

## *Crown and Higher Nobility in Late Fourteenth-Century England*

### THE PATTERNS OF MAGNATE POWER

Who were the magnates, and why are they important to our understanding of late medieval political society? Undoubtedly, the constituency which did most to shape the politics of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England was that handful of interconnected families, whose territorial standing and material wealth distinguished them from the remainder of the king's subjects. The scale and grandeur of their activities, habits, and tastes, are, to this day, evoked by the physical remains of their mighty residences, almshouses, colleges, and tombs.

By the mid-1390s the English magnate class consisted of about fifteen dynasties of varying provenance, antiquity, wealth, and power. At the top of the scale were men such as John of Gaunt, and the earls of Arundel and March, whose vast estates and wealth distinguished them even from their fellow magnates. These men owed their position in society to their enormous landed estates, amassed through a combination of inheritance, royal grant, purchase, conquest, and, in many instances, extortion.<sup>1</sup> In their daily exercise of lordship they commanded large networks of officials, retainers, and well-wishers to do their bidding. Waugh has shown that the magnates' engagement of gentry in their service had been formalized through contractual retaining by the early decades of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> For any king, the cooperation of his greatest subjects was highly desirable, if not essential. If they could not be befriended, they could at least be put to some

<sup>1</sup> There are several examples of the use of theft and extortion in the construction of landed empires. For Thomas of Lancaster, see F. R. Fairbank, 'The Last Earl of Warenne and Surrey, and the Distribution of his Possessions', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 19 (1907), 211-15; for the Despensers, N. M. Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II* (Cambridge, 1979), 106-18; for the Mortimers, G. A. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1957), 12-15.

<sup>2</sup> S. L. Waugh, 'Tenure to Contract: Lordship and Clientage in Thirteenth Century England', *EHR* 101 (1986), 811-39.

vital task—hence the service of Gaunt in Aquitaine and of the Mortimer earls of March in Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

Although lacking the supra-regional territorial power of Gaunt and the earls of March, the other magnates exercised considerable influence in those regions and counties where they held major estates. These men played a vital function in the administration and policing of distant localities, in the mediation of disputes, and in the brokering of patronage.<sup>4</sup> Their wealth enabled them to indulge in major residential and pious building projects, and also to lead substantial retinues in time of war.<sup>5</sup>

At the top of the range was the house of Lancaster, with an annual net landed income of about £12,000. Although the range of magnate landed incomes varied considerably, there are enough points of similarity between these families to make them a distinct, upper tier within the English nobility. Their cohesion owed much to the high incidence of intermarriage. For example, the Appellant earl of Arundel married the daughters of two comital houses, Elizabeth Bohun and Philippa Mortimer. None of the children of the elder earl of Kent, and Alice Fitzalan, married into families beneath comital rank.<sup>6</sup>

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the proliferation in the use of a number of tenurial devices allowed magnates to endow their children according to their own designs, while avoiding the fragmentation of their estates among collateral heirs.<sup>7</sup> In spite of the increasing resistance among magnates to the crown's exercising of its traditional rights of wardship and marriage, minorities could still have important consequences for the tenurial and financial integrity of estates. The coalition of aristocratic interests that thwarted Richard II's designs for the Mortimer inheritance in 1382–3 reveals a collective sense of consciousness among the magnates about the need to defend the interests of a minor heir, and to ensure that his wardship went to his kin and to royal favourites.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For Gaunt in Aquitaine, see A. E. Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth Century Europe* (London, 1992), 188–200; for Mortimer in Ireland, see D. B. Johnston, 'The Interim Years: Richard II and Ireland, 1395–1399', in J. F. Lydon (ed.), *England and Ireland in the Later Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven* (Dublin, 1981), 179–91.

<sup>4</sup> Christine Carpenter has examined in great depth the role of the earls of Warwick in the governance of 15-century Warwickshire in *Locality and Polity: A Study in Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge, 1992), chs. 10 and 11.

<sup>5</sup> J. Sherborne, 'Indentured Retinues and English Expeditions to France 1369–80', in Sherborne, *War, Politics and Culture in Fourteenth Century England*, ed. J. A. Tuck (London, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> GEC vii. 154–9.

<sup>7</sup> The significance of these legal instruments has been discussed in Ch. 1.

<sup>8</sup> A. E. Goodman, 'Richard II's Councils', in A. E. Goodman and J. L. Gillespie (eds.), *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999), 67.

Minorities also offered significant opportunities for magnate widows to exercise power in their own right. Some of the most significant territorial magnates were the great dowagers, whose ranks included Margaret, countess of Norfolk, a granddaughter of Edward I, and Joan Bohun, countess of Essex, mother-in-law of the future Henry IV. In their wealth, authority, and personal standing, these women were often more than a match for their male relatives—and had no compunctions about asserting their rights at law.<sup>9</sup>

The later fourteenth century was also a period in which the administration of magnate estates attained an increasing degree of sophistication. Whereas in previous centuries a handful of stewards, reeves, and bailiffs had been sufficient to manage a great inheritance, by the fourteenth century the magnates were imitating the administrative practices and structures of the crown, as the estate accounts of Elizabeth de Burgh (d. 1360) make clear.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly, the most sophisticated examples can be found in the administration of the duchy of Lancaster, where Gaunt inherited and developed a massive seigniorial apparatus, which, in its scale and structural complexity, was virtually 'a state within a state'. Many of the royal offices, such as those of chancellor, treasurer, and chamberlain, were replicated within Gaunt's ducal administration.<sup>11</sup> Not to be outdone, his brother Duke Thomas gave his secretary, Thomas Feriby, the inflated style of 'chancellor'.<sup>12</sup> These trends of increasing specialization can also be detected in the seigniorial administrations of the Neville and Mortimer families. The constables and stewards of magnates were often important men in their own right. For men such as Sir Nicholas Lilling and Sir Payn Tiptoft, their tenure of senior offices in the administrations of the earls of Warwick and Arundel were powerful indicators of their own significance.<sup>13</sup>

Although much of the magnates' authority flowed from their tenure of great estates, the standing and influence of individual magnates also depended upon more general perceptions of their personal abilities and

<sup>9</sup> For a broader examination of their significance, see R. E. Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies: The Problem of Later Medieval Dowagers', in A. J. Pollard (ed.), *Property and Politics, Essays in Later Medieval English History* (Stroud, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> M. A. Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism* (London, 1995), 52.

<sup>11</sup> S. K. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361–1399* (Oxford, 1990), 285–6; Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 312–21.

<sup>12</sup> A. E. Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy: The Lords Appellant under Richard II* (London, 1971), 94.

<sup>13</sup> For Sir Nicholas Lilling, see J. S. Roskell, L. Clark, and C. Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386–1421*, History of Parliament (Stroud, 1992–3), iv. 42; for Sir Payn Tiptoft, see *CJM* 1392–9, 110, no. 233.

achievements. In the 1380s and 1390s the earl of March attracted many Welsh gentlemen into his service, through expectations of the employment and good lordship that he had to offer on his marcher estates.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Adam Usk records that Roger Mortimer's father, Earl Edmund, had funded his studies at Oxford.<sup>15</sup> That the service of magnates was perceived to open up opportunities for advancement and enrichment is evident from many sources, not least the muster roll of Thomas of Woodstock's abortive Irish expedition of 1392. Of the fourteen knights Duke Thomas indented to lead to Ireland (out of a total force of 409), the list includes the peers Robert Scales, Philip Darcy, and Walter Fitzwalter, and the eminent Cheshireman and royal retainer Sir John Mascy of Puddington.<sup>16</sup> The draw of magnate service appears to have been particularly strong in counties where the duchy of Lancaster had a significant territorial presence, and many substantial gentlemen took on stewardships and other local offices in the gift of John of Gaunt.<sup>17</sup>

However, Walker has shown that even the wealthiest magnate had only a limited capacity to impose his authority in areas where he was the dominant territorial power.<sup>18</sup> The costs of retaining even a fraction of the most significant gentlemen in any locality were prohibitive. Hicks has suggested that only a minority of gentry were retained by noblemen, and of these a high proportion were attached to great households.<sup>19</sup> Those magnates who did have men willing to mediate their lordship were often unable to lever them into the desired local office.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, some gentlemen eschewed the dominant magnate affinity in favour of service to the crown, or to another lord, or independence.<sup>21</sup> Others had multiple loyalties<sup>22</sup>—such as Sir Thomas Percy, who retained strong Lancastrian connections while serving as steward of Richard II's household.<sup>23</sup> In such cases it was impossible to

<sup>14</sup> R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr* (Oxford, 1995), 43–4.

<sup>15</sup> *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377–1421*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (Oxford, 1997), 158.

<sup>16</sup> BL, Add. Roll 40859A (account of Edmund Brokesbourne, receiver-general of Thomas, duke of Gloucester, 16 Apr. 1392–9 Sept. 1393); P. R. Coss, *The Knight in Medieval England* (Stroud, 1993), 152.

<sup>17</sup> R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, 1: 1265–1603 (London, 1953), 378–81.

<sup>18</sup> Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, 235–6.

<sup>19</sup> Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism*, 76.

<sup>20</sup> J. R. Maddicott, 'The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth Century England', *TRHS*, 5th ser., 28 (1978), 28.

<sup>21</sup> C. Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1987), 81.

<sup>22</sup> T. B. Pugh, 'The Magnates, Knights and Gentry', in S. B. Chrimes, C. D. Ross, and R. A. Griffiths (eds.), *Fifteenth Century England: Studies in Politics and Society* (Manchester, 1972), 104–5.

