Emotions, Military Strategy and Politics during the Wars of the Roses

On 17 April 1471, three days after the Battle of Barnet, Gerhard von Wesel, a well-informed merchant from Cologne, wrote from London describing those who returned with the victorious Edward IV in the following graphic terms:

> 'Those who went out with good horses and sound bodies brought home sorry nags and bandaged faces without noses etc. and wounded bodies, God have mercy on the miserable spectacle'.[1]

Victory at Barnet ensured Edward IV's return to the English throne, six months after he had been deposed in a coup led by Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, that restored the Lancastrian Henry VI as king.[2] The account is a useful contemporary perspective on these political and military events but also has a wider resonance for understanding the effect that warfare on late medieval society. Von Wesel's account vividly describes the physical consequences of that conflict for survivors showing the extent of the injuries suffered even by those on the victorious side. Furthermore, the sight describe by von Wesel would have been a common one in the aftermath of battles during the Wars of the Roses. Abbot John Whethamstede's provided a similarly horrific description of aftermath of the First Battle of St Albans (22 May 1455) with dismembered corpses and

[1] The account is translated in: Hannes Kleineke, 'Gerhard von Wesel's Newsletter from England, 17 April 1471', *The Ricardian*, 16 (2006), 82. An earlier translation into English appears in: John Adair, 'The newsletter of Gerhard von Wesel, 17 April 1471', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 46 (1968), 65-69.

[2] Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford, 1998), 255-310; Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles), 126-80.

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internal organs, including brains, lying everywhere.'[3] There is archaeological evidence to corroborate these narrative accounts. Analysis of the skulls discovered by the excavation of the mass grave from the Battle of Towton (29 March 1461) demonstrated that nine out of the thirty-nine skulls 'exhibited well-healed cranial trauma that most likely resulted from previous battles of armed conflicts'.[4] This indicates that many of those on the battlefield were already scarred from previous encounters. Although the battles of Wisby (1361) and Aljubarrota (1385) are the only other mass war graves from late medieval Europe that have been found, the general picture that late medieval war scarred many of its participants for life is difficult to dispute.[5] Such 'miserable spectacle[s]' described by von Wesel are likely to have horrified at least some contemporaries, though how late medieval society viewed facial disfigurement is understudied compared to the early middle ages.[6] The propensity of warfare across late medieval Europe, coupled with the increased use of larger armies comprised of infantry soldiers, meant that the spectacle of scarred individuals must have been a common sight, leaving an emotional impact.

The series of civil wars that occurred during second half of the fifteenth century in England were at their most violent in the period 1459-61, culminating with the bloodiest land

[3] Henry Thomas Riley (ed.), *Registrum Abbatlae Johannis Whethamstede, Abbatis Monasterii Sancti Albanie, Vol. 1* (London, 1972), 175-6.

[4] Shannon K. Novak, 'Battle-related Trauma' in Veronica Fiorato, Anthea Boylston and Christopher Knüsel (eds.), *Blood Red Roses: The Archaeology of a Mass Grave from the Battle of Towton, AD1461* (Oxford, 2000), 94.

[5] Anne Curry and Glenn Foard, 'Where are the dead of medieval battles? A preliminary survey', *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, 11 (2016), 61-77.

[6] Patricia Skinner, *Living with Disfigurements in Early Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke, 2017).

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battle to ever happen in the British Isles at Towton. Estimates of the causalities vary between nine and twenty-eight thousand slain from as many as fifty thousand combatants.[7] The scale of the war is evident by the fact that the vast number of the secular nobility became embroiled in this phase of the war, which suggests a large battle by medieval standards.[8] Although the wars were not a consistent conflict – hence the plural 'wars' to denote the fact that there was three separate conflicts[9] – these series of pitched battles and skirmishes

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[7] Ross, *Edward IV*, 36 notes that since around three quarters of the adult peerage were present 'it is not at all unlikely that as many as 50,000 men were engaged'. There is a wide range of estimates for the numbers killed at this battle. A.H Thomas and I.D Thornley (eds.), *The Great Chronicle of London* (London, 1938) p. 197 claims that many were killed on but sides but only provides a number twenty thousand killed on the Lancastrian side. Gregory's Chronicle suggested thirty-five thousand were killed, 'The Continuation of Gregory's Chronicle' in Dan Embree and M. Teresa Tavormina (eds.), *The Contemporary English Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses* (Woodbridge, 2019), 75; heralds reportedly estimate twenty-eight thousand: James Gairdner (eds.), *The Paston Letters, A.D. 1422-1509*, 6 vols. (London, 1904), iii, 267; Howard's Chronicle claims twenty-three thousand were kills: 'Howard's Chronicle' in Dan Embree and M. Teresa Tavormina (eds.), *The Contemporary English Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses* (Woodbridge, 2019), 101. In contrast, another chronicle has the number of dead as low as nine thousand – 'Annales rerum anglicarum' in J. Stevenson (ed.), *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France, Volume II Part II* (London, 1864) 778.

[8] See in particular: Colin Richmond, 'The Nobility and the Wars of the Roses', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 21 (1977), 71-86. Simon Payling, 'Was the battle of Towton as bloody as all that', https://thehistoryofparliament.wordpress.com/2020/03/29/was-the-battle-of-towton-as-bloody-as-all-that/ [accessed 18 August 2020] suggests that the comparatively low number of parliamentary peers and former MPs who can actually be shown to have died at Towton 'raises the possibility that the battle did not see the carnage portrayed in contemporary chronicles'.

[9] All of the most recent accounts of the wars discuss them in these distinct phases, while also providing some over-arching explanations of them: Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in*

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presumably left some mark on those who participated, either physical or psychological, as the extract from Gerhard von Wesel indicates.

This article is concerned with the emotional, or psychological, aspects of the Wars of the Roses that are hinted at in von Wesel's account and how they influenced the shape of the wars. Anthony Goodman has examined the experience of ordinary soldiers during the wars, though his study was more focused on the daily realities of late medieval warfare rather than a full discussion about how such experience impacted the course of the wars.[10] The study of emotions by medievalists has provided important insights into political events and wars by showing the benefits to contemporaries of employing common ideas about emotions and violence. For instance, Damein Boquet and Piroska Nagy's wide ranging study of medieval emotions explored the relationship of violence and emotions, along with the importance performing emotions in the politics of the later middle ages.[11] Yet, warfare was not discussed directly in this study, but others have engaged with the role of emotions in other conflicts. Historians of the crusades are increasingly recognising the importance of emotions such as fear, cowardice and feelings of betrayal in shaping both the experience of medieval wars and later portrayals of them.[12] One study in particular provides a relevant comparison for

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England, c. 1437-1509 (Cambridge, 1997); David Grummit, *A Short History of The Wars of the Roses* (London, 2012); Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (London and New Haven, 2010).

[10] Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: The Soldiers' Experience* (Stroud, 2005).

[11] Damein Boquet and Piroska Nagy, *Sensible Moyen Âge: Une historie des émotions dans l'Occident medieval* (Paris, 2015); translated as: *Medieval Emotions: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages*, trans. Robert Shaw (Cambridge, 2018).

