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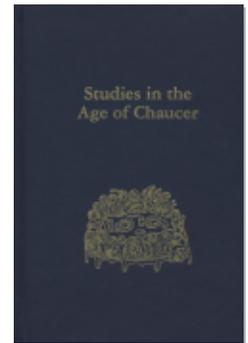
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## English Poetry, July–October 1399, and Lancastrian Crime

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“**A** MASTER OF LIES AND DISSIMULATION” is how J. W. Sherbourne characterized the person who made himself king of England by October 1399: “It is hard to think of another moment of comparable importance in medieval English political history when the supply of information was so effectively manipulated as it was by Henry IV on this occasion.” Sherbourne has it further that the earliest “clear evidence” of a perjured intention to make himself king on Henry’s part, his various solemn undertakings to the contrary notwithstanding, was in an effort to manage information. In August 1399, Henry dispatched writs ordering scrutiny of all *chronicae* “regni Angliae statum tangentes et gubernationem, a tempore Willelmi conquaestoris usque ad tempus praesens” [“touching on the status and governance of the realm of England from the time of William the Conqueror up to the present”], the intelligence gathered thereby—the pertinent chronicles themselves, under seal, in possession of persons “qui scirent respondere competenter et docere de chronicis supradictis” [“competent to explain the chronicles aforesaid and make answer”]—to be dispatched to Westminster for use of a committee there charged with considering the matter of Richard’s deposition and Henry’s accession to the throne (“deponendi regem Ricardum et Henricum Lancastrie ducem subrogandi in regem materia”).<sup>1</sup>

For correction and advice, thanks are due the editor, as well as Steven Justice and R. F. Yeager; also, the other interlocutors of the “Lancastrian Politics of Culture” seminar in the University of Ottawa, especially Andrew Taylor, Siobhan Bly Calkin, and Geoff Rector; and finally, A. G. Rigg, who, *i. a.*, did the better part of the work of reconstructing the text in the appendix.

<sup>1</sup>James W. Sherborne, “Perjury and the Lancastrian Revolution of 1399,” *Welsh History Review* 14 (1988): 218 and 239. The fundamental work on the various accounts of the deposition was that of Maude Violet Clarke and V. H. Galbraith, “The Deposition of Richard II,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 14 (1930): 125–81 (rpt. in Clarke,

The chief product of the committee's portentous labors was the October 1399 "Record and Process of the Deposition of Richard II," with its stunning preambular deceit, narrating Richard's willing resignation of the crown ("vultu hillari"), twice, on separate occasions.<sup>2</sup> The "Record and Process" was enrolled in the rolls of parliament, as the state-official record of events, and then it was also broadcast about the kingdom in various forms—in English even, and with key passages put about in brief pamphlets—coming thereby to dominate the English historical record after the fact, through the work of the compliant chroniclers who used it.<sup>3</sup>

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*Fourteenth Century Studies*, ed. Lucy S. Sutherland and May McKisack [Oxford: Clarendon, 1937], pp. 53–90), esp. 137–55, as Sherbourne acknowledges. Sherbourne's insight is the connection between the passage in Walsingham on the writs' dispatch and Adam Usk's participant's account of the committee work at Westminster, bespeaking regal ambitions on Henry's part (in *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377–1421*, ed. and trans. Chris Given-Wilson [Oxford: Clarendon, 1997], p. 62): "Item per sertos doctores, episcopos et alios, quorum presencium notator unus extiterat, deponendi regem Ricardum et Henricum Lancastrie ducem subrogandi in regem materia, et qualiter et ex quibus causis iuridice, committebatur disputanda. Per quos determinatum fuit quod periuria, sacrilegia, sodomica, subditorum exinnantio, populi in seruitutem redactio, uecordia, et ad regendum inutilitas, quibus rex Ricardus notorie fuit infectus, per capitulum *Ad apostolice*, extractus de *Re iudicata* in Sexto, cum ibi notatis, deponendi Ricardum cause fuerant sufficientes." Walsingham's complete remark is: "Litterae praeterea missae sunt ad omnes Abbathias regni, et maiores ecclesias, ut praelati dictarum ecclesiarum perscrutari facerent cunctas Chronicas regni Angliae statum tangentes et gubernationem, a tempore Willelmi conquaestoris usque ad tempus praesens; ut mitterent certas personas instructas in chronicis, secum ferentes huiusmodi chronicas, sub sigillis comunibus dictorum locorum, qui scirent respondere competenter et docere de Chronicis supradictis. Et haec quidem apices missae fuerunt sub nomine regis Ricardi, et privato sigillo suo": *Chronica maiora*, in "Annales Ricardi secundi," ed. Henry Thomas Riley, in *Jobannis de Trokelowe, et Henrici de Blaneforde, monachorum S. Albani, necnon quorundam anonymorum Chronica et Annales*, Rolls Series 28, pt. 3 (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866), p. 252. As it happens, all the quotations of Walsingham herein are from this portion of the *Chronica*, henceforth cited as *Annales*. On the peculiar editorial state in which the Rolls Series editions put Walsingham's work, see esp. Galbraith, "Thomas Walsingham and the Saint Albans Chronicle, 1272–1422," *EHR* 47 (1932): 12–30; also George B. Stow, "Richard II in Thomas Walsingham's Chronicles," *Speculum* 59 (1984): 68–102.

<sup>2</sup>Sherbourne, "Perjury and the Lancastrian Revolution," p. 218: "Who today believes a word of it?" The "Record and Process" is printed in *Rotuli parliamentorum: ut et petitiones, et placita in parlamento*, ed. Richard Blyke, John Strachey et al., 8 vols. (London: [s. n.], 1780–1832), III, 416–24, the portion here referred to and quoted being at III, 416–17.

<sup>3</sup>On the creation and recirculation of the "Record and Process," most instructive may yet be H. G. Richardson, "Richard II's Last Parliament," *EHR* 52 (1937): esp. 40–42, though on the poets see also Paul Strohm, "Saving the Appearances: Chaucer's 'Purse' and the Fabrication of the Lancastrian Claim," in *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 75–94. On the excerpts surviving in the form of a single conjugate bifolium (London,

Poets of similar disposition may also have been enlisted to help fabricate the record, at just the same moment when the writs of research went out, in August 1399. The evidence is all indirect, only tractable by paranoiac inference: once or twice might be accidents of enthusiasm; more, it begins to look like conspiracy, and there survive five “English” poems, all sharing the same curious array of properties. All purport to have been written late in the summer of 1399, before the deposition of Richard II, castigating his regime and calling for the Lancastrian invasion and usurpation that were then only in progress. Despite generic differences among them suggesting different intended audiences, the poems concur in using the same odd enigmatic allegorical idiom, in a way otherwise unparalleled in the literature. And all also converge on exonerating Henry of murder and perjury, when he had acted as a king, while still promising publicly that he did not want to be one, by ordering execution of the Ricardian officers Scrope, Bussy, Green, and Bagot.

Helen Barr has suggested that poets “may even have been part of the Lancastrian aim of legitimization.”<sup>4</sup> What follows attempts to develop such evidence as there may be for conspiracy on the occasion, or collaboration in some sense (though possibly still only coincidence): (1) the poems’ statements about their own chronologies, false and true; (2) the matters of their generic distribution and peculiar style; (3) their contributions to politics, in the narrowest sense, concerned with the current struggle within the ruling elite for control of the surplus-extraction mechanisms, in land-tenure and the repressive apparatus of state; and (4) the context of the broad current effort to represent as righteous and lawful the lawlessness and crime used to put the Lancastrian regime in place—to make *Henricus pius*—with which, one way or another, the poets complied.

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British Library, Stowe 66), see H. G. Wright, “The Protestation of Richard II in the Tower in September, 1399,” *BJRL* 23 (1939): esp. 154–55; some of its contents are collated in G. O. Sayles, “The Deposition of Richard II: Three Lancastrian Narratives,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 54 (1981): 264–66.

<sup>4</sup>In the chapter “Unfixing the King: Gower’s *Cronica tripertita* and *Richard the Redeless*,” in *Socioliterary Practice in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 79. Other cases of royal enlistment of poets are known: the early case (1314) of Edward II and the poet “Baston” is discussed in A. G. Rigg, “Antiquaries and Authors: The Supposed Works of Robert Baston, O. Carm.,” in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scolar, 1978), pp. 317–31; and recently, an early fifteenth-century attempt by Henry IV to employ Christine de Pizan has been argued, in R. F. Yeager, “Chaucer’s ‘To His Purse’: Begging, Or Begging Off?” *Viator* 36 (2005): esp. 399–401 and 407–10.

### The Poems and Their Imputable Dates

First comes a brief Latin verse oration, beginning “O deus in celis, cuncta disponens fidelis,” in forty-two lines of Leonine hexameters.<sup>5</sup> The poem refers to Henry Bolingbroke repeatedly, never as anything greater than *dux*, moreover, as *dux Lancastrie* (27; also 30 “Henricus, Lancastrie”), a title apt for him only briefly, during some period in the interval between the death of his father, the duke of Lancaster John of Gaunt (d. 3 February 1399) and his own assumption of regal style, as Henry IV, publicly 30 September 1399, though when precisely in this period cannot be established: Henry was legally disbarred from doing homage for the ducal title after 18 March 1399 and in fact never formally acceded to it; likewise, though careful not to use regal style himself before 30 September, others may have been readier to entitle Henry somewhat sooner than he was.<sup>6</sup> In addition to complaining of common suffering and bad counsel around the throne (14 “Consilium tale pereat a sede regali”), “O deus in celis” calls specifically for Henry’s invasion in force (31 “Scutis <patronus> nos protegat vndique pronus!”) and for violent uprising on his behalf (28 “Huius consortes estote per omnia fortes!” and 38 “Expedit armare, nos a somno vigilare”), as if he had not yet invaded and gathered armed support to him.

Similarly brief, in ninety short-lined rhyming English verses, ballad-like, is a poem called “On King Richard’s Ministers” by its earliest modern editor.<sup>7</sup> This item makes some allusion to earlier events, of the pe-

<sup>5</sup> A text and translation are essayed in the Appendix below. The poem was published by Thomas Wright, *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History Composed During the Period from the Accession of EDW. III. to that of RIC. III.*, Rolls Series 14, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1859–61), I, 366–68.

<sup>6</sup> The disbarment was implicit in parliament’s revocation—itsself later treated as perjured or otherwise illegal—of certain royal letters patent earlier granted Henry (see *Rotuli parliamentorum*, III, 372; also in S. B. Chrimes and A. L. Brown, *Select Documents of English Constitutional History* [London: Adam & Charles Black, 1961], p. 178), though the legal issues are involute; there is useful brief discussion in Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 403–4. The “Record and Process” itself is careful to call Henry *rex* only after he had claimed the formally vacated throne and been acclaimed or elected to it by the assembly (the first occurrence of the title applied to him comes at *Rotuli parliamentorum*, III, 423); earlier in the same document he is entitled only *dux*.

<sup>7</sup> Again, ed. Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, I, 363–66. I cite the edition of the same poem, though under the title “There Is a Busch That Is Forgrowe,” in James M. Dean, *Medieval English Political Writings*, Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 150–52. In Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, *A New Index of Middle English Verse* (London: British Library, 2005)—henceforth *NIMEV*—it is no. 3529.

riod of Richard's "Revenge" parliament, roughly August–September 1397, but to none later than Henry's landing in force at Ravenspur in the last few days of June 1399: Henry "is up and toke his flyt; / In the north contré he is light: / Thus here ye alle men saye" (43–45).<sup>8</sup> The same poem mentions the late duke of Gloucester's widow as still mournfully living and his son as missing, though the widow died 3 October 1399 and the son too, at uncertain date, though less than a month before his mother (he was still alive in August, apparently): Gloucester "is ded," says the poet, "his make is woo, / Her eldest bryd is taken her fro / In to an uncod place" (31–33).<sup>9</sup> By this its most definite evidence, the poem puts its own composition in July or possibly August 1399.

More complex and apparently some weeks later is the 857-line fragment now called *Richard the Redeless*, in English alliterative long lines, in the unique surviving manuscript distributed among four *passus*, as in *Piers Plowman*.<sup>10</sup> The poem's spatiotemporal scene setting is precise and clear enough at the outset (and the manuscript is evidently not defective here as it is elsewhere): from Bristol (1.2 "In a blessid borugh that Bristow is named"), the poet reports, Henry has returned to England, rallying support for professedly limited aims (not to make himself king, but only 1.13 "to rightyn his wronge"), while Richard is away campaigning in Ireland.

So sore were the sawis of bothe two sidis:  
Of Richard that regned so riche and so noble,  
That wyle he werrid be west on the wilde Yrisse,  
Henri was entrid on the est half,  
Whom all the londe loued in lengthe and in brede,  
And rosse with him rapely to rightyn his wronge.  
(1.8–13)

Again, this was the situation in July 1399, and the poet is claiming that the outcome of such conflict as was in process could not yet be foreseen:

<sup>8</sup>The precise date of Henry's landing is not known; for discussion of the evidence, see Saul, *Richard II*, p. 408 and n.

<sup>9</sup>The deaths are reported, for example, in the *Vita Ricardi secundi*, ed. Stow, *Historia vitae et regni Ricardi Secundi* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), p. 155, though the various sources differ on particulars: see Stow's nn. 440–41, pp. 207–8, or Given-Wilson, *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, p. 61 n. 5.

