

THE MIND'S EYE:
Reconstructing the Historian's Semantic Matrix through Henry Knighton's Account of the
Peasants' Revolt, 1381

by

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DEDICATION PAGE

To my parents David and Valerie, and my siblings Melissa, Benjamin, Alexa, and Bethany.

Ever my inspiration, my strength, and my comfort.

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ABSTRACT

The medieval historian engaged with the systems of power and authority that surrounded him. In his account of the Peasants' Revolt in late medieval England, the ecclesiastical historian Henry Knighton (d. 1396) both reinforced and challenged the traditional order. This thesis explores the ways in which his ideological perspectives shaped his understanding of the events of June 1381 and how this understanding was articulated through the structure, language, and cultural meaning of the historical text. The reconstruction of authorial intention and reclamation of both Knighton and the medieval reader as active participants in the creation of history challenge a historiography that has long disregarded Knighton as an unremarkable historical recorder. Instead, they reveal a scholar whose often extraordinary approach to the rebels and traditional authorities expresses a great deal about the theory, practice, and construction of power and authority in late medieval England.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The summer of 1381 saw the occurrence of a singular and unprecedented event in English history, commonly referred to as the Peasants' Revolt. In June, an amalgam of peasants, merchants, and artisans rose up, beginning in Essex and Kent and tearing a path across the south of England. Under the leadership of Wat Tyler, they stormed prisons and monasteries, tore up charters, and attacked figures of authority, all the while demanding equality, freedom, and the restoration of their "ancient rights." Most generally, the causes of the Revolt included the tumult of the aftermath of the Black Death, and the Hundred Years War. The immediate cause, however, was a series of poll taxes imposed by the fourteen-year-old boy-king, Richard II. Following months of agitating, the rebels gathered together and marched on Canterbury on 10 June 1381. They assembled together at Blackheath on 12 June. Just two days later, the main force of the rebels had reached and gained access to London, stormed the Tower and executed several high-ranking officials there including the archbishop of Canterbury and the royal treasurer. Outside the city, a substantial group of the rebels met with the king directly and obtained from him a charter pertaining to their request that he abolish serfdom. Within London the mob looted, venting their anger on lawyers, judges, and foreigners in particular. The following day, the remaining rebels met again with the king, but there, at Smithfield, Tyler was killed and the band dispersed. The Revolt was effectively over. Localized rebellions, which had erupted throughout the south of England while the events in London took place, were suppressed more slowly. The bishop of Norwich, Henry Despenser, defeated a large contingent of rebels on 26 June at North Walsham, and Thomas of Woodstock and Sir Henry Percy defeated the remaining Essex rebels on 28

June.¹ Over almost as quickly as it had begun, the Peasants' Revolt left a deep mark both in the contemporary histories and in the English psyche.

Focusing primarily on the contemporary chronicle of Henry Knighton (d.c. 1396), this thesis examines the chronicle's nature as a historical source and the implications of perspective and authorial voice on the representation of history. Knighton's *Chronicle* is a text defined by the contemporary networks of patronage, social status, historical traditions and genre. This work draws on recent re-interpretations of late medieval historiography that explore the importance of chronicles in grounding dynastic legitimacy. Chris Given-Wilson has defined the chronicle as "a record or register of events in chronological order ... [and] when used to describe medieval texts ... any work the subject-matter of which claimed to be essentially historical."² Through a closer reading of Knighton's chronicle, the modern historian gains a more complete understanding of the place that it occupied in the cultural consciousness of the time, and the challenge that the revolt presented to contemporary systems of power and authority, as well as of the historian's role in reinforcing and confronting these systems.

First, however, one must define what is meant by the terms authority and power, and these definitions provide much of the theoretical foundation for my study. I define authority as the ability to exercise power legitimately. In her study of medieval violence, Philippa C. Maddern explains power as the ability to define and exercise "right violence" (i.e. violence that upheld the existing social order) in opposition to "unlicensed violence," which lay beyond the sanction of law and society and therefore subverted hierarchy. She further argues that violence was the "language of social order" in late medieval England,

¹ For a complete chronology of the Revolt, see Appendix A below.

² Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), xix.

and that it was deeply symbolic, and part of an "intricate political ritual of justification, authorization, and patronage."³ More generally, Max Weber's definition of power consists of the ways in which the state interferes in the distribution of force, with the state defined itself as the delegator and proprietor of the legitimate use of force.⁴ The ability of politically and culturally sanctioned notions of legitimacy to define violence, power, and authority in the middle ages, as now, is of particular significance at times when traditional hierarchies are challenged. This thesis examines the historian's role as the articulator of these notions by asking how Knighton conceptualized and negotiated power and authority in his life. How can his relationship to authority and its influence on his historical writing be reconstructed through the ways in which he represented contemporary events? These questions will also shed light on the broader implications posed by the individual historian's influence in understanding medieval historical writing.⁵

Knighon did not write in a vacuum, and it is necessary to reconstruct the literary consciousness of the time to grasp fully the intentions of his writing. The relationship between power and historical writing is also important to acknowledge. In like vein, Gabrielle Spiegel has applied the "social logic" of texts (i.e. context and function) to her study of the development of genealogical and dynastic histories and vernacular prose as a way to explore the creation and perpetuation of political legitimacy in the late Middle

³ Philippa C. Maddern, *Violence and Social Order: East Anglia 1422-1442* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992): 234, 191-2.

⁴ See Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (Philadelphia: Facet Books, 1965).

⁵ David Green similarly explored the life and career of Edward of Woodstock (the Black Prince) as a case study in medieval power. See: David Green, *Edward the Black Prince: Power in Medieval Europe* (New York: Pearson, 2007).

Ages.⁶ This study contextualizes Knighton and his work in light of his social and political positions, as well as his engagements with competing contemporary historical narratives. Roger Ray and Bernd Schneidmüller have acknowledged the present-centric political function of medieval historical writing, particularly monastic chronicles, and the influence of contemporary concerns on the creation of historical representations.⁷

Collectively, Ray, Schneidmüller and Spiegel link medieval historical writing to the construction of authority and power. Similarly, Michel Foucault defines individuals as "conduits of [historically-grounded] power" or "proximities within ever-shifting matrices of power," as beings who are "constituted by historical relationships of power"; the representations of these historical relationships therefore determine the nature of the power they in turn enable.⁸ This role is particularly apparent in instances when the traditional holders of authority were contested, such as the Peasants' Revolt.

The nature of the Peasants' Revolt itself has been heavily debated. Nineteenth-century historians granted the Revolt an active and leading role in the demise of feudalism in England, while a school of later scholars portrayed it as a "historically unnecessary catastrophe" that in the end was responsible for little or no permanent socio-economic change.⁹ In the mid-twentieth century, the events of 1381 were subsumed within greater movements of change and over-arching social and economic forces.

⁶ See: Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65.1 (Jan 1990): 59-86.

⁷ See: Roger Ray, "Historiography," in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*. F.A.C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg, eds. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996. 639-649; Bernd Schneidmüller. "Constructing the Past by Means of the Present: Historiographical Foundations of Medieval Institutions, Dynasties, Peoples and Communities," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past*. Patrick Geary, Gerd Althoff and Johannes Fried, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 167-192.

⁸ Kenneth W. Stickers, "Persons and Power: Max Scheler and Michel Foucault on the Spiritualization of Power" *The Pluralist* 4:1 (Spring 2009): 51.

⁹ See: J. Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* Ebook (Kitchener: Batoche, 2001) and W. Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); R.B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1970), and M.M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society: An Economic History of Britain 1100-1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

Historical writing on the Revolt enjoyed a brief renewal under the interest of a new wave of Marxist historians. For these scholars, the event seemed a perfect revelation of class consciousness and antagonism at a much earlier time than Marxist ideas had been previously acknowledged. Rodney Hilton, in particular, writes extensively on the proto-class consciousness indicated by the rebels and their demands. More recently, post-modern scholarship has emphasized the importance of power at the manorial level in the maintenance of the medieval English economic system, as well as the challenge posed to it by the Revolt.¹⁰ My work seeks to evaluate the threat to established authority presented by the occurrence and events of the Peasants' Revolt from the perspective of one contemporary observer.

Regardless of the long-term impact of the rebellion, it undoubtedly represented a crisis in contemporary systems of power and authority. Hilton, a central figure in Marxist reinterpretations of the Revolt, argues that the Revolt was driven by more than economic and social concerns, but was an ideological struggle as well. The rebels' demands for an end to serfdom, as well as to secular and ecclesiastical hierarchy, are indicative of an inherent ideology (i.e. one born of the conflict itself) of the freedom found in the idealized past represented, for example, by the mysterious Statute of Winchester and the Domesday Book.¹¹ In addition, Hilton identifies the ideologies derived from the

¹⁰ See: Rodney H. Hilton, "Inherent and Derived Ideology in the English Rising of 1381" *Campagnes Médiévales: L'Homme et son Espace: Études Offertes à Robert Fossier* (Paris: la Sorbonne, 1995): 399-405.

¹¹ Throughout the Revolt, the rebels demanded the confirmation of various ancient charters, most popularly the Statute of Winchester, the identity of which is still debated by historians. For more on the Statute of Winchester and this debate see: Anthony Musson, "Appealing to the Past: Perceptions of Law in Late-Medieval England" in *Expectations of the Law in the Middle Ages*. Edited by A. Musson (Woodbridge, 2001): 165-79.

peasants' interactions with the lawyers defending them in manorial courts and the preaching of radical clergy such as John Ball.¹²

Another historiographical debate characteristic of scholarship on the Peasants' Revolt and critical to this study concerns the nature of different genres of historical record. The relative historical value of narrative sources such as chronicles (among historical records the most literary in nature) is defined against that of administrative and bureaucratic records, such as statutes and trial proceedings. Historians have long relied almost exclusively upon chronicles as records of medieval and early modern events, but in the mid-twentieth century scholars such as George Rudé and E.P. Thompson supplemented what they saw as the elitist and unrepresentative nature of chronicles with legal sources that would enable them to "disaggregate the crowd" and restore the voice of individuals and collectives of the peasant class.¹³ They, like Hilton later, are representative of a Marxist approach to the late middle ages, and one which was predicated largely on the identification of great economic and political forces as the active determiners of history.¹⁴ Also, in their wary approach to chronicles they had much in common with a historiographical movement that had begun a century earlier, which held that the "official provenance" of administrative records were more objective and historically accurate. Vivian Hunter Galbraith described this shift in historical inquiry thus: "records and archives as they are now called, which till a century ago were mere subsidiaries of the literary sources, are becoming more and more important in historical

¹² Hilton, "Inherent and Derived Ideology".

¹³ Andrew Prescott, "Writing about Rebellion: Using the Records of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381" *History Workshop Journal* 45 (Spring, 1998), 5.

¹⁴ For more on Hilton's Marxist perspective see Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), especially pp. 70-98. For more on Marxist histories of the middle ages see Guy Fourquin, *The Anatomy of Popular Rebellion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Anne Chesters (New York: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1978), especially pp. 28-35. Fourquin also addresses the Peasants' Revolt in particular, for example pp. 101, 139-43.

research."¹⁵ Currently, scholars such as Andrew Prescott propose a synthesis of the various types of historical material and argue that the legal records are not as objective as earlier scholarship once assumed.¹⁶

Chroniclers, however, are still regarded with some suspicion. The popular, if fleeting, characterization of Knighton, exemplified by Alister McGrath, is of the unsympathetic, elitist historian slavishly currying favour with those in power.¹⁷ That the objectivity of medieval historical writing was tempered by the aims and experiences of the chronicler is undeniable – and in no way unique to the middle ages – but the historical reality was far more complex than McGrath proposes, and medieval historians interacted with myriad sources of authority in a variety of ways. Moreover, these interactions were never more apparent or significant than when traditional sources of authority were the subject of challenge. Indeed, the ways in which contemporary commentators negotiated these systems is an eloquent historical source in and of itself. To investigate the diachronic relationship between observer and event, one must examine in detail both the historian and his work. Resituating Knighton within his semantic matrix exposes the surprisingly unorthodox nature of his narrative – and reveals it to be not only somewhat sympathetic to the rebels' grievances, but also to provide a space for legitimate popular dissent.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ McGrath touches on Knighton only long enough to characterize him as an "English chronicler interested in maintaining his rather comfortable status quo." Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001): 19. More generally, Susan Crane describes Knighton's hostility towards the rebels. Susan Crane, "The Writing Lesson of 1381" in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*. Edited by Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 208-209. Chris Given-Wilson argues that the contemporary chroniclers (including Knighton) were unanimous in their condemnation of the rebels: "there are few better demonstrations of the instinctive class prejudice of the medieval chronicler than the contemporary historiography of the revolt." Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 197.

What, then, is known of the chronicle itself and its provenience? The work begins with the Norman Invasion of 1066, and consists of two parts separated by a gap in the narrative between 1366 and 1377 (possibly 1372 and 1376).¹⁸ In the first part, Knighton borrowed heavily from Higden's *Polychronicon*, and the *Chronicle* of Walter of Guisborough, whom he often referred to as "the Leicestrian."¹⁹ Knighton took over the narrative himself in 1363, relying on a vast array of personal contacts and contemporary written sources to "assemble" the final document, "sometimes breaking [the sources] up into a number of sections interspersed with his own comments," as is characteristic of medieval chroniclers.²⁰ While the *Chronicle* has been variously ignored by most historians, it has nonetheless become the subject of a number of debates.

The manuscript was copied once at Leicester ca. 1459.²¹ Both the copy, later deposited in the British Library as MS Cotton Claudius E III, and the original (MS Cotton Tiberius C VII) were preserved in the Library of Sir Robert Cotton,²² though the latter was mildly damaged by fire in 1731.²³ After Knighton's death in 1396 the *Chronicle* was largely forgotten until 1652, when it was published by Sir Roger Twysden.²⁴ It was next subject to scholarly examination by W.W. Shirley in the 1850s, as a key resource for the study of Lollardy.²⁵ Noticing the break in narrative, Shirley concluded that the latter section (post-1377) was in fact the work of another chronicler, a near-sighted foreigner with Lancastrian leanings. Between 1889 and 1895, Lumby edited Claudius E III for the

¹⁸ Most scholars record the break as ten years in length, but in his recent edition of the chronicle, G.H. Martin suggests that it might be only four. See Boyd Breslow, "Review," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 29 no. 2 (Summer 1997).

¹⁹ *Knighton's Chronicle*, xxi.

²⁰ Given-Wilson, 15.

²¹ Taylor, 264.

²² Martin, "Knighton's Lollards," 28.

²³ Galbraith, 139.

²⁴ Martin, "Knighton's Lollards," 28.

²⁵ Martin "Knighton's Lollards," 28.

Rolls Series and the *Chronicon* was released in two volumes. The edition was so poorly received that it is blamed for bringing the entire Rolls Series project to an end.²⁶ Lumby's most damaging error occurred in the first volume, when he failed to identify the vast sections of the *Chronicon* that Knighton had copied practically verbatim from Guisborough. From that moment on, Lumby regarded Knighton, whom he accused of deceiving him, with intense distrust.²⁷

In his edition of the *Chronicon* Lumby repeated Shirley's hypothesis regarding dual authorship and for the next fifty years academics accepted an author dubbed the mysterious "Continuator" (post-1377) as the source for the later books. The *Chronicle's* authorship remained uncertain until 1957 when Shirley's theory was decisively disproved in a ground-breaking article by V.H. Galbraith.²⁸ The unity of authorship is still a matter of debate, however. For example, a 1975 book by Louisa Duls refers to the Continuation of Knighton's *Chronicon*,²⁹ although by then Knighton's complete claim on the *Chronicle* had been accepted by a majority of scholars. Galbraith's work reignited interest in Knighton, which Lumby's edition had threatened to relegate to obscurity, and in 1995 G.H. Martin translated and edited the new edition of *Knighton's Chronicle*. In order to avoid the redundancy of republishing the work of Higden and Guisborough it includes only the post-1337 material. The edition, with its far more sympathetic view of Knighton, has been well received,³⁰ and has confirmed Martin's place as today's leading expert on Knighton.

²⁶ *Knighton's Chronicle*, xx

²⁷ Martin, "Knighton's Lollards," 30; Martin, "Narrative Sources," 56 n. 35.

²⁸ A.K. McHardy, "Review," *The English Historical Review*, 112 no. 449 (Nov. 1997).

²⁹ Duls used Lumby's edition of the *Chronicon*, and may well have been unaware of Galbraith's claims for a sole author. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see the directions which academics followed in the period between publications, and especially in between Galbraith's article and Martin's *Knighton's Chronicle*.

³⁰ See Breslow and McHardy.

Scholarly thought on Knighton's chronicle may be divided into pre- and post-Galbraith categories, yet the work remains largely unexplored. Scholars continue to cite the chronicle as one of the most important narrative sources for the tumultuous events of late fourteenth-century England, and indeed it offer a series of fascinating perspectives on the relationship between the historian and society. The near-universally accepted view of the *Chronicle* is now that it is the work of a single cleric, thoroughly and conscientiously researched from the unique position that he enjoyed as a witness to events in England between 1377 and 1396. Through an examination of his relationship to the events of 1381, his perception of those events and the perspectives that informed his account of them, this study continues Martin's task of restoring Knighton's historical agency and voice, and contributes to an understanding of the role of the historian in medieval society.

Knighton's *Chronicle* is commonly cited by medieval historians of England in the late middle ages, but very few have sought closely to examine the *Chronicle* itself. The resulting dearth of scholarly material on Knighton has exponentially increased the influence of those who have studied the *Chronicle* – Sir Roger Twysden, W.W. Shirley, Rawson Lumby, V.H. Galbraith, and G.H. Martin – and upon whose judgment the others rely. For example, because it was the only edition of Knighton available, Lumby's disastrous edition of the *Chronicon Henrici Knighton* remained the primary academic source for one hundred years.³¹ Likewise, the dominant interpretation of Knighton is now that put forward by Geoffrey Martin, as the only recent scholar to have examined the work. Still, Knighton is well represented in the literature elsewhere because of his unique historical perspectives. For example, scholars of Lollardy value his unique position,

³¹ The edition, which is discussed in more detail below, was part of the Rolls Series and following the resounding condemnations of its reviewers, Reginald Lane Poole and James Tait, as well as Galbraith's later indictment of its central claim that Knighton was not the sole author.

writing as he did in Leicester during the height of Lollardy's popular movement there.³² Similarly, those studying Richard II appreciate the rare nature of a chronicle written without the post-hoc knowledge of the king's scandalous demise in 1399.³³ With a few exceptions, all praise Knighton for his rich compilation of sources and extensive local connections,³⁴ and for his preservation of documents no longer extant.³⁵ Scholars of the 1381 rising are no exception. Barrie Dobson identifies Knighton, together with Froissart, Walsingham, and the Anonimale Chronicler as one of the "indispensable four gospels of the Peasants' Revolt."³⁶ Likewise, Duls says of the *Chronicle* that it is "by far the most detailed of the Lancastrian histories and one of the most important of all records of this period, [and that] its value is further enhanced by the inclusion of ... official documents."³⁷

Knighton's account of the year 1381, which is occupied completely by the Revolt, comprises approximately 5.5% of the original material included in Martin's edition (eleven of one hundred, ninety-nine folios). In comparison, the text of 1382 is largely dominated by a discussion of Wyclif's trial and Lollard activity, and accounts for approximately 14.5% of the material (twenty-nine folios). The year 1380 centres on the causes of the Revolt and accounts for only 0.5% of the total content (one folio).³⁸ Thus, the Revolt represents a substantial, but not dominant proportion of Knighton's historical account. This is most likely due to the sources available to the chronicler. Located

³² Geoffrey Martin, "Knighton's Lollards" in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond, 28 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

³³ G.H. Martin, "Narrative Sources for the Reign of Richard II" in *The Age of Richard II*, ed. James Gillespie (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 61.

³⁴ Of particular worth was his association with John of Gaunt, his household, and especially his contacts. This provided Knighton with much more impressive first-hand information than the average chronicler.

³⁵ D.R. Woolf, "Genre into Artifact," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 35.

³⁶ Andrew Prescott, "Writing About Rebellion," 5-6.

³⁷ Duls, *Richard II in the Early Chronicles*, 213.

³⁸ See Appendix 1: Figure 1.

within the centre of the Lollard movement, and with his connections to the house of Lancaster (which was heavily involved in the proceedings), Knighton had first-hand access to a large number of records pertaining to the events. His sources for the Revolt, in contrast, were less plentiful and reliable.

It is also important to acknowledge the fact that Knighton was writing in a specific historical context. In the years around 1380, there occurred a brief resurgence of the monastic chronicle, which had since the turn of the century been previously losing ground to its secular counterpart.³⁹ In addition, with the exception of Knighton and Thomas Walsingham of St. Alban's, all religious chroniclers wrote anonymously.⁴⁰ Such anonymous works include the Evesham chronicle, the Anonimale chronicle, the Kirkstall chronicle, the Dieulacres chronicle, and a continuation of Higden's *Polychronicon* by monks of Whalley's abbey.⁴¹ In contrast, Knighton and Walsingham's works were the products of single authors and, as a result, differed from the anonymous chronicles in their unity of vision. The authorial voice of each can offer valuable insight into the mind of the medieval historian. Moreover, like all medieval chroniclers, Knighton and Walsingham wrote on the "recent and recoverable past,"⁴² often relying heavily on a relative abundance of secondary sources available to them in the 1300s. This relationship to events, and relative dependence on the accounts of others, is particularly descriptive of ecclesiastical writers, for their connection to the outside world was rather more limited than their secular counterparts.⁴³ However, Martin argues, monastic chroniclers were "closely attuned to contemporary politics, and [were engaged in] by no means an isolated

³⁹ Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 16.

⁴⁰ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* v. ii (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 159.

⁴¹ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 159, 164.

⁴² Martin, "Narrative Sources," 64.

⁴³ Given-Wilson, 16.

or other-worldly activity" and they fully utilized the wealth of material available to them.⁴⁴ This is certainly true of Knighton, whose "blood and thunder" narration indicates his desire to appeal to an audience beyond the monastery.⁴⁵ Accordingly, monastic chronicles like Knighton's were not removed from the society in which they were written, but were instead "as much a means of informing and even diverting contemporaries as one of instructing posterity."⁴⁶ Furthermore, Knighton's position as an Augustinian canon⁴⁷ differentiated him from truly monastic chroniclers and afforded him a unique perspective between the worlds of the ascetic monastery and secular society. Even so, Knighton's education as a religious shaped his conceptions of authority, and power. This dimension is discussed in Chapter 1.

In addition, much of Knighton's ideological perspective can be reconstructed through his use of language. The author's words connected him to his medieval readers, as well as to the cultural connotations that they encapsulated and expressed. Knighton's work, like the chronicler himself, cannot be properly understood when orphaned from the context that produced it. A deep cultural reading of the text itself reveals much of the intentions and understanding of both author and reader. This provides the modern historian with a glimpse into the medieval literate consciousness and exposes the ideas that shaped its ways of understanding. Ideology is defined in this thesis as the specific paradigms through which an individual processes and understands his world and the events that occur within it. It is a typically shared set of assumptions that

⁴⁴ Martin, "Narrative Sources," 59.

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Martin, "Henry Knighton's *Chronicle* and Leicester Abbey" in *Leicester Abbey: Medieval History, Archaeology, and Manuscript Studies*, ed. Joanna Story, Jill Bourne and Richard Buckley, 124 (Leicester: Leicester Archaeological and Historical Society, 2006).

⁴⁶ Martin, "Narrative Sources," 64.

⁴⁷ Canons differed from monks such as the Benedictines. Instead of removing themselves from the secular world they sought to interact with it through preaching and ministry, and thus had one foot in the sacred realm and one in the secular.

compartmentalize information – a prism or framework through which the individual interprets events and responds to them. An individual can participate in many ideologies at one time. Knighton's ideological background shaped his response to the Peasants' Revolt and how he wrote about it, and is revealed in both his life and his work. The interplay between text, ideology, and literate culture is discussed in Chapter 2.

The vicissitudes of patronage, a common medieval practice, also influenced the historicity of the chronicles of the day. As Antonia Gransden notes, whether out of loyalty or a pragmatic sense of self-preservation, historical writing "provided a means of expressing gratitude [to] and currying [the] favour"⁴⁸ of one's benefactor, and this is reflected in Knighton's attitude towards his abbey's patron, John of Gaunt.⁴⁹ Knighton's association with Gaunt, his flattering portrayal of the duke, and the historiographical shadow that Richard's deposition and the Wars of the Roses have cast over the late fourteenth century, have often caused him to be labeled a Lancastrian historian. For example, Louisa D. Duls explicitly categorizes Knighton as a member of the "Lancastrian Detractors of Richard" School.⁵⁰ Such a historiographical label is inappropriate and inaccurately associates Knighton's work with the chronicles that played an integral role in the legitimization of Henry IV and V in the aftermath of the usurpation of Richard II.⁵¹ Paul Strohm convincingly argues that this agenda of legitimization was imposed post

⁴⁸ Antonia Gransden, *Legends, Tradition and History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), 215.

⁴⁹ John Taylor also emphasizes the importance of local loyalties to chroniclers like Knighton and Ranulf Higden. See: John Taylor, *English Historical Writing in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 8-9.

⁵⁰ Louisa D. Duls, *Richard II in the Early Chronicles* (Paris: Mouton, 1975), see especially: "Appendix A" pp. 212-214 and "Appendix B" p. 250.

⁵¹ For more on the uses of historical writing in the Deposition of Richard II see: Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

facto on the past by Gaunt and his Lancastrian allies.⁵² It is therefore anachronistic to impose a similar agenda on Knighton. The chronicler in fact represented the young king's actions in 1381 in a positive and respectful light. This is discussed in Chapter 3.

This thesis also includes three appendices. Appendix A consists of two chronologies of the Peasants' Revolt. The first is based solely on the information included in Knighton's account, and the second represents the modern scholarly consensus of the order of events. Appendix B consists of an analysis of the content of Knighton's *Chronicle*, and the percentage that he dedicated to various events. Appendix C reproduces the long passage from his chronicle that relates the events of the Revolt in its entirety. It is taken from the copyright extinct 1889-95 Rolls Series edition. Readers are encouraged to refer to this excerpt in the work that follows.

Knighton's representation of the Revolt generally, and the rebels' actions in particular, demonstrated the rebels' attempts to articulate their grievances using largely conventional methods of expression. Their actions were likewise expressed in the contemporary history through the employment of largely orthodox paradigms. It was the ways in which both historians, and the rebels themselves, manipulated these culturally accepted paradigms that either censured or supported their actions. A closer reading of Knighton's representation of these paradigms reveals the remarkable degree of legitimacy that he afforded them. M. Bohna articulates a similar concept in relation to Jack Cade's rebellion over seventy years later. In the discussion of late medieval popular violence, Bohna states that "in their determination to inject their grievances into the political dialogue of the kingdom, the commoners of Kent made use of the only corporate existence available to them which both had statutory legality and also exploited the conventional symbolism

⁵² Ibid.

of social legitimacy."⁵³ As with the Peasants' Revolt, much of the rebels' claim to legitimacy rested on an appeal to the language of violence described by Maddern. Both the rebels and contemporary historians made use of a variety of cultural, linguistic, and political "rhetorical claim[s] to social legitimacy."⁵⁴

⁵³ M. Bohna, "Armed Force and Civic Legitimacy in Jack Cade's Rebellion, 1450" *English Historical Review* 118:477 (June 2003), 564.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2 Ecclesiastical Perspectives and Heresy

The Peasants' Revolt was not simply a challenge to the traditional secular structure of power and authority. It also confronted the nature of ecclesiastical hierarchy, structure, and orthodoxy. As such, it was intimately connected to contemporary trends of radical philosophy, heresy and religious dissent, and to ecclesiastical economic policy.¹ This chapter explores the nature and implications of Knighton's representations of these respective areas and their relationships with the ideologies and actions that dominated the Revolt. Knighton's representation of the ecclesiastical origins, responses to, and implications of the Revolt were shaped by a Christian paradigm, the cultural milieu of clerical discontent that existed at the time, his monastic training, and his experiences as an Augustinian canon at one of England's most financially successful religious houses. In keeping with contemporary historiography, Knighton characterizes the Revolt as an attack led by Satan without fear of God or his church. However, he also demonstrates a remarkable amount of sympathy for the institutional hardships facing the peasantry. Although he does not clearly articulate the specific nature of these burdens, he writes of the "ever new and all but intolerable burdens incessantly laid upon them" and of the "oppressive need" that confronted them.² His account of their trials as well as their demands suggests that these hardships took the form of systemic poverty and subjugation. Peasants felt that they were no more able to protect their daughters against

¹ I use the term "ecclesiastical" to refer to matters regarding the church as an institution, "religious" to refer to the broader philosophical and theological culture of Christianity at the time, and "priestly," "clerical" to refer to the experiences of priests in society.

² *Knighton's Chronicle*, 209. "noua ac noua quasi importabilia oner eis indesiniter" and "tali necessitate."

insult (see Chapter 3), than they were to escape the bonds of servile tenancy imposed upon them by landowners, a number of these ecclesiastical. In many ways, the Revolt exposed struggles that existed within the church; it was ideologically led by the cleric John Ball and drawing on quasi-Lollard principles of egalitarianism and the accessibility of the sacred. In addition, much of the destructive force of the rebels was directed toward ecclesiastical targets, including the archbishop of Canterbury and many land-holding abbeys. Ultimately, order could only be restored through the divinely ordained, retributive violence of the church, as this was embodied by the bishop of Norwich. Throughout his discussion of the church's role in the Revolt as a victim, as well as the involvement of rogue clerics, Knighton presents a vision of power and authority that is at once divine in scope and highly localized, jurisdictional, and economically-driven in practical terms. Most significantly, an examination of Knighton's account reveals a remarkable level of ambivalence. This is particularly evident in his description of Simon Sudbury's execution. Throughout, the sympathetic idealism with which he approaches the rebels' hardships and desire for freedom is balanced by a pragmatism when their grievances transform into action. For Knighton, the greatest threats posed by the rebels were to the church's estates and manors, and it was these that elicited the most violent retaliation. Throughout this discussion, his contemporary, fellow churchman and chronicler at St Albans Abbey, Thomas Walsingham provides an ecclesiastical counterpoint to Knighton's work.³ Walsingham's monastic background and perspective and interest in the church allow him to serve as a foil for Knighton's representation of the role of the church in the Revolt.

³ Walsingham is widely acknowledged as the foremost historian of the late-fourteenth century. See: John Taylor, "Fourteenth-Century Chroniclers" in *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 8-36, especially p. 9.