<sup>23</sup> C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity* (New Haven, 1986), 73.

assume which was the higher loyalty, until the two came into conflict, as they did for Thomas Percy in July 1399. He chose to betray Richard II. As Robert Holand had shown in his abandonment of Thomas of Lancaster in 1322, the instinct for political survival could transcend the strongest bond of lordship.<sup>24</sup> The world of retaining was a brutal 'free market', and this became very apparent in the late 1380s and 1390s, when gentlemen who had been spurned by the Lancastrian affinity entered the service of Robert de Vere and Thomas Mowbray, in the palatinate of Chester.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of the great concentration of landed estates in the hands of magnate families, the power that they wielded in their own 'countries' was by no means overwhelming or exclusive. The dominant lord of a locality often suffered a decline in influence in the face of competition from a rival, as happened in Gloucestershire in the 1390s, when Thomas, Lord Despenser, exploited his royal favour to marginalize Thomas, Lord Berkeley.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, the standing of the local gentry, and the nexus of royal power, could combine to marginalize the authority of a magnate. Although Warwickshire in the age of Richard Beauchamp (d. 1439) stands out as a successful example of magnate leadership of political society,<sup>27</sup> there were many more counties where there was no lord able or willing to fulfil this role. In his study of fifteenth-century Leicestershire Acheson found a number of lesser peers with landed interests in the county, whose involvement in the politics of the locality waxed and waned according to their inclinations and fortunes.<sup>28</sup> In her comparable examination of Derbyshire, Susan Wright showed that in the permanent absence of the personal lordship of the dukes of Lancaster, leadership of society devolved to the upper gentry, while Payling uncovered a similar pattern in fifteenth-century Nottinghamshire.<sup>29</sup>

Through the combination of their private landed interests, the delegated royal power that they exercised in the governance of the localities, and their

<sup>24</sup> J. R. Maddicott, 'Thomas of Lancaster and Sir Robert Holland: A Study in Noble Patronage', *EHR* 86 (1971), 449–72.

<sup>25</sup> S. K. Walker, 'Lordship and Lawlessness in the Palatinate of Lancaster', *JBS* 28/4 (1989), 348.

<sup>26</sup> N. E. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981), 113.

<sup>27</sup> M. C. Carpenter, 'The Beauchamp Affinity: A Study of Bastard Feudalism at Work', *EHR* 95 (1980), 514–32.

<sup>28</sup> E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c.1422–c.1485* (Cambridge, 1992), ch. 1.

<sup>29</sup> S. M. Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Chesterfield, 1983), 12; S. J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991), 108.

direct participation in the workings of the royal council and Parliament, the higher nobility were the natural leaders of political society. There was a general expectation that the king should surround himself with experienced men of rank and substance, of the calibre of those who had been appointed to the Continual Councils in the period 1377–80.<sup>30</sup> Richard II's increasing reliance on a dwindling number of friends and allies, whom he rewarded at the expense of his other leading subjects, would become as much of a cause of instability in the late 1390s as it had been in 1387–8. Before considering the resurgence of political conflict between Richard II and some of his leading subjects in 1397, it is first necessary to consider the territorial power and dynastic connections of the higher nobility.

#### THE HIGHER NOBILITY AND THEIR ESTATES

In this section I intend to give a brief introduction to the 'cast' of higher noble families (principally those holding the rank of earl) participating in the political dramas of the period, and offer a rough indication of the magnitude and distribution of their estates. Constraints of space preclude fuller dynastic histories and detailed commentaries on the economics of agrarian lordship.<sup>31</sup> Attention will be given first to those magnates who were closest to the king in both blood and political affinity, and then to those who were great powers in various localities, such as the south-west, the Severn Valley, East Anglia, and the northern counties.

John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, and eldest of the king's three surviving uncles, stood head and shoulders above the other lords of the kingdom. Appropriately enough for a man who devoted much of his energy and wealth to overseas conquests, he was born in 1340, during his father's triumphal visit to Ghent, where he first asserted his claim to the crown of France.<sup>32</sup> Gaunt's status as an icon of English royalty, launched by William Shakespeare, and still evoked by the awesome physical remains of many of his residences, has impressed itself on the modern consciousness to a remarkable degree. He can be distinguished from his fellow peers not merely by the scale of his wealth, the grandeur of his lifestyle, and his political pre-eminence, but also on account of his pan-European significance. Anthony

<sup>30</sup> Goodman, 'Richard II's Councils', 65–8.

<sup>31</sup> For a fuller description of the composition and values of the inheritances of the higher nobility, see A. J. Dunn, 'The Endowment and Disendowment of Lay Magnates in England and the Welsh Marches 1396–1408', Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1999, ch. 1.

<sup>32</sup> GEC vii. 410–12.

Goodman has rescued Gaunt's continental expeditions from the margins of his English political career, and located them at the centre of his broader ambitions to uphold the English royal dynasty's place in Christendom.<sup>33</sup>

From the time of his return to England in 1389, Gaunt spearheaded his royal nephew's diplomatic engagement with the Valois dynasty.<sup>34</sup> However, this congruence of foreign policy objectives cannot disguise an ambivalence at the heart of their personal relationship. It is unlikely that the two men forgot the intense strains that had affected their relationship during the mid-1380s, when Thomas Mowbray was believed to have been plotting against the duke, with Richard II's collusion.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the events of the reign of his great-grandfather figured large in Richard II's political memory. His endeavours to secure the canonization of Edward II were central to his ambitions to erase the stain of the 1327 deposition—a threat that he himself may have faced, temporarily, in the winter of 1387. As heir to the honours and estates of Thomas of Lancaster, and to the stewardship of England, it is unlikely that Gaunt shared his nephew's enthusiasm to revisit the events of the 1320s.<sup>36</sup>

Gaunt derived his ducal title and immense landed wealth from his marriage to Blanche, daughter of Henry of Grosmont, duke of Lancaster. In November 1362, shortly after his father-in-law's death, Gaunt received his titles and a vast collection of estates spread throughout England and Wales.<sup>37</sup> In addition to the palatine county of Lancaster, the ducal inheritance included substantial estates in south Wales, the west midlands, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire. This remarkable agglomeration of castles, estates, and liberties has received a thorough reappraisal from Anthony Goodman.<sup>38</sup> By the time of Gaunt's death, in February 1399, the gross annual value of the duchy was hovering around £12,000.<sup>39</sup>

In marked contrast to Richard II, who had no children and no siblings of the full blood, Gaunt was linked into the higher nobility through his brothers, cousins, and the varied Lancastrian dynastic connections of his late wife, Blanche. Henry, their only son, was born at Bolingbroke Castle, Lincolnshire, in 1366, and was styled earl of Derby from at least Easter

<sup>33</sup> Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 175–7.

<sup>34</sup> J. Sherborne, 'Charles VI and Richard II', in Sherborne, *War, Politics and Culture in Fourteenth-Century England*, 167–9.

<sup>35</sup> J. A. Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility* (London, 1973), 92–3.

<sup>36</sup> C. Given-Wilson, 'Richard II, Edward II and the Lancastrian Inheritance', *EHR* 109 (1994), 553–71.

<sup>37</sup> See Map 1.

<sup>38</sup> Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, chs. 13 and 14.

<sup>39</sup> PRO, DL 29/728/11990–1.

1377, when he was knighted.<sup>40</sup> He owed much of his landed endowment to his marriage to Mary Bohun, daughter and co-heir of the last earl of Hereford, Essex, and Northampton. After many years of litigation between Derby and his uncle Gloucester, who had married the other heir, Eleanor, a final division of the Bohun estates was made in 1395. Derby's portion of the Bohun lands consisted of the lordships of Brecon and Hay—worth nearly £1,100 annually—with other properties in Gloucestershire, Essex, and Wiltshire.<sup>41</sup> In 1397–8 Henry's gross income was £2,340, of which £667 (1,000 marks) was an allowance from his father, chargeable on the lordships of Tutbury and Bolingbroke. Without this subsidy from his father, Bolingbroke's income would have fallen short of his expenditure, which totalled £2,200 in 1397–8.<sup>42</sup> Essentially, Henry of Lancaster was more significant as an heir rather than as a magnate in his own right.

In the mid-1390s the future of his principal heir was not Gaunt's only concern. He also had four children by his erstwhile mistress Katherine Swynford, who was now his third wife. The lobbying of Gaunt's attorney, Richard Etton, at the Roman curia, bore fruit on 9 February 1397, when the king, with the assent of Parliament, confirmed the papal legitimization of John, Henry, Thomas, and Joan Beaufort.<sup>43</sup> On the following day Sir John Beaufort was created earl of Somerset.<sup>44</sup>

During the 1390s Gaunt made a concerted effort to provide for his second family, and spent £3,000 purchasing properties in Somerset from the earl of Salisbury for the endowment of John Beaufort.<sup>45</sup> These early acquisitions mark the beginning of a gradual accumulation of lands by the Beauforts in Somerset and the adjacent counties. Paternal leverage also provided the impetus for the launch of Henry Beaufort's remarkable episcopal career, when he was provided to the see of Lincoln on 27 February 1398, following the undignified demotion of Bishop John Buckingham.<sup>46</sup>

Although only one year younger than his brother John of Gaunt, Edmund duke of York is the least memorable of Edward III and Philippa's remarkable family. Fourteen years older than Thomas of Woodstock,

<sup>40</sup> PRO, E 101/398/8 (household account of Richard, prince of Wales, 1376–7).

<sup>41</sup> R. R. Davies, 'The Bohun and Lancaster Lordships in Wales in the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries', Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1965, 163–5; PRO, SC 6/1157/4, m. 2.

<sup>42</sup> PRO, DL 28/1/10, fos. 1<sup>v</sup>, 3<sup>r</sup>, 32<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> PRO, DL 28/3/5, fo. 11<sup>r</sup> (account of John Leybourne, receiver-general of the duke of Lancaster, 1396–7); *CPR* 1396–9, 86.

<sup>44</sup> *RP* iii. 343.

<sup>45</sup> *CCR* 1389–92, 559; 1391–6, 529.

<sup>46</sup> R. G. Davies, 'Richard II and the Church in the Years of "Tyranny"', *JMH* 1 (1975), 348.

Edmund benefited from the timely death of John de Warenne, earl of Surrey, in 1347, and received all of his lands north of the Trent.<sup>47</sup> He was created earl of Cambridge in 1362, the same year as Gaunt's creation as duke of Lancaster, and duke of York in 1385. In 1372 Edmund married Isabella of Castile, and he subsequently became heavily involved in Iberian affairs, leading an expedition to Portugal in 1381.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of Richard II's appointment of York as keeper of the realm in 1394–5 and 1399, he has been treated as something of a nonentity.<sup>49</sup> This reputation belies the fact that the duke was often to be found at the heart of government, witnessing all of the royal charters issued between 1396–8, and 70 per cent of those issued in the first half of 1399.<sup>50</sup> His calculated betrayal of his royal nephew's cause in 1399 suggests that he may have picked up some of the arts of political survival during his many years near the centre of power.

