity? Honour and sexuality in late medieval manhood», in BRADY, S. and ARNOLD, J. (eds.), *What is Masculinity? Historical arguments and perspectives*, London, Palgrave, 2011, (forthcoming).

[6] FLETCHER, C. D., *Richard II: Manhood, youth and politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

[7] A question posed by CARPENTER, D., «Go to the devil», in *London Review of Books*, July 2010, vol. 32, nº 14, pp. 30-31.

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"polities" which has been detected throughout Europe in this period[8]. During the later middle ages, the set of those who were knowingly affected by the politics of kings and the nobility and formed explicit opinions about them steadily expanded as royal administration, justice and taxation penetrated deeper into local society[9]. This has been seen as marking a period of "political dialogue" or –in a coinage which stresses the inequality of that dialogue– "political exchange" in which kings and princes found it increasingly necessary to influence or even create "public opinion"[10]. In England, from the Barons' Wars of the mid thirteenth century on, kings began to see the usefulness of persuading their subjects of the rightness of their cause through proclamations and calls for public prayers[11]. Nonetheless, this relationship was not simply one way. Through action in county courts, petitions in parliament, rebellion or the threat of rebellion, men down to the level of the small

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[8] For England, see GENET, J.-P., *La genèse de l'État moderne: Culture et société politique en Angleterre*, Paris, PUF, 2003. For similar developments across Europe, see WATTS, J. L., *The Making of Polities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[9] For the general phenomenon, see WATTS, *Making of Polities*. For England, see MADDICOTT, J. R., *The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown, 1294-1341*, Past and Present Supplement nº 1, 1975; HARRISS, G. L., «Political Society and the Growth of Government in Late Medieval England», *Past and Present*, 1993, nº 138, pp. 28-57. For comparable developments in Castile, see OLIVA HERRER, H. R., «Espace public et critique politique dans le monde rural à la fin du Moyen Âge», in BOUCHERON, P. and OFFENSTADT, N. (dirs.), *L'espace public au Moyen Âge. Débats autour de Jürgen Habermas*, PUF, 2003, pp. 301-19; ID., *Justicia contra señores. El mundo rural y la política en tiempos de los Reyes Católicos*, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 2004. For the king seen by the people in France, see GAUVARD, C., «L'image du roi justicier en France à la fin du Moyen Âge d'après les lettres de rémission», in *107ᵉ Congrès national des societies savantes (Brest 1982): Séction d'histoire medieval et de philology*, Paris, Ministère de l''Education Nationale, 1984, pp. 165-92; ID., «Rumeur et stéréotypes à la fin du Moyen Âge» in *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Âge: XXIVᵉ congress de la SMES*, Rome-París, Ècole française de Rome-Pub. de la Sorbonne, 1994, pp. 129-37.

[10] GUÉNÉE, B., *L'Occident aux XIVᵉ et XVᵉ siècle: Les États*, París, PUF, 1971, 6e. éd., 1998, p. 244 for *dialogue politique*, cited and reformulated critically as *échange politique* by BUCHERON, P. and OFFENSTADT, N., «Introduction générale: une histoire de l'échange politique au Moyen Âge», in BUCHERON and OFFENSTADT (eds.), *L'espace public*, pp. 1-21. For a critical approach to *opinion publique* see GAUVARD, C., «Le roi de France et l'opinion publique à l'époque de Charles VI», in *Culture et idéologie dans la genèse de l'État modern: Actes du table ronde CNRS, 15-17 oct. 1984*, Rome, École française de Rome, 1985, pp. 353-66; ID., «Qu'est-ce que l'opinion avant l'invention de l'imprimerie?», in *L'opinion. Information, rumeur, propaganda. Les rendez-vous de l'Histoire (Blois, 2007)*, Nantes, Plein Feux, 2008, pp. 21-59.

[11] For England, see JONES, W. R., «The English Church and Royal Propaganda during the Hundred Years War», *Journal of British Studies*, 1979, vol. 19, pp. 18-30; HEWITT, H. J., *The Organization of War under Edward III*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1966, pp. 158-68. For royal use of proclamation in France, see GAUVARD, «Le roi de France», pp. 357-8; DUTOUR, T., «L'élaboration, la publication et la diffusion de l'information à la fin du Moyen Âge (Bourgogne ducale et France royal)», in LETT, D. and OFFENSTADT, N. (eds.), *Haro! Noël! Oyé! Pratiques du cri au Moyen Âge*, París, Pub. de la Sorbonne, 2003, pp. 141-55.

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town or rural community influenced the doings of kings[12]. Comparable developments throughout western Christendom mean that many historians no longer hesitate, *pace* Habermas, to apply the concept of the «public sphere» to the later middle ages[13]. Even when the subjects of royal authority did not get as far as putting their grievances into writing, the content of public talk, rumour and what contemporaries called common fame[14] can sometimes be glimpsed in written sources[15]. In this article, I would like to explore both what the judgements of the English public on their kings have to tell us about contemporary views of the relationship between kingship and manhood, and also what royal proclamations reveal about efforts of the royal government to make use of the common manhood of the king and his subjects for their own ends.

First of all, though, before examining the relationship between manhood and kingship, we need to start by considering late medieval concepts of the nature of a man. I say "concepts" in the plural because late medieval culture contained several

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[12] MADDICOTT, J. R., «The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England», *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1978, 5th ser. nº 28, pp. 27-43; DODD, G., *Justice and Grace: Private petitioning and the English parliament in the late Middle Ages*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; CARPENTER, D., «English peasants in politics, 1258-67», *Past and Present*, 1992, nº 136, pp. 3-42; TUCK, J. A., «Nobles, Commons and the Great Revolt of 1381», in HILTON, R. H. and ASTON, T. H. (eds.), *The English Rising of 1381*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 194-212; WATTS, J. L., «The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politics», in CLARK, L. and CARPENTER, C. (eds.), *The Fifteenth Century. 4: Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2004, pp. 159-80; HARVEY, I. M. W., *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991.

