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# The Kings' Lines and Lies: Genealogical Rolls in Mythmaking and Political Rhetoric in the Reign of Henry VII

John-Wilhelm Flattun \*

## Introduction

Late medieval Plantagenet and Tudor use of historiography was as much a means of political rhetoric as mythmaking and legend to become part of national identity and legitimate their claim to the throne. History writing has been a way to present a truth of the past, to believe historical representations to be objective and truthful – its unity and objectivity depends on its patrons, presenters, and perceivers, who shape and make identity fit the image of one's own truth. Politically inclined writers, such as Higden and Lydgate, have depicted history in poetry, genealogies, chronicles, and chronicle rolls, and adapted a storytelling of the past to legitimate the present. How was Henry VII Tudor and his genealogical lines depicted in chronicle rolls? What determines change in oppositional arguments in visual rhetoric? The Yorkist Lincoln roll, Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Latin 113, and the Tudor London, British Library, MS King's 395 are good examples of late medieval history writing, in this article I intend to

explore them through the lens of political rhetoric and visual history writing.

The article compares the visual persuasive rhetoric in the two rolls, my intention is to see how visual migration, collective memory, and familiar iconography make it possible to propagate two opposite truths. I start with the Lincoln Roll's oppositional visual rhetoric, how the de la Poles used the genealogical roll as persuasion against the Tudor legitimacy. The way these rolls interact and engage with different types of audience leads to a discussion on the appropriation of tradition and historiography to exploit foreign and domestic politics as a means to create group belonging and national identity. I compare the visual rhetoric in the Lincoln Roll with the Tudor roll, MS King's 395, and explore how the latter can be seen as an attempt at legitimation through continuity. In conclusion, I argue that the attempt at integrating power through textual and visual historiography was presented, more subtly perhaps, as the Tudors confirmed their legitimate position

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as a natural historical continuation of power in drawing and distributing their own version of history.

Lancastrian, Yorkist, and Tudor factions reused images of myth, history, and royal lineage to adapt and appropriate history as they saw it. History itself does not contradict the belief in truth, it is rather the way history is presented, perceived, and its power to persuade that make a proposed truth possible. It is the act of mythmaking, or mythopoesis, what Ruth Morse, with respect to Shakespeare's history plays, has called rhetorical historiography.<sup>1</sup> Mythmaking becomes the way genealogies were used as political rhetoric and, in the way, public, or collective, memory functions as part of Tudor national and dynastic claim to a royal myth. Historiography incorporated the past in future dynastic legitimation. The power and agency of visual rhetoric is contextualised by the narratives of heroes and the formation of collective memory. Altering the angle from which the past was understood and presented, the image of a rightful king in a time of uncertainty creates its own historical certainty of collective belief in an age of pretenders and claimants to the throne. History and political news were incorporated in manuscript and print, as chronicles, genealogical information, and commonplace books became widely available and popular, and part of an integrated political and religious language. Although rhetoric and propaganda are closely related, they are not, as pointed out by Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton totally interchangeable, they define propaganda as a secularised branch of rhetoric, an "expression of secular cosmology, a political grammar of the conscious and unconscious."<sup>2</sup> Obfuscation and subtle disinformation were, as C. S. L. Davies argues, the more significant

means of propaganda during Henry VII's reign.<sup>3</sup>

Medieval historiography was often taken as truth by a contemporary audience, as the historian, according to Gervase of Canterbury (c.1141–c.1210), should "instruct truthfully" (*veraciter edocere*).<sup>4</sup> There is a long tradition of writing and disseminating history on the British Isles, secular and religious, British, Welsh, and English history, royal, noble, and national history. Myth, hagiography, and prophecy were woven together with intentions of shaping history into a contemporary sentiment, justifying claims of ownership, and/or justifying going to war to claim said ownership, legitimising rights, to land, titles, and the throne. Histories "incorporated myth and legend in an effort to trace back the glorious ancestors of the various nations."<sup>5</sup> Chronicles should, thus, ideally depict history as truth and show who had the most right to power. But, when the truth is a lie, or based on lies, when the proposed truth is not sufficient, lies become the preferred truth, the version presented by those with power. The image of a preferred truth becomes true when the stories and images presented fit better than the proposed truth of the opposing side.

The Battle of Stoke Field in 1487 between Yorkist and Tudor forces made it clear that the Wars of the Roses did not end at Bosworth in 1485, the resistance towards the Tudor King Henry VII (1457–1509) persisted. The civil unrest, what Michael Hicks calls "The Third War" (1485–1525), continued with the four main contenders to the throne, Lambert Simnel, Perkin Warbeck, Richard and Edmund de la Pole.<sup>6</sup> After the death of King Richard III's son, Edward, Prince of Wales, Richard III's nephew, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln (1460–1487), was the next Yorkist in line to the throne, because of

the king's dwindling close royal family.<sup>7</sup> A common feature of the pretenders was the claim of a closer blood relationship to the Plantagenet dynasty than that of the Tudors, drawing deeper and longer family lines, national history, and myth.

Even though not many genealogy rolls from Henry VII's reign exists, they were very popular with Edward IV (1442–1483),<sup>8</sup> and later Tudor monarchs.<sup>9</sup> The few examples in which he features are interesting because of the way they either portray a version of history aligned with the historical view as seen from a Yorkist perspective, or they show how one version of history writing could be appropriated and turned to propagate an opposite version as preferred truth. They illustrate the seemingly changing nature of dynastic visual rhetoric and exemplify how politically motivated genealogies and chronicles presented the truth as something plastic and capable of containing opposing views, of agitation and integration, disruption, and continuation. My approach focuses on the visual aspect of genealogical history writing, and images' ability to create "knowledge" – that is, the productivity of images.

