

**Saviourhood, Liberation, and Unity in the Royal Image of King Henry VII
of England**

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or purpose.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources have been acknowledged.

No generative AI was used during my research or in the writing of this thesis.

Reilly Antonia O'Hagan

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Abstract

When Henry Tudor seized the throne of England in August 1485, becoming King Henry VII of England (r.1485-1509), he portrayed himself not as a usurper or rival, but as a saviour. According to Henry, he claimed the throne to free England from tyranny, and to unite the kingdom under the rule of a new, just king – himself. Throughout Henry's nearly two-year campaign for the throne and later as king, Henry regularly highlighted the stark differences between himself and his predecessor Richard III, portraying himself as the antithesis to Richard's villainy, and as the figure who would unite England by ending the civil conflict later known as the Wars of the Roses. Henry maintained that his purpose in seeking the throne was neither for greed nor personal glory; rather, he asserted his claim in the name of saviourhood. The idea of saviourhood played a crucial role in the creation of Henry's royal image, and was expressed by Henry via two main characterisations: that of himself as a liberator, and of himself as a unifier.

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Abbreviations

C.P.R. Calendar of the Patent Rolls of Henry VII, I, A.D. 1485-1494; II, 1494-1509.

Introduction

In the winter of 1484, Henry, the Earl of Richmond, composed a letter. He wrote not from his homeland of Wales, nor from England, where great efforts had been made by the late King Edward IV and his successor King Richard III to retrieve (or really, to capture) him from his current location. Instead, Henry penned his letter from exile in France. The letter Henry drafted was no ordinary one; if its contents were well-received, it could not only mark the beginning of a new life for Henry, and an end to his fourteen years of exile across the Channel, but also the start of a political coup that would upend centuries of Plantagenet rule in England. In his letter, Henry wrote of his rightful claim, his due inheritance, and, importantly, of his intention to save England from the regime of a tyrannous ruler. These were not small claims, and the intention behind the letter was no small feat: in writing it, Henry was, for the first time, asserting his claim to the throne of England. At the end of his letter, Henry added his signature – not his name, not his title of Earl of Richmond, but his initial: a single H. In other words, not the signature of a minor noble, but the signature of a king. Less than a year later, in the late summer of 1485, Henry had achieved his goal; he had slain English King Richard III in battle, freeing England from the rule of a “homicide and unnaturall tyrant”.¹ Henry’s victory was not only a military success, but also a personal one that reinforced an idea of himself that he had been formulating for some time now. For, in his deposition of such a ruler, Henry, at least in his own mind, was no mere usurper. Rather, he was a liberator, a unifier, or in other words, a saviour.

¹ Open letter sent by Henry from exile to his allies in England. Date unknown, c. late 1484. In Caroline Halsted, *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester and King of England* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), 566.

King Henry VII of England (b.1457 – d.1509) remains an inscrutable monarch in British history. He seems to exist predominantly in the shadows, less known and understood than his Tudor descendants, and often overlooked within the broader confederation of English monarchs. He did not display the bombastic tyranny of his son Henry VIII; he did not cultivate a powerful image of divine and virginal authority like his granddaughter Elizabeth I; he lacks even a catchy or memorable epithet; he was not Bloody, nor a Longshanks, nor a Lackland.² An image of Henry VII can thus be difficult to conjure: who was the first Tudor king? And, perhaps more importantly and realistically, who did he want to be? How did he wish to be perceived? These are the questions this thesis seeks to answer. Of course, when Henry came to the throne on 22 August 1485, his marginal existence in the annals of Tudor and monarchic history could not, and perhaps would not, have been predicted. Henry, after all, arrived on the English throne in a truly dramatic fashion in many ways worthy of legend: born in Wales, and after having spent fourteen years in exile in Brittany due to his position as a potential rival claimant to the English throne, Henry launched an invasion of England that resulted in the deposition of King Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth, and the creation of a new royal dynasty.

When Henry led his army into England to seize the throne, it marked only the second time in his life that he had set foot on English soil. Apart from one visit to London as a child to meet his paternal half-uncle King Henry VI (r.1422-1461 and 1470-1471), Henry Tudor had spent most of his life outside of the country he would now be ruling from.³ Until he was fourteen, Henry lived in his birthplace of Wales – first under the care of his mother Margaret Beaufort and paternal uncle Jasper Tudor in Pembroke, and then, as the Wars of the Roses

² Mary I of England has often been referred to as ‘Bloody Mary’ on account of her supposedly excessive executions of Protestants; Edward I of England was over six feet tall, earning him the ‘Longshanks’ nickname; ‘Lackland’ (or ‘sans terre’) referred to the fact that upon his birth, the future King John was given no lands to inherit.

³ S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 14.

progressed and Edward IV took the throne, in the custody of Sir William Herbert and his family at Raglan on the Welsh March.⁴ Following Edward IV's return to the throne in 1471 after having been briefly deposed, Henry fled with Jasper into exile in Brittany, where he remained for the next fourteen years, before returning to depose Richard III in August 1485.⁵ Henry was thus an unlikely candidate for the throne. Had there been another male Lancastrian claimant with stronger ties, it is unlikely that Henry would have ended up as king at all, an insecurity which plagued Henry throughout his reign. Additionally, as Henry himself had witnessed firsthand, being king did not necessarily guarantee safety and security. The civil conflict that England had experienced over the previous thirty years, known as the Wars of the Roses, had proven that kings could and would be deposed. As such, how Henry presented himself was crucial. Henry's image and the way he represented himself needed to communicate a sense of strength and legitimacy, but also was designed to depict him as the antithesis to the largely unpopular Richard III. In the lead up to the Battle of Bosworth, then, and indeed later as king, Henry presented himself not simply as a rival or an alternative to Richard, but as something potentially more enduring: a saviour who would redeem England and Wales by ridding them each of tyrannical governance, who would end civil war by uniting the royal houses, and who would usher in a new dynasty representing peace, prosperity, and stability. I argue, therefore, that saviourhood formed a key component of Henry's image both before and after becoming king, demonstrated through two distinct but interconnected roles that Henry took on as king: that of liberator, and that of unifier. At its heart, this image of saviourhood was complex, and often contradictory, reflecting the nature of Henry himself. At once Henry's image conveyed both a sense of self-assuredness, stability, and legitimacy, as well a deep sense of anxiety and insecurity. The contradictory nature of

⁴ Chrimess, *Henry VII*, 15-16.

⁵ Chrimess, *Henry VII*, 17.

Henry's image both helped and hindered its effectiveness, resulting in an application of saviourhood that could often be, to put it colloquially, rather 'hit and miss'.

Henry's image of himself as a saviour was also all but complete by 1486 – he had slain the tyrant, united England (at least in theory) through his marriage to Elizabeth of York, and with the birth of his son Arthur, had an heir to continue on his legacy of saviourhood. By 1486 he had also established the imagery that would represent his saviourhood and define his dynasty, namely the red rose, the combined 'Tudor' rose, and the red or rouge dragon. What is notable about Henry's image however, aside from its initial innovation, is how little it develops after 1486. While of course the imagery of Henry's kingship required consistency and continuity, the practical application of Henry's image, and particularly his image of saviourhood stagnated somewhat after its initial implementation. During the remainder of the 1480s and throughout the 1490s, Henry's image did not undergo any significant developments or evolutions, with the imagery, colours, and symbolism that he had established at the start of his reign remaining the same. This decade and a half was by no means uneventful for Henry; he faced uprisings, such as the 1497 Cornish Rebellion, and was challenged by pretenders to the throne in 1486-1487, and again between 1491-1497. However, Henry did not alter his image, or increase the promotion of himself as a saviour during these periods. Part of the reason for this lack of change is, of course, related to consistency, and in many ways speaks to the efficiency with which Henry developed an identifiable image of himself and his new dynasty early-on. However, it also illustrates a key weakness of Henry's image of saviourhood, which is that it was very much designed to help put him on the throne, and to aid in the establishment of a dynasty. It was less applicable in the day-to-day administration of a kingdom, and was not particularly useful in dissuading rebellion against him. Despite its limited scope, Henry's saviourhood was applied in two ways that did extend beyond 1486. The first way was through Henry's son Arthur, who

represented the continuation of Henry's saviourhood, and the second through Henry's policies towards Wales in the final years of his reign. This thesis will explore where Henry's saviourhood can be found later in his reign, but will primarily focus on the image-building decisions that Henry made between 1483 and 1486.

Henry, it should be noted, did not explicitly refer to himself as a saviour; that is my word, though I do think it best describes the image-making and self-characterisation that Henry displayed during his reign. In the crafting of his image, Henry borrowed from a number of saviour traditions, sometimes simultaneously: the classical liberator from tyrannical rule, the returning hero, and the messianic redeemer. Though distinct in their designs, applications, and contexts, each of these traditions have in common the idea of a figure saving people from a situation which is negative or politically oppressive. I have therefore chosen 'saviourhood' to serve as an umbrella term for what Henry was communicating about himself through his image.

The concept of liberation or saviourhood, particularly from tyranny, is one that has existed for centuries, with origins dating back to the ancient world. Henry's conception and application of saviourhood takes inspiration, in part, from these classical ideas of tyranny and virtue. In particular, Greek, Roman, and Christian virtue ethics seem to have informed Henry's saviourhood, particularly with regards to his condemnation of rival Richard III. Within a framework of virtue ethics, the source of morality and moral judgement was the character or personal traits of an individual, with poor morality, especially in a leader, linked to poor character.⁶ As explored by historians Nikos Panou and Hester Schadee, from antiquity through to the Renaissance, 'the legitimacy and effectiveness of monarchical rule were

⁶ Nikos Panou and Hester Schadee, *Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2018), 6.

viewed as in large measure dependent on the moral rectitude of the ruler.⁷ A monarch's failure to base their rule in virtue and good governance could, therefore, greatly limit their legitimacy, and idea which Henry highlights through his representation of himself as a saviour.⁸ An integral part of Henry's image the designation of Richard III as a tyrant, evidenced by repeated assertions of Richard's unnaturalness and fundamentally bad character, criticisms which are grounded in an understanding of classical virtue ethics.

Henry's royal image also borrowed from characteristics belonging to two other 'saviour' traditions present within fifteenth century society: that of the Christ-like redeemer of Christian tradition, who offered salvation and love to a suffering people; and that of the returning or prophetic hero, found in Welsh bardic tradition and Arthurian literature, who would return to their homeland after a period of absence to free it from oppression and unite it under its true ruler (the hero). Henry interacted with these traditions through his positioning of himself as both rescuer and unifier, resulting in his adoption of a form of saviourhood that reflected both Christian and literary ideals.

To some extent, all medieval kings were saviours. As historian Jennifer Depold has shown, in late medieval English sermons preachers explored notions of perfect kingship, in which kings were 'represented as Christ and the ultimate saviour[s] of [their] people.'⁹ Medieval kings' wisdom and sovereignty was believed to derive from God's, by whom they were sent to rule, and notions of Christian kingly saviourhood can be observed in the English coronation oath, in which kings promised, among other things, protection of their people.¹⁰ Certainly, previous kings of England had been portrayed as saviours to an extent, or at least closely compared to Christ. Depold cites examples of Edward III (r. 1327 – 1377) and Henry

⁷ Panou and Schadee, *Evil Lords*, 7.

⁸ Panou and Schadee, *Evil Lords*, 8.

⁹ Jennifer Depold, "Christ as King and Kings as Christ," *Medieval Sermon Studies* 64, no.1 (August 2020): 23.

¹⁰ Depold, "Christ as King," 23.

V (r. 1413– 1422) being cast in the role of Christ in two separate ‘kingly Christ-knight’ sermons, which depicted Christ as a knight and king who fought to save his people.¹¹ In the contexts of Edward III and Henry V, saviourhood and their depictions as Christ stemmed from their willingness to protect their people in battle and to ultimately die for their people if required.¹² Throughout the Middle Ages, Christ, whether depicted as himself, as a knight, or as a king, served as a model for worldly behaviour and virtues.¹³ Henry VII’s own representation of himself as a saviour certainly borrows from this tradition of Christian saviourhood and redemption.

A tradition of heroes or saviours also existed in Welsh cultural history throughout the Middle Ages. In Wales, the redeemer-hero was a figure who never died but who would come to return their nation to its former state of glory, and has featured significantly in Welsh history and mythology since the sixth century.¹⁴ The redeemer would come either from sleep, concealment, from across the sea, or from another direction and was always a long-awaited figure who, through battle, would rid the land of the oppression it had long been suffering.¹⁵ Notably, the redeemer figure did not challenge rightful rulers, instead focussing their wrath on rulers who abused their power.¹⁶ Once the redeemer had freed their land and people, their rule typically led to a golden age of peace, prosperity and justice.¹⁷ As such, three main stages characterised the life of Welsh redeemer-heroes: the planning for battle, the battle itself, and the ruling of a kingdom at peace.¹⁸ Given these criteria, it is not difficult to see why Henry Tudor was often included in the category of Welsh redeemer-heroes. Indeed, Henry was one

¹¹ Depold, “Christ as King,” 22.

¹² Depold, “Christ as King,” 24.

¹³ Depold, “Christ as King,” 23.

¹⁴ Elissa R. Henkin, “Redeemers and Outlaws in Welsh Tradition,” *Southern Folklore* 53, no.3 (January 1996): 193.

¹⁵ Henkin, “Redeemers and Outlaws,” 193.

¹⁶ Henkin, “Redeemers and Outlaws,” 193.

¹⁷ Henkin, “Redeemers and Outlaws,” 193.

¹⁸ Elissa R. Henkin, “Three Forms of a Hero: Arthur, Owain Lawgoch, and Owain Glyndŵr,” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 15 (1995): 28.

of the major Welsh heroes of the ‘Sleeper in the Cave’ legend, in which eight redeemer-heroes are believed to be asleep in a cave until awoken at a point when Wales needs them; the other figures who share the cave with Henry are King Arthur, Owain Lawgoch, Owain Glyndŵr, Hiriell, Cynan, Owain, and Cadwaladr.¹⁹ In the lead up to the Battle of Bosworth, Welsh bards proclaimed Henry *y mab darogan*, the son of prophecy, who was returning to redeem his people, an idea that Henry also seems to have incorporated into his royal image.

However, Henry’s saviourhood, I argue, also arose out of his own, very specific, set of circumstances. While notions of saviourhood, particularly those related to Christ, were embodied within the principles and spectacles of medieval kingship, they were not wholly necessary for a king’s survival; prior to the Wars of the Roses, most (though not all) English kings had inherited their throne legitimately, rather than as usurpers. As such, a fervent depiction of themselves as a saviour was not needed to support or supplement their claim to the throne. For Henry, however, crafting an image of saviourhood offered him an additional means of gaining legitimacy and stability as king. Henry’s circumstances – his tenuous claim to the throne, his position on the periphery of the nobility, and his status as a usurper – meant that he could not simply rely upon his own legitimacy. He needed an additional claim to help justify his seizure of power. Richard III’s usurpation of the throne via the suspected murder of his own nephews had created an atmosphere of further suspicion and instability in the kingdom, which Henry was able to capitalise on. Richard’s usurpation, particularly egregious as it involved the murder of a nephew, and the broader uncertainty and violence caused by the Wars of the Roses allowed Henry to portray England as needing rescuing, and himself as the figure to do so. Henry’s image was thus as much born out of necessity and insecurity of position as it was ingenuity.

¹⁹ Henkin, “Three Forms of a Hero,” 23.

The work presented in this thesis owes much to the existing historiography on Henry, and will, hopefully, progress it further. Any discussion of Henry and his reign must include an acknowledgement of the work of one of his most prominent modern historians Stanley Bertrand Chrimes. Chrimes' 1972 biography of Henry remains one of the most authoritative interpretations of Henry's life, considering in detail the events, people, and administration that contributed to his reign, and providing an appraisal of his character. Chrimes examines the ways in which Henry established his new dynasty, ran his government, and undertook domestic and foreign policies and statecraft. Chrimes ultimately asserts that Henry was not a particularly original king; rather, he maintained institutions such as the King's Council, and looked to Yorkist precedents and indeed left-over Yorkist councillors to help determine his financial administration.²⁰ Chrimes' Henry is a builder and stabiliser who adapted the medieval foundations of English kingship for his own reign, qualities which Chrimes asserts actually made Henry one of England's strongest kings, and which were necessary in order to rebuild England in the aftermath of the Wars of the Roses.²¹ My own work expands upon Chrimes' argument for Henry as a stabiliser by demonstrating the connection between Henry's image and his need to foster a sense of political stability for England.

In addition to Chrimes, R.A. Griffiths' and R.S. Thomas' book *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, published in 1985 (with a new edition published in 2021) details Henry's ancestry with particular focus on the unlikely rise of the Tudors from the thirteenth century, and is one of the few works to examine Henry's years in exile in detail. Griffiths and Thomas' work explores Henry's relationship with the rulers of Brittany and France and the extent of his interaction with members of the English nobility prior to 1485, emphasising the diplomatic minefields, such as the struggle between England and France for control of

²⁰ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 120, 319, 322.

²¹ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 321-322.

Brittany (and, of Henry himself) that Henry had to navigate while in exile. Drawing on descriptions of Henry by his near-contemporary biographers and using Henry's own letters, Griffiths and Thomas present Henry as determined, astute, and resourceful, shaped by "lessons learned in the harsh school of penury and exile."²² Though Griffiths' and Thomas' work does not consider Henry's kingly image in particular detail, nor the idea of saviourhood, their investigation of how Henry's experiences shaped his character has served as a useful template for my own investigations into how Henry's image was shaped.