[13] See the contributions to BOUCHERON and OFFENSTADT, *L'espace public*.

[14] On *fama* see GAUVARD, C., «La *Fama*, une parole fondatrice», *Médiévales*, 1993, nº 24, pp. 5-13; ID., *De grâce especial: Crime, état et société en France à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991; FENSTER, TH. and SMAIL, D. L. (eds.), *Fama: The politics of talk and reputation in medieval Europe*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2003; THERY, J., «*Fama*: l'opinion publique comme prevue judiciaire», in LEMESLE, B. (dir.), *La preuve en justice de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Rennes, Pub. de l'université de Rennes, 2003, pp. 119-47.

[15] For rumour and talk in France see GAUVARD, «Le roi de France», «Rumeur et stereotypes», and the other contributions to *La circulation des nouvelles*, notably BEAUNE, C., «La rumeur dans le Journal du Bourgeois de Paris». For England see ROSS, C., «Rumour, propaganda and popular opinion during the Wars of the Roses», in GRIFFITHS, R. (ed.), *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1981, pp. 15-32; ARMSTRONG, C. A. J., «Some examples of the distribution and speed of news in England at the time of the Wars of the Roses», in HUNT, R. W., PANTIN, W. A. and SOUTHERN, R. W. (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to F.M. Powicke*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1948, pp. 429-54.

overlapping but also contradictory perspectives on the ideal characteristics of manhood.

The easiest conceptual structure to discern in the most readily available sources is that of what one might call clerical, or perhaps clerkly culture – to be found in sermons, devotional works, manuals for rulers and even in medical theory. This set of views was most clearly advocated by clergymen in the early and high middle ages, but by the fifteenth-century it would have been familiar to lay administrators, noblemen with a normal level of education for their class and even to ordinary laymen who listened to sermons or attended morality plays[16].

In this clerkly vision of manhood, virtuous action was achieved first by the rational determination of the correct path, and then by the vigour and steadfastness which allowed one to stick to this path, despite the impulses of bodily and worldly temptation. The perfect man was one who had great impulses but controlled them. Its archetype might be the ancient doctor Hypocrates as described in the physiognomical sections of the *Secretum Secretorum*, a guide for rulers in the form which circulated widely in various versions in late medieval England[17]. In an attempt to test the physiognomer Philemon, the students of Hypocrates sent him an image of their master. Seeing this image, Philemon declared that this man was naturally deceitful, avaricious and a lover of lechery[18]. The students of Hypocrates protested, scandalised. But then their master revealed that he was indeed subject to these impulses, and yet through great effort he resisted them. *I ordeyned my soule kyng aboue my body*, he says, and so succeeded in living a virtuous life[19].

Control of self was the key to this view of manhood. Steadfastness and constancy of purpose marked the man out from youths and women who, as a result of an inconstant physical nature, were less able to resist the impulses of sin. This vision of ideal manhood was well adapted to the lessons to be found in sermons and early *mirrors for princes* concerning the ideal nature of rulership. In talking of

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[16] FLETCHER, C. D., «Être homme et l'histoire politique du Moyen Âge: quelques réflexions sur le changement et la longue durée», in SOHN, A.-M. (ed.), *Histoire des hommes et des masculinités*, Lyon, École Normale Supérieur, 2012, (forthcoming); FLETCHER, *Richard II*, pp. 60-74; DUNLOP, F., *The Late Medieval Interlude: The Drama of Youth and Aristocratic Masculinity*, Woodbridge, York Medieval Press, 2007, esp. pp. 22-53.

[17] MANZALAOUI, M. A., (ed.), *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, (ed. EETS 276), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977.

[18] ID., *ibid.*, pp. 10-11, 90, 197-8

[19] ID., *ibid.*, p. 11. Cf. ID., *ibid.* p. 90. The version of c.1484 asserts that he did this *qwan I came to mannis age* (p. 198).

government these writers never failed to note that in order to govern others, one must first rule oneself[20].

Nevertheless, this clerkly view of manhood was far from being the only conception of manhood current in late medieval England. Equally strong was an idea of what a man was which also stressed vigour and steadfastness but in very different settings. This conception is revealed most clearly by the context and connotations of words such as *manly* and *manhood* in late medieval English texts[21]. These are, in fact, remarkably similar to the earliest connotations of the Latin words *viriliter* and *virtus*[22]. From this second perspective *manly* action is above all vigorous, steadfast action in a fighting situation. This vigour is often called for in circumstances of defence, especially against the odds.

To take an example more or less at random, one early fifteenth- or late fourteenth-century continuation of the *Brut* chronicle, whilst narrating Edward III's naval expedition to Flanders in 1340, records how he fell *manly and stifly* upon the French navy at the port of Sluys[23]. Later, in 1346, the English king attacks Caen, where he fights a fierce battle at a bridge which is *manly and orpudly ystrengthed and defended with Normannes*[24]. Or in another continuation of the *Brut*, the young earl of March is ambushed by *a grete multitude ...of wilde Iryschmen* who wish to capture or kill him, but *he come out ffersely of his Castell with his peple, and manly ffaught with ham* –although this does not prevent him from being hewed to pieces[25].