The way in which two sides of the same story was presented in these two rolls shows the visual and historiographical rhetoric of the factions in a war of royal legitimation. Central to my line of enquiry lies Jacques Ellul's two approaches to propaganda: *agitation* and *integration*.<sup>10</sup> The field of medieval royal communication has evolved since Ellul and the 1970s, especially the conceptual understanding and use of medieval propaganda. Taithe and Thornton criticise Ellul's focus on propaganda's effectiveness dependent on mass production and technological advancement, neglecting pre-modern use of

the term.<sup>11</sup> Despite more recent propaganda studies, Ellul's concepts are still useful. Sarah Gaunt claims these concepts make it possible to discuss and understand propaganda in opposing factions in late medieval England without too much of prejudice – and modern use of state driven propaganda.<sup>12</sup> The real paradox about propaganda, Taithe and Thornton reason: "most readers will assume that it is largely composed of lies and deceits and that propagandists are ultimately manipulators and corrupt," and claim that propaganda is not evil, and can be both "conscious trait and an unconscious, instinctive, reinforcement of self-identity and the promotion of a form of knowledge held as truth."<sup>13</sup> Within the two genealogical rolls discussed in this article, I trace the way Henry VII was portrayed as part of both sides' act of dynastic legitimation, posing questions of preferred truth and versions of history. The visual propaganda adapted by the two parts in the rolls are not necessarily evil but oppositional in their attempt to establish and claim royal and national identity, by means of versions of history, genealogy, and divine right. The thin line between politics, genealogical chronology, and religious belief is what strengthen and make possible either the emphasis on divine right or the more secular focus on royal bloodlines. Michael Hicks describes the aspects of divine kingship, absolute loyalty, and social hierarchies as central to medieval society.<sup>14</sup> A main issue in this article is the use of similar and associated images appropriated by opposing sides to claim the same right, it is the visual migration between the sacred and secular which depend on, create, and emphasises collective memory and social belonging in interaction with chronicle rolls as part of royal legitimation.

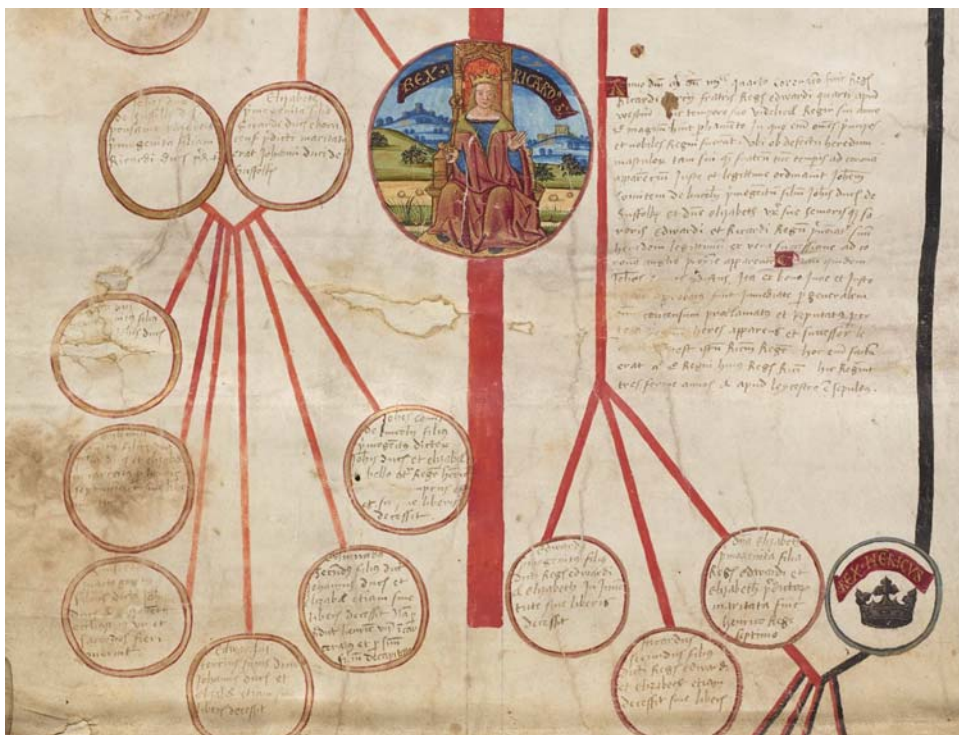


Fig. 1. Manchester, John Rylands Library, Latin MS 113, f.12 detail Richard III and Henry VII.

### Opposition and agitation

The Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Latin 113 (Fig. 1), is named after the Earl of Lincoln, John de la Pole (1460–1487), nephew to Richard III (1452–1485) by his sister Elizabeth, Duchess of Suffolk (1444–1503).<sup>15</sup> The vellum roll measures 14 inches (35.56 cm) in width and 20 feet 14 inches (6.13 m) in length, comprising of eleven membranes. M.R. James suggests the roll was made in Rouen and dates it vaguely to “after 1485” based on palaeographical and stylistic details, comparing the medallions to similar contemporary pictures from contemporary Rouen.<sup>16</sup> James does not examine the contextual parts of the manuscript, such as the inclusion of Queen Elizabeth and

Henry’s four children represented with red and black lines, though without their names attached. Parts of the roll may be said to be made before 1485, but with significant additions after the succession of Henry. Because of the four black and red lines drawn from Elizabeth and Henry, possibly signifying their first four children, the additions must be made after the birth of Arthur, Margaret, Henry, and Mary between 1486 and 1496, but before Edmund in 1499. It should be noted that these four have both black and red lines, suggesting, at least in part, the acceptance of a Yorkist heritage through Elizabeth. The genealogy follows the royal line of Richard, shown in the middle medallion on the last membrane, back to the

mythical reign of Brutus, the founder of Britain, in a central broad red line accompanied with a Latin chronicle. The roll shows the line of English kings as seen from a Yorkist point of view, from Richard III back through various historical, legendary, and mythical kings and queens of England. The historical and mythical line establishes a visual connection between king and country. The line functions as a Yorkist claim of legitimation: it traces the kings of Britain interspersed with medallions depicting the kings' portraits. The narrative places the Yorkist kings in the same visual and historical continuity to the legendary and mythical kings. Since the main line follows the Yorkist blood line rather than royal succession after Edward III, the roll gives more weight to the Yorkist family claim, further adding to the proposed Lancastrian usurpation. The Tudor children's combined red and black lines partially acknowledge their Yorkist and royal legitimacy, but as the de la Poles continued to oppose Henry VII and later Henry VIII claim, the feud was not laid to rest until much later.