Turning to the relationship between Henry and Wales, David Rees' 1985 book *The Son of Prophecy* is one of the few works on Henry to dedicate its entire focus to the important relationship that Henry had with his homeland. Rees explores the ways in which Wales contributed to Henry's victory at Bosworth through military support, including the allowance of unimpeded passage to Henry by Welsh landowners, and through the creation of bardic prophecy declaring Henry as a national redeemer. Rees does interact with the idea of Henry as a saviour by highlighting Welsh bards' designation of Henry as *mab y darogan*, or son of prophecy, a hero who would lead Wales to independence.²³ However, Rees argues that while Welsh bardic poetry describing Henry as the promised son of prophecy may have affected Henry on a personal, emotional level, and that he may have privately believed himself to be this figure, he ultimately kept such ideas about himself "subordinate" to his governance and statecraft.²⁴ This thesis will challenge this argument through an analysis of the centrality of Henry's saviourhood to his royal image and the very public nature of the saviour image that Henry created, particularly seen in his iconography.

²² R.A. Griffiths and R.S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2021), 191.

²³ David Rees, *The Son of Prophecy: Henry Tudor's Road to Bosworth* (London: Black Raven Press, 1985), 103.

²⁴ Rees, *The Son of Prophecy*, 144.

In 1993, the Harlaxton Medieval Symposium invited papers of the theme of ‘The Reign of Henry VII’. Many of the papers included in the published collection of the symposium addressed the idea of Henry’s reign representing the beginning of a ‘new monarchy’ and whether he can be deemed a successful king in terms of his ability, innovation, and governance. In particular, Christine Carpenter’s paper “Henry VII and the English Polity” challenged the historiographical view of Henry as a capable, if dull, administrator. Carpenter placed Henry firmly within his late medieval context, and examined him as a medieval king, rather than one who represented the beginnings of early modernity. Carpenter argued that, as a medieval monarch, Henry ultimately was not particularly successful, due to his failure to understand the decidedly medieval polity that he was ruling.²⁵ Carpenter’s paper, while not focussed on Henry’s image and largely providing an examination of the secondary scholarship of Henry’s reign, has nonetheless proved useful for my own work. Her categorisation of Henry as a medieval monarch is one that I agree with and has influenced my interpretation of his image and saviourhood. I think that Henry’s image relies upon notions of saviourhood which were medieval in essence, particularly his understanding of what a saviour represented and his use of the term ‘tyrant,’ as will be further explored in chapters one and two. Additionally, Carpenter’s discussion of historiographical methodology as it pertains to Henry in her later book *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution of England c.1437 – 1509* has proved useful. Carpenter highlights the lack of traditional Tudor sources that exist for Henry’s reign, such as State Papers, commenting that to study Henry, historians will require ‘a medievalist’s willingness to search around among a multiplicity of different sources, often both difficult and dirty.’²⁶ I have approached Henry and his image in this vein, pulling together different types of sources to create a more robust

²⁵ Christine Carpenter, “Henry VII and the English Polity,” in *Proceedings of the 1993 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Benjamin Thompson (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 16.

²⁶ Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution of England c.1437 – 1509* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 219.

understanding of his saviourhood. Similar to the Harlaxton Symposium, the 2009 issue of *Historical Research* also invited papers dedicated solely to Henry VII and aspects of his reign, in this case to commemorate five hundred years since Henry's death.²⁷ In his introductory article, historian Mark Horowitz highlighted some of the contradictory perceptions of Henry VII which have come to dominate the historiography on him: '...he has been viewed as either the last medieval king or the first modern king; an absolute monarch above the law or a king in support of the law; an emulator of the Spanish and French monarchies or a proponent of distinctly English customs and traditions...'.²⁸ The idea of Henry as a rather contradictory character, and the contradictory perceptions of him have influenced my own research into him and his reign. In particular, Mark Horowitz's article on Henry's use of bonds and Paul Cavill's article on Henry's enforcement of penal codes have provided useful contextual information on Henry's later reputation, despite not being directly concerned with his royal image.

Much of the more recent scholarship on Henry and his reign tends to focus on government, parliament, and administration, as well as the councillors and advisors around Henry at court. Sean Cunningham's 2007 biography *Henry VII* provides a detailed exploration of Henry's life and reign, beginning with Henry's unsettled childhood and ending with a discussion of Henry's posthumous reputation and the modern scholarship that has been produced about him. In the biography Cunningham also considers the governmental and financial developments that took place during Henry's rule, arguing that Henry's reign represents a 'crucial period in the development of the power of centralised crown government.'²⁹ Of Henry's character, Cunningham acknowledges the well-established difficulties of the existing source material, noting that although Henry's personality shaped

²⁷ Mark Horowitz, "Introduction", *Historical Research* 82, no.217 (August 2009): 375.

²⁸ Horowitz, "Introduction", 375.

²⁹ Sean Cunningham, *Henry VII* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3.

his reign, in particular his ‘constant personal vigilance and ruthless determination’, much of the true nature of the man has been lost to us along with the source material.³⁰ By examining the construction of Henry’s image, and pulling together different types of sources, I hope to offer a glimpse into Henry’s character as well, which will hopefully bring us closer to a more personal understanding of him. Additionally, Cunningham’s 2009 article “Loyalty and the usurper: recognizances, the council and allegiance under Henry VII” focusses on a specific issue from Henry’s reign, examining Henry’s use of bonds as a means of royal enforcement, a method that Cunningham argues Henry adopted to try to lessen potential backlash against his usurpation of the throne. Cunningham also states in this article that Henry acquired the throne largely through luck and the ‘the failings of others,’ a statement which this thesis will challenge by illustrating the level of pre-mediated consideration Henry put into his image-making even prior to becoming king.³¹

More recently still, Steven Gunn’s 2016 book, *Henry VII’s New Men and the Making of Tudor England* considers the so-called ‘new men’ who rose from relatively humble beginnings to prominent positions in Henry’s administration. While this work is less focussed on the character of Henry himself, it nonetheless provides a valuable insight into the court environment that Henry functioned within. Gunn argues that Henry’s new men were essential ‘to the vigour of his council, the lustre of his court, and the efficiency of his parliaments’ and that their work helped to build both the institutions and style of Henry’s kingship.³² Gunn’s exploration of the new men at Henry’s court indicates that Henry was to an extent an innovative king open to new methods and ideas of government, a trait I argue is also reflected in his royal image. Additionally, Gunn’s 2015 article “Henry VII in Context: Problems and

³⁰ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 282, 285.

³¹ Sean Cunningham, “Loyalty and the usurper: recognizances, the council and allegiance under Henry VII,” *Historical Research* 82, no. 217 (August 2009): 460.

³² Steven Gunn, *Henry VII’s New Men and the Making of Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 320.

Possibilities” considers in detail the reasons for Henry’s historiographical marginality, arguing that the poor documentation for Henry’s reign is compounded by the liminal position he occupies between the late medieval and early modern periods, which causes difficulties for both late medievalists and Tudor historians who use different scholarly methods and approaches.³³ Gunn correctly asserts that Henry’s reign often simply serves “as the coda to surveys of later medieval England or the prologue to studies of the Tudors”, arguing that the sources medievalists often rely upon, such as chronicles, gentry letters and records of crown agencies are fewer and “less useful” during Henry’s reign.³⁴ Gunn further argues that during Henry’s reign sources relied upon by Tudor historians, such as the reports of foreign ambassadors, were only in their infancy.³⁵ While Gunn’s assessment of the source-based difficulties in studying Henry is correct, the challenge is not insurmountable. As mentioned above, I plan to use a combination of material and documentary sources, to draw Henry out of the shadows. The surviving material culture from Henry’s reign, particularly his use of visuality and iconography has been little-explored by historians, despite the fact that it provides an important understanding of the ways in which Henry cultivated his image and presented it publicly.

In relation to Henry’s image more specifically, historian Joanna Frońska has explored Henry’s role as a liberator and peace-maker in her 2014 article “The Royal Image and Diplomacy: Henry VII’s Book of Astrology (British Library, Arundel MS. 66)”. Frońska explores Henry’s image as it is presented in an astrology manuscript produced for him in 1490, with particular focus on Henry’s role as a peace-maker in international affairs and on his connection to prophecy and astrological predictions. Frońska explores how this manuscript reflects Henry’s curated image as a saviour and liberator, and as the heir to

³³ Steven Gunn, “Henry VII in Context: Problems and Possibilities,” *History* 92, no. 3 (July 2007): 302.

³⁴ Gunn, “Henry VII in Context”, 302.

³⁵ Gunn, “Henry VII in Context”, 302.

legendary figures in British history such as Brutus and Cadwaladr.³⁶ The manuscript examined by Frońska in her article provides key evidence for how Henry wished for himself and his dynasty to be seen, and has been particularly useful for my own investigations into Henry's interaction with British history explored in chapter three of this thesis. Though Frońska's work focusses more on Henry's image in the context of international diplomacy and European cultural imagery, it is one of the few works to explore Henry's image and the way he projected it in detail.

In addition to the existing historiography on Henry, this thesis also takes inspiration from the existing literature on kingly image-making, spectacle, and performance. In particular, Peter Burke's descriptions of public image, particularly kingly public image, in his 1992 book *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* helped to form some of the questions I ask of Henry's image, and inspired me to focus my research on the public-facing image decisions that Henry made. Although it covers a different king, country, and century, Burke's work is helpful for forming an understanding of how kingly image-making was used to promote a specific view of a monarch. According to Burke, public image refers to the place of a figure within the collective imagination, and considers how that figure is 'sold' to the public and the role of "ideology, propaganda, and the manipulation of public opinion" in selling that image.³⁷ I have found Burke's description of public image useful for considering how Henry disseminated his image, and for exploring the purpose behind it.

In a Tudor history context, Sydney Anglo's 1969 book *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* provides a close analysis of the courtly and public spectacles that occurred during the reigns of the Tudor monarchs, including civic pageants, festivals, plays,

³⁶ Joanna Frońska, "The Royal Image and Diplomacy: Henry VII's Book of Astrology (British Library, Arundel MS. 66)", *Electronic British Library Journal*, article 7 (2014): 8.

³⁷ Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 1, 4.

and royal progresses and ceremonies.³⁸ Anglo argues that such displays were an important facet of Tudor policy and governance, playing a role in diplomacy and international relations, and, of course, solidifying the power and magnificence of the dynasty.³⁹ Of Henry VII, Anglo shows how his public spectacles and displays borrowed from courtly displays found in Europe, particularly those of the dukes of Burgundy.⁴⁰ Anglo also dedicates significant attention to Henry's use of the rose symbol – both the red rose, and the combined red and white rose – and argues that these symbols were representative of the end of civil war and a new era of peace and prosperity for England, though he does not link these symbols to the idea of Henry as saviour.⁴¹ Anglo does acknowledge that Henry was 'the last of a long line of Welsh messiahs' according to fifteenth century bards, however he does not dedicate a large amount of time to this idea.⁴² Anglo's 1992 book *Images of Tudor Kingship* provides a closer look at the background, design, and implementation of Tudor images of kingship, exploring them not simply as iconography but as 'dynastic hieroglyphs' which instantly identify the Tudors.⁴³ Anglo's book explores some of the key sources and concepts behind Tudor imagery and iconography, exploring the role of legendary British history, Henry VI and the idea of a Lancastrian dynastic inheritance, and the icons of the red and white rose in crafting a Tudor image of kingship. While not focussed solely on Henry VII, Anglo does assert that 'the distinctive signs which indicated the Tudor dynasty were all established at the outset of Henry VII's reign and remained constant thereafter.'⁴⁴ Henry's role as the first Tudor monarch and the originator of the dynasty's imagery will be further explored throughout this thesis. While Anglo's book is more concerned with the intellectual and practical contexts in which Tudor

³⁸ Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 3.

³⁹ Anglo, *Spectacle*, 2.

⁴⁰ Anglo, *Spectacle*, 5.

⁴¹ Anglo, *Spectacle*, 36.

⁴² Anglo, *Spectacle*, 45.

⁴³ Sydney Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London: Seaby, 1992), 4.

⁴⁴ Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, 4.

dynastic imagery functioned, it has nonetheless proved a highly useful contextual resource for my own work.

Kevin Sharpe's more recent 2009 book *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth Century England* also examines Tudor image-making and spectacle. As the time frame listed in the title would suggest, though, Sharpe's book does not dedicate a large amount of time to Henry VII. Sharpe argues that although Henry did understand the importance of performance and displays of majestic kingship, his interaction with it 'palls beside the later Tudors' magnificent displays abroad, as at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, or at home, as with Elizabeth's coronation entry or progresses.'⁴⁵ Sharpe also argues that to establish stability and authority for their dynasty, the Tudors needed to persuade their subjects of their right to rule: they needed to create images, words, and spectacles which not only reflected power, but also constructed it.⁴⁶ I would take this argument further to say that it was Henry, through his construction of saviourhood, who began this process. Sharpe's analysis of rhetoric and power, and how these shape an individual monarch's reign, has nonetheless proved useful for my own work, as has his argument that image serves as a form of constructed authority.

In relation to Henry's iconography more specifically, Virginia K. Henderson's chapter "Retrieving the Crown in the Hawthorn Bush: The Origins of the Badges of Henry VII" provides a highly useful analysis of the origins and uses of Henry's symbols and icons, with particular focus on his use of the rose badge.⁴⁷ Henderson highlights the connection of the rose, particularly the red rose, to both the Virgin Mary and Christ's Passion, and also explores

⁴⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 65.

⁴⁶ Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 6-7.

⁴⁷ Virginia K. Henderson, "Retrieving the "Crown in the Hawthorn Bush": The Origins of the Badges of Henry VII," in *Traditions and Transformations in Late Medieval England*, ed. Douglas Biggs, Sharon Michalove, and A. Compton Reeves (Brill: Boston, 2002), 237-259.

the Christological symbolism of hawthorn, a plant linked to Henry through the apocryphal story of his crown being retrieved from a hawthorn bush after Bosworth. In the chapter, Henderson also states that the ideas of renewal, rebirth, and Christ's Passion represented by hawthorn fit well with the conception of Henry as a redeemer-hero, although this conception of Henry is not fully explored in her work. In my own analysis of Henry's iconography, Henderson's work has served as a springboard for deeper examination of these symbols through colour and literary analyses.

Finally, it should be noted that I will not make great use of the term or idea of propaganda in this thesis. Henry's image was of course designed to convey a message about himself, but it does not constitute propaganda, at least according to a twenty-first century understanding. Dougal Shaw's arguments regarding propaganda, explored in his 2004 article "Nothing but Propaganda? Historians and the Study of Early Modern Royal Ritual" have been useful for exploring this idea. When examining a monarch's projected image, it is tempting to categorise it as a form of propaganda, designed to sway the public's view of the figure behind the image. According to Shaw, the use of the term propaganda suggests that images and rituals of monarchy 'were created and executed in a highly self-conscious manner, their essential function [being] to manipulate the people', an interpretation that in fact does not accurately reflect the court cultures of the late medieval and early modern periods.⁴⁸ Shaw argues that the public functions and rituals of monarchy were 'more complex cultural phenomena than polemical broadsides' which, while designed to convey meaning to the public, were not designed to deliberately control political culture in the way that we would understand propaganda today.⁴⁹ Modern uses of the term propaganda remain influenced by twentieth-century political culture, in which propaganda referred to the creation

⁴⁸ Dougal Shaw, "Nothing but Propaganda? Historians and the Study of Early Modern Royal Ritual", *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 2 (2004): 144.

⁴⁹ Shaw, "Nothing but Propaganda?", 144.

and careful dissemination of rituals and political messaging in, according to Shaw, 'a blatantly calculated manner.'⁵⁰ Such an understanding is largely anachronistic when considering kingly image-making in the fifteenth century. The image of a monarch of course conveyed meaning, but was not necessarily designed to influence and control the opinions of the public.⁵¹ In my own work on Henry's image, I have avoided using the term propaganda, instead examining his image as a means to foster a sense of legitimacy, stability, and dynastic ambition.

This thesis will contribute to the historiography of Henry VII by providing an assessment of an important aspect of his royal image, and by presenting him as a considered and creative image-maker. There is not, to date, any existing large-scale study of Henry's image, or of his abilities as an image-maker in his own right, nor do any exist which consider his relationship to saviourhood in particular detail. While, as we have seen above, historians such as David Rees and Virginia Henderson have acknowledged to varying extents Henry's role as a saviour, none have attempted to unpack the intricacies and nuances of this image. The work I present in this thesis is less concerned with the reception of Henry's image, but rather will study the make-up and methodology of Henry's saviour image – how it was constructed, its composition, and its purpose. Though chapter four will briefly consider the posthumous reception of Henry's image, and its successes and failures, it is the design, projection, and transformation of the saviour image over time that I aim to investigate. In doing so, I intend to provide a fresh interpretation of Henry and of the saviourhood that I consider to be one of the most important pillars of his kingship. Henry's creation of a saviour image showed him to be a capable image-maker, but also reflects the deep anxieties of his reign, namely personal and political instability and disunity, as well as his desperation to hold

⁵⁰ Shaw, "Nothing but Propaganda?", 144.

⁵¹ John Adamson, *The princely courts of Europe: ritual, politics and culture under the ancient régime, 1500-1750* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 34. Quoted in Shaw, "Nothing but Propaganda", 145.

onto power. This thesis also hopes to contribute to the existing scholarship on Henry by providing a study that places him at the centre of the analysis, rather than the events and people around him, or the mechanisms of his government. While analysis of Henry's context is of course crucial, and something that this thesis will include, it is also true that Henry is, ironically, often not the central figure in many existing studies of him and his reign.