In contexts like these it is also possible to discern a further connotation of *manhood* –one which linked it to the need to prevent shame and to defend one's honour, reputation or *fama*[26]. A romance tag declared that it was better to fight manly than to flee in shame and villainy[27]. By fighting manly, late medieval

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[20] LACHAUD, F., *L'éthique du pouvoir au Moyen Âge,* Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2010, pp. 111-113, 125-6; SENELLART, M., *Les arts de gouverner: Du régime médiéval au concept de gouvernemnt*, Paris, Seuil, 1995.

[21] FLETCHER, *Richard II*, ch. 2.

[22] MCDONNELL M., *Roman Manliness* Virtus *and the Roman republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, ch. 1.

[23] BRIE F. W. D. (ed.), *The Brut*, ed., EETS os 131, 136, London, Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1906-8, vol. ii, p. 295.

[24] ID., *ibid.*, p. 297.

[25] ID., *ibid.*, p. 341.

[26] On *fama* see FENSTER, T. and SMAIL, D. L. (ed.), *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 2003 and *Médiévales*, 1993, nº 24, directed by C. GAUVARD.

[27] ZUPITZA J. (ed.), *The romance of Guy of Warwick*, EETS es 42, 49, 59 (1883-1891), ll. 2119-20 (from Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge MS 107). See also FLETCHER, *Richard II*, ch. 2.

Englishmen would protect and increase their *manhood*, which in this sense was a synonym for honour. Liberality, too, could protect or increase this manhood by marking one's status through the giving of gifts[28]. One's manhood in this sense was one's right to the dignity of a man. It is often not clear whether this *man* is an adult, a male and human being. But what is clear is the link to the kind of activities which won or demonstrated *manhood*.

In this sense, he who fought *manly* bears comparison with the "true man" which Derek Neal has recently singled out as the ideal type of late medieval manhood[29]. False behaviour, which is to say untrustworthy or disloyal behaviour brought shame and in this sense they were unmanly –activities more fitting for a false thief than a true man. It is for this reason that one mid-fifteenth century *mirror for princes* warns against breaking faith *for that longeth to common harlottes* [that is: untrustworthy people] *and peeple withoute feith*[30]. Being "true" was itself a kind of steadfastness, comparable to standing one's ground in a battle. It was characterised by a good and stable keeping of one's word, necessary since *yf thou breke thy feith, all men shall liken the to the childe or beest vnresonable*[31].

These, then, are some of the meanings of manhood which come out most clearly in the sources available for the later middle ages. They do not represent the full spectrum, or at least not the full range of possible inflections of the associations of acting like a man. The vigour shown in battle might, potentially, be shown in more lowly work. There is some suggestion in sermons, and in moral works such as the alliterative poem *Piers Plowman* that working with one's hands could be manly[32]. On the other hand, tavern or street fighters might see the need to defend their manhood by refusing to flee in shame, far from the chivalric contexts which spring to the fore in chronicle, sermon or literary sources[33]. Certainly it seems clear that the tendency of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century writers to assume that sexuality must be central to any conception of masculinity is misplaced in the

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[28] ID., *ibid.*, ch. 3.

[29] NEAL, D.G., *The Masculine Self*, ch. 1. Cf. SHEPARD, A., «Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England, c. 1580-1640», *Past and Present*, 2000, nº 167, pp. 75-106.

[30] MANZALAOUI (ed.)*, Secretum*, p. 326. For the meaning of *harlot* see NEAL, *The Masculine Self*, p. 38.

[31] MANZALAOUI, (ed.), *Secretum*, p. 326. See also ID., *ibid.*, pp. 43, 140.

[32] E.g. *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373-1389),* (ed. DEVLIN M. A.), Camden Soc., 3rd ser. 85, London, Royal Historical Society, 1934, p. 100; *Fasciculus Morum: A fourteenth-century preacher's handbook,* (ed. and trans. WENZEL S.), University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989, pp. 422-5. On male identity and work see DAVIS I., *Writing masculinity in the later middle ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

[33] See FLETCHER, *Richard II*, pp. 38-9.

case of late medieval manhood[34], but it would be wrong to go too far in the opposite direction, to deduce that late medieval conceptions of being a man had no link to sexual activity. That said, it does appear that, in the sources available to us, manhood in the later middle ages had stronger links with vigour, steadfastness and a certain worthiness of respect, all of which were opposed to the shameful status and behaviour of beasts, children, women, the untrustworthy and those of lower social status.

With this rapid survey of late medieval concepts of manhood in mind, we can return to the question of how these intersected with contemporary ideas of kingship. In matters of war and diplomacy at least, the role of the king and the role of a man closely coincided. In dealing with foreign powers or with criminals, the king ideally reacted vigorously, with proper concern for his honour, and with the use of violence if necessary, but at the same time with control and reason, establishing his rights and proceeding with moderation.

One clear example of a king presenting himself in a way which stressed what he had in common with other men is provided by the efforts of Edward III (1327-1377) to persuade the public that his cause was right. In preparing the case for war in a number of proclamations between 1337 and 1340, Edward sought to persuade his subjects, foreign princes and the papacy that all legal recourse had been denied him, in a manner which amounted to a series of affronts to his honour and that of all Englishmen. By the time he formally assumed the title of king of France on 8 February 1340, thus opening that phase in Anglo-French conflict subsequently known as the Hundred Years War, his rhetoric had taken on very full and evocative form.

Historians have long drawn attention to the justifications which Edward circulated at this time, both at home and abroad, and his use of sermons and requests for prayers to support his cause[35]. When it comes to analysing particular texts, however, they have focused on the king's letters as they were sent either to the pope and cardinals in Avignon or to the nobility and people of France[36]. But

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[34] FLETCHER, «The Whig Interpretation of Masculinity?»; NEAL, *The Masculine Self*, pp. 89-122.