[12] Conor Kostick, 'Courage and Cowardice in the First Crusade', *War in History*, 20 (2013), 32-49; Stephen J. Spencer, 'Feelings of betrayal and echoes of the First Crusade in Odo of Deuil's *De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*', *Historical Research*, 92 (2019), 657-79.

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approaching the Wars of the Roses. The Burgundian-Armagnac civil war in which ravaged early fifteenth century France, like England in the 1450s, stemmed from the problems of governance caused by an incapable monarch, in the French case Charles VI. Emily Hutchison has drawn attention to the political importance public displays of grief by the family of Louis, duke of Orleans, in the years after his assassination in Paris on 27 November 1407 on the orders of John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy, which were important political acts that helped legitimise their actions.[13]

In addition to the value of emotions in political performance, the use of fear and terror as part of a broader military strategy has been recognised. Alastair MacDonald and Michael Jones have explored the importance of fear and courage as key emotions that shaped the experience of late medieval soldiers and combatants.[14] Similarly, the *chevachées* of Edward III's armies in France and Scotland are viewed as a key tactic in reducing the morale of enemy armies and demonstrate the use of fear as a weapon of war.[15] These tactics were later

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[13] Emily J. Hutchison, 'The Politics of Grief in the Outbreak of Civil War in France, 1407-1413', *Speculum*, 91 (2016), 422-52.

[14] Michael K. Jones, 'The Battle of Verneuil (17th August 1424): Towards a history of courage', *War in History*, 9 (2002), 375-411; Alastair J. MacDonald, 'Courage, Fear and the Experience of the Later Medieval Scottish Soldier', *Scottish Historical Review*, 112 (2013), 179-206.

[15] H. J. Hewitt, *The Black Prince's Expedition of 1355-1357* (Manchester, 1958), P. Hoskins, 'The itineraries of the Black Prince's chevauchées of 1355 and 1356: observations and interpretations', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 7 (2009), 12-37; M. M. Madden, *The Black Prince and the Grande Chevauchée of 1355* (Woodbridge, 2018); Iain A. MacInnes, '"To subject the north of the country to his rule": Edward III and the 'Lochindorb Chevauchée' of 1336', *Northern Scotland*, new series, 3 (2012), 16-31; Clifford J. Rogers, 'Edward III and the Dialectics of Strategy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 4 (1994), 83-102; C.

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used by Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, in 1522-3 which serves as an important reminder to historians of the continuation of military strategies employed during the middle ages into the early modern period.[16] In contrast, the role that emotions such as fear played in political and military strategies civil wars of fifteenth-century England have not been the subject of sustained analysis.

The Wars of the Roses provide an insight into ways in which emotions could play a tangible part in key political and military events of the events, and were not only about the political performances of individuals or narrative strategies of chroniclers. This article uses the Wars of the Roses as a case study for understanding the role of emotions in medieval political conflict. First, it highlights potential of the late-medieval English sources for revealing the use of emotions in war. It then examines three ways in which emotions shaped the wars: the personal enmities between successive dukes of Somerset and members of the House of York; regional hatreds between northerners and southerners; and finally collective hatred and blame directed towards individual councillors. Taken together, the material examined here provides new insights into how emotions had a tangible effect on the strategies of commanders and the political outcomes of a late medieval conflict.

Finding Emotions in the Sources

J. Rogers, 'Fire and Sword: Bellum Hostile and "Civilians" in the Hundred Years War', in M. Grimsley and C. J. Rogers (eds.), *Civilians in the Path of War* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 2002), 33-78.

[16] Neil Murphy, 'A "Very Fowle Warre": Scorched Earth, Violence and Thomas Howard's French and Scottish Campaigns of 1522-3', *War and History* (forthcoming – early view available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0968344519871970).

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Before exploring the role of emotions in the Wars of the Roses, it is necessary to establish the potential and limitations of the available sources, which are more limited than those for later conflicts. Early modernists have mined their richer source material for insights into the impact that warfare had on individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. These sources include diaries and autobiographical account that survive in much greater quantities from the sixteenth and seventeenth century onwards.[17] The seventeenth century was particularly bellicose, with the expansion of the state leading to bigger armies being a regular feature of life across large sways of Europe, most notably during the Thirty Years' War that ravaged large parts of the Holy Roman Empire and left numerous eye witness accounts that reveal the emotional and psychological effects of the war on different members of society.[18] This was also true in England where Erin Peters has shown that the English Civil War of the seventeenth century had a clear traumatic and psychological effect on those soldiers involved which entered the national psyche through print culture. She further argued that, although the seventeenth century operated within different cultural norms than the current world, 'a soldier's psychological response to witnessing severe physical trauma to the human body and

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[17] For instance, diary of the Welsh solider Elis Gruffydd who fought on Henry VIII's French campaigns in the 1540s which reveals the effects those campaigns had on the local population: Neil Murphy, 'Violence, Colonisation and Henry VIII's Conquest of France, 1544-1546', *Past and Present*, no. 233 (2016), 13-51, passim; Neil Murphy, *The Tudor Conquest of Boulogne: Conquest, Colonisation and Imperial Monarchy, 1544-1550* (Cambridge, 2019). More generally, Charles Carlton, *This Seat of Mars: War and the British Isles, 1482–1746* (New Haven, 2011) makes use of 236 memories and diaries.

[18] Geoffrey Mortimer, 'Individual Experience and Perception of the Thirty Years' War in Eyewitness Personal Accounts', *German History*, 20 (2002), 141-60.

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extraordinary violent scenes has not significantly changed over the last four hundred years'.[19] Peters' conclusion invites comparisons with earlier periods. Seventeenth-century historians have many eyewitness accounts from the participants and victims of warfare from which to base their conclusions. Yet, the change in the nature of the evidence may hide continuities in the way people during the middle ages responded to war on an emotional level.

Although late medievalists do not have the quantity or quality of source available to those studying later wars, there is a sufficient number of scraps of evidence for the Wars of the Roses for understanding the role of emotions during these conflicts. The late medieval evidence is furnished with a wide variety of reference to various emotions including fear, hatred, blame and honour which are crucial for understanding the war, providing a framework for understanding the role of emotions in shaping the course of medieval warfare. This is most evident in many of the narrative sources for the later middle ages. Wars were widely reported in the chronicles of the middle ages and the martial deeds of chivalric heroes were regarded as 'worthy of biographical treatment' were the predominant non-royal secular biographies of the later middles ages.[20] Chronicles and chivalric biographies were written within conventions that included the didactic purpose of presenting models for ideal Christian and aristocratic virtue. Accounts of battles were supposed to present readers with universal truths about warfare, which meant many had a 'formulaic, almost mechanised approach'.[21]

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[19] Erin Peters, 'Trauma Narratives of the English Civil War', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 16 (2016), 78-94 quotation on 91.

[20] Chris Given-Wilson, 'Chivalric Biography and Medieval Life-Writing' in Steven Boardman and Susan Foran (eds.), *Barbour's Bruce and it Cultural Contexts: Politics, Chivalry and Literature in Late Medieval Scotland* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2015), 105.

[21] Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004), 2.