To explore Henry's self-styling as a saviour, this thesis examines a combination of documentary, literary, and material sources across four chapters. The primary source corpus will include letters written personally by Henry prior to his kingship in 1484 and early 1485, which constitute some of the earliest examples of Henry's image-building. Contemporary and early modern interpretations of the king, including those of Bernard André (1500), Polydore Vergil (1534), Edward Hall (1548), and Francis Bacon (1622) have also been investigated to gain an understanding both of Henry's and the way it was publicly expressed. Additionally, Henry's image will be explored through legislation and grants from royal patent rolls, as well as material and iconographical sources such as Henry's coat of arms, the 'Tudor' or Union Rose, and the red Welsh dragon. Modern statues of Henry erected in 1916 and 2017 will also be analysed for the clues they reveal about Henry's posthumous reputation. Of course, as with any piece historical evidence, these sources have their own limitations: all were written and created with particular agendas behind them, particularly in the case of Henry's letters and the histories he commissioned. Such sources depicted Henry in a largely positive light, and undoubtedly fell line with his wishes and expectations. However, for my purposes, these agendas and biases are incredibly useful, as they allow an insight into the ways Henry wanted to be seen, and the narratives he sought to convey about himself.

Chapter one will begin by investigating the origins of Henry's image of saviourhood that he created for himself and will provide a close analysis of three letters written by Henry prior to becoming king. These letters, written between late 1484 and early 1485, illustrate the

progression of Henry's early image of himself as a saviour, and indicate that this characterisation of himself developed significantly before he won the throne. In each of these letters, we can observe the themes of liberation and unity – which served as the tangible outcomes that Henry offered to England as their saviour – that characterised Henry's personal displays of saviourhood.

The following two chapters will then focus on these themes – liberation and unity – respectively. Chapter two will explore how Henry's depiction of himself as a liberator became a central theme of the biography he commissioned from court historian and poet Bernard André in 1500, and served as a key means of presenting himself as antithetical to Richard III. Additionally, this chapter will also examine Henry's saviourhood as it pertains to his homeland of Wales through an analysis of some of the exemptions from discriminatory laws that he granted to areas of northern Wales. Henry's attempts at improving the social and political conditions in Wales were admittedly small, however they do reflect a desire to deliver the freedom he had espoused in letters written prior to his kingship. Chapter three will analyse the idea of unity as an important part of Henry's saviourhood. The chapter interprets themes of unity that can be observed in Henry's royal iconography, with particular focus on the symbol of the rose and its role as a representation of the dynastic unity that Henry's kingship would bring. Chapter three will also investigate the role that Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York played in establishing his role as a unifier, and the role that his son and heir Arthur played in creating a sense of unity and historical continuity. Henry and Elizabeth's marriage was a tangible representation of the unification of York and Lancaster, and an end to civil war, both of which were essential for the stability that Henry's kingship would need to cement. Additionally, Henry's decision to name his son Arthur, after the famous King Arthur further spoke to the unity and stability that were cornerstones of Henry's kingship. In medieval Arthurian literature, including Geoffrey of Monmouth's seminal *History of the*

Kings of Britain, King Arthur was often depicted as a saviour and a returning hero who would unite Britain. Henry's decision to name his heir after such a figure reflected not only Henry's own saviour ideals, but also the ideals that he had for his dynasty. King Arthur was a significant figure within both England and Wales; though the interpretations of King Arthur differed in these areas, the theme of Arthur as a saviour, avenger, and unifier appears as a commonality throughout the literature more broadly. It was this version of Arthur, I think, that Henry wanted his son to embody.

Finally, chapter four considers the legacy of Henry's image, and asks whether the saviour image that Henry sought to create for himself has stood the test of time. This chapter will begin by analysing sixteenth century historiographical accounts of Henry's reign, along with literary sources such as Shakespeare and popular ballads and poems to gain insight into Henry's posthumous reputation. Additionally, this chapter will consider interpretations of Henry in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with particular focus on two statues erected of Henry in Cardiff and Pembrokeshire. The final chapter will also consider one of the perhaps more recognisable elements of Henry's legacy: the characterisation of Richard III as a villain, which began during Henry's reign. An investigation of Henry's legacy and posthumous reputation reveals that while his image of saviourhood has not survived completely intact throughout the centuries, certain elements, such as Henry as a Welsh hero, the popularity of the Tudors in scholarship and popular culture, and Richard III's villainy, remain into the twenty-first century, and speak to the effectiveness of Henry's image-making.

As will be discussed in further detail, the surviving primary material directly related to Henry is scant when viewed in comparison with other English monarchs. By bringing together a range of documentary sources, literature, and material objects, however, this gap in the source material can be somewhat minimised. Through an analysis of sources which are more personal to Henry, such as his own letters, his family relationships, and his choice of

iconography, we can see the ways in which notions of saviourhood permeated both the public and more personal spheres of Henry's life and reign. Such an insight allows us to gain an understanding of Henry not only as an image-maker, but also to observe some of the very real anxieties about legitimacy and stability that Henry experienced as an outsider on the throne.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to offer a new perspective on Henry VII and a critically under-explored aspect of his royal image. Henry's saviour image, and how successfully it was implemented during his reign, significantly contributed to his ability to seize and remain on the throne following the tumult England faced during the height of the Wars of the Roses. Henry's double-pronged expression of saviourhood, seen through his dual roles as liberator and unifier, allowed him to both denigrate his predecessor Richard III while also portraying himself as the figure who would end civil war and restore England's stability and peace. Investigating Henry's saviourhood allows us to understand his kingship and motivations more deeply, and reveals him to be more complex, considered, innovative and, I think, human, than he has previously been given credit for.

Chapter One: *Laying the Foundations: Henry as the Would-Be Saviour King*

While Henry Tudor may have won his crown in dramatic fashion at Bosworth in 1485, his journey to the kingship of England did not begin there, nor indeed even in that year. In considering Henry's image, particularly that of himself as saviour, it is also important to consider the ways in which he represented himself in the years preceding his seizure of the throne, as they provide a crucial insight into the beginnings of Henry's saviourhood. For most of his life, including his years of exile in Brittany and France, Henry had styled himself as the Earl of Richmond, the title he had inherited from his father.¹ From late 1483 however, Henry became essentially the sole rival claimant to the throne of England and it is from this point onwards that we begin to see the early development of a curated saviour image. An examination of the ways Henry styled himself in the years before coming to the throne reveals that Henry presented himself as a political saviour before he even set foot in England, one who would rescue the kingdom from its current state of poor kingship and tyranny. This chapter will explore the ways in which Henry began to construct a particular image of himself prior to kingship, and will explore the foundations of the sense of justice, righteousness, and unity that would come to characterise Henry's kingly image of saviourhood.

The first section of this chapter will establish who Henry was before he became a viable claimant to the throne, and will focus specifically on his use of his inherited title of Earl of Richmond. Next, this chapter will examine when, where, and how Henry started to publicly present himself as not only a rival or alternative to Richard III's kingship, but as the rightful king of England, who would deliver the kingdom from tyranny. There are two important examples of how Henry fashioned himself as king before his accession to the

¹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 138.

throne; the first is a ceremony held in Rennes Cathedral in Brittany in December 1483 while Henry was still in exile, and the second is a letter written by Henry in mid-August 1485 just prior to the Battle of Bosworth. In each of these examples, Henry clearly and deliberately portrays himself as the King of England, despite not having yet set foot on English soil. To do so was entirely unique; no previous claimant to the English throne had ever gone so far as to refer to themselves as king before actually winning the throne, or at least being in England.² Henry's decision to style himself as king at this time was an extension of the saviourhood he was offering England. To declare himself king and to seek sanction of this declaration through battle suggests a level of confidence within Henry that his claim was righteous and divinely supported, a confidence that Henry believed (or hoped) would be accepted by the English people.

Additionally, this chapter will examine another aspect of Henry's image that was beginning to take place prior to his kingship: that is, Henry's depiction of himself as Welsh, and moreover, as a saviour of Wales. The contents of another letter written by Henry to a Welsh landowner ahead of Bosworth indicates that in the lead up to becoming king, Henry was positioning himself as a king who would not only free England from Richard III's tyranny, but who would also free Wales from political oppression. An image of Welsh saviourhood can also be observed through Henry's early choices of heraldry and representative colours. In the lead up to Bosworth and during the battle, Henry flew the standard of the Welsh red dragon, a symbol which represented the prophesised eventual triumph of Wales over its English oppressors. In considering the foundations of Henry's image, this chapter will show that saviourhood formed a core component of his image even prior to becoming king.

² Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 140.

‘Henry de Richemont’: Henry’s life prior to 1484

Before exploring Henry’s depiction of himself in the lead up to his seizure of the throne, it is important to understand his background – where he came from, and how he suddenly became the sole viable male claimant to the English throne. In doing so, we can observe the development of Henry’s identity from minor noble, to exile, to contender for the English throne, and in the process observe the construction of what would become Henry’s saviour image. Despite eventually ending up as the king of England, Henry’s early life was not spent preparing for such a role. Henry was born in Pembrokeshire in January 1457 to Margaret Beaufort and her (by the time of Henry’s birth) deceased husband Edmund Tudor, both of whom had ties to the Plantagenet royal dynasty, though their son was by no means in the line of succession. Henry’s mother Margaret was a member of the Beaufort family, who were descended from John of Gaunt, the duke of Lancaster and fourth son of King Edward III.³ John’s son Henry Bolingbroke seized the English throne in 1399, becoming Henry IV and the first ‘Lancastrian’ king.⁴ Though initially the illegitimate children of John of Gaunt and his mistress Katherine Swynford, the Beauforts were legitimised when John and Katherine were married, though not to the extent of being included in the line of succession.⁵ Through his mother’s line then, Henry was connected, however loosely, to the Lancastrian branch of the royal family tree.

Henry’s father’s line, the Tudors, was also connected to the Lancastrian monarchy, though their roots were predominantly in Wales. The Tudors (Welsh spelling Tudur) first rose to prominence in North Wales in the thirteenth century, during the supremacy of the prince of

³ Michael A. Hicks, “Beaufort Family,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Robert E. Bjork. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39. Accessed online: <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780198662624.001.0001/acref-9780198662624-e-0790?rskey=zBIMaT&result=764>>.

⁴ Hicks, “Beaufort Family,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 39.

⁵ Hicks, “Beaufort Family,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 39.

Gwynedd Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, also known as Llywelyn the Great (b.1173-d.1240).⁶ The Tudors were supporters of Llywelyn and served him as diplomats, councillors, servants, and soldiers, in the process quickly establishing themselves as one of the most influential families in Wales during the thirteenth century.⁷ In particular, Henry's ancestor Ednyfed Fychan (d.1246) served as Seneschal of Gwynedd under Llywelyn, cementing his family's place at the centre of Welsh politics.⁸ In the early fifteenth century however, the Tudor family's fortunes changed after they supported the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr, a cousin of the family, who in 1400 revolted against the English crown in the hopes of achieving independence for Wales.⁹ Following the defeat of the rebellion in 1415, the Tudors lost lands and status, and, like other Welshmen were barred by statutes introduced by King Henry IV during the rebellion years from carrying arms and holding office, amongst other restrictions.¹⁰ However, Henry's Tudor descendants' fortunes changed significantly yet again in the later fifteenth century, this time bringing the Tudor family far closer to the English crown. In the early 1430s (the exact date is unknown) Henry's grandfather Owen ap Maredudd ap Tudur married Catherine Valois, the dowager Queen of England and widow of King Henry V.¹¹ Owen and Catherine had four children together, chief among them Edmund (Henry Tudor's father) and Jasper (Henry's uncle). As the half-brothers of Catherine's first son, the current King Henry VI, Edmund and Jasper found themselves at the centre of court life, and were endowed with lands and titles; in November 1452, both Jasper and Edmund were granted earldoms, with Jasper becoming the Earl of Pembroke, and Edmund the Earl of Richmond.¹² According to

⁶ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 7-8.

⁷ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 8.

⁸ Rees, *Son of Prophecy*, 40, 41.

⁹ Rees, *Son of Prophecy*, 15, 17.

¹⁰ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 31.

¹¹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 35.

¹² Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 41.

Bernard André, Henry's court poet and historian, Edmund was also descended from the ancient rulers of Britain, writing that

“On the side of his [Henry's] father Edmund, earl of Richmond, [his lineage] extends all the way back to Brutus and all the princes descended from him...I should also briefly mention the descent of Edmund's father from ancient Briton kings, namely, Saint Cadwalader, to whom this same Henry legitimately succeeded after long intervals of time, and Cadwallo, the father of Cadwalader.”¹³

When Edmund married Margaret Beaufort in 1455, their combined connections to the English throne (though Margaret's rather more strongly), and the Tudor's supposed descent from kings such as Brutus and Cadwaladr would eventually prove crucial to their son Henry's triumph in 1485.

Of course, when Henry was a child, there was no suggestion of him ever becoming king, at least not in most noble circles. Henry's potential accession to the throne did not become a reality until at least 1483, when Richard III usurped the throne. A large amount of credit for this change in circumstances must be attributed to Margaret Beaufort and Edward IV's queen Elizabeth Wydeville, who aligned to arrange a marriage between Henry and Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Elizabeth Wydeville and Edward IV.¹⁴ Indeed, until at least 1483, Henry went by the title he had inherited from his father: the Earl of Richmond. We know from a letter signed by Henry in late October or early November 1483 that at this point he still referred to himself as the Earl of Richmond; the letter is signed in Henry's own hand as “Henry de Richemont”.¹⁵ The letter that Henry signed was in response to a loan of 10,000 écus d'or (a type of gold coin) granted to Henry and Jasper by Duke Francis II of

¹³ Bernard André, *The Life of Henry VII*, trans. Daniel Hobbs (New York: Italica Press, 2011), 6.

¹⁴ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 103.

¹⁵ British Library. BL Add MS 19398, f.33r.

Brittany to aid them in their (aborted) invasion of England as part of the Buckingham Rebellion, which will be discussed in detail below.¹⁶ Until at least late 1483 then, Henry was still presenting himself as who he had been since birth: a nobleman, with the title he inherited from his father. This title, and Henry's associated representation of himself however, would change drastically in the ensuing months as Henry edged ever closer to the possession of the English crown.

'By the Kyng': Henry's early depictions of himself as saviour

In October 1483, two years prior to Henry's accession, and a few months after Richard III had come to the throne, nobles and gentry in the south of England and parts of Wales launched an uprising against Richard's rule, which has become known as the Buckingham Rebellion.¹⁷ Named for Henry Stafford, the then Duke of Buckingham who defected from the side of Richard III, the rebellion initially sought to depose Richard and replace him with his nephew Edward V, who Richard himself had deposed earlier in 1483 and who many in England viewed as the rightful king.¹⁸ However, once it became apparent that Edward V had, in fact, disappeared along with his younger brother from where they were being held in the Tower of London (the contemporary, widely-held belief was that they had been murdered on Richard's orders), Buckingham proposed that Richard III should instead be replaced with Henry Tudor.¹⁹ Buckingham himself had familial connections to the throne; he was descended on his father's side from the fifth son of Edward III, Thomas of Woodstock, while on his mother's side his ancestors were also the Beauforts.²⁰ While it is uncertain whether Buckingham ever planned on usurping Richard III himself, or whether he always

¹⁶ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 113.

¹⁷ Gemma L. Watson, "A Herald and his Objects in Exile: Roger Machado, the Buckingham Rebellion, and Henry Tudor" in *Travels and Mobilities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marianne O'Doherty and Felicitas Schmieder (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 3.

¹⁸ Watson, "A Herald and his Objects," 3.

¹⁹ Watson, "A Herald and his Objects," 3.

²⁰ Rees, *The Son of Prophecy*, 88.

planned to put Henry forward, he was nonetheless a key player in the organisation and execution of the rebellion. Unfortunately for Henry and Buckingham, the rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful, and Henry was not installed on the throne of England. However, the rebellion did nonetheless serve as the catalyst for a significant change in Henry's circumstances. Buckingham was executed for his role in the rebellion, and as such Henry was now the main (and really, the only) Lancastrian rival for the throne of England. Following the failure of the rebellion, many of the nobles involved fled across the channel to Brittany, to avoid retribution from Richard, and to join Henry and pledge their loyalty to him.²¹ Indeed, it is estimated that Henry had up to five hundred supporters with him in Brittany after the events of 1483, the majority of whom were former supporters of Edward IV, but who now viewed Henry as the only viable alternative to Richard III.²² Some of those with Henry in exile in 1483-1484 included the bishops of Exeter and Salisbury; the brothers of Edward IV's queen Elizabeth Wydeville, Lionel, Edward, and Richard; Sir Giles Daubeney, an esquire for the body and knight of the Bath; John Cheyne, Edward IV's former standard bearer and master of Edward's bodyguard; and other gentry connected to Thomas Stanley first Earl of Derby, who was married to Henry's mother Margaret Beaufort.²³ Additionally, Roger Machado, who served as the Leicester Herald for Edward IV, Edward V and, briefly, Richard III, also joined Henry in exile at the end of 1483, as did John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford, in 1484; de Vere would later command Henry's archers at the Battle of Bosworth.²⁴ Indeed, many of the men who joined Henry in exile remained loyal to him, and fought with Henry at Bosworth. The Croyland Chronicle recorded that

²¹ Watson, "A Herald and his Objects," 4.

²² Watson, "A Herald and his Objects," 6.

²³ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 117-119.

²⁴ Watson, "A Herald and his Objects," 1, 11.

“The chief men of the opposing army [that is, Henry’s army] were the following: in the first place, Henry earl of Richmond, whom they called their king, Henry the Seventh; John Vere, earl of Oxford, John lord Wells...Thomas lord Stanley and William his brother, Edward Wydville, brother of queen Elizabeth, a most valiant knight, John Cheyne...Of the ecclesiastical orders...the venerable father, Peter, bishop of Exeter...”.²⁵

Many of these fellow exiles had also been present for one of the first examples of Henry’s publicly-displayed saviourhood. On Christmas Day in 1483 in the cathedral at Rennes, Henry’s fellow exiles congregated to pledge their allegiance to him. The Italian historian Polydore Vergil wrote in his *Anglica Historia* (commissioned by Henry) of the ceremony that

“Heare, after muche mutuall congratulation made, and that they had delyberated of dealyng in their causis certane days, the day of Chrystes natyvytee was coomyd uppon, which, meting all in the churche, they ratyfyed all other thinges by plyghting of their trouths and solemne covenantes; and first of all erle Henry uppon his othe promysyd, that so soone as he showld be king he wold mary Elyzabeth, king Edwards dowghter; than aftir they swore unto him homage as thowghe he had bene already created king, protesting that they wold losse not onely ther landes and possessions, but ther lyves, before ever they wold suffer, beare, or permyt, that Richard showld rewle over them and theirs [sic].”²⁶

Vergil records here that during the Rennes ceremony, Henry not only promised to marry Edward IV’s oldest daughter Elizabeth once he became king, but that those present proceeded to swear their allegiance to Henry as if he had already been crowned. Such

²⁵ Ingulph, *Ingulph’s Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers*, trans. Henry T. Riley (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 502.