<sup>10</sup>I cite the edition of Barr, in *The Piers Plowman Tradition* (London: Dent, 1993), pp. 101–33. On the setting and date, see Frank Grady, "The Generation of 1399," in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 211–12.

“For it passid my parceit and my preifis also, / How so wondirffull wer-  
kis wolde haue an ende” (1.17–18).

These initial claims are not belied elsewhere in what survives of the poem. The poet describes Henry as leading his supporters regally one time—“In full reall aray he rood vppon hem euere”—though this does not amount to calling him king quite, and the preceding line entitles him *dux* only, albeit in similarly formulaic language: “a duke doughty in dedis of armes” (3.359–60). Also, from time to time, the poet tends to write as if Richard had already lost sovereignty, as a practical matter, beyond any hope of his recovering it. Twice, for example, the poet tells Richard, addressing him directly, that his manifold wrongdoings have “crasid youre croune for euere” (1.95; cf. 1.157): “But if God helpe, youre heruest is ynne” (1.166). Only the living are addressed in such terms, of course, and the poet is careful always to call Richard king, “oure crowned kyng” (pointedly, though, only “till Crist woll no lenger”):

And as a [liage] to his [lord] though I lite hade,  
All myn hoole herte was his while he in helthe regnid.  
And for I [wuste] not witterly what shulde fall,  
Whedir God wolde [g]eue him grace sone to amende,  
To be oure gioure a[g]leyn or graunte it another,  
This made me to muse many tyme and ofte,  
Forto written him a writte to wissen him better,  
And to meuve him of mysserewle his mynde to reffresshe.  
(1.24–32)

The risks of admonishing a still-sovereign Richard II in this way must create suspicion of a postdeposition vantage point. It may be even probable that the poet was writing after the deposition, or was finishing up. Nevertheless, the poet’s contrivances amount to avoidance of direct, unequivocal statements to the effect that Henry became king and Richard ceased to be, let alone that Richard was still later done to death. The summer of 1399 scene-setting at the outset may be a fiction, but it need not have been fictional by much time. There is no mention in the poem (allegorical or otherwise) of any event postdating the summer of 1399 by more than a few weeks.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The latest reference I find is to William Bagot’s appearance in Henry’s first parliament in October 1399, discussed below, pp. 397–8. Barr, “The Dates of *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*,” *N&Q* 235 (1990), esp. 271–72 (also, *Piers Plowman Tradition*, p. 261), suggests that the reference of *Richard* 2.17 is to events of January

The *Cronica tripartita* of John Gower (c. 1330–1408) ought not to be included here perhaps. It does not maintain consistently the same claim (fictional or otherwise) of predeposition composition.<sup>12</sup> Gower narrates a more extensive range of events than do the other poets—from the November 1386 establishment of the “Commission of Governance,” chiefly, to the public obsequies for Richard II in February 1400—and often enough he seems clearly to be narrating with hindsight. Why else, for example, his assertion that the earl of Arundel’s body had not yet reached its final place of rest (2.157–58 “Det deus hoc sciri, poterit quod adhuc sepeliri, / Eius et heredes proprias habeant sibi sedes” [“So he may rest in peace, God, let us know the place / And then his heirs may reacquire his proper space”]), unless Gower already knew that the body was to be moved again?

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1400: the *Richard*-poet describes Richard’s men’s desertion of him at the time of the invasion, during July and August 1399, and comments that some at least of these liveried retainers, deerlike by virtue of their use of the Ricardian White Hart badge and their cowardice, kept some capacity to make trouble afterward or were allowed it: “But yet they had hornes half yere after.” There was the rising against Henry in January 1400, occurring three months after he became king—at some point, say, between 30 September 1399 (the date of his public claim to the throne and acclamation) and 13 October 1399 (the date of the coronation)—though in the seventh month after his return to England, at roughly the beginning of July 1399. The *Richard*-poet’s roundly vague dating-phrase “half yere after” appears formulaic, however, as is indicated by the evidence from *Richard* itself and other cognate poetry that Barr collects, “The Dates of *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*,” pp. 272–73, citing there also Elizabeth Salter’s cautionary analysis of other parallels, “The Timeliness of *Wynner and Wastoure*,” *MÆ* 47 (1978), 40–65. The poet’s phrase “But yet they had hornes half yere after” tends to suggest ignorance of January 1400 revolt, when such “hornes” as Richard’s feral adherents had been left were no longer “had,” but all lost, conclusively; the phrase may only mean what it says: at the moment of the invasion and usurpation, Henry was clement towards Richard’s adherents (see below, pp. 402–4).

<sup>12</sup>See Grady, “The Generation of 1399,” pp. 209–10. Often adduced in evidence on this point, erroneously, is *Cronica* 1.9 “Libro testante, stat cronica scripta perante,” where the reference of *liber* and *cronica* must be to the *Vox clamantis*, treating events of the earlier period of Richard’s rule, particularly its Book One on the Great Revolt of 1381 (*Cronica* 1.5 “Quomodo surrexit populus”). The *Vox clamantis* was written earlier (“perante”) than the *Cronica tripartita*, and remained in circulation (“Libro testante, stat cronica scripta”: also, the following line 1.10 “Est alibi dicta, transit nec ab aure relicta”), in some cases in manuscripts in which the *Cronica tripartita* followed it. In this prologue-like passage at the beginning of the *Cronica*, Gower is connecting his present work on the *Cronica* to the *Vox clamantis* by these references back to his earlier work. The line is mistranslated, “With this book as witness, the chronicle was written beforehand”—as if *liber* (“this book”) and *cronica* (“the chronicle”) refer to the *Cronica tripartita* itself—in Eric Stockton, *The Major Latin Works of John Gower* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p. 290, adding a confused note on the passage, p. 471. For citing the *Cronica*, I use the text of G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The Latin Works*, in *The Complete Works of John Gower*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), 314–43, though tacitly altering

Gower does intermittently invoke the notion that he was writing as events unfolded—journalism, in a fairly strict sense—even though the *Cronica*'s putatively current reportage often supersedes itself. For example, the second book pretends not to know what was to happen to the earl of Gloucester when he was arrested 11 July 1397 (2.50 “Nescit quo fine, sit vite siue ruine” [“He knows not whether life or death will be his fate”]). Soon, however, Gower goes on to tell what did happen: Gloucester was murdered in captivity, in late August 1397 (2.91–118), though in so doing Gower makes use of detailed information about the murder that came to light (or may have been fabricated) only long afterward, about October 1399. Then Gower ends his report of the murder with a prayer for Gloucester's proper burial, emphatically unisonant-couplet rhymed (2.117–18 “Det deus hoc fatum, sit adhuc quod corpus humatum, / Spiritus atque statum teneat sine fine beatum!” [“May God grant that his body find at last its rest, / And may his soul in heaven finally be blest!”]), as if it had not yet taken place. Gloucester had in fact been buried in England already by the end of September 1397, as Gower would already have known at the time of his writing this part of the *Cronica*, and the remains were reburied again about two years later, in late 1399, after Henry's accession. Still, at the end of this same Book Two, Gower announces a precise date for its composition, of September 1397 or immediately thereafter, claiming that it was current events of that moment that compelled him to pick up his pen:

Anno bis deno primo, de sanguine pleno,  
 Septembris mense feritas dominatur in ense!  
 Tristis vt audiui, carmen scribendo subiui.

[King Richard's reign, twice ten and one, a bloody year,  
 September's moon—then sword and savagery ruled here!  
 At this sad news to write my song I took my pen.]

(2.340–42)

At the beginning of his final Book Three, to narrate events of early 1398 to early 1400, including the crucial revolutionary summer, Gower resumes the same fiction of current composition, as if at the later moment. The previous book had been written earlier, at the time of the

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some of the edition's features of orthography and punctuation; the verse translations of it are courtesy of A. G. Rigg.

events it told, Gower reiterates; now he takes up his pen again, to write about more recent current events, as they too happen. Though Henry must in fact have been *rex* by the time these lines were written, Gower yet here calls him *dux*; the *rex* is still Richard:

Regnum confractum, regis feritate subactum,  
Nuper defleui, lacrimas sed abinde quieui.  
Regnum purgatum, probitate ducis renouatum,  
Amodo ridebo, nec ab eius laude tacebo.

[The kingdom torn apart and crushed by the king's rage  
I've recently bewailed, but now my grief's assuaged.  
For now I smile to see the kingdom purged and raised  
By the duke's prowess: now I'll always sing his praise]

(3.3–6)

### Genres and Allegorical Style

All these writings date themselves to the same period, July–October 1399, when even Gower claims to have been at work on the *Cronica tripartita*; despite this coincidence of occasion, the same poems yet embody a broad, even generic distribution, without overlapping one another much. The Leonine hexameter was the choice of both Gower and the “O deus in celis,” which in fact shares a few other features, more unexpectedly, with the *Cronica tripartita*.<sup>13</sup> The meter was among the most elevate available—possibly the most elevate—and, especially in Gower's heavily spondaic treatment, it is stately: in Latin too, this was the antithesis of popular form.<sup>14</sup> The two poems deploy it in different generic registers, however. “O deus in celis” is a brief, simple oration, fit for the simplest sort of hand-to-hand circulation (if only among the clerically learned) by means of single-sheet copies. Gower's *Cronica*, on the other hand, is an ambitious narrative, grand in design, and also more costly to reproduce, copies of it necessarily built for longer-term storage rather than broadcast dispersal. Among the English-language poetry, by contrast, “On King Richard's Ministers” is strongly marked for generic popularity, broadside ballad-like in its length, line, and

<sup>13</sup>Verbal parallels are listed in the Appendix, nn. *ad* 1 and 15.

<sup>14</sup>There is comment in David R. Carlson, “A Rhyme Distribution Chronology of John Gower's Latin Poetry,” *SP* 104 (2007): 15–55.

rhyme. Then *Richard the Redeless* is something else again: pamphlet-length, it seems, for putting about in single uncovered gatherings of a few sheets perhaps, not ballad-like but also not for storage by bound *volumen*. Significantly not a dream-vision, it is still deliberately in the *Piers Plowman* tradition, though it does not share the tradition's propensity for broad socioreligious criticism, learned but dissident: it uses the conventions apologetically rather, for castigating one faction of the great, to the benefit of another.<sup>15</sup>

What is missing is anything marked out, by language or genre, for the consumption of this same (nonclerical) elite social group itself—the titular nobility, including royals—whose hectic doings of 1399 provide the poems' subject matter. The genres not covered by the surviving poetry are the nobler ones: courtly lyric, dream-vision, and romance, in French or in English. With this exception of the local secular aristocracy (such persons as ought not to have required the sort of persuading undertaken by the surviving poems that their own antics were important), the poetry seems designed to reach out to a range of concerned niche-like audiences, with news of what was happening about the kingdom's governance, sometimes in the prophecy-like form of statements in advance of events, but one way or another in effect justifying, for non-noble outsiders, what the Lancastrian regime did to put itself in power.

These choices imply a common authorial intention to address nontitled audiences—distinct, differing nontitled sectors, however, as the linguistic and generic differentiation of the poems one from another witnesses. Despite the sameness of non-noble address, the poems also share the peculiar allegorical conceit of referring to their chief figures by the same series of animal names, as well as other enigmatic forms of denomination, demonstrably aristocratic in bent or otherwise markedly nonpopular.

The poetry calls the victims of Richard's 1397 "Revenge" parliament *Olor* (or *Cignus, metri causa*), 'Swan' in English; *Vrsus* or 'Bear'; and *Equus*, 'Horse': respectively, Thomas of Woodstock (1355–97), duke of Gloucester; Thomas Beauchamp (c. 1339–1401), Earl of Warwick; and Richard Fitzalan (1346–97), Earl of Arundel and Surrey. No such appellation is used consistently for the king Richard in the same poetry, but for the invader Henry there are several: *Aquila* or 'Eagle' most often, though also 'Falcon' (*Richard* 2.157) and 'Heron' (in "On King Rich-

<sup>15</sup>See Grady, "The Generation of 1399," esp. p. 210.

ard's Ministers")—comprehensively, "the blessid Bredd" or "the Fowle" (*Richard* 2.141 and 3.36 and elsewhere)—and possibly others.<sup>16</sup>

The Latin poems also feature a peculiar sort of riddling or punning interlingual denomination, recurrent in the English poems too but without the polyglot dimension. In the *Cronica*, for example, Gower calls Michael de la Pole "de puteo Michaelis" (1.109), literally, 'Michael of the pool' or 'pit,' as if translating French "de la" and English "pool" into Latin, simply enough. Likewise, though with a greater degree of difficulty, Gower uses "vestis stragulata"—literally, "burel cloth," after a coarse-grade of woolen fabric known as "burel" in English—in describing the 1388 execution of Richard's aged tutor Simon Burley, by decollation: "Corruit in fata gladii vestis stragulata" ["That burel-cloth fell to the sword, such was his fate"] (1.140). And so forth. Precisely the same sort of interlingual riddling occurs in the "O deus in celis" (30) too, where the poet uses "Ver"—Latin 'Spring' though here possibly also evoking French *vert*—and "Dumus"—Latin 'thorn-bush'—to refer to Henry Green and John Bussy, evidently pronounced like modern 'bushy.' The various references in the English poems to bushes ("Ther is a busch that is forgrowe"), for example, or even to the grass ("The long gras that is so grene")—discussed further below—work similarly, though without the linguistic complexities: to evoke names, by riddling references to stuff and things, allegorically.