[35] BARNIE J., *War in Medieval Society*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974, pp. 4-5; HEWITT, *Organization of War*, p. 159; LE PATOUREL J., «Edward III and the Kingdom of France», *History*, 1958, vol. 43, pp. 173-189.

[36] RYMER T. et al. (eds.), *Foedera*, Records Commission Edition, London, Eyre and Strahan, 1816-69, vol. ii, pt. ii, pp. 1108-9, 1111. LE PATOUREL, «Edward III», p. 176; HEWITT, *Organization of War*, p. 159 claim to discuss proclamations of Edward to the people of England, but give page

whereas these proclamations seem also to have circulated in England, since they are copied or alluded to in a number of monastic chronicles[37], they seem singularly ill-adapted to stir the spirits of the English to come to Edward's aid. The letters to the people of France, in particular, aim to reassure Edward's future subjects that he will not impugn their rights, but will restore the good old law of Saint Louis. This was not the kind of talk likely to play well in England, or indeed in Aquitaine, and Edward felt the need to issue simultaneous proclamations reassuring his subjects that his new title would not impugn their rights by subordinating them to the crown of France[38]. It is less often remarked that the proclamations to the pope, cardinals and the kingdom of France are not the only version of Edward's proclamation to survive. Another text was once to be found in the Cotton library, in a volume which belonged to Jacquetta of Luxembourg, wife of Henry V's brother and long-time regent of France, John, duke of Bedford. This document was edited by Thomas Rymer before it was apparently destroyed by fire in 1731[39].

This open letter gives a highly accomplished rhetorical defence of the king's claim, in a version best suited to an English public. It seems to be aimed at a wide audience, perhaps at first an ecclesiastical one, but with a powerful strand of rhetoric appropriate for use in later preaching and public proclamation. It narrates

references to those parts of *Foedera* where letters to Edward's potential French subjects are cited. For this document they are followed by BARNIE, *War in Medieval*, p. 7, although Barnie himself only discusses in detail the documents sent to the French and to the pope and cardinals as copied in Murimuth's chronicle, next note.

[37] Copied in *Adae Murimuth Continuatio Chronicarum et Robertus de Avesbury De Gestis Mirabilibus Regis Edwardi Tertii*, (ed. THOMPSON E. M.), Rolls Series, London, HMSO, 1889, pp. 309-10 (to the French), 91, 303 (to the cardinals). Alluded to in *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, (ed. BOND E. A.), London, Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1868, although he interestingly says that letters were circulated in French, *English* and Latin. The English letters could not have been the same as those issued in France, for reasons discussed in this paragraph.

[38] FROISSART J., *Oeuvres*, ed. M. le baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, Bruxelles, 1867-77, vol. xviii (Pièces justificatives), pp. 129-30 (England will not be subject to the kingdom of France). *Foedera*, Records Commission Edition, vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 1127.

[39] First published in RYMER T. (ed.), *Foedera*, London, Churchill, 1704-1717, vol. v, pp. 160-3. Cited as MS Cotton Otho D.11, f. 106. This volume was badly damaged but not entirely destroyed in the fire of 1731. The British Library now preserves 150 leaves and fragments from this volume, but an examination reveals no legible trace of the document which Rymer transcribed. The letter would have been towards the end of the volume, perhaps included in the *Histoire de la noble fortress de Lusignen en Poitou; compilé selon diverses croniques* which according to Cotton's catalogue began on f. 101, although it could have been separately copied towards the end and overlooked by Cotton. See SMITH T., *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library 1696*, ed. C.G.C. TITE, Cambridge, Brewer, 1984, pp. 74-5. The editors of the Records Commission edition of *Foedera* simply reproduce Rymer's transcription without any clue as to the fate of the manuscript. See *Foedera*, Records Commission Edition, vol. ii, pt. ii, pp. 1109-1110.

once more how Edward had been repeatedly denied his rights by "Philip of Valois". Its narrative of wrongs culminates in an account of a final incident which departs from a strictly legal approach and which is not found in proclamations addressed to French and papal audiences. This story immediately precedes the moment in this letter when Edward III reaches the age of majority, sees the dishonour which is done to him and repudiates his oaths to Philip VI. First, the text records raids on English shipping and attacks on Guernsey, which was occupied in September 1338, stressing their brutality[40]. One particular crime is singled out for more detailed treatment. According to this letter, the French captured certain "simple English fisherman" (*piscatores simplices anglicos*), who had done nothing wrong. Then, raging *inhumaniter* in their faces, the French cut off the sailors' noses, their ears and finally their genitals – which ought to be covered *pro humanitate*– and put them in the poor men's mouths, before leading them naked through the town. All this is done *in spectaculum et contumeliam anglicae nationis* –to the public humiliation and insult of the English nation– before they are cruelly executed.

Edward III is presented by this open declaration as a lord who pursues righteous vengeance for wrongs done to his men. This is also presented as a crime against *humanitas*, which for contemporary English speakers, who lacked the word "humanity", would have resonated with "manhood" –meaning those qualities shared by all "men" in the sense of all human beings, but also in the sense of "man" as a being who is worthy of respect. Those who mutilate, humiliate and execute the English fishermen failed to experience the pity which they ought to feel for their fellow men –a fitting theme for a sermon in favour of the king's cause. But, at the same time, this open letter also narrates an attack on "manhood" in a different sense –on the honour and worthiness of respect of both the sailors, the English nation and the king.