²⁶ Polydore Vergil, *Three books of Polydore Vergil’s English history, comprising the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III*, trans. Sir Henry Ellis (London, The Camden Society, 1844), 203.

homage to Henry suggests that by 1483, not only was Henry formulating an image of himself as king, but that this idea was also not entirely rejected by the members of the nobility with him in exile. Vergil does write that in their homage to Henry the nobles stated that they would rather lose their lives and property than have Richard rule over them, which does not explicitly translate into them then truly believing in Henry as the rightful king. However, it does suggest that they were committed to deposing Richard, and entertained the idea that Henry could be a potential alternative. They publicly swore allegiance to him, and, seemingly, accepted the idea of his marrying Elizabeth of York. While at this stage such actions did not necessarily reflect a deep-seated belief in Henry's kingship or right to the throne, they were not a rejection either. The Rennes ceremony highlights that Henry's position in 1483 was still undeniably uncertain, but also reflects a turning point in his image, and an indication of the ideas which underpinned it. Receiving the homage of the nobles gathered in Brittany undoubtedly gave Henry's cause greater weight, and may indeed have helped inspire the self-assuredness that characterised Henry's image and his decision to declare himself king in 1484 (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). However, the lack of explicit belief in his right to rule, coupled with Henry's own weak claim had the potential to undermine this self-assuredness. Henry's decision to style himself as a king and a saviour was therefore a decision forged out of both confidence and uncertainty, a contradiction which characterised much of his image as king later on.

This ceremony was foundational for the creation of Henry's image; it was one of the first recorded occasions in which Henry acted as a king, and in which the nobility, importantly, allowed him to do so. The ceremony also provided a glimpse into what Henry's kingship, and subsequent dynasty, could look like by promising to marry Elizabeth of York. The ceremony established Henry as an alternative to Richard, reflecting the fact that the discontent that had arisen after Richard's usurpation was still very much alive, and subtly

indicating that Henry would free them from Richard's tyranny. In doing so, this ceremony served as the beginnings for what would be a defining feature of Henry's saviourhood: his role as liberator, which will be further examined in chapter two. Additionally, Henry's vow to marry Elizabeth of York was not only important for bolstering Henry's own legitimacy and claim to the throne, but also served another purpose. Henry's marriage to Elizabeth would also prove essential for cultivating an image of Henry as a unifier, a role which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three of this thesis. Henry's proposed marriage to Elizabeth was not only politically expedient (especially given Henry's tenuous claim to the throne), but also afforded Henry the opportunity to symbolically end the civil conflict of the Wars of the Roses by uniting York and Lancaster in marriage. The ceremony at Rennes was almost certainly not the brainchild of Henry alone; the exiles around him, particularly those closely involved in court life, very likely advised Henry and had a hand in organising this event. However, in it we can see the fledgling beginnings of some themes that would become commonplace in Henry's kingship, namely the denigration of Richard III's rule, and the liberty and unity that Henry hoped to establish with his.

Almost a year after the Rennes ceremony, in November 1484, Henry made the unprecedented decision to officially adopt the title and style of king.²⁷ Specifically, we can see this stylistic and titular choice in some of the few surviving letters written by Henry before he assumed the crown, in which he openly refers to himself as the king, as well as uses the epistolary style favoured by English kings during this period, namely the royal 'we'. It is through these stylistic decisions and the language Henry uses in his letters that we observe the origins not only of a concerted bid for the throne, but also of Henry's decision to style himself as a saviour. Henry's decision to style and name himself king was his own and was

²⁷ R.A. Griffiths, "Henry Tudor: The Training of a King," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1986): 206.

without precedent, though it was also made possible by the support of the regency council of Charles VIII of France. The threat of hostility and attempted invasion by England hung over France throughout much of the Middle Ages, however supporting Henry in his invasion provided the opportunity for France to propel a more friendly monarch to the throne of England (and one who was in their debt).²⁸ By 1484, France was prepared to offer Henry financial and naval support to launch an invasion of England, and allowed him to recruit military support from Normandy and the king's own Scots Guard.²⁹ Henry's new access to such resources meant that he could now begin to formally present himself not just as a rival, but as the king himself and saviour of England, a decision which can be seen in a letter he sent from France across the Channel to his English allies:

“Right trusty, worshipfull, and honourable good friends, and our allies, I greet you well. Being given to understand your good devoir [duty] and intent to advance me to the furtherance of my rightful claim due and lineal inheritance of the crown, and for the just depriving of that homicide and unnaturall tyrant which now unjustly bears dominion over you, I give you to understand that no christian heart can be more full of joy and gladness that the heart of me your poor exiled friend, who will, upon the instance of your sure advertise what powers ye will make ready and what captains and leaders you get to conduct, be prepared to pass over the sea with such forces as my friends here are preparing for me. And if I have such good speed and success as I wish, according to your desire, I shall ever be most forward to remember and wholly to requite this your great and most loving kindness in my just quarrel.

“Given under our signet.

“H.R.

²⁸ A.V. Antonovics, “Henry VII, King of England, ‘By the Grace of Charles VIII of France’”, in *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths and James Sherborne (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), 174.

²⁹ R.A. Griffiths, “Henry Tudor: The Training of a King,” 206.

“I pray you give credence to the messenger of that he shall impart to you.”³⁰

While neither dated nor addressed to anyone specific, this letter nonetheless provides us with important context for understanding Henry’s transformation from the Earl of Richmond to King of England, in his own view at least. Although, as stated, we cannot say for sure when Henry wrote this letter, from its contents it is safe to assume that it was written sometime towards the end of 1484. Henry writes that once he has assurance of the support and resources that his allies in England can provide, he would then “be prepared to pass over the sea with such forces as my friends here are providing for me.” Henry’s mention of the forces prepared by his friends is likely a reference to the financial, naval, and military support provided by France in late 1484, which helps us to estimate a rough date for the letter: it is likely to have been written sometime in November 1484, after Henry’s October arrival in France from Brittany and his appeal to the king for assistance.³¹ While this letter lacks the more authoritative tone and royal style of Henry’s later correspondence sent upon landing in England, it does provide a fascinating insight into how Henry’s image was beginning to take shape, even before setting foot on English soil. In his letter, Henry describes himself as having a “rightful claim” to and “lineal inheritance” of the crown of England, while he describes Richard III as being a “homicide and unnatural tyrant,” unjustly bearing dominion over England. Here, Henry not only confidently asserts his claim to the throne, but also repositions both himself and Richard. In the letter, Richard is the intruder, the pretender, wielding power illegitimately and undeservedly, while Henry is the rightful claimant, the legitimate inheritor. Further, the letter also provides one of the earliest examples of what would become a staple of Henry’s saviourhood: the idea that his rule would rid England of

³⁰ Open letter sent by Henry from exile to his allies in England. Date unknown, c. late 1484. In Caroline Halsted, *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester and King of England* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), 566.

³¹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 139.

tyranny and bad governance, specifically perpetuated by Richard III. Henry writes that part of his purpose in asserting his claim is to “depriv[e]” the kingdom of the unnatural kingship of Richard III, that is, to remove such kingship, a claim echoed in Henry’s later letters. He frames his removal of Richard as a “just quarrel,” steeped in righteousness, Christianity, and a need for good governance.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, this letter reveals that by late 1484, Henry had changed his signature. Rather than signing as the Earl of Richmond which, as shown previously, Henry had been doing even into late 1483, Henry appears to have signed this letter as ‘H.R.’ – Henricus Rex – or as simply ‘H’. There is some disagreement among historians as to how this letter is signed. Henry’s biographer S.B. Chrimes transcribed the signature in his 1972 book as ‘H.R.’, based on the transcriptions made by Caroline Halsted in 1844 and J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps in 1848, while R.A. Griffiths and R.S. Thomas argue that the signature is actually an elaborately-written ‘H’, misread by a seventeenth century copyist who recorded the letter.³² Griffiths and Thomas’ argument does gain support from the fact that one of Henry’s other letters sent prior to becoming king (and which will be discussed later in this chapter) also carries the signature of a single ‘H’. Additionally, ‘H’ was still a royal signature, and indeed Henry continued to use the single ‘H’ initial as his signature until 1492, seven years into his reign.³³ Ultimately, whether Henry used ‘H.R.’ or just ‘H’, his updated signature reflects a significant change in the way Henry wanted to present himself to his allies; stylistically, Henry was now presenting as a king, his decision to do so steeped in a notion of saviourhood, in which he was the rightful inheritor of the throne and the just ruler who would rid England of its current tyrannous, illegitimate king.

³² S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 39. Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 133. Halsted, *Richard III*, 566. J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps, *Letters of the Kings of England* (London: H. Colburn, 1848), 161.

³³ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, 139

By the time Henry launched his invasion of England, his use of the epistolary style of a king was cemented, even though he had still not, yet, won the throne for himself. In mid-August 1485, as Henry was making his way up through Wales and into England, he sent out letters to various Welsh landowners asking for their support and assistance, two of which survive – one written to John ap Meredudd, and one to Sir Roger Kynaston. In each of these letters, we can observe, to varying degrees, Henry’s portrayal of himself as a righteous, saviour-king, reflecting not only consistency on Henry’s part, but also suggesting that the foundations for this image of Henry indeed pre-date his kingship. Henry’s letter to Sir Roger Kynaston, the constable of Harlech Castle in Wales and Sheriff of Merionethshire, and temporarily in charge of the estates of John Grey, Lord Powis, contains further evidence for Henry’s portrayal of himself as the rightful ruler of England.³⁴ Henry begins this letter with the phrase ‘By the Kyng’ and again signs it with the single ‘H’ initial – indicating again that he is indeed portraying himself as the rightful king in this letter.³⁵ Henry also writes to Kynaston that

‘...we will and pray you and upon your allegiance straictly charge and command you that in all hast possible ye assemble his said folkis and servaunts wnd with them so assembled and defensibly arrayd for the werre ye comme to us for our ayde and assistance in this our entreprise for the Recovere of the coronne of our Royaume of England to us of Right apperteynyng...’³⁶

Here, Henry is clearly presenting himself not simply as a rival claimant to the throne, but as the king. Even if he had not described himself as such at the beginning of the letter, the tone and choice of wording throughout it leave little room for misinterpretation. Henry’s

³⁴ Griffiths, “Henry Tudor: The Training of a King,” 209.

³⁵ Letter from Henry Tudor to Sir Roger Kynaston, in Griffiths, “Henry Tudor: The Training of a King,” 209. Letter originally contained in George Grazebrook, *Miscellanea genealogica et heraldica*, 4th series, 5 (1914): 30-39.

³⁶ Letter from Henry Tudor to Sir Roger Kynaston, in Griffiths, “Henry Tudor,” 209.

language within this letter is far more direct and authoritative than in his 1484 letter, and displays an understanding of royal epistolary conventions. Throughout the letter, Henry uses the majestic plural, or royal 'we' that had become standard practice in letters written by and for kings during the Middle Ages; present within Henry's writing are first-person pronominal plurals such as 'we', 'our' and 'us' which were used to refer to the monarch, as well as second-person pronominal words to refer to the letter's recipient, such as 'yourself', 'you', and 'ye'.³⁷ The use of such language indicates that Henry, or at least the group of nobles around him, was aware of the epistolary conventions of kingship and, further, clearly demonstrates that Henry was indeed presenting himself as the king prior to Bosworth. Additionally, Henry's "command" that Roger assemble a force to assist him in his seizure of the crown, and his later advice that Roger avoid his "grevost displaysir" by not doing so also suggests a determination on Henry's part to be taken seriously not just as an alternative king, but as the rightful one, who would be willing to punish those who did not give him their support.³⁸

During the lead up to the Battle of Bosworth, much of Henry's correspondence had been sent to members of the English nobility, and reflected a desire to specifically rid England of the tyranny of Richard III. However, in his pre-kingship years, there is also evidence that Henry was crafting another role for himself: that of himself as a saviour of Wales from historic political oppression. As discussed previously, Henry had a strong familial and personal connection to Wales, having been born and spending some of the formative years of his life there. The relationship between England and Wales during the Middle Ages was at best tense, and at worst characterised by invasion, conquest, and a loss of rights, culture, and self-government for Wales at the hands of English kings. Since the Norman

³⁷ Mel Evans, *Royal Voices: Language and Power in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 71.

³⁸ Letter from Henry Tudor to Sir Roger Kynaston, in Griffiths, "Henry Tudor," 209.

invasion in 1066, Wales had experienced multiple attempts at invasion and conquest by kings of England, beginning in 1067 with William the Conqueror.³⁹ By the end of the eleventh century, Wales was heavily divided, with different areas of the country controlled by the English crown, independent marcher lordships, and native Welsh ruling dynasties respectively.⁴⁰ In the thirteenth century during the reign of Edward I, England's conquest of Wales was essentially completed. Beginning in 1277, Edward's campaign into Wales initially focussed on weakening the power bases of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Gwynedd and recognised native Prince of Wales.⁴¹ Despite Llywelyn's resistance, by September 1277 he was forced to submit to Edward, losing his authority in central and south Wales.⁴² Following Llywelyn's defeat, the English conquest of Wales was complete, with Wales's legal, political, and economic systems brought fully under English jurisdiction by 1278.⁴³ Though Llywelyn's brother Daffyd, and later Llywelyn himself, did lead an uprising against Edward's rule in March 1282, their efforts were in vain, and the rebellion was crushed in December of the same year.⁴⁴ Henry's connections to Wales, then, were not necessarily in his favour, particularly in regards to becoming both king of England and a saviour of Wales. While previous kings of England had had links to Wales and claimed to be a descendant of the ancient kings of Britain – most notably Edward IV – none incorporated Wales into their representative imagery and symbols nearly as prominently as Henry did. Wales made up a key component of Henry's image, both before and after becoming king.

During the lead up to the Battle of Bosworth, Henry recognised the need for Welsh support of his campaign, particularly as he planned to launch his invasion of England by moving up through Wales, and as such he sent letters out to various Welsh landowners whose

³⁹ Sean Davies, *Edward I's Conquest of Wales* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2017), 10.

⁴⁰ Davies, *Edward I*, 8.

⁴¹ Davies, *Edward I*, 8.

⁴² Davies, *Edward I*, 110-11.

⁴³ Davies, *Edward I*, 120.

⁴⁴ Davies, *Edward I*, 146.

lands he would pass through enroute to meet the opposing forces. One such letter, written to a landowner named John ap Maredudd who held lands in north Wales, survives. The letter provides an example of the type of help Henry was seeking, but more importantly, it also contains descriptions of Richard, Henry, and Wales' political status which hint at the saviour role Henry sought to adopt in relation to Wales. Henry begins the letter by acknowledging the connection that he has to Wales and its inhabitants, writing of the "great confidence that we have to the nobles and comons of this our principalitye of Wales [sic]", before going on to outline the reason for his need to pass through John ap Maredudd's lands.⁴⁵ Henry writes that "throughe the helpe of almighty God, the assistaunce of our lovinge frendes and true subjects [sic]" and that aforementioned confidence he has in the Welsh, he plans to

"...descend into our realme of England not onely for the adepcion [recovery] of the crowne unto us of right appertayninge [appertaining], but also for the oppression of that odious tirant [tyrant] Richard late duke of Gloucester, usurper of our said right and moreover to reduce as well our said realme of England into his auncient [ancient] estate honour and prosperitye, as this our said principalitye of Wales, and the people of the same their erst libertyes, deliveringe them of such miserable servitudes as they have piteously longe stand [stood] in [sic]..."⁴⁶

In this letter, Henry, of course, presents himself as the rightful claimant to the throne: he refuses to acknowledge Richard III as the king, instead calling him by his previous title of Duke of Gloucester, and refers to him as a tyrant and usurper. However, Henry also presents himself as something of a saviour of the Welsh people. Henry appeals to a sense of shared national injustice and cultural experience that he seems to assume John ap Maredudd, as a Welshman, will share. He writes of his desire to restore to the Welsh their "erst" liberties,

⁴⁵ *Letter to John ap Maredudd*, in Griffiths, "Henry Tudor," 208-209.

⁴⁶ *Letter to John ap Maredudd*, in Griffiths, "Henry Tudor," 208-209.

which appears to be a reference to the rights held by Wales before successive English invasions greatly reduced the individual rights of the Welsh people, and effectively eliminated native rule. Henry also writes of his aim to deliver the Welsh from the “miserable servitudes” they have had to endure, highly emotive language which, again, seems to indicate that Henry was both aware of and concerned with the poor conditions in Wales, and wanted to present himself, at least during his Bosworth campaign, as the figure who would deliver Wales from these conditions. Of course, this letter can simply be read as an appeal to a Welsh landowner; read from this perspective, it is unsurprising that Henry would appeal to John in such a way that ensures Henry gets what he needs – unimpeded passage through north Wales. Given the fact that the principality of Wales was also under the rule of the English king – in this case Richard – the letter can also be seen as a furtherance of Henry’s promise to rid the entire kingdom of Richard’s tyranny. However, this letter also indicates that even before he seized the throne, Henry was aware of conditions in Wales, and incorporated them into his image of saviourhood. Henry was using Wales to construct an image of himself as a saviour of the country, as the figure who would lead it out of its “miserable servitude” as Henry emotionally put it. In this way, Henry’s description of himself in the letter was laying the foundation for his later image as king, in which Wales featured prominently.