Such manners of speaking were not common currency. An instructive contrast may be with the so-called John Ball Letters of 1381: in that case, there is evidence for popular circulation of the writings (multiple copies, independently derived, of widely variant, unstable texts that had been put about in oral and ephemeral written forms, like letters, such as could be folded up and put in pockets), in simple, irregular ("sub-literary") English verse or rhymed prose, using largely self-evident allegorical codes (modeled after *Piers Plowman*), personification-like, drawn from popularly familiar processes of production, tilling, milling, and other varieties of quotidian making:

<sup>16</sup>Gower wrote an epigram too, inc. "H. aquile pullus"—ed. and trans. Yeager, *John Gower: The Minor Latin Works*, Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), p. 46—at about this same time. "Prophecias" is how the poem is labeled, and it does participate in a tradition of prophetic utterance by its use of the same enigmatic "Aquila" denomination for Henry, twice in its four lines. On it, see also Yeager, "Chaucer's 'To His Purse,'" p. 403.

Johon Schep, som tyme Seynte Marie prest of Yorke, and now of Colchestre, greteth wel Johan Nameles, and Johan the Mullere, and Johan Cartere, and biddeth hem that thei bee war of gyle in borugh, and stondesth togidre in Godes name, and biddeth Peres Ploughman go to his werk, and chastise wel Hobbe the Robbere, and taketh with yow Johan Trewman, and alle hiis felawes, and no mo, and loke schappe you to on heved, and no mo.

Johan the Mullere hath ygrounde smal, smal, smal;  
The kynges sone of hevene schal paye for al.<sup>17</sup>

To the contrary, in the case of the 1399 poetry, the evidence is that contemporaries regarded the kind of riddling allegories the poems use as particularly difficult, fending off ready common apprehension. Gower himself wrote prose glosses to go with the *Cronica tripertita*, spelling out the tenor of the enigmatic appellations he uses (“Comes Northumbrie, cuius signum fuit luna crescens” [“The earl of Northumberland, whose device was a crescent moon”], e.g., is the gloss *ad* 1.55–56, “Hac sub fortuna presens aquilonica luna / Non fuit ad sortem, sequitur sed mente cohortem” [“The Northern Moon was not at hand among that group / By fortune’s cast, but in his mind he joined their troop”]), in a way that also advertises the difficulties of the verse itself. Gower’s earlier *Vox clamantis*, though allegorical also in long stretches, is provided with no such apparatus. Its allegories are simpler. Evidently, however, Gower believed that even the *Cronica*’s relatively adept audience, already impressed with his obscurity, might yet want help. Gower goes so far as to apologize for his recondite procedures:

Si non directe procerum cognomina recte,  
Hec tamen obscura referam, latitante figura;  
Scribere que tendo si mistica verba legendo  
Auribus apportant, verum tamen illa reportant.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted from the editions in Richard Firth Green, “John Ball’s Letters: Literary History and Historical Literature,” in *Chaucer’s England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 193–95. On the letters’ provenance, useful evidence is collected in Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 15–23; a still earlier formal and substantive analogue, of c. 1311, is discussed in Margaret Aston, “*Corpus Christi* and *Corpus Regni*: Heresy and the Peasants’ Revolt,” *Past & Present* 143 (1994): 23–26. The phrase “sub-literary” is from John N. King, *English Reformation Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 4.

[I'll tell these nobles' names, but not direct, out loud;  
 I'll tell them in a riddle, veiled beneath a shroud.  
 The words I plan to write may seem mysterious  
 For ears to read, but still they're true and serious.]

(1.45–48)

The same occurs in *Richard the Redeless*. To end an especially obscure patch, the poet puts a rebuke, castigating an imagined reader or hearer (“Hicke Heyuheed”—using the other type of appellation, noteworthy a self-explanatory quasi-personification, *Piers Plowman*-like) for failure to penetrate; instead of explaining, the poet blames, insisting on the difficulty of the allegory and keeping it intact:

“What is this to mene, man?” maiste thou axe,  
 “For it is derklich endited for a dull panne.  
 Wherffore I wilne yif it thi will were,  
 The partriche propurtes by whom that thou menest?”  
 A! Hicke Heyuheed! hard is thi nolle  
 To cacche ony kunynge but cautell bigynne!  
 Herdist thou not with eeris how that I er tellede  
 How the egle in the est entrid his owen.

(3.62–69)

Fortunately (though not for “Heyuheed”), there survives a contemporary explanation of the allegorical techniques used for making up the 1399 poems. It may be useful to be told, perhaps, as a general rule of interpretation for this kind of enigmatic writing, that one of the types of “occultatio” it may dispose consists “in accidentalali designatione propter aliquod accidens competens alicui in moribus vel dispositione corporali, vel ex nomine vel cognomine, vel ex armis sibi convenientibus” [“in denomination by accidental, by means of some accidental proper to a particular person, in respect of habit or bodily disposition, or from the person’s Christian or family name, or from the blazons the person uses by convention”].<sup>18</sup> But the point is that such writing by “occultatio” required learned exegesis, *scholastico more*, even at the time. The manner of speaking at issue was emphatically not popular, at least in this sense: few, if any, could be expected to understand it without

<sup>18</sup>Ed. Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, I, 126, cited in Barr, *Socioliterary Practice in Late Medieval England*, pp. 71–72 n. 47.

help. There are no examples of its use for contemporary topical poetry outside the 1399 summer poems.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the appellations chosen may have had a basis in heraldry;<sup>20</sup> the chief source for the kinds of allegories used in the poems of the summer of 1399, however, would have been the tradition of riddling “Galfridian” political prophecy, founded by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century and proliferating thence. The chief examples are the various “Bridlington” prophecies, dating from the reign of Edward III and continuously reinterpreted, circulating most widely with the extensive exegetical apparatus of John Erghom, whose explanation of *occultatio in accidentalī designatione* was quoted above, from his “Secundum praeambulum” to the prophecies—second of four. And there is other evidence for extensive clerical-academic cultivation of the enigmatic techniques involved at the same time.<sup>21</sup> Such evidence as there is for current knowledge of the particular allegories used in the 1399 poems—the beasts and birds, bushes and so forth—outside the poems themselves is restricted to this single, specific type of source. Contemporary annalists and memorialists—learned persons all, especially Thomas Walsingham (d. c. 1422) and Adam Usk (d. 1430)—cite (and then have to explicate) enigmatic Latin prophecies, of the sort associated with Bridlington’s name, with which the 1399 poems would also have had some relation.

For example, on the occasion of the duke of Gloucester’s arrest, in the early morning hours of 11 July 1397, Walsingham has it that a

<sup>19</sup>To my knowledge, the only analogues are a series of poems from the period c. 1450–c. 1464, another moment of intense partisan division within the ruling elite, which again did not have broader sociopolitical implications or ramifications except among the immediate dependents of the members of the royal family who were at odds with one another. The examples are cited in V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Blandford, 1971), pp. 157–92.

<sup>20</sup>Heraldry too was already something of an occult science, with a castelike priesthood of initiates, the heralds and pursuivants charged with controlling proliferation of the enigmatic significations peculiar to the heraldic system; and the symbolism was legible or sensible only to a narrow social fraction, the armigerous few and their dependents: those immediately involved in the intraclass political adventures of this most elite secular group. Cf. Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 108–11.

<sup>21</sup>On the “Bridlington” prophecies, see Rigg, “John of Bridlington’s Prophecy: A New Look,” *Speculum* 63 (1988): 596–613; and on the contemporary clerical interest in verbal enigmas, see Andrew Galloway, “The Rhetoric of Riddling in Late-Medieval England: The ‘Oxford’ Riddles, the *Secretum philosophorum*, and the Riddles in *Piers Plowman*,” *Speculum* 70 (1995): 68–105.

ten-year-old Latin verse prophecy (“per decennium ante vulgata”) was fulfilled:

Impletaque fuit tunc prophetia comminatoria, metrice composita, et per decennium ante vulgata, quae talis est:

Vulpes cum cauda caueat, dum cantat alauda,  
Ne rapiens pecus simul rapiatur, et equus.

“Vulpem cum cauda” vocauit duces [sc. Gloucester], quia semper ferebatur super hastam, in eius praesentia, cauda vulpis. “Dum cantat alauda” dixit, quia mane ad cantus alaudae, prout contigit, capiendus fuit; quo capto, imminebat et raptus pecudis rapiantis, id est, comitis Warwici; et equi, id est, comitis Arundeliae; quia alter pro signo ferebat versus, alter equum.<sup>22</sup>

[Then was fulfilled that monitory prophecy composed in verse and published a decade earlier, reading “Let the tailed fox beware while the lark is singing, lest the devouring beast be devoured along with him, and the horse as well.” It calls the duke “tailed fox” because he was in the habit always of having borne before him a fox’s tail atop a spear. “While the lark is singing,” it said, because in the morning, at lark’s song, as it happened, he was to be arrested; and when he was arrested, seizure threatened “the devouring beast” too, namely, the earl of Warwick, as well as “the horse,” namely, the earl of Arundel; for the one bore a bear for his device, and the other a horse.]

Such evidence makes manifoldly absurd Gower’s assertion that, upon Richard’s triumph over his enemies in the “Revenge” Parliament, the metropolitan *vulgus* sang:

“Non Olor in pennis, nec Equus stat crine perhennis:  
Iam depennatus Olor est, Equus excoriatus.

<sup>22</sup> *Annales*, p. 206. Another version of the same prophecy and explication occurs in the “Dieulacres Chronicle,” ed. Maude Violet Clarke and V. H. Galbraith, in “The Deposition of Richard II,” *BJRL* 14 (1930): 169; and the *vulpis cauda* as another allegorical appellation for the *Olor* Gloucester recurs too in the *Cronica tripertita* 1.87–88 (also with the prophecy’s *alauda*): “De vulpis cauda velox Aper est vt alauda; / Cauda ruit castra, que sunt numero velud astra,” as Gower’s marginal note *ad* 1.77 explains: “qui tunc vulpis caudam in lancea gessit.” Of the use of the “Bridlington” prophecies by Adam Usk, there is instructive discussion in Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399–1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 9–14.

Vrsus non mordet, quem stricta cathena remordet.”  
Sic fatue turbe vox conclamabat in vrbe.

“The Swan is feather-free, the Horse has lost its mane,  
The Swan’s been plucked, the Horse is flayed (O what a shame),  
The Bear can’t bite, he’s tethered by a biting chain!”  
Throughout the town this silly rhyme the mob declaim.

(2.314–17)

No such celebration is otherwise in evidence, for one thing. Had Richard tried some triumphal transit of the city, the *civus* may have been less supportive than Gower suggests, if people were at all interested in such obscure squabbling among their betters, which had no import for the class-struggle and little or none for daily living. Also, the evidence is that such a crowd may have tended to use some other prosodic form, or language even; and the peculiar allegorical idiom, compounding Galfridian prophetic utterance with quasi-heraldic emblems—*Olor*, *Equus*, *Vrsus*—was not in popular use.<sup>23</sup>

The same considerations render the fifth “poem” in the corpus implausible too:

Up on an hylle ys a greene.  
On the grene stondeþ a busch.  
Up on þe bussch hangeþ a bagge.  
Wh<erefore> the grene ys y-mowe,  
And the bussch ouere throwe,  
And the bagge y-schake:  
Penne yt ys tyme, Engelond, to wake.

<sup>23</sup> Here as elsewhere, Gower may have been prey to an opaque Caesarism that occurs elsewhere in the literature of the revolution, as, for example, in the pervasive imputation to Henry of a Caesar-like clemency, discussed below, pp. 402–4. The analogue for the kind of popular or vulgar scurrilous song that Gower attributes to the London *turba* on the 1397 occasion is the verses Roman troops sang about their generals in formal triumphs in the city, as reported most famously about Caesar’s quadruple triumph of 46 BCE (e.g., Suetonius, *Diuus Julius* 49.4, 51, 80.2–3); the people used trochaic tetrameter catalectic, an old Roman meter, rather than hexameters or anything still more Hellenizing, as well as their own peculiar (“sub-literate”) vocabulary. For evidence of cultivation of knowledge of Roman history and antiquities at Walsingham’s St. Albans—at the time that Gower too was writing—see now James G. Clark, “Thomas Walsingham Reconsidered: Books and Learning at Late-Medieval St. Albans,” *Speculum* 77 (2002): 832–60.