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Therefore, chronicle accounts cannot be taken as objective depictions of historical events which makes assigning a particularly emotional response to a particular combatant or sets of combatants. This, however, does not make such attempts impossible. For the Battle of Edgecote (July 1469), Barry Lewis has shown the value of Welsh poets for gleaning additional information of the battle, including the emotional responses to the battle, though this is a rare example of such an endeavour for the Wars of the Roses.[22]

Furthermore, medievalists lack autobiographical accounts and diaries, that survive for later periods, which illuminate the mental worlds of those effected by warfare.[23] Lower level of literacy and accidents of survival alone do not account of this lack of material. Yuval Noah Harari noted the tendency of medieval culture discourage autobiographical writing, which may provide glimpses of emotional reactions to war, has led to a lack of military memoirs for the middle ages. Only a few accounts of crusaders, along with material from the Iberian Peninsula and Jean le Bel's account of his campaign in Scotland in 1327 were referred to by Harari as military memoirs.[24] This means that although there is some narrative evidence that can reveal the role of emotions in warfare, much of this material needs to be treated carefully, which makes wider generalisations from particular case studies difficult.

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[22] Barry Lewis, 'The Battle of Edgecote or Banbury (1469) Through the Eyes of Contemporary Welsh Poets', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 9 (2011), 97-117.

[23] Carlton, *This Seat of Mars*; MacDonald, 'Later Medieval Scottish Soldier' 181-2.

[24] Yuval Noah Harari, 'Military Memoirs: A Historical Overview of the Genre from the Middle Ages to the Late Modern Era', *War in History*, 14 (2007), 291-3. An account by two English soldiers in France between 1415 and 1429 has been edited by Anne Curry and Remy Ambühl for publication: Anne Curry and Remy Ambühl (eds.), *The Soldiers' Chronicle of the Hundred Years War: College of Arms Manuscript M9* (Woodbridge, forthcoming).

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Beyond the narrative evidence, there is a wide range of administrative and financial records that survive in increasing quantities towards the end of the middle ages, that may initially not be regarded as useful for understanding the history of emotions.[25] These are more formulaic than even the standardised legal records which historians have mined for the use of emotions in the narrative strategies of litigants.[26] England is particularly well-served in this respect, having the largest surviving body of government records of any secular medieval state. Such documents were formulaic and not designed to be a record of someone's psychological or emotional state. For instance, on 4 November 1461, Edward IV granted Walter Harding to the rangership of the chase of Cranborne, Dorset, 'in consideracion of the good seruice that oure seruant and true liegeman Watkyn Harding hath doon unto the lord oure fadre whom god rest and shal doo to us heraftre during his life'.[27] 'Oure fadre' was Richard, duke of York who was killed the previous December at the Battle of Wakefield. Harding had been in the service of Richard, duke of York since the 1440s, being appointed ranger Cranborne Chas in 1444 and the seneschal in 1448/9.[28] Edward IV was only confirming previous appointments with his grant. Although loyalty was a likely motivating factor behind the grant, Edward's actions are best explained as being part of the routine nature of medieval government. In short, he was doing something that was expected of him.

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[25] This type of source is not discussed by Susan Matt in her overview of the sources for the history of emotions: Susan J. Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions' in Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns (eds.), *Doing Emotions History* (Illinois, 2014), 47-51.

[26] For instance: Bronach C. Kane, 'Defamation, gender and hierarchy in late medieval Yorkshire', *Social History*, 43 (2018), 356-74.

[27] The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA) PSO1/21 no. 1080; *Calendar of Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: 1461-1467* (London, 1897), 54.

[28] P.A Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411-1460* (Oxford, 1988), 232.

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The wider point about this example is that it highlights the difficulties in deciphering emotions and motivations behind many of the administrative records produced either in preparation of medieval warfare or in the aftermath of war.

Yet, such administrative documents should not be discounted because, on occasion, they can provide genuine insights into the mental world of contemporaries. One unusual document that provides a rare insight into the mental world of one participant in the Wars of the Roses, Richard III. On 12 October 1483, after hearing that Humphrey Stafford, duke of Buckingham, had attached himself to a rebellion in the south-west, Richard III issued a mandate to the Lord Chancellor to deliver the great seal to him.[29] The instruction is something that would be expected in such a crisis. What makes this unusual is that Richard then, in his own hand, wrote a postscript to the document further denouncing Buckingham as 'the most untrue creature living' and claiming that 'there was never a false traitor better provided for'.[30] Buckingham had been a key ally of Richard's in the spring and summer of 1483 when Richard launched two coups which led to him usurping his nephew Edward V, for which he was rewarded. His exact motivation for rebelling is uncertain with possibilities including his disgust at the probable murder Edward V and his younger brother, that his own ambitions were being curtailed by Richard and even an attempt to realise his own distant claim to the crown because Henry Tudor's claim to the throne came via the debarred

[29] For these events see: Louise Gill, *Richard III and Buckingham's Rebellion* (Stroud, 1999) Michael Hicks, *Richard III: The Self-Made King* (London and New Haven, 2019), 286-307; Charles Ross, *Richard III* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), 105-26.

[30] TNA, C81/1392/6. A facsimile of this document is reproduced in: Hicks, *Richard III: The Self-Made King*, plate 16; Ross, *Richard III*, plate 10 (b).

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Beaufort line.[31] Whatever Buckingham's motives for rebelling were, Richard's reaction to the rebellion was clear. Although kings were not familiar with the intimidate details of every document produced in their name, an order that related to the great seal is something a king was bound to be aware of.[32] The fact that Richard went further and added postscript to this routine order provide a brief glimpse into this anger at Buckingham soon after he discovered the rebellion. The document is clear example of '*Ira regis*' ('the king's wrath') which Boquet and Nagy argued 'would seem to be the royal and princely emotion *par excellence*'.[33] In this instance, the piecing together of administrative and narrative sources demonstrates that emotions need to be considered in the actions of historical figures and not only in terms of narrative strategies of writers and chroniclers.

Personal Enmity: The Beauforts and the Yorkists

The importance of emotions during the Wars of the Roses is relatively neglected, with historians focusing on the structural problems of the English state in influencing the course of the wars. This represents a gap in approaches to late-medieval English politics which have sought to go beyond viewing the wars purely in terms of the self-interests and materialist motivations of elites. Christine Carpenter and John Watts advocate the 'new constitutional history' which emphasises what the wars reveal about political culture and concepts of good

[31] Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, 212.

[32] See also: Gordon McKelvie, 'Kingship and good lordship in practice: Henry VII, the earl of Oxford and the case of John Hale, 1487', *Journal of Medieval History*, 45 (2019), 513-14.

[33] Boquet and Nagy, *Medieval Emotions* 169-71, quotation on 169. Richard III's document is not discussed in this study.

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governance and the 'common wele'.[34] In contrast, others such as Michael Hicks, have avoid the problematic term 'constitutional', with its Whiggish connotations, and sought to examine the period in terms of the ideas and idealisms of those participating in the wars.[35] The importance of personality and ideas are therefore at the heart of how the Wars of the Roses are understood, but there has been little focus on the importance of specific emotions such as pride, grief, hate and fear in shaping the actions of individuals.