Knighton's work must be contextualized within his role as a religious author, particularly in his discussion of the church. To understand more fully the impact of Knighton's ecclesiastical training on his writing, one first needs to examine the nature of the church's role in fourteenth-century historical literature more generally. As mentioned above, medieval historical writing was dominated by a Christian paradigm. In his influential work on English fifteenth-century historiography, C.L. Kingsford suggests that the fourteenth century was a period of transition which oversaw the ultimate replacement of the monastic historian – a thoroughly medieval archetype – with secular histories in the vernacular, such as Jean Froissart's *Chroniques* and non-academic sources such as the Paston Letters.⁴ The late fourteenth century, he argues, still belonged to the "Middle Ages" and its ecclesiastical scribes, but the "signs of decay and of the imminence of change are obvious."⁵ He argues that the literary changes occurring around the turn of the fifteenth century reflected political developments, most notably the rise of nationalist sentiment and subsequent elevation of English as a language of state and the rise of the commercial class.⁶ In this way, fourteenth-century historical literature was a child waiting for the turbulence of adolescence to bring it to maturity and the monastic historian was a powerful symbol of this childhood. More recently, John Taylor incorporates a broader definition of late medieval historical literature to include not only chronicles but monastic registers and political poetry as well.⁷ Like Kingsford, he sees the fourteenth century as a period of transition that led from the dominance of the

⁴ The fifteenth century saw a substantial increase in non-historical, written sources and a broadening in the type of literary source material available to historians in addition to changes in historical literature.

⁵ C.L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1913), 3.

⁶ Ibid. Taylor describes the rise of the English language in historical literature as an indication of a "new maturity and a new self-consciousness among the English people." John Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 7.

⁷ Ibid., 1.

monastic chronicle to the rise of secular records such as parliamentary literature and political poetry. He rejects, however, the notion that the fourteenth century was simply a preparatory stage for the changes of the Tudor and Stuart eras.

Other scholars have since perpetuated Kingsford's binary view of "medieval" (i.e. ecclesiastical) and "modern" (i.e. secular) historical writing and the identification of a medieval model with a solely ecclesiastical perspective as well. Elizabeth Eisenstein places the division between medieval and early modern historical literature in the fifteenth century, with the development of print culture. She utilizes the dichotomy between an inherently medieval scribal culture and a new, modern print culture and defines print culture by contrasting it with the older form.⁸ The vast majority of printing presses were not located within monasteries, as scriptoria had been. Likewise, F. Smith Fussner defines medieval historical writing by its Augustinian "theology of history" and Wallace K. Ferguson marks the transition from "the theological world history of the medieval chroniclers" to a "new periodization on secular grounds" as providing the later boundary of the Middle Ages.⁹ Fussner argues that the monastic chronicler was interested in history merely as a revelation of God's teleological design and that "secular history was meaningful only as an illustration of divine providence."¹⁰ However, a closer examination of the historical writing of the time indicates that this binary pair did not exist in practice. The process of change did not simply start and end at later-to-be-determined dates; the transition from religious to secular world views was a continuous

⁸ See: Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁹ F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962): 9; Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (Boston, 1948): 17-18.

¹⁰ Fussner, *Historical Revolution*, 10-11.

process.¹¹ Although the medieval monastic chronicler and secular modern historian are convenient historical shorthand archetypes, it is unlikely that, in the fourteenth century, a monastic scholar existed who had no interest in secular concerns, or a secular historian whose worldview was not shaped by Christian teaching.¹² Scholars such as Steven Justice trace the high-exclusive scholarly association of medieval historical literature, and literacy more generally, with the ecclesiastical realm – the association between which Kenneth Burke classifies as a "psychosis" – to the Middle Ages. The majority of scholars (Knighton included), Justice argues, "expect to find literacy only under a tonsure" and interpret literary sources accordingly.¹³ In contrast, Mark O'Brien notes the "secularization of the clergy" occurring at this time, as clerics and monks became increasingly preoccupied with material and political advancement.¹⁴ The rejection of the oversimplified conflation of medieval with sacred work and modern with secular allows modern historians to reconstruct more completely the influences upon fourteenth-century writers.

That is not to say that the sacred and profane worlds did not differ in many ways; they were not mutually exclusive. As historical writing shifted from monastic to secular histories, there was a concurrent decrease in the power and numbers of religious houses.

¹¹ In the wake of the linguistic turn, literary historians, such as Paul Strohm and Steven Justice are less concerned with periodization *per se*. Their research primarily concerns the language and content of individual texts and the ways in which they reflect the author's consciousness as well as the greater cultural milieu that produced them. Recent scholars have not produced as broad an overview and typography of the genre of historical literature as Kingsford's work. Justice and others rely on Kingsford's scholarship to classify historical sources, but their focus lies in the details of language use and construction in specific texts. Other scholars such as John Taylor still focus on classification in a way similar to Kingsford.

¹² For example, Knighton was as interested (if not more so) in the military feats of Edward the Black Prince in France and the succession of kings as he was in church doctrine and the succession of popes. In contrast, the court historian, Jean Froissart took a keen interest in the movement of the pope to Avignon as well as the pope's involvement in local disputes. (See, for example, Froissart pb Fol. 222r).

¹³ Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 17. Justice is wary of the assumption that the rebels were universally illiterate because, he states, it "makes too much [sense]" and is precisely what chroniclers would want us to believe.

¹⁴ O'Brien, *When Adam Delved*, 9.

The monastic chroniclers of the medieval period worked largely within the orbit of the monastery or abbey. In contrast, by the end of the fourteenth century secular historians were closely linked to court life and politics, either in London or elsewhere in Europe.¹⁵ This difference had implications for both secular and monastic histories.¹⁶ For example, the monastery was far more insular than the court community; the monastery purportedly sought to remove itself from worldly concerns, while those very concerns were the driving forces of the court. However, a simple dichotomy between the two realms did not exist in practice. Monastic historians were by no means removed from the outside world. They were intimately connected both to international networks of scholarship and to the communities directly surrounding them. For example, Harriet Hanson's analysis of the interrelation of chronicle accounts of the Peasants' Revolt suggests that geographically-diverse English chroniclers incorporated elements of Froissart's account of the Revolt as early as 1388 and before Froissart returned to the English court from France.¹⁷ Likewise, many of the chronicles include state documents and eye-witness accounts of the events that they record. The complex collaboration that Hanson describes is not consistent with other-worldly isolation, but instead suggests that there was a multifaceted, international network of both monastic and secular scholars (see below).

¹⁵ See: Mariateresa Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri, "The Intellectual" in *Medieval Callings*. Edited by Jacques Le Goff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990): 204.

¹⁶ Examining the next great shift to undergo historical writing after the movement to secular histories, Elizabeth Eisenstein explores the influence that the geographical and sociological shift from "copyist's desk to printer's workshop" and the movement from a manuscript to print culture had on the writing industry. She establishes the commercial workshop as a new archetypal stage upon which the act of bookmaking was enacted and which defined the nature, aims, and structure of the written work. Monastic scribes and authors dedicated their lives to their work and often spent decades on one project. In contrast, the speed of production in the workshop was rushed, chaotic and often frenzied. Although the two spaces shared an ethos of collaboration, they embodied very different approaches towards the role of written works. For the chronicle, raised to maturity in the monastic scriptorium and the medieval university, the early modern printer's shop was indeed foreign soil.

¹⁷ See Harriet Hanson, "The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and the Chronicles" *Journal of Medieval History* 6:4 (1980):393-415. She suggests that Froissart's work served as a source for Knighton and Walsingham, as well as the *Evesham* and *Anonimalle* chronicles.

For example, she suggests that the *Anonimalle Chronicle* drew on Walsingham's work, among others, which in turn made use of *Eulogium*, and *Westminster* chronicles as well as that of the Hainaulter court historian Froissart.

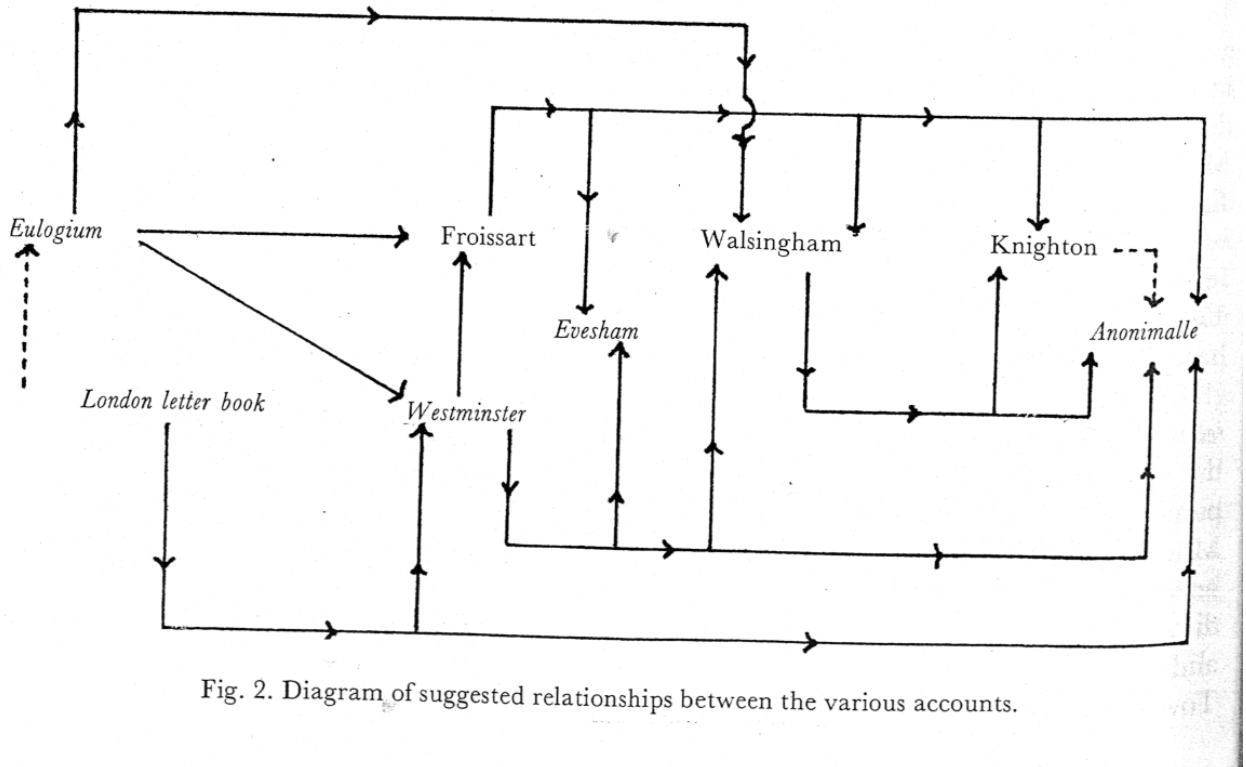


Fig. 2. Diagram of suggested relationships between the various accounts.

Figure 1 Hanson's pictorial depiction of the textual relationships between the major chronicle accounts of the Revolt.¹⁸

Indeed, she argues that the chronicle sources are so "highly interdependent" that future historians cannot use each as a measure of historical accuracy against one another.¹⁹ This provides a much more holistic portrayal of the monastic chronicler existing within both a sacred and a secular world. It is essential to contextualize the historian fully in his individual context if one is to more completely understand his perspective and the impact that would have had on his writing.

¹⁸ Harriet Hanson, "The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and the Chronicles" *Journal of Medieval History* 6:4 (1980), 412.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

Knighton has been defined as a medieval monastic chronicler throughout the historiography, and indeed his life was highly influenced by the church. Knighton spent at least thirty-three years at the abbey of St Mary of the Meadows in Leicester, and Taylor suggests that he was recruited from the locality.²⁰ The abbey was founded in 1143 to support a community of Augustinian canons regular. Augustinian canons were secular clergy (i.e. priests who served lay parishioners) living the communal lives endorsed by the majority of monastic orders of the late medieval period and structured by a loose common rule. The community, also known as Leicester Abbey, was constructed approximately half a mile north of the town of Leicester and included a church, cloister, chapter house, infirmary and kitchens. Knighton arrived at St. Mary's no later than 1363, for he records his attendance at the royal procession of Edward III that occurred in that year, and he remained at the abbey until his death in approximately 1396.²¹

The abbey was also a highly successful economic venture. As a result of its vast endowments, by the late fifteenth century the abbey had possessions in at least 171 villis throughout England and was the largest landowner in Leicestershire, surpassing all lay lords in accumulated property.²² Under the leadership of Abbot William de Cloune, the abbey was powerful enough to acquire a certain amount of independence from the crown. De Cloune and his successors were granted an exemption from their obligation to attend parliament, and the king relinquished the authority to interfere with the abbey upon an abbot's death beyond an act of seisin of no longer than twenty-four hours. That is to say, he could not impose further taxation nor intervene in the election of the new abbot. At the end of the fourteenth century the abbey temporarily gained a rare grant of freedom

²⁰ Taylor, *Historical Literature*, 8.

²¹ *Knighton's Chronicle*, xvii.

²² Levi Fox, *Leicester Abbey: historical introduction and description* (Leicester, 1949), 9.

from the bishop's authority.²³ The abbey was a powerful and important member of the order of canons regular, as well as an influential landowner and an economic centre in Leicestershire. Knighton's enthusiastic interest in taxes (secular and ecclesiastical) and market concerns, such as the price of wool, are a testament to the significance of the abbey's role as an economic enterprise. Moreover, St Mary in the Meadows was not simply a place of worship. C.H. Lawrence discusses the religious house's function as both landlord and employer, as well as its increasingly manorial management style.²⁴ He states that the vast majority of abbots' lands were bound to perform the same obligations to the crown as those of lay lords, and that they required many serfs to work the land of their demesne manors.²⁵ At a time when the circumstances precipitated by the population decline that followed the plague were forcing landowners to afford their tenants greater freedom, ecclesiastical estates generally were slow to follow their secular counterparts in reform. E.B. Fryde notes that in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries ninety-five percent of tenants of the bishops of Winchester's estates, for example, were unfree.²⁶ Knighton was uniquely positioned to witness the impact of the changing labour situation on one of England's most economically successful religious houses. The church's role as landowner was a significant part of his experience and, to a degree, defined his understanding of ecclesiastical-lay interactions. He was at the very least an indirect participant in its tenant policies.

Much of the popular anger directed towards the church stemmed from its role as landowner and the persistence of serfdom on its estates. Indeed, the rebels chose to burn

²³ Ibid., 11.

²⁴ C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* 3rd Ed. (Toronto: Longman, 2001): 123-129.

²⁵ Ibid., 126, 128.

²⁶ E.B. Fryde, *Peasants and Landlords in Later Medieval England* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996): 11.

administrative documents but leave theological texts unharmed, indicating a focus on the church's political and economic role rather than its spiritual one.²⁷ The rebels' primary demand was the statutory abolition of serfdom on ecclesiastical and secular estates. Rodney Hilton states that by 1381 this was more of a symbolic ultimatum than a real one, especially as many of the rebels were not serfs but freemen and artisans. This was particularly true of the Kentish rebels, Justice indicates, because traditional serfdom had never existed there.²⁸ However, the demographics of Winchester estates cited above suggest that the concern might have been more relevant than Hilton allows. Knighton records several attacks on abbeys during the Revolt. Most of these incidents took place outside London and were unconnected to the events there.²⁹ In Peterborough, the abbey's tenants attempted to destroy it physically, and at St Albans tenants and townspeople there surrounded the abbey and forced concessions from the abbot.³⁰ Knighton writes that "in many places tenants likewise tried to prevail over their lords."³¹ Such activity was so prevalent that "everywhere men believed, in fear and trembling, that at any moment and without delay the rebels would descend upon them."³² This is an interesting statement for it follows his specific descriptions of hitherto localized, uncoordinated attacks of tenants on their own abbeys.

Knighton then records the movement of rebels from London to Leicester. These rebels, who were not inhabitants of the town or the surrounding area, were less concerned with Leicester Abbey and its tenurial practices, than they were intent on destroying the

²⁷ See: Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 46.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁹ They did not share leadership with the rebels in London.

³⁰ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 225-227. The abbot granted the common's demands under duress but this agreement was later revoked by order of the king.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 227. "coeperunt tenentes contra suos dominos inualescere."

³² *Ibid.*

property of the universally disliked John of Gaunt. In this way, Knighton presents the Revolt as an external threat to Leicester, frees the town's inhabitants from implication in the movement and spares them the divine retribution that confronts the men and women of Peterborough and St Albans. The contrast between Knighton's account of the good men of Leicester who had rallied to defend their town against the rebels and the men elsewhere who had "come to destroy the church, and the men of the church, and in the church, and by the church," is startling. By way of comparison, nowhere in his account of the Revolt does Knighton condemn any group's actions more strongly than those of the tenants of Peterborough. Henry Despenser, the bishop of Norwich, was sent by God, he writes, to defeat those "evildoers at their work."³³ Mercy lost to reciprocity: "and so they, who in their fury had spared none, found no mercy in the bishop's eye, but were weighed as they themselves had weighed, and repaid in the same measure as they had used."³⁴ These rebels had threatened the very existence of the church, and "for that very reason it was fitting that they should die at the hands of a churchman."³⁵

In addition, the rebel leadership sought to abolish the traditional ecclesiastical hierarchy. In London, the rebels attacked specific symbols highly emblematic of the church's economic, political, and spiritual power, but events such as the execution of Simon Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, indicate that the church was already facing a crisis of authority. They also indicate that the authority lay in the office itself, and not the individual holding the title. Knighton does not discuss Sudbury's personal ideology, or the implications for the office of his particular death, but rather focuses on the shocking murder of the archbishop of Canterbury, beheaded by the leaderless crowd at the Tower

³³ Ibid., 225.

³⁴ Ibid., 225-7.

³⁵ Ibid., 227.

of London while Richard II met with Wat Tyler at Mile End.³⁶ Likewise, the rebels killed him not because he was Simon of Sudbury, nor for his actions as archbishop, but because his title made him the symbolic and actual head of the English church and a cornerstone of the royal administration. Fryde argues that Sudbury was in fact a moderate, unpartisan politician and that the rebels grossly misjudged him.³⁷ This would be true if they had killed him for his political ideology alone since they would just as readily have killed a man whose liberality would have made him more sympathetic to their complaints. His personal ideology, however, had little influence on their decision to remove him as a symbol of traditional authority.

For such an act to be possible, the rebels had to feel that the power wielded by the English church and its officers was no longer legitimate and it could therefore be challenged. Knighton locates the source of this discontent in the plague and concerns with the lower clergy, not the wealthy land-owning abbeys and bishoprics. Owing to the increased demand for priests that resulted from the high mortality and consequent spiritual anxiety of the Plague and the loss of a high percentage of priests to the disease, England faced a shortage of priests. Hollister estimates that approximately fifty percent of English clergy succumbed to the disease, a rate higher than the general population.³⁸ As a result, clerical fees rose and the quality of priests diminished as the church decreased both its standards and the length and depth of a postulant's training. Knighton writes with contempt of the influx of illiterate widowers, the "merest of laymen" into the priesthood and the implications this had for their ability to perform their duties

³⁶ Ibid., 213-15.

³⁷ He argues that Sudbury's murder indicates "the grotesque misjudgement and misrepresentation of the king's leading ministers in the country at large." Fryde, *Peasants and Landlords*, 43.

³⁸ C. Warren Hollister, *The Making of England, 55 B.C. to 1399* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1976), 245.

properly.³⁹ In addition, the establishment of a second, fiscally-minded pope at Avignon during a period of English frustration in the Hundred Years War led to a certain amount of resentment towards the greater church, as well as hindering its aura of infallibility.⁴⁰ Neither pope, however, figures in the rebels' demands or Knighton's account of the Revolt – it was solely an English struggle, although one in which the church figured prominently. Mark O'Brien notes that the decadence and corruption of the fourteenth-century English church resulted in a "widespread scepticism in the authority of the clergy and a corrosion of the respect that the church needed in order to survive."⁴¹ The legitimacy upon which the authority of the church rested had already been corroded and this fact was reflected in the challenge posed by the Revolt.

The rebels' intention to make John Ball their archbishop suggests that their opposition to Sudbury was ideological in nature.⁴² Here, their desire was not to challenge the existence of the church or the church's right to authority, but to place at its head one who would govern it in accordance with their demands. The office of the archbishop would regain its legitimacy, and thus its authority, when it embodied the will of the commons. The fact that they advocated the abolition of all other bishops in England but intended to maintain the office of archbishop of Canterbury suggests that they wished to centralize the authority of the church. It also indicates an awareness of the jurisdictional delegation of power and authority within the church bureaucracy. The archbishop would have the authority to enforce the changes that the rebels sought when authority was centralized in his office. To achieve this, middling figures in the hierarchy, such as

³⁹ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 103.

⁴⁰ Hollister, *Making of England*, 247.

⁴¹ O'Brien, *When Adam Delved*, 8.

⁴² Knighton states this as one of their intentions as early as the rebels' entrance into Maidstone before 12 June. *Knighton's Chronicle*, 211.

bishops and abbots, had to be eliminated, as did the current archbishop. Knighton records the installation of John Ball as the archbishop of Canterbury as an aim of the rebels when they released Ball from the archbishop's prison in Maidstone, suggesting that the deposition of the archbishop was a premeditated event. He emphasizes this again, writing that "the commons intended to kill the archbishop and the other notables with him, and came there to do it, and subsequently achieved their purpose."⁴³ These statements suggest that when they stormed the Tower the archbishop was the rebels' primary target. Later, however, Knighton describes Sudbury as an innocent bystander, unfortunately present when the rebels came for John Legg, the king's treasurer and the true focus of their anger. The discrepancy is most likely the result of Knighton's personal allegiance to the archbishop and his desire to portray Sudbury as the innocent victim of the rebels' discontent. Knighton's loyalty was to both the office of the archbishop and to the man placed there by the church.

The chronicler's characterization of the archbishop and his companions as "the lamb before the shearer" further emphasizes their innocence and suggests an element of martyrdom in their deaths.⁴⁴ Sheep were understood to be particularly innocent animals, and their invocation had a number of connotations in religious imagery. Sheep were members of the flock of God the shepherd, and lambs in particular were associated with religious sacrifice, culminating in the sacrificial death of Christ, the metaphysical Lamb of God. Furthermore, Knighton notes that the king sought to "deliver the archbishop and his colleagues from the jaws of the wolf."⁴⁵ The wolf was the natural enemy of sheep, and the contrast of predator and victim emphasizes the sacrificial innocence of the

⁴³ Ibid., 213.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 215.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 213.

archbishop. Although Knighton refrains from directly categorizing the archbishop as a martyr, unlike Walsingham, the allusions he draws led the medieval reader to a similar conclusion.⁴⁶ Knighton reinforces this association when he writes that the archbishop and his associates were condemned by the "clamour of the crowd," likening his death to the trial of Christ and the freeing of Barabas by the crowd.⁴⁷ For Knighton, Sudbury died defending what he symbolized as the archbishop of Canterbury: the traditional and supreme authority of the church and its place in the social and political structure of late medieval English society.

Knighon makes no mention of what ultimately happened to the men who killed the archbishop of Canterbury, and yet he writes, in reference to the rebels at Peterborough, that "they who had not feared to ravage the church's pastures did not deserve the church's protection, and some of them were struck down with lances and swords by the altar, and against the walls of the church, both within and without."⁴⁸ He appears to displace the responsibility for the actions he attributes to the rebels in London in an earlier passage, who "spar[ed] none of any degree or order, whether in churches and churchyards, or streets and public places, or in houses or the fields."⁴⁹ Perhaps the chronicler felt it necessary to exaggerate the threat posed to the church by local revolts in order to legitimize the actions of the bishop, while the crimes committed in London were heinous enough to warrant severe retaliation. Whether or not this is the case, Knighton clearly perceives the localized actions of discontented tenants and townspeople as a more severe threat to the greater church, or at least his position within it, than the murder of the

⁴⁶ Walsingham directly refers to Sudbury's death as martyrdom (*martirium archiepiscopi*). Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 428-9.

⁴⁷ *Knighon's Chronicle*, 213.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

archbishop. It is important to remember that Knighton lived in one of the wealthiest Augustinian abbeys in England of the time, and so the events at in Norfolk, Essex, and Suffolk would have threatened him as an individual more than those in London. Still, the severity of his reaction and the way in which he describes the attempted destruction of one abbey as an effort to eradicate the church in its entirety have greater implications for the understanding of the English medieval church than the fears of one chronicler for his own personal safety. They are a testament to the economic importance of ecclesiastical estates, the significance that contemporary landowners placed on the continued loyalty of tenants, the localized nature of the church's authority, and the acceptable use of retributive force. Knighton presents the abbey as the life-force of the medieval English church and a threat to it is a threat to the very existence of the church and its ability to survive in a way that the murder of the archbishop of Canterbury was not.⁵⁰ Estate-holding religious houses formed the economic spine of the greater church and the disloyalty of its tenants represented an egregious subversion of the social, spiritual, and economic hierarchy. Extreme violence, i.e. the decisive enactment of power, was required to re-establish the church's authority.⁵¹ It was legitimized through Knighton's depiction of a life or death scenario.

⁵⁰ Knighton's ambivalent response to Sudbury's death is particularly evident when compared with Walsingham's account. Walsingham writes that the rebels "conspired to destroy holy church and the Christian faith, [and] worked for the destruction of the kingdom ... They must be judged by their works, because they murdered the father of the whole clergy, the head of the English church, the archbishop of Canterbury" and attempted to destroy grammar and literacy in the kingdom as well. Walsingham further defined Sudbury's death as martyrdom and recounted several miracles that purportedly followed his death. The severity of the implications of the murder of the archbishop (i.e. the destruction of the church and all of Christianity), as well as his importance in the English church, that Walsingham describes is clearly not reflected in Knighton's account. Knighton's treatment of the event suggests that Sudbury's death, while tragic, was not a critical blow to the power or authority of the church. (Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 424-431).

⁵¹ Maddern defines violence as the "language of social order" in the Middle Ages. To a large degree, violence was power and therefore extreme violence strongly articulated the corresponding power.

It would seem that the rebels themselves also endowed their ideological struggle with this level of importance. Mark O'Brien states that the church's fiscal institutions were where the oppressive nature of medieval economic practices would have been felt the most keenly and therefore would have elicited the strongest anger from the rebels.⁵² The chroniclers' emphasis on the rebels' demand for the abolition of serfdom, as well as the forcefulness of tenant actions, indicates that their demand for an end to serfdom had greater implications than simply the acknowledgment of a pre-existing reality. Some scholars argue that, in practice, serfdom had effectively ended by 1381.⁵³ The end of serfdom, however, was related to the most radical aims of the revolt: unprecedented egalitarianism. Hilton defines this desire for freedom as a fundamental aspect of the revolt's "inherent ideology" (that which is developed internally in the course of the struggle).⁵⁴ In light of the church's position as a feudal landowner, it is perhaps unsurprising that some of the earliest active protests against serfdom should have occurred in Cluniac estates in Shropshire.⁵⁵ Interestingly, a similar ideology of freedom and egalitarianism likewise was also developing in clerical circles. It was particularly significant that many clergy had been proponents of a form of justice that was often at odds with that of the secular world.⁵⁶

⁵² O'Brien, *When Adam Delved*, 7.

⁵³ For example, see: Hilton, "Inherent and Derived Ideology," 401. Hilton argues that the demand was at least as much symbolic as real for the rebels.

⁵⁴ Hilton, "Inherent and Derived Ideology," 402.

⁵⁵ See Hilton, "Inherent and Derived Ideology," 402. These protests began to take place as early as 1163.

⁵⁶ For example, ecclesiastical courts in England sought to avoid the death penalty, the prescribed punishment of the secular courts. For more on the differences between ecclesiastical and secular law see: Margaret Kerr, Richard Forsyth, and Michael Pyley, "Cold Water and Hot Iron: Trial by Ordeal in England," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 22:4 (Spring 1992), 573-595; and A. K. McHardy, "Church courts and criminous clerks in the later Middle Ages," in *Medieval Ecclesiastical Studies in Honour of Dorothy M. Owen*, edited by M. J. Franklin and Christopher Harper-Bill (Boydell Press, 1995), 165-183.

John Wycliffe, a contemporary of Knighton who was well known for his radical theological views, articulated this new vision of freedom and justice. Among other things, Wycliffe advocated the popularization and de-stratification of Christianity.⁵⁷ He questioned the fairness of a society predicated on the exploitation of a large segment of the population. He felt that this was wrong exacerbated by the hypocrisy of a wealthy and powerful church claiming to preach poverty and humility: "what reason is there for maintaining a fat, worldly priest in pomp and in pride ... What reason is there, I say, for the poor to bear hunger and cold instead?"⁵⁸ The influence of unorthodox church theologians can be seen in the ideology of the rebellion, if only indirectly. Not only were the ideological basis of the Revolt and its inciting call to arms – "when Adam delved and Eve span, who was then a gentleman?" – expressed through a biblical precedent, but the concept of radical equality that constituted the most extreme ideology of the rebellion drew its impetus from Christian teaching that was reshaped to support the peasants' demands. Brocchieri describes the late medieval university – itself a monastic institution – as an environment conducive to the development of this radical and unorthodox ideology.⁵⁹ The university brought together both noble laymen and clerics from disparate regions of Britain and the continent and diverse theological and ideological backgrounds. It facilitated international networks of scholarship that allowed for both orthodox and subversive academic discussions that would have been much simpler to contain if they had remained localized. The academic nature of the university also encouraged scholars

⁵⁷ Wycliffe attacked the disparity in access that existed in the church. He targeted literacy, excessive ritual, and expensive benefits such as indulgences as they reinforced both ecclesiastical and lay hierarchies.

⁵⁸ Mariateresa Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri, "The Intellectual," in *Medieval Callings*. Edited by Jacques Le Goff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 199.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 201. Taylor also acknowledges the significance of the university as a medieval institution. He notes particularly its influence on the church. Taylor, *Historical Literature*, 5.

to reexamine and critically engage with traditional religious texts. Wycliffe's arguments, and Lollardy more generally, rested on an open and critical examination of the Bible. The university provided an environment conducive to both the development and propagation of this subversive ideology of equality.

Examining Wycliffe and Lollardy specifically, Stephen Justice argues that the connection between unorthodox religious teaching, ideology and the rebellion was constructed *post facto* by historians, for no evidence of a historical relationship exists.⁶⁰ Indeed, far from sympathetic observers, Knighton and fellow chronicler Walsingham's apparent hostility towards Wycliffe as a heretic made them eager to place as much blame as they could on him and his followers. This idea of a relationship between Wycliffe and the Revolt, Justice states, was then perpetuated throughout the historiography. Knighton had very little patience for Wycliffe's doctrines. For example, he refers to the scholar's conclusions as "errors" leading to the "depravity of heresy."⁶¹ Justice cites Knighton's comparison of John Ball and Wycliffe as John the Baptist and Christ, respectively, and Walsingham's assertion that the Revolt was punishment for heresy as the extent of the connection insinuated by the chroniclers. In light of his dislike of Wycliffe, the tenuous nature of the relationship that Knighton does finally describe is therefore compelling evidence of the lack of any real link.⁶² Had there been any substantial connection, he argues, Knighton would have exploited it in order to further undermine Wycliffe's reputation.⁶³ Closer examination of Knighton's relationship to Wycliffe, however, reveals a more complex reality. It is true that the chronicler condemns Wycliffe's

⁶⁰ Stephen Justice, "Religious Dissent, Social Revolt and 'Ideology'" *Past and Present* Supplement 2 (2007): 205.