Henry’s depiction of Welsh saviourhood was also manifested through his use of Welsh symbols, colours, and imagery during the Battle of Bosworth itself. During the battle, Henry displayed a symbol that had long been linked to Wales and, specifically, to the prophetic legend that Wales would one day defeat the English who they perceived as invaders of their native land. Robert Fabyan, in his *Great Chronicle of London*, provided an account of Henry’s procession into London following his victory at Bosworth, in which he included a description of the standard and banners that Henry fought under. Fabyan writes that Henry

“...with great pompe and triumphe...roade through the cytie to the cathedral church of S. Paule wher he offred [offered] his iii. standards...in the secod [second] was a red firy [fiery] drago [dragon] beaten vpo [upon] white and grene sarcenet...”⁴⁷

The standard that Fabyan describes here is one of a red dragon imposed on a background of green and white material – an image steeped in Welsh oral stories, history, and mythology. Of course, the use of the symbol of a dragon was not limited solely to Wales. Between the first and fourth centuries CE, the symbol of the *draco* (which had the head of a dragon with the body of a serpent) was used as a military standard by the Romans, and became a personal emblem of the emperor.⁴⁸ Dragons, and dragon-slaying figures, also exist in the mythologies, folklore, and national histories of various areas; many of the Greco-Roman myth cycles, including those of Heracles, Jason, Perseus, and Odysseus feature a dragon-slayer, as do mythologies of Near East and Indo-European cultures.⁴⁹ England’s own patron saint, St George, was himself a dragon-slayer. However, the symbol of the dragon in Wales was rarely associated with a slaying figure; rather, the dragon represented Wales itself. The earliest description of a dragon representing Wales is found in the story of the two brothers Lludd and Llefelys, a traditional Welsh fable contained in the *Mabinogion*. The *Mabinogion* is a collection of eleven Welsh stories passed down as oral histories, and eventually written down in the fourteenth century.⁵⁰ In the story of Lludd and Llefelys, the titular brothers are respectively the kings of Britain and France. Lludd’s kingdom of Britain is besieged by three plagues, the second of which was a scream heard every evening in May,

⁴⁷ Robert Fabyan, *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley (London: G.W. Jones, 1938), 238.

⁴⁸ Kirsi Simpanen, “The symbolism behind the *Draco* standard,” *Arctos – Acta Philologica Fennica* 55 (2021): 225-226.

⁴⁹ Daniel Ogden, *Drakōn: dragon myth and serpent cult in the Greek and Roman worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

⁵⁰ *Mabinogion*, ed., and trans. Sioned Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

which had the power to damage the land, cause women to miscarry, and men to lose their strength.⁵¹ After appealing to him for help, Llefelys tells Lludd that

“‘The second plague in your land...that is a dragon, and a dragon of another foreign people is fighting it and trying to overthrow it, and because of that,’ he said, ‘your dragon gives out a horrible scream.’”⁵²

The theme of one dragon fighting off another, foreign dragon was intended to represent the invasion of Britain by the Saxons in the fifth century, and was an idea repeated by other writers when recording the history of Wales. The ninth-century Welsh monk Nennius, in his *Historia Brittonum*, also referenced a battle between two dragons, this time one red and one white. In his version of the Tale of Emrys, Nennius writes of a meeting between the British king Vortigern, a council of wizards, and a young Merlin (referred to as Ambrosius). In Nennius’ tale, a cloth holding one white worm and one red worm is revealed to the king, the meaning of which is explained by Ambrosius:

“The boy [Ambrosius] said ‘Wait and see what the worms do.’ The worms began to drive each other out. One used his shoulders to drive the other on to a half of the cloth. This they did three times; then the red worm was seen to be weaker, and then was stronger than the white, and drove him beyond the edge of the cloth...Then the boy asked the wizards ‘What is the meaning of this remarkable sign, that happened on the cloth?’ They admitted ‘We do not know.’ The boy answered... ‘The cloth represents your kingdom, and the two worms are two dragons. The red worm is your dragon...But the white one is the dragon of the people who have seized many

⁵¹ *Mabinogion*, Davies, 1.

⁵² *Mabinogion*, Davies, 178.

peoples and countries in Britain, and will reach almost from sea to sea; but later our people will arise, and will valiantly throw the English people across the sea.”⁵³

Again, in Nennius’ story, the dragons represent Wales and England; this time however, the colour red becomes associated with Wales, and white with England.

Similarly, the design of Henry’s standard, which displayed the dragon against a background of green and white also nodded to Wales. The colours green and white were linked to Wales and Welsh rule, with the Welsh poet Prydydd y Moch (b.1173 – d.1220) describing Llywelyn the Great being “clad in the robe of Royalty, a robe of green and white silk”, suggesting that these were once Welsh royal colours.⁵⁴ Henry’s decision to fly a standard bearing a red dragon on a green and white background at Bosworth was thus a decision undoubtedly intertwined with his relationship to Wales. However, the choice of this standard also suggests that Henry aligned himself with Welsh understandings and symbols of saviourhood and liberation. The triumph of the red dragon, for Wales, represented Welsh triumph over invaders and the Welsh people’s subsequent liberation, an idea which fits neatly into Henry’s own language and style of saviourhood that he had begun to use. Henry’s use of the red dragon and his assertion that he would free Wales from servitude also speaks to his role as *y mab darogan*, which was attributed to him by Welsh bards in the lead up to the Battle of Bosworth. *Y mab darogan* or the son of prophecy was a returning hero figure in Welsh literature, often tasked with rescuing or redeeming their people following oppression or displacement.⁵⁵ It is not far-fetched to assume that the saviourhood that Henry had already

⁵³ Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, ed., and trans. John Morris (London: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1980), 42, 31.

⁵⁴ Excerpt from poem by Prydydd y Moch, in John Williams, “Antiquity of Welsh History,” *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 1, no.3 (July 1846), 320.

⁵⁵ Aled Llion Jones, “Prophecy as criticism: MS Peniarth 50, tradition and translation”, *Translation Studies* 9, no.2 (2016), 140.

begun to cultivate was further bolstered by recognition from his homeland, and that such recognition also fed his desire to liberate Wales.

An examination of Henry's life before kingship allow us to see that Henry was already beginning to construct a particular image of himself and was engaging with ideas of saviourhood at least a year before seizing the throne. Henry's early adoption of the title of king, and the language and symbols he used to represent himself reflect the liberation that he asserted he would bring to England, and reflect a consideration of the needs (as he saw them) of both England and Wales. Further, and perhaps most significantly, the language that Henry uses in his letters and the iconography he chose to represent himself early on in his quest for the throne provide clues as to what his future kingly image would look like. The expressions of saviourhood that Henry made in the lead up to Bosworth, particularly his depiction of himself as a liberator of both England and Wales, were carried with him and publicly displayed throughout his reign, and came to define his portrayal of himself as king. By understanding the origins of Henry's saviourhood, we can track its development, continuity, and change across his reign, and indeed beyond, as the next three chapters of this thesis will demonstrate.

Chapter 2: *Saviourhood Through Liberation*

“...for the just depriving of that homicide and unnaturall tyrant...”¹

Such was Henry’s stated purpose in entering England ahead of the battle of Bosworth in 1485. The “unnatural tyrant” to whom Henry was referring was of course Richard III, who had come to the throne in June 1483 shrouded in controversy after deposing his nephew, the uncrowned Edward V. From the moment that Henry became a viable claimant to the English throne and, as we have seen, in some of his earliest surviving letters, Henry maintained that his purpose in seeking the throne was neither for greed nor personal glory; rather, he maintained that he asserted his claim in the name of justice, right, and, importantly, liberation. Once Henry had won the throne, these themes became central tenets of Henry’s kingship and image, essential for both legitimising his claim, lineage, and seizure of the throne in the first place, as well as for stabilising the kingdom and attempting to heal the divisions caused by years of civil conflict during the Wars of the Roses. By painting himself as a liberator, and as someone with a just and rightful claim to the throne, especially in the face of his predecessor’s tyranny, Henry endowed himself with a sense of legitimacy; according to Henry, Richard had gained the throne illegitimately and ruled tyrannously, and so Henry’s deposition of him was less usurpation than it was liberation. Creating this roundabout form of legitimacy was crucial for Henry; upon becoming king in 1485, Henry not only stepped into a role for which he had no experience or training, but also became the head of a country that was heavily factionally divided as a result of the internecine conflict between Lancaster and York. If going by the precedent set in the last two decades alone, Henry, despite being king, was not by any means guaranteed security on the throne. His four

¹ Open letter sent by Henry from exile to his allies in England. Date unknown, c. late 1484. In Caroline Halsted, *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester and King of England* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), 566.

most recent predecessors – Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III – had all lost their thrones at some point during their reigns (even though Edward IV did recover his).² Additionally, Henry’s own claim to the throne was tenuous, despite his best efforts to portray it otherwise. Henry was inexperienced and operating in an environment almost entirely unfamiliar to him, with both history and his own lineage decidedly not in his favour. What Henry could do to bolster his legitimacy and his security, however, was to ensure he was depicted, both by himself and in biography form, as a liberator, who would fulfil his promise made before his accession to rid England of tyranny.

To explore Henry’s saviour image, and in particular, how it manifested through a depiction of himself as a liberator and defeater of tyranny and bad rule, this chapter will begin with a discussion of the work of one of Henry’s few contemporary biographers: Bernard André. André’s *Life of Henry VII*, composed between 1500 – 1502, provides the first official account of Henry’s reign and victory at Bosworth, and is one of the earliest sources, aside from Henry’s own letters, that positions Henry as a liberator and Richard III as a tyrant. In particular, the analysis of the *Life* in this chapter will focus on André’s depiction of Henry’s liberation of the kingdom through his victory at Bosworth, as well as on his representation of Henry as a divinely-appointed vanquisher of sin and ungodly rule and rightful inheritor of the throne. In the second section of this chapter, I will shift our attention to Henry’s image as a liberator of his homeland of Wales. This section will examine Henry’s grants of denization to Welshmen in England and his exemptions from discriminatory laws granted to several towns and lordships in the north of Wales towards the end of his reign. Though Henry’s direct, practical interaction with Wales was limited once he became king, these grants and exemptions do reflect a desire to play the role of the liberator for Wales, a role that was both prophesied and reflected in Henry’s own pre-kingship letters. Ultimately,

² Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 3.

this chapter will illustrate the extent to which playing the role of the liberator permeated Henry's broader projected image of himself as a saviour, and how it was expressed 'theoretically' in his biography and practically through his grants to Wales. An exploration of Henry's belief in himself as a liberator indicates that while elements of his saviour image initially appear propagandistic, they in fact reflect genuine concerns of Henry's, namely the insecurity of his position, and his desire to implement practical change and improvements in his kingdom.

'...descend into our realme of England': Henry as Liberator of England³

The modern historiography on Henry VII has done substantial work on his iconography and the visuality of both his and broader Tudor kingship. Sydney Anglo in particular has demonstrated the importance of visual display and spectacle to Henry and his Tudor descendants, highlighting the legitimising and stabilising role that such displays played for the Tudors by reinforcing their connections to Lancastrian royalty. While such analysis is highly valuable, and indeed is an important element of my own work, I would like to turn now to one of the few contemporary written accounts of Henry's life and reign: Bernard André's *The Life of Henry VII*, commissioned by Henry and written between 1500 – 1502, though left incomplete. André's *Life* reads almost as an equal parts biography and hagiography; he details Henry's life beginning in about 1483 up until he stopped writing in 1502, incorporating descriptions of Henry's lineage, experiences, and key events in his life, as well as praise-poems, panegyrics and (likely invented) speeches given by Henry. André's work is a largely under-examined source in the historiography of Henry's reign, likely due in part to its long sections of verse and fabrication or embellishment of certain speeches and

³ *Letter to John ap Maredudd*, in Griffiths, "Henry Tudor," 208-209.

events.⁴ However, to overlook André's *Life* is to our detriment, particularly if we want to better understand the origins and application of Henry's image of himself as a saviour. *The Life of Henry VII* may not provide us with the most scholarly account of Henry's reign, at least from a modern historiographical perspective, but what it does provide is an insight into how Henry wanted to be seen, written by someone who knew him personally, not just as king, but prior to his seizure of the throne at Bosworth. André's biography is an invaluable source for investigating Henry's saviourhood; it presents Henry clearly in the role of liberator and Richard III as the monstrous villain, roles which remained defining aspects of Henry's liberating saviourhood throughout his reign and beyond.

Despite scarce details existing about his life prior to his arrival at Henry's court, we do know that André, born in Toulouse, first met Henry during Henry's years in exile in Brittany and later France between 1471 – 1485.⁵ Upon Henry's entry to London following the battle of Bosworth in 1485, André greeted the new king by reciting Latin poetry, and in 1486 was granted an annuity by Henry.⁶ In 1496, André was appointed royal tutor to Henry's eldest son Arthur, and in 1500 was appointed royal historiographer and commissioned to write a biography of the king.⁷ Bernard André therefore knew Henry for more than two decades. While of course their relationship was most likely one of king and subject, it is clear that a long-standing relationship did exist between the two, one that seems to have earned André a substantial degree of trust and privilege from Henry. André clearly enjoyed proximity to Henry and his family, a fact that makes his work particularly useful for understanding the image that Henry wanted to project. *The Life of Henry VII* is one of the first sources to decidedly demonise Richard III and transform him into the tyrant still so recognisable today,

⁴ Daniel Hobbins, "Introduction," in Bernard André *The Life of Henry VII* (New York: Ithaca Press, 2011), xii.

⁵ Hobbins, "Introduction," xiii.

⁶ Hobbins, "Introduction," xiii.

⁷ Hobbins, "Introduction," xiii – xv.

and thus also one of the first sources to demonstrate Henry's desire to depict himself as a saviour.⁸ Throughout André's account of Henry's life, he highlights the monstrous qualities of Richard III, emphasising his tyranny, unnaturalness, and bloodthirstiness, while Henry is presented simultaneously as a remover of tyranny, as an almost Christ-like redeemer, and as the rightful, legitimate king of England.

André begins his biography by describing Henry's lineage, linking Henry and his family all the way back to Brutus, the founder of Britain, as well as legendary kings such as Cadwallo and Cadwaladr, the latter of whom will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis. André provides a brief overview of the deeds of these kings and the subsequent arrival of the Saxons into Britain, whom he describes as having "interrupted" the rule of the Britons – an interruption not rectified, according to André, until the arrival of Henry on the throne.⁹ After the arrival of the Saxons, André writes that

"There followed after a long space of time a series of many laws, disastrous losses, and the massacres of Richard the Third, who cruelly murdered his brother Edward the Fourth's two sons, Prince Edward and Richard, duke of York. Then Henry the Seventh liberated the land by divine and human right, with divine power vindicating, willing, and assisting, as from a most brutal enemy. He swiftly overcame and slaughtered Richard as he deserved and drove his tyranny from the island."¹⁰

The language that André uses in this passage is crucial for understanding the development of Henry's saviour image and, indeed, it is language we see used again and again throughout the *Life*. André refers here to Henry "liberating" the land, indicating that prior to Henry's reign, the kingdom had experienced a loss of freedom and subsequent subjugation, overseen by the

⁸ Hobbins, "Introduction," xi.

⁹ Bernard André, *The Life of Henry VII*, ed., and trans. by Daniel Hobbins (New York: Ithaca Press, 2011), 7.

¹⁰ André, *Henry VII*, 8.

Saxons and eventually Richard III. Henry's arrival on the throne signals the end of this subjugation, and, importantly, a return to freedom and good kingship. This idea is further reinforced in two speeches written by André in the *Life*, attributed to Henry. These speeches may be loosely based on real speeches made by Henry ahead of Bosworth, however they are likely heavily embellished. Despite the embellishment, the speeches do again show this idea of Henry as a liberator. In André's record of the prayer Henry supposedly said before leaving France, Henry states that he makes his journey "not for greed, ambition, or certainly any desire to spill human blood. I go rather as one aggrieved at the long and wretched captivity of the kingdom of England and her people."¹¹ Similarly, in André's version of Henry's greeting to the English people ahead of Bosworth, Henry states that he has arrived

"...after long delays, tutored by a divine oracle about the countless calamities you suffer even now. Not with the sword, nor with fire, nor with plunder do we wish to ruin you. We come rather to liberate you from tyranny, and we have determined with God's help to reclaim our ancient right neglected since the slaughter of the blessed Henry the Sixth."¹²

In each of these speeches, England is described as existing in a state of captivity, with Henry's purpose in challenging Richard III presented as one of liberation and the restoration of freedom.

In addition to liberation, the above passages also make reference to the "divine and human right" through which Henry freed the kingdom from oppression and claimed the throne.¹³ Much of Bernard André's argument for Henry's right to rule England (and, really, Henry's own argument, which André clearly reflects) centres around the idea of the divine

¹¹ André, *Henry VII*, 22.

¹² André, *Henry VII*, 27.

¹³ André, *Henry VII*, 8.

right of kings, and specifically Henry's own divinely sanctioned kingship. By highlighting Richard's wickedness, his tyrannical kingship, and his crimes, André positions Richard as antithetical to righteousness and godliness, and as an illegitimate king ruling in opposition to God's law, thereby reinforcing the justification for Henry's seizure of power.