Hiis tres milites Buschey, Bagod et Grene, consiluerunt regi Ricardo ut transfectaret in Hyberniam ut ipsi regerent regnum ad firmam. [These three sirs, Bussy, Bagot, and Green, counseled King Richard to betake himself to Ireland, in order that they might rule over the kingdom themselves, as a fee-farm.]<sup>24</sup>

Its ventriloquism comes nearer a *vox populi* than Gower's does, by virtue of its invocation of yet another noncoincident generic register: the "subliterary" quasi-rhyming-poetic register of the 1381 John Ball Letters, with which this item probably shares more than provenance: it is attested only by a marginal inscription in a copy of Walsingham's *Chronica maiora* from St. Albans (where John Ball was executed and copies of the incriminating "Letters" were discovered about his person, to be published by Walsingham).<sup>25</sup> With Gower and the rest of the corpus, it uses the same nonpopular, enigmatic style of riddling denomination, having even a Gower-like explanatory gloss in Latin spelling out answers.<sup>26</sup> In addition, this fifth item introduces the curious historical-

<sup>24</sup>Quoted from Clark, "Thomas Walsingham Reconsidered," p. 845 n. 84 (from marginalia in the manuscript Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 7, fol. 47r)—the same passage from the same manuscript was reported in *Annales*, ed. Riley, pp. 276–77 n. 5.—here introducing lineation as verse, though the item is not noted in the *NIMEV*.

<sup>25</sup>In the English, there may be some phrases that recall "On the King's Ministers" (see above, n. 7): "up on þe bussch hangeþ a bagge" may recall 79–81 "The grete bage is so ytoron, / Hit nyl holde neyther mele ne corn / Hong hit up to drye!" and "the grene ys y-mowe" may recall 4–6 "The long gras that is so grene, / Hit most be mowe, and raked clene—/ For-grownen hit hath the felde." But for two items using the same allegorical conceit, both proleptically, to call for the same outcomes for the same current events, the verbal parallels, not numerous, are also not close; it does not appear that the one is a garbled recollection of the other, for example. The nearest parallels I find for its particular terms are in the "John Ball Letters" (ed. cit., above n. 17). The concluding English phrase of the marginalium, "Denne yt ys tyme Engelond to wake," quotes a refrain-like injunction that is the only feature common to all the "John Ball Letters": a conclusion in three of them, "God doe bote, for now is time;" elsewhere, "For nowe is tyme to be ware" or "Nowe is tyme." Cf. also the poem known as "The Insurrection and Earthquake (1382)" (*NIMEV* 4268), ed. Rossell Hope Robbins, *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 57–60, with a refrain, "This was a warnyng to be ware," including the variation (which Robbins, p. 277, calls "semi-proverbial") 79–80 "Vr bagge hongeth on a sliper pin, / Bote we of this warnyng be ware."

<sup>26</sup>The Latin gloss with the English quotes a rumored allegation against Scrope that only Walsingham transmits (*Annales*, p. 240), though the allegation is so wild that even Walsingham qualifies, with "Dicebatur" and "imaginabatur": "Dicebatur praeterea, quod Willelmus le Scrop, regis Camberlanus, et Comes de Wiltshire de novo creatus, omnes escaetas regni Angliae de rege cepisset ad firmam per triennium; et ob hoc imaginabatur mortes plurimorum procerum et aliorum valentium, ut uberem faceret firmam." Of the *prosatores*, only Walsingham is concerned to inculpate the Bristol victims in advance of the July executions, as the poets do (see pp. 394–6); here as elsewhere, however, Walsingham is persistently oblique, only insinuating rather than specifying malfeasance: at the news of Henry's landing, Walsingham has it, Scrope, Bussy, Green,

substantive common property of the 1399 poetry, by virtue of its relatively narrow concentration on just the one episode from the summer of 1399.

### Scrope, Bussy, Green, and Bagot

The poems' shared disposition of the same deliberately veiled manner of speaking, in riddling and opaque allegories of a specialized type—not popular, but recondite, restricted in use to specialists purpose-trained in such idioms' vagaries—suggests coordination, at a culturally high level, as does the generic organization of the same poetry, by noncoincidence in a nevertheless relatively full range of the available nonaristocratic literary kinds. If the poetry were spontaneous or popular, both more and less coincidence would have occurred: more generic overlap, where the range of choice was restricted, especially in popular forms of writing; and less consistent recourse to the same strange allegorical idiom, where other commoner ways of representing the same events might have been disposed instead.

The other convergence of the poems is also telling: amid so many other conceivable points of focus, their coincident concentration on the same group of minor Ricardian place-holders—William Scrope (c. 1351–99), John Bussy (d. 1399), Henry Green (c. 1347–99), and William Bagot (c. 1354–1407). The five poems represent these men similarly, by means of the same allegorical appellations, prophecy-like, used also for Gloucester, Warwick, and the earl of Arundel, though Scrope, Bussy, Green, and Bagot were not personages of comparable eminence. Scrope was chamberlain of the royal household from 1395, and Richard's treasurer from 17 September 1398; for such services, he was created earl of Wiltshire on 29 September 1397. And Bussy too had had a career of sorts, though it was strictly bourgeois: a former sheriff of Lincoln, and knight of the shire for Lincoln repeatedly from 1388, he was the speaker of commons for Richard's last three parliaments. Green and

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and Bagot "timuerunt maxime, ita quod videbantur spiritum non habere" (*Annales*, p. 243); and again, Walsingham speculates, the same men left Westminster "conturbati et conterriti, utpote quos intus accusauit conscientia" (p. 244); cf. also the later passage where Walsingham says of them: "cernentes se inuisos patriae et patriotis, et metuentes quod si diutius starent cum duce Eboraci [sc., at Oxford], caperentur fortassis per manus communium [as Walsingham will go on to imply happened at Bristol], fugerunt ad villam Brystolliae sub magna festinatione" (pp. 245–46), again, without any imputation of actual crime, implying consciousness of guilt in them.

Bagot had still less public prominence, though both were intermittent parliamentarians, too. Then, however, Scrope, Bussy, Green, and Bagot were implicated in the episode that provided common topical matter for the poetry of the summer of 1399: Henry's illegal killing of as many of them as he could keep, at Bristol, on 29 July 1399.<sup>27</sup>

In modern historiography of the period, Scrope, Bussy, Green, and Bagot tend to be described as widely much hated; but the characterization is implausible. Who knew about their doings at the time? Who would have cared? The circle can only have been narrow, restricted to the few directly involved, for and against, with executive governance of the kingdom—peers and committee workers—in the brief period of Richard's tyranny, roughly from late 1397. Henry's Bristol victims had not acted in public, excepting hardly even the commons' speaker Bussy, but only at a level of consequential remove from the local and day-to-day, directing execution of policies made still higher up or mediating among the great, always away from the public scene. The notion that there could have been any spontaneous *clamor populi* against Scrope, Bussy, Green, and Bagot personally is difficult to credit. Only death made any of them more notable, somewhat, and only in retrospect, more by virtue of the circumstantial peculiarities that killed them than by any of their own doings or intrinsic consequence. What mattered was not the victims, but what Henry might have meant by killing them, or what might be inferred from his so doing.

The St. Albans "verse" is concerned exclusively with the prospect of executions; the other poems make more of the minions' earlier careers by way of justifying in advance what was to happen to them—especially *Richard the Redeless*, which has glancing references often, *per allegoria*. When Henry "the [hende] Egle" has returned to England, for example, gathering flock-like his supporters to him ("But the nedy nestlingis whan they the note herde / Of the [hende] Egle the heyer of hem all" [3.73–74]), the anti-Ricardian forces are said to light on Bussy ("Thei busked fro the busches and breris that hem noyed" [3.75]) and Green ("They gaglide forth on the grene for they greued were" [3.101]) in

<sup>27</sup> Scrope's career is delineated in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 51, ed. Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder, 1897), 148–50. For the others, I rely on the thoroughly documented brief biographies in *The House of Commons 1386–1421*, ed. J. S. Roskell, Linda Clarke, and Carole Rawcliffe, 4 vols. (Stroud: Sutton, 1992), on Bussy (by Rawcliffe), II, 449–54; on Green (by Colin Richmond and L. S. Woodger), III, 225–28; and on Bagot (by Woodger), II, 99–103.

particular: “busches and breris” can refer to Bussy, and Green’s name appears again. Likewise, the poet makes allusion in course of faulting the wearers of King Richard’s livery of the White Hart: “They bare hem the bolder for her gay broches, / And busshid with her brestis and bare adoun the pouere” (2.38–39), where Bussy appears to be blamed for a general popular oppression in fact beyond his capacity.

Most significant of these passing references in *Richard the Redeless* may be a passage in which the poet faults Bussy and Green for the malfeasancess of the 1397 “Revenge” parliament, as if they were responsible for King Richard’s vengeance then. The excessively young counselors around the king were blameworthy, the poet writes, addressing Richard directly, because

They made you to leue that regne ye ne myghte  
Withoute busshinge adoun of all youre best frendis,  
Be a fals colour her caris to wayve.

(1.185–87)

“Busshinge” appears to incorporate Bussy’s name again, and the answer to the implicit riddle of the “fals colour” must be “green,” the color of newfangledness, or falsity in the specific contemporary sense. The two are being apportioned blame for high crimes indeed, if the reference of “all youre best frendis” (1.186) is to the king’s near-relatives, and long-time counseling benefactors, who were done various injuries in 1397, including death.

The “O deus in celis” too appears to allude to the same matter of the “Revenge” parliament, inexplicitly: “Dampnarunt forti iustorum corpora morti, / Sanguis <at> quorum vindictam clamat eorum” (23–24). Though these righteous, still crying out for vengeance, whose bodies were condemned to harsh death, are not named in the poem, the subject of the verb (“Dampnarunt”), here represented as the guilty parties, can only be “Scrope, Bagge, Ver, Dumus” (22): “Tales pomposi de stercore sunt generosi” (20).

Gower’s only reference to the Ricardian minions other than his account of the executions in 1399 comes in similar context, where he too attempts to blame them for putative crimes of the period of the “Revenge” parliament. Once he has finished narrating the condemnations of Richard’s enemies in that parliament, Gower goes on to tell that, afterward,

Omnia que dici poterant dicunt inimici,  
 Pluraque fingentes mendacia sunt parientes.  
 Grene, Scrop, Bussy, cordis sine lumine fuscii,  
 Omne nephas querunt, quo ledere plus potuerunt.  
 Rex fuit instructus per eos, et ad omnia ductus  
 Que mala post gessit, quibus Anglia tota pauescit.  
 Intra se flebat populus, qui dampna videbat;  
 Cum non audebat vocem proferre, tacebat.

[The heroes' enemies dishonor their good name;  
 They fabricate their falsehoods, foully spreading shame.  
 Green, Scrope, and Bushy, black of heart, devoid of charm,  
 Search out all wickedness by which to do them harm.  
 By them the king to all the wicked schemes was led  
 That later he fulfilled, which caused all England's dread.  
 At heart the people wept for sorrows without cease,  
 But dared not say a word, and so they held their peace.]  
 (2.318–25)

Where Gower characterizes the minions' contributions to the 1397 business chiefly as giving malign advice afterward, "On King Richard's Ministers" is more direct. In turn, each personally is accused: Bussy of killing the *Cignus* Gloucester (13–14 "Thorw the busch a swan was sclayn; / Of that sclawtur fewe wer fayne"), Green of killing *Equus*, the earl of Arundel (19–20 "The grene gras that was so long, / Hit hath sclayn a stede strong"), and Bagot of bringing about the arrest and exile of *Vrsus*, the earl of Warwick:

A bereward fond a rag;  
 Of the rag he made a bag;  
 He dude in gode entent.  
 Thorwe the bag the bereward is taken  
 Alle his beres han hym forsaken—  
 Thus is the berewarde schent.  
 (25–30)

Incredible as these imputations in "On King Richard's Ministers" are (and must have been at the time, too, to anyone with the least intelligence of the events of the 1397 parliament), such assertions may yet have been expected to shift some weight, in some quarters, by way of

justifying what was done with the minions at the moment, in July 1399: eye for eye, killers to be killed, as three of the four were, illegally.

The same poem "On King Richard's Ministers" refers to the executions themselves only *per allegoria* and in prospect, as what ought to be but has not yet been done. Two stanzas at its beginning (1–12) mirror three penultimate ones (67–84), symmetrically calling for the killings by turns of Bussy ("Ther is a busch that is forgrowe; / Crop hit welle, and hold hit lowe"; "But hewe hit downe, crop and rote, / And to the toun hit lede"), then of Green ("The long gras that is so grene, / Hit most be mowe"; "Til the roton be dynged ought, / Our lene bestes schul not rougt, / Hur liflode to gete"), and finally of Bagot ("The grete bagge, that is so mykille, / Hit schal be kettord and maked litell"; "Hong hit up to drye!"). The proper agent for bringing these killings to pass is to be Henry Bolingbroke (a "heron" here rather than an "eagle"), this despite the legal problem of someone other than a king executing traitors:

Upon the busch the eron wolle reste,  
Of alle places it liketh hym beste,  
    To loke aftur his paye.  
He wolle falle upon the grene;  
There he falleth hit wille be sene,  
    They wille not welle away.  
(55–60)<sup>28</sup>

It is significant that there is no allusion in this crucial passage of "On King Richard's Ministers" to Henry killing Bagot. The St. Albans lines are verbally close but less equivocal on this point: "Wh<erefore> the grene ys y-mowe, / And the bussch ouere throwe, / And the bagge yschake." Though "On King Richard's Ministers" pretends to be calling for the executions of the hated Ricardian minions, or prophesying—"the eron wolle," "He wolle," "hit wille," "They wille"—the poet also appears to know what happened: in fact, Bagot was to escape execution with the others.