Duke Edmund's son and heir, Edward, was born in Norwich in 1373. At the age of 7 Edward was betrothed to Beatrice of Portugal, to whom he was married in 1381. On 25 February 1390 he was created earl of Rutland, and endowed with its shrievalty and forest, and the castle and lordship of Oakham, to sustain his comital dignity during the lifetime of his father.<sup>51</sup> On 22 March 1391 Edward became admiral of the northern fleet, and, in November of that same year, was promoted to be sole admiral of England. On 27 January 1392 he replaced Thomas Holand, earl of Kent (d. 1397), as constable of the Tower, and later that year accompanied his father and his uncle of Lancaster on the diplomatic expedition to France. A clear measure of Richard II's favour to him was his creation as earl of Cork in January 1395, during the royal expedition to Ireland. Further evidence of Richard II's faith in Rutland can be found in the batch of important offices which he accumulated in the period 1396–7, which included the wardenship of the Cinque Ports and of the Isle of Wight, and the justiciarship of all forests south of the Trent.<sup>52</sup> Between the autumn of 1396 and the autumn of 1397 Edward, earl of Rutland, received payments of about £5,470 for his diplomatic expeditions to France and Germany, of which £2,400 were his own

<sup>47</sup> Fairbank, 'The Last Earl of Warenne and Surrey', 256.

<sup>48</sup> P. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II* (Oxford, 1955), 185–200, 290–318.

<sup>49</sup> C. Given-Wilson, 'Richard II and the Higher Nobility', in Goodman and Gillespie (eds.), *Richard II*, 107, calls him a 'political lightweight'.

<sup>50</sup> C. Given-Wilson, 'Royal Charter Witness Lists, 1327–1399', *Medieval Prosopography*, 12/2 (1991), 68.

<sup>51</sup> *RP* iii. 264.

<sup>52</sup> GEC xii/2, 898–900.

wages.<sup>53</sup> It is likely that these sums made a considerable contribution to his wealth, as he did not have a particularly large landed endowment.

Richard II's opinion of Rutland is well known from the bill of Sir William Bagot. In October 1399 Bagot was brought before Parliament to account for his actions in the previous reign. His testimony contains a curious account of a conversation which he had with Richard II, in which the king contemplated renouncing his crown, 'And he went on to say that the most able, wise and powerful man that he could think of to whom to renounce it was the duke of Aumale [Edward of Rutland].' Bagot replied, 'but I said by my troth that I knew well that the people would not obey him'.<sup>54</sup> Whatever the popular opinion of Rutland, the magnitude of the royal favour that he received placed him among the closest of Richard II's confidants.

Although Richard II enjoyed a good relationship with the Beauforts and the Yorks, his own favourites were his half-brothers Thomas and John Holand, both of whom were born shortly after 1350, and thus about seventeen years his senior.<sup>55</sup> As Nigel Saul has noted, Richard II acknowledged his proximity in blood to the Holands by allowing them to emulate his impaling of the royal arms with those (fictional arms) of Edward the Confessor.<sup>56</sup> The Holand brothers enjoyed all of the advantages of their birth and position. Like his father (a founder member), Thomas Holand was inducted into the Order of the Garter in 1376, and four years later was promoted to the earldom of Kent, the honour held by his maternal grandfather.<sup>57</sup> Although close to the centre of power throughout his life, Kent played little role in the politics of the reign. His appointment as constable of the Tower in May 1387—a period of mounting political tension—suggests that Richard II regarded him as a safe pair of hands. Richard II's concern to establish the earls of Kent as powers on the southern English littoral found expression in the grant of Corfe Castle to Earl Thomas and Alice Fitzalan, in survivorship, in May 1391.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> PRO, E 403/554, m. 2, £13 6s. 8d., £306 13s. 4d.; E 403/554, m. 5, £102 17s. od., £120 3s. 8d.; E 403/554, m. 9, £2,013 6s. 8d., £212; E 403/554, m. 14, £136 13s. 4d.; E 403/554, m. 16, £424; E 403/554, m. 17, £93 6s. 8d., £240; E 403/554, m. 20, £93 6s. 8d., £240; E 403/555, m. 1, £666 13s. 4d.; E 403/555, m. 18, £333 6s. 8d.; E 403/555, m. 19, £333 6s. 8d.; E 403/555, m. 23, £133 6s. 8d.; E 403/555, m. 28, £10 [?]s. [?]d. Total: £5,472 7s. 4d.; PRO, E 101/320/16.

<sup>54</sup> *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (London, 1983), 75–81.

<sup>55</sup> See Table A2.6; GEC vii. 154; v. 195.

<sup>56</sup> N. E. Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, 1997), 246.

<sup>57</sup> Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, 79–80; Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages*, 48; W. M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III* (New Haven), 117; H. E. Collins, *The Order of The Garter, 1348–1461: Chivalry and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2000), 290.

<sup>58</sup> GEC vii. 155.

During his tour of Hampshire and Dorset in August 1393 Richard II spent ten days with his half-brother at Corfe, and celebrated a requiem mass for their mother, Princess Joan.<sup>59</sup> Something of the status and influence of Earl Thomas and his Fitzalan countess can be gathered from the marriages that they contracted for their children. Thomas, their son and heir, married Joan Stafford, and his sisters Margaret, Eleanor, and Joan became countess of Somerset, countess of March, and duchess of York, respectively. Well before Kent's death on 25 April 1397 his son, also Thomas (b. 1371), was well established in the affections of his royal uncle, and was in receipt of a 200 mark annuity from 1 June 1395.<sup>60</sup> The younger Thomas Holand inherited lands with a nominal annual value of about £2,640, the most significant components of which were in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Had he not perished in the 1400 rising, Thomas Holand's inheritance would have been swollen by the extensive Yorkshire dower lands (worth £250 annually) of his mother, Alice Fitzalan, and those of his grandmother Elizabeth Julers in Hampshire (worth £300 annually).<sup>61</sup>

Whereas the elder Thomas Holand had led a life of amiable mediocrity, the same could hardly be said of his brother John. In a single year, 1384–5, John Holand bloodied his hands with the murders of the Carmelite friar John Latimer and, even more significantly, that of Ralph, son and heir of the earl of Stafford. This second slaying cost Holand the justiciarship of Chester, which he had been granted in 1380 as part of an effort to establish him as a power in the royal earldom.<sup>62</sup> Holand was still under a cloud in 1386, when, in considerable haste, he married Elizabeth, the daughter of John of Gaunt, whom he had contracted to serve on his Iberian expedition. Holand's service with his father-in-law in Spain may have been the key to his rehabilitation. Like Gaunt, he was untainted by involvement in the events of 1387–8, and his murder of Ralph Stafford may have receded in the public consciousness by the time of his return in 1389.<sup>63</sup> The timing of the absent John Holand's creation as earl of Huntingdon on 2 June 1388, at the end of the Merciless Parliament, reveals that the Appellant-dominated government viewed him as a man worth cultivating—an opinion which his royal half-brother came to share.<sup>64</sup> As Stansfield has shown, John Holand's

<sup>59</sup> M. J. Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399* (Stroud, 1999), 59.

<sup>60</sup> Granted, initially, during the lifetime of his father, and extended for the duration of his own life on 28 May 1397 (*CPR 1391–6*, 570; *1396–9*, 141).

<sup>61</sup> *CIM 1399–1422*, 13–207, *passim*, nos. 21–379, *passim*. Total gross nominal value in 1400: £2,636 10s. 11d.

<sup>62</sup> GEC v. 195–6; Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, 79.

<sup>63</sup> Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 274.

<sup>64</sup> *RP* iii. 250.

fortunes were transformed by the sustained application of his royal half-brother's favour from the late 1380s.<sup>65</sup> Richard's esteem for his brother's abilities extended to his employment on diplomatic business, which carried him as far afield as Hungary in the early 1390s.<sup>66</sup>

His comital endowment, worth £650 annually, was constructed from the grant of the estates of Lord Audley, a parcel of properties that was diverted from fulfilling Edward III's will, and miscellaneous life alienations from the duchy of Cornwall.<sup>67</sup> These grants were subsequently confirmed to Holand at the time of his creation as earl of Huntingdon in June 1388.<sup>68</sup> Richard II's treatment of his grandfather's pious 'bequests' illustrates that his cavalier attitude to the lands of others was well formed before 1397.<sup>69</sup>

John Holand adopted Dartington Hall in Devonshire as his preferred home, and the central boss of the porch vault—a chained and lodged white hart—survives to this day as a powerful visual reminder of his unofficial lieutenancy in the south-west.<sup>70</sup> Although Richard II does not appear to have contemplated following Henry III's precedent of making his brother Richard earl or duke of Cornwall, John Holand's promotion to the dukedom of Exeter in 1397 was an obvious statement of royal designs for his regional primacy.

The one member of Richard II's immediate family with whom his relations remained consistently poor was his youngest uncle, Thomas of Woodstock. The fifth and youngest surviving son of Edward III and Queen Philippa, Thomas was born in 1355; he was created earl of Buckingham at his nephew's coronation in 1377, and was advanced to the dukedom of Gloucester in 1385.<sup>71</sup>

Duke Thomas's endowment was based, principally, on his wife's inheritance. In May 1377 he was granted the custody of the Welsh Bohun lands, at a rent of 800 marks.<sup>72</sup> These consisted of the lordships of Brecon, Hay, Caldicot, and Huntingdon (worth £1,405 gross in 1398).<sup>73</sup> For Thomas, control of the Bohun inheritance represented the potential for a secure

<sup>65</sup> M. M. N. Stansfield, 'The Holand Family, Dukes of Exeter, Earls of Kent and Huntingdon, 1352–1475', Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1987, 80 and *passim*.