The exception to this trend is the quarrels between successive dukes of Somerset and the house of York. Although not discussed in terms of the history of emotions, articles in the 1980s by Michael Hicks and Michael K. Jones drew attention to the importance of the ideals and personal feelings for understanding key events on either side of this conflict in a manner similar to how those working on feuds and vendettas have shown emotions to shape conflict.[36] Michael Jones has noted the central role that the concept of honour and personal pride had in the poor personal relations between Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset, and

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[34] Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), 628-47; Carpenter, 'Political and Constitutional History: Before and After McFarlane' in R.H. Britnell and A.J. Pollard (eds.), *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society*, ed. (Stroud, 1995), 175-206; Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*; John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Oxford, 1996).

[35] Michael Hicks, 'Idealism in Late Medieval English Politics' in *Richard III and His Rivals: Magnates and their Motives in the Wars of the Roses* (London, 1991), 41-60; Michael Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2002). See also: Gordon McKelvie, *Bastard Feudalism, English Society and the Law: The Statutes of Livery, 1390-1520* (Woodbridge, 2020), 5-7.

[36] Michael K. Jones, 'Somerset, York and the Wars of the Roses', *English Historical Review*, 104 (1989), 285-307; Michael Hicks, 'Edward IV, the Duke of Somerset and Lancastrian Loyalism in the North', *Northern History*, 20 (1984), 23-37.

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Richard, duke of York during the period 1450-5. After York returned from Ireland in 1450 he led a personal campaign against Somerset who had replaced him as lieutenant of Normandy and, in York's eyes, surrendering too easily. Somerset had become the key advisor to Henry VI, occupying what was, in theory, to York's role because York was the king's nearest male relative with English royal blood.[37] The campaign only ended with Somerset's death at the First Battle of St Albans in 1455, where the duke and his key allies, Henry, earl of Northumberland and Thomas, lord Clifford were targeted.[38] The personal enmity that York felt towards Somerset is suggested by Abbot John Whethamstede's claim that the corpses of the dead at St Albans were left, including Somerset's, and that he had to persuade York to give the dead an honourable burial.[39] Honour and personal pride therefore contributed to the escalating tensions in England during the 1450s.

Familial honour continued to influence the politics of the 1450s when Somerset's son, Henry Beaufort, second duke of Somerset, became a key Lancastrian commander. The young duke's actions before the outbreak of full scale war in 1459 provide clear example of public displays of anger and grief. A desire for revenge was a key factor influencing the duke's actions from early in his public life. At a council meeting in October 1456, the young duke had to be restrained from attacking the duke of York and then quarrelled with Sir John Neville, a younger son of the earl of Salisbury.[40] Tensions between the sons those slain at St

[37] Henry VI did have two half-brothers after his mother Catherine de Valois, married the Welsh esquire Owen Tudor. His half-brothers, however, had no relations to the English royal family.

[38] Jones, 'Somerset, York and the Wars of the Roses', 285-307.

[39] *Registrum Abbatlae Johannis Whethamstede*, 176-8.

[40] *Great Chronicle of London*, 189; Ralph Flenley (ed,), *Six Town Chronicles of England* (Oxford, 1911), 159. The young duke's followers were rather bellicose at this council meeting with another report stating that they

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Albans and the Yorkist faction culminated in early 1458 when tensions had to be alleviated because of the tendency for such lords to travel with large retinues for their own protection.[41] In February 1458, the duke of York reportedly came to a council meeting at Westminster with 140 horses, the earl of Salisbury with 400 horses and 80 knights and esquires and the duke of Somerset with 200 horses,[42] causing the mayor of London to assemble a large force of peace keepers.[43] Benet's Chronicle explicitly notes that the duke of Somerset, the earl of Northumberland and lord Clifford quarrelled with the duke of York and the Neville earls of Salisbury and Warwick because of the deaths of their fathers three years earlier.[44] Reconciliation between these factions became essential for ensuring peace throughout the kingdom. The Yorkists entered into a series of bonds with the families of those killed in at First St Albans totalling £78,000.[45] They were also required to endow a chantry at St Albans for the souls of those killed and pay compensation to the families. Finally, a public ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral, London, where those involved swore an oath committing themselves to peace.[46]

The actions of the young duke can be understood when compared to other events, the clearest of which is the activities of Orleanist/Armagnac faction in the years following the

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ended up in an altercation with the watchmen of Coventry, during which two or three watchmen were killed and alarm bell was rung – *PL*, iii, 108.

[41] For an overview of the events described in the remainder of this paragraph see: Ralph Griffiths, *Reign of King Henry VI* (London, 1981), 805-7.

[42] *PL*, iii, 125

[43] *Six Town Chronicles*, 159-60.

[44] G.L. Harriss and M.A. Harriss (eds.), 'John Benet's Chronicle, 1444-1461' in *Camden Miscellany*, 26 (1972).

[45] *Calendar of Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: 1454-1461* (London, 1947), 292-3.

[46] *An English Chronicle*, 77-8.

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assassination of Louis, duke of Orleans in 1407 who used public displays of grief and anger as political propaganda. This was because it was legitimate to use emotions in such as manner.[47] The events in England in the 1450s, and France earlier in the century, illustrate a broader pattern recognised by historians of blood feuds in which desires for revenge play a key role in the political life of local elites.[48] Stuart Carroll has argued that vengeance was an important aspect of medieval and early modern political life and that 'revenge … requires strategic thinking that opens up the possibility of mediation and reconciliation' and vengeance can be a tool of analysis as opposed to moral problem to overcome.[49] The importance of the desire for revenge and the defence of familial honour is apt for understanding what happened here and the role of emotions in this phase of the wars. The attempted resolution between York and Somerset was reminiscent of the blood feud in other parts of Europe, that is generally thought to have died out in England much earlier than elsewhere in Europe whereby payments were made to the family of someone who was killed.[50]

There is a tendency to view dramatic outbursts of rage as part of carefully constructed political performances.[51] Although there was a calculated element of political theatre in many public displays of emotions, historians should avoid falling into the trap of interpreting all public displays of emotions as instances of planned performances. In this instance, the young

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[47] Hutchinson, 'Politics of Grief', 422-52.

[48] Jeppe Büchert Netterstrøm, 'The Study of Feud in Medieval and Early Modern History' in Jeppe Büchert Netterstrøm and Bjørn Poulsen (eds.), *Feud in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aarhus, 2007), 35-7.

[49] Stuart Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 2006), 1-5, quotation on 5.

[50] Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 870 refers to the 'feud-like' character of political violence at this time. Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, 139 describes this as a wergild. Neither expand upon their respective comments.

[51] This approach is clearly evident throughout: Hutchinson, 'Politics of Grief', 422-52.