André heavily emphasises Henry's divine right to rule throughout his text, and uses it to position Henry clearly not only as a saviour but as an almost messianic figure, juxtaposed against Richard III's sinfulness and barbarity. André sets up Henry as a semi-divine figure early on in his biography, describing him when a young boy as having "the highest disposition of virtue" and noting that "he was so attentive in reading and listening to the divine office that all who watched him saw signs of his future goodness and success."¹⁴ If we return to Henry's speech made before departing France, we see these themes of divine right and inherent goodness once more; in describing his purpose, Henry states that

"...You see that the tyrant has defiled everything with blood. He butchered the duke of Buckingham...and many other innocent people, even heroes of the kingdom, and he murdered his own nephews. The bloodthirsty king also longs to destroy us in like manner – we who were passed over by the will of God...But now the time draws near when God, the righteous judge, will punish his crimes by our hands. Be strong therefore in this battle, and keep God ever before your eyes...Victory comes not from the number of warriors but from the hand of God."¹⁵

In this passage, Henry is presented not only as a figure who is prepared to rescue England from tyranny, but as a soldier of God. In asserting that God will judge and punish the crimes of Richard III "by our hands," Henry is positioned as God's representative, sanctioned by him to carry out justice and dole out punishments in his noble pursuit to rid the country of

¹⁴ André, *Henry VII*, 10.

¹⁵ André, *Henry VII*, 23.

tyrannous rule. Additionally, this passage also draws a (well-established) link between martial victory and divine intervention; written over a decade after Henry's victory in battle at Bosworth, André is here reinforcing the idea that Henry's kingship is indeed divinely sanctioned. Finally, this passage also further demonstrates the stark differences between Henry and Richard III, a key tenet of Henry's saviour image. In this passage, Henry's description of Richard is steeped in tyranny and barbarism; he butchers, he defiles, he murders, he is altogether bloodthirsty and therefore ungodly. By contrast, Henry is the beacon of righteousness, liberation, and devoutness, chosen by God to rid England of Richard's violence. This contrast is also further emphasised later on in André's biography. In Henry's speech given upon arriving in England, Henry tells the people of England that although they are "mistreated and miserably subject to a cruel tyrant, I rejoice for myself, I rejoice for you, I love you, and I shall be your protector" before instructing his army:

"You are to do nothing to others, in word or deed, that you would not wish others to do even to yourselves. If you behave so, God will favour us and the unlawful usurper will not long enjoy what rightfully belongs to others."¹⁶

Once again, Henry is presented as a saviour here, but he is also more than that. In his proclamation of love and protection for the English people, Henry is also presented as a messianic, Christ-like figure, both a righteous avenger and a loving saviour. Further to this idea, Henry's instruction given to his army to essentially "do unto others" is a direct reference to Jesus' Golden Rule, handed down during his Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."¹⁷ Throughout this speech, Henry is positioned by André (though likely at the

¹⁶ André, *Henry VII*, 27.

¹⁷ "Matthew 7:12," *King James Version*. Accessed online at: <<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-7-12/>>.

request of Henry himself) as a just, lawful, and godly saviour, whose sole purpose was to rid England of tyrannous, ungodly rule. By contrast again, Richard III is depicted as the opposite; André compares Richard to “a snake feeding on evil plants...inflamed and enraged into madness” and attributes to Richard a speech in which he commands his army to

“...destroy everyone by fire and the sword, without mercy, pity or kindness...Slaughter the earl of Richmond [Henry] himself without respect to his blood or noble birth. Or, if you can, bring him to me alive, so that after I have devised some new or uncommon punishment, I may slaughter him, cut his throat, or slay him with my own hands.”¹⁸

The villainy of Richard III in this passage is almost cartoonish in its depiction, however for Henry, it serves an important purpose. The vilification of Richard III was crucial to Henry’s successful depiction of himself as a saviour. In André’s biography, Richard is clearly associated with Satan – he is compared to a snake and devises new cruel and unusual punishments for his enemies. By contrast, Henry is a messiah, sweeping in to England to rid the country of this satanic and sinful ruler.

In addition to André’s depiction of Henry as a liberator and divine saviour, we lastly need to consider his depiction of Henry as a saviour from a specific type of bad governance: tyranny. In both Henry’s pre-kingship letters and throughout André’s biography, tyranny is a central element and one of the key themes used to justify Henry’s usurpation of the throne, and to highlight the contrast between him and Richard III. In the *Life*, Richard is repeatedly referred to as a tyrant, which André associates with cruelty, violence, injustice, and ungodliness. Henry, as we have seen, is presented as the antithesis to these qualities; he is depicted as a just and loving Christ-like redeemer, who will save England from the torment it suffers under Richard’s rule. Despite André’s humanist education in France, his

¹⁸ André, *Henry VII*, 28.

representation of tyranny in the *Life* appears to be predominantly grounded in concepts of tyranny from the medieval world. Although André's work does position Henry as an ideal embodiment of fifteenth-century princely virtue – particularly through his discussion of Henry's good qualities as a child and his mercy, intellect, and piety – the ways in which Richard III is characterised as a tyrant more closely reflect the theoretical frameworks established in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The *Life* also falls more into the category of dynastic history than it does political treatise, and reflects the tradition of historical writing in France, which typically was closely linked to the royal house.¹⁹ As such, André's definitions of kingship and tyranny differ from some of his humanist contemporaries, for whom kingship and tyranny could be interchangeable.²⁰ In medieval political thought, kingship was typically synonymous with 'good' rulership; the idea of 'bad' kingship, or of having a king who was bad was an oxymoron within the political discourse of the Middle Ages.²¹ Instead, a monarch who was bad or who ruled badly or cruelly was considered a tyrant.²² This idea was emphasised in the twelfth century by John of Salisbury, who in his 1159 work *Policraticus* criticised the association of kings with tyrants, arguing that the Latin *rex* derived from the Latin word for right (*recte*), indicating that kingship should be associated with right or good conduct, and tyranny, its opposite, with bad.²³ We can certainly see this idea articulated throughout André's *Life*; Richard III is rarely referred to as king, even when André is describing events that occurred during his reign, but is instead almost exclusively referred to as a tyrant. By contrast, both Henry and his Lancastrian predecessor Henry VI are referred to as kings, with André referring to Henry VI as "the good king," "the

¹⁹ Hobbins, "Introduction," xxvi – xxvii.

²⁰ Hester Schadee, "'I Don't Know Who You Call Tyrants': Debating Evil Lords in Quattrocento Humanism," in *Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Nikos Panou and Hester Schadee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 173.

²¹ Cary J. Nederman, "There Are No 'Bad Kings': Tyrannical Characters and Evil Counselors in Medieval Political Thought," in *Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Nikos Panou and Hester Schadee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 137.

²² Nederman, "'Bad Kings'", 137.

²³ Nederman, "'Bad Kings'", 137.

blessed king,” and a “just, pious, and blameless king” at various instances, in addition to his glowing descriptions of Henry VII.²⁴

John of Salisbury also provides examples of characteristics belonging to tyrants, including a propensity towards violence and oppression, injustice, and enslavement of their people, and an association with depravity and the devil.²⁵ The version of Richard III portrayed in André’s *Life* has partaken in all these activities, further highlighting the fact that he has not ruled as a king, but rather as a tyrant. In *Policraticus*, John also notes that

“...it is not only permitted, but it is also equitable and just to slay tyrants. For he who receives the sword deserves to perish by the sword. But ‘receives’ is to be understood to pertain to he who has rashly usurped that which is not his, not he who receives what he uses from the power of God. He who receives power from God serves the laws and is the slave of justice and right.”²⁶

This idea that it is allowable to depose a tyrant, and that the person who does has received sanction from God is also found in André’s biography; he frames the battle of Bosworth and Henry’s victory as divine providence, with Richard having been “slaughtered as he deserved.”²⁷ In referring to Richard as a tyrant, André (and, by extension, Henry) is insinuating that Richard was not a king. According to John of Salisbury, a king was good and ruled justly; if he ruled badly, he was a tyrant. Such an idea again helps Henry to rather neatly sidestep his own tenuous claim to the throne and his own status as a usurper – he was not usurping a king at Bosworth, but rather was ridding England of a tyrant.

²⁴ André, *Henry VII*, 9, 15, 17.

²⁵ Nederman, “Bad Kings”, 140

²⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25.

²⁷ André, *Henry VII*, 29.

Despite its embellishment and often blatantly hagiographical style, Bernard André's biography is an essential text for understanding the development of Henry's image as a saviour. André's proximity to Henry and his family, and his relationship with Henry prior to 1485 gave him a unique insight into how Henry established himself and his fledgling dynasty, and, importantly, into how he wanted to be seen as king. In André's biography, we can identify one of the key themes of Henry's brand of saviourhood, that is, a sense that Henry was a liberator and deliverer for England, ridding the kingdom of tyranny and freeing it from the poor conditions it had been suffering under as a result of Richard III's rule.

'...such miserable servitudes': Henry as Liberator of Wales²⁸

"...For I am Welsh, you know, good countryman."²⁹

Such are the words Shakespeare's Henry V speaks to the Welsh officer Fluellen ahead of the Battle of Agincourt. And indeed, he is not alone in the sentiment. Henry Tudor was certainly not the first king of England to represent himself as Welsh through lineage, nor was he even the first king of England to be born in Wales.³⁰ What was more unique about Henry's relationship with Wales, however, was the contradictory nature of it and, particularly in the final years of his reign, the ways he used it not to support his legitimacy but to extract revenue to fill the royal coffers. In many ways, Henry's victory at Bosworth had been made possible by the support he received from Wales. Welsh landowners permitted him to pass through their lands, Welsh soldiers formed a key contingent of his army, and the Welsh bards heralded him as the hero who would liberate Wales and unite Britain, garnering further

²⁸ *Letter to John ap Maredudd*, in Griffiths, "Henry Tudor," 208-209.

²⁹ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act IV, Scene VII. Accessed online via the Folger Shakespeare Library <<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/henry-v/read/4/7/>>.

³⁰ Edward II was born in Caernarfon in Wales in 1284; Edward IV traced his lineage back through the Mortimer family line to Llewellyn the Great and, further back, to Cadwalladr. See Sydney Anglo, "The British History in early Stuart propaganda," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 44, no. 1 (1961): 20-21.

support for his cause. For Henry's part, he did acknowledge Wales and his connection to the country, especially in the early years of his reign. He, as we have seen in chapter one, used the red dragon of Wales as one of his personal standards at Bosworth, and later as king, and he had his court historian Bernard André highlight his supposed descent from Cadwaladr.

However, Henry's saviourhood as it applied to Wales was also complex image to craft. In presenting himself as saving Wales from, in his own words, the "miserable servitude" inflicted upon the country, Henry was walking a fine political line. To present himself as a saviour of Wales was in some ways the antithesis to English kingship; since the twelfth century England had launched various attempts to conquer Wales, finally succeeding in the late thirteenth century during the reign of Edward I. In many ways, Henry's own connection to Wales, or rather the way he acknowledged and displayed it, is inconsistent and contradictory. He clearly and quite deliberately drew upon Welsh legendary history and imagery in the creation of his image both before and after becoming king; his use of the red Welsh dragon as one of his standards, his written desire to free Wales from "miserable servitude", his choice of the name Arthur for his son, and his nods to prophecy and the figure of the *mab y darogan* would all suggest this was so. Further, Wales had provided essential military and cultural support to Henry during his Bosworth campaign, as shown by David Rees, actions that arguably helped propel Henry to the throne and bolstered his connection to the country. The fact remains, however, that Henry never visited Wales as king; he never returned to his homeland after seizing the throne at Bosworth.³¹ He also, it can reasonably be argued, did little to initiate real change to the discriminatory conditions faced by the Welsh. Overall, Henry's direct interaction with Wales and the effect of his saviour image on the country was negligible, with the legal and political restrictions placed on the Welsh remaining largely in place for the majority of Henry's reign. However, there is one area in which we can

³¹ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 273.

see Henry tangibly apply his saviour image to Wales, and it is through the exemptions from certain laws and restrictions that he granted to specific areas of Wales towards the end of his reign. These grants of exemption were by no means universal, and were likely born equally if not more out of Henry's revenue-raising efforts than genuine sentiment for Wales, but they do represent a practical side to Henry's saviourhood, and an example of how this image was used in conjunction with royal policy. While Henry's charters of freedoms that he granted to Wales may well suggest some degree of sentimentality or emotion for his homeland, they also ensured Welsh support and provided a source of revenue for a king who had by the end of his reign, become largely unpopular. Towards the final years of his kingship, Henry implemented a series of increasingly severe financial measures (more fully explored in chapter four) which represented a shift towards a more austere style of rule than he had previously demonstrated. With this shift in leadership style also came a shift in the application of Henry's saviourhood. While on the surface these grants fulfilled the promises Henry made before becoming king, they also aided in his increasingly harsh efforts to maintain control. To understand these grants and the ways Henry used them, we first must examine the political landscape of Wales prior to his reign.

Following Edward I's conquest of Wales in 1282, the area that became known as the Principality of Wales was brought under English jurisdiction, meaning that it was subject to the statutes and decisions of the crown. Two years later, on 19 March 1284, Edward I issued the Statute of Rhuddlan, also known as the Statute of Wales, which formally enshrined Edward's annexation of Wales to England.³² The beginning of the statute reads as follows:

“Edward, by the Grace of God King of England, Lord of Ireland, and Duke of Aquitaine, to all his Subjects of his Land of Snowdon, and of other his Lands in Wales,

³² Davies, *Edward I*, 155.

Greeting in the Lord. The Divine Providence, which is unerring in its own Government, among other gifts of its Dispensation, wherewith it hath vouchsafed to distinguish Us and our Realm of England, hath now of its favour, wholly and entirely transferred under our proper dominion, the Land of Wales with its Inhabitants, heretofore subject unto us, in Feudal Right, all obstacles whatsoever ceasing ; and hath annexed and united the same unto the Crown of the aforesaid Realm, as a Member of the same Body...[sic]”.³³

According to this passage of the statute, the Principality was now subject to the authority of the English crown, and was to be governed as a territory of England. Towards the end of this first section of the statute, we can also gain an insight into the legal changes that Edward intended to implement in Wales. The statute tells us that “the laws and customs of those parts,” that is, Wales, have been put before the king and members of the English nobility; after hearing these laws, Edward

“by the advice of the aforesaid Nobles, abolished certain of them, some thereof We have allowed, and some We have corrected; and We have likewise commanded certain others to be ordained and added thereto; and these We Will shall be from henceforth for ever stedfastly kept and observed in our Lands in those parts according to the Form underwritten [sic].”³⁴

Wales’ legal system therefore, and the traditional customs that had been practiced in the country were thus largely abolished or significantly altered following Edward’s conquest; English legal and financial frameworks were introduced in the Principality, which effectively eradicated native Welsh customs and ensured that English common law would be the default

³³ “The Statute of Wales,” in Ivor Bowen, *Statutes of Wales* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1908), 2.

³⁴ “Statute of Wales,” in Bowen, *Statutes*, 2-3.

in any legal cases heard in Wales.³⁵ Additionally, the statute imposed geographical division upon Wales; Gwynedd, the traditional seat of power of the most powerful native Welsh princes was broken up into three governable areas, which became the royal counties of Caernarfon, Merioneth, and Anglesey, each answerable, of course, to the English crown, and presided over by royal officials: “Sheriffs, Coroners, and Bailiffs of Commotes [sic]...”.³⁶ The Statute of Wales imposed what was essentially colonial rule in Wales, and was the first of a series of statutes implemented between 1284 and 1402 which historians Matthew Stevens and Theresa Phipps have described as amounting to “race laws”, similar to an apartheid system.³⁷ During this period, laws were introduced which increasingly impinged upon the movement, freedom, and political and legal rights of the Welsh. In 1295, according to extents listed in the Record of Carnarvon, the Welsh were restricted from carrying “arms to attack or defend in towns, markets, churches or congregations on penalty of loss of the same arms and imprisonment for one year”, as well as from “bear[ing] arms in the English walled towns on penalty of loss and forfeit of the arms and imprisonment.”³⁸ These laws indicate that following the conquest of Wales, there was a definite interest, on the part of the English crown, in suppressing or limiting Welsh movement, and their potential to participate in any kind of armed disruption or insurrection.

These 1295 laws were confirmed again in 1402 during the reign of Henry IV (r.1399-1413), following the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr, who led a substantial and lengthy rebellion against English rule between 1400 – 1415. During Owain’s revolt, Henry IV introduced a number of statutes designed to restrict Welsh freedom of movement further, and well as further limit the legal and political rights of the Welsh in Wales and England. In 1400-1401,

³⁵ Davies, *Edward I*, 155.

³⁶ Rees, *The Son of Prophecy*, 9. And “Statute of Wales,” in Bowen, *Statutes*, 3.

³⁷ Matthew Stevens and Teresa Phipps, “Towards a Characterization of ‘Race Law’ in Medieval Wales,” *The Journal of Legal History* 41, no. 3 (November 2020): 297.

³⁸ “Record of Caernarvon” 131-132, in Stevens and Phipps, “Race Law”, 318.

Henry IV passed a statute in which Welshmen were prohibited from purchasing land in certain areas of the Welsh March, thereby limiting their movement and economic freedom, and also introduced restrictions on holding positions in local government:

“It is ordained and established that from henceforth no Welshman wholly born in Wales, and having father and mother born in Wales, shall purchase lands and tenements within the Towns of Chester, Salop, Bridgenorth, Ludlow, Leominster, Hereford, Gloucester, Worcester, nor other Merchant towns joining to the marches of Wales, nor in the suburbs of the same upon pain of forfeiture of the same lands and tenements to the Lords of whom such lands or tenements be holden in chief. And also that no such Welshman be from henceforth chosen or received to be citizen or burgess in any City Borough or Merchant Town...So that none of them from henceforth be received or Recepted to no Office of Mayor, Bailiff, Chamberlain, Constable, or Warden of the ports or of the Gaol, nor to the Common Council of such cities boroughs or towns, nor that he be in no wise made other occupier or Officer in the same ; nor that none of the said Welshmen from henceforth bear any manner armour within such City Borough or Merchant Town, upon pain of forfeiture of the same armour and imprisonment until they have made fine in his behalf [sic].”³⁹

These restrictions on office-holding were later extended in 1402:

“It is ordained and established that no Welshman be made Justice Chamberlain, Chancellor, Treasurer, Sheriff, Steward, Constable of Castle, Receiver, Escheator, Coroner, nor Chief Foresters nor other officer, nor Keeper of the Records nor

³⁹ “2 Henry 4 c.12, 1400-01”, in Bowen, *Statutes*, 31.