Of course, we should not assume that this kind of rhetorical gambit always worked to the benefit of the king, polished as it is in this instance. Within a year of this declaration, Edward III was facing one of the most intense crises of his reign, precisely because of his failure to carry public opinion with him. On other occasions in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, in even worse circumstances, the need for the king to defend his manhood in war and diplomacy could also work against him, as common talk linked his lack of vigour to failures at home and abroad.

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[40] On which see SUMPTION J., *The Hundred Years War, vol. i: Trial by Battle* (London, 1990), p. 247.

The clearest example of a king who was held to lack appropriate manly vigour occurs at the other end of the Hundred Years' War, as the government of Henry VI (1422-61) and the last English holdings in France began to collapse in the late 1440s[41]. For example, in one of many reports of treasonous words against the king which date from this period, one Richard Spencer testified that as he was riding with William Parker of Westminster to arrest a *stronge felon* on behalf of the king, the latter made some ill-guarded remarks[42]. Parker said, treasonably, *that hit is grete pyte that euer our soueraigne lord now regnyng chuld be kynge other regne for this that he occupieth him not in Werres beyond the see*. It was because of this that *ther are so mony traytours and felons in Englond as are this y hard*, that is to say as hard as the *strong felon* they were going to arrest. Thus, according to Parker, it was because of Henry VI's failure to deal with the collapsing situation in France, that criminals felt emboldened to do as they liked. This witness thus apparently believed that the personal vigour of the king was tied up with the success of his rule in such a way that his failure to apply himself led not only to failure in war but even to the collapse of order at home. Even if the allegation against Parker was untrue, it demonstrates that his accuser believed that this kind of accusation was both scandalous and plausible.

For the critics of Henry VI, lack of vigour –the essential quality of manhood– lay at the root of his failures as a king. Thus in another case of treasonous words, dating this time from November 1446, in which one John Page, a draper of London, allegedly said to him that the earl of Suffolk and the bishop of Salisbury, who then headed Henry VI's government, had *sette suche Rule on our souerayn lord the king that hys rull is nowetz*– that he was not really ruling at all[43]. Page also allegedly said that, whenever the kyng *wold ha*[ue] [h]*ys dysporte wyth our souerayn lady the Quene*, the bishop and others around the king *conselyd hym that he schuld not come nye her*. It was because of this that she had not conceived and that the land lacked a prince. Thus the king's lack of will meant not only that he did not rule the country, but that he did not even have the will to disport himself with the queen, and so furnish the kingdom with an heir.

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[41] On this crisis, see esp. HARRISS G. L., «Marmaduke Lumley and the Exchequer Crisis of 1446-9», in ROWE, J.G. (ed.), *Aspects of Late Medieval Government and Society*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986, pp. 143-78; KEEN M. H., «The End of the Hundred Years War: Lancastrian France and Lancastrian England», in JONES, M. and VALE, M. (eds.), *England and her Neighbours, 1066-1453*, London, Hambledon, 1989, pp. 297-311.

[42] The National Archive, London [hereafter TNA] KB 9/260, m. 87. For dating, see HARVEY, *Jack Cade's*, pp. 30-1.

[43] TNA, KB 9/260, m. 85.

John Page then compounded his treason by casting doubts on the king's parentage, saying the king *is not in his persoun as hys nobyll progenitours* had been. How could Page tell? Well, *his vesage was not fauoryd, for he had not bute a cheybeys face and is not stedefast of wytt as other kyngys have ben*. As a result Henry was losing all that his noble progenitors had won. He did not have an attractive appearance, but only a *cheybeys* face –an expression which is suggestive of extreme youth, but also, particularly when placed next to the idea that his face was *not favoured*, that of a churl or a *boie* of lower social class. Finally we are told that Henry was *not stedefast of wytt*. This fits with Henry VI's notorious tendency to do whatever the person in front of him asked of him, but it also invoked the broader associations of a lack of steadfastness –an unmanly and potentially shameful lack of constancy in word and action. According to Page's alleged words, it was this which led to loss in war and, as the accusation continued, despoliation of the poor commons through the bad counsel. All this justified the commons in rising to destroy the king and the counsellors about him, as they subsequently did in Jack Cade's rebellion of 1450[44].

Critics of Henry VI picked out failures which would have shown lack of manhood in any man. The war aims of Edward III easily coalesced with one group of assumptions about the nature of manly action, and the same could be said of Henry V[45]. Matters were not as straightforward with kings who displayed the vigour which lay at the heart of manhood but who were nonetheless objects of criticism[46]. For example, how should the king behave when he believed his honour to be impugned by internal political opponents, especially the senior ranks of the nobility? From a perspective quite removed from ideals of manhood, the king's nobles had not only the right but the duty to counsel the king, and in troubled times certain nobles carried that function further to enforce reform upon the king by claiming to know his honour better than he knew it himself. But this was ambiguous territory, and it was an unwise noble who neglected that the king, too, was a man whose manhood could be impugned by attacks on his honour, and who might feel the need to avenge himself on those who slighted him.

Such was the case in the reign of Edward II (1307-27) and it was largely because of this that his manhood remained an issue long after his deposition and

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[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Which I discuss in a forthcoming article on «The Manhood of Henry V».