The *Richard the Redeless* poet has the same kind of precise, detailed knowledge of what took place at Bristol, including the killings of Scrope, Green, and Bussy but not Bagot. Though again the writing

<sup>28</sup> At line 57 of this quotation, "paye" is a conjectural emendation, for both sound and sense, of ms. "pray."

needs be read allegorically, it narrates the three executions, as Henry's doing, rather than only calling for or predicting them:

Thus baterid this bred on busshes aboughte,  
 And gaderid gomes on grene ther as they walkyd  
 That all the schroff and schroup sondrid from other.  
 He mellid so the matall with the hand-molde  
 That [they] lost lemes the leuest that they had.  
 Thus foulyd this faukyn on fyldis aboughte,  
 And caughte of the kuyttis a cartffull at ones,  
 That rentis and robis with raveyn euere laughte.  
 Yit was not the fawcon full fed at his likynge,  
 For it cam him not of kynde kytes to loue.  
 Then bated he boldeliche as a brid wolde,  
 To plewme on his pray the pol fro the nekk.

(2.152–63)

“Dux perlustrator, constans, sis tu dominator, / Et fac tractari fals<o>s et decapitari!” is how the same detail appears in “O deus in celis” (15–16), in the form of an imperative, as if for an action yet to be taken; and Gower, in narrative, has the same rhyme-word at the same point in his verse: 3.176 “statuit dux decapitari” [“the duke decided for decapitation”]. That decollation was how Scrope, Bussy, and Green were killed at Bristol appears here in *Richard the Redeless*, too, but *sub allegoria*: “Then bated he boldeliche as a brid wolde, / To plewme on his pray the pol fro the nekk.”

The *Richard*-poet continues, in the same vein, with an account of what became of Bagot. He had been captured with the other three at Bristol but escaped, to be caught again later:

But the blernyed boynard that his bagg stall,  
 Where purraile-is pulter was pynnyd full ofte,  
 Made the fawcon to floter and flussh for anger  
 That the boy [nadd] be bounde that the bagge kept.  
 But sone ther-after in a schorte tyme,  
 As fortune folwith ech fode till his ende,  
 This lorell that [ladde] this loby away  
 Ouere frithe and forde for his fals dedis,  
 Lyghte on the lordschepe that to the brid longid.

(2.164–72)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>That Bagot was laid hold of somewhere in the Lancastrian patrimony (if that is the implication of 2.172 “on the lordschepe that to the brid longid”) may be corroborated

Bagot's next public appearance after his disappearance from Bristol at the end of July appears to have been the one described here, in plain terms: he "was felliche ylaughte and luggid full ylle, / And broughte to the brydd and his blames rehersid / Preuily at the parlement amonge all the peple" (2.173–75). Though the matter did not become part of the official parliamentary record—there was in fact no trial-like rehearsal of "his blames"—Walsingham too reports Bagot's appearance before Henry IV's first parliament as king, during October 1399.<sup>30</sup> The *Richard the Redeless* poet makes no further reference to him, however: evidently, Bagot's ultimate disposition, after his appearance in parliament, was not in public knowledge by the time *Richard the Redeless* was finished.<sup>31</sup>

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by the account in Adam Usk, *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, ed. Given Wilson, p. 60, though the same passage has been taken to imply that Bagot was seized in Ireland, brought back under duress: "inuinculato ducto." Much about Bagot's post-capture doings remains uncertain.

<sup>30</sup>See *Annales*, pp. 303–6 and 308–9. Barr, *Piers Plowman Tradition*, p. 269, suggests that the last mention of Bagot in "On King Richard's Ministers" (80–85) hints at the pardon of him: calling out against "the grete bage"—"Hong hit up to drye!"—the stanza ends, "Wen hit is drye, then schalt thou se / Yif hit wil amended be, / A beger for to bye." The lines appear also to call for Bagot's execution, however, and it may be that the answer to the implicitly riddling remark ("then schalt thou se") is that, after execution, Bagot would prove not to have been "amended," even by so much as "A beger for to bye." As elsewhere in writings after this same fashion, the obscurity cannot be dissipated.

<sup>31</sup>Bagot was rehabilitated, to a remarkable degree, especially by light of what happened to his associates in Richard's late governance: at the time of Bagot's release from imprisonment, he was granted £100 per annum from the royal Exchequer, 17 November 1400 (*Calendar of the Patent Rolls Henry IV*, 4 vols. [London: HMSO, 1900–1986], cited by regnal-year coverage: *CPR 1399–1401*, p. 386); he was formally restored to law 8 June 1401 (*CPR 1399–1401*, p. 502) and returned to parliament in late 1402 (*Calendar of the Close Rolls Henry IV*, 5 vols. [London: HMSO, 1900–1986], also cited by regnal-year coverage: *CCR 1402–1404*, p. 125); 21–30 October 1404, he was in King Henry's company at Coventry, where he witnessed a series of royal writs (*CCR 1402–1404*, pp. 472–75); during this same period, from late 1400 to his death in 1407, Bagot was repeatedly a successful suitor to the king, in behalf of others (e.g., *CPR 1401–1405*, p. 468), and in his own, even in cases where recovery or retention of landed incomes that Bagot had obtained, by allegedly illegal means, during Richard's tyranny, were at issue (e.g., *CPR 1401–1405*, p. 96). Bagot was held imprisoned in the Tower of London from 22 November 1399 (*CCR 1399–1402*, p. 20), if not earlier, until 12 November 1400 (*CCR 1399–1402*, p. 224); and a royal order of 5 April 1400 allowing removal of Bagot's fetters during whatever might remain of his incarceration in the Tower (*CCR 1399–1402*, p. 78) may tell something of the conditions of his capture (corroborating the remark of Adam Usk quoted above, n. 29). Despite such evidence of Bagot's noncooperation—the point also, perhaps, of Walsingham's reports of what Bagot said when he appeared before Henry's first parliament in October 1399 (cited above, n. 30)—the fact remains, however, that Bagot was never tried or punished for his crimes in the reign of Richard II, unlike the Bristol victims; instead, he was rewarded

About this same sequence of events, Gower is briefer and less allegorically involute but has the same particulars:

Dux probus audaci vultu cum plebe sequaci  
 Regnum scrutatur, si proditor inueniatur;  
 Sic tres exosos magis omnibus ambiciosos  
 Regni tortores inuenerat ipse priores.  
 Ense repercussi periunt Scrop, Grene, quoque Bussy:  
 Hii quasi regales fuerant cum rege sodales.  
 Scrop, comes et miles, eius Bristollia viles  
 Actus declarat, quo mors sua fata pararet;  
 Greneque sorte pari statuit dux decapitari;  
 Bussy conuictus similes quoque <sus>tinet ictus.  
 Vnanimes mente pariter mors vna repente  
 Hos tres prostrauit, gladius quos fine vorauit.  
 Sicut et egerunt aliis, sic hii ceciderunt,  
 Quo dux laudatur regnumque per omne iocatur.

{The worthy duke, bold-faced, with popular support,  
 To search out treachery the whole of England sought.  
 A hateful trio thus he found that led the rest,  
 Tormenting all the realm, stirred by ambitious zest.  
 The three were then beheaded: Bushy, Green, and Scrope,  
 Three buddies of the king, a rascal royal group.  
 Scrope was an earl and knight; his wicked deeds were shown  
 At Bristol, where death claimed him as its very own.  
 Green equally should lose his head, the duke declared,  
 And Bushy was convicted too: he was not spared.  
 These three were of one mind, and so one speedy death  
 Took all at once: the sword devoured their final breath.

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by the new king, who repeatedly protected Bagot from prosecutions concerning his landed incomes even while Bagot was held under ostentatious duress in the Tower (*CCR 1399–1402*, pp. 31, 97, for royal protection; and, for the case against Bagot, *CPR 1399–1401*, p. 152). It must be possible that Bagot was let go from Bristol, rather than escaping, in exchange for immediately useful intelligence, say, at a moment when all were starved for information—or even that he had been a Lancastrian agent throughout—and that Bagot's subsequent nonpunishment and the rewards were payment to him for services to the usurper, with Walsingham's stories and the Tower imprisonment, chains or no, to cover. It would have been inimical, at least awkward, for Henry to appear publicly lenient with the unpopular criminal Bagot at the same moment he also still needed publicly to legalize his killings of the others at Bristol, on the basis of popular outrage against the minions' crimes and his own divinely ordained rectitude about meting out justice to them.

As they had done to others, so they met their fate;  
 For this the duke earned praise; the realm could celebrate.]  
 (3.168–81)

Gower's final assertion here, that the three *proditores'* executions were popular, widely even (3.181 "Quo dux laudatur regnumque per omne iocatur" ["For this the duke earned praise; the realm could celebrate"]), is repeated in Walsingham's *Cronica*, in remarkably similar terms, given the different verbal mediums: "laetantibus cunctis regni mediocribus, quod tam cito, tam gratiose, prout eis videbatur, de infestissimis liberabantur hostibus" ["all the lesser folk of the kingdom rejoiced at being freed so speedily, so graciously, from such evil wrongdoers, as it appeared to them"]. Walsingham also imputes Henry's doings to divine intercession—God himself "immisit igitur in cor domini Henrici" ["put it in Lord Henry's heart"], Walsingham has it: "repente Deus illius [sc. Ricardi] superbiam decreuit humiliare, et populo Anglicano succurrere, qui iam miserabiliter opprimebatur, et de spe releuationis et remedii omnino exciderat, nisi Deus manus porrigeret in adiutorium eorundem" ["of a sudden, God determined to put down his [sc. Richard's] pride, and to succor the English people, for long miserably oppressed, and altogether bereft of any hope of relief or remedy, had not God stretched out his hand to rescue them"]<sup>32</sup>—as Gower does as well:

O quam plura sinit deus, et cum tempora finit,  
 Omnia tunc certe que sunt demonstrat aperte!  
 Dux inspiratus tandem, quasi sit renouatus,  
 Singula compensat perfecto cordeque pensat.

God many things permits, but when He terminates  
 All time, He'll surely show all things in their true state.

<sup>32</sup>The quotations are *Annales*, pp. 247 and 240–41. Walsingham makes this assertion repeatedly in the paragraphs he devotes to the revolution, typically with this same insinuation, that God's intervention was an answer to popular prayers. See *Annales*, p. 239: "Cum rex moram protelaret in Hibernia, communitas regni Angliae totis votis dominum precabatur, ne unquam sospes reverteretur; nempe in ore omnium voluebatur, quod iam terram Angliae idem rex habebat inuisam": p. 242: when rumors of Henry's approach begin to circulate, "fiebat magna communitatis exultatio, putantis veraciter quod Deus hunc mitteret ad dissoluendum jugum seruitutis eorum grauissimae": and p. 250, where Walsingham claims that Henry's miraculous success makes people want him to be king: "Et mirum quod totum regnum tantillo tempore sic pacificatum et stabilitum fuit, unanimes voluntate, ut nihil magis desiderarent incolae, quam Henricum, ducem Lancastriae, in regem suum, deiecto rege Ricardo."

The duke, inspirited and, as it were, renewed,  
 Considered carefully and everything reviewed.

(3.122–25)

Support for such assertions is offered—ostensibly, tendentiously in fact—in the other poems, by way of their imprecations of the divine, as if the God of Walsingham and Gower were answering to the anti-Ricardian poets' prayers. The prayer begins the "O deus in celis" (3–4 "Ablue pennatos fallentes perfide natos, / Vt tormentorum noscant recepisce dolorem"), ends it (43–44 "Aquila dux austro saluabit nos alabaustro. / Illius cetum prestat, Christe, fore letum!"), and recurs in the middle (18 "clamat gens celitus"); and it finishes "On King Richard's Ministers" as well:

Now God that mykelle is of myght,  
 Grant us grace to se that syght,  
 Yif hit be thy wille.  
 Our lene bestes to have reste  
 In place that hem lyketh beste,  
 That were in point to spylle.

(85–91)

In all cases—report, prophecy, prayer—the conceit is not that Henry wanted or needed to demonstrate his regal capacity by trying and killing *proditores*, nor that the killings satisfied some other mundane want of his, though three of the men had been Lancastrian retainers: Bussy a chief steward of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Bagot having been a close avuncular companion to Henry himself in youth, while Scrope was in receipt of incomes and holdings that had been redistributed from the Lancastrian patrimony after John of Gaunt's death. They were resisting the invasion, however, if only by fleeing it, so Henry, who did not want to be king, tried and killed them, as if he were.