⁶¹ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 255-7.

⁶² Justice, "Religious Dissent, Social Revolt and 'Ideology,'" 207.

⁶³ Justice, "Religious Dissent, Social Revolt and 'Ideology,'" 207.

theological assertions, describing them in some ways as signs of the apocalypse, but he is much more sympathetic towards Wycliffe than Justice assumes.⁶⁴ Knighton, in fact, avoids implicating Wycliffe in a number of ways. He praises the man as an academic, shifts much of the blame to John Ball, and constructs his narrative in such a way as to remove Wycliffe's influence from the Revolt.

Both Walsingham and Knighton would most likely have had personal knowledge of Wycliffe. Walsingham wrote from St. Albans in Hertfordshire and was likely educated at Oxford while Wycliffe served as a master there.⁶⁵ After expulsion from Oxford, Wycliffe settled at the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, not far from the abbey of St. Mary's in the Meadow. Historians have remarked upon Knighton's proximity to the "hotbed of Lollardy" and the unique historical vision provided by that closeness.⁶⁶ More significant than his personal knowledge of Wycliffe and the Lollards, however, was Wycliffe's relationship to John of Gaunt. As discussed in later chapters, Gaunt's patronage was perhaps the greatest external (i.e. non-ideological) influence on Knighton's historical vision. Gaunt championed Wycliffe. Knighton therefore risked condemning his benefactor through thorough censure of Wycliffe. In addition, the abbot of St. Mary in the Meadows at the time Knighton was writing, Philip Repingdon, had defended Wycliffe at Oxford in the 1380s, although Knighton makes no explicit connection between Repingdon and Wycliffe as he does with John of Gaunt and the heretical theologian.⁶⁷ Knighton also acknowledged Wycliffe as a fellow academic, as

⁶⁴ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 243-51.

⁶⁵ See: John Taylor, "Walsingham, Thomas (c. 1340-1422)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 25-27.

⁶⁶ See, for example: Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 57.

⁶⁷ See Taylor, *Historical Literature*, 17.

discussed below. Knighton was monk, secular cleric, and not least scholar. He understood this commonality and respected Wycliffe as an academic.

Knighton was forced to reconcile the interests of patron, church, and the establishment by discrediting Wycliffe's subversive philosophy while still maintaining the integrity of the latter's person. Misguided and subversive his ideology may have been, Knighton writes, but the man himself was "the most eminent theologian of that time. He was reckoned second to none in philosophy, and incomparable in scholastic learning."⁶⁸ Knighton states that in 1382 Wycliffe was ordered to defend himself before an ecclesiastical gathering in London.⁶⁹ He records that at this time Wycliffe and his supporters were rescued by an "invincible guardian" (Gaunt) from losing themselves to heresy irretrievably. Gaunt convinced many of them, including Wycliffe and noted followers such as Nicholas Hereford, to confess their heretical ideas; "otherwise they would have fallen into the pit of destruction."⁷⁰ The highly respectable scholarly reputation that Knighton establishes for Wycliffe justifies Gaunt's protection of the man whose heretical ideas Knighton, as an orthodox member of the clergy, would have found threatening and repulsive.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 243.

⁶⁹ Martin suggests that Knighton confused a number of different gatherings, including the Blackfriars council, and November synod at Oxford. Wycliffe was required to appear at none of these, but his teachings were condemned in absentia. See: *Knighton's Chronicle*, 250 n. 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 251. He writes that they had lost themselves to their subversive philosophies: "the sun of their audacity set, and they were taken into the shadows of madness."

⁷¹ Knighton ends his recitation of Wycliffe's assertions with: "the heretical conclusions, repugnant to the judgements of the Church, which are mentioned word by word above, and which are called the conclusions of Wyclif, are there recited, as are the erroneous conclusions." *Ibid.*, 269.

He suffered no such qualms in regards to the character of John Ball, whom he describes only as a destructive heretic.⁷² In addition, the chronicler organizes his account's timeline in such a way as to implicate Ball in the Revolt while distancing Wycliffe from it. Knighton states clearly that Ball, whose career culminated with the Revolt in 1381, predated Wycliffe even though by 1374 the scholar had been exiled from Oxford on account of his unorthodox ideas and the two men were at best contemporaries. Walsingham, by contrast, begins his discussion of the year 1381 with "the ravings of John Wyclif."⁷³ It is in the context of Wycliffe's heresies – the man who "seemed to swallow the Jordan and plunge all Christians into the abyss" – that he places his account of the Revolt.⁷⁴ In contrast, Knighton creates a very linear, but reversed, progression between the two men, placing John Ball and the Revolt *before* his discussion of Wycliffe. Unlike Walsingham, Knighton's discussion of Wycliffe's heresies follows his account of the Revolt, reversing the St. Alban's chronicler's chronology and causality. He states that Wycliffe had "as the precursor of his pestiferous contrivings John Ball, a powerful enemy of the church's unity, a fomenter of discord between the clergy and the laity, a tireless disseminator of illicit beliefs, and a disturber of the church of Christians."⁷⁵ His condemnation of Ball allows him to place the ideological responsibility for the Revolt on Ball alone and therefore to maintain orthodox thought and condemn Wycliffite philosophy without specifically implicating Wycliffe (and by association, John of Gaunt) in the Revolt.

⁷² He writes that Ball had "for a long time unprofitably spread the word of the Lord, mixing tares with the wheat ... bitterly denouncing the law and the free estate of the church, execrably dividing the clergy and the laity by his errors, and casting a cloud of darkness over the province for many years." *Ibid.*, 211.

⁷³ Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 403.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 403. Walsingham directly follows his account of the heresies inspired by Wycliffe with the Revolt, occurring, he states, "as punishment for [England's] sins." *Ibid.*, 411.

⁷⁵ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 277.

Stephen Justice defines heresy (e.g. Wycliffe's discrediting of transubstantiation) and social dissent (e.g. the rebels' demands for political and social equality and actions toward achieving that end) as mutually exclusive terms. For Knighton, however, "heresy" included a great deal more than unorthodox theological philosophy. His world was not one in which the religious sphere was neatly separated from the secular realm. Knighton defines attacks on secular persons and lands as much led by "the Evil One" as were those on ecclesiastical targets.⁷⁶ Friedrich Engels dismisses the role of heresy in the Revolt as a "religious screen" behind which the "demands of the various classes" were hidden. The rebels' demands relied on, or at least drew on, orthodox philosophies of religious and secular hierarchy.⁷⁷ In light of the culture from which the revolt sprang, saturated as it was in Christian doctrine and philosophy, it is unsurprising that the rebels should have characterized their aims and grievances in terms of theological language. Justice dismisses the necessarily radical nature of these metaphors, arguing that "normative religious belief could encourage and justify rebellion as well as submission, could provide rebels as well as their lords with resources of self-explanation and self-justification."⁷⁸ Knighton also used the flexibility of conventional norms both to sympathize with and to condemn the rebels.

The question then becomes: how did this philosophy make its way from the academic and exclusive halls of the University of Oxford, where Wycliffe studied and taught, to the fields of Blackheath, for all intents and purposes a world away? The most

⁷⁶ Knighton says of the rebels' attacks on the New Temple and the houses of secular officials that "even the old and decrepit clambered over [obstacles] as agilely as if they had been rats, or were borne aloft by spirits. And indeed one can well believe that the Evil One, whom they followed and served, was guiding their steps." *Ibid.*, 217.

⁷⁷ For example, their desire to make John Ball their archbishop. Justice discusses the use of orthodox theology in relation to a Eucharistic rite depicted by Walsingham. Justice, "Religious Dissent, Social Revolt and 'Ideology,'" 212.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

probable answer again lies with the church. First of all, Knighton, aware of Wycliffe's subversive philosophies, would have seen similarities between the rebels' demand for freedom and the tenets of Lollardy. In this way, his knowledge of one would have influenced his presentation of the other. Thus, he already possessed a coherent, educated model of religious dissent to draw upon for his description of the Revolt. More generally, unlike the monks whose lives were removed from the profane world, and the nobles and intellectuals sequestered in their manor houses and universities, respectively, the lower clergy regularly had close contact with and confronted the poverty, illness, starvation, and social injustices that plagued the lower echelons of society.⁷⁹ J.R. Maddicott correctly emphasizes the close relationship between lay clergy and the common poor.⁸⁰ Clerics had what could be called a professional interest in the particularly harsh tribulations that peasants faced in the fourteenth century. Christianity was, after all, a religion that described the poor, meek, and persecuted as blessed.⁸¹ They were also influenced by the philosophies of theologians such as Saint Anthony and the desert fathers, and Saint Francis of Assisi. Figures like Saint Anthony were lauded for rejecting wealth and status in favour of a life of poverty and asceticism. Mendicant Franciscan monks vowed to live a life bereft of material comforts and social acceptance, choosing poverty and alienation instead. Priests were charged with the spiritual, and sometime physical, care of the most marginalized members of medieval society. In this way, they embraced another type of egalitarianism, choosing to live as the poor did. In

⁷⁹ For more on the segregation of medieval society see: Jeffrey Denton, ed. *Orders and Hierarchies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁸⁰ J.R. Maddicott, "Poems of Social Protest in Early Fourteenth-Century England" *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium*, W.M. Ormrod, ed. (London: The Boydell Press, 1986): 136.

⁸¹ See: Matthew 5:3-12.

addition, they served peasants in a unique capacity, and participated in the most significant events of their lives.⁸² They had the potential to identify with the peasant class both materially and ideologically. Mark O'Brien defines medieval society as an "ideological world" centred on the figure of the local priest. He served as the keystone in the maintenance of social order (or in this case the disruption of it).⁸³

Lay clergy also possessed the education required to interpret and disseminate Wycliffite ideology and the expertise with which to communicate these concepts to various levels of society. The pulpit made them effective ideological disseminators, as did the pastoral aspects of their ministries. They had the opportunity, means, and above all the ability to articulate this ideology. Rodney Hilton explores the complexity of thought that underpinned the actions and demands of the rebels. The targets of rebels' wrath (e.g. tax collectors, lawyers, the archbishop of Canterbury, and the royal treasurer) were carefully chosen for their highly symbolic value. Hilton acknowledges that while the rebels were not all illiterate tenant farmers, the ideology of the rebellion was remarkably educated, coherent, and consistent in light of their limited access to education.⁸⁴ Hilton, a Marxist historian, interprets the combination of the rebels' diverse backgrounds with their unity of purpose as a form of proto-class consciousness.⁸⁵ Members of the clergy also played an active role in the Revolt. In addition to the contribution of John Ball, already discussed, Hilton estimates that some twenty

⁸² For example, secular clergy presided at marriages and performed baptisms and last rites. Perhaps more importantly, their sermons also sought to influence the minds of their parishioners.

⁸³ O'Brien, *When Adam Delved*, 6-7.

⁸⁴ The term "Peasants' Revolt" is something of a misnomer. The rebels were a heterogeneous group, the majority of which were peasants of varying social rank, but which also included a wider cross-section of society, such as artisans, and craftsmen.

⁸⁵ The interest of communist and Marxist historiographical traditions in the Revolt is discussed in the Introduction, p. 5.

clergymen played prominent roles in the Revolt, both in local uprisings and in London.⁸⁶ In this context, Knighton's status as an Augustinian canon has important implications for his representation of the Revolt.

Knighon's knowledge of peasant life, as well as the hardships that it inflicted on those who lived it, is clear when he writes that

when the commons of Kent and neighbouring parts found themselves so gravely harassed, and ever new and all but intolerable burdens incessantly laid upon them, without hope of redress, unable longer to bear the injury of such oppression, they conferred amongst themselves to discover what remedy or support they could devise.⁸⁷

Not only was the chronicler aware of the struggles of the peasantry, he clearly sympathized with them. He acknowledged the magnitude of their suffering as well as its inescapable nature. This passage suggests that the rebels had little choice but to challenge their oppression, driven to action by the severity and constancy of their servile state. The reasonableness of the peasants' actions is again emphasized in Knighton's description of their meeting. He writes of the commons meeting in counsel and supportive fellowship to discuss "those endeavours that the common good and necessity urgently demanded" and of the joyful attitude that resulted from the discovery that they could "look to each other for relief from such oppressive need."⁸⁸ Knighton describes a collective brought together by necessity, and one that embodied optimism and a strong sense of community. These are not the words of a man opposed to the demands of the rebels; quite the opposite, in fact.

⁸⁶ See Maddicott, "Poems of Social Protest," 139; and R. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973): 207-208. Hilton contrasts this with the lack of ecclesiastical involvement in peasant unrest on the continent.

⁸⁷ *Knighon's Chronicle*, 209.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

Furthermore, the chronicler acknowledged that the source of these tribulations lay beyond the immediate control of the peasants themselves and were imposed upon them without remedy (*imponi absque remedio*). In comparison, Walsingham describes the first assembly of the commons with little of Knighton's sympathy. He writes that the "serfs ... in company with other countrymen of Essex, conceiving ambitions beyond their powers and harbouring hopes of subduing everything to their foolish designs, assembled in large numbers and began to clamour for liberty."⁸⁹ The *St. Alban's Chronicle* embodies an elite outrage at the presumption of the commons. Walsingham, a scholar and a monk, clearly did not empathize with the peasants' hardships, unlike Knighton, whose work would have made it much more difficult for him to ignore. Knighton admitted to the reality of the peasants' burdens, while Walsingham labeled them "false pretexts."⁹⁰ Froissart, who was less dismissive than Walsingham, still described the argument for equality as "folly" and argued that the rebels were simply "envious of the wealthy and noblemen."⁹¹ They denied the validity of the peasants' complaints, where Knighton acknowledged their root causes.

Knighton's sympathy, however, had limits. After the understanding with which he addresses the rebels' grievances, his account quickly becomes markedly less positive. In the paragraph following his endorsement of the rebels' ideological foundation, he refers to the "wicked commons" assembling and soon their movements are designated as "attacks."⁹² What accounts for this significant transformation? Knighton himself reveals much of the answer. He states that the rebels

⁸⁹ Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 411.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁹¹ Froissart, fol. 70v.

⁹² *Knighton's Chronicle*, 209-10.

assembled on Blackheath, where ... no longer content with their first purpose, nor satisfied merely by minor crimes, they ruthlessly contemplated greater and unspeakable evils, nor would they be ready to desist from their wicked plans until all the lords and the great men of the kingdom had been utterly destroyed.⁹³

Knighton limits his sympathy to the realm of ideology and strongly denounces the actions that resulted from those forces. The peasants had a right to grumble about their status, but acting on this injustice overstepped legitimate procedure and therefore stripped their conduct of authority.

Following his account of the death of Wat Tyler, but before his description of the retaliation of the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, Knighton includes statements concerning four "leaders" of the Revolt. Aside from John Ball, these men are likely archetypal constructions of the type of men who participated in the rebellion and not specific and historical individuals.⁹⁴ They embody and articulate, however cryptically, much of the philosophical underpinning of the rebels' ideology. Their words employ a highly metaphorical style to reveal apocalyptic undertones common at this time. John Aberth examines the frequent use of Apocalyptic imagery by late medieval writers. He explores the famines, wars, plagues and death that threatened to overwhelm European society in the fourteenth century and asks if it is indeed surprising that late medieval persons believed the Apocalypse to be near.⁹⁵ In like vein, Knighton records several ambiguous and ominous speeches of the said leaders. For example, Jack Miller asked his companions "for help to turn his mill aright. He has ground things small, and small, the

⁹³ Ibid., 210.

⁹⁴ For more on the archetypal nature of these men, see: Justice, *Writing in Revolt*, xxx.

⁹⁵ John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages* 2nd Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.

King's Son of Heaven shall pay for all."⁹⁶ Likewise, Jack Carter implores them to "make a good end of what [they] have begun, and do well, and ever better, for in the evening a man reckons the day," and Jack Trueman warns that "sin spreads like the wild flood ... God make the reckoning, for now is the time."⁹⁷ Each of these "leaders" of the Revolt framed his statements within an apocalyptic context. They galvanized their supporters by emphasizing the finality of their position. Worldly safety would mean little when the day of reckoning was come. It was therefore their duty to confront the injustices of the world before the end. Guy Fourquin classifies this sentiment, discernable in both the Peasants' Revolt and the Bohemian Taborite Uprising (1420), as "egalitarian millenarianism."⁹⁸ Proponents of the Revolt's ideology promised a second "Golden Age," a return either to Eden or to the utopic community of the early Christians. These letters also further testify to the influence of secular clerics on the formation of rebel ideology and Richard Firth Green demonstrates the prevalence of common sermon phrases in them.⁹⁹

The cultural prevalence of millenarianism, however, that some employed to secure support for the Revolt, was also used to condemn it. Less sympathetic writers saw the Revolt as a destructive harbinger of the Apocalypse itself, akin to the four horsemen. Knighton himself describes Lollardy as the fulfillment of Guillaume de Saint-Amour's eight signs of the apocalypse.¹⁰⁰ An anonymous clerk drew a more direct link to the Revolt, writing:

The Rysing of the comuynes in Londe,
The pestilens and the eorthe-quake,

⁹⁶ *Knighon's Chronicle*, 223.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁹⁸ Fourquin, *Popular Rebellion*, 101.

⁹⁹ Richard Firth Green, "John Ball's Letters: Literary History and Historical Literature," in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, edited by Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 176-200. See especially, pp. 183-187.

¹⁰⁰ *Knighon's Chronicle*, 245-249. De Saint-Amour wrote in the mid-thirteenth century.

Theose threo thinges, I understonde,
Be tokens the grete vengauce and wrake
That shulde falle for synnes sake,
As this Clerkes cone de-clare.
Nou may be chese to leve or take,
For warnyng have we to ben ware.¹⁰¹

Indeed, many contemporaries saw the Revolt as divine punishment for England's sins. In this way, the event that challenged traditional sources of power so completely could be rationalized as God's will. As Walsingham states, God oversaw its beginning just as he made its end.¹⁰² Both authors categorize the Revolt with other faceless scourges of God, such as natural disasters and the plague. The agency of the rebels is therefore subsumed by the autonomous authority of God. In contrast, Knighton's account of their first gathering, grievances, and self-organization returns much of this agency to those involved in the uprising.

The letters preserved in Knighton's account are part of a much longer tradition of literary social protest. In the late medieval period, authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland attacked the church for its arrogance, greed, debauchery and abuses of power.¹⁰³ Heavily critical, popular satire such as theirs circulated widely, and J.R. Maddicott demonstrates the similarities in theme, style, literary structure, and possibly authorship that the letters shared with works of this tradition, particularly the "protest"

¹⁰¹ Aberth, *From the Brink*, 3.

¹⁰² Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 411. He writes that "England, as punishment for its sins, suffered a sudden serious catastrophe affecting all its operations, such as had never before been experienced in its history. If God, the Lord of all mercies, had not restrained [the Revolt] quickly with his customary good grace, the government would have been utterly destroyed, and England a mockery and laughing-stock to the whole world." It is interesting to note that Walsingham saw the Revolt to be more potentially destructive to England than any other event had been, including the Viking raids of the ninth century, and the Norman Conquest. The Norman Invasion, to Walsingham at least, did not threaten the structure of authority in England as the Revolt did, and was simply a matter of which individuals wielded it.

¹⁰³ Hollister, *Making of England*, 247-48.

poems of the early 1300s.¹⁰⁴ Late medieval English structures of power and authority permitted a certain amount of criticism, and passive protest was acceptable. In 1381, however, the "language of mere grievance transformed into the language of sedition" and ultimately into action.¹⁰⁵

Knighton's role as a member of the secular clergy writing in a monastic environment influenced his reaction to and historical interpretation of the events of 1381. He consistently sought to balance his loyalty to church orthodoxy and to his patron, and his first-hand knowledge of the state of the English peasantry. The resulting account is one which in some respects is amazingly sympathetic to the rebels' grievances, and on others endorses the violent and merciless repression of the same men. Like the rebels, he understands the Revolt through a prism dominated by Christian imagery, language, and doctrine, without compromising his focus on the importance to the church and to the rebels of economic factors. The representation of power that his work portrays is one the heart of which is located in local ecclesiastical landholdings and the authority for which rests on the abbots' and bishops' abilities to maintain control over their tenants. A challenge to this was nothing less than sacrilege.

¹⁰⁴ J.R. Maddicott, "Poems of Social Protest," 139.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3 COMMON GROUND: CULTURAL-TEXTUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CROWD

Perhaps as a result of his sometimes conflicting perspectives as both monastic scholar and lay cleric, Knighton proves to be a subtle and often contradictory historian. His approach towards recording the nature and actions of the rebels illustrates many of these paradoxes, for he both sympathized with them and condemned them. From his identification of the origins of the Revolt within the inappropriate behaviour of the poll tax collectors to his account of Richard II's disbanding the crowd at Smithfield, Knighton's attitude towards the rebels is expressed through his use of language. Most significantly, his account reveals the existence of a socio-political-cultural space (albeit limited) in late medieval English society within which the expression of popular dissent was accepted as legitimate. Once the rebels stepped outside that space, however, their actions threatened the stability of the accepted social and political structure and lost legitimacy in Knighton's eyes. In order to understand the depth of information communicated through the *Chronicle* – including the writer's intentions and the readers' responses – modern scholars must attempt to reconstruct the consciousness of the medieval *literati* and to place Knighton's work within it. Through literal and cultural translation, Knighton's word use reveals a perspective that is surprisingly radical. His inclusion of the word *communes*, for example, is remarkably purposeful and complex. It incorporated and evoked a number of associations and a common cultural understanding in the late medieval reader that provided the rebels with an amount of political legitimacy uncharacteristic of most late fourteenth century chroniclers. A literary-cultural analysis

has implications for the understanding of medieval historical writing because it exposes the complexity of the written record. Specifically, a textual analysis of Knighton's attitude towards the rebels reveals elements of the nature of popular dissent in late medieval England by contextualizing it within the author's ideological framework.

Knighon's description of the origins of the Revolt is, in many ways, consistent with the modern sociological definition of the phenomenon. The sociologist Jacques Ellul argues that revolt requires both a belief that one's state in life has become intolerable and an identification of the source of that intolerability.¹ Knighton made the desperate condition of the commons clear when he wrote that they "found themselves so gravely harassed, and ever new but intolerable burdens incessantly laid upon them, without hope of redress."² The rebel gathering was the result of extreme need and the lack of any viable alternatives. Who then, bore the brunt of their anger? Who did they see as the source of their desperate condition? Knighton did not present a single, unified, and coherent "enemy" of the rebels, although a great deal can be construed from his description of the various targets of the rebels' anger and violence. According to Knighton, much of the blame for the outbreak of rebellion and the violence at the Tower lay with John Legg, a former deputy to the king's treasurer, and his "three colleagues."³ They had sought and gained a commission from Richard II to investigate the collection of the newly-instituted poll tax in the south of England in 1380. The first poll tax was levied in 1377. The tax, and subsequent poll taxes, was remarkably unpopular and widely evaded.

¹ Fourquin, *Popular Rebellion*, 21.

² *Knighon's Chronicle*, 209.

³ The "three colleagues" to whom Knighton refers on a number of occasions were tax collectors. *Ibid.*, 207, 215.

The failure of the tax to gather revenue led to accusations of corruption and fraud directed at its administration. Knighton records that many ministers complained that "the tax had not been well administered, nor honestly collected."⁴ Legg's commission was, in part, issued to counter such concerns. In practice, however, the accusations of corruption and inappropriate behaviour were magnified under the commission. Knighton related that

when one of [the three commissioners] came into a village to inquire into the tax, he would assemble the men and women before him, and horrible to relate, would shamelessly raise the young girls' skirts to discover whether they were corrupted by intercourse with men,⁵ and thus he would compel their friends and parents to pay the tax for them, for many would rather choose to pay than to see their daughters shamefully mistreated. Those and other such actions of the investigators greatly provoked the people (*populum*).⁶

It is clear that, from Knighton's perspective, compelling villagers into action through the sexual violation of young women was not considered "right violence." In her study of late medieval crime, Philippa Maddern defines this concept as violence which upheld the existing social order.⁷ Right violence, instead of lying beyond the socially acceptable range of behaviour, functioned primarily to legitimize claims of power and status and acted as the "language of social order."⁸ The function of violence in medieval English society is, for Maddern, paradoxical. It was at once inevitable, and even necessary, in

⁴ Ibid., 207.

⁵ A girl's virginity (or lack thereof) had implications for her status as a minor or dependent, and therefore as a tax-payer. The story illustrates not only the excessive crudity of the tax commissioners' behaviour, but also their intention to seize as much tax revenue as possible from families.

⁶ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 209.

⁷ Maddern, *Violence and Social Order*, 191-2.

⁸ Ibid., 234.

order to uphold the hierarchical power systems through which society functioned, and, at the same time, it could be used to undermine these structures.

The commissioners had the power of the state behind them, but they did not exercise it justly or legitimately and instead engaged in "unlicensed violence."⁹ In this way, they squandered the authority of their stations and provided the space for dissent. The exploitation of virtuous, unmarried women was socially destructive and therefore subversive. In Knighton's estimation, the villagers' anger was justified, and the commissioners' authority forfeit. As with the execution of the archbishop of Canterbury, discussed above in Chapter 1, the authority of the rebels' targets must have been already severely weakened to allow such a challenge to them. The theoretical sociologist Guy Fourquin defines authority as the ability to give orders and have them followed. The tax commissioners' demands were offensive enough, and their grasp on power weak enough, that they were unable to maintain their hold on authority. Not only were their commands ignored but, Walsingham related, one commissioner was murdered and driven out of town.¹⁰ Knighton acknowledged the legitimacy of the peasants' anger toward the poll tax collectors, and of the violence perpetrated against the commissioners. Indeed, he later blamed these men for causing the Revolt, writing that "John Legg and his three colleagues were, as had been said, the cause of that irretrievable doom. And their heads were fixed on lances and staves, that they might be known from the rest."¹¹ Bloody deaths were the punishment for their inappropriate use of violence.

⁹ Maddern defines "unlicensed violence" as the opposite of "right violence," and as something that lay outside the sanction of law and society and therefore subverted hierarchy.

¹⁰ Henry Thomas Riley, *Thomae Walsingham, Quondam Monachi S. Albani, Historia Anglicana*. Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863), 392-3.

¹¹ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 215.

Although he acknowledged the validity of the rebels' response to the tax collectors' misuse of violence, Knighton also warned of the anarchy unleashed through the appropriation of violence – meant to be the prerogative of the knightly class – by the masses.¹² Other targets of the rebels' anger were not so legitimate, and a great deal of wrong-doing resulted from the rebels' inability to differentiate between the guilty and the innocent. The responsibility required for the correct definition and enactment of right violence proved to be too much for the broader population, and it spiraled out of the commons' control. Knighton wrote despairingly of their inability to use right violence appropriately, noting that "alas and alack, two luminaries of the kingdom [Archbishop Simon Sudbury and Brother Robert Hales], and the worthy [i.e. Legg] with the unworthy, seven in all, were beheaded on Tower Hill."¹³ The innocent died with the guilty as a result of the commons' inability to differentiate between them. Knighton recorded the sack of the Savoy, which he similarly defined as an act of inappropriate violence, with palpable horror. He related that "those servants of Satan cast down, burned and, reduced to ashes" John of Gaunt's mansion.¹⁴ The rebels, now driven by the forces of evil, also attacked the New Temple belonging to the prior of Clerkenwell, as well as Clerkenwell itself, destroyed manuscripts and burned the students' possessions.¹⁵

Individuals associated with the justice system were also specifically targeted, as well as those in positions of immediate power, including apprentices' masters: "they looked particularly for lawyers in the city, and students of the common law, and wherever they found them they at once put them to death [and] many apprentices from the city

¹² Maddern discusses in detail the upper classes' monopoly on the definition and use of right violence. See, for example: Maddern, *Violence and Social Order*, 191-2.

¹³ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 215.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 217.

whose masters they had beheaded joined them."¹⁶ Knighton also noted the grotesque murder of Richard Lyons in London. In 1376, Lyons had been convicted of committing fraud against the crown and other high-ranking nobles, but was later released and pardoned. Knighton's representation of Lyons' beheading in the courtyard in front of his house demonstrated the rebels' misdirected desire for true justice (the murder of a convicted felon), their misappropriation of judicial authority, and the consequent collapse of social norms indicated by the murder of a man in his own home. What began as the legitimate use of violence against Legg and his associates turned into an outpouring of unsanctionable criminal acts that threatened the very foundation of society.

Once the destructive power of the mob had been unleashed, the crowd proved unable to maintain its internal coherence. Knighton described the chaos that ensued as people turned on each other in an orgy of blood. His story of an unfortunate looter illustrated the fact that even attempts to sustain the unified integrity of the group devolved into senseless violence. When the man, who had stolen a piece of silver from the Savoy, was caught by a number of his fellow rebels, "they threw him and the plate together into the fire, crying that they were zealots for truth and justice, not thieves or robbers."¹⁷ In stark contrast to the commons, whose members spoke with one, rational voice, the group now turned on itself. Without the ability to maintain control over individuals, power, once gained, became crippling self-destructive. Knighton's account of the thirty-odd looters whose acts of thievery resulted in their deaths illustrated the futility and selfishness into which the rebels' actions had degenerated, as well as the utter collapse of their loyalty to one another. He wrote that:

¹⁶ Ibid., 217.

¹⁷ Ibid., 215.

some broke into the wine cellars [at the Savoy], and drank so much of the delicious wine that they could not crawl out ... until the door was blocked by fire and fallen stone, so that they could not have escaped if they had been sober, and there they remained until they died. For seven days afterwards their cries, and lamentations for the enormity of their sins, were heard by many who went to that place, but *there was none among their friends who helped or consoled them.*¹⁸

In Knighton's account, individual selfishness replaced the well-being of the group as the rebels' driving purpose. For example, he wrote that "personal enemies, and people they had reason to hate, they hunted down diligently, and beheaded them out of hand."¹⁹ The disintegration of the collective was also clear in Knighton's account of the individually-driven violence that occurred overnight when "many of them, in their drunken state, secretly slew companions against whom they had grudges, so that there was much bloodshed that night, amongst their own number as well as other people."²⁰ The group collapsed in upon itself, leaving behind it complete social disorder. Knighton described the ensuing chaos as follows:

those and other atrocities they committed, sparing none of any degree or order, whether in churches and churchyards, or streets and public places, or in houses or the fields, and wherever they raised a clamour against anyone, the rest quickly gathered, knowing that he would be beheaded, without either fear of God, or reverence for Holy Church.²¹

Knighton depicted senseless violence for the sake of violence and personal revenge. Any legitimacy that he earlier granted the rebels' actions, he now decidedly withdrew. The common people were clearly incapable of the control, selflessness, unity, and judgment required for the maintenance of right violence.