[46] I have dealt at length elsewhere with another king who falls under this category. See FLETCHER, *Richard II*.

death. Although the nature of Edward's relationship with his favourites Piers
Gaveston and Hugh Despenser the younger has been the object of much debate[47],
what is most surprising with regards to public perceptions of Edward's manhood
and kingship is how little comment was attracted by any sexual aspect of these
relationships during the fiercely contested politics of his reign[48]. It seems that the
story of Edward's murder, with obvious symbolism, by a red-hot poker is very late,
and that the accusation of sodomy was not levelled against him before 1326[49]. The
elaborate account of the execution of Hugh Despenser the younger to be found in
Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*, in which Hugh's penis and testicles are cut off and
burned in front of him on the grounds that he was a heretic and a sodomite *as was
also said of the king*, do not figure in earlier accounts[50].

Yet although questions of sexuality did not come to the fore until Edward II's
deposition, it nonetheless does seem that the king's manhood, was a matter of
public debate during his reign. First, it appears that Edward was widely regarded
not only as good looking but also as physically strong –a classic representation of
the man in the sense of one who has strength and vigour. Nonetheless, in both
contemporary narratives and those which date from after his deposition, Edward's
critics allege that through *inconstant* morals –that is through morals which lacked
the steadfastness associated by clerical writers with the self-controlled man– he falls
into forms of behaviour which threaten his honour and reputation as a king. Most
interestingly for our present purposes, in the eyes of his critics one important way in
which the king lost his honour was through activities which would have been
perfectly manly for most of his subjects. His vigour was wasted, not only through
morally disreputable but also lower class company, and activities which are
alternately immoral and inappropriate for a king. He wastes his time in rustic

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[47] CHAPLAIS P., *Piers Gaveston: Edward II's adoptive brother,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994
and the insightful reviews by PHILLIPS J. R. S., *English Historical Review*, 1996, vol. 111, pp. 1250-2
and HAMILTON J. S., *American Historical Review*, 1996, vol. 101, pp. 169-70. For more recent
comment see ORMROD, W. M., «The sexualities of Edward II», in DODD, G. and MUSSON, A. (eds.),
The Reign of Edward II, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2006, pp. 22-47.

[48] If these relationships were sexual, or even thought to be sexual, this would tend to support the
argument of BOSWELL J., *Christianity, social tolerance and homosexuality*, Chicago, Chicago
University Press, 1980 for broad tolerance of same sex relationships in the middle ages, even if this
tolerance was of a distinctly "don't ask, don't tell" variety. Only when the king himself was about to be
deposed were these accusations made explicit.

[49] MORTIMER, I., «Sermons of sodomy: A reconsideration of Edward II's sodomitical
reputation», in DODD and MUSSON, *Reign of Edward II*, pp. 48-60.

[50] FROISSART J., *Chroniques*, (ed. S. LUCE), SHF (Paris, 1869), vol. i, pt. i, pp. 34-5, following LE
BEL, J., *Chronique*, (ed. VIARD J. and DÉPREZ E.), SHF (Paris, 1904-5), pp. 27-8.

pursuits and –the conclusion is explicit– fails to win renown through manly deeds in war.

These themes are brought together skilfully in the universal history of the Chester monk Ranulph Higden, composed a decade or so after the king's death[51]. At the opening of his account of Edward's reign, Higden states that the king *was fair of body and great of strength* (*corpore elegans, viribus praestans*), but goes on to say that in his mores he was very inconstant –*moribus ... plurimum inconstans*[52]. This judgement Higden ascribes to common talk –*si vulgo creditur*. As the chronicler continues, he explains, again according to familiar moral themes, how the king was corrupted by the company he kept. Edward did not appreciate the company of nobles, and instead spent his time with untrustworthy scoundrels[53], and with singers and actors. Higden then makes a move from men of bad reputation to men of the lower orders, continuing his list of the king's unworthy companions with carters, diggers and dikers, and rowers, shipmen, boatmen, and other craftsmen.

What did Edward do with these people? Well, he spent his time drinking, carelessly revealing privy counsel and striking those near him for minor offences. He was generous in his gifts and splendid in the feasts he gave, prompt in speaking but inconstant in action, unfortunate against his enemies but furious with his own men[54]. All in all he behaved like the riotous youth of clerkly imagining, not the constant moral man that Christian ethics recommended. Yet, the king's associates are dangerous to his honour, not only because they lead him into bad behaviour but also because they are of lower social class. The thrust of Higden's rhetoric becomes clearer as he goes on to allege that Edward loved and honoured one favourite in particular –implicitly Piers Gaveston– from which hatred arose for the loved one, shame for the lover, scandal amongst the people and damage to the realm. Morally dubious behaviour folds into socially inappropriate company which in turn is personified by a man who was actually of Gascon noble stock. All of this leads neatly to the king's political sins, and the reverses which were supposed to have derived from them. Had Edward not wasted his time, gifts and honour on ribald associates, the lower classes and Piers Gaveston, all would have been well.

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[51] TAYLOR J., *The Universal Chronicle of Ralph Higden*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 2.

[52] LUMBY. J. R. (ed.), *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, Rolls Series, London, HMSO, 1882, vol. viii, p. 298: *unstedfast of maneres and of thewes* [i.e. moral character], as the late fourteenth-century English translation has it. *Ibid.* p. 299.

[53] *scurris* translated into Middle English by John Trevisa as *harlottes*, on which see above n. 27.

[54] *Polychronicon*, vol. viii, p. 298.

All of these themes ran back into Edward II's reign and the public talk which abounded throughout it. Early on, it seems that common fame remarked on the potentially manly strength which had not given rise to military victory. According to the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* –a chronicle probably composed and revised in the course of Edward's reign[55]– the king was, at his accession, *a young man and strong of might, in about his twenty-third year*[56]. At the birth of his son five years later, he was a strong and handsome man[57]. Yet, after six years of his reign, the *Vita* asserts, he had achieved nothing –which is to say no great military deed[58]. God had endowed him *with gifts of every virtue* –which is to say every strength or capacity– which made him equal to or even excel other kings. But he was misled by bad counsel –especially the counsel of Piers Gaveston. If only he followed the advice of his barons, Edward would easily have defeated the Scots! If only he had practised the use of arms he would have exceeded the prowess of King Richard the Lionheart! Physically, the *Vita* assures us, this would have been inevitable, because Edward was tall and strong, a handsome man with a fine figure.