Rather, the conceit is that ordinary folk were calling out to God for the executions, and Henry, as God's elect ("Quem deus elegit"), was in position to serve.<sup>33</sup> The Ricardian officers were persons "quos plebs communis reputaret hostes publicos" ["whom the common folk regarded as public enemies"], in Walsingham's account; "vrgebat nempe

<sup>33</sup>The quoted phrase is *Cronica tripartita* 3.320; cf. "In Praise of Peace" prol.1 "Electus Cristi."

dominos ad ferendum in eos tam repentinam sententiam clamor importunus communitatis, quae voluisset eos in frustra decerpisse, si quomodo libet potuisset” [“the importunate clamor of the community—having long hoped in vain for them to be cut off by any means possible—compelled the lords to execute the sentence on them that had so quickly been handed down”]. In the circumstance, Henry could only yield to the popular sentiment: “et idcirco, ut praefertur, ad plebis importunam instantiam, tristem exceperunt sententiam” [“thus, as the story goes, they suffered the fatal decree, at the importunate insistence of the people”]; “hii namque capti sunt, et custodiae forti commissi vespere, et mane decapitati” [“for they were laid hold of, put in durance of an evening, and beheaded in the morning”].<sup>34</sup>

The poetry substantiates Walsingham’s improbable assertions about the “plebs communis” at Bristol, that there was there “clamor importunus communitatis” and *plebis importuna instantia*. The poets’ orations prove that there was *clamor populi* by representing themselves as the very *clamor populi* itself, in direct evidence. Spontaneously, as it were—howbeit with recondite poetic language, in even generic distribution, showing knowledge in detail of what happened—people were calling out to God for the murderous Henrician intervention against the king’s men, while or even before it had occurred.

### *Henricus Pius, Murder, and Perjury*

Gower mentions the fugitive Bagot only in a different connection, later, when narrating the doings of Henry’s first proper parliament, in October 1399, and then only glancingly, in enumerating the surviving Ricardian favorites and servants treated mercifully by Henry at that time. Henry only deprived them of the titles (and incomes) they had acquired since the September 1397 death of the duke of Gloucester, leaving such persons otherwise unmolested.<sup>35</sup> Bagot too, though hateful, was spared:

Est tamen ablatum, quod eis fuit ante beatum,  
Vocibus Anglorum venerabile nomen eorum.

<sup>34</sup> *Annales*, pp. 246–47.

<sup>35</sup> The pertinent parliamentary *acta* are in the *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, III, 449–52; see also the analysis of A. L. Brown, “The Reign of Henry IV: The Establishment of the Lancastrian Regime,” in *Fifteenth-Century England, 1399–1509*, ed. S. B. Chrimes, C. D. Ross, and R. A. Griffiths (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), pp. 2–7.

Corpora stant tuta, cecidit sed fama minuta;  
 Dux redit in comitem, quatit et sic curia litem.  
 Labitur exosus Bagot, quem rex piotusus  
 Erigit, et mite prolongat tempora vite.

[But now they lost their name that had before been sung  
 With reverence and awe upon the English tongue.  
 Their bodies were quite safe, their reputation mute;  
 Duke was reduced to earl—that settled that dispute!  
 The hateful Bagot fell; the king in mercy raised  
 Him up again, prolonging Bagot's living days.]

(3.384–89)

The conceit adumbrated in this passage was that the Lancastrian revolution had been accomplished “sine sanguinis effusione,” the idea being that such events as had occurred could have been bloodless only “divina dispensacione,” by God’s special intervention.<sup>36</sup> So clement in victory toward his enemies was the *pius Henricus* that, according to both Walsingham and Gower, the people—crying out still for more vengeance—came to imagine that bribery must have been involved. After Richard’s deposition and Henry’s accession, “plebei constanter petebant, sisti in iudicio certos dominos pro prodicione et mala gubernacione regis et regni. Sed nouus rex, pius et misericors et generosus, noluit aliquem interire, rogauitque populum, vt omnem querelam, contra eos conceptam, dimitteret ad tempus” [“the people were petitioning urgently for a number of lords to be brought to trial for treason and ill-governance of the king and kingdom. But the new king—pious, merciful, well born—was unwilling to see anyone killed, and he besought the populace to set aside for a time the enmity they had conceived against them”].<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Quoted from the somewhat more expansive version of Gower’s gloss in the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 92, published in Carlson, “The Long Revolution Gloss *ad Cronica tripertita* 3.332,” *John Gower Newsletter* 25, no. 1 (April 2006): 4–8. Application of the epithet *pius* to Henry—the cognate noun *pietas* yielding both MnE ‘piety’ and ‘pity,’ having also the benefit of equating the new king with the nation-founding Vergilian hero, *pius Aeneas*—is especially Gower’s doing: at the conclusion of the *Cronica*, 3.462–77, the epithet recurs five times; the penultimate section of Gower’s contemporary or slightly earlier “In Praise of Peace” 330–57—in which derivatives of *pius* and *pietas* occur ten times in under thirty lines—is built similarly.

<sup>37</sup> *Vita Ricardi Secundi*, ed. Stow, p. 163; and cf. *Annales*, p. 320: “Fiebat murmur in populo,” Walsingham has it, “et obloquium de rege, et archiepiscopo, et comite Northumbriae, aliisque de consilio; quasi illi, caecati muneribus, saluassent vitam hominum, quos vulgus sceleratissimos et morte dignissimos reputabat.”

Regia nam pietas sic temperat vndique metas,  
 Quod nil mortale datur illis iudiciale. . .  
 Sic pius Henricus, inimico non inimicus,  
 Gracius, vt debet, pro dampno commoda prebet.  
 Ipse pium frenum laxat, quia tempus amenum  
 Appetit, et Cristo placuisse putauit in isto.  
 Non tamen in gente placet hoc, sed in ore loquente  
 Publica vox dicit, leges quod mammona vicit.  
 Iusticiam queri plebs vult, rex vult misereri.

[For royal mercy moderates and modifies  
 Its power; there is no deadly judgment; no one dies. . .  
 Thus gentle Henry was not hostile to his foes,  
 But, as is right, to render good for evil chose.  
 He softly loosed the rein; he sought a time of peace,  
 For in this way he thought that he the Lord would please.  
 From gossip was clear the people disagreed,  
 And everyone declared that law was quashed by greed.  
 The mob sought justice, but the king for mercy tried.]

(*Cronica* 3.382–83 and 390–96)

“Pius et misericors et generosus,” the new king “noluit aliquem interire,” but of course there was killing: Richard himself, in February 1400, for instance; and the Ricardian earls of the January 1400 “Epiphany Rising,” “quorum cadavera,” wrote Adam Usk, “partita ad modum ferinarum carniū venacione occupatarum, partim in sacculis, partim inter duos super humeros in baculis, London’ defferi et postea sale condiri, vidi” [“and I saw their bodies, chopped up like the carcasses of beasts killed in the chase, being carried to London, partly in sacks and partly on poles slung across pairs of men’s shoulders, where they were later salted to preserve them”].<sup>38</sup>

In addition to its evidences of Henry’s clemencies to grander Ricardians, October 1399 saw also the brutal public execution—at London, with a postmortem broadcast of the body parts, to assure the message got about—of a more useful or convenient person, a man named John

<sup>38</sup> *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, ed. and trans. Given-Wilson, pp. 88–89. On the revolt, see Alan Rogers, “Henry IV and the Revolt of the Earls,” *History Today* 18 (1968): 277–83; Peter McNiven, “The Cheshire Rising of 1400,” *BJRL* 52 (1970): 385–92; also David Crook, “Central England and the Revolt of the Earls, January 1400,” *Historical Research* 64 (1991): 403–10.

Hall, *servus* of the late Thomas Mowbray, who may have withheld information about Gloucester's death in 1397, and whom Henry's parliament condemned: "le dit John Halle soit treinez del Tour Hill jesques a les Fourkes de Tybourne, et la bowelez, et ses bowels arcz devaunt luy, et puis soit penduz, decollez, et quarterez, et son teste envoie a Caleys ou le mourdre fuist fait, et les quartres envoieez as autres lieux ou le roy plerra."<sup>39</sup>

The episode is excluded from the more partisan chroniclers; so too, almost, the "Decapitacio Perkyn de Lye," at Chester, the center of Ricardian real power since about 1387, where Henry did make extensive show of force in the summer of 1399: "ubi demonstravit se et miliciam suam magnifice coram civitate."<sup>40</sup> The killing is reported by Adam Usk, who witnessed it: Henry himself, Adam has it, "tercio die aduentus sui ibidem, magni malefactoris reputati Perkyn de Lye caput amputari, et in palo ultra portam orientalem affigi, fecit" ["on the third day after his arrival there, he gave orders that Perkyn de Leigh, who was reputed to be a great malefactor, should be beheaded, and his head set up on a stake outside the east gate"]. The justification was the popular opprobrium again, but lighting on a local Ricardian official, who liked to dress himself up as a monk, Adam alleges. So he was mocked while being tortured, killed, and mutilated:

Iste Perkyn in forestia regia de Lamari principalis custos, et eius officii maiestate plures oppressiones et extorciones pagensibus fecerat monacalia indutus, quia sub talibus uestium transfuguracionibus plura dampnosa, ut dicebatur, perpetraverat, merito in eadem captus transmigrare extitit.

[This Perkyn was principal keeper of the royal forest of Delamere, where, puffed up with the majesty of his office, he had inflicted countless oppressions and extortions on the inhabitants of the region, in the course of which he used to dress up as a monk, for it was said that while thus disguised he could perpetrate even greater cruelties; it was thus fitting that following his capture, he was put to death in the same garb.]

<sup>39</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, III, 452–53.

<sup>40</sup> *Vita Ricardi Secundi*, ed. Stow, p. 155. On Richard and Cheshire, see R. R. Davies, "Richard II and the Principality of Chester 1397–9," in *The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack*, ed. F. R. H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron (London: Athlone, 1971), pp. 256–79; also McNiven, "The Cheshire Rising of 1400," 379–96; and James L. Gillespie, "Richard II's Archers of the Crown," *Journal of British Studies* 18 (1979): 14–29.

“Vnum bene scio quod de eius morte neminem ad tunc dolere perpendi” [“One thing I know for sure, that I know of nobody at the time who lamented his death”] is Adam’s claim;<sup>41</sup> but there is contrary evidence in this case, in a contemporary local memorial of the man as a Ricardian martyr (“That for Kyng Richard the dethe did die, / Betrayed for righteousnesse”) and in the comment of the “Dieulacres Chronicle,” which imputes unjust killing (“sine causa”) to the duke Henry personally (also replacing the demeaning diminutive of the Lancastrian sources): “Quo in tempore Petri de Legh iudicio ducis sine causa est abscissum et super portam orientalem Cestrie positum, cuius anime propicietur Deus” [“At that time, Peter Leigh was killed without cause by judgment of the duke, and his head was set atop Chester Eastgate, may God have mercy on his soul”].<sup>42</sup>

Greater concern had to attach to the salient instance of the Lancastrian revolutionary killing, the executions of Scrope, Bussy, and Green, when only Bagot escaped to enjoy the new king’s *pietas*: more numerous victims, who were not local (like Peter Leigh) or servile (like John Hall), but realm-level political actors, closest to Richard of all Henry’s victims, killed first, earliest in the revolutionary cycle. Like the killing of Peter Leigh at Chester, again belying the regime’s conceit of a revolution “sine sanguinis effusione,” these were extra-judicial murders in fact, illegal for want of proper regal authority. A trial was staged, evidently, as Walsingham’s reiteration of the term *sententia* in his account of what happened at Bristol implies: “Tandem capti sunt et inuiti ducti extra castrum ad ducem Lancastrie. Et primo quidem arestati sunt, deinde in crastino coram iudicibus, uidelicet constabulario et marescallo, iudicio sistuntur.”<sup>43</sup> [Finally they were laid hold of and conveyed resisting to the duke of Lancaster outside the city. First, they were put under arrest, and then the next morning they were brought up for trial before judges,

<sup>41</sup> *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, ed. and trans. Given-Wilson, pp. 56–59. Chaucer describes his *custos*-like Reeve as disposed to similar dress-up, at *Canterbury Tales* 1.590 “His toppe was dokked lyk a preest biforn” and 621 “Tukked he was as is a frere aboute.” I am not able to find that the parallel has been noted; Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 284 n. 70, comments on the curiousness of Chaucer’s characterization.

<sup>42</sup> Clarke and Galbraith, “The Deposition of Richard II,” pp. 163–64 and 172. The verses (reportedly inc. “Here lyeth the bodie of Perkyn a Leigh”) are not listed in the *NIMEV*.

<sup>43</sup> The quotations here and just below are from the *Vita Ricardi secundi*, ed. Stow, p. 154.

namely, the Constable and the Marshall.] In fact, the Constable and Marshall mentioned here were with King Richard in Ireland, and it may be only that Henry already had decided that he could hold or distribute such offices himself if he wanted.<sup>44</sup> Henry was still only *dux*, however, illegally in England, and he had no business trying traitors or executing them, though that is what he did: “dampnati et decollati” [“condemned and beheaded”] were the three at Bristol, “de prodicione et mala gubernacione regis et regni conuicti” [“convict of treason and ill-governance of the king and kingdom”].

Also fundamentally troubling about the episode—and so not even hinted at in the Lancastrian apologists—was the fact that Henry still had not yet publicly articulated any intention to be king, though at Bristol he was already acting as if in law he were one. He promised (and would continue to promise for some time after the executions)—swearing solemn oaths publicly to various parties—that he was come, not to make himself king, but only “sua iura petens” [“seeking what was rightfully his”], as one of the poets put it.<sup>45</sup> Oath-breaking was taken seriously among the Lancastrians, it would seem, and charges of perjury against Henry himself were to recur virulently later; nonetheless, the regime was founded, as K. B. Macfarlane concluded, “on a series of unconstitutional actions and upon at least three major acts of perjury.”<sup>46</sup>

Hence, in the present case, the awkwardness of the Bristol killings remained great enough that, as the last item of business on the last

<sup>44</sup>On the stewardship Henry may already have been claiming for himself and the legal implications of it, see Sherbourne, “Perjury and the Lancastrian Revolution,” esp. pp. 233–34.