Lieutenant in any of the said offices in no part of Wales, nor of the Council of any English Lord....”⁴⁰

Here, the restrictions on office-holding, and really, by extension, on the political rights of the Welsh were expanded to encompass the whole of Wales, rather than just the March as the original 1400-1401 statute had stipulated. Similar statutes passed in the same years also restricted the ability of the Welsh to procure justice and due process through the legal system; another of Henry IV’s statutes passed in 1400-1401 stipulated that for the following three years “no Englishman... shall be convict at the suit of any Welshman within Wales, except it be by the judgment of English Justices or by the Judgment of whole Englishmen Burgesses”, further limiting the ability of the Welsh to seek legal redress in Wales.⁴¹ It is reasonable to assume that these were some of the “miserable servitudes” to which Henry had referred in his 1485 letter to John ap Maredudd.

So, what could Henry do about these conditions in Wales? In reality, not a great deal. English law limited the ability of a monarch to completely revoke the statutes of a previous king, meaning that Henry was ultimately limited in the practical measures he could actually take to improve the situation in Wales.⁴² What he could do, however, was to grant exemptions from the restrictions laid down in previous statutes, both to individuals, and to whole towns or lordships. Henry granted exemptions from the statutes of Henry IV in two main ways, the first of which was through granting denization to Welshmen living in England. Denization was introduced in England as a category of royal grant - Letters Patent of Denization – at the end of the fourteenth century, and was initially granted to foreign clergy and merchants, though this was later expanded to include a range of foreign men and

⁴⁰ “4 Henry 4 c. 32, 1402”, in Bowen, *Statutes*, 36.

⁴¹ “2 Henry 4 c.20, 1400-01”, in Bowen, *Statutes*, 33-34.

⁴² Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 256.

women who had taken up residence in England.⁴³ Denization afforded foreign residents of England the majority of rights enjoyed by those native to England, including the ability to bring a case before the courts, protection from corruption or injustice by royal officials, and full property possession rights.⁴⁴ In Henry's letters patent, we can find examples of Henry granting denization to various Welshman living in England, which included specific exemption from the statutes of Henry IV. On 18 January 1486, Henry granted the

“Denization of William ap Griffith ap Robyn, native of Wales: and extention [sic] to him of the privileges of an Englishman, and enfranchisement from the penal enactments against the Welsh of 2 Henry IV.”⁴⁵

Similarly, just under a month later on 16 February 1486, Henry also granted denization to another Welshman in England:

“Denization of Richard ap Llewellyn ap Hulkyn, *alias* Res ap Hulkyn, who is a Welshman by birth, and the children of his body lawfully begotten, and enfranchisement from the penal enactments against the Welsh of 2 Henry IV.”⁴⁶

In each of these grants, Henry explicitly states that these men are exempt from the legal and political restrictions placed on them by the statutes of Henry IV, thereby granting them not only the same rights as English citizens, but also the rights denied to them by the Welsh statutes, such as to hold political or legal office and to purchase land and property. From an examination of his patent rolls, we can observe that in 1495 Henry also granted denization to other Welshmen, including a John ap Elys of Ruthland and “the heirs of his body” and an

⁴³ Bart Lambert and W. Mark Ormrod, “Friendly Foreigners: International Warfare, Resident Aliens and the Early History of Denization in England, c.1250–c.1400”, *The English Historical Review* 130, no.532 (February 2015): 1.

⁴⁴ Lambert and Ormrod, “Friendly Foreigners,” 1.

⁴⁵ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls of Henry VII, I, A.D. 1485 - 1494; II, 1494 - 1509 (C.P.R)*, ed. H.C. Maxwell Lyte (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1914), 55.

⁴⁶ *C.P.R.* I, 75.

Owen Tydur and his children (it is not clear whether this Owen Tydur was a relative of Henry's – his grandfather, also named Owen Tudor, had already died prior to Henry ascending the throne).⁴⁷ In the grand scheme of things, the denizations that Henry granted did not bring about substantial change for the Welsh. They were granted to people known to the king who were living in England, and were thereby limited in their scope and accessibility. However, what the denizations do indicate is that in the first decade of his reign, Henry's image of himself as a saviour was being applied practically, and was used to elevate the position and experiences of Welshmen living in England and, in the case of William ap Griffith ap Robyn, who fought with Henry at Bosworth, rewarding Welshmen who had supported him.⁴⁸

More significant in terms of tangible change and in terms of political expediency, however, were the exemptions from the statutes of Henry IV that Henry granted to various areas in Wales in the last five years of his reign. Granted to a number of towns and lordships in the north of Wales, the exemptions freed the Welsh inhabitants of these areas from the restrictions imposed during the fifteenth century. In one of his first exemptions to north Wales, issued on 28 October 1504, Henry granted property and political rights to the inhabitants of Caernarvon and Merioneth, declaring that the tenants and inhabitants of these areas and their heirs should

“be empowered freely to bear, hold, enjoy, and occupy, in peace and quietness, the office of sheriff, mayor, guardian of the peace, bailiff, constable, and any other office whatsoever, if they should have been elected and called to those offices...”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *C.P.R.* II, 16, 43.

⁴⁸ William supposedly brought a troop of horses to aid Henry in battle. Glyn Roberts, “Williams family, of Cochwillan,” *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (1959). <<https://biography.wales/article/s1-WILL-COC-1389>>.

⁴⁹ This charter does not appear in the Patent Rolls, but is contained within an *inspeximus* from the first year of Henry VII's reign. *Inspeximus* printed in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1847): 292 – 296. See Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 253.

Similarly, in a charter issued on 8 August 1505, Henry gave the inhabitants of the lordship of Bromfield and Yale

“...the power of acquiring lands and tenements in fee in England or in English towns in Wales, and of holding the offices of sheriff, mayor, bailiff, constable or other officer therein notwithstanding the Act in parliament 2 Henry IV; and of becoming burgesses in any English town in Wales...”⁵⁰

Here, Henry granted property and political rights to Welshmen living in Bromfield and Yale, giving them the ability to acquire property in England, and hold political office. Again, on 20 July 1506, Henry issued two similar exemptions to the lordships of Chirk and

“...Denbychlond, *alias* Ros and Ryvoneok...the commote of Kemmerch...the tenants of the bishops of St Asaph and Bangor, of the abbot of Conwey, of the master of the hospital of St. John the Baptist of Spytty, of the barons of Brynsannygl and of any other lords, barons or persons and all inhabitants within the lordship, commote and places aforesaid, notwithstanding statutes 2 and 4 of Henry IV against Welshmen acquiring lands in England... [sic]”⁵¹

To these areas, Henry granted the same land and office-holding rights as mentioned above, and stipulated that the lordship’s inhabitants

“...may go to all places, market towns or others, without the said lordship, with their goods to sell them and not be compelled to pay tolls within the lordship of Chirk; on goods sold without the lordship, and be discharged of all tolls within the lordship as the burgesses of Chirk; are. They shall have common of pasture in the

⁵⁰ *C.P.R.* II, 434.

⁵¹ *C.P.R.* II, 464-465, 471.

king's forests of Kumcath, Karregnant, Bodlith, Dolwen and Mochnant in the said lordship.”⁵²

In addition to property and political rights under English law, Henry also offered exemptions from discriminatory tolls that the Welsh had been required to pay, and allowed them the use of the king's forests in the area. Finally, in the last full year of his reign on 2 June 1508 Henry issued a licence to the tenants occupying the land of the Bishop of Bangor and the tenants of the lordship of Ruthin. This licence bestowed on the tenants gave them the right to hold offices in England and in English-controlled towns in Wales, as well as exempted them from

“...tolls, stallage [taxes on market stalls], pavage [road maintenance taxes], piage, murage [town wall repair taxes], pontage [passage] and the undue customs called ‘stallage brueris’ throughout the lordship [sic].”⁵³

Taken at face value, these grants appear largely altruistic; certainly, they appear as an attempt to rectify injustices faced by the Welsh, and there is no mention of payment for them included in the charters themselves. However, as J. Beverly Smith has shown, an examination of royal financial records reveals a different story. Smith's exploration of the accounts of the chamberlain of north Wales during Henry's reign shows that, rather than being granted in gift, the 1504 charter was granted after the shires mentioned (Caernarvon and Merioneth) agreed to pay a fine to the king of 1000 marks each.⁵⁴ It is not unreasonable to assume that similar payments were made in exchange for the other charters Henry granted, and indeed for a later 1507 charter, another fine was paid by the shires affected.⁵⁵ Such payments were in

⁵² C.P.R. II, 464.

⁵³ C.P.R. II, 586-587 and Edward Harvey “Pavage grants and urban street paving in medieval England, 1249-1462”, *The Journal of Transport History* 31, no.2 (December 2010): 151.

⁵⁴ J. Beverly Smith, “Crown and Community in the Principality of North Wales in the Reign of Henry Tudor”, *Welsh History Review* 3, no. 2 (December, 1966): 158.

⁵⁵ Smith, “Crown and Community”, 158.

line with the harsh financial policies that dominated Henry's reign in its final years. Henry's grants to Wales had, therefore, a two-pronged effect. Granting increased rights and freedoms to Wales may have allowed Henry to keep the country on side and to maintain the support they had always given him, but they also allowed him to further his intense revenue-raising program.

However, we should not entirely discount Henry's personal feelings towards Wales, or at least the image of himself as a Welsh saviour, when considering these charters. In granting these exemptions, Henry was also very much returning to the role of the saviour that, for better or worse, had served him throughout his years on the throne. He was bringing justice to Wales and restoring liberties that had been taken away by a tyrannous king, which was, even in Henry's own words, the role that a saviour plays. To some degree, Henry appears to have wished to improve conditions in Wales, most likely as a reward for the Welsh support he had received throughout his reign and as an assurance of loyalty, though we cannot completely discount the idea of him possessing lingering sentimental feelings towards his birthplace. In keeping with his saviour image, he may also have wished to extend to Wales also the idea of unity that he had applied to England at the beginning of his reign. There is some evidence that Henry's role as liberator was acknowledged in Wales; in 1584, Welsh writer David Powel published *The Historie of Cambria, now called Wales*, in which he described Henry's Welsh legal exemptions. Powel wrote that

'King Henrie the seventh, who by his grandfather Owen Tudor descended out of Wales, being aided by the Welshmen of Bosworth field...knowing and pitieng their thraldome [subjugation; bondage] and injuries, tooke order to reform the same, and granted unto them a charter of liberties, whereby they were released of that

oppression, wherewith they were afflicted by lawes more heathenish than christian.[sic]⁵⁶

Here, Henry is depicted in the role of liberator of Wales through his grants (Powel incorrectly states they took the form of one charter) of liberties to the north, indicating that, to Powel at least, the idea of Henry as a saviour was understood and received in Wales.

Ultimately, Wales was an important component in the saviour-style image that Henry was determined to create for himself and, indeed, for his dynasty. The support that Wales had provided Henry with during the lead up to his return from Brittany and the Bosworth campaign was something that Henry could not afford to ignore and, what was more, given his personal connection to Wales, was something that Henry seems to have wanted to honour, at least in a small way. However, Henry was limited in the extent to which he could foster his relationship to Wales – both by practical, legal limitations, and more complexly, by English attitudes towards the Welsh and his own position as king of the country that had colonised Wales. His image as a saviour was also undermined by the fact that his efforts to ostensibly improve conditions in Wales came at a financial cost, thus limiting the extent to which they can be seen as truly altruistic. Though Henry granted denization to Welshmen living in England early on in his reign, and granted licences which exempted a number of Welsh towns in the north of the country from discriminatory statutes, the shires affected did pay for these privileges. While it can be argued that Henry's attempts to improve conditions in Wales were

⁵⁶ David Powel, *The Historie of Cambria, now called Wales* (London: Rafe Newberrie and Henrie Denham, 1584), 390-391.

Powel's work initially found in J. Beverley Smith, "Crown and Community in the Principality of North Wales in the Reign of Henry Tudor," *Welsh History Review* 3, no. 2 (December 1966), 145.

Definition of 'thraldome' found in the Middle English Dictionary, part of the *Middle English Compendium* created by the University of Michigan. Accessed at: < https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=hnf&q=thraldome>.

minimal overall, they do show the extent to which Henry's saviourhood was embedded within the mechanics of his reign. Whether or not Henry's image as a saviour of Wales was purely based in political opportunism or whether it was born from genuine sentiment, it is clear that the idea of saviourhood was used by Henry to further the politics and policies of his reign.

Chapter 3: *Saviourhood Through Unification*

As a new day dawned on 30 October 1485, it brought with it the inauguration of a new monarch: a new king Henry, the seventh of his name, and with him a new royal dynasty. As opulently dressed nobles and horses in finely decorated trappours proceeded to Westminster for the coronation of England's new sovereign, Henry Tudor's style of kingship was on full display.¹ Those in attendance at Henry's coronation would have been treated to an event that exuded splendour, extravagance and, most importantly, symbolism. Taking in the rich colour-scapes created by tapestries adorned in crimson, gold, purple, white, green, and seeing Henry's heraldic devices on display, in such as his fiery red dragon, bright red roses, and crown-adorned thorn bush, attendees were provided their first official glimpse into just what this new era of kingship would look like. The symbols displayed at Henry's coronation were a representation of his power, authority, and claim to the throne, but they also reflected Henry's self-adopted role as a redeemer and spoke to the renewal and new beginning that he wanted his reign to represent.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, much of Henry's saviourhood was centred around the idea of freeing England from tyranny and the unrighteous and illegitimate (according to Henry) kingship of Richard III. However, ridding the kingdom of tyranny was not all that Henry needed to do in order to legitimise and stabilise his rule. For his saviour image to be effective and to ensure he remained on the throne, especially given the track record of his predecessors, there was another crucial role that Henry sought to embody: that of himself as a unifier. Throughout Henry's reign, unity and specifically uniting England was

¹ Trappours were ceremonial or military trappings worn by horses, which were typically decorative and ornamental. Definition found in the Middle English Dictionary, part of the *Middle English Compendium* created by The University of Michigan. Accessed online at <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED46839>>.

a prevalent theme present in both the visuality and written accounts of Henry's kingship. In particular, Henry's royal iconography, his marriage, and the symbolic name that he chose for his eldest son and heir reflect a desire on Henry's part to bring unity to England, and speak to his self-styled role as a saviour and bringer of peace and stability in the aftermath of Richard III's reign and the broader conflict of the Wars of the Roses. Henry seems to have particularly applied this version of his saviourhood to England; he used the ideas of peace and unity to create a contrast between his and Richard III's kingship, as proof of his own legitimacy and right to rule, and, most importantly, to return England to a state of stability by unifying the warring factions of the royal house.

To further explore how Henry applied his image of saviourhood in England, this chapter will examine the ways in which Henry used saviourhood to represent his right to rule England and his desire to unify the kingdom. To begin, the first section of this chapter will examine one of Henry's adopted royal emblems that, above all, represented unification and Henry's role as a unifier: the rose. This section of the chapter will consider the different forms of the rose that Henry's iconography employed, including the individual red rose, the hawthorn bush, and the combined red and white Tudor rose, to show that Henry ultimately used the rose as a symbol of saviourhood. The rose itself and the colours of red and white were connected during the Middle Ages to both Christ and the Virgin Mary, which suited Henry's purposes as a self-styled saviour or redeemer, and allowed Henry to draw contrasts between himself as the red rose, and the Yorkists who used the white. Alongside the examination of Henry's use of the red rose will be a discussion of the connected significance of Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York. As a member of the Yorkist royal house and embodiment of the white rose, Elizabeth of York was a crucial figure in the development of Henry's image as a unifier, and was also essential for the creation of the idea of the Tudor dynasty as a dynasty of unifiers. In the second section of this chapter, then, the idea that

Henry intended to create a dynasty synonymous with unification will be explored in further detail by examining the importance of Henry's eldest son Arthur to this goal. In particular, the origins and significance of Arthur's name will be explored, as will the themes of unification present in Arthurian legend. Henry's choice of the name Arthur for his son was an anomaly in fifteenth century England; if we examine medieval naming conventions, Arthur's name certainly appears to be an outlier, indicating that there was a specific reason why Henry chose this name. Across English, Welsh, French, and Breton Arthurian tradition, King Arthur was regularly depicted not only as a warrior, but as a unifier. Henry's decision to name his son after Arthur reflects, more than anything, the desire for unity that he hoped his dynasty would bring to the kingdom.

Ultimately, this chapter will explore the role that unity and being a unifier played in Henry's broader image of saviourhood. While Henry had, as we have seen, previously constructed an image of himself as a liberator, freeing the kingdom from Richard III's tyranny, this image was less relevant once Richard had been successfully vanquished. To create lasting legitimacy and stability for both himself and England, Henry therefore needed to address the other political issues that the kingdom faced, namely the conflict and instability caused by the Wars of the Roses. Casting himself in the role of the unifier and, importantly, using visuality and popular literature to publicly communicate the unity that his kingship would bring, allowed Henry to add another dimension to his saviourhood, and to ensure that it was accessible to the everyday people of his kingdom. Historians such as S.B. Chrimes have suggested that Henry was not a particularly innovative king, arguing that Henry was more of a stabiliser and strengthener, rather than a king who pushed boundaries and embraced the new. However, an examination of the desire for unity that underpinned Henry's saviourhood, and particularly, of the iconography that Henry used to communicate it, proves otherwise. As we shall see, Henry's depiction of himself as a unifier relied upon innovative

and original uses of the red rose and naming conventions, reflecting a willingness to try new things in his pursuit of an effective and lasting image of saviourhood.