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duke of Somerset's outbursts during the late 1450s cannot simply be regarded as a performative ploy designed to advance his own interests, as his activities indicate. Gregory's Chronicle noted that, at the Loveday, peace was formally made between the Yorkists and the sons of those killed at the First Battle of St Albans.[52] This peace did not last and a widespread civil war broke out in the autumn of 1459 that witnessed seven pitched battles between 23 September 1459 at Blore Heath and 29 March 1461 at Towton. Although the personal enmity between the sons of those killed in 1455 and the Yorkist was not the only reason for conflict, it was those sons who were the key Lancastrian commanders. In particular, Henry Beaufort, third duke of Somerset, led the Lancastrians at the Battle of Wakefield where Richard, duke of York, his son Edmund, duke of Rutland and Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury were killed. A few months later York's eldest son, the earl of March, became Edward IV. The second duke of Somerset eventually reconciled with the Yorkist establishment as part of Edward IV's conciliatory policy towards Lancastrians in his early years.[53] Despite being a key Lancastrian commander, Edward IV reconciled with Somerset in late 1462, displayed favour, pardoned and patronised the duke, only for Somerset to rebel again in late 1463. According to one account, Edward IV even intervened to save his life at Northampton when a mob desired his death for treason, sending him to 'a castelle of hys owne fulle secretly, for sauegarde of the dukys lyffe'.[54] After a Yorkist victory at Hexham on 15 May 1464 Henry Beaufort, second duke of Somerset, was executed. Michael Hicks argued that dynastic loyalty was a key influence when the second duke of Somerset rebelled again in 1464.[55] Somerset's actions

[52] 'Gregory's Chronicle', 64.

[53] Ross, *Edward IV*, 64-9.

[54] 'Gregory's Chronicle', 78

[55] Hicks, 'Lancastrian Loyalism in the North', 23-37.

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were influenced by personal feelings of dynastic loyalty, as opposed to pure financial self-interest. The example of the second duke of Somerset is an important reminder that emotions such as anger and a desire for vengeance cannot be viewed as purely performative because the duke did not gain anything by rebelling in 1463. A key Lancastrian commander during the Wars of the Roses was driven by emotions as much as materialistic self-interest or constitutional idealism.

Collective hatred between regions

Beyond the personal feelings of individuals, collective emotions were a key aspect of the first phase of the Wars of the Roses, which had longer term consequences. Fear of, and hatred towards, northerners from the southerners were significant emotional developments from the wars, mainly caused by tales of atrocities conducted by northern armies. The abbot of St Albans recorded that the northerners in the duke of York's army looted the town after their victory.[56] Despite the northern association with York's victory in 1455 at St Albans, it was the use of northerners by the Lancastrians in the 1459-61 conflict that most clearly shows how the ability to manage popular emotions including fear, was vital for military success.

Andy King has noted that the period 1459-61 witnessed an intensification of prejudicial southern comments about northerners. Such prejudices were not new in 1459-61, but were more pronounced than they had been in previous centuries. One reason for this was that the Scottish marches remained 'warlike' throughout the fifteenth century whereas the gentry of southern England had become less militarised. According to King, the Yorkist

[56] *Registrum Abbatlae Johannis Whethamstede*, 171-4.

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successfully 'inflamed southern anxieties about warlike Marchers'.[57] Indeed, the lure of looting and plunder was allegedly used by the Lancastrians to recruit northerners. One chronicle stated that, before the Battle of Northampton (10 July 1460), proclamations were made in Cheshire and Lancashire promising that if the Lancastrians were victorious 'thanne euvery man shulde take what he myght and make havok' in the southern counties of Kent, Essex, Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Wiltshire.[58] Multiple instances of northerners looting are recorded in the chronicles after the Lancastrian victory at Wakefield. For instance, Gregory's Chronicle reports that some of the northern men 'robbyd euyr as they yede' and attacked Dunstable the day before the Second Battle of St Albans (17 February 1461).[59] Such tales are likely to have been hyperbolic, as has been shown for the town of Stamford which suffered from the Lancastrian army in early 1461 but the town exaggerated the events in later years for its own advantage.[60] Yet, there is clear contemporary evidence that southerners were concerned about the activities of the Lancastrian army in early 1461. These fears are evident in a letter that Clement Paston wrote to his brother John on 23 January 1461 which stated that 'Þe pepill in þe northe robbe and styll and ben apoynted to pill all thys cwntre, and gyffe away menys goodys and lyfflodys in all the sowthe cwntre.'[61] These anxieties influenced the outcome of the First Phase of the Wars. Eliza Hartrich recently argued that fear induced by tales of atrocities committed by the Lancastrian northerners

[57] Andy King, "The Anglo-Scottish Marches and the Perception of 'the North' in Fifteenth-Century England", *Northern History*, 49 (2012), 37-50 quotation on 49.

[58] John Davies (ed.), *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI*, printed for Camden Society (London, 1856), 98.

[59] 'Gregory's Chronicle', 71.

[60] Alan Rogers, 'Stamford and the Wars of the Roses', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 53 (2009), 88-91.

[61] *PL*, i, 197-8.

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caused London to fully commit to the Yorkists in early 1461.[62] This was part of a broader study that emphasised in the role that towns played in the high politics and constitutional ideas of fifteenth-century England. Peter Fleming has shown the importance of similar issues for towns in the west midlands and the Welsh marches, particularly Coventry, Bristol and Shrewsbury.[63] What has yet to be recognised that the inability of the Lancastrians to address the emotion of fear, represents a failure in their military strategy.

There is plenty of evidence that alleviating southern fears about northerners was integral to Lancastrian military strategy from late 1460. A letter in the name of Henry VI's son, likely drafted by his councillors and his mother Margaret of Anjou, refuted allegations made by Yorkists in London that the Lancastrian force would 'make assembles of grete numbre of straungeres that wolde purpose to dispole and to robbe you and thayme of yor goodes and utterly to destuye you.'[64] This was a clear attempt to alleviate fears that the city had about northerners, as reflected in many southern chroniclers. Addressing fear in a civil war scenario was different than in England's wars with France and Scotland where the ability of an army to spread fear amongst non-combatants would lower the enemy's moral thus having a tangible benefit.[65] It is also different from other civil wars and therefore cannot be explained by a simplistic distinction between civil wars and wars between states. For instance, Iain MacIness has shown that, during the Bruce-Balliol civil war in Scotland in the

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[62] Elisa Hartrich, *Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth-Century England, 1413-1471* (Oxford, 2019), 172.

[63] Peter Fleming, 'The Battles of Mortimer's Cross and Second St Albans: The Regional Dimension', in Linda Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century XIV: Essays Presented to Michael Hicks* (Woodbridge, 2015), 91-102.

[64] Margaret Lucille Kekewich, Colin Richmond, Anne F. Sutton, Livia Visser-Fuchs and John L. Watts (eds). *The Politics of Fifteenth Century England: John Vale's Book*, (Stround, 1995) 143.

[65] See references on footnotes 14 and 15.

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1330s, terror was used by the Bruce side to advance their position.[66] In contrast, the Lancastrians needed to alleviate fears in order to advance their military objectives which differs from many other strategies in late medieval wars.