<sup>66</sup> Edinburgh University Library, MS 183 (Privy Seal Letter Book), fo. 27<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> *CPR 1385–9*, 495; C. Given-Wilson, 'Richard II and his Grandfather's Will', *EHR* 93 (1978), 320–37.

<sup>68</sup> *CPR 1385–9*, 494–5; *RP* iii. 250–1; *The Westminster Chronicle 1381–1394*, ed. L. C. Hector and B. F. Harvey (Oxford, 1982), 295.

<sup>69</sup> *CPR 1385–9*, 518; 1391–6, 600, 102, 218; 1396–9, 22; 1391–6, 15, 501, 201.

<sup>70</sup> A. Emery, *Dartington Hall* (Oxford, 1970), 96.

<sup>71</sup> GEC v. 719–21.

<sup>72</sup> *CFR 1369–77*, 403.

<sup>73</sup> R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282–1400* (Oxford, 1978), 196.

territorial endowment on a scale comparable to that which his elder brother Edmund had received during their father's lifetime. Having endured the frustration of his expectations for many years, Thomas made strenuous efforts to retain control of the Bohun estates, and the future of his sister-in-law Mary (the co-heir) became a determining factor in their tenure and transmission. Mary Bohun's preparations for a monastic vocation appeared to vouchsafe Woodstock's future monopoly on this inheritance, but his expectations were cruelly frustrated in 1380, when his own brother Gaunt arranged her removal from Pleshey and married her to his own heir, the future Henry IV.<sup>74</sup> Gaunt's act of opportunism ensured that his own son acquired a very handsome endowment, at the expense of Duke Thomas. After many years of litigation the Bohun inheritance was divided in 1395, leaving Duke Thomas with estates including the marcher lordships of Huntington, Caldicot, Newton, Cantrefselyf, one-third of Pencelli, and one-third of Bronllys.<sup>75</sup> The carving of 'Thomas' and 'Alianore' into the masonry of the three-storey Woodstock Tower at Caldicot Castle was a touching (and still visible) evocation of the duke's adoption of his wife's marcher estates as his country retreat.

Although Woodstock's largest estates lay in the Welsh marches, Pleshey Castle, the Essex home of his wife and mother-in-law, became his principal residence, the centre of his administration, and the showcase for his artistic patronage and piety.<sup>76</sup> In spite of the opulence of his residences and the grandeur of his lordship, Duke Thomas was intensely frustrated by his dependence on his wife's lands, and these grievances added a personal intensity to his criticisms of royal policy. The underlying weakness of Gloucester's landed position is revealed by his reliance upon annuities, reversionary grants, and wardships to sustain his ducal dignity. In March 1385 he was granted the wardship and marriage of Sir William Moleyns of Stoke Poges, in Buckinghamshire, for a payment of £700, followed on 15 July 1387 by that of Walter, Lord Fitzwalter, at a rent of £180.

At his creation as duke of Gloucester on 6 August 1385 he was granted an exchequer annuity of £1,000. However, the following year he petitioned, successfully, that the annuity be secured on the customs of London, King's

<sup>74</sup> J. C. Ward (ed. and trans.), *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066–1500* (Manchester, 1995), 21–2; Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 276.

<sup>75</sup> PRO, DL 41/240 (copy of the 1395 division of the lands between Eleanor and Mary Bohun, drawn up in 1412–13); Davies, 'The Bohun and Lancaster Lordships in Wales in the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries', 161–3.

<sup>76</sup> *CPR 1374–7*, 355; *CCR 1377–81*, 390; *CIPM 1392–9*, 378, no. 1032. The nominal gross value of Pleshey Castle and its estates in the 1390s was c.£136.

Lynn, Ipswich, Hull, and Yarmouth.<sup>77</sup> Various efforts were made to find a landed basis for this annuity, including the tail male grant of the castle and lordship of Castle Rising on 17 May 1386, and a fee tail grant, of June 1389, of all the properties of Caen Abbey, worth about £260. In May 1390 he was granted the reversion of the Yorkshire lordship of Holderness (worth £600 gross, and deductible from his exchequer annuity), which fell to him on the death of Queen Anne, in 1394.<sup>78</sup> The most important augmentation to Duke Thomas's income came on 24 July 1392, with the grant of the custody and marriage of William, the heir to the earldom of Stafford.<sup>79</sup> Not only did this grant deliver to Duke Thomas the control of the Stafford estates (worth £3,000 annually in 1399–1400<sup>80</sup>), but it also enabled him to cultivate an important connection in the west midlands, to compensate for his declining political stature at court. Although Woodstock is reckoned to have enjoyed the very handsome income of about £2,500 by 1385,<sup>81</sup> he felt acutely the disparity between his brothers' secure landed endowments, and his own reliance on customs annuities to augment his income.

Although distanced from the circle of royal kinsmen that included the duke of Lancaster and York, and the Beauforts and the Holands, the houses of Mortimer, Arundel, and Mowbray were distinguished by the fact that their landholding was not confined to a single region, and thus they could be classed as magnates of national significance.<sup>82</sup> These three families were also connected by marriage, as the Appellant earl of Arundel had Thomas Mowbray as his son-in-law, and, following his second marriage in 1390, the earl of March as his brother-in-law (although it is also important to note that recurring patterns of intermarriage meant that very few of the magnate families were *not* at least second cousins).

The Mortimers' descent from Lionel, duke of Clarence, the second son of Edward III, gave them an intangible quality of superiority over the other comital dynasties of the period. Moreover, their tenure of the earldom of Ulster, and of the lordships of Trim and Connaught (albeit subject to the constant erosion of the native Irish princes), gave them an 'international' profile within the Plantagenet dominions that none of their fellow earls

<sup>77</sup> PRO, SC 8/221/11029 (c.1386).

<sup>78</sup> *CPR 1388–92*, 255–6; *1391–6*, 575–6.

<sup>79</sup> *CFR 1391–9*, 54; *CPR 1391–6*, 116, 119, 124–7.

<sup>80</sup> Staffordshire Record Office, D. 641/1/2/6, Rolls 4, 7; C. Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham, 1394–1521* (Cambridge, 1978), 107.

<sup>81</sup> Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy*, 91.

<sup>82</sup> However, all three did have royal blood. The Mortimers were descended from Lionel of Clarence, Mowbray was a great-grandson of Edward I, and Arundel was the grandson of Henry of Lancaster, a grandson of Henry III.

(saving Gaunt) shared to the same degree. Earl Edmund's leading role in the opposition to the court in 1376–7, and the rumours that Richard II intended to nominate his son Earl Roger as his heir to the throne in 1386, both help to convey some sense of the family's place in the political firmament.<sup>83</sup> The widespread political resistance to Richard II's attempts to farm out the Mortimer estates for the benefit of his friends in 1382 highlighted the sensitivity of the broader political community to the future of this dynasty and its estates, and the readiness of its relatives, supporters, and retainers to uphold its interests.<sup>84</sup>

After fourteen years of minority as a royal ward, Roger Mortimer came into his inheritance at the age of 19 in February 1394.<sup>85</sup> The greatest concentration of his estates lay in Wales and its marches, where he inherited no less than sixteen marcher lordships and several fine residences including the castles of Usk, Ludlow, and Denbigh.<sup>86</sup> Earl Roger's most significant other property on the British mainland was the lordship and castle of Clare, in Suffolk, and its appurtenances spread throughout the neighbouring counties.<sup>87</sup> He also held the lordship of Bridgwater, in Somerset, and had a territorial presence in nineteen other English counties. It is likely that the total gross annual landed income of the Mortimer earls exceeded £3,500.<sup>88</sup> Something of the liquidity enjoyed by Earl Roger is apparent from the claim by the Wigmore chronicler—a source close to the Mortimer family—that the baronial trustees who had managed his estates since 1384 were able to release to him 40,000 marks in cash when he attained his majority.<sup>89</sup>

In 1390 Philippa, the sister of the earl of March, married the principal trustee of his estates (during his minority), and one of the most controversial noblemen of the period, Richard Fitzalan, earl of Arundel and Surrey. Thirty years ago Anthony Goodman reconstructed the many facets of Arundel's public and private career, and this book does not pretend to supplant his detailed survey.<sup>90</sup> However, more can be said about the ways in which the resources of the Arundel inheritance were translated into

<sup>83</sup> G. A. Holmes, *The Good Parliament* (Oxford, 1975), 149–51; *Eulogium Historiarum*, vol. iii, ed. F. S. Haydon, RS (1863), 361.

<sup>84</sup> *Chronicon Angliae, 1328–1388*, ed. E. M. Thompson, RS (1874), 353.

<sup>85</sup> *CPR 1391–6*, 375; GEC viii. 448–9.

<sup>86</sup> R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest* (Oxford, 1987), 466–72; id., *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, 196.

<sup>87</sup> G. A. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth Century England*, 17–19, 87–8.

<sup>88</sup> *CIPM 1392–9*, 429–60, nos. 1184–1232.

<sup>89</sup> W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. vi, pt. 1, ed. J. Carley, H. Ellis, and B. Bandinel (London, 1830), 354.

<sup>90</sup> Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy*, chs. 6 and 7.

political power by the earl and his allies, and the subsequent efforts of the crown to destroy this alternative pole of authority.

The basis of Arundel's position in political society was the wealth that he derived from two substantial concentrations of estates, in Sussex and Shropshire. Chris Given-Wilson has shown us that Arundel was a wool magnate par excellence, and much of his income was derived from the sale of fleeces for export to the continental cloth manufacturers.<sup>91</sup> There can be little doubt that Arundel took a strong personal interest in the management of his estates. Between 1391 and 1393 he commissioned extremely comprehensive surveys of his marcher lordships of Bromfield, Yale, Oswestry, and Chirkland. Running to 176 folios, the Bromfield and Yale survey catalogues in remarkable detail the composition, value, and customs of every part of these lordships.<sup>92</sup> This survey even includes a text of the Statute of Wales of 1284, but reissued in the name of the earl to apply to his lordships in north-east Wales.<sup>93</sup>

A flavour of Arundel's personal authority in the political society of the marches can be gathered from his activities as a justice of north Wales in the period 1392–3. Throughout this period his court, sitting at Shrewsbury, attempted to impose some order on the spate of thefts, affrays, and homicides which were apparently endemic to the county and its marches.<sup>94</sup> The extent to which Arundel's private and 'public' regional interests were intertwined was illuminated by his role in an examination at Gloucester Castle on 15 July 1393. At the request of the prior of Worcester, the earl had detained one of the prior's tenants, John Colyns, who had driven off stock from the manor of Alveston, Warwickshire, to Ruyton, in Arundel's lordship of Oswestry. Although the earl presided in person, he was supported by his

<sup>91</sup> Arundel's wealth is discussed at considerable length in C. Given-Wilson, 'Wealth and Credit, Public and Private: The Earls of Arundel 1306–1397', *EHR* 106 (1991), 16–17.