The Wars of the Roses is clearly marked by lines diverging after the reign of Edward III (1312–1377) in 1377. The visually prominent red main line with its royal medallions emphasises the Yorkist line as stronger and more legitimate than the Lancastrian. It follows Edward's second son Lionel, Duke of Clarence (1338–1368), rather than his third, John of Gaunt. The illuminated royal medallions are replaced after Edward III with the introduction of the Lancastrian kings. The kings of Lancastrian and Tudor descent have smaller medallions with just a crown to show their regal status accompanying their name. Lancastrians are represented only by an encircled crown; this denotes their lesser

royal status and marks them as pretenders. They are not part of the dynastic and mythical continuation, but usurpers, though in possession of the crown, they have no hereditary right. From Edward IV the illuminated medallions are reintroduced, until the coming of Henry Tudor, who, like the Lancastrian kings, is depicted with a simple banner and a crown, aside from the main royal line. The Tudors are depicted as outsiders and a threat to the proper royal line, not part of the divine line of kings, meddling in God's order. The Tudor royal line and claim had to be dismissed and proven false. A significant visual aspect of this roll concerning the succeeding royal line of Richard is the insertion of Henry VII and the Tudor line far on the right margin and depicted only with a black crown as his royal status. The Lancastrian line is drawn in a thin yellow line on the right side of the page, while the non-royal Yorkist descendants are drawn with the same red colour as the main to the left of the page, albeit far closer to the royal line, to signify the importance of their rightful descent. It is only the most recent usurper to the throne, Henry Tudor, whose line is drawn to the far right of the page in black. The Tudor line is remarkably more visually removed from the central royal line than their Yorkist and Lancastrian counterparts, indicating a stronger dismissal of their royal claim. This simplified rhetorical element exemplifies the roll's opposing view to Tudor royal succession.

Henry Tudor's line is traced back to his maternal grandfather Owen Tudor (1400–1461), husband to the widowed Catherine of Valois (1401–1437), married to Henry V (1386–1422) with comments on Owen's position and origin: "servant" (Fig. 2). The representation of Owain's low social position





Fig. 2. Manchester, John Rydlands Library, Latin MS 113, f.10 detail Owain Tudor.

had been known to the public through “Giles Chronicle” from 1450s, and both Caxton’s and Wynkyn’s printed *Chronicle of England* in 1482 and 1495,<sup>17</sup> and used by Richard III and Perkin Warbeck.<sup>18</sup> Part of Henry VII’s obfuscation of history was the aversion of pointing to his grandfather’s origin, the visible presence and description of Owen Tudor as “servant” is thus a bold statement of the lack of Tudor legitimation in the eyes of Yorkist supporters. The bold black line, almost at the outer margins of the roll, is the undeniable reality of a new oppositional king. There is no textual recognition of the marriage between Elizabeth of York and Henry, the text describes only Elizabeth as daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville in the seventh year of their reign (1466).

In opposition to the marginalised Tudor line, the unfinished line from Richard III shows the intended Yorkist continuation, the legitimate, royal line with the de la Poles. Although they were never officially appointed Richard’s heirs, the genealogy shows a political version of the truth, a

history that positions the royal claim within a dynastic identity. Lancastrians and Tudors become the opposing other to the Yorkist claim, a false alternate history. The de la Pole family did not just present their version of history, they tried to act it out on several occasions after the Battle of Bosworth.<sup>19</sup> In 1487, when Lambert Simnel was presented as Edward VI (1477–1525/1535), John, Earl of Lincoln, was one of his main backers,<sup>20</sup> supported by Duchess Margaret of Burgundy, sister to Edward IV and Richard III.<sup>21</sup> The Earl died in the ensuing Battle of Stoke in 1487.<sup>22</sup> Years later, Henry blamed Margaret for the Simnel affair.<sup>23</sup> After the Earl of Lincoln’s death at the battle of Stoke, Edmund de la Pole (1471–1513), became next in line to inherit the title Duke of Suffolk, and the Yorkist heir to the throne. With the death of his father, the Duke of Suffolk, in 1492 he was forced to revert the dukedom to an earldom, and Henry VII charged him with £5000 for the privilege.<sup>24</sup>

Edmund succeeded two other claimants to the throne. The pretender Perkin Warbeck,

claiming to be Edward IV's youngest son, Richard of Shrewsbury, Duke of York & Norfolk,<sup>25</sup> and Edward, 17th Earl of Warwick son the Edward IV's younger brother George, Duke of Clarence.<sup>26</sup> Both were finally executed in 1499. For a while there was peace between Henry VII and the de la Poles, but the king's suspicions resulted in the Earl's flight abroad in 1499, yet again making an enemy of the de la Pole family.<sup>27</sup> Edmund was later executed by Henry VIII in 1513.<sup>28</sup> The last de La Pole pretender to the throne was John and Edmund's younger brother Richard, nicknamed "The White Rose" (1480–1525). He was proclaimed King of England by the French King Louis in 1513 and planned an invasion of England with Francis I. Richard died fighting with Francis in the battle of Pavia in 1525.<sup>29</sup>

Combined with the dismissal of Henry's royal pedigree, depicted as the sharp and invasive black genealogical line and simplified iconography, the roll sends a visual message of political rebellion against the Tudor dynasty. Its visual rhetoric suggests the Tudor's bloody usurpation by force, and the Lincoln genealogy as a symbol of royal hereditary rights. The Tudor claim to the throne was by treasonous bloodshed and battle rather than divine right by proper consanguinity.

### **Foreign or domestic monster**

Depicting the opposition as usurpers and foreign invaders was already present in historiographic chronicle rolls and collective memory, the MS Latin 113, thus, follows in a long and political visual historiographic tradition. The way Henry VII and his lineage is represented as tainted, to the pure and proper Yorkist and Plantagenet line closely resembles the visual propaganda used by

both Lancastrian and Yorkist factions in the previous generations. The agitation rhetoric plays on pathos, utilises collective sentiment and recent memory to create group belonging and a form of national identity, and the opposition as "the other." The dismissal and layout marginalisation of the black Tudor line continues the foreign Lancastrian usurpers and conquerors, a sentiment highlighted by Henry's French and Scottish forces Henry in 1485.<sup>30</sup> The oppositional rhetoric, both Lancastrian and Tudor, is based on the notion of "the other," not just a villainous king, the rhetoric aligns Lancaster, and later Tudor, with hostile foreign powers which threatens a national identity. The rhetorical and political chronicle rolls depend on an association to familiar royal history, a collective memory and national myth, with royal legitimacy connected to the rightful king.