Soon after the Lancastrian victory at Wakefield, Margaret of Anjou again tried to allay the fears of Londoners in a letter where she promised that they would not be 'robbed, dispolied nor wronged' by anyone in the Lancastrian army.[67] The English Chronicle noted that after the Lancastrian victory at Wakefield, many northerners in the Lancastrian army travelled south towards Dunstable 'robbyng alle the contre and peple as thay came'.[68] The chronicle was a piece of Yorkist propaganda with a narrative constructed to justify Edward IV's usurpation in 1461.[69] A similar sentiment is evident in the continuation of the Crowland Chronicle, known for its anti-northern prejudices, which described Margaret of Anjou's army as invading the south ('*borealium in partes australes irruptio*').[70] In this situation, the fact that both chroniclers are hostile sources enhances their value because they reveal the attitudes of some southerners to northerners during the Wars of the Roses. The leaders of the

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[66] Iain MacIness, "'Shock and Awe': The Use of Terror as a Psychological Weapon of War During the Bruce-Balliol Civil War, 1332-1338" in Andy King and Michael A. Penman (eds.), *England and Scotland in the Fourteenth Century: New Perspectives* (Woodbridge, 2007), 40-59.

[67] *John Vale's Book*, 142. The letter is undated but was written after Wakefield since Richard duke of York was referred to as the 'late' [dead] duke but before the victory at the Second St Albans. *The Great Chronicle of London*, 193 notes rumours in London in early 1461 that the Lancastrian army 'wolde come down to the Cyte and Robbe and despoyle the Cyte, and destroye it utterly and alle the sowth Cuntreys'.

[68] *An English Chronicle*, 97.

[69] Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, 122-3.

[70] Nicholas Pronay and John Cox (eds.), *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations, 1459-1486* (London, 1986) 112.

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Lancastrian army were acutely aware of southern fears of northern armies which needed to be factored into their military strategy. Margaret's letter failed and the fear that a northern army would sack London was one reason why the Yorkists won the war. After another Lancastrian victory at the Second Battle of St Albans, London refused the Lancastrian army because they were 'dredyng the manas and the malyce' of them.[71] A few days later, the city of London allowed York's son, Edward, earl of March into the city where he was proclaimed king on 4 March 1461.

These concerns were not confined to London and were replicated in the west midlands and Welsh marches. Hours after their victory at the Second Battle of St Albans, the Lancastrians dispatched a contingent to Coventry with a letter in the name of Prince Edward to the mayor and aldermen ordering them to assist three local Lancastrians. The priest who delivered the letter then said that his master, Prince Edward, needed to know that he would be safe if he travelled to Coventry, including the thinly veiled threat that 'he wylle come to helpe to kepe the cyte when the northeryn men comyn downe to you fro the felde and entrete thayme to do yow favour'. The Coventry Annals went on to report that those in attendance were so angered by the priest's statement that they would have beheaded him and those with

[71] *An English Chronicle*, 98. This event is reported in other sources but in less emotive terms. E.g. *The Great Chronicle of London*, 194. John Benet's chronicle noted that the Lancastrian army came from the north 'pillaging all towns and villages in their path'. After their victory at St Albans, they reportedly stayed at Dunstable, plundering the whole of Middlesex before Margaret of Anjou sent a gentleman and chaplain to the mayor of London requesting money but they returned empty handed'. 'John Benet's Chronicle', page required. The chronicle of Robert Bale described this in similar terms: Hannes Kleineke, 'Robert Bale's chronicle and the second battle of St Albans', *Historical Research*, 87 (2014), 750.

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him if the mayor had not calmed them down.[72] Peter Fleming has speculated that the although the priest's words may have angered those present, 'it is more likely that the audience was already heavily infiltrated by Yorkists'.[73] If there were Yorkist supporters at the meeting at Coventry, as opposed to the event being caused by spontaneous anger, the important point is that those Yorkists were able to enflame and direct such anger to their own ends. Coventry raised £100 for Edward IV for a contingent of soldiers for which they were thanked on 5 March 1461, the day after Edward was proclaimed king.[74] This incident may give credence to the tale that Margaret of Anjou gave her northern army permission to 'spolye and robbe' the towns of Coventry, Bristol, Salisbury and their surrounding countryside, as well as London 'as payment and recompense for theyre sowde and wages'.[75] Although the battle of Towton won the first phase of the wars for the Yorkists, and ensured that Edward IV remained king but it was the fear of atrocities from northerners in the Lancastrian army that allowed Edward entry into London in order to be proclaimed king and helped him gain military support from Coventry.

Although the Yorkist were successful in exploiting southern fears about, and hatred towards, northerners, after their victory, the necessity for reconciliation meant that regional hatred were downplayed in official propaganda. The roll of the 1461 parliament includes a commendation to the new king, Edward IV, from the Commons ('*Commenadcio facta regi*

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[72] Fleming, 'Mortimer's Cross and Second St Albans', 99-100. The quotations are from 'The Coventry Annals' or 'Aylesford Annals' currently in the possession of the earl of Aylesford Finch-Knightley of Packington Hall MSS, LH1/1 and are transcribed by Fleming.

[73] Fleming, 'Mortimer's Cross and Second St Albans', 100.

[74] M.D. Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book or Mayor's Register, 1420-1555* (London, 1907), 313-14

[75] *An English Chronicle*, 98.

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per communes') thanking him for the salvation of the kingdom. There are also direct references to Lancastrian raiding on the countryside during the early months of 1461.[76] However, this official narrative of the war does not blame on northerners *per se* for the atrocities, unlike other southern sources with a clear prejudice, but instead those Lancastrian lords who gathered men from the north. Later on in the roll, the acts of attainder claimed that, after Wakefield, Henry VI:

> by his writts called to assist hym to attend uppon his persone, to resiste and represse another commocion of people, by his assent and wille gadered, and waged not oonly in the northparties, but also oute of Scotlond, commyng from the same parties with Margarete late called quene of Englond, and hir son Edward, late called prynce of Wales, entendyng to the extreme destruction of the seid reame, namely of the south parties therof.[77]

This narrative was repeated in the acts of attainder against those Lancastrian lords who fought at Towton referred to them being 'accompanyed with the Frensshmen and Scotts, the kynges ennemyes' but did not refer to any English enemies except those named in the act.[78] In short, the north is discussed in purely geographic terms, denoting the location of riots and rebellions and an area where the Lancastrians recruited, rather than condemning the characteristics of northerners. There was good reason for this. The parliament rolls were the approved final

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[76] Christopher Given-Wilson et al (eds.) *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, 16 vols. (Woodbridge, 2005), [hereafter *PROME*], 'Edward IV: November 1461', item 7.

[77] *PROME*, 'Edward IV: November 1461', item 17.

[78] *PROME*, 'Edward IV: November 1461', item 20. This phrasing was repeated verbatim when the attainder John Lench, esquire from Wyche, Worcestershire, was enrolled in the records of the King's Bench – The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA) KB27/803 rex rot. 7.

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version of the business conducted by each parliament, not a verbatim transcription of the discussions during sessions. Therefore, certain laws such as acts of attainder need to be read as the official justification for confiscating their lands and disinheriting their heirs.[79] The prevalence of northerners in the Lancastrian army could not be ignored, but it was not expedient to emphasise particular characteristics of groups of subjects because that may have deepened, or reinforced, existing prejudices. Instead, the acts of attainder played on xenophobia against the traditional enemies of Scotland and France. This tactic represented the adaptation of the policy employed by Edward III early in the Hundred Years' War when the constitutional position of the French, as supposed subjects of the English crown, meant that a 'generally conciliatory policy that took the presence of French people as a given' had replaced tactics in 1294, 1324 and 1337 which sought to expel them from England because of anxieties over security.[80] After eighteen months of bloody civil war, it suited the new Yorkist establishment in 1461 to present Edward IV as the rightful king of the entire kingdom and therefore avoid incorporating any divisive regional prejudices in the 'official' version of the war.