¹⁸ Ibid., 215-17. Italics added.

¹⁹ Ibid., 217.

²⁰ Ibid., 219.

²¹ Ibid., 219.

In addition to the claim of intolerability and the appropriation of right violence, the rebels themselves also utilized the power of myth-making to legitimize their actions. Ellul argues that all revolts ultimately reach a place of self-proclaimed enlightenment. The ascendancy of myth, typically that of an idyllic past, develops concurrently with revolt as a reaction to intolerability. Ellul writes that "man responds to an excess of suffering by revolt and by steeping himself at the same time in myth."²² The conflation of revolt and mythology certainly existed in 1381. Throughout the Revolt, the rebels demanded a return to a utopian past, symbolized by what they saw as their "ancient rights," and articulated through quasi-mythological legislation such as the Statute of Westminster.²³ Knighton, however, avoided any discussion of mythology in his account of the Revolt. He made no mention of the Statute of Winchester. Instead, he recorded the rebels' specific demands with little examination of the ideology that spawned them apart from the fact that it lay in the peasants' daily hardships. During the rebels' first meeting with the king, at Mile End, Knighton states that they

complained to the king of the many exactions and the intolerable servitude with which they were gravely burdened, and which they could no longer sustain. Wherefore the king ... granted them at their request a charter under the great seal, that all men in England should be free, and of free condition, and they and their heirs released from every yoke of servitude and villeinage, to remain free forever.²⁴

Presumably, the charter that Richard guaranteed the rebels reflected and satisfied their demands, notably the abolition of serfdom. Nowhere did Knighton depict the desire for

²² Fourquin, *Popular Rebellion*, 22.

²³ For more on the use of mythology in the Revolt, and particularly the Statute of Westminster, see: Musson, "Appealing to the Past."

²⁴ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 213.

the reenactment of ancient rights that was so prevalent in the accounts of other observers.²⁵ The rebels' rallying cry itself,²⁶ although it did not appear in Knighton's chronicle, was predicated on the return to a form of ancient (and biblical) equality. In contrast, Knighton provided no mythological or quasi-historical justification for the rebels' demand for the abolition of serfdom.

Likewise, Knighton did not mythologize the more specific requests made to Richard at Smithfield, writing only that:

the commons asked of the king that all game, whether in waters or in parks and woods should become common to all, so that everywhere in the realm, in rivers and fishponds, and woods and forests, they might take the wild beasts, and hunt the hare in the fields, and do many other such things without restraint.²⁷

There was no appeal to ancient customs, or mythological precedent. Throughout the chronicle, Knighton demonstrated much more sympathy for the rebels' material concerns than their ideological interests.

The terms with which he referred to groups of rebels, however, demonstrated a range of strong ideological positions. What follows is a detailed textual analysis of the various expressions that Knighton employed throughout the account to denote the rebel collective. Semantics are complex phenomena, and should be approached with a certain degree of wariness. Multiple layers of meaning surround any term and, as such, it is impossible to write in an entirely neutral way. Scholars are forced to participate in a process of selection. This is particularly true with regard to the narratives of those involved in the uprising. Some scholars choose to utilize the term "rebels," some simply

²⁵ See, for example: V.H. Galbraith, ed. *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1333 to 1381* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 147.

²⁶ "When Adam delved and Eve span, who then was a gentleman?"

²⁷ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 219.

"peasants"; more recently "insurgents" has been used.²⁸ Each of these terms connotes specific nuances and influences the argument of the respective historian. "Rebels" emphasizes the unorthodox and illegal nature of the participants' actions. "Peasants" is somewhat of a misnomer because not only peasants but also artisans, merchants, and even some members of the nobility played a part in the Revolt. "Insurgents" has become increasingly popular as a term by which to refer to those involved, but its strong associations with the modern, and highly politicized, conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan make its use problematic. It imposes the idea of a very specific type of modern conflict onto the medieval example, and inclines the modern western reader to be sympathetic to a specific (i.e. non-insurgent) side. Similarly, definitions of collective entity, such as "crowd," "mob," "band," and "people," all have different nuances and most involve a value judgment on the part of the author.

Matters of translation further complicate this issue. Knighton wrote in Latin, and most likely thought in a combination of Latin and Middle English. A number of difficulties arise in the modern English reconstruction of an ideology that is expressed largely in Latin. This process of translation is, however, not simply a matter of language, and indeed language is only one of several significant conceptual barriers between the medieval work and the modern scholar. The academic must re-articulate an ideology and avoid anachronism not only across languages but also across two cultures separated by almost one thousand years. It is a complicated but necessary task if one hopes fully to re-situate the medieval historian in an historical context as well as to understand his work within the contemporary linguistic culture. The ways in which Knighton chose to

²⁸ For example, Hilton uses "rebels" in *Bond Men Made Free*; O'Brien uses "peasants" in *When Adam Delved*; and Oman uses "insurgents" in *The Great Revolt*.

articulate himself are as significant as the ideas that he expressed. An understanding of his word choices, and their significance to a medieval reader, provide the modern historian with insight into the nuances of the meaning that medieval writers hoped to communicate to their audiences.

Lucien Febvre argues that language is the primary way in which the "social environment impregnates [the historian] ... in advance and sets him ... within a framework, predetermining him in what he creates."²⁹ He argues that, through the shared associations of language, the group influences individuals and their work. While there can be little doubt that language provides the framework within which the author works, I suggest that it acts less as the tyrannical tool of mass culture, but rather as a medium through which the author interacts with his audience. Each is aware at some level of the understanding and allusions common to both parties that each word or phrase evokes. Febvre is most useful to the current discussion in his recognition of language as a social and organic entity. In addition, he warns historians against the anachronism that results from the unconscious projection of their own semiotic associations, values, and assumptions onto the past.³⁰ To avoid this fate, he suggests that the historian "reconstitute the whole physical, intellectual and moral universe" of the generation under study.³¹ Although the nature of history, and the sources available to historians, makes this task impossible to accomplish in its entirety, detailed cultural-textual analysis is one way in which historians can recover another aspect of the historian's universe, in this case Knighton's.

²⁹ Lucien Febvre, "History and Psychology," in *A New Kind of History* edited by Peter Burke (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

The chronicler used a variety of terms to define the collective of rebels, all of which are summarized in their respective narrative contexts in Table 1. Most significantly, Knighton employed variations of the Latin word *communes* to refer to the collective of rebels nine times in his account of the uprising. It was the noun most frequently used by Knighton to describe a group of people involved in the Revolt. At its most technical, the medieval term denoted an association, corporation or community, and variations of the term refer to a sense of universality, or majority; for example, *communio* was defined as "common assent", and other variations signified common rights, land, property, or allowance.³² The latter variations included an impression of collectivity and ownership. This sense of singleness is tempered slightly by the commons' plural meaning. This number of the noun emphasized the unified nature of its various parts (i.e. the acknowledgment of the plural nature of the commons accentuated the uniformity of the single actions that the members took). The term also had a number of associations within the political and literary cultures of the time.

Politically, by the late fourteenth century the term had come to refer to the official collection of knights and burgesses who participated in the political organization as "the commons." In the 1340s, the rolls of Parliament began as a matter of course to record common petitions. Although there is a great deal of debate regarding the extent of their accurate reflection of the needs of the society generally, scholarly consensus suggests that by the mid-fourteenth century the petitions represented the "agenda of the commons."³³ The increasing tendency towards allowing the commons a political voice culminated in the election of a "speaker" in 1377, whose function it was to articulate and debate the

³² R.E. Latham, *Medieval Word List*.

³³ Chris Given-Wilson, et al. *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*. CD-ROM. Leicester: Scholarly Digital Editions, 2005.

concerns of the commons before the king.³⁴ The records indicate that the commons eventually eclipsed the lords as the political body directly engaging with the king, although as Chris Given-Wilson points out the records are incomplete. At the very least, the commons that was reflected in the parliamentary rolls of Richard II's reign was a largely autonomous entity that enjoyed redress directly through the king and that was situated firmly alongside king, lords, and prelates. Indeed, one such record cites the inclusion of the lords and prelates at the request of the commons:

the matter was laid before all the said commons gathered in the place where they were assembled by order of the king, in the chapter-house of the abbey of Westminster, because the said commons as a whole had not yet assembled in the king's presence. Whereupon, the commons prayed of our lord the king that because of the arduous nature of their business, and the feebleness of their knowledge and abilities, it might please him to grant them the assistance and support of the prelates and lords named below, to consult with them in particular on their affairs, for the swifter and better despatch of the business with which they were charged.³⁵

In this passage, the commons were accountable to the king alone. The king re-constituted them through calling for their assembly, charged them with state business, and gave them the tools with which to accomplish their tasks – in this case, the advice of specific lords and prelates. They were independent in as much as they requested the aid of the specialists themselves and presumably exercised choice over the selection of these

³⁴ Anne Curry suggests that the introduction and development of the Speaker was directly related to the requirements of warfare. See: Anne Curry, "Speakers at War in the Late 14th and 15th Centuries" *The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust 2010* (2010): 8-21.

³⁵ Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, "Richard II, iii-5 [column A]. "ceste matire \estoit exposee/ a toute la dite commune ensemble en lour place ou ils s'estoient assemblez par comandement del roi en le chapitre de l'abbeye de Westm', a cause qe toute la dite commune n'estoit mye devant ensemble en presence del roy. Et sur ce, les communes prierent a nostre seignour le roy qe pur l'arduite de lour charge, et le feblesce de lours poairs et sens, qe pleust au roi nostre seignour de lour granter d'avoir les prelatz, seignours, dessouz escritz, en lour eide et efforcement pur communer especialment avec eux en lour affaires, pur plus hastive et bone exploit de la busoigne dont ils estoient chargez."

advisors.³⁶ It is also important to note that they were given the ability and the opportunity for direct discussion with the king. The relationship was often an adversarial one that saw "commons" in conflict with "government," but nevertheless a legitimate one.³⁷ In parliamentary discourse, the commons possessed legitimate political authority, and could rightfully demand an audience with the king in order to air their grievances and request specific action.

The commons, in all of its Latin, French, or Middle English variations, also played a significant role in the literature of the time, much of which expressed biting political and social commentary. One of the most influential works of the late fourteenth century, and a text intimately connected to the 1381 rising, William Langland's Middle-English *Piers Plowman*, made significant use of the term. Larry Scanlon has examined the role that the commons played in Langland's construction of a national vision. He argues that Langland linked the commons with notions of political sovereignty throughout *Piers Plowman* and that it was through this conflation that the commons engaged with the radical sentiments of 1381.³⁸ Langland called upon the cultural definition of the term, one which informed various contemporary challenges to traditional authority, in order to situate himself within a very specific discussion concerning the nature of political authority in the later Middle Ages. The following passage, found in the B text, most clearly articulated Langland's vision of political sovereignty and the role of the commons:

Thanne kam þer a kyng; knyghthod hym ladde,
Might of þe communes made hym to regne.
And þanne cam kynde wit and clerkes he made,

³⁶ In this record they asked for the advice of specific magnates.

³⁷ Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, "General Introduction."

³⁸ Larry Scanlon, "King, Commons, and Kind Wit," 194, 211.

For to counseillen þe kyng and þe commune save.
The kyng and knyghthod and clergie bothe
Casten þat þe commune sholde hire communes fynde.
The commune contrived of kynde wit craftes,
And for profit of al þe peple Plowmen ordeyned
To tilie and to travaille as trewe lif asketh.
The kyng and þe commune and kynde wit þe þridde
Shopen lawe and leute, ech lif to knowe his owene.³⁹

To Langland, the commons formed one part of a tripartite system that also included the king, and "kynde wit" which was personified in the king's clerical counsellors. The king entered the scene first, but only the "might of þe communes made hym to regne." The authority of the king originated in the power of the commons and was therefore dependent on its good will. Here, the commons were the ultimate source of political authority, and they were responsible for delegating elements of this power to the king and, through him, his counsellors. Throughout the poem the commons appeared in relation to discussions of kingship, and as such evoked images of leadership and its role in government. The specific nature of Langland's definition of kingship and monarchical authority is discussed below. For the time being, it is enough to appreciate the highly politicized nature of the term "the commons" in late medieval literature.

Langland's work also grants the commons the ability to articulate their concerns. For example, they speak in a single, unified voice when addressing the embodiment of Conscience before splintering into individual voices: "'How?' *quod al the the comune*. 'Thow conseillest us to yelde al that we owen any wight er we go to housel?'"⁴⁰ The ignorance of individual members of the common people is then exposed – the brewer

³⁹ William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, B. Pro. 112-22 in Scanlon, "King, Commons, and Kind Wit," 204. It is important to note that the "communes" (and any agency it held) largely disappeared from this passage in the C version of the text that appeared soon after the Revolt. Langland's reactionary removal of the charged word reinforces the significance of Knighton's use of it.

⁴⁰ Langland, *Piers Plowman*, B. 19.394-5. Italics added.

through his refusal to be ruled by Jesus Christ, and the vicar through his ill-mannered discussion of papal authority – and condemned by Conscience.⁴¹ The "lewed" curate is in the process of dismissing the commons' ability to think or act with virtue when he is interrupted by the appearance of the king.⁴² The king then re-casts the nature not only of political sovereignty, but also of justice as the monopoly of the monarch:

And thanne cam ther a kyng and by his croune seide,
"I am kyng with croune the comune to rule,
And Holy Kirke and clergie fro cursed men to defende.
And if me lakketh to lyve by, the lawe wole I take it
Ther I may hastilokest it have--for I am heed of lawe:
For ye ben but membres and I above alle.
And sith I am youre aller heed, I am youre aller heele,
And Holy Chirches chief help and chieftayn of the comune.
And what I take of yow two, I take it at the techynge
Of Spiritus Iusticie--for I jugge yow alle.
So I may boldely be housled, for I borwe nevere,
Ne crave of my comune but as my kynde asketh.'
"In condicion,' quod Conscience, "that thow [the comune]
defende,
And rule thi reaume in reson, right wol and truthe."⁴³

Here, the commons possesses little legitimate political authority. Instead of representing the collective, they are "but membres" and the king is "above alle." His task is to rule over them, and his crown is the physical symbol of his authority. Unlike the passage in the prologue, in which the might of the commons is the source of his authority, he now rules by means of the law. He is the ultimate arbiter of justice (the "heed of law"), and his judgment over all is directly informed by the Spirit of Justice. The only condition

⁴¹ Ibid., B.19.399-453.

⁴² The curate speaks thus: "For the comune,' quod this curatour, 'counten ful litel
The counseil of Conscience or Cardinale Vertues
But if thei sowne, as by sighte, somewhat to wynnynge.
Of gyle ne of gabbyng gyve thei nevere tale,
For Spiritus Prudencie among the peple is gyle,
And alle tho faire vertues, as vices thei semeth." Ibid., B.19.454-9.

⁴³ Ibid., B.19.468-81.

placed on his complete authority by Conscience is the understanding that he should defend the commons (his people) and act in reason, right will and truth.

Is this new vision of political authority reconcilable with Langland's earlier formulation of the "three estates" and his association of the commons with political authority? The relationship between the commons and the king becomes clearer in the context of John of Paris's statement in 1302 that "rex est a populi voluntate, sed, cum est rex, ut dominetur est naturale."⁴⁴ Alan Gewirth likewise argues that the sovereignty of the people existed only as a concept and, in practice, acted as "the exclusive legitimating principle of the coercive power."⁴⁵ Scanlon correctly points out that in the first passage this formulation of political agency is inverted and the people (i.e. commons) become the active force. He does, however, neglect to consider the later re-alignment of this relationship and the traditional, passive role in which the commons is ultimately cast. Taken together, both uses of the term show how "the commons" could be used in many (often contradictory) ways. Both the term and the entity that it represented, however, always existed *within* the traditional power structure (i.e. the three estates) and was ever used to articulate or re-negotiate concepts of political sovereignty. Unsurprisingly, in this context, it was typically discussed in conjunction with, and had implications for, the definition of kingly authority.

In a slightly more abstract sense, Jean E. Howard and Paul Strohm explore the development of the term as an ideological concept in the late medieval and early modern period. They argue that the idea of the commons became a fundamental element of the

⁴⁴ John of Paris, *De potestate regia et papali*, in "Government," *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought* by Jean Dunbabin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xix. (Scanlon, n.15) "The king exists by/through the will/consent of the people, but, when he is king, it is natural that he should rule."

⁴⁵ In Scanlon, "King, Commons, and Kind Wit," 210.

"public or social 'imaginary'" as a "rallying-point and index of social conflict."⁴⁶ They define this "imaginary" as that cultural entity which retained social knowledge and acted much like a culture's subconscious. Technically, the commons was defined either as an influential subset of the non-aristocratic population or as a boorish mass to be ignored or repressed. The term also served as a symbol of a more inclusive group through which popular demonstrations were enacted.⁴⁷ Similarly, scholars such as Rees Davies explore the significance of terminology in shaping and reflecting ideological stances, that is shared assumptions and attitudes. John Watts likewise argues that names in particular held the power to define identities, and in doing so were "central to medieval political culture."⁴⁸

Watts examines this form of semantic authority specifically in relation to the development of the term "commons" as an articulation of political ambitions in English popular revolts between 1381 and the Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549. He argues that the understanding of the commons changed from a term of political legitimacy unrelated to class to one that denoted a lower rank deliberately excluded from the political community.⁴⁹ This shift challenged the legitimacy of, and isolated popular action and protest. His discussion provides a well-constructed pre-1381 cultural genealogy of the term, from its respectable roots in Romano-canonical legal language, to its associations with a highly inclusive (albeit still hierarchical) community and representative political whole, and with concepts of collective petition and political agency. By the late

⁴⁶ Howard and Strohm, "The Imaginary 'Commons'" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37:3 (Fall 2007), 549, 551.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 549.

⁴⁸ John Watts, "Public or Plebs: The Changing Meaning of 'The Commons', 1381-1549" in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages* edited by Huw Price and John Watts (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 242.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 245, 259-60.

fourteenth century, listening to and enacting the interests of the *communitas regni* were the most significant responsibilities of the government, and the commons' right to self-expression a well-established element of the medieval English political institution.⁵⁰ The appropriation of this term was therefore, he argues, "both innovative and highly charged."⁵¹ The rebels, well aware of its connotations, used the term to clothe their grievances and actions in contemporary modes of political legitimacy. This was not dissimilar to the ways in which Langland used the term to express various arguments concerning political sovereignty from within the accepted systems of power. In this way, the rebels' appropriation of the voice of the commons was radical only in its active nature and the nearly complete exclusion of the upper strata of society.

The location of popular rebellion firmly within conventional structures of legitimacy and authority has led Michael Bush to describe revolts of the commons as "inherently conservative attempts to restore the social order ... to induce those who prayed and those who fought to perform their traditional roles of spiritual and physical defense, instead of introducing novelties."⁵² The resistance of contemporary chroniclers, however, suggests that the rebels utilized conventional language that was typically denied them in order to articulate radical philosophies. Watt notes that the majority of medieval observers either used the term "commons" to denote the rebels in a sarcastic and belittling manner or avoid the use of it altogether. Knighton was virtually unique in his seemingly casual deployment of the term.⁵³ The nature of the term as a signifier of political

⁵⁰ Ibid., 250.

⁵¹ Ibid., 249.

⁵² Ibid., 243. See: M.L. Bush, "The Risings of the Commons in England, 1381-1549," in J. Denton, ed. *Orders and Hierarchies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 109-125.

⁵³ The Anonimale Chronicle also employs the term without the disgust that plagues the other authors. See: Howard and Strohm, "Imaginary 'Commons,'" 249.

legitimacy and sovereignty underscores the significance of Knighton's use of the word. His application of the term to the rebels, albeit in a deceptively casual and neutral way, allowed the rebels a radical amount of legitimacy. The various contexts in which he chose to employ *communes* therefore reveal much of his position in supporting and denouncing the rebels.

Beyond the simple use of the term, the *communes* also appear to have the greatest semantic range in the chronicle, and Knighton employed it both to condemn and sympathize with the rebels' actions. He described Richard's succession (in 1377) as one of hereditary right and *uoto communi singulorum*.⁵⁴ It was the *communes* of Kent who found themselves so greatly burdened that they gathered to devise a remedy before the outbreak of rebellion,⁵⁵ and who rose up in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk⁵⁶ and in the town of St Albans.⁵⁷ The *communes* intended to kill the archbishop of Canterbury upon entrance into London,⁵⁸ and bore a special hatred for John of Gaunt.⁵⁹ Knighton typically used the term to denote the rebel group when it was particularly unified or acting with a uniformity of purpose, intention, or action. Most significantly, Richard asked the *communes* to meet him at Mile End,⁶⁰ and it was the *communes* who presented their demands to him at Smithfield.⁶¹ Knighton's deployment of the term to describe the rebels in this moment associated the rebels with the legitimate right to directly redress to the king that "the commons" possessed. Watts argues that the rebels themselves consciously chose to refer to themselves as the commons to this exact purpose. He states that it

⁵⁴ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 198. "the collective vote/choice of all."

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 224. "*communes surrexerunt*"

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 218.

"emphatically made them part of the *communitas regni* whose interests were recognized to be the purpose of all government, and whose capacity to speak for itself was such a cherished feature of English political arrangements."⁶² The fact that a broad array of peasants, merchants, and apprentices demanded their own inclusion in the political culture of the time – although the method of expression was unusual – is less surprising and notable than a "conservative" historian's endorsement of this aim. Knighton's "commons" was coherent, organized, and remarkably successful in the short term. For example, the discussions in Kent led to common action, and the commons were able not simply to negotiate with the king, but to gain every concession from him that they demanded. Likewise, they succeeded in their execution of Simon Sudbury, among others.

Communes was, however, not the only term with which Knighton referred to the rebels. In contrast to the exceptional legitimacy granted to their actions by the use of *communes*, for example, the term *plebs* bore only negative connotations. Knighton used it, as he did *communes*, to refer to the rebels as a generalized, unified group. In the medieval lexicon, *plebs* denoted the parish or people of a parish. More generally, variations of the term were used to describe the common folk, commons, or the notoriety associated with the common people, respectively. As such, it carried associations both with lay community (directly defined against the religious community), and a specific (i.e. low and uncultured) order of people. Howard and Strohm argue that throughout the late medieval and early modern periods the notion of a sovereign commons was slowly replaced with that of a *plebs*, or as they define it, a "political underclass."⁶³ The medieval

⁶² Watts, "Changing Meaning," 250.

⁶³ Howard and Strohm, "Imaginary 'Commons'", 550.

term bore many of the connotations of class that had informed its Roman roots. Howard and Strohm summarize Thomas Elyot's 1531 explanation of its function to demonstrate the perceived inferiority of the *plebs*, as well as the important social function of its repression. They suggest that Elyot perceived the "continued subordination of the plebs or nonmagisterial commons [to be] a necessary precondition for the maintenance of order and avoidance of perpetual conflict."⁶⁴ Elyot translated the plebs as "communalitie" in English, "which signifieth onely the multitude, wherin be contened the base and vulgar inhabitaunts, not aduanced to any honour or dignity."⁶⁵ Watts likewise notes the late medieval association of plebs with the lower classes.⁶⁶ He observes the outrage of a thirteenth-century alderman in England when faced with the attempts of the city's *populus* (a term somewhat analogous with *plebs*) to redefine themselves as the London *communa*.⁶⁷ *Plebs* was a marker of low social status, while *communes* denoted at least some element of political legitimacy and authority.

This understanding of the meaning of *plebs* was articulated in Knighton's work as well. Unlike *communes*, which the chronicler used in more value-neutral contexts, *plebs* was always paired with the descriptor *nephanda*. In his translation of the chronicle, Geoffrey Martin translates the adjective as "wicked," but the term might also be used to describe an "impious" or "abominable" act. Its source was the classical word *nefas* meaning among other things, "crime, wrong" or "act contrary to divine law."⁶⁸ Its meaning was connected to concepts of divine justice, just as *plebs* was to concepts of

⁶⁴ Ibid., 551.

⁶⁵ Sir Thomas Elyot, *The boke, named The governour deuised by sir Thomas Elyot Knight* (1580) STC/291:02. (EEBO)

⁶⁶ Watts, "Changing Meaning", 246.

⁶⁷ The term *populus* tends to be less negative in connotation than *plebs*, and when matched with other modifying adjectives can also refer to the middle class. *Plebs* is used almost exclusively to denote the lower class. See: Watts, "Changing Meaning", 246.

⁶⁸ The New College Latin-English Dictionary.

religious community and structure. With the phrase *plebs nephanda* Knighton depicted a lay parish committing sacrilege. The phrase was used twice in the account: first to describe the gathering of the commons at the beginning of the Revolt, and a second time in reference to the collective from which that faction of the rebels that followed the king to Mile End separated themselves.⁶⁹ In both cases, the group was coherent, unified, and decidedly rebellious. These situations were two of the most precarious moments for established authority during the Revolt in that it was at these moments that the rebels most clearly and uniformly identified their actions as part of a rational mass movement. The systems of power against which the peasants' anger and grievances were directed faced a determined and unified enemy – one which tore across the south of England and captured the city of London. The aims of the rebel collective here were much less abstract, and in Knighton's eyes less reasonable, than when he utilized the term *communes*. Knighton was no longer depicting the vague "rising" of the commons depicted by the latter, nor the reasonable grievances articulated before the initiation of Revolt and again at Mile End, nor the hatred expressed for specific public figures. Now the social, political, and economic structure was truly challenged as apprentices left their masters, prisons were destroyed, criminals released, bystanders compelled into rebellion, London invaded, and the Tower besieged. The *communes* first became the *plebs nephanda* at Blackheath in the early days of active revolt:

AD 1381, and the [fourth] year of the reign of King Richard II. In the following year [1381], therefore, in the month of May, on the Wednesday following the fourth Sunday after Trinity, the wicked commons (*plebs ista nephanda*) of Kent, and Surrey, and of many other neighbouring parts began to gather together. And apprentices left their masters and ran to join them. And thus

⁶⁹ Knighton's *Chronicle*, 209, 213.

they assembled on Blackheath, where amidst so many they forgot themselves, and no longer content with their first purpose, nor satisfied merely by minor crimes, they ruthlessly contemplated greater and unspeakable evils, *nor would they be ready to desist from their wicked plans (nephando proposito) until all the lords and the great men of the kingdom had been utterly destroyed.*⁷⁰

Nowhere in Knighton's account was the severity of the threat to the ruling class more clearly articulated than in the phrase emphasized at the end of this passage. At Blackheath, dissent became sedition and the legitimacy that Knighton afforded the rebels' grievances and earlier actions momentarily, but completely, disappeared. The rebels, he suggests, would no longer be satisfied until the power structure of contemporary England had been completely overturned and an entire class eradicated. It was with this intention that they freed John Ball from prison at Maidstone and marched on London.

Perhaps most significantly, the very nature of "crowds" itself enabled this transformation. Knighton clearly stated that "*amidst so many* they forgot themselves, and ... ruthlessly contemplated greater and unspeakable evils."⁷¹ The great size and nature of the gathering of people there (*plebs nephanda*) facilitated the willful challenge to the pre-existing power systems. Confidence was indeed bolstered by numbers, but Knighton implied a much more significant change as well. His use of a different term to define a similar group of people made manifest what he saw as the transformation that the crowd underwent as an independent and living entity. Individuals ceased to exist within the group and it took on an identity and a momentum of its own. This change is even indicated by the singular form of the *plebs* (the one *plebs* acts in one certain way) in contrast to the plural-in-form but singular-in-meaning *communes*. The group

⁷⁰ Ibid., 209-211. Italics added.

⁷¹ Ibid., 211. Italics added.

consciousness indicated by the *plebs* was not dissimilar to Knighton's description of the *communes*; however, the nature of the collective had become far more dangerous and tangible. Beyond merely thinking as a group, they now *acted* collectively (and in Knighton's perspective, destructively). Unlike *communes*, the singular form and function both of *plebs* and of its English translation (parish) implied a consciousness that existed above and beyond the sum of its individual members. In many ways, this allowed Knighton to distance individual participants from the responsibility of the actions undertaken by the collective; just as a "mob" acts in ways groups of conscious individuals or even a crowd would not. Through his use of this particular term, however, Knighton also strongly attached responsibility to a specific type of person or an archetype – an individual of a non-ecclesiastical and lower-rank background. When it operated as a singular entity in a dangerous and threatening manner, his definition of the group took on connotations of a parish acting contrary to divine law. This semantic paradigm further challenged the actions of the rebel group by evoking concepts of divine law, justice and authority. Divine law was the highest of normative codes and God the ultimate judge. How could actions against this mandate be legitimate in any way? In addition, biblical texts provided numerous accounts of the divine retribution that befell idolaters and the unjust alike.

Knighton later used that precedent to justify the bishop of Norwich's vengeful and bloody destruction of the rebels. The chronicler wrote that the bishop, "sent by the divine mercy upon high ... appeared with a strong armed force, and disturbed the evil-doers at their work, and pursuing them, dispersed them, and then dealt with them as they deserved, some being put to death, some committed to prison and fetters, none being

spared."⁷² Here, Knighton endorsed a retributive form of justice, the authority for which issued directly from God. The bishop, Henry Despenser, was an agent of divine justice, sent by God to mete out justice to those who had broken divine law by their actions. The nature of these actions is discussed above in Chapter 1, but Knighton generally described Despenser's prerogative as divine agent in combatting the rebels' challenge to the economic structure of the church as well as the loss of respect for the church's authority, both profane and sacred. For example, the rebels challenged the church's worldly authority by invading the physical spaces of the abbeys and bishops' palaces, while the ideological dissent and heresy discussed in Chapter 1 is indicative of the challenges posed to the church's authority over sacred truth. In addition, the exclusive use of the feudal word *tenentes* to describe the rebels who engaged in conflict with the abbeys attested the economic nature of their sacrilegious actions. The tenants, who served a specific economic function in feudal manors of St Albans and Peterborough, rose up against their respective landowners (the abbeys) and demanded certain rights and privileges; it was these whom Despenser later engaged.⁷³

The phrases *tenentes* and *plebs* both evoked associations with various social groupings, one economic and the other religious. This was true as well of the *populares* who stormed the bishop's prison at Maidstone and released the prisoners there, most notably the heretic John Ball. The term *populares* translates as "populace," but variations of the word were used generally both to describe the laity and the common people. By 1336, it was being used to denote the "middle class" specifically, as well as the

⁷² Ibid., 225.

⁷³ Ibid., 225, 227. Knighton does not discuss the rights demanded by the tenants specifically, but other sources describe the rebels' search for certain ancient charters which they believed contained evidence of the freedoms due to them.

developing concept of "citizen."⁷⁴ Through the use of this word, Knighton again stressed the non-ecclesiastical nature of this group of individuals (like *plebs*) and the context placed them in direct opposition with the church. In addition, as with the terms discussed above, the combination in English of its singular form and plural meaning stresses the uniformity and coherence of the group. As such, the groups that attacked the church were not simply masses of malcontents, but identifiable and coherent social categories, each with its own personality and grievances.