The iconography visually migrated between political and cultural periods and was reused as new and oppositional with a generation in-between. Paul Strohm comments on the use and reuse of texts, though applicable to iconography: "remembering that the text has and inside and an outside," he posits that "a text's repetition in new contexts, and in relation to new programs or possibilities of understanding, transgresses all attempts to fix meaning within a particular and limited program of truth."<sup>31</sup> Edward IV's earlier genealogies made it abundantly clear, the Lancastrians were "no more than the last in a series of foreign invasions, including the Norman Conquest and the Saxon invasions, which deprived the British people of their rightful king and name."<sup>32</sup> This rhetorical historiography turned Henry VI's visual chronology and genealogies on its head. Public memory and sentiment turned Lancastrian French lineage and king into an enemy of the people.<sup>33</sup> The



rhetoric of foreign invasion was appropriated to stir up agitation among the commoners, sometimes directed to particular groups, which we can reconstruct from what was written.<sup>34</sup> General literacy was not a prerequisite for mass distribution, as people did not need to read to get access to slander and proclamations.<sup>35</sup> The political slander and rumours during the Wars of the Roses highlights the spread of false or tainted proclamations of legitimation to the public. From the *Paston Letters*, though the Pastons were not passive observers in the conflict, we read a letter from Richard III to the people written in 1483, to be read by the sheriff in the town square.<sup>36</sup> Richard attacks Henry's hereditary line, "descended of bastard blood both of father's side and of mother's side."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Richard labels the Tudors as "rebels and traitors," and Henry's and Jasper Tudor's supporters are known as "open murderers, adulterers, and extortioners, contrary to the pleasure of God."<sup>38</sup>

The de la Poles' depiction in roll display a Yorkist genealogical history proclaims the preferred version of history from their side of the story. Their descent from Yorkist line depicts both Lancastrian and Tudor as illegitimate and unworthy of the throne, descendants of mere servants and villainous usurpers.

Edward IV adopted the genealogies from Henry VI's persuasive effort in France but turned the tables. Henry's claim to the French throne became Lancastrian foreign blood. Edward's use of agitation propaganda is perhaps best summarised in Henry VI as a French foreigner, and with the recently concluded hundred-year war between England and France fresh in mind, the Lancastrian claim to the French and English throne paints them as invaders.<sup>39</sup> One image shows

the three suns shine through tree crowns, as a prophesy of Edward's future dominion over the three kingdoms. The Lancastrian false claim to the throne is depicted in the roll with Henry Bolingbroke, later Henry IV (1367–1413) as usurper, exposed as a violent murderer. Henry IV forcibly removes Richard II from the genealogical tree and severs the king's branch with his sword. This is from Edward's illustrated chronicle roll, *Illustrated Life of Edward IV*, additionally titled *Typological life and genealogy of Edward IV* (London, British Library, MS Harley 7353, Fig. 3).<sup>40</sup> This roll was probably commissioned by Edward to celebrate his victory over Henry VI at Mortimer's Cross in 1461. Owen Tudor, grandfather to the future king Henry VII, led the opposing forces. It was in this battle Edward saw his royal badge to be, the three suns, "Three glorious suns, each one a perfect sun" (3 *Henry VI*, II.i.26), the sun in splendour.<sup>41</sup> Edward IV also used familiar histories and mythical stories to create an image of a justified usurpation. The Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 623,<sup>42</sup> (63/71, r & v), shows how Edward used Arthurian myth and symbolism to claim descent from Brutus and the native red dragon, *Rubeu[s] Draco*, while Henry VI lineage is the white invading Saxon *Albus Draco*.

Collective memory functions when people remember and associates the civil war with the recently French war and draws political and cultural similarities between new factions. This makes it possible for Edward IV to utilise fear and anger against the Lancastrians, as the foreign enemy, in the same way the de la Poles' oppositional rhetoric agitates their supporters in their rebellion against the Tudors a generation later. Henry's French and Scottish invasion force



**Fig. 3. London, British Library, Harley MS 7353 f 1r, detail prophecy of Edward IV. © British Library Board before shelfmark "Harley MS".**

is exactly what the de la Pole genealogy needs to cast Henry VII as a false claimant, and national enemy. They agitate fellow Yorkist and northern nobility and gentry against the Tudor dynasty, their blood is purer and older than the usurping foreigners, their version of history.

### Continuation and integration

The London, British Library, MS King's 395, genealogy (Fig. 4) is a bound parchment roll-codex,<sup>43</sup> comprising of 34 folios, measuring 17 by 12 inches (43.5 × 31.0 cm), made in England.<sup>44</sup> The manuscript was part of King George III's library, which might suggest it was made for the royal family rather than a noble family. The roll contains the long chronicle version, curved lines connect Adam and Eve to Henry VII (f.33), Henry

VIII (f.33), and Edward VI (f.34). The chronicle text ends with Richard III's death and burial. The pictorial genealogy is represented as medallions, divided in the royal houses of Lancaster, York, and Tudor. The medallions contain proportionally similar sized royal portrait, accompanied with royal arms, and follow a bold gold-filled line of royal succession in the centre. The royal line of Henry's is shown on the right, descended from John of Gaunt through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, and his father Edmund Tudor.