These regional hatreds, however, were not necessarily an ever-present feature of the wars. During the Second War, which saw Henry VI restored by a faction led by Richard Neville, sixteenth earl of Warwick, and his family there is little indication of such regional divisions resulting in the same levels of prejudice. The regime that restored Henry VI was a

[79] On this source material see: Michael Hicks, 'King in Lords and Commons: Three Insights into Late-Fifteenth-Century Parliaments, 1461-85' in Keith Dockray and Peter Fleming (eds.), *People, Places and Perspective: Essays on Later Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Stroud, 2005), 131-54; McKelvie, *Statutes of Livery*, 33.

[80] W. Mark Ormrod, 'Enmity or Amnity? The Status of French Immigrants to England during an Age of War, c. 1290-c.1540', *History*, 105 (2020) 29, 36.

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combination of two factions: the Nevilles who had become disillusioned with the Yorkists throughout the 1460s; and those Lancastrians who went into exile after the first war, including Margaret of Anjou. There is some indication that the Lancastrian sought to recruit widely in the north-west, but that this was not as successful as a decade earlier. The Crowland Chronicle noted that the Lancastrians were confident of recruiting widely from Cheshire and Lancashire.[81] Similarly, *The Arrival*, a piece of Yorkist propaganda quickly produced and disseminated after Edward IV's restoration, claimed that the Lancastrians expected a 'great nomber of men of Lancashire and Chesshere upon whom they muche trustyd'.[82] Despite these reported attempts, there was only limited response from these regions to attempts at recruitment.[83] Moreover, there is much less prejudice in these accounts towards northerners compared to the first war, which may reflect that such hatreds intensified in 1461 in particular because of the nature of that campaign. It should also be noted that *The Arrival* uses a similar narrative strategy to that employed in the 1461 Act of Attainder by avoiding any divisive statements about Edward IV's subjects. This represents a consistent approach to propaganda by Edward IV which tread a fine line between stoking southern fears about northerners while not openly denouncing his own subjects.

Regional enmity re-emerged in 1483 when Richard III usurped, and probably killed, his nephew Edward V. The best account for understanding the fears of Londoners at this time is from Dominic Mancini, an Italian in London during the period of the usurpation. The

[81] *Crowland*, 127.

[82] 'The Arrival of King Edward IV' in Dan Embree and M. Teresa Tavormina (eds.), *The Contemporary English Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses* (Woodbridge, 2019), 180.

[83] Malcolm Mercer, 'The Strength of Lancastrian Loyalism during the Readeption: Gentry Participation in the Battle of Tewkesbury', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 5 (2007), 96-7.

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account was unknown until its discovery in 1934. Since it was not tainted by Tudor propaganda against Richard III, the account has normally been examined in the context of disappearance of the 'Princes in the Tower' and the likely role Richard III has in that event.[84] Mancini's account of these events is particularly insightful in revealing the attitudes and emotions of Londoners during Richard's usurpation. Richard entered London accompanying the young Edward V on 4 May 1483, with a retinue of around 500 men and four cart-loads of weapons and armour with Woodville devices intended to prove that the Woodvilles meant to harm Richard. Mancini claimed that Richard used this as an attempt to stir up hatred towards the Woodville faction amongst the people but was unsuccessful because many knew the arms were collected for a campaign in Scotland.[85] Richard's entry marked the culmination of the first of two coups in the Spring and early Summer of 1483.[86] His second coup, which ultimately led to him becoming king, began on 13 June 1483 when Richard had William, lord Hastings, a key ally of his brother Edward IV, executed on charges of treason.[87] According to Dominic Mancini, the townsmen of London 'became panic-stricken' and Richard needed to send a herald to declare Hastings had been executed for plotting.[88] Crowland gives a similar impression of these events, nothing that after the execution of Hastings, a frightening and unheard of number ('*in numero terribili et inaudito*') of northerners, Welshmen and those

[84] Michael Hicks, *Richard III* (Stroud, 1991), 125-36.

[85] Dominic Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard the Third* ed. C.A.J Armstrong (Oxford, 1969), 83.

[86] The key overviews of these events are: Hicks, *Richard III: The Self Made King*, 234-60; Ross, *Richard III*, 63-95.

[87] On the dating of this see: Gordon McKelvie, 'The Bastardy of Edward V in 1484: New Evidence of Its Reception in the Inquisitions *Post Mortem* of Richard III', *Royal Studies Journal*, 3 (2016), 73-4; B.P. Wolffe, "Hastings Reinterred", English Historical Review, 91 (1976), 813-24.

[88] Mancini, *Usurpation*, 91.

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from other places were summoned before Richard became king.[89] The chronicler's description was more reserved description of the events of 1461 when he described northerners as invading the South but there is further evidence of regional prejudice in his discussion of events, emphasising the large numbers of people travelling south with Sir Richard Ratcliffe before executing the Woodvilles.[90] After more than three decades of intermittent political turmoil, it is plausible that sudden violent political shifts could quickly engender feelings of fear and panic in Londoners.

Collective hatred towards individuals

Another context in which emotions influenced the wars was when groups directed their anger and hatred towards specific individuals. When describing the Edmund Beaufort, first duke of Somerset's death at the First Battle of St Albans, the continuation of Gregory's Chronicle noted that 'the pepylle sayde that the Duke of Somerset was worthy to suffer that dethe'.[91] This sentiment was expressed in stronger terms by the pro-Yorkist English Chronicle which stated that 'þe comones of þis lands hated þis Duke Edmond[92] and loued þ Duk of Yorke, because he loued þ communes and preserued þhe commune profyte of þhe londe.'[93] The reference to widespread popular hatred towards the most prominent member of the Lancastrian court until his death helped legitimise York's actions during the 1450s. Popular politics was an important dimension to the wars and leading nobles sought to win the support

[89] *Crowland*, 158.

[90] *Crowland*, 160.

[91] 'Gregory's Chronicle', 60.

[92] Edmund, duke of Somerset.

[93] *An English Chronicle*, 72.

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of popular more generally.[94] Moreover, public pressure influenced the politics and government of fifteenth century England, although protests normally characterised as conservative in nature, concerned mainly with the protection of customary rights and directed towards unpopular courtiers as opposed to kings themselves.[95]

The animosity directed towards unpopular courtiers who were believed to have enriched themselves at the public's expense, was a symptom of broader social concerns, fears and anxieties. Alex Brown has recently highlighted that fear of downward social mobility caused much social anxiety amongst the gentry and yeomanry of late medieval England. Brown's examination is an important reminder of the low level existence of the somewhat nebulous fears and anxieties amongst groups of people who were politically active in late medieval England. Brown further argued that 'the financial pressure of the fifteenth century recession undoubtedly produced a general anxiety amongst many'.[96] Although Brown's study drew mainly on literature and gentry correspondences, and did not discuss the political upheavals of the Wars of the Roses, it raises issues about how low level but constant fears of status and wealth influenced the political upheavals of the period. The bullion crisis of the mid fifteenth century, and the subsequent downturn of royal finances, led to dissatisfaction with Henry VI's court from the later 1440s onwards and was one of the preconditions for the

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[94] This is a recurring theme throughout: Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*.