The group was not always as coherent as these terms suggest. Knighton used a number of different terms to denote the new types of collectives that developed when the uniformity of the whole broke down, revealing the disorder of the many internal parts. In more disorganized moments, Knighton employed the term *turba* to refer to the crowd. It described the group in the liminal stages between unity and coherence and complete collapse. Beginning with Classical Latin, *turba* literally translated as "crowd" or "mob," and in the medieval period the word had also come to denote "the striking of a bell," and variations described a "whirlwind" or "disturbance."⁷⁵ These definitions lacked the stability or endurance implied by social groupings like the commons or parish. A parish, or the laity, was unlikely to disappear either suddenly or completely. In contrast, *turba* described transient and ephemeral phenomena. Like a bell toll, which once struck, shocks and captures the attention of those who hear it, it soon passes away and leaves behind no trace of itself. *Turba* also bore the connotations of a destructive element inferred from its definition of disturbance and whirlwind. Overall, the word described a transitory, often destructive and always startling, collective of individuals. The terms

⁷⁴ Lantham, *Revised Medieval Word List*.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

mob and crowd still suggest a certain coherence or unity, but one which is at all times dangerously close to collapse and over which little control can be exercised. A mob cannot be reasoned with and tends to act chaotically and irrationally, unlike Knighton's representation of the *communes* which clearly presented their demands and grievances to the king at Smithfield through their agent Wat Tyler. The latter's role as mouthpiece is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

In contrast, the term *turba* described, for example, the confused mass of rebels that remained at Smithfield after Tyler's death as well as the crowd at St Albans in the midst of its dispersal by Henry Despenser.⁷⁶ In both situations, the integrity of the crowd was in the process of dissolving and the nature of the group was in a liminal state. For example, the assembly at Smithfield was disbanding chaotically when Knighton referred to it as the *turba* (among other things). Knighton noted that as much as one third of the rebels (ten thousand individuals) fled the area immediately following Tyler's death. The twenty thousand who remained, however, had not moved since the appearance of the king earlier that morning. Knighton recorded:

The first dispersal ... Thereupon a great wailing arose from the crowd (multus) ... many of the crowd (multis de illis) slipped away, and as though seeking to disappear, suddenly gave themselves to flight, to the number of some 10,000, it was reckoned... [The king then] ordered those of the wicked company who remained to surrender (ceteri qui remanserant de nephanda turba), and to reassemble on the field so that he could discuss an agreement with them. Those things being done, in the mean time a multitude of armed men (multitudo armatorum) came out of the city ... and surrounded the wretched crowd (cohortem miseram) in the field, who were as sheep without a shepherd (quasi oues desolates sine pastore) ... There were reckoned to be

⁷⁶ Knighton's *Chronicle*, 221, 225. "iussit rex ut ceteri qui remanserant de nephanda turba se cederent" and "turbam eorum dispersit."

20,000 in that wretched throng (*illa misera*
<*multitudine*>).⁷⁷

This passage exemplifies the possible transformative ability of the crowd, as well as the ways in which it was reflected in Knighton's writing. In the span of a paragraph, Knighton used five distinct nouns to denote the group of rebels assembled at Smithfield (*multus, multis de illis, turba, cohortem, oues, and multitudine*). This did not simply reflect the shifting physical composition of the crowd (although it was indeed in flux); it also spoke to a change in the nature or identity of the group. For example, when Richard commanded "those of the wicked company (*nephanda turba*) who remained to surrender, and to assemble on the field so that he could discuss an agreement with them,"⁷⁸ he was not asking the rebels literally to move themselves to the field (they were already there), but that they transform themselves from a *nephanda turba* into a collective of individuals loyal to the crown and to place themselves under his control.

Similarly, the crowd assumed a militaristic character upon the arrival of the armed men from London and transformed into the *cohors* – a term that denoted the military connotations of its Latin roots.⁷⁹ Perhaps this term, used uniquely in this sentence, both reflected the prospect of violence as the armed men appeared on the field, as well as legitimized their aggression. The situation became a matter of war, of two sides meeting in battle, rather than the massacre of defenseless innocents. Interestingly, Knighton's choice of words then emphasized the crowd's inability to act of its own volition. Finding themselves surrounded, Knighton depicted the crowd as "lost sheep without a shepherd

⁷⁷ Ibid., 220-1. "<Multitudine>" indicates an empty space in the manuscript, with a later caret. (See *Knighton's Chronicle*, 220 f.e).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 220-1.

⁷⁹ The term was used classically to refer to, among other things, the tenth part of a legion.

(*quasi oues desolates sine pastore*).⁸⁰ Sheep were characterized by their stupidity, docility and need for leadership. In addition, Knighton's phrasing drew allusions to the biblical passage Matthew 9:36, which stated that Jesus went about the towns healing and performing miracles, and that "when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (*oves non habentes pastorem*)."⁸¹ The crowd upon which Richard took pity was not as blameless as the biblical crowd, as Knighton's description of them as a "foolish multitude (*stulte multitudini*)" indicated, unlike to the Vulgate's *turbas, misertus est eis*. Still, the biblically-weighty metaphor of sheep and shepherd articulated the roles both of the crowd and of Richard. The significance of the king as shepherd is further discussed in Chapter 3. In Knighton's account, a number of terms described the crowd as it transformed from a coherent whole laying its demands before the king and requesting his cooperation (*communes*), to a leaderless mob, and finally to the *stulte multitudine* on which Richard took pity, then dispersed.

Knighton drew upon contemporary notions of authority and the legitimate use of violence in his account of the origins of the Revolt, the rebels' ideology and methods of self-justification, and their use of violence during the rising, respectively both to support and condemn the rebels. Throughout his account of the Revolt, he expressed much of his own ideology through the ways in which he chose to define the rebels, particularly as a collective. Much like the rebels themselves, Knighton worked from *within* the traditional framework to articulate an untraditional ideology. Of course, any statement that defines Knighton's ideological perspective as radical must be qualified. The chronicler

⁸⁰ Knighton's *Chronicle*, 220-1.

⁸¹ Matthew 9:36. The verse is recorded in the Vulgate as: *Videns autem turbas, misertus est eis: quia erant vexati, et jacentes sicut oves non habentes pastorem*.

condemned the rebels almost entirely. It is remarkable, however – particularly in the context of a historiography that almost universally paints him as a conservative elitist – that he should have justified their behaviour in any way. The events that he recorded and the way in which he expressed them, as well as the aspects that he chose not to include, provide valuable insight into the mind that created this history as well as the nature of the culture that shaped it. Knighton likewise articulated much of his conception of authority through his representations of those being led and the relationship between leader and followers. The implications of his representation of leadership during the Revolt for late-medieval notions of authority, the other half of this relationship, are discussed in Chapter 3.

Table 1 The Frequency of Terms and Nature of Knighton's Rebel Collective

Word	Context
<i>communes</i>	-Richard II elected by people's choice (199)
	-gravely harassed (209)
	-intended to kill SS (213)
	-king send to commons to meet at Mile End (213)
	-asks king at Smithfield (219)
	-surrexerunt in other counties (225)
	-communes of the town rose in St Albans (227)
	-hated John of Gaunt (231)
<i>plebs</i>	-wicked commons (<i>nephandus</i>) (209)
	-met with <i>nephanda plebe</i> at Mile End (213)
<i>populares</i>	-breaking Ball out (211)
<i>populum</i>	-offended by the actions of John Legg and the other tax collectors (209)
<i>cives</i>	-people of London (211)
	-burgensibus of civitate knighted (221)
<i>burgensibus</i>	-men knighted (221)
<i>tenentes</i>	-tenentes and compatriot rose against the Abbot of Peterborough (225)
	-demanded rights at St Albans (227)
	-elsewhere demanded certain privileges (227)
<i>degeneres filii</i>	-remained in London while rest at Mile End (213)
<i>prophani</i>	-eos? Approaching Leicester from London (227-8)

<i>serui diaboli</i>	-destroying the Savoy (214)
<i>malefactores</i>	-interrupted by Norwich (225)
	-king punished those of St Albans and revoked their concessions (227)
	-eye for eye justice meted out on malefactors (241)
	-pardoned by the king (243)
<i>insurgentibus</i>	-pardoned by the king (243)
<i>delinquentes</i>	-Richard punished delinquents (241)
<i>inimicos</i>	-all and every one in Leicester arms himself to face inimicos (228)
	-JG had many emulos and inimicos (235)
<i>emulos</i>	-JG had many emulos and inimicos (235)
<i>turbido/turba</i>	-shouts drew out SS (calmore) (214)
	-nephanda turba who remained after Tyler's death ordered to surrender (221)
	-turba dispersed by Norwich (225)
	-seeking John of Gaunt (with intent to harm) (233)
<i>malignorum</i>	-Constance flees the rabiem malignorum (231)
<i>cetu</i>	-of knights in London (211)
<i>manu</i>	-Norwich's forti manu armata (225)
<i>cohortem</i>	-cohortem miseram surrounded by Knollys (221)
<i>turme/turma</i>	-John of Gaunt hears reports of turme nephandorum luporum (233)
	-turma on east and on west (233)
<i>multus</i>	-immediately following Tyler's death (221)
<i>multitudine</i>	-stulte multitudine pardoned by king (221)
	-20,000 of that misera <multitudine> pardoned (added later) (221)
<i>omnes et singuli</i>	-of Leicester are told to arm themselves to face the rebels (inimicos) (228)
<i>oues</i>	-cohortem surrounded by Knollys (221)
<i>lupus</i>	-John of Gaunt hears reports of turme nephandorum luporum (233)
	-JG hopes Richard won't be swayed by rumours luporum rabiem (235)
<i>rabiem</i>	-Constance flees the rabiem malignorum (231)
	-JG hopes Richard won't be swayed by rumours luporum rabiem (235)
<i>stultus</i>	-stulte multitudine pardoned by king (221)
<i>nephandus</i>	-wicked commons (plebs) (209)
	-met with nephanda plebe at Mile End (213)
	-one of group sacking the Savoy (214)
	-nephanda turba who remained after Tyler's death ordered to surrender (221)
	-who would have harmed John of Gaunt (and sought to) (231)
	-John of Gaunt hears reports of turme nephandorum luporum (233)

CHAPTER 4 PERSON AND PRIVILEGE: INDIVIDUAL AUTHORITY DURING THE REVOLT

Knighton's description of individuals throughout the Revolt and its aftermath reveals much about late medieval conceptions regarding leadership, authority and justice. For example, his account of the rebel leadership demonstrates the compartmentalization of active and ideological functions, as well as the ways in which weak leaders were defined by their followers, and acted as the mouth-pieces of the greater whole. In contrast, strong leaders defined the nature of the group through their intentions and presence. Individuals drew on several sources of authority, most notably the authority traditionally afforded their respective offices, their ability to control the instruments of justice, and their personal charisma. Tyler and Baker were able to draw upon their personal charisma, which in Tyler's case dissolved into mere bravado. In addition, Tyler attempted to cast himself as the representative of the commons (thereby harnessing the authority of the office), albeit with limited success. The rebels' actions, such as the destruction of prisons, release of criminals, and the summary justice that occurred in London, indicated their desire to redefine justice and to assume responsibility for its enactment. To do so, they attempted to appropriate the symbols of judicial authority. In contrast, the pre-existing systems of power were reasserted through the use of retributive justice and violence. Knighton's Richard II possessed both the natural authority to which he was entitled through his office, and a limited amount of charismatic authority. By contrast, Knighton characterized John of Gaunt as possessing a great degree of personal authority, in addition to that which his office gave him. Together, these representations comprise an ideal of leadership grounded in biblical precedent, rooted in networks of

patronage and personal fidelity, and almost entirely constrained by contemporary notions of status and office.

After Tyler's death and the dispersal of the crowd, Knighton identified the individual leaders of the Revolt as Thomas Baker, Jack Straw, Jack Miller, Jack Carter, and Jack Trueman.¹ His narrative separated the rebel leadership into two categories: the leaders in action (Baker and Tyler) and those in ideology (Miller, Carter, Trueman, and John Ball). Baker and Tyler appear throughout the account, rallying the rebels, and debating with the king, but are denied the active voice given to Miller, Carter, Trueman and Ball in the "letters" that directly follow the list of leaders. The apocalyptic rhetoric expressed in these passages, is discussed above in Chapter 1, and this aspect of their content will not be re-examined. As an expression of rebel voice, however, their inclusion in the *Chronicle* was decontextualized and included none of Knighton's commentary. In fact, they seem to be completely out of place. They constitute a jarring break in the narrative style of the account. Presented with what seems to be little authorial manipulation, and recorded in the vernacular, they contain the most direct representation of the rebel voice in the *Chronicle*. The archetypal nature of these leaders, who most historians agree were figurative constructions (with the exception of Ball), would have facilitated the dissemination of their already cryptic and highly metaphorical messages by directly engaging with the English cultural consciousness. Jack Carter's reference to "Peres þe Plowman my broþer" was an example of the inter-textuality and literate culture from which these passages drew heavily.² In addition, it placed them within the highly developed culture of socio-political literature that existed at the time.

¹ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 220-1. "Ductores. Isti fuerunt ductores eorum. Thomas Baker primus motor, sed postea principalis ductor, Iakke Strawe, Iakke Mylner, Iakke Carter, Iakke Trewman."

² *Ibid.*, 222.

Geoffrey Martin also draws attention to their use of the language of the pulpit – another form of oratory that was directly addressed to the lower estate.³ Through the Middle English language they used, the rhetorical devices they employed, and their universality,⁴ these passages were designed to be accessible and familiar to the un-Latinate majority of the English people. The fact that the passages were not directed at the educated, Latin-literate minority further attracted Walsingham's suspicion that they contained secret, coded instructions to the rebels.⁵ The monastic scholar clearly felt not only that the "letters" were not directed at him, but also that they engaged with a culture that was alien to him. In light of Walsingham's distrust of the rebels' writing, it is interesting that Knighton should have chosen to include the passages and particularly that he allowed them to speak for themselves.

In contrast, Baker and Tyler were never allowed to have a direct voice. Knighton did not include any of the speeches delivered by either man; instead, their actions were much more significant than their words. David Aers illustrates the significance of voice at this time with the execution of one John Shirle after the revolution simply for uttering dangerous words.⁶ The form of leadership exemplified by Baker and Tyler, however, was defined by action instead of an ideological stance. For its expression, it required an individual who was both uniquely charismatic and able to harness and subsume himself within the will of the group. Knighton's representations of Baker and Tyler exemplified this type of leadership. The chronicler described Baker as an essential facilitator of the beginning of the rising. Throughout his exhortations of the people to action, however, he

³ Ibid., 222-3, f. 1.

⁴ They were universal in that they did not address a specific audience, and spoke so generally as to allow them to be applied in a myriad of ways.

⁵ See: *Knighton's Chronicle*, 223, f.1.

⁶ Aers, "*Vox Populi*," 436-7. Shirle was heard praising John Ball in a pub and for this was executed.

made no specific demands, nor did he employ any rhetorical devices. Instead, Baker sacrificed himself for the greater good, leading where "none cared to be the first to act, lest he should bring irredeemable retribution upon himself."⁷ Here, Baker's personal charisma was evident. Knighton related that the man:

taking a bolder spirit to himself, began to exhort and gather together some of his township, and then others and still others joined them, and each sent word to his friends and kin, and so from town to town, and county to county, asking and requiring them without delay to lend their counsel and aid to those endeavours that the common good and necessity urgently demanded.⁸

Although Baker's charisma and disregard for personal danger were necessary to initiate the revolt, his role was simply first to express, and then to facilitate, the desires of the people to gather together and discuss an end to their suffering. The true exhortation was a communal one, expressed by an ever-increasing collective to their peers. Still, Baker served the important function of channeling and rationalizing that collective will. As soon as he receded fully into the group and the collective began to look to itself for leadership at Blackheath the exhortation, which was before open and hopeful, became coercive. After destroying the prison at Maidstone, the rebels did the same at Southwark "and compelled all of the prisoners to go with them and help them, and all those they came upon, whether travelers or others, of whatever sort, they forced to join them."⁹ When the will of the people was not rationalized through the figure of a leader it became unreasonable, tyrannical, and much more dangerous.

Medieval philosophers explored the difference between acceptable leadership (embodied by the king) and illegitimate tyranny. In her examination of the medieval

⁷ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 209.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

English understanding of revolt, Claire Valente argues that the medieval understanding of the distinction owed much to Isidore of Seville's location of the origins of the word king (*rex*) in *recte faciendo* ("to act rightly") and Aristotle's characterization of a tyrant as one who placed his needs over the needs of his people.¹⁰ The implications of the distinction were further elaborated in works of political philosophy such as those of Thomas Aquinas, Bartolus of Sassferrato, and Nicholas of Oresme. Later, John of Salisbury defined a tyrant as one who did not acknowledge the supremacy both of the common good and of the law (justice).¹¹ Knighton explicitly made reference to the common good in his description of Baker's actions. In contrast, he emphasized the fact that John Ball, whom the rebels freed under their own direction, had "in a manner greatly pleasing to the lay mind, bitterly denounc[ed] the law."¹² Ball presented a very different archetype of leadership. Instead of a vessel that embodied the will of the people, like Baker, the commons became the agents through which the will and ideology of Ball were enacted. Without the presence of an active leader, the people were at risk of being led astray by destructive ideologues.

In contrast to Baker and Tyler, Knighton gave the commons an active voice. Knighton directly quoted the crowd after Tyler's death, writing that: "thereupon a great wailing arose from the crowd, and a cry of 'Our leader is dead'".¹³ Earlier, when Tyler alone addressed Richard II at Smithfield, Knighton cloaked his demands in the voice of the commons. He wrote that Tyler, whom he now conflated with Jack Straw, approached

¹⁰ Valente, *Theory and Practice*, 14.

¹¹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Cary J. Nederman, ed and trans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25, 163, 191, 201, 205.

¹² *Knighton's Chronicle*, 211.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 221. "Inde clamor ingens et ululatus factus est multus, 'Ductor noster mortuus est.'"

the king, but that it was the commons who addressed him.¹⁴ *The commons*, not Jack Straw the individual, asked the king to lift certain hunting and fishing restrictions.¹⁵ Knighton characterized Tyler as the mouthpiece of the commons and he described the peasant as "speaking for the others."¹⁶ Interestingly, Knighton made no mention of Tyler during the rebels' first meeting with Richard at Mile End. At Smithfield, Tyler's ability to act as the expression of the will of the people combined with an excessive amount of charisma evident in the bravado that he displayed while speaking with the king. He stood close to the king, nonchalantly tossing an unsheathed dagger between his two hands.¹⁷ He was even brave – or foolhardy – enough, when Richard requested time to consider the commons' demands that he "drew closer to [the king], with menacing words, and though I know not how he dared, took the reins of the king's horse in his hand."¹⁸ Unfortunately for Tyler, this proved to be his undoing and William Walworth and Ralph Standish responded to his action by running him through and killing him. Tyler's personal audacity was necessary if he was to debate with the king, just as Baker's disregard for traditional taboos and legal ramifications enabled him to initiate the Revolt.

Tyler's personal charisma and his ability to serve as an archetypal rebel became key factors in his historiographical and cultural legacies, even though the confusion surrounding the separate identity of Jack Straw persisted well into the twentieth century. Tyler's name became synonymous with the Peasants' Revolt. For example, the

¹⁴ For a complete discussion on the confusion surrounding the separate identities of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw see: Friedrich W.D. Brie, "Wat Tyler and Jack Straw" *The English Historical Review* 21:81 (Jan., 1906), 106-111. Scholars generally accept Brie's argument that both names refer to one person. Much of Brie's argument relies on Knighton's claim that Tyler had changed his name to Jack Straw before the meeting at Smithfield.

¹⁵ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 219. The specific demands are discussed later.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

seventeenth-century scholar John Cleveland wrote of the "Insurrection of Wat the Tyler with his priests Baal and Straw," and the eponymous title was also used for children's books in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Similarly, Tyler's failure as a leader was long indistinguishable from that of the Revolt to achieve the rebels' demands or lasting change. In fact, Alastair Dunn argues that the genesis of Tyler's popular fame lay precisely in his failure, which made use of a "peculiarly English attachment to rebels – especially those who fail."²⁰ The significance of his figure in the collective historical memory of the English people, however, was not always reflected in the historiography. The rebels' association with political extremism was largely incompatible with orthodox historians who wrote before the late twentieth century. Instead, his symbolic cachet was often utilized by radical movements, such as the Jacobins, and this use further compounded established distrust of him. Thomas Paine reacted to this historiographical trend, arguing that:

Tyler appears to have been an intrepid and disinterested man ... All his proposals made to Richard were on a more just and public ground than those which had been made to John by the barons; and notwithstanding the sycophancy of historians ... his fame will outlive their falsehood.²¹

Whether historians condemned or defended Tyler, or defined him as a success or a failure, the rebel leader has held a much more prominent place in the popular cultural memory than in the scholarship. Even within the sphere of cultural memory, Tyler's legacy has not been romanticized to the extent of other semi-mythological rebels like

¹⁹ John Cleveland, *The idol of the clovynes, or, Insurrection of Wat the Tyler, : with his fellow kings of the commons, against the English Church, the King, the lawes, nobility and gentry, in the fourth yeare of King Richard the 2d. Anno. 1381*. London: [s.n.], 1654. EEBO. And: G.A. Henty and W.H. Margetson, *A march on London : being a story of Wat Tyler's insurrection*. London: Blackie & Son, 1898.

²⁰ Alastair Dunn, "The Many Roles of Wat Tyler" *History Today* (July 2001): 28-29.

²¹ Thomas Paine, "The Rights of Man," in Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1955), 617.

Robin Hood. This lack of romanticization largely lies in the fact that the figure of Wat Tyler began, and remained, historically grounded. In contrast, Robin Hood always belonged to English mythology more than historical accounts. Tyler's location in "reality" made him a greater threat and also made it more difficult for him to be appropriated by the traditional order.²² Dunn indicates that historians have consistently interpreted the Peasants' Revolt through their own contemporary political atmosphere, foregrounding the symbolic threat to the ruling order that he represented. The many comedic and theatrical treatments of Tyler minimized the threat to the ruling order that he symbolized and he was most often represented as a buffoon.²³

Knighton's location at the beginning of this historiography is significant. Although he does not present Tyler as a figure of comic relief, he certainly does not glamourize the rebel leader or his actions. Even Thomas Baker cuts a more dashing figure. In fact, Tyler has only a minimal role in the chronicler's account. He appears only at Smithfield and is killed within a paragraph. Unlike the authors of the letters he never speaks with a direct voice, and his death is decidedly non-heroic in nature. He dies after writhing on the ground and his body is rudely dragged away from the scene:

[William] Walworth ... drew his basilard and ran Jack Straw through the neck. Thereupon another esquire, called Ralph Standish, stabbed him in the side with his basilard. And he fell to the ground on his back, and after rising to his hands and knees, he died ... And with him dead, [he was] dragged roughly by his arms and legs into St Bartholomew's church.²⁴

²² The function of King Arthur similarly demonstrates the ways in which a potentially subversive quasi-historical figure (a Christ-like Briton king) could be coopted by the very order to which he posed the most risk (the Norman nobility).

²³ Dunn, "Wat Tyler," 29.

²⁴ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 221.

Knighton does not present Tyler in the most glamorous manner, nor his death as particularly dignified. The lack of romanticizing and mythologizing in the account contributes to the historical quality of Knighton's *Wat Tyler* and was perpetuated in the historiography.

Whatever may be said of Tyler himself, in Knighton's account his demands are quite reasonable. Taking on the voice of the commons, he

asked of the king that all game, whether in waters or in parks and woods should become common to all, so that everywhere in the realm, in rivers and fishponds, and woods and forests, they might take the wild beasts, and hunt the hare in the fields, and do many other such things without restraint.²⁵

Knighton makes it clear that was Tyler's demeanor, and not the nature of his demands, that proved unacceptable and led to his murder. The contrast to Walsingham's contemporaneous chronicle is startling. The latter stated that, among other extreme and unreasonable conditions, Tyler requested the execution of all persons connected to the legal professions, most particularly judges and lawyers.²⁶ These hyperbolic demands rendered the rebels' aims ridiculous by their excessiveness; in no way could Richard have granted them. In contrast, Knighton did not dramatize the rebel leader's character. Instead, he presented his demands through the trope of the collective voice of the commons. Knighton's use of the commons lends Tyler a remarkable degree of legitimacy, just as the parliamentary commons had the right to direct discussion with the king through the Speaker. Indeed, Given-Wilson argues that in the later fourteenth

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

²⁶ Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 464. MS Bib. Reg. 13 E ix. "Voluit namque, ante alia, commissionem pro se et suis obtinuisse, ad decollandum omnes juridicos, escaetores, et universos, qui vel in lege docti fuere, vel cum jure, ratione officii, communicavere."

century the voice of the commons began to overshadow those of the lords, as the records show that it was increasingly the commons who came before the king to request or protest.²⁷ While this is somewhat due to the misrepresentative picture left by the specific records, it indicates that the commons enjoyed some form of direct access to the king. In addition, the role of the Speaker, and through him the commons, was to a degree adversarial.

In addition to the rebels' attempts to appropriate the politically acceptable role of the Speaker in order to facilitate their radical agenda, they also endorsed a system of justice that mimicked accepted social practice while remaining utterly unorthodox. The rebels' actions demonstrate a preoccupation with justice and the legal system. For example, throughout the Revolt, much of their anger was directed at the instruments of the traditional justice system, such as lawyers and judges: "the malefactors had vented their hatred upon judges ... and all other lawyers upon whom they came, and never spared them the capital penalty."²⁸ They sought to destroy the symbols of the existing legal system, including both its officers and its tools, such as the prisons at Maidstone and Marshalsea, which they destroyed. Following the smashing of the prisons, they attempted to enact their own conception of justice, freeing those who had been condemned and executing those who had been pardoned. For example, they executed Richard Lyons who, although convicted of various crimes, had been pardoned.²⁹ Likewise, they freed Ball even though he had been "tried by the church and duly convicted, and adjudged and committed to ... prison in perpetuity."³⁰ At the same time,

²⁷ Given-Wilson, *Parliamentary Rolls*.

²⁸ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 241. See also: *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

the rebels engaged in some form of self-policing and insisted that they were "zealots for truth and justice, not thieves or robbers."³¹ Knighton also pointed out that never did they "kill anyone by any means except by beheading."³² This was a curious, summary use of a punishment typically reserved for aristocrats and traitors. Perhaps the rebels again sought to appropriate the higher order's forms of justice. Perhaps it represented a tacit recognition of the status of those they were killing. Regardless of their intentions, the rebels' definition and enactment of justice indicated an attempt to subvert the established authority while still working within the traditional structures of justice. Concepts of justice were also central for the definition of kingship. Valente argues that fourteenth-century English political culture understood kingship to be constrained by the supremacy of the law and the king's duty to the common good.³³ *Piers Plowman*, exemplary of the literature and culture of the time, describes the King, the Commons, and Kind Wit as the progenitors of law and justice. It further states that: "*nomen habet sine re nisi studet iura tenere*."³⁴ Not only was it the king's imperative to uphold justice; a failure to do so forfeited his right to the title's authority.

Although kings had the opportunity to draw on the authority of their office, their individual abilities to do so with success varied. Valente states that historians most commonly cite a king's character as the determining factor in late-medieval revolts and political crises.³⁵ Most of the historiographical discussion of Richard's reign and the historical accounts produced during it centres on the context of his deposition and the

³¹ Ibid., 215.

³² Ibid., 217.

³³ Valente, *Theory and Practice*, 13-14.

³⁴ *Piers Plowman*, "Introduction" B.141. "The title [of the king] is meaningless if he does not strive to keep the laws."

³⁵ Valente, *Theories and Practice*, 237.

ensuing dynastic struggle. Knighton, however, must be viewed apart from this model. The chronicler died in 1396 and thus his narrative was not influenced by the events of 1399. He was, of course, aware of the environment that existed immediately preceding the usurpation, but the increasing brevity of his entries makes it clear that he was struggling to complete his chronicle by 1389. In spite of this, in her examination of Richard's treatment in contemporary chronicles, Louise D. Duls categorizes Knighton as a "Lancastrian detractor of Richard."³⁶ She defines the Lancastrian sources as those written between 1377 and 1457 from an anti-Richardian perspective. These historians represented Richard as a "wicked king" and juxtaposed him with Henry IV.³⁷ In this context, she admits that Knighton's account of the Peasants' Revolt "grants Richard more courage and mercy than most Lancastrian narratives do."³⁸ Yet, due in part to her unfortunate reliance on the Lumby edition of the chronicle, Duls fails to consider the fact that Knighton did not write with post facto knowledge of 1399. Resituating Knighton reveals that excessive partisanship did not universally dominate the pre-usurpation period. Indeed, an apparently "Lancastrian" work that was "marked by strong admiration for John of Gaunt"³⁹ could also present Richard in a fairly flattering light. Geoffrey Martin similarly notes that Knighton represented Richard throughout his chronicle as "intelligent and formidable, with no suggestion of his ultimate fate."⁴⁰

Knighton only rarely ascribed specific personal characteristics to Richard. In one instance, however, Knighton praised the self-possession that the king exhibited when

³⁶ Louise D. Duls, *Richard II in the Early Chronicles* (Paris: Mouton, 1975), 18 n. 26, 205, 212-13. Duls barely mentions Knighton's work, giving it a cursory glance at best. For example, his account of the Revolt is relegated to a footnote.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴⁰ *Knighton's Chronicle*, xlix.

meeting with the rebels and then re-gaining control of the situation after Tyler's death. Here Richard, as an individual, demonstrated that "although he was young in years he was possessed of a shrewd mind."⁴¹ The chronicler used the king's Christian name only thrice in his description of the Revolt: first of all to date the Revolt by regnal year; secondly when he mentioned Richard's marriage to Anne of Bohemia in 1381; and lastly in his description of the general pardon of 1382.⁴² It is also clear that, for Knighton at least, Richard did not possess the charismatic authority of his father, whom the chronicler described as

the flower of the world's knighthood, for whom to do battle was to reign, to contend was to triumph, and to him by right of the female line the kingdom and crown of France ought to have descended.⁴³

Knighton also demonstrated a great deal of reverence for Edward III, Richard's grandfather and predecessor. The chronicler praised Edward's virility, saying of his campaigns in France: "[he] took castles and towns by assault in great numbers, and there were no parts there able to resist him."⁴⁴ In addition, he presented the king, like his son, as a paragon of chivalry. He recounted a battle that took place outside of Paris in 1360. Knighton wrote that the cowardly French hid behind their walls and refused to meet the English in battle. Edward III was infuriated by their fear and failure to meet the expectations of honour and attempted to provoke them into correct action by setting the

⁴¹ Ibid., 219.