<sup>92</sup> *Extent of Chirkland 1391–1393*, ed. G. P. Jones (Liverpool, 1933); *The Lordship of Oswestry 1393–1607*, ed. W. J. Slack (Shrewsbury, 1951).

<sup>93</sup> BL, Add. MS 10013 (survey of Bromfield and Yale, 1391–3). The survey includes: the customs of the lordship, its officials, their functions, and wages (fos. 1–7); specimens of all types and permutations of briefs to officials, in the forms used by the Warenne lords (fos. 7–8); extent of Holt Castle and town, a list of tenants, their holdings, and obligations (fos. 9–10); details for the administration of Holt town, and the responsibilities of each official (fos. 16–19); assessed annual values for Holt (fo. 16<sup>v</sup>, £76 18s.) and Wrexham (fo. 150<sup>v</sup>, £128 15s. 9d.); and a comprehensive list and valuation of all appurtenances of the lordships (fos. 20–176). The surveys have been discussed at considerable length by M. Rogers, 'The Welsh Marcher Lordship of Bromfield and Yale 1282–1485', University of Wales Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

<sup>94</sup> PRO, JUST 3/180, m. 51<sup>v</sup> (the trial of David ap Panell, 1393); *Calendar of Ancient Petitions Relating to Wales*, 210–11, no. 126 (Robert Middleton v. the prior of Chirbury, in a case of affray, 12 Mar. 1393).

'councill', which suggests that his leading servants were utilized in a public and quasi-judicial context.<sup>95</sup>

The inquisition taken after Earl Richard's execution in 1397 ascribed to his entire landed estate a total value of about £3,900, although this may represent a substantial undervaluation.<sup>96</sup> Although best known as a political adventurer and war captain, Arundel was also a religious man, and his piety found expression in his foundations of the College of the Holy Trinity in Arundel in 1380 (in fulfilment of his father's will), and a hospital called the Maison Dieu fifteen years later.<sup>97</sup>

The potential for the collision of the private interests of the earl with those of the crown was exemplified by the Cheshire rebellion of 1393, during which Arundel's inactivity left him vulnerable to a charge of treasonable collusion from John of Gaunt in the Parliament of the following year.<sup>98</sup> Whatever the truth of Gaunt's allegations—and Arundel was swift to deny them—they reveal the deep mistrust in which Arundel was held in court circles, and the earl was sufficiently chastened to sue out a pardon on 30 April 1394 for any treasons which he may have committed.<sup>99</sup> In the following months Arundel's almost suicidal lack of political finesse became manifestly obvious, and his request to depart early from Queen Anne's funeral on 3 August 1394 added insult to the injury caused by his late arrival, earning him a blow from the king, which drew blood in the sacred confines of Westminster Abbey.<sup>100</sup> That day Arundel was committed to the Tower of London for a week, and the price for his release was a recognizance of £40,000 for his future conduct.<sup>101</sup> Typically, Arundel failed to appreciate the intensity of Richard II's anger, and, in a letter to his brother Archbishop Thomas of York, expressed his surprise at his summons to appear before the king to sue for a pardon at Lambeth Palace on 10 August 1394.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Worcester Cathedral Library, Liber Albus, Letter Book of the Priors of Worcester, fo. 367<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> *CIM* 1392–9, 104–238 *passim*, nos. 224–396, *passim*.

<sup>97</sup> Arundel Castle, MS F. A. 5 (copy of the will of the earl of Arundel, 5 Dec. 1375); 10, 12, 13, 17 (memoranda concerning the foundation of Arundel College). I am grateful to Chris Given-Wilson for sharing with me his transcription of these manuscripts.

<sup>98</sup> For an account, see J. G. Bellamy, 'The Northern Rebellions in the Later Years of Richard II', *BJRL* 47 (1965), 254–74.

<sup>99</sup> *RP* iii. 244, 351; *CPR* 1391–6, 406.

<sup>100</sup> *Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti*, comp. J. de Trokelowe and anon., in *Chronica et Annales*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS (1866), 168–9, 424.

<sup>101</sup> *CCR* 1392–6, 368.

<sup>102</sup> *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions*, ed. M. D. Legge, Anglo-Norman Text Society, no. 3 (Oxford, 1941), letter 30, pp. 76–7. The earl writes 'And, honoured brother, know that I have received, since we last spoke, a writ directed to me, that I should appear at Westminster, on the 15th of St Michael next coming [14 Oct. 1394], before the council of our lord the King,

Arundel's growing estrangement from Richard II's court is evident from his absence as a witness to charters after 24 September 1396.<sup>103</sup>

Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, Arundel's son-in-law since 1384, and his erstwhile ally in the Appellant campaign, trod a different political path in the 1390s, and succeeded in rebuilding the relationship that he had enjoyed with Richard II before 1387. In 1383 Thomas Mowbray had succeeded his childless brother John in the earldom of Nottingham, and inherited very substantial estates, predominantly in the eastern English counties. The densest concentrations were to be found in the counties where the family had been established for centuries: Leicestershire (including the manor of Melton Mowbray), Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire, where their ancient seat of Axholme was located.

To these original concentrations were added several properties in Wiltshire, Warwickshire, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk, and Northamptonshire inherited from his mother, Elizabeth Seagrave. Mowbray also had estates in Sussex at Bramber and the town of Shoreham, and also stood to inherit the ancient manor of Bosham from his grandmother, the countess of Norfolk.<sup>104</sup> As befitted the daughter of one of the richest men in England, Elizabeth Fitzalan brought Thomas Mowbray several valuable manors in Buckinghamshire, Essex, and Norfolk.<sup>105</sup> R. E. Archer has calculated that the total gross annual landed income of Thomas Mowbray in the 1390s was about £1,475, and it is clear that he was a wealthy man.<sup>106</sup> Throughout the mid-1380s Richard II lavished gifts on Mowbray, from small tokens, such as the distribution of liveries of cloth to the earl's wedding guests in 1384, through to high honours, such as the earl marshalcy of England two years later.<sup>107</sup>

Even without the favour of Richard II in the 1390s, Thomas Mowbray stood to acquire even greater riches by inheritance from his grandmother, the countess of Norfolk.<sup>108</sup> Countess Margaret's principal territorial strength was concentrated around her Suffolk seat of Framlingham Castle, and her extensive East Anglian estates had an annual value of £900. She was

which, when I saw it, seemed very strange to me, as this is the first of any writs that I have received on such a matter . . . .

<sup>103</sup> PRO, C 53/166, mm. 2-5, no. 4.

<sup>104</sup> See Map 2.

<sup>105</sup> *CIPM 1399-1405*, 78-95, nos. 264-304; *CIM 1399-1422*, 233-8, nos. 387-96; Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy*, 159.

<sup>106</sup> R. E. Archer, 'The Mowbrays, Earls of Nottingham and Dukes of Norfolk to 1432', Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1984, 69, 74.

<sup>107</sup> PRO, E 101/401/6, m. 13 (Great Wardrobe account, 1383-5); BL, Lansdowne MS 229, fo. 11<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> GEC ix. 599-600.

also a substantial marcher lord, and her lordship of Chepstow was given a gross annual value of about £207 in the inquisitions following her death.<sup>109</sup> In addition to the principal concentrations of her estates, she held lands in ten other counties, and their total gross annual value has been assessed at £3,000 in the 1390s.<sup>110</sup>

Below the Mortimers, Fitzalans, and Mowbrays, whose lands were spread over several regions and brought them annual incomes as high as £3,500, there was a tier of earls and greater lords whose territorial power was largely confined to a single region or county. These dynasties formed the backbone of the magnate class, and had come to prominence through strategic marriages, profitable husbandry, and military service in the campaigns of the 1340s and 1350s.

The two magnates resident in the west midlands, the earls of Warwick and Stafford, had both grown in territorial and political significance during the reign of Edward III. Established in the castle and earldom of Warwick since 1268, the Beauchamps had estates with a gross annual value of £3,150 in 1396–7.<sup>111</sup> The Beauchamp territorial presence was most heavily concentrated in west Warwickshire and Worcestershire, of which the earls were hereditary sheriffs.<sup>112</sup> Thomas Beauchamp was not a significant power in the north, but he did hold the great Durham lordship of Castle Barnard, worth an estimated £500 annually, in 1397.<sup>113</sup> His other territorial outposts lay in the Welsh marches, where he held the lordships of Gower and Elfael, worth £237 and £194, respectively.<sup>114</sup> However, the Beauchamp title to Gower was far from secure, a legacy of its complicated tenurial history since the 1320s. In 1353 Warwick's father had used Edward III's favour to strip John, Lord Mowbray, of Gower, and there can be little doubt that in the 1390s Thomas Mowbray longed to avenge this slight to his family.<sup>115</sup> Whereas Warwick remained excluded from Richard II's favour on account of his actions in 1387–8, Thomas Mowbray had striven to regain Richard's friendship, and it is clear that he had Gower in his sights.

<sup>109</sup> *CIPM 1399–1405*, 76–7, nos. 258–60.

<sup>110</sup> Archer, 'The Mowbrays, Earls of Nottingham', 74; id., 'The Estates and Finances of Margaret of Brotherton, c.1320–1399', *HR 60/143* (1987), 277.

<sup>111</sup> BL, Egerton Roll 8769, m. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, 360.

<sup>113</sup> *CIM 1392–9*, 198–201, nos. 339, 346, 347.