The precise date of the roll is debated, the British Library dates this manuscript to c. 1511 with additions before 1553, in the reign of Henry VIII, but Anglo<sup>45</sup> and Carlson<sup>46</sup> dates the manuscript contemporary with Henry VII's reign. With a detailed iconographic reading of the last three pages, one could argue the changes were made over a

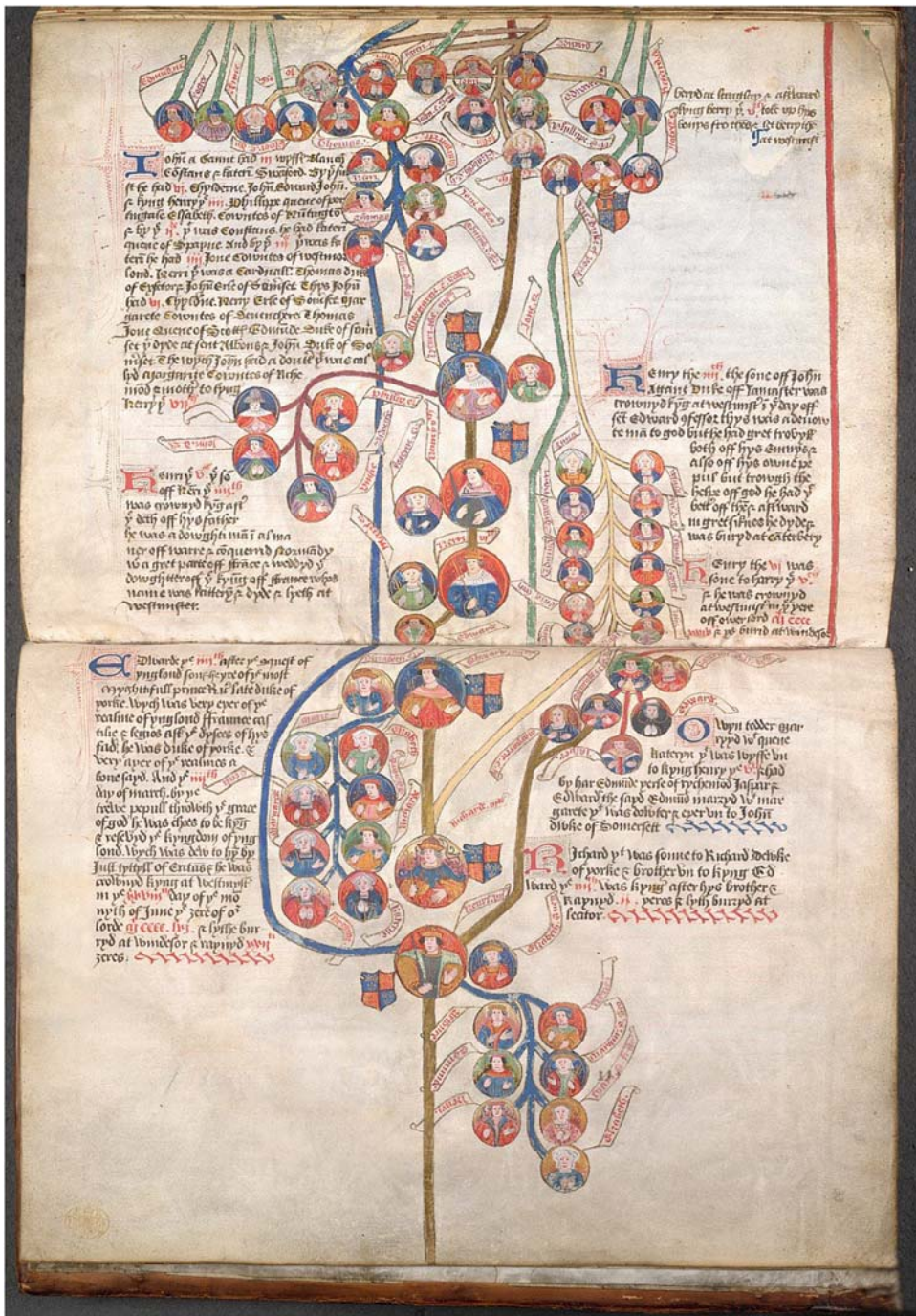


Fig. 4. London, British Library, MS King's 395, ff. 32v-33. © British Library Board "MS King's".



longer period.<sup>47</sup> I would propose the manuscript underwent several additions, spread over a period from 1503 to 1553, with at least three different hands involved.

There are iconographical similarities between Henry VIII, Katherine of Aragon, and their children, and the earlier medallions in the previous folios, but there are stylistic differences indicating a gap in time between f.33 and f.34. Apart from typographical differences in the text above the portraits, the genealogical lines change from organic into straight lines from f.33. Henry VIII's five last wives are stylistically unlike previous portraits. The portraits have transformed, the figures are smaller, face inward, and a modern and angular English black and white gable hood rather than the earlier, all white hood headdress of the women earlier in the roll, resembling the simple butterfly headdress of the 1490s.<sup>48</sup> A possible delineation would be that the manuscript was initiated after 1503 during Henry VII's reign, indicated by the number of children present, and continued in a similar style, but a different hand between 1511 and 1516. A more markedly change in style and hand happened after 1543, seen in the clear stylistic differences. The most obvious change of scribes is with Edward VI (f.34r), as the final hand, and different in style from the rest of the portraits, before 1553 and the death of Edward VI, as he is depicted differently from all the rest on a separate folio. Tudor monarchs kept this type of diagrammatic continuation with the succession of a new monarch, as pointed out by Sarah Trivison with reference to the London, British Library, King's MS 395.<sup>49</sup>

The ancient royal lines stretch from mythical kings to Plantagenet and Tudor, these dynastic motifs became part of the effort to fight the Yorkist pretenders.<sup>50</sup> Tudor

genealogical use of myth and history appropriate similar visual rhetoric as the widely known and distributed dynastic lines, were the de la Pole roll's propose disruption and emphasises usurpation, the Tudor roll conveys an integrated narrative. The Tudor roll uses the same visual and rhetorical exempla as the Lincoln roll, where it adopts national history, myth, and identity as claims for royal rights. The Tudor genealogical historiography plays on the Plantagenet and Lancastrian dynasty, their legitimation delineates from the same ancient lines as the de la Poles continues and integrates rather than agitates and opposes the new reality.

The Yorkist Edward IV descended via his father Richard of York (1411–1460) from Edward III's second son Lionel Duke of Clarence (1338–1368), his daughter Philippa (1355–1382), and her daughter by Roger Mortimer (1374–1398) Anne de Mortimer (1388–1411). Edward traced his lines back to Cadwaladr and, in extension King Arthur, he incorporated Arthurian and mythical histories from Geoffrey of Monmouth in his descent from Welsh princes, Cadwaladr and Brutus by the Mortimer family. Several Yorkist genealogies point to the Mortimer line and the marriage between Ralph de Mortimer (1198–1246) and Gwladys Duy (d.1251), daughter of Llywelyn the Great (1173–1240). Edward IV legitimised his Welsh lineage back to Arthur and Brutus, by this claiming that he must be the rightful heir of the throne of Britain, and the returned saviour.<sup>51</sup> Edward appropriated the Arthurian lineage and prophesy at the start of his reign, such as in the astrological chronicle, Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley MS. 623, in which he aligns himself with the Pendragons as the red dragon and casts the Lancastrians as the foreign white dragon (fol o63r).