⁴² "Anno Domini millesimo .ccc. octogesimo primo et regni regis Ricardi .ij." Ibid., 208. "*Rex Ricardus desponsavit*. Eodem anno apud Westmonasterium rex Ricardus desponsavit Annam filiam regis Boemi." Ibid., 240. "Anno proximo sequenti, millesimo .ccc.lxxxij., regis Ricardi .v., dominus rex ... condonavit generaliter omnibus." Ibid., 242.

⁴³ Ibid., 197.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 59.

suburbs on fire.⁴⁵ Geoffrey Martin's argument that Edward III's death prompted Knighton to begin his historical account further emphasizes the personal nature of the connection that Knighton felt towards the man.⁴⁶ In contrast to the loyalty that the chronicler exhibited to the individuals Edward III and his son the Black Prince, throughout the vast majority of the account, Knighton approached Richard simply as *rex*, or the king. He did, however, consistently present Richard as possessing the characteristics of kingship.

The distinction between the king as an individual and as an institution had implications for the enactment of authority in the late medieval realm. Many of the scholarly examinations of kingly authority in late medieval England focus on the limitations that prevented it from developing into a form of absolutism. For example, the English king had to compromise with various political elements: his barons, various aristocratic factions, and later the commons. Scholars point to the near-constant depositions that plagued the throne in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Claire Valente suggests that the fact that five of the eight kings who ruled between 1215 and 1415 faced serious military challenges (if not successful usurpations) attests the precarious nature of kingship at this time.⁴⁷ David Green cites the coronation oaths that constrained a king's autonomy and placed certain restrictions on his actions. He argues that Edward II's coronation oath, which held him accountable to the "community of the realm" and expected him to uphold current and future legislation, was "indicative of the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴⁷ Valente, *Theory and Practice*, 1.

shackles that the political community at large was attempting to place on the monarchy."⁴⁸

At the same time, the monarchy as an institution, and the king as its constituting officer through whom it gained expression and existence, remained inviolable. Of paramount importance in this discussion – the reconciling concept – was the development of the idea of the king's "two bodies," that is, the separation of the individual and the office.⁴⁹ This allowed dissenters to uphold the existing order (represented in the office) while disposing of particularly unfavourable individuals. Nowhere was the unquestionable authority of the monarch as an institution more clear than in the Peasants' Revolt. The rebels, who sought the abolition of all worldly hierarchy, never wavered from their loyalty to the crown. Indeed, B. Wilkinson identifies the "strong and simple loyalty of the rebels to the king" as one of the defining features of the Revolt. He cites Froissart's account of the rebels' insistence to Richard that they wished him no harm and that he would always be their king.⁵⁰ Likewise, the *Anonimale Chronicle* records one of the rallying cries of the rebels as: "wyth whom haldes yow? Wyth kynge Richard and with the trew communes."⁵¹ The king was spared responsibility for the rebels' hardships and instead they blamed bad counsel for the iniquities that they faced. Perhaps, the rebels saw Richard as malleable owing to his youth. Regardless, their loyalty to the crown as well as their desire to debate and engage with him alone spoke to a belief that nothing could be accomplished except under the authority of the monarch. In this, they exhibited

⁴⁸ Green, *Black Prince*, 18.

⁴⁹ For more on this concept see: Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁵⁰ B. Wilkinson, "The Peasants' Revolt of 1381," *Speculum* 15:1 (Jan. 1940), 19. "Il ne vous feront ja mal, et vous tiennent et tenront tousjours a roi." Froissart, ix. 104.

⁵¹ *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1333-1381*, edited by V.H. Galbraith (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 139.

an intention similar to that of aristocratic dissenters: a desire to control the king, not to overthrow him.⁵² To do so, they were willing to allow him an unprecedented amount of untempered power by removing the checks of baronial control.

The elimination of the king's "wicked advisers" was a commonly employed intention of noble rebellions throughout the late medieval period. Joel T. Rosenthal credited the concept's enduring popularity to its malleability, its ability to unify disparate groups and its timeless utility.⁵³ A similar, albeit more extreme, ideology appears to have contributed to the aims of the Peasants' Revolt. The king's officers, such as John Legg and Robert Hales, and his counselors, such as John of Gaunt, bore the brunt of the rebels' anger, which was spared the king. The concept of wicked counsel also in part determined the response to the Revolt as parliament sought to ensure that the king received the counsel of "good and worthy men" and to limit the influence of less well-liked members of his household.⁵⁴ For, although events of the early fourteenth century had already proven the fallibility of the king, Green argues that the actions of the 1381 rebels proved that "the office itself remained inviolate."⁵⁵

How, then, did Knighton characterize the office of kingship in this crisis?

Knighton used the metaphor of the shepherd to imbue Richard with the biblically-defined characteristics of good kingship. He described the leaderless crowd at Smithfield as "lost

⁵² Valente, *Theory and Practice*, 12.

⁵³ Joel T. Rosenthal, "The King's 'Wicked Advisers' and Medieval Baronial Rebellions" *Political Science Quarterly* 82:4 (Dec., 1967), 595-6. See in Knighton also: "Pius dux innocentissimus ... maius sibi timuit, ne rex ab aliquibus emulis eius sub sinistro consilio ductus ad istius modi luporum rabiem inconsulte preberet assensum." ("The good and most innocent duke ... feared greatly for himself lest the king, under the influence of evil counsel from those who were jealous of him, should have been rashly moved to give his support to the rabid wolves.") *Knighton's Chronicle*, 234-5.

⁵⁴ Anthony Tuck, *Crown and Nobility 1272-1461: Political Conflict in late medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985), 179.

⁵⁵ Green, *Black Prince*, 16.

sheep without a shepherd" until Richard took up the role left empty after Tyler's death.⁵⁶ The shepherd-king created and sustained order for his people. He led them and protected them from external threats and from themselves. He sheltered them and, without him, they were scattered and unable to survive. The passage echoed a section of the biblical first book of Kings, in which the prophet Micaiah described a divine vision, saying: "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"⁵⁷ It was part of God's warning to the king of Israel, Ahab, of the destructive reckoning that would befall Israel during his reign and in the aftermath of his untimely death, as a result of his poor leadership. Here, the lost sheep are a manifestation of inadequate leadership. Occurring in Knighton's *Chronicle* immediately following the death of Wat Tyler the connection is clear. Knighton was again using a biblical precedent to articulate concepts of leadership and authority. Ahab lost his legitimacy as a leader and was sent to his death by God, who then showed mercy to his misguided subjects by restoring order to them. Likewise, the illegitimate leader, Tyler, was murdered by the mayor of London and his followers scattered like lost sheep until Richard graciously accepted them back under his legitimate authority. Here, leadership was something that was *bestowed* upon a populace.

The significant social function held by gifts and gift-giving in the high and late Middle Ages has been explored by a number of scholars. Another form of medieval gift-giving, child oblation, also illustrates the power of biblical precedent, in this case the story of Hannah dedicating her son Samuel to God, to shape medieval social customs and

⁵⁶ Knighton's *Chronicle*, 220-1. "Quasi oues desolates sine pastore."

⁵⁷ 1 Kings 22:17. "Vidi cunctum Israël dispersum in montibus, quasi oues non habentes pastorem. Et ait Dominus: Non habent isti dominum: revertatur unusquisque in domum suam in pace." The Latin text of the shepherd and sheep follow that of the passage in Matthew almost exactly. See: *supra*, n. 288.

expectations. Gifts, like the religious sacrifices that they exemplified, were fully reciprocal and formed an important part of the social logic that underpinned the accepted societal organization. Gift-giving also had great significance for the power structures of medieval Europe.⁵⁸ The fourteenth century fell within the transition between the redistributive, feudal barter economy of the early Middle Ages and the quasi-capitalist monetary system of the early modern period, and as such contained elements of both. Gift-giving lost some of its economic significance, but continued to be an integral element in the creation of a social fabric and relationships with sources of power. Mayke de Jong argues that gift-giving, and the reciprocity that underpinned it, was an interaction between social beings and groups that created and defined long-term connections and relationships.⁵⁹ She also acknowledges its political role in defining relationships of power.⁶⁰ Like child oblation, the gift of leadership owed much of its textual foundation to biblical precedent.

Shepherds were connected to concepts of leadership and kingship throughout the Bible, and a medieval reader (and author) would have been well aware of this association. Moses was called from his work as a shepherd to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, and there took on the more figurative role of a shepherd of people. He carried a divine shepherd's staff as a scepter, through which God performed miracles, and Moses' name continued to be evoked as an example of leadership throughout the Old

⁵⁸ It is unsurprising that Mayke de Jong, whose work typically focuses on the nature and enactment of power in the early middle ages, should dedicate a book to the study of child oblation as gift-giving. (See: Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (New York: Leiden, 1996).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, especially 126-155.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 266-82.

Testament.⁶¹ Likewise, David, the greatest Israelite king of the Old Testament, spent his youth as a shepherd. Moreover, it was this training specifically that enabled him to defeat the Philistine warrior Goliath: "David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him."⁶² Similarly, the author of the books of Samuel draws a direct connection between David's life as a shepherd and his ascension to the throne of Israel. He writes that God ordered Samuel, his prophet, to "tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel.'"⁶³ Likewise, the prophet recorded God's earlier pledge to David: "'you will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"⁶⁴ As a psalmist, David sustained the metaphor up the hierarchy, declaring of the highest king, "the Lord is my shepherd." The association between shepherds and great leaders would have been strong in a cultural consciousness as deeply influenced by Christian theology as that of the late medieval English people.

This biblical metaphor also articulated concepts of natural authority. Reflecting the inherent natures of both man and sheep, the shepherd held authority over the animals in his charge. It would have been considered equally unnatural and ridiculous for the sheep to govern either themselves or their shepherd. Knighton made the same claim of the relationship between a king and his subjects. Through his comparison of Richard to a shepherd and the rebels to sheep, he implied that it would be a perversion of the natural

⁶¹ See: Exodus 4:2-4. In times of trouble and unrest, Isaiah wrote of the peoples' desire for a leader like Moses the shepherd: "Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people--where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock?" Isaiah 63:11.

⁶² See: 1 Samuel 17, esp. 17:50.

⁶³ 2 Samuel 7:8.

⁶⁴ 2 Samuel 5:2.

order for the rebels (i.e. subjects) to lead themselves or to dictate instructions to their rightful leader. Not only was their attempt to do so a crime against political structures of late medieval England, it defied the divinely ordained and enduring hierarchy of human society and the natural world. Indeed, Knighton twice referred to the rebels as *lupes* (wolves) – the natural enemy of the shepherd⁶⁵. In this context, the severity of the rebels' threat becomes clear, and the passage offers valuable insight into Knighton's perspective. Certainly not the mindless lackey of the ruling elite, but neither a radical egalitarian, Knighton would have seen the active inversion of power structures as a perversion of the divinely-created, natural order. His sympathies with the plight of the peasant class did not shake his certainty in the divinely-appointed and -endorsed hierarchy of all things, from human society to the natural world.

One of a shepherd's most important leadership responsibilities was the protection of his flock. As mentioned above, Richard's presence ensured the safety of the rebels who remained at Smithfield after Tyler's death. Earlier, Knighton had used a bird metaphor to illustrate the protective nature of the king. He wrote that several high-ranking officials (including Simon Sudbury) sought "refuge under the outstretched wings

⁶⁵ See Table 1 in Chapter 2. The wolf metaphor places the wolves (rebels) in opposition to the shepherd (king). Additionally, in both cases John of Gaunt is described as the lamb who the predatory wolves seek to destroy. "Ei relatum est quod due turme nephandorum luporum discurrerant per duas partes partes regni et quelibet turba continebat decem milia electorum ad rapiendum eum." ("He was told that two packs of the wicked wolves were ranging through the kingdom ... and that either pack contained 10,000 men chosen to seize him.") *Knighton's Chronicle*, 232-3. "Pius dux innocentissimus ... maius sibi timuit, ne rex ab aliquibus emulis eius sub sinistro consilio ductus ad istius modi luporum rabiem inconsulte preberet assensum." ("The good and most innocent duke ... feared greatly for himself lest the king, under the influence of evil counsel from those who were jealous of him, should have been rashly moved to give his support to the rabid wolves.") *Ibid.*, 234-5. The association of Richard and the shepherd is undermined somewhat in the second passage, as it implies that the king could be made to follow the will of the wolves. This emphasized Knighton's view that any disloyalty that the boy king (already characterized as the shepherd) showed to his uncle represented an egregious reversal of the natural order. See also n. 306, below.

of the king."⁶⁶ The chronicler reinforced the metaphor by describing the king's attempts to protect Sudbury and the others from the shepherd's natural enemy, the wolf. He wrote that: "the king, seeking to deliver the archbishop and his colleagues from the jaws of the wolf, sent for the commons, telling them to assemble at Mile End."⁶⁷ Here, however, the king's physical presence was again the crucial factor in his ability to protect his flock. While he was at Mile End, and absent from the Tower, "like the lamb before the shearer," the archbishop and his colleagues were executed by the crowd.⁶⁸ In this way, the *person* of the king held the authority to prevent violence. Similarly, it was Richard II, invested by the institution of kingship, who imposed his will upon the crowd at Smithfield.

At Smithfield, Richard demanded that the crowd remake itself into a coherent entity in order to cede its autonomy and control to him. His true desire for the reassertion his authority, and not the discussion that he promised, is particularly evident in the fact that he never meant to debate with them, but to disperse them. This became evident as soon as the knights arrived from London. Both through his pity and the nature of the rebels' dispersal, he fully reasserted his ultimate authority over both the singular entity and its disparate parts (*cohortem* and *oues*). Richard also restored order through the method of their dispersal. Before he figuratively re-created the crowd, ten thousand rebels "slipped away, and as though seeking to disappear, suddenly gave themselves to flight."⁶⁹ In contrast to the chaotic and unordered dispersal of the first group, of those remaining Richard "ordered every one of them to return home."⁷⁰ Interestingly, the

⁶⁶ "Ad turrin cucurrerent causa refugii sub alis regis lactaturi." Knighton's Chronicle, 212-13.

⁶⁷ "Volens igitur rex archiepiscopum et socios suos de ore luporum liberare, misit ad communes mandans eis ut ad locum qui Mylcros vocatur extra ciuitatem conuenirent cum rege." Ibid., 213.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 215.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 221.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 221.

promise of order and leniency was enough. Knighton wrote off-handedly that although the king commanded an ordered dispersal of the crowd, "when the king had left many of them suffered the pangs of death."⁷¹ Here, Knighton did not portray Richard as engaging in the violence that implicitly followed his exit. By departing before the massacre, the king was able to remain merciful and gracious, even though he appeared to implicitly sanction it, while the newly-appointed knights carried out the violence necessary to re-assert the traditional hierarchy. In addition, the king's absence emphasized his role as protector of the people (discussed later) as well as the power that it gave him over them. While Richard remained at Smithfield the rebels were safe, but as soon as he left his control over the knights was removed. Life was thus something which could be protected by the king, as easily as it could be taken away. This emphasized the importance of maintaining the office of kingship for the English people.

Similarly, the king was the source of authority for his agents. As the account of John Legg and his compatriots attested, authority did not lie simply in the office but also in the behaviour of its officers. Truly, the commissioners only ever held the power and authority granted to them by the crown, and possessed little, if any, intrinsic authority as respective individuals. Their authority came from their relationship with the state generally, and the king more specifically. His endorsement gave their power legitimacy and therefore authority. In contrast, the crown (i.e. the office of the king) held a loose monopoly over natural authority, through divine endorsement in a general way.⁷² This type of authority was expressed through the natural deference with which the office of the monarch was approached. The king, in this case Richard II, held the traditional authority

⁷¹ Ibid., 221.

⁷² This monopoly was not absolute in the Middle Ages, as events such as the Magna Carta, the Baronial Uprising, and Henry V's usurpation of the throne prove.

of his office, one which was grounded in custom and tradition, as well as the legal authority accorded him as the supreme maker of law, expressed through bureaucratic and administrative hierarchy. The claims to natural, traditional, and legal authority were typical of a medieval English king, but were particularly tenuous during periods of minority kingship, such as Richard's.

Knighton dedicated very little of his account of the Revolt to the legal and military retributions that followed it. Vengeance, like the violence at Smithfield, was something that occurred when great and just men looked the other way. In fact, mercy was the attribute that Knighton emphasized the most in his characterization of John of Gaunt, to whom Knighton dedicated much of the latter part of his account of the Revolt. Gaunt was actually in Scotland and northern England during the Revolt, yet Knighton included a detailed narrative of his trials in the north. Knighton had deep personal ties to Gaunt, as the patron of Saint Mary in the Meadows, and the duke's household was one of his most important – and certainly the most direct (i.e. firsthand) – sources of information. Throughout his chronicle, Knighton represented Gaunt in an unfailingly flattering light, and a great deal of his history of the Revolt focused on the duke's actions although he was not in England at the time it occurred. As discussed earlier, he even managed to present Gaunt's patronage of the heretic John Wycliffe as evidence of his goodness.

Knighton's portrayal of the king was reserved in comparison to the unabashed praise of his uncle, John of Gaunt, and his glowing characterization of the Black Prince. Knighton depicted Gaunt's status both through his personal charisma and through his title. The chronicler characterized Gaunt as almost saint-like. For example, he recorded

Gaunt's reasoned reaction to the news of the Revolt, writing that the duke was "not moved by anger, because he had betrayed no one, not struck by frenzy, because he was conscious of no fault, but he showed himself in all his action, that is to say good and gentle."⁷³ Paragraphs later, he depicted Gaunt as Christ, abandoned by his household just as Christ had been by his disciples.⁷⁴ He referred to Gaunt repeatedly as "the good duke (*pius dux*)."⁷⁵ He explained his word choice to the reader, saying:

Lest any wonder that I should always refer to him as the good duke, let the careful reader consider, and he who hears me remember, as a friend of truth, that the good duke drew such strength from his virtues, that all his misfortunes, and in all the hardship and injuries that had been spitefully visited upon him, he sought no revenge, and ordered no reprisals by his followers, but impartially and patiently forgave the offences of anyone who sought forgiveness.⁷⁵

Knighton did not cloak his admiration for Gaunt with subtlety. This passage clearly indicates that Knighton felt mercy, long-suffering, moderation, and piousness to be the most important characteristics of a great man. Gaunt's authority lay not simply in the outward displays of his rank – the size of his household, the wealth of his properties, or the deference owed him – but more particularly within himself as an individual.

Knighton stressed two characteristics in particular to illustrate Gaunt's superior character: piousness in suffering and mercy. Knighton described God's particular favour towards the duke, writing that "God always sustained him, and turned his enemies' deceits to his advantage, and at all times repressed their malice, and delivered him from their hands."⁷⁶ Here, he drew allusions to Psalm 17 and again made use of the currency

⁷³ Ibid., 233.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 233.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 239-41.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 235.

of biblical metaphor. Similarly, Gaunt's own facility with the psalms served as an indication of his piety. In the face of his many trials, he "fastened his mind upon God, to Whom he most earnestly commended himself and his cause, remembering how it is written: 'Many are the tribulations of the righteous, and God shall deliver them from all.'"⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that Knighton used scripture to describe Gaunt's person and actions during the revolt no fewer than five times.⁷⁸ In comparison, Knighton directly alluded to scripture only twelve times in total throughout his account of the Revolt.⁷⁹ His description of Gaunt therefore accounted for almost half of his biblical allusions. Gaunt's epithet of the *pius dux* also reinforced his characterization as a pious and righteous man. Equally significant was Gaunt's mercifulness. Knighton retold the story of some of the duke's servants, caught stealing from his treasury. Gaunt disregarded the advice of his officials who wanted the offenders hanged and was "so charged with the spirit of mercy that he forbade it, saying that he would not set his possessions above any man's life."⁸⁰ The word that Knighton used to describe his mercy, *pietas*, connected both aspects of mercifulness and piety to illustrate the duke's goodness.

In addition, Knighton emphasized the gentility and power that Gaunt possessed as the duke of Lancaster and uncle of the king. In his examination of the expression of medieval power in the life of Edward the Black Prince, David Green argues that the household represented the "embodiment of royal and seigneurial authority."⁸¹ The strength, wealth, and size of a lord's household signified his ability to exercise power, and

⁷⁷ Ibid., 237. See Psalm 33.

⁷⁸ Matthew 26:56 (p. 232), Matthew 8:20 (p. 234), Psalms 17(18):1 (p. 234), Isaiah 45:13 (p. 234), and Psalms 33 (34): 20 (p. 236).

⁷⁹ Matthew 13:25 (p. 210), Isaiah 27:7 (p. 216), Matthew 9:36 (p. 220), Psalms 54:24 (55:23) (p. 224), Matthew 7:2 (p. 226), Psalms 2:9 (p. 226), Psalms 18:5 (p. 226).

⁸⁰ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 241.

⁸¹ Green, *Black Prince*, 107.

the public display of said authority was highly significant. Material and military displays such as tournaments were expressions used to communicate power. In contrast to the degree of control the boy-king exercised over the crowd at Smithfield, Knighton often depicted Richard's leadership of his household as weak. For example, he was unable to marshal his retainers in order to lead them from the Tower to Mile End; instead: "the knights who were to accompany him foolishly allowed their ardour to cool, lamentably hiding the boldness of their spirit, and as though struck by some womanish fear, not daring to go out, stayed in the Tower."⁸² Neither was he able to save the lives of Simon Sudbury, Robert Hales, or any of the others executed in his absence.

By contrast, Knighton emphasized Gaunt's strong leadership of his household during the crisis. The duke withheld the news of the Revolt from his retainers until their business in Scotland had been completed, in an attempt to avoid the chaos that would follow the release of such information.⁸³ Once his business was finished satisfactorily, he gathered his household together and informed them of the events occurring in the south. He then demonstrated his selflessness and "with all goodness and kindness, he gave leave to all his people, and asked them each to go to their own homes, lest they should suffer loss there."⁸⁴ Knighton also wrote of Gaunt's concern for the welfare of his retainers in the latter's anger towards the Earl of Northumberland for denying his household the provisions that had been promised them.⁸⁵ Knighton contrasted the earl's shameful treatment of Gaunt and his household with the honourable generosity extended to them

⁸² *Knighton's Chronicle*, 213.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 235. Knighton wrote that the earl did not wish to have any contact with the duke until he "knew whether or not he had the king's good will."

by the Scots, particularly the earls of Douglas and Dunbar. Those who once had been enemies

received him most kindly, with gifts, splendid presents, and all the marks of respect that they could devise, and gave him supplies in plenty, and plied him with everything that they could think of that would honour and console him.⁸⁶

In addition, Knighton emphasized Gaunt's status in numerous descriptions of his vast wealth. He described the duke's London mansion, the Savoy, as "unmatched in the kingdom." There Gaunt kept many of his treasures: "bed-hangings and other ornaments, with innumerable jewels ... [and] such quantities of vessels and silver plate, without counting the parcel-gilt and solid gold, that five carts would hardly suffice to carry them."⁸⁷ Knighton's source for this information was the keeper of the duke's wardrobe, who claimed that "no prince in Christendom had a finer wardrobe."⁸⁸ Knighton's familiarity with members of Gaunt's household, and the keeper of his wardrobe in particular, was evident in his description of the duke's riches. He mentioned the trials of the keeper of Gaunt's wardrobe again who was turned away by the abbot of Leicester Abbey when he sought to hide the duke's things there.

Knighton also repeatedly emphasized the degree of honour that Gaunt was due. The earl of Northumberland disgracefully withheld it from him, for which he was chastised by the king later and repented. In this way, "he who first shamefully repelled the duke, was the first to show him honour again."⁸⁹ Others of Gaunt's many enemies also sought to undermine him. Thus, they perpetuated rumours that told of the existence

⁸⁶ Ibid., 235-7.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 215.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 215.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 239.

of animosity between Gaunt and the king. In his biography of the duke, Anthony Goodman admits that relations between Gaunt and the king were strained at this time and that the duke was increasingly isolated at court.⁹⁰ Knighton's work reflected the uneasy relationship between uncle and nephew. The chronicler's insistence that the rumours of the crown's complicity in the rebels' destruction of Gaunt's property were unfounded did not stop him from including them in his account. He wrote that

in truth, it was said in many parts of the kingdom that what had been done against [Gaunt] had been done with royal approval. And that, although untrue, was believed by some, who as often happens, unbridled their tongues, in the hope that what they said, and worse, had come to pass.⁹¹

Gaunt worried that these rumours would reach the king, and that Richard would be influenced by the "evil counsel from those who were jealous of him."⁹² Knighton wrote, however, that Richard was well aware of the respect that Gaunt deserved, not only from his fellow lords but also from the king. Richard sent Gaunt a letter professing his goodwill, and ordered all the lords, burgesses, and sheriffs of the north country, "each according to his power, to lead the duke safely through their territories. And so it was done, the men of each country giving place to those of the next, as he came with all ceremony through" to Reading.⁹³ This great procession and display bore witness to the degree of honour and pomp that Gaunt commanded. Even Richard owed him deference. Knighton wrote that, in a manner reminiscent of the actions of the Scots, "the king rejoiced greatly at his coming, and showed him the greatest respect, and did all he could for his comfort, and with copious presents, such as royal magnificence might owe to his

⁹⁰ Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 87.

⁹¹ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 235.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 235.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 239.

uncle, joyfully honoured him."⁹⁴ Here, it was the king himself who honoured the merciful and long-suffering duke. Goodman suggests that this representation was not altogether true. He describes Richard's behaviour towards his uncle as "petulant... [and] indifferent to kinship obligations."⁹⁵ Instead of criticizing Richard, however, Knighton focused on the impressive (and most likely empty) gestures of friendship from the king to the duke. This perhaps reflected Knighton's awareness of the fragility of Gaunt's position in the power structures of England in the aftermath of the Revolt. The Revolt was "undoubtedly a terrifying and humiliating experience"⁹⁶ for Gaunt, and Knighton recognized that his patron could not afford to be seen as lacking the king's support. To prevent such a perception, the chronicler emphasized the loyalty that the king owed his uncle. Knighton has not been the only historical writer to acknowledge Richard's debt to Gaunt. Goodman, writing over six hundred years later, argues that the rebels' respect for the legitimacy of Richard's kingship was in large part due to Gaunt's "dogged restraint and determination to defend Richard's interests."⁹⁷ Amongst other concerns, medieval perceptions of an individual's authority relied on, and were defined against, that of others. Thus, Gaunt needed to appear close to the king, while Richard relied on Gaunt's personal support. Knighton's account, and the heightened significance it attached to John of Gaunt, was in part shaped by the duke's shaky position in the immediate aftermath of the Revolt.

The story of Gaunt's thieving servants formed the backdrop for the "vengeance upon the commons" that followed the end of the Revolt. Knighton described how the

⁹⁴ Ibid., 239.

⁹⁵ Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 88.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 84.

king charged the judge Sir Robert Tresilian with the task of travelling throughout the countryside and punishing the malefactors. Tresilian's retribution was swift and complete; he "went everywhere, and did great slaughter, sparing none ... for anyone who appeared before him on that charge, whether justly or upon some accusation moved by hatred, was at once sentenced to death."⁹⁸ The vindictive nature of Tresilian's justice echoed Knighton's account of the Bishop of Norwich's retribution, discussed in Chapter 1. Just as the church had punished those who had shown it no mercy, Tresilian used the law to punish those who had subverted the law. Knighton wrote that:

as the malefactors had vented their hatred upon judges, such as Sir John Cavendish, and such others as they could find, and had put them to death, and all the other lawyers upon whom they came, and never spared them the capital penalty, so he spared none, but repaid like with like.⁹⁹

Tresilian's vengeance was as merciless as Bishop Henry Despenser's. Likewise, both models of justice functioned on an "eye for an eye" conception of retribution. It is true that Knighton did not dwell excessively on retribution; his account of the suppression of the Revolt was brief and focused exclusively on the violent payment of figurative reparations, but it formed an integral part of his retelling of the event.

In contrast, the scholarly consensus holds that there was no bloodbath after the revolt.¹⁰⁰ Barrie Dobson, for example, argues that the crown's response was remarkably moderate: "it seems that England ... experienced no "reign of terror" in late 1381 ... nothing, it might be said, became the English government more than the moderation with which it repressed [the] revolt."¹⁰¹ W.M. Omrod likewise argues that the severity

⁹⁸ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 241.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁰⁰ Prescott, "The Hand of God," 321. He then challenges this consensus.

¹⁰¹ Barrie Dobson, *Peasants' Revolt*, 303-4.

threatened by the establishment "never materialised."¹⁰² Why, then, did Knighton present the aftermath as a bloody and dramatic event? Andrew Prescott points out that contemporary chronicles universally contradict the vision of moderation that the legal records suggest and that historians continue to propound.¹⁰³ He re-examines the administrative sources and proposes that the crown sought to build on the recentralization of control that occurred at Smithfield by creating special commissions that combined "military power and discretionary judicial authority."¹⁰⁴ He argues that the general pardons were, in part, meant to curb the social disorder caused by the commissions, which were soon manipulated to settle local squabbles and whose commissioners were accused of "unlawfully oppressing the people beyond measure by extortions and other grievances."¹⁰⁵ He states that these "chaotic and bloody prosecutions" must have shaped contemporary perceptions of justice.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, contemporary accounts of the suppression of the revolt must have articulated certain pre-existing conceptions of justice.

Knighton's account of the aftermath endorsed a kind of retributive justice that is perhaps unsurprising in the context of a legal system that settled disputes with amercements and expected payment for pardons. In many ways, the retribution of Despenser and the commissions was necessary for the reestablishment of the social order. Only after this bloodshed could Richard be moved by the requests of his new wife and John of Gaunt in particular to pardon the offenders, and "thus by the workings of divine mercy that rage was subdued."¹⁰⁷ Forgiveness, symbolized by the general pardon of

¹⁰² W.M. Ormrod, "The Peasants' Revolt and the Government of England," *Journal of British Studies* 29 (1990), 22.

¹⁰³ Prescott, "The Hand of God," 322.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 326-7.

¹⁰⁵ *CCR 1381-5*, p. 85 in Prescott, "Hand of God," 330.

¹⁰⁶ Prescott, "Hand of God," 336.

¹⁰⁷ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 243.

1382, could only be given once restitution had been made. Once like had been repaid with like, Richard pardoned the offenders and Knighton's discussion of the event ended. Whether violence was perpetrated or withheld by mercy, it was ever the language through which justice was articulated and enacted in late-medieval England.