<sup>114</sup> BL, Egerton Roll 8769, m. 5 (account of Thomas Knight, receiver-general of the earl of Warwick); R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, 196 (Elfael).

<sup>115</sup> The struggles over Gower have been detailed in Holmes, *the Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth Century England*, 39; T. B. Pugh (ed.), *Glamorgan County History*, iii: *The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 1971), 249.

Thomas Beauchamp's dwindling political capital in the 1390s was manifest in his inability to regulate the politics of his own 'country'. The swaggering impunity of the king's favourite in Warwickshire, Sir William Bagot, was most powerfully illustrated in September 1395, when he lent his support to a major insurrection against the mayor of Coventry, Richard Lichfield, during which the town was invaded by a band of armed men numbering more than a hundred. Unsurprisingly, the assize held at Coventry, on 30 May 1396, declined to convict the conspirators, a testimony both to the waxing power of their leader and to the increasing political impotence of the 'natural' leader of the county community.<sup>116</sup>

Although long established in the town and barony whence their name was derived, the Stafford family had only recently attained a significant position in the ranks of the higher nobility, and warfare had been the agency to transform their fortunes. Sir Ralph Stafford owed his creation as earl in 1351 to his fellowship in arms with Edward III, which had dated back to his role in the overthrow of Mortimer and Isabella in 1330.<sup>117</sup> Earl Ralph's second son, Hugh, succeeded in 1372, and strengthened his family's position in the west midlands through his marriage to Philippa, a daughter of Thomas Beauchamp (d. 1369), earl of Warwick, father of the Appellant earl.<sup>118</sup> The dynastic good fortune of the Staffords ended in 1385 with the murder of Sir Ralph Stafford in 1385, and the premature death of his father, Earl Hugh, in Rhodes, the following year.<sup>119</sup>

The marriage of Earl Thomas Stafford (the second son and successor of Earl Hugh) to Anne, daughter of Thomas, duke of Gloucester, in 1389 confirmed the increasing significance of this dynasty. Although Earl Thomas died only a year after gaining livery of his lands, in July 1392, the connection with Duke Thomas was preserved. Indeed, Earl Thomas's brother and successor, William, died as a minor ward at Pleshey in April 1395. The connection between these two families was reconstructed with the marriage of Countess Anne to her late husband's brother Edmund, earl of Stafford (some time after 1395).<sup>120</sup> Although the Staffords' connections to Thomas of Woodstock are likely to have incurred Richard II's distrust, their shrewd

<sup>116</sup> *Rolls of the Warwickshire and Coventry Sessions of the Peace, 1377–1397*, ed. E. G. Kimball, Dugdale Society Publications, 16 (1939), 75–7; A. K. Gundy, 'The Earl of Warwick and the Royal Affinity', in M. A. Hicks (ed.), *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), 65–6.

<sup>117</sup> Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III*, 18–19.

<sup>118</sup> The Staffords were not serious rivals to the Beauchamps in Warwickshire until after 1438, when they purchased Maxstoke Castle from Lord Clinton (Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, 361).

<sup>119</sup> GEC.xii. 179–80.

<sup>120</sup> Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, 10–12.

eschewal of court politics spared them aggressive royal interference in the transmission of their estates.

In the 1380s and 1390s leadership of political society in the Severn Valley had yet to succumb to the marital expansionism of the Beauchamps and Staffords, and was contested by two of the wealthiest lords in England who were below comital rank, Thomas Berkeley and Thomas Despenser. Thomas, Lord Berkeley, came of age in 1373, and in June 1382 his fortunes were transformed by the death of his father-in-law, Warin, Lord Lisle. Margaret Lisle was the sole heiress of the baronies of Lisle and Tyes, valued at about £270, and her inheritance extended her husband's interests into Northamptonshire, Berkshire, and Oxfordshire.<sup>121</sup>

Of all the noble families of the fourteenth century, the Despensers offer the most compelling illustration of the mutability of political fortune. By the time of the death of Edward, Lord Despenser, in 1375, the family had made a remarkable recovery from the nadir of its fortunes in 1326–7, when Hugh, earl of Winchester, and his notorious son had suffered traitors' deaths.<sup>122</sup> In 1394, after a prolonged minority, Thomas, Lord Despenser, gained livery of some of the most valuable agricultural estates in the Severn and Windrush Valleys, including Tewkesbury, Chipping Sodbury, and Burford. The family's prize assets lay in the southern marches, where they held the old Clare lordship of Glamorgan (worth £1,037 annually<sup>123</sup>) and Ewyas Lacy. Thomas Despenser acceded to his honours at a propitious time, when Richard II was seeking to promote, in a more systematic manner, the royal influence in the localities, and forge improved ties with the men who dominated them. Lords Lovell, Beaumont, and Grey of Ruthin also found moderate, but definite, favour from Richard II in the 1390s.<sup>124</sup>

Like the west midlands, the south-western counties had two comital dynasties, the Courtenay earls of Devon and the Montagu earls of Salisbury. The Courtenay estates were heavily concentrated in Devon, and centred on the castles of Okehampton, Plympton, and Tiverton.<sup>125</sup> This critical mass of properties brought the Courtenays a sizeable landed income, assessed in

<sup>121</sup> *CIPM 1413–1418*, 250–6, nos. 805–16; J. Smyth, *The Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. J. Maclean, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society (1883), ii. 2–8.

<sup>122</sup> Pugh (ed.), *Glamorgan County History*, iii. 173–9.

<sup>123</sup> Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, 196.

<sup>124</sup> Given-Wilson, 'Richard II and the Higher Nobility', 114–15.

<sup>125</sup> However, the family's chances of becoming great magnates had been dashed in 1298, when Edward I intervened to prevent Hugh Courtenay from inheriting the lands of Isabella de Fors, countess of Aumale, which included the Isle of Wight. Hugh Courtenay was not able to assume the title earl of Devon until 1335, nearly forty years after he had entered the inheritance (G. A. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth Century England*, 32–4; K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), 257–9).

a survey of 1387–8 at £1,373.<sup>126</sup> Throughout the 1380s and 1390s the earl was able to realize annual cash receipts fluctuating between £830 and £860.<sup>127</sup> The success with which Earl Edward capitalized on his liquidity to promote his lordship is manifest from his livery roll of 1384–5, naming a total of 135 men, including several prominent knights from the south-western counties.<sup>128</sup>

Although the estates of the Courtenays, like those of the Staffords, escaped forfeiture in this period, Edward, earl of Devon, had a poor relationship with Richard II. In 1392 the earl was hauled before the royal council on charges of maintenance brought by Sir William Sturmy, a knight with substantial interests in the south-west and a life retainer of Richard II. Devon's blatant protection of his servant Robert Yeo, who was alleged to have murdered one William Wyke, a tenant of both Sturmy and John Holand, resulted in his conviction and imprisonment by the royal council on 15 April 1392. Although Devon was soon released, royal grace was only forthcoming after considerable pressure from the lords of the council, who urged the king to show regard for the earl's lineage and status.<sup>129</sup>

Richard II was more favourably disposed towards the other magnate dynasty of the south-west, the earls of Salisbury, especially after the succession to the title of his chamber knight Sir John Montagu the younger in June 1397. The greatest concentration of Earl John's lands lay in Dorset, Devon, Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Somerset.<sup>130</sup> These estates, together with others in outlying counties, including Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Hertfordshire, had a potential gross annual value of at least £1,200.<sup>131</sup> However, the fortunes of the Montagus had undergone serious reversals since the award of the earldom in 1334, and Earl John had entered into a seriously depleted inheritance. Earl John's problems were further compounded by the very substantial estates which his uncle Earl William had jointured upon his countess, Elizabeth Mohun, and this would prove to be a cause of serious conflict within the family.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>126</sup> BL, Add. Roll 64, 318, m. 1d (valor of the lands of the earl of Devon, 1387–8).

<sup>127</sup> BL, Add. Rolls 64, 317, m. 1 (account of John Isaac, receiver of Edward, earl of Devon, 1379–80); 64, 321, m. 1 (account of Thomas Kerdington, receiver of Edward, earl of Devon, 1396–7); 64, 322, m. 1 (partial account roll of earl of Devon, *temp.* Richard II).

<sup>128</sup> BL, Add. Roll 64, 320 (livery roll of the earl of Devon, 1384–5) lists eight knights, 43 esquires, 34 valets, 18 miscellaneous servants, 4 minstrels, 6 pages, 11 damoiselles, and 14 lawyers.

<sup>129</sup> *Select Cases before the King's Council, 1243–1482*, ed. I. S. Leadman and J. F. Baldwin, *Selden Society*, 35 (1918), 77–81.

<sup>130</sup> See Map 6.

<sup>131</sup> *CIM 1399–1422*, 5, 10, 26, 40–5, 49–54, 58–62, 64, 79, 121, 276; nos. 7, 17, 49, 54, 59, 76–87, 100–11, 114, 121, 123, 128–9, 134, 137, 167, 241, 496.

<sup>132</sup> For the disputes within the Montagu family, see below, Ch. 6.

Two of England's smaller comital inheritances, those of the de Vere earls of Oxford and the de la Pole earls of Suffolk, were largely concentrated in East Anglia. Robert de Vere, duke of Ireland and earl of Oxford, had died without issue in exile in Louvain in 1392. His power over Richard II transcended the grave, as the king had his body shipped back to England and buried at considerable expense at Earls' Colne Priory, Essex.<sup>133</sup> Thomas Walsingham observed that few noblemen attended the king as their hatred of de Vere had not abated.<sup>134</sup> Aubrey de Vere had already been restored to the lands (1392) and earldom (1393) of his late nephew.<sup>135</sup> In spite of their impeccable antiquity (they had been earls since 1142) they possessed few estates other than those around their Essex seat of Castle Hedingham.<sup>136</sup> Although close to the king throughout the 1390s, Aubrey would maintain a much lower political profile than that of his nephew in the previous decade.<sup>137</sup> Unlike the other 'Ricardian' earls, Aubrey de Vere was not utilized as a significant agent of royal authority, and, compared to the inner circle of counter-Appellants, benefited little from royal patronage. His failure to recover the great chamberlainship, which had been held by his notorious nephew, attests to his relative insignificance.<sup>138</sup>

Michael de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, another notorious victim of the Merciless Parliament, had also died in exile, on 5 September 1389 in Paris. The earldom had been granted to him in August 1385, and his endowment had been constructed from the estates of the childless previous earl, William Ufford, in Essex and Suffolk, which were transferred to him in a rolling series of grants between 1382 and 1385.<sup>139</sup> Although Richard II's endeavours to promote the power of the de la Poles sustained a major blow with the forfeiture and exile of his favourite in the 1388 Parliament, he made substantial efforts to rebuild the dynasty's territorial lordship. Between 1388 and 1389 de la Pole's son, also Michael (b. 1367), recovered his mother's lands and those which his father had entailed upon him and his wife, Katherine Stafford.<sup>140</sup>

Richard II finally atoned for the humiliation that had been visited upon his favourite ten years before by restoring the earldom of Suffolk to the

<sup>133</sup> PRO, E 403/554, m. 12 (mic. 1396). Sir Thomas Percy, steward of the royal household, discharged of the sum of £58 8s. 1½d., 'which the king commanded to be spent on the obsequies of Robert de Vere'.