Henry VII appropriated Plantagenet manuscripts and buildings and altered them to fit a Tudor version of history. Henry's arras maker, the tapisser Cornelius van de Strete was employed to weave red roses and portcullises into borders of old tapestries.<sup>52</sup> Yorkist manuscripts were transformed in the same fashion, integrated into a Tudor heritage, first by the royal librarian Quentin Poulet. Perhaps the most prominent was the addition of red roses, dragon, and greyhound heraldry to London, British Library, Royal 16 F. ii. This manuscript contains, among other the love poems of Charles d'Orleans (1r–136v), a manual on princely education (210v–248v) originally intended for Edward IV, presented to Prince Arthur Tudor in 1501 on his marriage, it shows the Tudor royal lines continue seamlessly converted from Yorkist lines.<sup>53</sup>

Arthurian iconography and genealogical importance were significant parts of Edward IV's visual rhetoric, Henry VII's continual re-use of the same motifs mimicked Edward's. In 1490, Henry commissioned the genealogy, London, British Library, Royal MS 18 A LXXV, it traces his grandfather, Owain Tudor descending from Brutus. He engaged the historian Bernard André,<sup>54</sup> whose *Historia*, outlines Henry's lineage on his father's side back to Cadwaladr.<sup>55</sup> The commonplace Arthurian tradition also incorporated a link between past and present kings, as Holladay observes: "genealogical imagery portrays continuity by articulating the elements connecting the distant past to the present."<sup>56</sup> Holladay points out that genealogical image measures its strength from the length of the lines back and potentially forwards in time, they thus "imply continuity in to the present and the possibility to continue in the same fashion, without interruption, linearly and indefinitely."<sup>57</sup>

The London, British Library, MS King's 395 displays the royal position of the Tudor dynasty as a continuation of the Plantagenet dynasty, by their royal descent from Edward III by both Lionel, Duke of Clarence, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster; and mythical descent from Cadwaladr, the last Prince of Wales. This last claim of descent from Welsh princes, back to Cadwaladr, Brutus, and Trojan founders of Britain,<sup>58</sup> was emphasised as a dual line through the Plantagenet and drawn in lines from Henry VII's grandfather, Owain Tudor's ancient family lines to Llewelin ap Griffith. This argument went straight to the core of the oppositional de la Pole's antagonism towards Owain Tudor. As I have argued above, and has been pointed out by Anglo, the use of Arthurian iconography and genealogy was not an innovative use of British history by the Tudors.<sup>59</sup> It emphasises a rhetoric of continuation and Ellul's type of integration propaganda, positioning the Tudor dynasty in line with the Plantagenet instead of usurpers. Henry VII did what many had done before him when he appropriated the red dragon as his own symbol of Welsh lineage descending from the Tudor line back to Cadwaladr.<sup>60</sup> The dragon image became a symbol of royal power and Welsh heritage, but also as a continuation of the rightful and prophesied rulers of Britain from Welsh and English myth and historiography.

The Tudor roll follows in Edward IV's tradition of the long English genealogy, comparable to the long Latin, significantly Philadelphia, Penn University Library, MS Roll 1066,<sup>61</sup> with its lineages back to biblical times.<sup>62</sup> Edward IV's explicit use of both Christ's and Brutus's genealogies becomes a statement of divine legitimacy, on the reverse of where Poitiers's genealogy of Christ, pairs Christ's lineage with that of

Edward's. The line from David to Jesus is mirrored in the line from Brutus to Edward.<sup>63</sup> The biblical source material and association are obvious, and the genealogical tree motif was present in several churches and manuscripts throughout the middle ages.<sup>64</sup> Edward's Coronation roll from 1461, Philadelphia, Free Library of Philadelphia, Lewis E 201, has a similar allusion to biblical chronology.<sup>65</sup> Here the long Latin lines trace the royal succession and legitimation from Edward, back through to King Arthur and Brutus, to Adam and God. The use of the long Latin genealogy in MS King's 395 includes the biblical genealogy and references to Christ and places the royal line of succession in the grand history of creation. The allusion to mythical and holy royals gives Edward IV and Henry VII an added divine claim to the throne. The inclusion of biblical genealogy alludes to the divinity of the sovereign and the rights bestowed upon the rightful ruler by God, as had been established through, among other, the belief in the true king's ability to heal the sick.<sup>66</sup> The genealogy of Peter of Poitiers's (1130–1215) *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi* exemplified the use of history and legend as means to teach the genealogy of Christ together with legendary genealogies of kings and nations.<sup>67</sup> By a visual migration, the iconography was reused but with an added political reference. Familiar to medieval viewers as the tree of Jesse motif, the biblical genealogy of Christ, from stained-glass windows, architecture, and the readings of Isaiah (11:1), Luke (3:23–38) and Matthew (1:11).<sup>68</sup> The double genealogy of Christ and British kings gives added claim to legitimacy and fulfils popular prophecies, that in times of strife proclaim that the true king and redeemer shall come forth.<sup>69</sup>

The Tudor roll relies on a similar and familiar visual rhetoric historiography and mythmaking, it argues for an integration type of propaganda as opposed to the agitating de la Pole roll. Continuation between time and groups relies on visual migration, the reuse of images to alter a symbol's use – in this context different political camps and a form of collective forgetting, is a prerequisite for a shared acceptance in the proposed truth.