But why did Edward II fail to fulfil this manly potential? The *Vita* suggests an explanation. If Edward had given to arms the attention he gave to rustic pursuits (*circa rem rusticum*) he would have raised England on high. His name –again his *fama* and reputation– would have resounded through the land. Piers Gaveston is made posthumously responsible for this miseducation, since it was he who led the king astray, spread discord in the land and wasted its treasure. This lament leads neatly on to an account of the events leading up to the defeat of Edward's army by Robert the Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314, notably the way that the continuing discord between the king and the earl of Lancaster after Gaveston's execution in 1312 led to the earl's absence from the king's army. Again, morally bad company, financial and military mismanagement and unfitting fraternisation with lower social classes are all rolled together to explain why the king's manly vigour failed to lead to manly victories. This also serves to justify members of his nobility in claiming to be better arbiters of the king's honour than the king himself.

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[55] On composition, see GIVEN-WILSON C., «*Vita Edwardi Secundi*: Memoir or journal?», in *Thirteenth-Century England*, 1997, nº 6, pp. 165-76.

[56] *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, (ed. and trans. CHILDS W. R.), (Oxford, 2005), p. 4.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 62. Remarking at the birth of the future Edward III that it was to be hoped that he would "remind us of the strength and comeliness of his father" (*uiribus et specie referat cum corpore patrem*).

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

It seems well attested that Edward greatly appreciated the company of men of lower social classes[59]. It also appears that his love of outdoor, physically demanding activities was soon related to attacks on his military manhood, even his legitimacy as king. Soon after Bannockburn, a man called Robert le Messager was accused before the king's council of having *irreverently* spoken *many shameful words* concerning the king, saying that the king had been beaten by the Scots because he failed to go to Mass, and that this was because he spent too much time attending to making ditches and digging and other shameful things (*et eciam alia indecencia*)[60]. It is not quite clear whether the king himself was supposed to be doing the digging in person[61], nor whether the expression *shameful things* is being ascribed to Robert le Messager, or whether this phrase was supplied by the jurors or the scribe who made the record, as a kind of *et cetera*. Nonetheless, what this document does show is that association with such pursuits, whether in person or in a supervisory role, was held to have led the king away from his religious duties, to shameful rustic pursuits and hence to his loss in war. It is strongly implied that an interest in these activities themselves was unfitting for a king, or even a knight, by the grouping together of ditching and digging with *other shameful things*[62].

Was Edward II, then, an example of the wrong kind of manhood for a king? His strength and vigour could have led to victory in war, but since he was not victorious in war this must be the result of a misapplication of his energies. Edward spent his time in activities which, if they might have been manly for a husbandman or a shipman, were shameful for a king or even for any man of knightly class. There is evidence that by the mid 1310s public talk was beginning to suggest that if Edward did not behave like a king, then perhaps he was not really king at all. In 1316, one Thomas de Tynwelle, clerk, was accused of publicly declaring that Edward II was not his father's son[63]. In 1318, as the king and the earl of Lancaster were locked in tense negotiations over the Scottish threat and the government of the kingdom, a man named John of Powderham began to claimed that he, not Edward II, was the true son of Edward I, but had been swapped in the cradle with the son of

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[59] For examples see PHILLIPS J. R. S., *Edward II*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010, p. 32, nº 121.

[60] JOHNSTONE, H., «The Eccentricities of Edward II», *English Historical Review*, 1933, nº 48, pp. 264-7 at p. 267.

[61] A. RICHARDSON, «'Hedging, Ditching and Other Improper Occupations': Royal landscapes and their meaning under Edward II and Edward III», *Fourteenth-Century England*, 2006, nº 4, pp. 26-42, esp. p. 31.

[62] Much the same implication is found in a mocking song sung by the Scots after Bannockburn, which linked Edward's shameful defeat to his obsession with rowing. See *Brut*, vol. i, p. 208.

[63] PHILLIPS, *Edward II*, p. 15.

a carter, who now reigned as king[64]. According to the *Vita* this matter was spoken of throughout the land[65], and indeed it is reported in the majority of chronicles of Edward's reign[66]. The Lanercost chronicle also notes the wide currency of this rumour, and goes on to imply that this was not least because, to the public ear, the accusation seems to have had a ring of truth –*above all because the said lord Edward seemed in no way like the elder Edward* [I] *in any regard*. For indeed, Edward had *since his adolescence given himself over in private to rowing and carting, to making ditches and thatching houses, as was commonly said*. At night he and his companions paid attention to *mechanical arts ... it was not fitting that the son of a king should attend to such things*[67].

Can we deduce from these public attacks on the reputation of Edward II that, in the early fourteenth century, the king was not supposed to be a man like other men –or at least not like the *rustic* men who made up the majority of his male subjects? The same chroniclers tap into well established concepts of manhood when they portray the king's knightly subjects defending castles from assault or acquitting themselves in battle[68], and even humble sailors are inspired to act *manly* when they are allowed to keep their booty in encounters with the Scots[69]. Surely the king should emulate this kind of manhood. Indeed, it is his love of the mechanical arts which is supposed to lead him away from it. He should keep his undertakings with steadfastness, like the barons who defend *viriliter* the ordinances they wished to impose upon the king[70]. But he should not engage in *rustic activities*, however vigorously he might do so.