Knighton's representations of the leaders of 1381 illustrate aspects of his ideological perspective as did his various depictions of the crowd. Knighton articulated various late medieval conceptions of authority and leadership. His representations of the rebel leaders, Richard II, and John of Gaunt in particular demonstrated the ways in which individuals gained legitimacy through their use of commonly accepted roles, tradition, and personal charisma. In addition, networks of patronage defined personal loyalty. The chronicler's relationship to these networks influenced not only his approach to the historical events, but also the content that he chose to include. For a "Lancastrian" historian, Knighton was balanced in his representation of Richard II. He described a boy who effectively made use of the authority of kingship to defuse a potentially disastrous uprising. Even so, he did not credit Richard with the personal authority that he extended to Edward the Black Prince and John of Gaunt. In contrast, Gaunt possessed both the authority of his position as the king's uncle and title as well as charismatic authority. Knighton's account, particularly his representations of Richard and Gaunt, also reveals a great deal about the significance of patronage and affinity in late medieval England that J.R. Maddicott argues "formed the fabric of contemporary life."¹⁰⁸ Knighton's respect for Richard's authority as the king was largely eclipsed by the familiarity, loyalty, and love with which he recorded the trials and triumphs of the duke of Lancaster.

¹⁰⁸ J.R. Maddicott, "Thomas of Lancaster and Sir Robert Holland", *English Historical Review* 86 (1971), 449.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Chris Given-Wilson argues that contemporary chroniclers of the events of 1381 were unanimous in their condemnation of the rebels. Tainted as they were by this universal censure, he argues that "there are few better demonstrations of the instinctive class prejudice of the medieval chronicler than the contemporary historiography of the revolt."¹ While this may be true of many, a closer reading of *Knighton's Chronicle* suggests otherwise and presents a much more complex representation of the chronicler's motivations and values, as well as the ways in which he was able to express them through his use of language. Re-contextualizing the historian within his semantic paradigms, and his work within the literate culture of his time, reveals a remarkable sensitivity to the situation and aims of the rebels.

In late-medieval English histories, an individual's authority could be expressed in a variety of ways. Much authority was bound up in a person's title or role. For example, names categorized and defined an individual's identity and role in society in a very literal way, as those of Thomas Baker, Jack Miller and Wat Tyler suggest. Rees Davies acknowledges the relationship between name, role and power. He argues that names held particular significance for medieval political culture because they played so central a role in the definition of collective and individual identities.² Similarly, individuals such as Richard II, Simon Sudbury, and John of Gaunt had access to the authority contained within their respective offices of king, archbishop of Canterbury, and duke. The

¹ Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 197.

² Rees Davies, "Presidential Address: The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400: II Names, Boundaries and Regnal Solidarities," *TRHS*, 6th ser., 5 (1995), 1-20 at 3.

authority of office, however, was not entirely passive, and individuals had to claim that authority through the force of their personalities. Knighton's representation of their ability to do so indicates the level of his own acceptance of their authority, as well as his willingness to afford legitimacy to their assertions of power. Knighton reinforces the performative nature of authority in his representations. Authority was in part legitimized through performed displays such as households and representative garb as well as through historical writing. John Watts discusses an individual literally taking on the mantle of kingship as the "wearer of the crown in which all the realm was symbolized."³ Chronicle writers participated in the performance of power and authority in late-medieval England through their deployment of culturally-charged imagery and language.

A closer examination of the implications of metaphorical imagery in Knighton's *Chronicle* and a cultural-historical reading of the text itself reveal the author's remarkable sympathy for the existence of popular dissent. His work was shaped by his perspective as an Augustinian canon at a wealthy abbey, his relationship with the house of Lancaster, and by contemporary heretical movements and religious dissent. His account of the Peasants' Revolt reveals the totality of the Christian paradigm in the medieval world-view, the significance of biblical precedent, as well as the ways in which individuals synthesized competing loyalties and ideologies. Knighton focused on the significance that economic stability held for authority in the late-medieval manorial system, and perpetuated an understanding of justice as serving a retributive function. A cursory glance at the *Chronicle* overlooks the complexity and depth of Knighton's text. The chronicler was a thoughtful and daring scholar, who carefully shaped his narrative to reflect a perspective that was remarkably sympathetic to the rebels. The historical

³ John Watts, "Public or Plebs: The Changing Meaning of 'The Commons', 1381-1549," 248.

representation of the Revolt that emerges from the work is often contradictory, as Knighton both condemned the rebels and provided them with a space for legitimate dissent.

Resituating Knighton within the literate culture of his time further illuminates and contextualizes the historian's paradoxical perspectives and remarkable progressiveness. In many ways Knighton's approach more closely resembled that of the authors of contemporary popular literature than his fellow historical chroniclers.⁴ Perhaps this is simply because literary scholars have already reconstructed the works of medieval poetry within their respective contemporary textual cultures while historians are only beginning to do so now. Not only does the incorporation of literary sources in historical research create a more complete representation of the cultures with which the medieval writer interacted, and through which he communicated with his reader, it also reveals much about the historian's intention and purpose.

Larry Scanlon describes the mode of address of the poet William Langland as "prophetic" in its attempt to elucidate for the future what the author sees as the most pressing needs of his present.⁵ He then argues that the poet's traditionalism did not necessarily place him in an antagonistic relationship with the rebels and their ideology – much of which was traditionalist. He asks: "if the Rising was politically meaningful in spite of its traditionalism, then why should Langland's apparent conservatism necessarily signify opposition to the rebels or antipathy to their goals?"⁶ Scanlon's suggestion that

⁴ Knighton was, in style, subject matter, and method foremost a chronicler. However, he appears to have presented the rebels much more sympathetically than his fellow historians, particularly Walsingham and Froissart. Of course, a similar analysis of the latter two would have to be done for a true comparison to be made.

⁵ Larry Scanlon, "King, Commons, and Kind Wit," 196.

⁶ Scanlon, "King, Commons, and Kind Wit," 197.

conservatism (an anachronistically modern notion anyway) and unorthodox ideologies were not mutually exclusive in the late Middle Ages has implications for the understanding of medieval historical writing as well. The medieval chronicler shared the poet's prophetic intention and directed his deeply contemporary writing to posterity. Similarly, his traditionalist leanings did not necessarily oppose him to the rebels' demands. This is certainly true of Knighton, who appears to have been remarkably sympathetic to the struggles of the lower orders and who, on some level, saw their dissent as existing within a legitimate political space. Perhaps it is unsurprising that a man who was pardoned in 1370 for harbouring two criminals should have had a complicated relationship with authority.⁷

Medieval chronicles are certainly not works of fiction. They are, however, complex literary narratives that are fundamentally shaped by their authors' ideological perspectives. Although the modern reader can never engage with them as fully as had their contemporary audience, resituating author and work within their historical context provides a more holistic and revealing view of both. For example, the chronicler struggling to reconcile the dichotomies that underlay his life – lay and monastic worlds, temporal privilege and sacred promise, the abuse of authority by those who traditionally held it and the somewhat legitimate seizure of authority by those who had no business doing so, and a plethora of competing loyalties – bears little resemblance to the uncritical toady of the elite typically portrayed in the historiography. This thesis examines only a small section of Knighton's *Chronicle*, and a similar study of the work's entirety is certainly called for.

⁷ In 1370, Knighton was pardoned for harbouring a Franciscan friar and his groom. V.H. Galbraith, "The Chronicle of Henry Knighton" in *Kings and Chroniclers*, edited by V.H. Galbraith (London: Hambledon Press, 1982), 137. See also, *Knighton's Chronicle*, xvii.

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APPENDIX A A Chronology of the Peasants' Revolt

D) Knighton's Timeline

1380: The king imposes the poll tax led by John Legg

1381:

- **May, Wednesday following the fourth Sunday of Trinity:** The commons gathers together, led by Thomas Baker
- **12 June:** the rebels arrive at Southwark and break open the prison at Marshalsea
- **13 June:** Feast of Corpus Christi
- **14 June:** the rebels enter London, meet the king at Mile End, execute the archbishop of Canterbury and his companions at the Tower, sack the Savoy
- **15 June:** the rebels meet Richard II at Smithfield, Wat Tyler is killed and the crowd dispersed
- [- **16 June:** messenger arrives at Leicester to warn the town]
- [- **16/17 June:** the keeper of John of Gaunt's wardrobe arrives in Leicester]
- [- **20 June:** Richard sends out Sir Robert Tresilian with a special mandate]
- [- **25 June – 10 July:** John of Gaunt stays in Holyrood Abbey]
- [- **3 July:** Richard sends orders that Gaunt be escorted back to the South]
- **29 September:** the charter granted at Mile End is voided in Parliament

1382: Richard issues a general pardon

II) General Timeline⁸

1381:

- **May:** resistance to poll tax collection in Essex
- **10 June:** the rebels, now organized, march on Canterbury
- **11 June:** the king demands an explanation for their actions
- **12 June:** the rebels assemble at Blackheath, storm Marshalsea, Southwark, Lambeth, and Highbury, first rebel attacks in Suffolk
- **13 June:** Feast of Corpus Christi, the rebels enter London, sack the Savoy
- **14 June:** the rebels meet the king at Mile End, the archbishop and his companions are killed, the king grants charters of freedom, charters are also granted at St Albans, execution of John Cavendish
- **15 June:** the rebels meet the king at Smithfield, Tyler is killed, the rebels dispersed, execution of the Prior of Bury in Suffolk
- **15-17 June:** attacks on the University of Cambridge
- **16 June:** first attacks in Norfolk
- **17 June:** attack on Peterborough Abbey
- **18-26 June:** Henry Dispenser regains control of East Anglia
- **26 June:** Dispenser's forces defeat the rebels at North Walsham

⁸ From: Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973).

- **28 June:** Thomas of Woodstock and Sir Henry Percy defeat the Essex rebels at Billericay
- **First week of July:** clashes in Worcester
- **13 July:** John Ball is executed
- **29 July:** tenants continue to rebel against the Abbey of St Werburgh in Chester

APPENDIX B The Content of *Knighton's Chronicle*

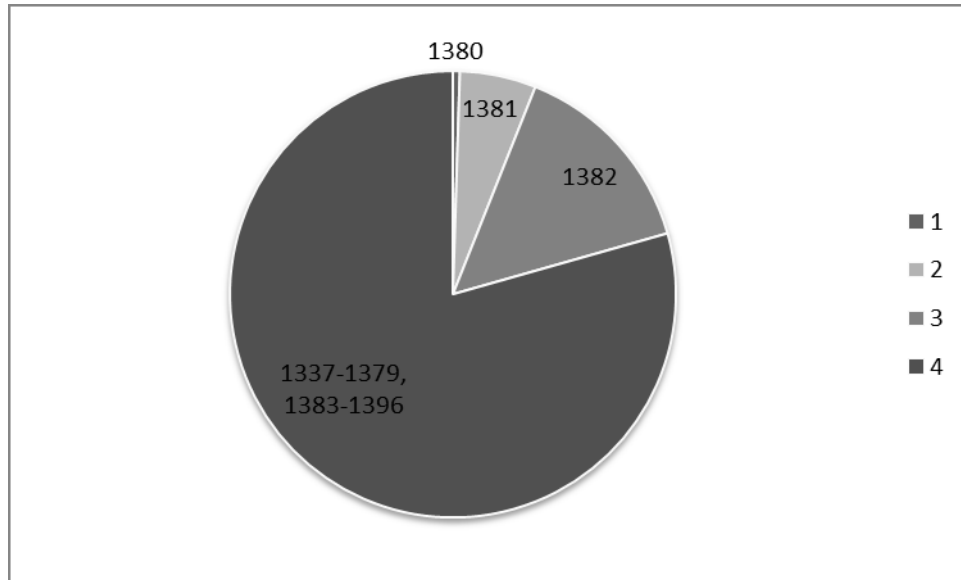


Image 1: The years 1380, 1381, 1382 as percentage of the whole

	Folio Count	Page Count	Percentage of Whole (Folio)	Percentage of Whole (Pages)	Discrete Numbers (Folio)	Discrete Numbers (Pages)
1337-1396	100 (199)	(Latin) 225	100.00 (100.00)	100	139v – 239r	2-552
1381: Total	5 (11)	(Latin) 16	5 (5.53)	7.11	172r – 177v	208-240
1382: Wyclif and Lollards (not inc. William Swinderby)	11 (23)	(Latin) 32	11 (11.56)	14.22	178r – 189v	242 - 306
1382: William Swinderby	3 (7)	(Latin) 9	3 (3.52)	4	189r – 192v	306 - 324
1382: Total	14 (29)	(Latin) 41	14 (14.57)	18.22	178r – 192v	242 - 324
1380: Total	1 (1)	(Latin) 2	1 (0.50)	0.44	171v – 172r	204 - 208

Image 2: Chart of content percentage

APPENDIX C Knighton's Account of the Revolt in its Entirety

The following is taken from the Rolls Series edition of the chronicle.

A.D. 1378. Viii.º die mensis Aprilis electio Urbani pape vi. anno Domini MCCCCLXXVIII. Exemplum epistolæ quam cœtus cardinalium transmisit imperatori de electione Urbani pape sexti, et quam idem imperator fecit sigillari sigillo suo cum aliis xv. sigillis aliorum domitorum; et transfigi fecit Romæ ad ecclesiam sancti Petri in testimonium et fidem præmissorum omnibus intentibus.

Copy of a letter from the cardinals to the emperor announcing the election.

Serenissime princeps, Quia plerumque, immo plurimum, Tyræ. col. præsertim in rebus arduis famæ loquacitas veritatem quibusdam coloribus adulteris obrumbat, ideo quod his diebus in Romana ecclesia gestum sit vobis præsentî scriptiõne nunciavimus. Et ut his qui vobis rem aliter factam narraverint seu scriperint non credatis, et mens vestra hæc nostra insinuatione clarificata in tranquillo et sereno veritatis liquore coalescat, regia igitur celestindo cognoscat, quod sanctæ

felicis recordationis domino et patre nostro Gregorio papa 3º. vicesimo septimo die mensis Martii nuper elapsi viam universæ carnis ingresso, et sicut de largissima dei pietate confidimus post labores ad præmia evocato, tantique præteriti conclavi palatii apostolici in quo præfatus dominus noster abierat, ne dicamus obierat, juxta sanctiones canonicas decrevimus introire, sed ex certis causis ad id nostrum inducentibus animum, hujusmodi nostrum introitum ad diem immediatè sequentem duximus differendum. Quo quidem die, videlicet vii.º die mensis Aprilis primitus gratia Spiritus Sancti invocata conclavem intravimus de electione et substitutione futuri pontificis tractaturi. Sequentique die luciferi aestivæ occasum ut pie credimus [lunine] illustrati, circa illam diem horam qua Spiritus Sanctus ille, qui paracletus est, sanctorum discipulorum corda descendit, ad personam reverendi in Christo patris domini Bartholomei archiepiscopi Barrenni, viri utique meritum claritate conspicui, et multiplicium virtutum lampade refulgentis, libere et unanimiter direximus vota nostra eum ad celestissimam apostolicæ speculæ concorditer evocantes, et hanc nostram evocationem seu electionem in conspectu maxime Christianis plene multitudine nunci-

¹ *obnubilat*, A.

: Some word is required for the construction.

vinus. Ceterum die nona ejusdem mensis Aprilis idem A.D. 1378. dominus noster electus in throno dignitatis apostolicæ sublinatus sibi Urbani. vi. nomen assicvit. Ac die qua Christus Jesus summus pontifex vitam nostram resurgendo reparavit, coram turba fidelium copiosus, sicut in Romana ecclesia consuetudinis est, in basilica principis apostolorum de urbe cum ingenti tripudio et lætitia innumerabilis populi Christiani pontificali regno magnifice et solemniter extitit coronatus. Quas quidem serenitati vestræ ideo nunciavimus, ut, sicut obitus memorati domini Gregorii vobis amaritudinis et tristitiæ calicem propinavit, ita in presentis patris concessione nobis cœlitus facta gaudii et exultationis spiritum assumatis; in illo enim cuius vicem idem dominus noster gerit in terris firmam spem fiduciamque tenemus, quod sub eius felici regimine status Romana ac universalis ecclesiæ reflorebit, et orthodoxa² fides felix optatumque suscipiet incrementum. Datum Romæ die viii.º mensis Maii.

Eodem anno quidam de cardinalibus prima induc- An Anti- tione Urbani papam reliquerunt, et abierunt Avi- Pope. noniam, ibique exererunt Robertum episcopum Cib- set up at bonensem in summum pontificem, quem vocaverunt Avignon. Clementem papam, unde schisma³ maxima orta est in ecclesia Christi, quibusdam regibus et regnis uni adhaerentibus, quibusdam vero alteri.

Concessa est regi una grossa que continet iii. dena. A.D. 1379. rios de quolibet viro et muliere, religiosi, mendicantibus, et pauperibus solum exceptis.

Dominus Thomas de Wodestoke, comes de Bokynge. A.D. 1386. ham, perrexit in Britanniam in auxilium ducis Britannie contra Francigenas. Henricus comes Derbyæ Marriage desponsavit filiam minorem comitis Herfordie. Dominus earl of Thomas de Wodestoke desponsaverat sororem senioremi, Derby.

et divisa est comitatus de Bowne cognomine. Concessa est domino regi de episcopis, de abbatibus, de mercatoribus certa taxa de quolibet viro cum uxore ii. solidos. De aliis non conjugatis singulis xii. denarios.

Wals. i. 382.

Wals. i. 393.

Tyrs. col. 2633. Wals. i. 434.

Wals. i. 449.

¹ *ascivit*, MS.

² *orthodoxa*, A.

o 62014.

³ *schisma*, MSS.

⁴ *conomine*, MS.

A.D. 1860. De religiosis possessionariis vi. solidos viii. denarios. De singulis beneficiatis vi. solidos viii. denarios. Et tamen ista taxa non se extendebat in seacario regis per magnam summam ad taxam præcedentis anni, scilicet iiii. denarios. De quo ministri regis administrantes multum conuesti sunt, dicentes, rem in collectione non se habere bene gestam, nec fideliter taxam fore collectam.

A.D. 1381. Unde quidam Johannes Leg cum tribus aliis sibi associatis impetravit a rege commissionem¹ ad inquirendum de collectoribus hujus taxæ in Cantia, Northfolc,² et aliis patriis confinibus, et pacti sunt magnam summam pecuniæ domino regi pro sua acquisitione se daturus; consiliumque regi ad suam perniciem, pro³ dolori sponpondit.⁴ Unus eorum cum esset ad aliquam villam ad faciendum inquisitionem de dicta taxa, convocari fecit tam viros quam mulieres, et puellulas, quod dictu horribile est, eorum impudice elevavit, ut sic experiretur utrum corruptæ essent et cognitæ a viris, ut sic more arctaret amicos et parentes pro eis solvere taxam, et plures potius elegerunt solvere pro suis filiabus⁵ quam videre eas tam turpiter attractari. Hæc et hujusmodi dicti inquisitores facientes maxime provocaverunt populum. Cumque vidissent communes de Cantia et finitimis locis erga eos rem sic graviter peragi, et nova ac nova quasi importabilia onera eis indesinenter absque remedio imponi, istiusmodi oppressionis gravamen ulterius ferre non valentes, conferebant adinvicem quam remedium vel subsidii cautelam inde reperire valerent. Cumque hæc et hujusmodi uniusquisque in animo revolveret, nec manum inceperit apponere anderet ne sui damni irremediabile detri-

¹ Here in a later hand on the margin of A. is *Commissio impetrata a rege*; on the margin of MS., also in a later hand, is *Johannes Legge*.

² *Norfolke*, MS.

³ *prodi*, MS.

⁴ *sponpondit*, MS.

⁵ *filiabus*, MS.

Vile conduct of the inquisitors.

Kentish people seek for a remedy.

mentum pateretur, tandem quidam Thomas Baker¹ de A.D. 1381. Fobhyngges² ab artificio sic vocatus, animum fortiores sibi assumens, cepit hortari, et associare sibi quosdam de villa sua, et sic alios ac alios sibi associaverunt, et sic miserunt unusquisque ad amicos et cognatos suos, et sic ulterius de villa in villam. et de patria in patriam, rogantes et petentes consilium eorum et auxilium ad ea quæ communis utilitatis et necessitatis eos tam graviter urgentis erant, eis ferre indilate. Qui maximo tripudio suo more gaudentes catervatim³ concurrere ceperunt, læti admodum effecti quod diem bines viderent quo sibi invicem succurrere possent in tanta ac tali necessitate.

Anno Domini MCCCXXXI. et regni regis Ricardi ii. A.D. 1381. secundo.

Sequenti igitur anno supradicto mense Maii feria iii. quarto post festum Trinitatis cepit convenire plebs ista nefanda³ de Cantia, de Sothereys, et de multis aliis locis scilicet confinibus. Apprentici quoque relicti magistris suis illis accurrebant. Sicque congregati sunt super le Blakeheth, ubi præ multitudine seipos oblit, et causa pristina non contenti neque minoribus sceleribus pacati, majora inexquisita mala meditati sunt immisericorditer, nec a suo nefando⁴ proposito desistere disposerunt quoadusque omnes proceres regni et magnates funditus extirparent; sicque primo direxerunt aciem suæ nequitie ad quandam villam archiepiscopi Cantuariensis vocatam Maydestoke⁵ in qua erat carcer dicti archiepiscopi, et in predicto carcere erat quidam Johannes Balle capellanus,⁶ qui predicator famosissimus habebatur apud laicos, qui per plura retroacta tempora verbum dei insipienter

Wals. i. 456.

Thyrs. col. 263A.

¹ On margin of MS. in a later hand is *Thomas Baker*.

² *Fobhynges*, MS.

³ *nephandis*, MSS.

⁴ *nephandis*, MSS.

⁵ *Maydestok*, MS.

⁶ On margin of MS. in a later hand is *Johannes Balle*.

A. D. 1381. sparserat, lollium cum tritico immisceendo, laicis nimis placens, et libertati juris ecclesiastici et status quam maxime derogans, atque multos errores in ecclesiam Christi inter clerum et laicos execrabiliiter introducens, multis annis provinciam sic obnubilavit,¹ ob quam causam a clero fuerat auditus et de jure convictus, atque in eodem carcere pro suo perpetuo mancipatus et adjudicatus. Dicti vero populares carcerem fregerunt, et eum extraxerunt, atque abire eum secum fecerunt, nam in archiepiscopum² eum sublimare proposuerunt.

He is released from the archbishop's prison.

Die vero Mercurii³ ante festum consecrationis venerunt in Souththreye ad carcerem regis de Marchelsya, et carcerem absque mora fregerunt, et omnes incarceratos in eorum auxilium secum abire coegerunt, et quoscunque invenerunt sive peregrinos seu alios cujuscunque conditionis secum ire compulerunt.⁴

Die Veneris⁵ in crastino consecrationis intraverunt⁶ per pontem in civitatem Londoniensem, nec erat qui eos resisteret, et tamen, ut dicebatur, cives Londonienses de eorum adventu longo ante tempore intellexerunt; sicque ad Turrim iter direxerunt ubi rex erat cum grandi coetu militum, armigerorum, valetorum, et aliorum hominum stipatus. Erant ibidem in Turri⁷ ut dicebatur, circiter cl. milites, secundum quosdam centum octoginta, cum matre regis et ducissa de Britannia, et multis aliis dominabus. Et Henricus comes Derbeyæ filius Johannis ducis Lancastrie adhuc juvenis ibidem erat. Symon quoque de Subhyry archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, et cancellarius

¹ obnubilavit, MSS.
² Here in a later hand on margin of MS. is *Balle Johannes destinatus Archiepiscopus Cantuariensis.*
³ On the margin of A. only is *Die Mercurii.*
⁴ compulerunt, A.
⁵ On the margin of A. only is *Die Veneris.*
⁶ Here on margin of MS. in a later hand is *Corpus Christi daye.*
⁷ Here on the margin of A. only is *Turris.*

Anglie, et frater Robertus de Halys prior Hospitalis A. D. 1381. Anglie et thesaurarius regis. Johannes¹ quoque Leg et quidam Johannes de ordine Minorum in armis bellicis strenuus, in physica² peritissimus, domino Johanni duci Lancasterie familiarissimus cum aliis tribus ad Turrim cucurrerunt causa refugii sub alis regis latitaturi. Communes vero disposuerunt se inferticare archiepiscopum et ceteros prenomatos cum eo, et ad hoc ibidem venerunt, et postea votum suum impleverunt. Volens igitur rex archiepiscopum et socios suos de ore luporum liberare, misit ad communes mandans eis, ut ad locum qui Myltros³ vocatur extra civitatem convenirent cum rege locuturi, et de eorum proposito tractaturi. Milites vero qui ituri erant cordis strenuitatem quasi tabescentes recorderent amiserunt, et mentis audaciam, quod dolendum est, sub calle dederunt, nec egredi quasi timore femineo percussi ulatenus audebant, sed se in Turri continebant. Rex vero perrexit ad locum assignatum, et multi de nefanda⁴ plebe sequebantur eum. Plures vero remanserunt in eodem loco. Ubi cum venissent questi sunt regi se multiplici et intolerabili servitute et vexatione graviter oppressos, nec posse nec velle ulterius sustinere. Unde rex pro bono pacis et temporis ingruentia ad petitionem eorum concessit eis cartam sub magno sigillo, Quod omnes homines in dem carta eodem anno post festum sancti Michaelis in parlamento apud Westmonasterium per regem et magnates regni quassata fuit, et adnullata, et irrita et

The people desire to kill the archbishop and others.

The king invites the people to meet him.

T. Wals. col. 2635.
 Gest. Abb. regno Anglie libere essent, et libera conditionis, et charta. S. Albani ab omni jugo servitutis et villenagii exuti pro se et heredibus suis imperpetuum permanerent. Quæ quidem carta eodem anno post festum sancti Michaelis in parlamento apud Westmonasterium per regem et magnates regni quassata fuit, et adnullata, et irrita et

¹ Here on margin of MS. only is *Johannes Legge.*
² physica, MSS.
³ Myltros, MS. But in both MSS. it is hard to say whether the termination is not *cross.*
⁴ nefanda, MS.

A.D. 1381. inanis iudicata. Dum hæc sic agerentur, ecce de-
This generes filii remanentes patrem suum archiepiscopum
attacked cum sociis antedictis absque vi vel impetu, absque
by parlia- gladio vel sagitta, vel quacunque alia oppressione, sed
ment. solum verbis minacibus et clamore turbido evoca-
 verunt, et ad mortem invitaverunt, qui sponte non
 reclamantes, non reluctantes tanquam agni coram ton-
 dente se nudipedes, capite discooperto, cingulis abjectis,
The arch- acsi homicidio vel furto rei et sic vindictam meriti
bishop and essent, libere se morti indebite obtulerunt.¹ Et sic,
six of them heu pro dolor! duo luciferi regni, indigni cum dignis, Wals. i.
seized and antequam rex reviniret super le Tourehyll decollati sei.
beheaded.

The arch-
bishop and
six of them
seized and
beheaded.

Their
heads
fixed on
lances and
sticks.

They next
attack the
Savoy
palace,

and burn
it down.

Many
treasures
were
therein,
and all
were
destroyed.

¹ *optulerunt*, A.

² i.e. Savoy.

suo retulit et juravit, quod credidit quod non esset A.D. 1381.
 aliquis rex Christianus habens meliorem gardropium,
 nec aliquis vix talem; nam ut dixit tanta copia erat
 vasorum et jocalium de argento, absque aliis deauratis
 et de auro puro, quod vix v. correcte ea vehere
 sufficient; unus autem illorum nefandorum sumpsit. No plunder
 allowed.
 unam pulchram peciam argenteam, in gremioque ab-
 seondi, quod videns aliis et sociis referens, ipsum cum
 pecia in ignem projecerunt, dicentes, Zelatores veritatis
 et justitie, non fures aut latrones. Fertur quosdam
 intrasse cellarium vini ibidem, et tantum de dulci
 vino bibisse quod egredi quidam non sufficiebant, sed
 jociis, et canticis, ac aliis illecebris ebrietatibus vacantes. Some
 drunken
 rioters.
 donec ostium¹ obturatum fuit igne et lapidibus quod
 egredendi facultas denegata fuisset, licet sobrii essent, perished.
 usque ad mortem. Per septem dies post hæc clamor
 eorum a multis ad locum accedentibus et de enormi-
 tate sceleris dolentibus auditus est, nec erat qui eos
 adjuvaret vel consolaretur ex omnibus caris suis. Et
 sic se de vino inebriaverunt, vinumque consumere
 venerunt, et in vino perierunt. Numerus eorum, ut
 postea dicebatur xxxiii. ferme erat.

Cum hæc et alia mala fecissent redierunt ad novum
 templum² quod erat prioris de Clerkenwell, et ibi plures
 domos subverterunt. Cistas in ecclesia sive in cameris
 appreticiorum inventas fegerunt, et libros quoscunque
 inventos, sive ecclesiasticos, sive cartas et munimenta in
 cistis appreticiorum securibus scindebant, et in cibum
 ignis dederunt. Domos quoque juratorum in civitate
 subverterunt, quas senes et quasi decrepiti, quod dictu
 mirum est, tanta agilitate ascenderunt, acsi essent
 ratones vel spiritu aliquo vecti. Quod quidem cre-
 dibile esse potest, quia spiritus malignus quem sequen-
 tibus et serviebant, ipse gressus eorum dirigebat. by the
 evil one.

Twys. col.
2636.

Wals. i.
457.

¹ *hostium*, A.

² Here on both margins is *Novum*
templum.

A.D. 1381. Eodem die processerunt inde ad Clerkinwell, ubi præfer ecclesiam pauca reliquerunt non destructa de mansione prioris. Manerium quoque de Hybery extra Londonias distans per ii. leucas quod prædictus Robertus de Halys prior de novo quasi alterum paradisum¹ delicate construxerat, funditus destruxerunt. Juratos quoque civitatis et juris regni apprenticios quoscunque invenerunt sine mora interfecerunt. Si quis ante aliquem haberet exosum vel inimicum, tales maxime requirebant et indilate decollabant. Plures quoque apprenticii civitatis decollatis magistris suis abierunt cum illis; nec aliter quosque interficiebant nisi solum capitis obtruncatione. Ricardum quoque Lyounes famosum burgensem de domo sua extraxerunt et in sepe decapitaverunt. Qui tempore regis Edwardi iii. in quodam parlamento convictus fuit multiplici fraude regi et regine, ac aliis dominis et dominibus regni facta in lapidibus pretiosis et aliis jocalibus, unde iudicio parlamenti perpetuo carceri adjudicatus est, stipendio diurno xii. denariorum ex curialitate regis ei concessio, sed postea gratiam consecutus liberatus est, sique peremptus.

Hæc et alia quam plura enormia faciebant nullo gradui vel ordini parentes, tam in ecclesiis quam in cimiteriis, tam in plateis et stratis quam in domibus et campis; in quem ante dirigebant clamorisonum mox accurrebant ceteri, scientes eum decollandum, nec deum timentes, nec honorem matris ecclesiae verentes. Cum igitur hæc et alia quam plura execrabilia per totum illum diem perpetrassent, tandem tanto labore fatigati, et immoderamine vini insoliti inebriati, die quoque advesperante, videres² eorum jacentes sparsim in plateis, et sub muris soporatos veluti porcos interemptos; nocteque illa plures illorum, sumpcis viribus ebriosi, socios suos

¹ paradysum, MS.