[95] Christian Liddy, 'Urban Enclosure Riots: The Risings of the Commons in English Towns, 1480-1525', *Past and Present*, no. 226 (2015), 41-77; A.J Pollard, 'The People and Parliament in Fifteenth-Century England' in Hannes Kleineke (eds.), *Parliament, Personalities and Power* (Woodbridge, 2011), 1-16; John Watts, 'The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politics', in Linda Clark and Christine Carpenter (eds.), *Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain* (Woodbridge, 2004), 159-80.

[96] A.T Brown, 'The fear of downward social mobility in late medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 45 (2019), 597-617, quotation on 616.

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Wars of the Roses.[97] The various manifestos produced during throughout the wars, as a means of galvanising popular support, refer to impoverishment of the kingdom which addresses some of the fears about downward social mobility that Alex Brown identified.[98] Charting how these pressures and movements influenced the wars is beyond the scope of this article. The relevant point here is that these fears and anxieties could translate into popular anger, leading to violent actions.

The sources reveal two deaths that were caused, not by political or military consideration, but by popular anger that had a clear effect on the course of the wars. The first execution was of William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk, who was Henry VI's pre-eminent courtier during the 1440s. Suffolk rose to prominence during the decade and was the key negotiators of the Treaty of Tours (1444) on the English side. It was alleged that he had enriched himself from royal revenues. He was also said to have impeded England's ability to defend its French possessions in Normandy by disclosing details of English defences, revealing instructions to ambassadors and preventing the English relief effort.[99] In response to popular anger towards him, the duke was imprisoned in January 1450 and impeached in the parliament on charges of treason. Henry VI intervened to stop the trial and exiled Suffolk for five years for the lesser crime of misprision.[100] This decision was unsatisfactory to many and Suffolk's ship was intercepted by the Nicholas of the Tower, where he was subjected to a

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[97] Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, 49-55.

[98] On these manifestos see: Theron Westervelt, 'Manifestos for Rebellion in late Fifteenth-Century England' in Benjamin Thompson and John Watts (eds.), *Political Society in Late Medieval England: A Festschrift for Christine Carpenter* (Woodbridge, 2015), 184-98.

[99] Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 676-84.

[100] *PROME*, Henry VI: November 1449', items 49-52.

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mock trial by the ‘community of the realm’ and summarily executed. News of the execution spread quickly with the Norfolk esquire John Paston receiving two letters that included this information on 5 May 1450 from London and 6 May from Leicester.[101] These events are well-known, but are significant in the context of this article because they suggest widespread public anger a key courtier. John Bale claimed that ‘the cominaltie of the land hadde him in greet suspect and blame’ in early 1450 for recent losses.[102] However, the execution was not hot-tempered or opportunistic but pre-planned because, according to the nearest contemporary account, the captain of the Nicholas of the Tower ‘hadde knowlich of the dukes comyng’.[103] Moreover, there is no indication that nobles were involved in this killing. Indeed, many parliamentary peers had been involved in many of the decisions blamed on Suffolk at his trial and therefore would have been reluctant for any sentence of be passed.[104] It was the execution of Suffolk in 1450 that allowed Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset, to become Henry VI’s key advisor once he returned from Normandy that summer. Popular anger was therefore a key element in the rise to prominence of a key figure whose actions and own personal feud, as discussed, was one of the causes of the Wars of the Roses.

A decade later, after the battle of Wakefield, Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury was killed, not in battle, but by a popular mob. Accounts of the battle are rather terse, but it is clear that Salisbury was taken alive.[105] It is distinctly plausible that Salisbury surrendered and there was a plan to ransom him. One account states that ‘a grete summe of money’ should

[101] *PL*, ii, 146-8.

[102] *Six Town Chronicles*, 127.

[103] *PL*, ii, 146.

[104] James Ross, *Henry VI* (London, 2016), 60.

[105] E.g. *Great Chronicle of London*, 193 claimed that ‘therle of Salisbury was takyn on lyve’.

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have been paid for his life but, at Pontefract, Salisbury was set upon by a mob that 'loved him not', dragging the earl out of the castle and beheading by him.[106] The possibility that Salisbury was executed to appease a popular mob, as opposed to any attempt by the aristocratic commanders to shield themselves from responsibility for the earl's death, is accurate if one accepts that the Lancastrians had alternative plans for Salisbury. Although the topic is understudied, particularly when compared to the Hundred Years War, there is some limited evidence that ransoming occurred during the Wars of the Roses.[107] For instance, a case in chancery from the early 1460s alleged that a servant of the earl of Northumberland extorted for a payment taken when the plaintiff, was taken prisoner at Wakefield, which may have been a ransom.[108] The probability that Salisbury was taken prisoner with a view to ransoming him means it is not credible to assume that the populous was simply a tool of the Lancastrian commanders to dispose of a leading opponent without the need for a trial, because any show trial would have been legal. Several Yorkists were killed in battle and Salisbury had, by fighting with the duke of York, committed treason and therefore his life would have been forfeited. Like the duke of Suffolk a decade earlier, it was popular anger as opposed to be plotting by elites that led to the death of a key political figure.

Conclusions

This article has used the varied, of terse, records produced in England during a period of intense civil war to explore the role of emotions in shaping medieval political conflict. When

[106] *An English Chronicle*, 107.

[107] For ransoming during the Hundred Years' War see: Rémy Ambühl, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013).

[108] TNA C1/27/456. I intend to produce a separate study of ransoming during the Wars of the Roses.

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these sources are used with care, they provide insights into real emotional experience of those involved in the Wars of the Roses. At the highest social strata, emotions had a key in the personal relations between elites which, although not the only causes of the wars, helped to shape the events and factions of the 1450s and their aftermath. When the focus is turned from individuals to groups of people, it is clear that existing regional enmities were exacerbated by the Lancastrian campaigns in 1460-1 which was something that became integral to the military strategy of both sides during the civil war. The necessity for reconciliation meant that, once the war was won, the new king Edward IV needed to downplay regional enmity in the official versions of the war, but such southern prejudices towards northerners continued as evident in the concerns of Londoners during Richard III's usurpation a generation later in 1483. The key point here, is that popular emotions and feelings were variables that military commanders and politicians needed to integrate into their decision making process when devising strategies. This military strategy was different from England's wars with France and Scotland where commanders attempted to spread fear amongst enemy populations. Instead, during the Wars of the Roses, the Lancastrians attempted to alleviate fears of southerners while the Yorkists tread the thin line between exacerbating fears for their own gain while not smearing fellow Englishmen. Finally, popular anger that was targeted against certain key courtiers was one element of a wider concern about socio-economic positions in later medieval England, and such emotions led to the deaths of several leading commanders. This does not mean that emotions were the only thing that drove the Wars of the Roses because 'constitutional' ideas about good governance and the materialistic self-interest were clearly a factor has many have previously shown. In short, the Wars of the Roses cannot fully be understood without examining the emotions of those individuals and groups who shaped the course of the wars.

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