There are reasons to be careful about generalising from the stress which Edward II's critics put on the unfitting nature of his fraternisation with the lower orders. According to his critics, Edward's manhood and kingship were both compromised by his failure to do due honour to the ordering of the social hierarchy. The threat posed by Piers Gaveston, as it is told by clerical and lay chroniclers alike,

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[64] On this incident, see CHILDS W. R., «'Welcome, my brother' : Edward II, John of Powderham and the Chronicles, 1318», in WOOD I. and LOUD G. A. (eds.), *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages*, London, Hambledon, 1991, pp. 149-63.

[65] *Vita*, p. 148.

[66] CHILDS, «'Welcome my brother'», p. 150.

[67] *Chronicon de Lanercost*, (ed. STEVENSON J.), Edinburgh, Maitland Club, 1839, p. 236.

[68] See, for example, the defence of Berwick in *Lanercost*, p. 239; the comportment of the earl of Gloucester at Bannockburn, *Vita*, p. 90, and troops at Boroughbridge, *Vita*, p. 212.

[69] *Vita*, p. 156.

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 32.

is above all a threat of shame brought on by a failure to respect hierarchy. For early annalistic compilations, Piers marked his return from his first exile at the beginning of Edward's reign by a series of scandalous public displays –carrying the crown of Edward the Confessor before the king at his coronation, wearing purple, humiliating the nobles at tournaments[71]. Implicitly it was Gaveston's arrogance and Edward's excessive favour which disturbed a peace which would have otherwise remained untroubled.

Gaveston is supposed to have coined insulting nicknames for members of the nobility, inspiring them to defend their honour, and so spread discord in the kingdom[72], and most historians agree that it was Gaveston's lack of respect, which particularly contributed to the hatred which he inspired amongst certain sections of the nobility. But it does not seem to have been remarked that these nicknames are not really nicknames at all, they are insults: epithets designed to impugn the honour of the recipient and to impose either violent revenge or humiliating silence. The *Brut* records that Piers called the young earl of Gloucester *whoreson*, the earl of Lincoln *breast belly* and the earl of Lancaster, quite simply, *churl*[73]. These are examples of the kind of name-calling which is designed to lead either to a violent response from those who receive them, or else to their shameful failure to take revenge. Most historians record Piers' nickname for the earl of Warwick –the *black dog of Arden*– but not the retort given by the Lanercost chronicle, which ascribes to Warwick a suitably menacing retort –*if he calls me a dog, certainly I will bite him when I see my moment*[74]. And this is indeed what happened, as the chronicler well knew. It was Warwick together with Lancaster who was the most prominent in bringing about Gaveston's summary execution.

Manhood had a particular resonance in the reign of Edward II because of the military defeats and violent political disputes which characterised it and which leant force to attacks on the king's earthy pastimes and on the arrogance of his *familiares*. Criticism of Edward's vigorous hobbies or his relationships with his favourites, sexual or otherwise, are always closely linked to explanations of the political and military troubles of his reign, to such an extent that one wonders if criticism of Edward's *rustic pursuits* –a loaded expression it should be noted, implying an animalistic lack of civilisation– would have been voiced at all in less controversial

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[71] *Annales Londonienses*, pp. 151-2; *Annales Paulini*, pp. 258-62. Cf. HIGDEN, *Polichronicon*, vol. viii, p. 300.

[72] e.g. *Brut*, vol. i, pp. 206-7.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Lanercost*, p. 216: *si vocet me canem, pro certo ego mordebo eum quando videbo tempus meum.*

times. Nonetheless, on another level, these matters were always there to be taken up and criticized when things went wrong, in terms which powerfully invoked the late medieval associations of manhood. They were consequently all the more powerful for that, justifying resistance to the king and his final deposition, in terms which resonated beyond the king and the upper nobility, down to the level of Robert the Messenger or John of Powderham, and the wider public who gossiped about such matters in the tavern, at the market or on the road.

Can we see any change, then, in the relationship between kingship and manhood, perhaps a movement away from a world view in which kings clearly occupied a separate sphere to one in which they were increasingly judged by the same standards as other men? This is a tempting hypothesis. Still, I think there is a need to isolate different strands in thinking about the nature of manhood, to pick out some values which were always shared between kings and other men, and others which had different effects according to the social contexts in which they took place, and above all according to the point of view from which they were observed. It seems clear that throughout our period concepts of manhood based around military vigour, shame through violence or shame through insult resonated as powerfully for kings as it did for rural householders or minor royal officials. Edward III tried to use them to help him persuade his people to support him in his wars. A man should be vigorous and firm willed also, and when this was a matter of war, again, or following a coherent policy, the lack of such qualities brought down the opprobrium of critics of Henry VI. But in the case of Edward II we enter more ambiguous territory. Manhood is so closely linked to honour that respect for social hierarchy could be seen as manly behaviour – or a lack of it be portrayed as unmanly. This could be used to undercut the potential manliness of Edward's unquestioned physical vigour, and to present a plausible (to contemporaries) explanation of why his bodily strength did not lead to military victory. Perhaps this kind of strategy was less powerful at the end of our period than at the beginning? Further work needs to be done to establish this for certain. What is clear is that in the early fourteenth century kings already needed to be men as well as kings, to gain the approval of a public whose opinion was of increasing importance for political success or failure. Yet at the same time, we need to bear in mind that the means to establish or deny the manhood of kings varied not only with time but also with the multitude of possible strategies provided by the multiple concepts of manhood which were available in late medieval England.