² vides, MSS.

occulte interfecerunt quos ab antea in odio habuerunt; A.D. 1381. sicque in illa nocte strages magna tam ab invicem interea quam ab aliis facta est. Die vero sequenti, scilicet Sabbato, iterum adunati sunt in Smythfeld, ubi rex venit mane ad eos, qui licet ætate juvenis tamen animi sapientia prudenter doctus. Cui appropinquavit Next day ductor eorum proprio nomine Watte Tyler, sed jam they nomine mutato vocatus est Jakke Strawe. Hic regi Smithfield, tellum evaginatum, quem dagger vulgus vocant, in manu gerens, de manu in manum jecit quasi pueriliter ludens, et opportunitatem capiens, si rex ei petita negaret, quod¹ ipsum subito, ut credebatur, percuteret, Wat Tyler unde maxime timuerunt qui regi assistebant quid in facto eveniret.

Petunt a rege ut omnes warenne tam in aquis quam in parco et boscis communes fierent omnibus, ita ut libere posset, tam pauper quam dives, ubicunque in regno in aquis et stagnis piscariis et boscis et forestis foras capere, in campis lepores fugare, et sic hæc et hujusmodi alia multa sine contradictione exercere. Cumque rex de hujusmodi concessione cum deliberatione tardaret, Jakke Strawe propius accedens et regem [verbis] minacioribus alloquens, frenum equi regis, quo ausu nescio, manu arripuit. Quod Johannes de Walworth burgensis Londoniensis intuens, et mortem regi imminere pertimescens, arrepto basilardo² transfixit Jakke Straw in gutture. Vidensque hoc alius armiger nomine Radulfus Standyche³ cum alio basilardo penetravit latera ejus. Et sic corruit resupinus, aliquamdiu⁴ manibus et pedibus desiliens interit. Inde clamor ingens et ululatus factus est multus, Ductor noster mortuus est.

Wals. i. 464.

Tyler, col. 2657.

Wals. i. 465.

¹ quid is written above the line in A.

² Standiche, MS.

³ resupinus, MS.

⁴ Here on both margins is Prima dispersio.

A.D. 1381. Igitur sic mortuo et in ecclesiam sancti Bartholomei, quae prope erat, manibus et pedibus viliter tracto, multi de illis se subtraxerunt, et quasi evanescentes in fugam se subito dederunt, numero, ut credebant, circiter x. millia. Tunc rex dicto Johanni de Walworth¹ et Radulfo de Standyche vicem

reprensens ipsos cum aliis iiii. burgensibus de civitate militari cingulo sublimavit, scilicet dominos Johannem et Philippum, Nicholaum de Brembre, et Johannem Laurunde,

[et] Nicholaum Twyford. His militibus sic a³ rege ordinatis jussit rex ut ceteri qui remanserant de nefanda turba secederent et abirent in campum, et ibi convenirent, ut ibidem posset cum illis de concordia tractare. Illis ibidem constitutis, ecce processit interim

de civitate multitudo armorum duce domino Roberto Knollys⁴ cum aliis militibus, et circumvallabant cohortem miseram in campo quasi oves desolatam sine pastore. Tunc rex pius qualis fuissent⁵ conditionis misericordia motus noluit miseris interire, parvens stultae

multitudini, jussit eos abire unumquemque in domum suam, multis tamen interim recedente tege damnata mortis perpessus. In illa misera multitudo recesserunt xx. mille. Isti fuerunt ductores⁶ eorum, Thomas Baker primus motor sed postea principalis ductor, Jakke Strawe, Jakke Mylner, Jakke Carter, Jakke Trewman. Jakke Mylner alloquitur socios sic.

Jakke Mylner asketh⁷ help to turne hys mylne aright. He hath grounden smal smal,⁸ the kings sone of heven he schal

¹ *Walworth*, MS.

² *Phyllypote*, MS.

³ Here on both margins is *Rex fecit milites*.

⁴ On margin of A. only is *Robertus Knollys*.

⁵ Here a space is left in both MSS., enough for a couple of words, and *qualis fuissent* consequently

make no sense. The two words may be omitted without losing the general meaning of the sentence. It probably ran somewhat thus: *qualis fuisset in omnibus rebus, as an expansion of pius.*

⁶ On both margins is *Ductores*.

⁷ *asketh*, A.

⁸ *small small*, MS.

pay for alle. Loke thy mylne go aright, with the fourre A.D. 1381. sayles, and the post stande in stedfastnesse.¹ With ryght and with myght, with skyl and with wylle, lat mygt helpe goth oure mylne aright. And if mygt go before ryght, and wylle before skylle; than is oure mylne mys adyght.

Wals. ii.
34.

Jak Carter.

Jakke Carter prayes zowe alle that ze make a gode ende Jack of that ze hane begunnen, and doþ wele and ay better and botur, for at the even² men heryth³ the day. For if the ende be wele, than is alle wele. Let Perce the Plowman my brother duelle at home and dygt us corne, and I will go with zowe and helpe that y may to dygte zoure nete and zoure drynke, that ze nome fayle; lokke that Hobbe robberyoure be wele chasyed for leaying of zoure grace for ze have gret mede to take God with zowe in alle zoure dedes.⁴ For nowe is tyme to be war.⁵

Jak⁶ Trewman.

Jakke Trewman doth zow to understande that falsnes and Jek gyle havt⁷ regned to long, and trowpe hat bene sette under a lokke, and falsnes regneth in everylk⁸ flokke. No man may come trowpe to, bot he syng si dedero. Speke, spende and spede, quoth Jon of Bathon, and therefore synne fareth as wilde flode, krew love is away, that was⁹ so gode, and clerks for welthe worche hem wo. God do- bote, for nowze is tyme.

Twys. col.
2638.

Exemplar epistolae Johannis Balle.

Jon Balle gretyth zow wele alle and doth zowe to under. John Ball's stande, he hath rungen zoure belle. Nowe rygt and mygt, letter. wylle and skylle. God spede every ydele. Nowe is tyme

¹ *steddefastnesse*, MS.

² *even*, MS.

³ *heryth*, MS.

⁴ *deed*, MS.

⁵ *warre*, MS.

⁶ *Jakke*, MS.

⁷ *have*, MS.

⁸ *every*, MS.

⁹ *wate*, MS.

A.D. 1381. Lady helpe to Ihesu bi some, and bi some to his fadir, to make a gode ende, in the name of the Trinite of Pat is begunne amen, amen, pur charite, amen.

Prims epistola Johannis Baile.

John Baile,¹ seynte Marye prist gretes welo alle maner men and byrdes hem in the name of the Trinite, Fadir, and Sone and Holy Gost stonde manlyche togedyr in trowthe, and helpez trowthe, and trowthe schal helpe Gowe. Wals. ii. Now regneth pride in pris, and covetyse is hold wys, and 32. leecherye withouten shame and glotonye withouten blame. Envye regnij with tresone, and slouth is take in gretre sesone. God do bete, for nowe is tyme amen.

Similar rising in Norfolk and elsewhere.

In Essex Southfolc and Northfolc similiter sur- Wals. ii. 1. rexerunt communes in quibusdam locis in magna multitudine, et multa mala fecerunt et plures probos homines decollaverunt. Et sciendum quod in omnibus locis habebant eundem modum jugulandi. Dominum Johannem de Candyche justiciarium regis capitani-um trucidaverunt. Dominum quoque Robertum Salle militem in armis strenuitate famosum decollaverunt, sicque inaudita et enormia mala a seculo non audita, non solum in una patria sed in multis partibus regni irreperabiliter perpetrata sunt.

Similiter apud Peturburgh,² compatriotæ et tenentes abbatibus ejusdem surrexerunt contra eandem domum sollicit abbatiam, et eam exterminare cupiebant atque proposerunt, quod et irremediabiliter fecissent nisi deus manum resisticem eis inopinata immississet. Nam auxilium eorum a domino Henrico le Spenser episcopo Northwyceensi,³ divina mediante superna clementia, qui cum forti manu armata supervenit, ipsosque malefactores ab incepto proposito perturbavit, et ipsosque persecutus turbam eorum dissipavit, et eis reddens prout meruerunt, scilicet aliis

¹ John Baile] twice in MS.

² On both margins is *Peturburgh*. | *Northwyceensis*.

mortem, aliis carcerem et vincula, nomini parcens; et A.D. 1381. dum plures eorum fugam caperent ad ecclesiam pro Ricardi prasidio, in foveam perditionis ceciderunt quam ad ecclesie paraverant, nam ecclesie immunitatem non punibant. meruerunt qui valles ecclesie destruere non metuebant. Nam quidam eorum juxta altare et ad parietes ecclesie, tam intra ecclesiam quam extra, lanceis et gladiis confossi sunt. Et sicut illi in sua ferocitate positi nemini parebant sed ultioneu furiosam exercebant, sic nec oculus episcopi cuiquam eorum As they pepercit, sed digna pro dignis rependens, et eadem mensura qua mensi fuerunt remettebatur illis; nam nec ecclesiam et viros ecclesie, destruere venerunt, et in ecclesia et ab ecclesia, ut ita dicam, immo quia ita dicere andeo quia ab ecclesiastica persona perire meruerunt; nam manus ejus in ultionem eorum valde lietanter erat extensa, et absolutionem gladialem episcopalis dignitas eis impendere in extremis non dedig- mabatur pro suis delictis, ut adimpleretur quod dictum est per prophetam, Reges eos in virga ferrea et tanquam vas figuli confringes eos. Similiter faciebat iste valens episcopus in diversis locis in comitatibus Cantabrigie et Hontyngdonie; et in quibuscumque locis de talibus audiebat, sine mora eis occurrebat, illos disperdens, superbiam eorum funditus quassavit.

Wals. col. 469.

As they mensura, they were not spared.

The church was ravaged.

W. ii. 9.

The bishop of Norwich takes like measure in other parts.

West. Abb. S. Alban iii. 293.

1. Apud sanctum Albanum communes de villa, et multi a finibus illis egressi obliti bonorum ad abbatiam confluebant, abbatemque et conventum petitionibus eorum adulescere et eis petita concedere atque de multis libertatibus in non modicum dispendium domus et gravamen. Et hæc tenentes abbatibus sibi fecerunt pro suo perpetuo habituri. Sed rex infra breve super- veniens cartam frangi fecit, et malefactores puniri. Similiter in multis locis ceperunt tenentes contra suos dominos invalescere, unde scriptum est. Asperius nihil

Wals. i. 477.

Violent demands of the tenants at St. Alban.

¹ Here on both margins is *Apud sanctum Albanum*.

A. D. 1381. est humilli cum surgit in altum. Nam seipsum ignorabant, suam conditionem non attendebant, nec de fine perpendebant, sed facti sunt velut stulti sicuti qui prius saltant quam lapsum suum considerant; sicque in illis nefarius impletum est quod de sanctis Apostolis scriptum est, In omnes terras exiit, etc. Ps. xviii. 5.

Nam corda hominum tam in remotis et extremis partibus quam in propinquis et vicinis ubicunque in regno a timore eorum contremuerunt, et ubique tremuli et confertissimi credebant eos statim absque mora inopinata singuli in suis partibus affuturos.

General alarm.

¹ In Leycestria venit nuncius vespere ad majorem

Report that the rioters were coming to Leicester.

Alarm of the mayor at the news.

villæ asserens eos prope esse apud Harberough; ² ap- proximates, cum idem profani essent Londoniis, et in crastino circa horam primam diei in villam Leycestriae fore venturos ad destruendum manerium ducis Leacestriae ibidem, et omnia bona ejus ibidem inventa dilaceranda. et eventenda atque comburenda, nam quaedam habebat ibidem de cotidianis suis necessariis quia saepius ibi fovebat familiam suam, tamen in tempore istiusmodi confictus in marchia erat cum Scotis de negotiis regni tractaturus. Quid plura? Major inde maxime conturbatus et conterritus, et quid in casu sibi ipsi contrario faceret contremescens. Si eis resistere disponeret forte deficeret, et sic cum suis consentaneus judicaretur. Salubri usui consilio convocavit vicinos suos juratos et alios peritiores, quorum consilio eadem nocte fecit proclamationem ad altam crucem villæ, et ad iii. portas sub nomine regis, quod unusquisque paratus esset mane seipsum et proximos defensurus. Similiter sub certa pena regi danda, quod omnes et singuli de villa tam divites quam pauperes, tam magistri quam servientes, meliori modo

¹ Here on both margins is *Ley-* | ² *Harberough*, MS. *cestriu*.

quo se armari possent et se defendere scirent, omni A. D. 1381. excusatione postposita, extra villam super montem vocatum Galtrehill armis suis taliter stipati manere convenirent, si forte possent, divina eos adjuvante gratia et patria eis similiter succurrente, contra inimicos tam subito supervenientes, occurrere resistendo. Galtrehill. eos tam subito supervenientes, occurrere resistendo. Galtrehill. Quo in loco cum convenissent numerati sunt circiter mille ducenti tam de bonis et aliis.

Altera quoque die fecerunt similiter ostendentes se in eodem loco, et eventum rei cum magno timore expectantes; nam exploratores emisserant et ad explorandum de operibus eorum et eos certificandum ubi essent, et quando ad recipiendum eos, sive cum pace sive cum pugna, nec erat aliquis eorum qui rediret nunciare eis sive bonum sive malum. Propterea magis timuerunt. Interim custos gardropia domini ducis rediit de Londoniis similiter metuens ne supervenirent ad destruendum si quid inventum in castello Leycestriae ducis unde cum festinatione qua potuit ea que invenit in castello, onustis carrectis fecit deduci ad abbatiam Leycestriae pro salva tuitione habenda a praedictis inimicis. Cum diebus ibidem venissent die Martis sequenti circa meridiem, abbas nimio terrore percussus, sicut et ceteri castri regni, non audebat ea hospitio recipere, ne forte hujusmodi rei occasione tota abbatia detrimentum intolerabile exterminii pateretur, quia idem communes pacificum duces Lancastriae super omnes mortales in illo conflictu magis exosum habebant, et si ipsum invenissent absque mora ab eis periclitaretur; sicque redierunt ad carrectas onustae prout venerant, et in area ecclesiae sanctae Mariae de Castro bona illa exposita sunt, divi- nam gubernationem, sine cuius adminiculo nihil superest, expectando.

In illis diebus, ut jam ante dictum est, erat praefatus Theobaldus dux Lancastriae Johannes in Marchia Scotiae ad tractandum cum Scotis de negotiis regni. Quod, ut out of the way at the

¹ WYs. col. 264b.

A.D. 1391. credibile fieri potuit, ex divina dispositione ei accidit, *Wals. ii.* quod procul ab illis partibus absens esset ne in manus *41.* nefandorum caderet sine natura¹ occidentandus. Domina Constantia ducissa Lancastrie talibus auditis timore

magno percussa cordis est, malignorumque rabiem de-
 clinare volens, et pro refugio sub alas domini sui
 volare desiderans, cum festinatione qua potuit iter
 Pontefract arripuit, venique ad Pontefractum ad castellum suum
 pro subsidio habenda quasi in domo propria secura.
 Et qui inibi erant ipsam hospitio et salvo custodire
 nullatenus voluerunt, sed recusaverunt ipsam cum cas-
 tello sub securitate custodire. Dicebant namque se non
 audere: sicque desolata et quasi a propria domo cum
 pudore in lassitudine repulsa, eadem nocte cum lumine
 cerea antequam discesceret viam septem leucarum peregrit,
 et absque quietis refocillatione apud Knaresburgh² per-
 venit, et ibi moram fecit, donec, cessante procellosa
 tempestate rabidi cursus, serenitas tranquillitatis et
 pacis superlucit, et pius dux pacis et misericordiae de
 Scotia cum honore reverteretur.

Jam precesserunt detrimetosa cum lamentatione
 dolorosa, nunc succedunt lacrimosa cum diligenti ama-
 ritudine compassiosa. Igitur pio duce non sui scilicet
 sed regni negotiis sic se in remotis habente, rumor
 hujusmodi rapacitatis ad aures ejus pervenit. Quo
 subito turbatus³ et licet perturbatus mirum non⁴ esset,
 et inde non ex arrepto sed cum summa deliberatione,
 sapientissimo usus consilio, non motus ira quia non
 proderet, non concussus vecordia quia in aliquo delicto
 non reus, sed qualis fuerit in omnibus actibus suis
 ostensus, scilicet pius et mitis, hillari vultu audita,
 quasi motus non esset, secreta conservavit, et usque
 ad tempus aptum occultum absque revelatione qua-
 cunque silenter conservari mandavit, nec cuidam reve-
 2641.

¹ *materia* MS.

² *et licet perturbatus* om. MS.

³ *Knaresburgh*, MS.

⁴ *non* is on the margin in A.

laci permisit. Sed finem negotii sui pro quo ibidem A.D. 1391.
 venerat, cum festinatione qua potuit totis nisibus¹ ac-
 celeravit, nam prope finem erant ex utraque parte de
 tractatu suo.

Fine igitur habito, et hinc inde indenturis sigil-
 latis, tunc primo petit a Scotis licentiam in Scotiam
 intrare, et ibidem pro certo tempore si vellet moram
 facere, atque quando ei placeret absque impedimento
 sui vel alicujus suorum licenter redire et abire,
 nonnum enim innotuit Scotis necessitatis causa. His
 itaque ad votum patrat², tunc demum convocavit
 consilium suum atque familiam, et intimavit eis cala-
 mitatem gentis Anglorum australis plage. Et ecce
 ploratus et ululatus multus lacrimantium atque plan-
 gentium. Tunc ille cum omni mansuetudine et pietate
 dedit licentiam suis omnibus, et rogavit ut unusquis-
 que rediret ad propria, ne detrimentum paterentur de
 bonis suis. At illi ab eo, veluti discipuli a Christo,
 relicto eo, omnes fingerunt, paucis admodum cum eo
 remanentibus. Similiter ei relatum est quod duo
 turmae nefandorum luporum discurrerant per duas
 electorum ad rapiendum eum, una turma per orien-
 talem partem, et alia turma per occidentalem partem.
 Similiter quoque omnia quae habebat Leycestriae de-
 structa erant, et castellum de Tuttebery everberatum
 et multa alia perpetrata, quae de facto falsa erant.
 Unde non mirum esset licet cor ejus haec horrida
 frangerent. Comes quoque de Northumbria invitaverat
 eum ad cenam et cum eo pernoctandum. Cumque
 accessisset ad locum, ecce quidam miles dicti comitis
 cum aliis armigeris venit ei obviam in medio itineris,
 nuncians ei, dictum comitem dominum suum nec
 audere nec velle ipsum: ducem hospitio recipere, nec
 aliquid humanitatis ei impendere, nec in aliquo cas-

Wals. ii.
 42.

¹ *nisibus* *acceleravit*] on the margin in A.
 o 63014.
 K

A.D. 1381. tello seu villa, suæ custodiæ deputatis intrare permittere, donec sciret utrum dominus rex ei benevolus esset. *Wals. ii. au. non.* O casus super omni parte supra modum dolendus! pacis amator et reformator a pace sine delicto deicitur et perturbatur. Quo se divertat, quo caput suum inclinet? Si ad castrum de Banburgh¹ gressum chian moram facere disposuerat, dictus comes eum prevenit ingressumque prohibuit, victualia quoque quæ pro se et familia sua ibidem paraverat secum abducere denegavit, unde orta est magna discordia, nec immerito, inter eos.

Videns igitur pius dux innocentissimus quomodo predictus comes super ceteros rumores adversabatur, magis sibi timuit ne rex ab aliquibus æmulis ejus sub sinistro consilio ductus ad istiusmodi luporum rabiem inconsulte præberet assensum.² Et ut verum fatear, in multis locis regni divulgatum fuerat, regnum assensum intervenisse in his quæ contra eum fiebant. Quod quidem a nonnullis credebatur licet vane, qui tamen forte, ut assolet, lingue habenas a cordis radice laxabant, cupientes quod ore fatabantur in effectum durius evenisse: nam plures habuit æmulos et inimicos divites simul ac pauperes, qui potius sinistra quam bona de eo loquebantur, male de eo sentientes, injusta contra eum cum non esset eorum meritis sepe meditantur. Sed deus semper adiutor ejus versutias omnium inimicorum vertebat in bonum, et omni tempore compescuit malitiam eorum, et ipsum eripuit de manibus eorum. Spretus igitur sic pius dux a dicto comite et ex omni parte sic agonizatus, et ab hospicio suo atque victualibus tam horribiliter³ dejectus, recessit, nec mirum, corde merore repletus gressumque suum sub conductu præhabito in Scotiam direxit, ab amicis et cognatis repulsus, inter inimicos

¹ The duke begins to fear lest the king should be set against him.

² This was reported to be so.

³ This was by his rivals.

God was his help.

¹ Banburgh, MS.

² assensum] on the margin in A.

et ignotos hospitium quæsiturus. Ad villam de Ed-A.D. 1381. nesburgh¹ domino eum protegente in omnibus viis suis cum pervenisset, quos antea habuerat adversarios et inimicos tunc invenit eos amicos familiarissimos, nam Edla-Sooti humanissime eum receperunt, et donis, magnifici-burgh, centis, exanimis honorificentiori modo quo sciebant ipsum glorificaverunt, et victualia ad plenum ei ministraverunt, et quicquid posset honoris vel solatii excogitari ei impendere sollicitè curabant.

Comes de Duglas, et comes de Dunbarre cum aliis where he duobus comitibus venerunt ad eandem villam in ejus is well solatium et confortationem, ibique expensis propriis and is aliquamdiu moram fecerunt ad ejus consolationem. the earls Quid plura? Similiter ex alia parte ad memoriam of Douglas deduxit actus suos præcedentis vitæ suæ, et de sin-Dunbar. gulis operibus suis si in aliquo delicto transgressus fuerat, clam vel palam, erga regem vel regnum, quo tale quid mereretur ex sua culpa. Sicque He ex- librata conscientia eum animo suo, et in se non amines his reperiens modicum vel grande quo posset juste life, and in accusari vel quid contra eum juste obici, his et thereby, his similibus cum sapienti deliberatione excogitatis in seipsum rediens, confortationem aliqualem inde sumpsit, in transacta justitia sua fiduciam habens, et in deo fixit cor suum, cui se et causam suam cum omni attentione commendavit, animadvertens quod scriptum est, Multæ tribulationes justorum et de his omnibus liberabit eos deus.

Inter cetera tamen in memoriam retorquebat quomodo He recalls ac sæpius audierat tam a viris ecclesiasticis quam a suis no mind ac sæpius audierat tam a viris ecclesiasticis quam a suis how his domesticis, qualiter fama ejus quasi in omnibus partibus character regni multo tempore denigrata fuerat, et qualiter ipse had been pro nullo duxerat quicquid ei dictum fuerat concupis- centia excecatus, nec deum timeans nec homines erubes- cens. Habebat namque quandam dominam Katerinam

¹ Ed. xxxiii.

² 20.

¹ Endusburgh, MSS.

A.D. 1381. de Swynforde alienigenam in familia cum uxore sua, unde suspicio sinistra maxima de eo oriebatur. Et his on account of Catharine excogitatis in seipsum, deo gratiam sibi inspirante, statim reuersus est, et se totum divinæ misericordiæ committens, et emendationem vitæ deo promittens, votum vovit deo, quod, quam citius posset, dictam dominam a familia sua amoveret cum effectu ulterius non offensus. Cumque ad propria redisset opportunitate nacta ipsam a domo sua statim amovit ulterius in familia sua non mansuram. Quid plura? Cumque ad aures boni regis Angliæ perstrepisset de tanta angustia eius et calamitate inaudita atque tristitia intolerabili puiducis avunculi sui, atque opprobriosa eius repulsione minus iuste ei objecta, maxime condoluit, et mox indilate literas consolatorias quam citius potuit ei transmittere festinavit. Et sic literis novis ac novis supervenientibus animum regis ei benevolunt cognoscens, ad plenum consolatus est, et quasi pro nihilo duxit tantam injuriam et irrecuperabilia damna bonorum suorum. Similiter et fratres sui in quantum poterunt eum consolari nisi sunt. O eventus quam variabilis! Nam unde maximum opprobrium illi oriebatur inde lætitia primi honoris provenit, et ideo cum redeunt consolationis mirabilia redit pio duci et eius dilectoribus lætitia.

And does so.

The king writes to the duke.

Who is comforted thereby.

And his heaviness is turned into joy.

The king commands the earl of Northumberland to keep the duke safe.

The duke declares he does

quo. Sicque abinveem recesserunt absque pluri, pius A.D. 1381, dux viam suam greditur, comes vero in domum suam revertitur.

Mandavit etiam rex omnibus et singulis dominis et plebi borialis plagæ ac etiam vicecomitibus et burgenisibus omnibus et singulis præcipiens, quod quilibet eorum cum fortitudine sufficienti secundum vires suas ipsam salvo transducant per partes suas. Sicque factum est quod, aliis recedentibus in suo comitatu aliisque succedentibus in alio comitatu, cum honoris tripudio venit per Eboracum, Notinghamiam, Leycestriam, aliquando mille comitatus lanceatis, ut dicebatur, et quandoque At hæc hæc numero majori stipatus, quandoque minori, exceptis segittariis et aliis. Tandem vero venit ad regem apud Reading, Redynges. Rex vero in ejus adventu admodum lætus effectus, cum magno honore eum suscepit, atque cum omni diligentiâ eum confortabat, donisque largitus, with all prout decuit regiam magnificentiam ad suum avunculum, hilari ter honorificavit.

Wals. ii. 44.

Ne cuidam cedat in mirum quare ipsum totiens pium duce vocitavi, diligens lector attendat et auditor, veritatis amicus, intelligat, quod iste pius! Let no one wonder at my praise of him, dux pietatis tanto robore fundatus extitit, quod in omnibus tribulationibus suis et in omnibus angustiis atque injuriis sibi malitiose illatis non vindicetam quesivit, non ultionem per suos mandavit, for he sed æquanimitèr tollerans cuicumque petenti delicta condonavit. Cum autem thesaurus argenteorum vasorum ejus per quosdam de familiaribus suis sæpius ad magnam summam furtive ablatu fuisset, et ministri ejus per juris rigorem contra eos captos tandem valent procedere eos suspendendo, tanta pietatis spiritus repletus erat quod ipsos prohibuit dicens se nolle aliquem hominem perire pro bonis suis, præcipiens semper tales dimitti sub abjuratone, quod se

sed æquanimitèr tollerans cuicumque petenti delicta condonavit. Cum autem thesaurus argenteorum vasorum ejus per quosdam de familiaribus suis sæpius ad magnam summam furtive ablatu fuisset, et ministri ejus per juris rigorem contra eos captos tandem valent procedere eos suspendendo, tanta pietatis spiritus repletus erat quod ipsos prohibuit dicens se nolle aliquem hominem perire pro bonis suis, præcipiens semper tales dimitti sub abjuratone, quod se

1 Here on both margins is *Piritas ductis*.

A.D. 1181. abstinerent a familia et domo regis, et domo sua, et domo fratrum suorum.

Enquiry made by justice Treslyon about the insurrection.

His itaque gestis¹ et quietis tempore succedente, aderat tempus quo rex puniri faceret delinquentes. Missus est igitur dominus Robertus Treslyon² iusticiarius præcepto regis ad inquirendum de surgen- tibus contra pacem et puniendum. Qui ubique dis- currents et nulli parcens fecit stragem magnam. Et ut illi malefactores inimicabiliter insidiabantur ad- versus iusticiarios, scilicet dominum Johannem de Candyche³ et alios quos invenire potuerunt, mortem eis inferendo capitalem, atque contra omnes legis regni peribos quos invenire poterant, nec curdam eorum pepercerunt capitali sententia puniendo, sic nec ipse cuiquam peperit, vicem pro vice repen- dens. Nam quicumque accusatus fuerat coram eo in causa supradicta, sive juste sive ex odio, statim ipsum mortis sententia plectebat. Et alios quidem decapitari præcepit, alios autem suspendi, alios vero trahi per civitates et suspendi per quatuor partes civitatum, alios autem eviscerari, visceraque concremari coram ipsis viventibus, posteaque decollari et in iv. partes dividi ac suspendi per iv. partes civitatum secundum delicti et meriti quantitatem. Dominus Johannes⁴ Fosc. Ziz. Balles vero captus fuit apud Coventre et ductus apud sanctum Albanum, ibique præcepto regis tractus fuit et suspensus, atque in iv. partes divisus, que ad iv. loca missæ sunt et suspensa.

John Balles haaged at St. Alban's.

Marriage of the king.

Eodem anno apud Westmonasterium rex Ricardus desponsavit⁵ Annam, filiam regis Boemi, sororem Im- peratoris, et dedit Imperatori ut dicebatur pro mari- tagio decem mille libras præter alias expensas in

¹ Here on both margins is *Ultio de communi bus.*

² *Treslyon*, MS.

³ *Candiche*, MS.

⁴ On both margins is *Johannes Balles.*

⁵ On both margins is *Rex Ri- cardus desponsavit.*

querendo eam et adducendo eam sumptibus suis A.D. 1181. propriis.

Anno proximo sequenti MCCCLXXII., regis Ricardi A.D. 1182 vº, dominus rex ad speciale rogatum Annæ reginæ et aliorum magnatum regni, et specialiter pii ducis Lancastriæ, condonavit generaliter omnibus antedictis partem. insurgentibus malefactoribus unientibus et adhaerentibus et consentientibus eisdem, et concessit cartas eidem prosequi volentibus; et mediante divina cle- mentia dicta rabies sic sopita est.

Fosc. Ziz. Xii. kalendarum Junii terræ motus generalis mala multa faciens in regno quasi prima hora post nonam

Wals. ii. feria quarta. Item die Veneris sequenti quasi in ortu solis terræ motus non multum nocens. Sabbato sequenti aque motus quasi hora tertia mane. Naves vacillabant in portibus ab aquæ motu.

In istis temporibus floruit magister Johannes Wyclyfe¹ rector ecclesie de Lutterworthe in comitatu Leyces Wyoliffe. In philosophia nulli reputabatur secundus, in scho- lasticis² disciplinis incomparabilis. Hic maxime nitē- batur aliorum ingenia subtilitate scientiæ et profundi- tate ingenii sui transcendere, et ab opinionibus eorum variare. Hic multas dicitur introducere in ecclesia opiniones quæ a catholicis ecclesie doctoribus repro- bantur, quæ in suo loco pro parte patebunt. Hic Johannem Baptistam, qui vias suas in talibus opi- nionibus preparavit, et plurimos quoque doctrina sua, rumor et ut dicitur, perturbavit. De quo superius mentionem feci. Hic magister Johannes Wyclyf Evangelium quod Christus contulit clericis et ecclesie doctoribus, ut ipsi laicis et infirmioribus personis, secundum tempo-

Fosc. Ziz. 272.

Wals. ii. 67.

Fosc. Ziz. 273.

¹ Here on both margins is *Wyclyff.*

² *scilicet*, MSS.

³ Here on margin of MS. only is *J. Ball.*