### Integrating visually political rhetoric

A late medieval onlooker would recognise royal diagrammatic genealogies after centuries of exposure to secular and religious genealogies, applied in politics, religious didactics, and law.<sup>70</sup> Jonathan Hughes argues that the nail holes found on several contemporary genealogy rolls, he points to the aforementioned MS Lewis E 201 as an example, suggest they were hung on display.<sup>71</sup> Some of the chronicle rolls during the Wars of the Roses were displayed in places of worship and public places as part of royal propaganda, which made many of the otherwise exclusive imageries available to a broader public, albeit in a limited fashion. Some genealogies were even made into large posters, up to 12 metres in length, hung in great halls of nobility, in royal courts and grand cathedrals. As with the Duke of Bedford's commission for Henry VI in 1423, later made into the 4 feet long roll Oxford, Bodleian, MS Add E 7. It covers the history from William the Conqueror to Henry VI.<sup>72</sup> A later example from Ghent shows how these genealogical rolls were publicly displayed during wedding feasts. A contemporary example was when Charles the Bold married Margaret of York, sister to



Edward IV and Richard III, as his third wife in 1468.<sup>73</sup> He displayed a lavishly decorated heraldic version of his genealogy from 1465, University of Illinois, Newberry Library/UIUC MS 1,<sup>74</sup> as part of the inaugural ceremonies. It was meant to bolster his legitimacy and power by showing off his ancestral arms with a lineage back to a mythical heritage similar to his son-in-law Maximilian, the Habsburgs of the Holy Roman Empire, whom Margaret was close to after the death of Charles in 1477.<sup>75</sup>

While Ellul's term *propaganda*,<sup>76</sup> or perhaps the more neutral and contemporarily rhetorical *persuasio*, has moved from its religious origin and is closely associated with modern political regimes. The existence of propaganda has been discussed many times since Ellul within royal communication studies, Tatiana String outlines the Strong-Anglo debate, an all-or-nothing approach to royal propaganda in Henrician England, and argues with Scribner against dismissing the term "propaganda" "simply because the word did not exist for the period in question."<sup>77</sup> The historical approach to propaganda in late medieval Western Europe, as Taithe and Thornton argue: "allows an examination of the means of communication and persuasion in the political societies," as the need to transmit ideas and information with growing literacy.<sup>78</sup> More recently, Sarah Gaunt has argued for the usefulness of propaganda as a concept for forms of political communication in late medieval Britain with focus on visual propaganda from the Yorkist side.<sup>79</sup> The long-term visual rhetoric aimed at political persuasion allows for a discussion of early Tudor use of familiar and integrated Lancastrian and Yorkist propaganda combined with a dynastic and national identity, at the same time claim stability and continuity.

The rhetoric became one of assimilation and stability, the Tudor was founded as a recognisable structure of royal succession, complete with familiar historiography and collective memory of dynastic myth. The former dynasty's lines were aligned with the new, even though it meant to propose an alternate, but preferred, truth to royal legitimacy.

This rhetoric of rebellion and protest, what Ellul calls "agitation propaganda," is "explosive and works within or even creates a crisis situation."<sup>80</sup> Historical examples Ellul draws on are the Crusades and the French Reign of Terror. On the other side is the propaganda of integration, which seeks conformity, has a long term-goal and requires a more comprehensive and complex approach.<sup>81</sup> Ellul claims this latter type of propaganda did not exist before the twentieth century, and states that it "seeks to obtain stable behavior, to adapt the individual to his everyday life," and that the aim is "stabilizing the social body, at unifying and reinforcing it."<sup>82</sup> I would argue the way Edward IV and Henry VII use familiar visual narratives as political rhetoric, suggests a type of long-term intention of rhetorical integration to stabilise society. This type of propaganda appropriates the language of nostalgia, sentimentalism, as the purpose of propaganda, as with rhetoric, is to convince, it has to be viable and truthful "within its own remit."<sup>83</sup> The rhetoric aimed at unification of the new regime into a presumed dynastic continuation, to persuade the public the Tudors were natural and rightful rulers of the Plantagenet line. The dependency on collectivity makes the propaganda of integration similar to how collective memory is prerequisite to political use of historiography and genealogies, as dynastic myth is created from an illusion of continuity. Allusions to legends and

claimed royal lines depend on popular familiarity to function as political rhetoric. It should be clear from the examples above that what Ellul describes as propaganda of integration was part of the politics and visual rhetorical persuasion of legitimacy in late medieval England. Claiming the longer and deeper lines in dynastic history was utilised by both sides during the Wars of the Roses.

Both types of Ellul's propaganda express a claim to dynastic and royal legitimation, Rodney Barker describes this claim as fundamental: "What characterises government, [...], is not the possession of a quality defined as legitimacy, but the claiming, the activity of legitimation."<sup>84</sup> It is through the act of claiming a place in history, the place in the history of power, kings have positioned their mythic and divine right. The activity of legitimacy can thus be said to be "an observable activity in which governments characteristically engage, the making of claims."<sup>85</sup> This act of legitimation can be closely related to, and suggests a reason for, the widespread making and distribution of chronicles and genealogical rolls and tables by Yorkists and Lancastrians, but also by the Tudors and the numerous pretenders. To legitimate their claim for power, political origin myths and hereditary royalty became a way of fashion the right to power.

The intention of dynastic continuation of genealogical history uses collective memory to adapt and appropriate familiar heraldic and royal lines. On the other side is the preferred truth of the de la Poles. The roll presents Henry VII as an illegitimate king, black marginal lines visualise and oppose the Tudor regime, backed by a continuous flow of rumours and slanders which describe the usurpers, the illegitimate Lancastrians and Tudors. Colin Richmond suggests medieval

propaganda must be truth-bending to a degree, if not it would just be "the announcement of policy and its justification by way of information, which is not inaccurate although it may not be the whole story." In the representation of usurper monarchs during the Wars of the Roses there is always a form of lie in the rhetoric of the opposite side. Richmond proposes royal propaganda from the Wars of the Roses reflected contemporary political changes in the central government, more focused on how the population was informed than how they were governed. He describes Richard III as a modern propagandist out of necessity, "when versions of the truth could not be depended on in the endeavour to win support, lies were the only resort."<sup>86</sup> Though an established systematic and centralised propaganda effort is doubtful in a form recognisable to modern presumptions, the existence of opposing persuasive rhetoric was a major part of the Wars of the Roses.<sup>87</sup> In the discourse of late medieval politics, Hicks's commonplace exclamation best describes the use of genealogies as propaganda in the context of oppositional dynasties: "The best propaganda, however, is that which rings true to the audiences that it addresses."<sup>88</sup> It is here we see the function of the de la Pole genealogy as part of building support from within Yorkist families and supporters, who already were suspicious towards the new regime.