<sup>45</sup>The phrase is from the c. 1400 *Metrical Historia regum Anglie Continuation* 260 “Appulit interea dux sua iura petens,” ed. Rigg, *A Book of British Kings, 1200 BC–1399 AD*, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 26 (Toronto: Centre for Medieval Studies, 2000); but it can be widely paralleled, in Gower, for example: *Cronica* 3.129 “Vt sua propria querat” and 3.167 “sua propria dumque resumit”: “In Praise of Peace” prol.2 (addressing Henry directly) “Qui bene venisti cum propria regna petisti,” as well as in the Lancastrian *prosatores*, e.g., Walsingham (*Annales*, p. 241): “vt reuerteretur in terram natiuitatis suae, et iura paterna repeteret.” The “Dieulacres Chronicle” (ed. Clarke and Galbraith, pp. 170–71) qualifies significantly: “Ut dixit, ius sue hereditatis vendicaturus.”

<sup>46</sup>*Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 49–58, at 58; developed in Sherbourne, “Perjury and the Lancastrian Revolution,” pp. 217–41. A perverse symptom of the Lancastrian concern is the number of times in the “Articles of Deposition” of the “Record and Process” that charges of perjury are brought against Richard. Richard’s coronation oath is reproduced in full in it (*Rotuli parliamentorum*, III, 417), and he is then alleged to have been foresworn again and again.

day of Henry's inaugural parliament, 19 November 1399, the commons petitioned the king to impose a stipulated legality on the killings, in retrospect.<sup>47</sup> "Les ditz communes prierent au Roy, qe la pursuyte, l'arest, et les juggementz, et quant qe fuist fait envers William le Scrop, chivaler, Henry Green, chivaler, et John Bussy, chivaler, purroient estre affirmez en cest present parlement, et tenuz pur bones." In response, the king asserted that these three men only ("lesqueux taunt soulement") had been "encountre le bon purpos et commune profit de le roialme" "et coupablez de toute le male q'avoit venuz au roialme": patent fiction—"lies and dissimulation" again—but expeditious, so, "toutz d'une accord," all members of the assembly concurred, finding "Qe mesmes les pursue, areste, juggementz, et quant qe fuist fait, come desuis est dit, furent bons, et les afferment pur bons et profitables."

This sophisticated rendition of the Henrician Bristol "juggement" "droiturel" *post festum* in parliament, implicitly acknowledging that Henry's doings were and had otherwise remained illegal, bespeaks a concern over the crimes necessary to put Henry in possession of the throne—murder and perjury, used again against Richard II in February 1400—that persisted among the Lancastrian activists into the postrevolutionary period. Hence too then, the effort to pretend such popular animus against the Bristol victims as is asserted in the summer 1399 poems, which appear to have come into circulation at about this moment (excepting the Gower), probably too *post festum*. The poetry also exculpates, asserting that the killings were not much Henry's doing, let alone the doing of a *Henricus rex*, to be lauded for his *pietas*. The duke only acquiesced to a *clamor populi* at Bristol, with the poems themselves

<sup>47</sup> *Rotuli parliamentorum*, III, 453, whence come the quotations following. Objection to the proceeding was raised in parliament by William Scrope's father, Richard, seeking guarantees to protect property rights (his own particularly) from a conqueror's malevolence or greed. Henry's response was the threat that the *acta* report. In claiming the throne, 30 September 1399, Henry himself had promised, or warned (*Rotuli parliamentorum* III, 423): "it es nought my will that noman thynk þat be waye of conquest I wold disherit any man of his heritage, franchises, or other ryghtes that hym aght to haue, ne put hym out of that that he has and has had by the gude lawes and custumes of the rewme, except thos persons that has ben agan the gude purpose and the commune profyt of the rewme." The language Henry is reported to have used in parliament 19 November 1399, in course of the incident under discussion, carefully repeats these terms he had used earlier. Henry would now be content to warrant, in effect, that only these three men, Scrope, Bussy, and Green, had been "encountre le bon purpos et commune profit de le roialme," in exchange for retrospective parliamentary legalization of his murders of them.

to supply proofs that there had been such *clamor*. No murder, nor perjury, the coincident evidence provided by the poets' performances showed, concurring with Henry's parliament. God had answered the people's prayers, and parliament pronounced so much legal and right: "et sur ceo les ditz communes mercierent au Roy de son droiturel jugement, et de ceo qe Dieux lour avoit envoie tiel Roy et Gouvernour."

There is no evidence of writs going out to the English poets in late summer 1399, as they did to the monastic chronicle-keepers at the time, ordering them too to do their part for the Lancastrian management of the information stream, nor are there receipts of payment and the like.<sup>48</sup> About the better-attested, more extensive writings of Gower, there is much to indicate that he wrote for the Lancastrian regime otherwise, with something like official sponsorship, in response to specific commissions—his inaugural effusion for Henry, "In Praise of Peace," for example—as he may have done earlier for other English monarchs, possibly as early as late in the reign of Edward III.<sup>49</sup> As Gaillard Lapsley suggested, Gower's *Cronica tripartita* is as much as another witness to the "Record and Process of the Deposition," like the pertinent sections of Walsingham's *Chronica maiora*.<sup>50</sup> Gower follows the parliamentary record so closely that it must be understood (again, even in the absence of direct evidence to this effect) that he came into possession of one of the relatively numerous copies of the "Record and Process" that the regime put about and based his work directly on it. Gower's only substantive departure from the "Record and Process" in the portions of the *Cronica tripartita* that correspond comes in the accounts he gives there of what happened with Scrope, Bussy, Green, and Bagot at Bristol.

<sup>48</sup> Receipts of payment to John Lydgate for poetry-writing survive: see Derek A. Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371–1449): A Bio-bibliography*, English Literary Studies Monograph Series 71 (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1997), p. 59, nos. 13 and 13A; and there are fairly numerous later examples, from the last quarter of the fifteenth century onward. Earlier, the only direct evidence takes the form of poets themselves claiming to have been commissioned to write, though the poets are not invariably credible witnesses in such matters; a near-contemporary instance, c. 1367, is discussed in Carlson, "The Invention of the Anglo-Latin Public Poetry (circa 1367–1402) and its Prosody, esp. in John Gower," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 39 (2004): 392–93.

<sup>49</sup> On "In Praise of Peace," see Grady, "The Lancastrian Gower and the Limits of Exemplarity," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 552–75; also, on Gower's writing of the late years, see Yeager, "Chaucer's 'To His Purse,'" pp. 401–5; and for evidence from earlier in Gower's career, see Carlson, "Gower's Early Latin Poetry: Text-Genetic Hypotheses of an *Epistola ad regem* (c. 1377–80)," *Mediaeval Studies* 65 (2003): 293–317.

<sup>50</sup> Gaillard Lapsley, "The Parliamentary Title of Henry IV," *EHR* 49 (1934): esp. 438–40, also 596–600; cf. Grady, "The Generation of 1399," p. 223.

The poetry's coincidence of interest, in the profitable fiction of a *clamor populi* at Bristol—representing the *clamor* itself or report of it at the time—exonerating Henry, is too hard to imagine as accidental, as are the convergences of this peculiar substance and the peculiar allegorical idiom that the poetry all deploys. Finally also, the poetry was too particularly useful to the Lancastrian regime then in process of installing itself to pass now for spontaneous. Rather than popular effusions, clerical or lay, the contemporary English poems on the events of July and August are the more likely to be evidence again of the Lancastrian regime's disposition to manipulate the historical record, and its groundbreaking labors at public self-fashioning.

**Appendix:**  
**“O Deus in Celis” Text and Translation**

- <fol. 94r> O deus in celis, disponens cuncta fidelis,  
 Deprecor, exaudi reddentes nos tue laudi.  
 Ablue pennatos fallentes perfide natos,  
 Vt tormentorum noscant recepisse dolorem.
- <5> De regno flores nostros tollunt meliores:  
 Taxas de gente, pro defectu moriente.  
 Hii sunt inflati, pro nummis infatuati;  
 Querunt ditari, pro gasis delapidari.
- <10> Illustrent <fraude vulpes> <r>apidi sine laude.  
 Plus querunt aurum quam celi <f>erre tezaurum.  
 Dissimulant, verba ponentes mortis acerba.  
 Hos regni terra mactent et aspera fer<r>a!
- Gens male taxatur; p<er>ante furta sequatur!  
 Consilium tale pereat a sede regali.
- <15> Dux, perlustrator constans, sis tu dominator,  
 Et fac tractari fals<o>s et decapitari!
- Milleni fantur quod plures associantur.  
 Priuatur vita, clamat gens celitus ita.  
 Quondam peiores sunt facti iam meliores:
- <20> Tales pomposi de stercore sunt generosi.
- Fraus latet illorum propter <. . .> tezaurum.  
 Scrope, Bagge, Ver, Dumus, tormentorum par<i>t humus.

- Dampnarunt forti iustorum corpora morti,  
Sanguis <at> quorum vindictam clamat eorum.
- <25> Inuidia tentum reuocetur parliamentum,  
Vt ciuitas digna, que plurima passa maligna.  
Ad nostrum ducem Lancastrie reddite lucem!  
Huius consortes estote per omnia fortes!
- <30> Heu! periunt iura, nisi sint beneficia plura.  
Lux, laus, Henricus, Lancastrie factus, amicus,  
Scutis <patronus> nos protegat vndique pronus!  
Taxa <. . .>  
<. . .>  
<Illo> regnante, semper post cesser, <u>t ante.
- <35> Huius dux causa pateat! Sua ianua clausa;  
<fol. 95v> Pannis indutus plusquam viuit modo mutus.  
Mox suspendatur, si verum lingua loquatur.  
Expediit armare, nos a somno vigilare.  
Galli<a> per artes nostras vult perdere partes.
- <40> Nos fallunt, illa que <palma fixa> sigilla.  
Scriptum draconis verbum spernit Salamonis.  
Gallus cantabit causas; caulis latitabit.  
Aquila dux austro saluabit nos alabaustro.  
Illius cetum prestet, Christe, fore letum!
- [O God in the heavens, all-disposing, trustworthy,  
Hear us, I pray, as we give ourselves to your praise.  
Wipe out those befeathered boys, treacherously deceiving,  
That they might know receiving the pain of torments.
- <5> They pluck from the realm our better blossoms:  
Taxes from the people, dying for want.  
Such men are puffed up, infatuated with riches;  
They seek to enrich themselves, to plunder for treasure.
- <10> Let their blazon be foxes, ravening in deceit, praiselessly.  
They want to carry off gold more than heaven's treasure.  
They practice deceit, pronouncing bitter words of death.  
Let the kingdom and hard steel punish them!  
The people are wrongfully taxed, so let them try thievery  
beforehand!

STUDIES IN THE AGE OF CHAUCER

- <15> Such counsel from about the throne should be gone.  
Duke, who shine constantly upon us, be you the master,  
And cause false persons to be drawn and beheaded!
- Many conspire, thousands are saying.  
Life is laid waste, so the people cry out heavenwards.  
Persons once lowly are now made superior:
- <20> Such pompous nobles are up from the dung-heap.  
Their treachery lies hidden because of the riches they have.  
A soil of torments engenders Scrope, Bagot, Spring-Green, and  
Thorn-Bush.  
They condemn the bodies of the just to mighty death,  
And their blood yet cries out for vengeance against them.
- <25> Held for spite, let the parliament be called anew,  
Like a worthy city that has suffered many wrongs.  
Return life again to our duke of Lancaster!  
Be bold in all, you who are his followers!
- But alas! laws die, if there be not many emoluments.  
Splendour, praise, Henry, made duke of Lancaster, friend,  
Eager shield-guardian, may he protect us on all sides!  
Tax < . . . >
- < . . . >
- <35> With him reigning, it would cease ever after, as before.  
For the sake of this, let the duke come forth! His way is barred;  
Dressed in rags, he lives now more in quiet.  
Were a tongue to tell truth, straightaway would come a  
hanging.  
It behoves us to arm, to rouse us up from sleep.  
By ruses, France would lay waste our provinces.
- <40> They lead us astray, those armorial seals which are affixed by  
the palm.  
The Dragon's script scorns the word of Salomon.  
The Cock will crow its causes; in the sheep-folds will it hide.  
The eagle-duke will save us from the alabaster-white south.  
May it come to pass, Christ, that this man's company fare well!

TEXT:

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Rawlinson 4.429, fols. 94r–95v = *ms.*  
*Wr* = ed. Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, I, 366–68.