<sup>134</sup> *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, 185.

<sup>135</sup> Bodl., MS Rawlinson, B 248, fo. 14<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>136</sup> Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, 42–8, 78, 80.

<sup>137</sup> J. F. Baldwin, *The King's Council in England during the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1913), 493–4, 504.

<sup>138</sup> GEC x. 233–4.

<sup>139</sup> GEC xii/1. 440; *RP* iii. 206–9; GEC xii/1. 438.

<sup>140</sup> Ward (ed. and trans.), *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, 109–11, 120.

younger Michael during the triumphant parliamentary session of January 1398.<sup>141</sup> However, like Aubrey de Vere, Michael de la Pole the younger was not brought into Richard II's inner circle. In spite of this, Earl Michael was sufficiently grateful for his restoration to raise forces in July 1399 to resist Henry of Lancaster.<sup>142</sup> The earls of Oxford and Suffolk ranked among the poorest of their peers, and in the 1390s Richard II did not repeat his failed efforts of the previous decade to expand their power and influence, and neither earl is likely to have earned much more than £1,000 from his lands.<sup>143</sup>

The two magnate families whose territorial power and influence had increased most significantly during the third quarter of the fourteenth century were located in the far northern counties. Although geographically and politically distanced from the crises of 1387–8, the Percy and Neville dynasties had a considerable latent political energy, which was unleashed to decisive effect during the revolution of 1399.

The creation of Henry, Lord Percy, as earl of Northumberland at the coronation of Richard II on 16 July 1377 was just recognition of the remarkable rise of this family. When he gained livery of his inheritance in 1368, Henry Percy held the Northumberland lordships of Alnwick, Warkworth, Langley, and Prudhoe, and extensive estates in Yorkshire. His second marriage, in December 1381, to Maud Lucy, sister and heir of Anthony, Lord Lucy, and widow of Gilbert Umfraville, titular earl of Angus, brought him the reversion of the Cumberland lordship of Cockermouth.<sup>144</sup>

In addition to their private resources as territorial lords, the Percys could also draw upon the extensive royal powers delegated to them in the governance of the Scottish marches. By the reign of Richard II the Percys had come to regard the wardenship of the east march, and the captaincy of the town of Berwick, as something of a private preserve.<sup>145</sup> The jealousy with which they guarded their status as the pre-eminent lords of the north had become clear in 1379, when John of Gaunt was appointed lieutenant of the Scottish marches, with precedence over the other wardens.<sup>146</sup> The latent

<sup>141</sup> *RP* iii. 359; *CCR* 1396–9, 336.

<sup>142</sup> *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397–1400: The Reign of Richard II*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (Manchester, 1993), 250.

<sup>143</sup> Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, 76–83; C. Given-Wilson, 'Richard II and the Higher Nobility', 117–18.

<sup>144</sup> J. M. W. Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Family, 1416–1537* (Oxford, 1958), 6–8, 158–60; id., 'Henry IV and the Percies', *History*, 44 (1959), 212–27.

<sup>145</sup> C. J. Neville, 'Keeping the Peace on the Northern Marches in the Later Middle Ages', *EHR* 109 (1994), 1–25.

<sup>146</sup> J. A. Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', *Northern History*, 3 (1968), 39; Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 57, 60.

tension between Gaunt and Northumberland exploded into an open feud in 1381, when the duke, fleeing the Great Revolt in fear of his life, was denied access to Bamburgh Castle by the earl's constable.<sup>147</sup> In the Parliament which opened on the following 6 November Gaunt vented his fury against Northumberland, and, if we are to believe *The Anonimale Chronicle*, extracted a humble apology.<sup>148</sup>

For the remainder of the 1380s Richard II was content to allow the Percys and the northern lords, such as Neville, Clifford, and Greystoke, to share the wardenship of the marches.<sup>149</sup> Although Northumberland and his son Hotspur monopolized both the eastern and western wardenships from June 1391, Richard II had not abandoned the idea of imposing outsiders who owed their appointment exclusively to his favour, rather than to their pre-existing regional eminence. The Percys' loss of the western wardenship to a succession of royal favourites—John Beaumont, John Holand, and Edward of York—from June 1395 challenged their status and power in the region. Although Richard II succeeded in asserting his personal authority through these appointments, the eventual price to be paid in incurring the enmity of the Percy family would be very great.<sup>150</sup>

In September 1397 Northumberland lost the distinction of being the sole northern earl when Ralph Neville was created earl of Westmorland. In 1389 he had inherited a large and compact body of lands across Yorkshire and the palatinate of Durham. Like the duchy of Lancaster, Neville's estates were divided into receiverships to enable close local supervision and maximize the collection of revenues. One was located at his principal residence, Raby Castle in the palatinate of Durham, and there were two others at Middleham and Sheriff Hutton.<sup>151</sup>

Ralph Neville's marriage to Joan Beaufort, the natural daughter of John of Gaunt, in 1396 marked his ascendancy in the ranks of the higher nobility. Not only did this match succeed in establishing Gaunt's illegitimate daughter at an elevated social level, but it also laid the foundations of a mutually supportive relationship between the house of Lancaster and the senior branch of the Nevilles.

<sup>147</sup> *Knighon's Chronicle, 1337-1396*, ed. G. H. Martin (Oxford, 1995), 233-5; S. Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt* (London, 1904), 251-9; R. B. Dobson (ed.), *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, 2nd edn. (London, 1983), 326; A. E. Goodman, 'John of Gaunt: Paradigm of the Late Fourteenth Century Crisis', *TRHS*, 5th ser., 37 (1987), 134, 146.

<sup>148</sup> *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1333-1381*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1927), 152.

<sup>149</sup> R. L. Storey, 'The Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1377-1489', *EHR* 72 (1957), 599-601, 611-12; Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 44-5, 49-50.

<sup>150</sup> *Rot. Scot.* ii. 110, 119, 130; Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', 213.

<sup>151</sup> C. Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages*, 105-6; see Map 7.

Although the Percys and Nevilles were undoubted rivals for political pre-eminence in the north, their mutual suspicion was transcended by their shared and growing alarm at Richard II's interference in the governance of the north. Their dramatic intervention in the revolution of 1399, tipping the political and military balance decisively against Richard II, commands their recognition as two of the most powerful magnate dynasties of the era. Although physically distanced from the central institutions of power, and from the culture of the southern-based court, the ability of the northern magnates to apply their military strength to the crisis of 1399, with decisive results, suggests that the centre of gravity of magnate power should be relocated northwards in the later Plantagenet and early Lancastrian polities.

#### CROWN AND NOBILITY, 1377–1396

For the first three years of his reign Richard II's relationship with his leading subjects was conducted indirectly, through the Continual Councils that had been appointed for his guidance. From 1380 the council assumed a more traditional composition, and consisted of the great officers of state and of the household.<sup>152</sup>

The imposition of the three Poll Taxes, at a time of seething popular resentment against royal misgovernance and seigniorial oppression, represented a series of disastrous miscalculations on the part of a group of men whose supposed experience and wisdom had been the very criteria for their appointment.<sup>153</sup> It can scarcely be doubted that Richard II's near isolation in the Tower of London, attended by only a handful of household staff, and his later confrontations with the rebels at Mile End and Smithfield, caused him to reflect on the loyalty and abilities of those men of his father's generation into whose care the governance of his kingdom had been placed.<sup>154</sup> It is possible that Richard II's later cultivation of friendships with men of a younger generation can be traced to a sense of betrayal arising from the

<sup>152</sup> *Chronicon Angliae*, 163; Goodman, 'Richard II's Councils', 65–6.

<sup>153</sup> For analyses of the causes of the 1381 revolt, see R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free* (New York, 1973), 144–64; E. B. Fryde, *The Great Revolt of 1381* (London, 1981), 11–15; id., *Peasants and Landlords in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 1996), ch. 2; C. Dyer, 'The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381', in R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston (eds.), *The English Rising of 1381* (Cambridge, 1984); A. Dunn, *The Great Rising of 1381* (Stroud, 2002), ch. 1.

<sup>154</sup> *The Anonimale Chronicle*, 143; C. M. Barron, 'Richard II and London', in A. E. Goodman and J. L. Gillespie (eds.), *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999), 130.

events of 1381, as well as to an increasing confidence in his own judgement.<sup>155</sup>

In spite of Richard II's undoubted enthusiasm to rule, he did little to earn the trust and respect of his noble subjects. The creation of the dukedoms of York and Gloucester for his uncles Edmund and Thomas on 6 August 1385, during the invasion of Scotland, was long overdue, and did little to improve his relationship with the latter.<sup>156</sup> Approval for these honours was obscured by widespread disquiet over Richard II's promotions of Michael de la Pole to the earldom of Suffolk, and the novel creation of a marquessate for Robert de Vere on 1 December 1385.<sup>157</sup> *The Westminster Chronicle* contains an unusual passage which claimed that Thomas and Edmund were, in fact, created dukes of Aumale and Canterbury, and that John, Lord Neville, was made earl of Cumberland. These putative creations are far from nonsensical, as Gloucester's first writ of parliamentary summons styled him as duke of Aumale, and he had just been granted the reversion of the lordship of Holderness, which had been a historical appurtenance of this honour.<sup>158</sup> It is also possible that the monk of Westminster had access to a draft instrument of creation for Neville, whose earldom may have been aborted owing to a lack of resources to sustain his endowment, as the crown was already under pressure from elements within Parliament to resume alienated lands.<sup>159</sup> However, the apparent uncertainty in Richard II's mind about the appropriate ducal stylings for his uncles remains something of a puzzle.