### **Historiography and truth bending**

Several factions of the Wars of the Roses utilised historiography and political origin myth to legitimise their claim for power and self-fashioning a national history with a dynastic right to power.<sup>89</sup> Gabrielle Spiegel explains

how the function of political genealogy is connected to a continuation myth:

Genealogy, even when largely mythical, asserts the temporal durability of a people. Because it considers rulers as the expression of social continuity, whose own unbroken descent implies the political continuity of those they rule, it establishes a temporal dimension for the consideration of politics.<sup>90</sup>

Allusions to historical lines and royal prophecies depended on people's belief in mythical lineage connected to a nation's history and belief in a truth in the past as national origin myths. This collective memory of proposed historical truth is prerequisite in building legitimacy on the return of a mythical ruler destined to conquer a foreign invader or usurper. When writing on the request of Ernald, abbot of Rievaulx, in 1198, William of Newburgh wrote the *The History of English Affairs*, in his introduction he reviews Geoffrey of Monmouth's earlier *History of the Kings of Britain* (C. 1136). Newburgh goes so far as to call Monmouth's history "a laughable web of fiction," commenting on Monmouth's inclusion of Merlin's prophecies, that "by translating them into Latin he has published them as though they were authentic prophecies resting on unshakable truth."<sup>91</sup> Though the criticism of Monmouth's mythical historiography does not go well with Newburgh's version of history, it was Monmouth's version of history which became the preferred truth of British national myth throughout the middle ages in an effort of regal legitimation and national mythmaking.

The use of visual rhetoric becomes the means of persuasion to appropriate opposing sides of the same story to opposite claims. The

notion of an agreed history and preferred truth lies in the perception of the intended audience on the one hand, and the use of retrospective historiography, either as visual rhetoric, slander, myth, or propaganda on the other. It is a form of shared history made believable to a broader collective as true history. The way people remember stories of power as collected memory, either as factions in a war, or as an imagined society at large, can greatly change the way in which political and mythical history is preserved and presented at different points in time and place, used to agitate or integrate a belief in power. Familiarity, remembering and forgetting as part of a collective memory and are thus instrumental in forming rhetorical exempla and images as creating knowledge of an ideal, embodying history with its dynastic and political implications of government and royal rights.

It is the oppositional approach to history which becomes the subject of political propaganda and visual rhetoric, royal and noble political communication present the same story from completely opposite sides and use the same history and images to propagate opposite truths. Jan Assmann's cultural memory concept integrates the use and reusability of texts, images, and rituals which are "specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image."<sup>92</sup> Lancastrian and Yorkist rulers made use of a multitude of politically motivated rhetorical devices to establish and hold a grip on royal power. A visual rhetoric represented kings on both sides Henry IV to Edward IV, and Henry VII as usurpers, and instilled in the public kings as either justified heroes, warrior kings, or saintlike. Issues of

succession were essential for maintaining order and legitimacy in the bastard feudal system of the Middle Ages, genealogies together with historiography incorporated familiar myths and legends, and dynastic continuity. The rhetoric of power became part of a larger discussion of political authority and late medieval popular sentiment, rulers and national myth trace back to great and glorious ancestors from across the nations.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

There are opposite golden ancestral lines, each to their own preferred truth, Yorkist and Lancastrian, Tudor and de la Pole way. It is in the way they represent an idea, or an ideal, the interaction with and agency of these images they become part of a collective memory, a mythmaking of a utopian figure of power and lineage. Given their place in the Wars of the Roses and their part in forming a state narrative, their use of familiar motifs of power and identity play on the role myth has in forming a history and a national collective. The visual propaganda in the chronicle rolls discussed here plays on myth and history to create a shared collective belonging and a sense of agreed history or preferred truth, but to opposite factions.

The specific use of layout and colours, I would argue, based on the two genealogical rolls, was part of the visual rhetoric of persuasion and political historiography. The hereditary lines in gold and bright blue trace royal lineage from history, to myth, to the divine, and create an idea of national and dynastic continuation. But the harsh Tudor lines in black, removed from the stem of a preferred royal myth and legitimation profess a stark contrast and an opposition to the new dynasty that mark Lancastrians and Tudors

as violent usurpers and foreign others. These lines play a role in the mythmaking of political history, alluding to legendary, heroic, and saintly kings, and the myth of a country, to gather allies and take the throne by force.

Visual migration is the central function for the reuse of textual and visual narratives and iconography, for an image to be used either as oppositional agitation or integrated continuation it needs to be recognisably remembered and transferrable. In order to reuse images of power and allusions of dynastic myth, visual migration depends on collective memory to form renewed claims of dynastic legitimation. Memory is a prerequisite for genealogies and historiography to be used forcefully political and as part of legitimation propaganda. The familiar allusions to former Plantagenet rule made it possible for the early Tudor regime to express a natural continuation of royal and dynastic succession by adapting and appropriating a visual and conceptual likeness. Nor the visual rhetoric or general politics changed radically, but rather instilled a notion of subtle evolution and integration, it rewrites and adapts iconic myth and visual historiography, depended on long traditions of powerful royal presence verging on politics, religion, and mythical history.

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## Summary

How was Henry VII Tudor and his genealogical lines depicted in contemporary chronicle rolls? What determines the underlying functions realising the changing oppositional arguments in visual rhetoric? Does visual migration of familiar iconography based on collective memory make it possible to use the same images to propagate two opposite truths? In this article I examine two genealogical chronicle rolls on opposite sides in the Wars of the Roses’ later stages. The Plantagenet, Yorkist, and Tudor use of visual historiography was as much a means of political rhetoric as mythmaking and legend, to become part of the national identity and legitimate their claim to the throne. Given their place in the Wars of the Roses and their part in the formation of a state narrative, their use of familiar motifs of power and identity plays on the role myth has in the formation of history and national collective. The visual propaganda in the chronicle rolls plays on myth and history to create a shared collective belonging and a sense of agreed history or preferred truth.

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