## VARIANTS:

9 <fraude vulpes>} vulpes fraude *ms.*, *Wr* 9 <r>apidi] *fortasse* <r>  
 a<b>idi : lapidi *ms.* : liuidi *Wr* 10 <f>erre] terre *ms.* 12 fer<r>a]  
*Wr* : fera *ms.* 13 p<er>ante] prouocante *ms.* 14 pereat] pareat *Wr* 15  
 tu] an *Wr* 16 fals<o >s] *Wr* : falses *ms.* 21 propter <. . .> thesaurum]  
 propter thesaurum *ms.* 22 Ver] *fortasse* Ver<t> 22 par<i>t] parat *ms.*  
 24 <at>} que [= relative pronoun] *ms.* : qui *Wr* 24 vindictam] vin-  
 dicta *Wr* 25 tentum reuocetur] centum reuocatur *Wr* 26 ciuitas] cunctas  
*Wr* 29 Periunt] Pereunt *Wr* 31 <patronus> ] et armis *ms.* 31 pronus]  
 pronos *Wr* 32–34] Taxa regnante semper post cesset et ante *ms.* 34  
 cesset] cessit *Wr* 34 <u>t] et *ms.* 35 Sua] sibi *Wr* (*non sine vi*) 39 Gal-  
 li<a>} Gallica *ms.* 40 Nos] Rex *Wr* 40 <palma fixa>} fixa palma *ms.* :  
 fixa penna *Wr* 44 Christe] Christus *Wr*

## NOTES:

1: Cf. Gower, *Cronica tripartita* 1.109–10 “Sic deus in celis mala de puteo Michaelis / Acriter expurgat, ne plus comes ille resurgat,” where the reference is to another, earlier much execrated favorite of Richard’s, Michael de la Pole, earl of Suffolk (c. 1330–89), by means of the same sort of interlingual punning (see above, p. 385). Also, Gower, *Cronica tripartita* 1.54 “Sic quasi de celis interfuit, ille fidelis,” where the reference is to Henry Bolingbroke. Gower did often rework or more simply reuse lines he had fashioned for another use; examples are discussed in “Gower’s Early Latin Poetry,” pp. 300–303 and 305, and “A Rhyme Distribution Chronology of John Gower’s Latin Verse,” pp. 25–7, 31–5, and 38–9.

3: *pennatos*: perhaps ‘full-fledged,’ like arrows properly fledged or fletched with feathers, in context ‘over-grown,’ boys who have gotten too big; or perhaps ‘feathered,’ like demons, who are sometimes depicted with feathered legs; or perhaps ‘winged,’ like the old god of cupidity itself, the boy Cupid.

4: Rhyme and meter fail in this line, which is nevertheless sensible. It may be that (unmetrical) *recēpisse* is a miswriting of *resipisse*, differing in sense but similarly pronounced.

8: *gasis*: > CL *gaza*, *-ae*.

8: *delapidari*: > CL *dilapido*, *-are*, but as a deponent for the sake of rhyme.

9: *Illustrent*: The translation interprets the verb as taking its sense from the cognate technical term *illustratio*, 'blazon,' in heraldry. The alternative interpretation ("Let foxes illuminate them") seems less pointed.

9: <*f*>*fraude vulpes*: the inversion of order restores rhyme.

9: <*r*>*apidi*: though the suggested reading may be somewhat strained in sense—"rabidi" might be more idiomatic—it has the attraction of being nearer manuscript "lapidi" than Wright's apparent conjecture "liuidi."

10: <*f*>*erre*: manuscript "terre" would be sensible, in chiasmus with "celi"—'aurum terre quam celi thesaurum'—but (with an ultimate longum) it is unmetrical.

10, 21: *thesaurum*: (in the same metrical position both times) > CL *thesaurum*, -i.

12: *terra*: the translation construes the noun as a nominative, taking its final longum in the position to be an instance of lengthening at the caesura, only *metri causa*, as is ubiquitous in contemporary prosody (e.g., the preceding line 11 *verbā*).

13: *p*<*er*>*ante*: manuscript "prouocante" will not construe (though a similarly dangling ablative may occur again below, 34 "regnante"), and it has too many syllables for the meter. The proposal supposes a lengthening of the final -ē, as if by analogy with regular adverbs.

15: *dux*: as confirmed later in the poem (26 and 30), the reference is to Henry Bolingbroke; for the implications for the date, see above, p. 378.

15: *Dux, perlustrator constans, sis tu dominator*: other constructions of the sequence of nominatives (differently punctuated) can be imagined. The line may recall (or be recalled by) Gower, *Cronica tripertita* 3.486 (with reference to Richard II): "Est qui peccator non esse potest dominator."

16: *tractari . . . et decapitari*: A precise description (in the correct legal terms) of what was in fact to happen: see above, pp. 396–7.

18: *clamat gens celitus*: For parallel conceits in the contemporary literature, see above, pp. 401–2.

19–20: *Quondam peiores sunt facti iam meliores./ Tales pomposi de stercore sunt generosi*: Adam Usk (ed. Given-Wilson, pp. 60–62) has similar com-

ment, at the only point in his *Chronicle* where he mentions William Bagot.

21: *propter* <. . .> *tezaurum*: grammar and rhyme are satisfactory, despite the metrical shortness of the line, evidently just at this point: a word (or some combination of words) with the metrical values longum—longum—breve is wanted.

22: *Scrope, Bagge, Ver, Dumus*: On the careers of these four men, see above, pp. 392–402. On the interlingual synonymy peculiar to this corpus of poetry by which some are named here, see above, pp. 384–5. Wright’s note (*Political Poems and Songs*, I, 367) essays an identification of “Ver” as “Robert de Vere, duke of Ireland,” but this is an error (*vt puto*): though formerly a notorious victim of Richard’s enemies, he had died at Louvain in 1392, having fled abroad after his defeat at Radcot Bridge in 1387 in the Appellants’ coup, some years before the “O deus in celis” could have been written.

23: *Dampnarunt forti iustorum corpora morti*: For other contemporary attempts to blame these men for (or at least implicate them in) the “Revenge” parliament killings of 1397, see above, pp. 394–5.

24: *Sanguis* <*at*>: The manuscript’s relative pronoun “que” (like Wright’s “qui”) does not make sense; an enclitic *-quē* (“Sanguisque”) would be both sensible and close to the manuscript reading, perhaps enough so to tolerate its (unmetrical) brevity.

25: *Inuidia tentum*: The final parliamentary meetings before the deposition were the so-called Shrewesbury and Westminster continuations of the 1397 “Revenge” parliament, during early 1398, where parliamentary business of the “Revenge” parliament was carried forward by means of a subcommittee, of Richard’s election, to which were appointed Scrope, Bussy, and Green, *inter alios*, but not Bagot (see *Rotuli parliamentorum* III, 368). The chief business of the continuations was additional prosecutions of Richard’s enemies and the banishment of Bolingbroke; and their legality, not to mention their probity, was to form the basis of one of the “Articles of Deposition” in 1399 (Art. 8; cf. Art. 31: *Rotuli parliamentorum* III, 418 and 421). The issues are discussed in J. G. Edwards, “The Parliamentary Committee of 1398,” *EHR* 40 (1925), 321–33.

26: *ciuitas*: Wright’s “cunctas” would appear to be his representation of

a manuscript spelling “cuntas” (a widely attested contemporary spelling), having the same number of minims. A similar line, perhaps clarifying the simile here (“vt ciuitas”), occurs in a poem of 1314 on the English defeat at Bannockburn, “Me cordis angustia,” ed. Wright, *The Political Songs of England, from the Reign of John to that of Edward II*, Camden Society Old Series 6 (1839; repr. New York: Johnson, 1968), pp. 262–267, at p. 267, addressing “Anglia” now bereft of the earl of Gloucester, who was killed in the battle (110–113):

Facta es vt domina viro viduata,  
Cuius sunt solamina in luctum mutata;  
Tu es sola civitas capite truncata;  
Tuos casus Trinitas faecundet beata!

31: *Scutis* <patronus> *nos*: manuscript “Scutis et armis,” reasonably sensible, perhaps explicable as an intrusive cliché, will not scan (“et,” not closed, is a breve) and does not rhyme; Wright’s attempt to read “pronos” line-final, as if to make rhyme with “nos,” will not do either: “nos” is post-caesural (and the “rhyme” would still be only monosyllabic). By light of the money-oriented immediate context (29 “beneficia,” 32 “Taxa”), it might be possible (preferable) to take *scutum* as *écu*, the coin, understanding *scutis pronus* as “ready with coins, money.”

32–34: The manuscript line, “Taxa regnante semper post cessel et ante,” is troubling: it makes the final syllable of “Taxa” long, as if the word were to make an ablative absolute with “regnante”—and unlike the formally similar manuscript “prouocante” in 13, here “regnante” is confirmed by rhyme—but then the line leaves the verb “cesset” without an expressed subject; no other implicit subject can be supplied from the context, and resupplying “Taxa” itself for itself makes nonsense (“With tax reigning, tax would cease”), likewise taking the ablative phrase “Taxa regnante” as if somehow grammatically a subject. A possibility might be to construe the manuscript line’s “Taxā” with the previous line 31, punctuating: “nos protegat . . . / Taxa!” (“he would protect us from tax!”), leaving “regnante” alone, to be construed with the rest of its line (loosely, perhaps, “eo” to be supplied, referring back to 30 “Henricus”): “Regnante, semper post cessel” “[With him] reigning, it [i.e., *taxa*] would cease ever after.” The more extreme solution proposed here means to avoid some of these problems—the necessity of taking

32 “Taxa” as ablative case, and then resupplying the same term in the same line as a subject for 32 “cesset”; also, the related disconnection or incompleteness about 34 “regnante”—by imagining a lacuna. So doing has the recommendation of preserving the otherwise consistent end-stopping of lines; also, of resolving the scribal division of the poem into quatrains, which otherwise comes up two lines short at the end in the manuscript’s presentation. An alternative might be to treat the first two lines as a separate exordium-like injunction, shifting the beginning of the quatrain sequence to 3 (with line-space after 6, after 10, et cetera); but the attempt to do so would put an unacceptable quatrain division after 30, just about this hypothesized lacuna, where the one line occurs—the string of nominatives “Lux, laus, Henricus, Lancastrie factus, amicus”—that has a necessary (grammatical) connection with something following: it needs the next line for completion. There is nothing in the poem itself, however, to indicate any quatrain (or other stichic or stanzaic) arrangement: no scheme of rhymes between (rather than within) lines or alternations of length of line, to provide *inter alia* some check on the scribal conduct; so it may be that any divisions of some groups of lines from others (couplets or quatrains) ought to be ignored. On the other hand, this same extrinsic nature of the quatrain divisions may indicate authority. Without prompting by the verse itself, a copyist would not trouble to impose an invented scheme; if such a premise is good—and it may well not be—the copyist here must be imagined to have been following the exemplar, at least to start; the (hypothesized) missing out of lines here would have put the exemplarily scheme off, with the consequent stranding of the two lines 43–44 at the end of the surviving copy (as in Wright’s representation).

35: perhaps instead: “Huius, dux, causa pateat sua ianua clausa” or, with Wright’s conjecture, “sibi ianua clausa,” “For the sake of this, O duke, let his closed door be open!” or “the door closed to him be open!”

37: *Mox*: emending to “<V>ox” might yield better sense: “were tongue to speak truth, that voice would be cut off.” In any case, truth-telling was an especially vivid issue just at the moment, as witnesses contemporary poetry (from Chaucer’s *Manciple’s Tale* to *Mum and the Sothsegger*), but also as a specific legal charge against the Ricardian regime, which was regarded as having tried to criminalize speech: see Art. 20 of the “Record and Process” (*Rotuli parliamentorum* III, 420).

40: <*palma fixa*> *sigilla*: the reversal of the ms. word-order makes “palma” ablative and “fixa” nominative, to go with “sigilla.” Whereas the grammatical relation in the ms. word-order cannot make sense, the reversal comes only somewhat closer to doing so. The translation interprets “palma” to mean “hand,” by metonymy; an alternative might be to take it as an additional heraldic reference, to a “frond” of some sort: perhaps the fleur-de-lis of France, perhaps the *planta genesta*, or brooms-cod, of Richard’s family. In either case, if the reference of “sigilla” is to armorial tokens, the use and abuse of them in retaining was a vivid contemporary issue: see John M. Bowers, “*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting: Ricardian Poetry Revisited,” *SAC* 17 (1995): 136–37.

41–43: On the tradition of the enigmatic phraseology used here (*Scriptum draconis*, *verbum Salamonis*, *Gallus* apparently for France, *Aquila dux* for Henry Bolingbroke), see above, pp. 388–9. A similarly conceited stanza occurs in the “*Me cordis angustia*,” ed. Wright, *The Political Songs of England*, at p. 267, allegorising the Scots’ defeat of the English at Bannockburn (102-105):

Quando saevit aquilum [= the north-east wind],  
           affricus [= the southwest wind] quievit;  
 Et australi [= southern] populo dampnum  
           mortis crevit.  
 Anglia victoria frui consuevit,  
 Sed prolis perfidia mater inolevit.

43: *austro saluabit nos alabaustro*: Henry returned to England in the North (see above, p. 379, e.g.), so it seems likely or possible that the reference to the South is to the Ricardian regime based at Westminster, revealing an antimetropolitan or decentralizing bias often associated with the North in this period. Though *alabauster* is here taken as adj. modifying *auster*, it is not an especially instructive term; possibly some form of *arbalauster* (a loan-word from French, consequently spelled very variously in contemporary Latin) may lie behind the ms. reading: translate “The eagle-duke will save us from the south with his cross-bow.”

44: *cetum*: the translation interprets as a spelling of CL *coetus*, -i “company, assembly,” though CL *coeptum*, -i ‘undertaking, purpose’ (most commonly spelt in ML *ceptum*, -i) may also be possible.