By far the most illuminating account of Richard II's designs comes from Henry Knighton, who claims that, together with the ducal creations for the royal uncles, Sir Simon Burley (the king's tutor) was made earl of Huntingdon.<sup>160</sup> Although no other source corroborates this remarkable act of royal will, Saul cautions against dismissing this story as a fabrication. Not only did Richard II have a taste for multiple creations, he had also been endowing Burley with substantial landed estates over the previous years.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, in one sense Burley was 'heir' to this title, as it had last been held by another royal tutor, Sir Guichard d'Angle, from 1377 until his death in 1380.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>155</sup> The reactions of the English political elite to the 1381 revolt are discussed in J. A. Tuck, 'Nobles, Commons and the Great Revolt of 1381', in R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston (eds.), *The English Rising of 1381* (Cambridge, 1984); and Saul, *Richard II*, 63–4.

<sup>156</sup> Given-Wilson, 'Richard II and the Higher Nobility', 118–19.

<sup>157</sup> *RP* iii, 209–10.

<sup>158</sup> *CPR* 1381–5, 125–6; *CChR* 1341–1417, 328–31.

<sup>159</sup> *The Westminster Chronicle*, 127, 141, 145; Given-Wilson, 'Richard II and the Higher Nobility', 118.

<sup>160</sup> *Knighton's Chronicle*, 338.

<sup>161</sup> Saul, *Richard II*, 116–17.

<sup>162</sup> J. E. Powell and K. Wallis, *The House of Lords in the Middle Ages* (London, 1968), 381.

If Richard II fought shy of completing his designs for Burley, he would admit of no obstructions, whether political or financial, when it came to Robert de Vere. On 13 October 1386, less than a year after his creation as marquess of Dublin, de Vere became duke of Ireland, and thus an equal of the king's uncles. It is not unlikely that Walsingham spoke for many in the political community in his bitter condemnation of de Vere's avarice and personal mediocrity.<sup>163</sup> Already a liability to his king, de Vere's capacity to attract hostile attention to the royal court was confirmed in the spring of 1387, with his sensational divorce from Philippa de Coucy, the granddaughter of Edward III, and his subsequent marriage to Agnes Lancecron, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Anne.<sup>164</sup>

As in the previous decade, the state of the war with France had a determining effect on the tone of politics in England. The chain of events that brought down Michael de la Pole began with the great invasion scare of September 1386.<sup>165</sup> Parliamentary fury against the failures of English military policy, combined with their outrage at the prospect of voting a subsidy of four tenths and fifteenths, sealed the fate of Chancellor de la Pole.<sup>166</sup> His resignation on 23 October 1386 and subsequent impeachment enabled the enemies of the court to make a concerted effort to wrest the machinery of power from the king's hands. The appointment of a commission of government, for a year from 20 November 1386, was a compelling illustration of the total lack of confidence among the political community in their king's ability to discharge his responsibilities.<sup>167</sup> Richard II's repudiation of the commission could not have been more dramatic or unequivocal. His 'gyration', beginning in February 1387, took him away from his enemies and into the localities, where he sought comfort and support on the royal demesne and on estates held by his allies.<sup>168</sup> At the very centre of his strategy for resistance to the commission was the royal earldom of Chester. The importance of Chester in Richard II's calculations was confirmed by the appointment of Robert de Vere as its justiciar, during the royal visit of 12–16 July. Although de Vere's Cheshire army was routed by the Appellants at Radcot Bridge on 20 December 1387, Richard II's later

<sup>163</sup> *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS (1864), ii. 148.

<sup>164</sup> *The Westminster Chronicle*, 189.

<sup>165</sup> *Historia Anglicana*, ii. 147–52; J. Sherborne, *War, Politics and Culture in Fourteenth Century England*, ed. J. A. Tuck (London, 1994), 100–17.

<sup>166</sup> RP iii. 215–16. These events are covered exhaustively in J. S. Roskell, *The Impeachment of Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, in 1386* (Manchester, 1984).

<sup>167</sup> RP iii. 221.

<sup>168</sup> For Richard's itinerary, see Saul, *Richard II*, 473.

disbursement of money to veterans of this campaign showed his enduring appreciation of the county's loyalty.<sup>169</sup>

The appeal of treason that was delivered against the king's companions on 11 November 1387 violently redefined the patterns of political participation and allegiance for the remainder of the reign, and the seeds of Richard II's eventual destruction were sown in the legacy of bitterness and mistrust following the bloody purge of the royal household in the Merciless Parliament. Richard II's efforts to rule through his friends among the nobility and the knights of the household had proven to be an unqualified disaster. The concentration of royal patronage to the benefit de la Pole, de Vere, and Archbishop Neville, and the aggressive promotion of knights such as John Beauchamp and Simon Burley, succeeded only in uniting the political community against the crown and court.<sup>170</sup> It is a measure of the magnitude of Richard II's failure that a small group of magnates (Gloucester, Arundel, Warwick, Henry of Derby, and Thomas Mowbray) whose private interests impinged blatantly on their public manifesto<sup>171</sup> succeeded in drawing together a coalition of sufficient strength to dominate Parliament and procure the destruction of some of leading courtiers.<sup>172</sup>

For all of their ruthlessness and determination 'in opposition', the Appellants proved to be aimless and lacklustre in power. A more aggressive prosecution of the French war had been central to Gloucester and Arundel's attacks on Richard II, but their military expeditions proved to be no less costly, and no more successful, than those of earlier in the decade. The absence of effective military leadership and direction was highlighted on 5 August 1388, when the Scots defeated an English army at Otterburn, and captured its leader, Hotspur.<sup>173</sup> A month later the Appellants faced a hostile Parliament at Cambridge, where the Commons railed against lawlessness, which they identified with the abuse of livery by lords' retainers—a charge perhaps calculated as a rebuke to a magnate-dominated government.<sup>174</sup> By

<sup>169</sup> *The Westminster Chronicle*, 189, 225; P. J. Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire, 1277–1403*, Chethan Society, 3rd ser., 34 (1987), 186–8.

<sup>170</sup> Given-Wilson, 'Richard II and the Higher Nobility', 117–23; id., *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity*, 160–4.

<sup>171</sup> *RP* iii. 228–37; Saul, *Richard II*, 178–82.

<sup>172</sup> For the trials and sentences of the Appellees of 1388, see *The Westminster Chronicle*, 281–98.

<sup>173</sup> A. Tuck and A. E. Goodman (eds.), *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages* (London, 1992), ch. 1; S. Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III 1371–1406* (Edinburgh, 1996), 159.

<sup>174</sup> N. E. Saul, 'The Commons and the Abolition of Badges', *Parliamentary History*, 9 (1990), 302–15.

the spring of 1389 the Appellants appeared to have run out of energy, ideas, and even the desire to retain power.

Richard II's declaration of his majority on 3 May 1389 marked a watershed in his relationship with his greatest subjects.<sup>175</sup> The years between the end of Appellant government in 1389 and the inception of Richard's tyranny in 1397 had none of the high drama of the previous decade, and Richard appears to have acquired a new confidence and sureness of touch. In 1392 he tried his strength, and won, against the mayor and corporation of London.<sup>176</sup> In 1394–5 he visited Ireland—the first king to do so since John—and would return on a second expedition in 1399.<sup>177</sup>

The impressive investment in Westminster Hall from 1394 bears witness to the increasing consciousness of the king in projecting the imagery of sovereignty. It is to this period that we owe the two most famous images of Richard II, the 'coronation' portrait and the Wilton Diptych.<sup>178</sup> Saul has drawn attention to the increasing courtesy and refinement of court manners.<sup>179</sup> It is possible that this burgeoning cult of formality was connected to the exposure of the king and his companions to the mores of the courts of the king of France and his uncles. Richard II's marriage to Isabella, daughter of Charles VI, was the centrepiece of the twenty-two-year truce which the two kings concluded at Calais in October 1396. But, perhaps the greatest difference between the England of the mid-1390s and that of the mid-1380s was that the king was at peace with his greatest subjects.<sup>180</sup>

During the 1380s Richard II had found himself opposed by many of his greatest subjects, but by the middle of the 1390s had emerged as one of the leading princes of Christendom. How would the relationship between crown and higher nobility, and the stability of the broader political community, be changed by Richard's picking at the political scabs of the 1380s?

<sup>175</sup> *The Westminster Chronicle*, 355–7, 391–3; *Historia Anglicana*, ii, 181; Goodman, 'Richard II's Councils', 71.

<sup>176</sup> C. M. Barron, 'The Quarrel of Richard II with London 1392–97', in F. R. H. du Boulay and C. M. Barron (eds.), *The Reign of Richard II* (London, 1971), 173–201; id., 'Richard II and London', 149, 153–4.

<sup>177</sup> J. F. Lydon, 'Richard II's Expeditions to Ireland', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 93 (1963), 135–48; Saul, *Richard II*, ch. 12; M. J. Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', in A. E. Goodman and J. L. Gillespie (eds.), *Richard II: The Art of Kingship* (Oxford, 1999), 187.

<sup>178</sup> For an introduction to the aesthetics of Richard II's kingship, see D. Gordon, *The Wilton Diptych: Making and Meaning* (London, 1993); D. Gordon, L. Monnas, and C. Elam (eds.), *The Royal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych* (London, 1997).

<sup>179</sup> Saul, 'Richard II and the Vocabulary of Kingship', *EHR* 110 (1995), 854–77.

<sup>180</sup> *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, 188–94; J. J. N. Palmer, 'England and the Great Western Schism, 1388–1399', *EHR* 83 (1968), 520–1.