‘The red rose bloom’d’: The Imagery of Unification²

Perhaps one of the most iconic and enduring symbols of the later fifteenth century and, specifically, of Henry’s kingship was the image of the rose. Roses have come to be associated not just with the Wars of the Roses, in which Lancaster and York are each represented by a different coloured rose, but also with the Tudor dynasty. Particularly synonymous with the Tudors was the hybrid rose created by Henry at the beginning of his reign, known as the Tudor Rose. Made up of one white and one red rose (the white superimposed on top of the red as seen in fig. 1), the Tudor Rose was designed to represent the 1486 union between Henry and Elizabeth of York, a marriage which signified, at least in theory, the union of the houses of York and Lancaster, and the subsequent end of the civil conflict that had plagued England.³ The Tudor rose became one of the main identifying emblems of the Tudor royal house, and of the unity, peace, and stability (at least, in theory) that the ascent of the Tudors had ushered in following Henry’s win at Bosworth. As such, an examination of the Tudor rose, and of the rose symbol more generally, is essential for understanding Henry’s image of himself as a saviour through unification. To better understand this symbol, and particularly how it was used by Henry to present himself as both a Christ-like redeemer and a unifier of York and Lancaster, we first need to consider its two components – the red rose and the white – individually.

² Anonymous, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers*, trans. Henry T. Riley (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 506.

³ In reality, Henry was still dealing with the fallout from the Wars of the Roses years after Bosworth and his marriage to Elizabeth, with the last full battle of the conflict, the battle of Stoke Field, fought in 1487, and the Yorkist Perkin Warbeck plot dominating much of the 1490s.



Fig. 1. The 'Tudor' rose. British Library Cotton Titus D. IV f.12v. c. 1509.



Fig. 2. Elizabeth of York, by unknown artist. Oil on panel, late 16th century, based on a work of circa 1500. NPG 311.



Fig. 3. The royal arms of England of Henry VII, including the crowned hawthorn bush. British Library Royal 19 B. XVI.



Fig. 4 and 5. Flowering hawthorn (above) and its red berries (below). Images from Artstor: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.24807647> and <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.24807646>.

As Sydney Anglo has shown in his 1992 book *Images of Tudor Kingship*, roses had long been a popular heraldic symbol in medieval England.⁴ While sometimes adopted without any apparent familial significance, more often the icon of the rose was used to identify a particular family and, importantly, their factional political loyalties, seen most clearly in the Wars of the Roses.⁵ The red and white roses have come to represent the two warring factions of the Wars of the Roses, with the House of Lancaster represented by the red rose, and the House of York represented by the white. By the fifteenth century the Yorkist white rose was a recognisable symbol, regularly used by the Mortimer family from whom Edward IV was descended.⁶ While the origins of the family's association with the white rose are unclear, by the mid-fifteenth century the white rose had become an identifying emblem of the Mortimers, used prominently by Richard of York (b.1411 – d.1460), the father of Richard III and Edward IV.⁷ Edward IV in particular used the white rose as one of his personal emblems and livery badges, and in a late sixteenth century portrait (copied from one painted c.1500) Edward's daughter Elizabeth of York is depicted holding a white rose (fig. 2). Despite the prominent Yorkist use of the white rose during the fifteenth century, the extent to which the Lancastrians used the opposing red rose as a representative symbol is debatable. In fact, there is little evidence of the Lancastrian royal house adopting the symbol of the red rose prior to 1485, and indeed most of the references to the red rose in the fifteenth century, predominantly in chronicles such as the Croyland Chronicle and Edward Hall's Chronicle and poetry, date from either just before Henry launched his invasion of England in August 1485, or from after his accession. Many of the fifteenth century references to the Lancastrian red rose, therefore, are ostensibly connected with Henry. One such example of these references

⁴ Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, 75.

⁵ Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, 76

⁶ Marcin Kudła, "A Multimodal View of Late Medieval Rhetoric: The Case of the White Rose of York," *Studies in Logic, Grammar, and Rhetoric* 61, no.74 (2020): 133.

⁷ Kudła, "The White Rose of York," 133.

comes from an anonymously-authored Welsh bardic prophecy about Henry's return, written just before his departure from Brittany. The prophecy reads:

“...We are waiting for him to show, when he comes, the Red Rose in high pomp. The Thames will run red with blood on that day, and we shall be satisfied; their end will be on that day. No Saxon will go a second time to the battlefield. There is longing for Harry, there is hope for our race. His name comes down from the mountains as a two-edged sword, and his descent from high blood.”⁸

In this prophecy, Henry is referred to as the Red Rose, and is depicted as a figure who will defeat the enemies of Wales. For the author of this prophecy, Henry represented hope for Wales and the end of subjugation by the English. However, this prophecy also indicates that prior to Henry becoming king, he was already being associated with the emblem of the red rose. While the source material for Henry's time in exile is scarce, we do know, as seen in chapter one of this thesis, that Henry had a strong grasp of the importance and power of image-making and representation. It is therefore likely that, in addition to presenting himself as the king and as a saviour, he also adopted the symbol of the red rose to further enhance these images of himself. Further, as we have seen, the white rose was already relatively well-established as an emblem of the Yorkist branch of the royal line. It is therefore not unfeasible that while deciding how he wanted to represent himself ahead of his bid for the throne, Henry chose an emblem that would directly contrast with the faction he sought to depose.

Perhaps most overtly, red roses also featured prominently at Henry's coronation. In a list of items required for Henry's coronation, we find multiple references to fabrics needed specifically for red roses, including

⁸ Anonymous Welsh prophecy in W. Garmon Jones, *Welsh Nationalism and Henry Tudor* (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1918), 38.

“Item, bought of Robert White, mercer, vi.yerdes crymsyn velvet, for the dragons and rede roses of a trappour...”⁹

“Item, bought of Willm. Redy, mercer, iiii yerdes white clothe of golde, for the bordour of the trappour of the Rede Roses...”¹⁰

“Item, bought of Symonde Gerard, iiii yerdes grene clothe of gold vppon saten grounde, for the border ye trappour of ye rede roses...”¹¹

Although Henry had not used the red rose as one of his representative symbols at Bosworth in August 1485, by October that year at his coronation it had become one of his royal emblems and was prominently displayed along with his red dragon which remained a staple feature. This timeline again reinforces that Henry seems to have begun to associate himself with the red rose prior to Bosworth, or at least very soon after.

References to Henry as the red rose can also be found in the second anonymous continuation of the Croyland Chronicle, covering the period 1459-1486. The Croyland Chronicle was initially begun in the eleventh century by an author named Ingulf, an abbot at the abbey of Croyland, then continued by Peter of Blois and two other anonymous authors up to the fifteenth century.¹² The chronicle is a particularly useful source for fifteenth century England and the events of Richard III and Henry’s reigns (at least, the first few years of Henry’s). Towards the end of the chronicle, the anonymous author of the second continuation includes a poem by “a certain poet” which recalls “the events which happened to the three

⁹ “Empcions and Provisions of stuff made by Robert Willughby, knight, agenist the coronacion of our soueraine lorde king Henry the VIIth,” in William Campbell, *Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII from Original Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office*, Volume 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887), 8.

¹⁰ “Empcions and Provisions,” *Materials*, 8.

¹¹ “Empcions and Provisions,” *Materials*, 10.

¹² Michael Shally-Jensen, *Defining Documents in World History: Renaissance and Early Modern Era (1308 – 1600)* (New York: Salem Press, 2017), 41–42.

kings who have borne the name of Richard.”¹³ In the last four lines, the author, in reference to Richard III’s defeat at the Battle of Bosworth, writes that:

“...The year one thousand, hundreds four, and five
to eighty added, when of August came
The twice eleventh day, the Boar’s tusks quail’d;
And, to avenge the White, the Red Rose bloom’d.”¹⁴

The boar referred to in the poem is Richard III, whose heraldic symbol was a white boar.¹⁵ Again in this poem the red rose symbol was used to refer to Henry who, through his victory at Bosworth, had avenged the white roses (likely referring to the murdered sons of Edward IV) mentioned in the last line. The second continuation of the Croyland Chronicle was written during the year of 1486, indicating that the red rose symbol was by this point, and likely before, a recognisable and familiar emblem of Henry’s. Similarly, the late fifteenth century ballad called *The Rose of Englande* also refers to Henry as the red rose, indicating that this emblem remained closely associated with him in the decade following his accession. *The Rose of Englande* begins by associating the red rose with the Lancastrian royal line, and by describing the deposition of King Henry VI and disruption of the Lancastrian line, which the author of the poem blames on Richard III. The ballad suggests that despite Richard’s usurpation, the red rose would one day regain the crown, an outcome which, according to the ballad, was realised by Henry VII, who later in the poem takes on the epithet of the red rose:

“Our king, he is the rose soe redd,

¹³ Ingulph, *Croyland Chronicle*, 505.

¹⁴ Anonymous, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland*, 506.

¹⁵ Olga Vassilieva-Codognot, “Ambiguous Figures of Otherness: Redoubtable Beasts in Princely Badges of the Late Middle Ages,” in *Animals and Otherness in the Middle Ages: Perspectives across disciplines*, ed. Francisco de Asís García García, Mónica Ann Walker Vadillo, María Victoria Chico Picaza (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), 143.

That now does flourish fresh and gay:

Confound his foes, Lord, wee beseeche,

And loue His Grace both night and day!” [sic]¹⁶

This ballad reflects not only Henry’s own affinity with the red rose symbol, but also demonstrates the extent to which, within a decade of Henry seizing the throne, the red rose had become associated with the Lancastrian branch of the royal family. As stated above, the use of the red rose symbol by Lancastrian royalty was negligible prior to Henry’s reign. The established association of Lancaster with the red rose by 1495 thus speaks to the effectiveness and innovation with which Henry wielded this symbol and reworked its history for his own purposes.

In the medieval western world, the colours red and white were seen as the most powerful colour contrast, as opposed to black and white, which may be why Henry chose a red rose to oppose the Yorkist’s white.¹⁷ Chess boards in western Europe contained opposing red and white pieces, rather than the original Indian red and black, and a number of prophecies, poems, and narrative histories draw upon the opposing nature of these two colours.¹⁸ In an example particularly relevant to Henry, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth century *Prophecy of Merlin* describes two opposing dragons, one red and one white (representing Wales and England or the Saxons respectively) battling for supremacy, with the prophecy stating that the red will eventually triumph above the white.¹⁹ Further, the colour red was also associated with Christ and the intervention of God on earth.²⁰ Red could

¹⁶ Anonymous, “The Rose of Englande,” in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads vol. 3*, ed. Francis James Child (New York: Dover Publications INC, 1965), 331. Accessed via Project Gutenberg.

¹⁷ Michel Pastoureau, *White: The History of a Colour*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 74.

¹⁸ Pastoureau, *White*, 74.

¹⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1966), 171.

²⁰ Michel Pastoureau, *Red: The History of a Colour*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 61.

represent not only the blood of Christ, but also the divine love that he brought to the earth.²¹ Given the connections drawn between Henry and Jesus by Bernard André, as explored in chapter two, Henry's choice of the red rose also highlights his piety and self-proclaimed role as a loving, unifying monarch.

Henry's decision to use the red rose was shrouded in the familiar: roses were an important and symbolic flower in the Middle Ages, often representing divinity and the Virgin Mary, and despite being a different colour to Henry's rose, the white rose had become a prominent Yorkist, and by extension royal, symbol by the later fifteenth century.²² In adopting the symbol of the red rose, Henry was able to create a contrast to the Yorkist white rose that was easily recognisable, despite it not having been widely used prior to his accession. The contrast between red and white was a concept that was familiar to medieval people, and it allowed Henry to introduce a relatively unused symbol – the Lancastrian red rose – while still grounding it in the established colour symbolism of this period. Considered against the Yorkist use of the white rose, Henry's adoption of the red rose is clearly calculated; even if previous Lancastrian kings had not used it as a representative symbol, it is still a clear juxtaposition with the white, and helps to visually set Henry apart from his Yorkist predecessors.

However, though used to represent a contrast between himself and the Yorkist kings, Henry also used the red rose to help build his image as a unifier, and to signify the beginning of a new, unified dynasty. We see this idea not only in Henry's creation of the now-iconic Tudor rose, but also in the slightly lesser-known symbol of the crowned hawthorn bush (fig. 3). Before examining these symbols, it is important to note that Henry's use of the rose and the hawthorn, and their long-standing success as symbols of unity, would not have been

²¹ Pastoureau, *Red*, 61.

²² Henderson, "Retrieving the Crown in the Hawthorn Bush," 240.

nearly as effective without the presence of one key figure: Elizabeth of York. As we have seen in chapter one, Elizabeth had long been a fundamental pillar of Henry's political strategy and success even before becoming king. Henry's promise to marry Elizabeth at the Rennes Cathedral ceremony in 1483 laid the groundwork for his pursuit of unity that characterised much of his kingship, as well as provided him with additional, and much-needed, support from other Yorkist nobles. However, a union with Elizabeth also provided Henry with a legitimacy which was not only necessary for him, especially as a political outsider, but was also crucial for his image as a just, legitimate saviour. As the eldest child of Edward IV, and following the disappearance (and likely murder) of her younger brothers, Elizabeth perhaps more than anyone embodied Yorkist royalty. Marrying Elizabeth was therefore crucial for the unity that Henry needed to create, and for the creation of a newly unified dynasty. Although Henry did attempt to demonstrate his legitimacy in his own right – particularly through claiming descent from Cadwaladr and Brutus – the fact remains that without Elizabeth the image of unity that he strove for would have been significantly diminished. Edward Hall, in his 1548 chronicle highlighted the unity that Henry and Elizabeth's marriage represented, writing that

“...by the whiche mariage the deuse or badge of the hous of Lancastre which was the redde Rose, was vnite and joyned with the White rose, whiche was the cognisance and ensigne of the noble progeny of Yorke...”²³

Without Elizabeth, Henry also would not have been able to create by far one of the most significant and recognisable symbols of the Tudor dynasty – the so-called Tudor rose. This rose, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, has become one of the defining emblems of

²³ Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle: Containing the history of England, during the reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding monarchs, to the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth, in which are particularly described the manners and customs of those periods* (New York: AMS Print INC, 1965), 3.

Tudor monarchy. Instantly recognisable and used not just by Henry, by also by his descendants, the combined red and white Tudor rose was a highly effective visual representation of Tudor royalty, remaining so even into the twenty-first century. However, the name ‘Tudor rose’ is something of an anachronism. As C.S.L. Davies has pointed out, the name Tudor was little used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in England at least.²⁴ Prior to becoming king, Henry had always referred to himself by his hereditary title of Richmond (until 1484, when he began to refer to himself as the king), and was also referred to by this name in most sixteenth century accounts of his life before kingship.²⁵ While the Tudors were often celebrated in Welsh writing, the name carried different connotations in England; Tudor or ‘Tydder’ was used by both Richard III and by the pretender to Henry’s throne Perkin Warbeck to denigrate Henry and draw attention to his lowly origins.²⁶ The term ‘Tudor rose’ is thus a modern one; in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, rather than representing the Tudors, the combined red and white rose represented the unity between Lancaster and York that Henry’s accession supposedly brought. What the red and white rose does show, however, is the extent to which unity was a dominant force in Henry’s ideology of kingship from the very beginning of his reign. In March 1486, less than a year after winning the throne, Henry set out on a royal progress to the Northern counties, including York, which had remained largely supportive of Richard III and Yorkist kingship.²⁷ During his time in York, the city welcomed Henry by, among other events, putting on a pageant displaying the so-called Tudor rose:

“Thirdly; at the entrie of the Citie...shalbe craftily conceived a place in maner of a heven, of grete joy and angelicall armony; under the heven shalbe a world desolate,

²⁴ C.S.L. Davies, “Tudor: What’s in a name?” *History* 97, no.325 (January 2012): 24.

²⁵ Davies, “Tudor: What’s in a name?” 25.

²⁶ Davies, “Tudor: What’s in a name?” 25.

²⁷ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 50.

full of treys and floures, in the which shall spryng up a rioall rich rede rose convaide by vaice [device], unto the which rose shall appeyre another rich white rose, unto whome so being togedre all other floures shall lowte and evidently yeve suffrantie, shewing the rose to be principall of all floures...and thereupon shall come fro a cloude a crowne covering the roses...” [sic]²⁸

This display of the red and white rose in York indicates that it had indeed become an established and recognisable symbol of Henry’s. Further though, the decision of “the Maior, his breder Aldermen, and other of the Common Counsell of the Citie” to focus attention on this emblem also speaks to its role as a symbol of unity. The red and white rose, of course, represented Lancaster and York respectively, and their combination reflected the union of Henry and Elizabeth, and the supposed end of civil conflict. To display this symbol in York, formerly Yorkist heartland, speaks to its use as a representation of unity, and demonstrates that by early 1486, the meaning behind the red and white rose was indeed that of unity.

In addition to the combined red and white rose, Henry also used another member of the rose family to convey his message of unity: hawthorn. Henry’s crowned hawthorn emblem (fig. 3), though lesser known than the red and white rose, further reinforced Henry’s role as unifier. The origins of this emblem are more obscure than the rose; the common, apocryphal story of its origin states that after the Battle of Bosworth, Richard III’s crown had been retrieved from where it had rolled under a hawthorn bush and placed on Henry’s head. This story is likely fictional, and does not appear in any contemporary or near-contemporary accounts of the battle – the *Croyland Chronicle*, Polydore Vergil, and Francis Bacon each make no mention of it.²⁹ However, some clues as to the emblem’s meaning and origins do

²⁸ “The Reception of Henry VII,” in *York Civic Records, I. (transcripts of house books) 1475-87*, ed. Angelo Raine (York: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1938), 156.

²⁹ Henderson, “Retrieving the ‘Crown in the Hawthorn Bush’”, 237.

emerge from an examination of the religious symbolism connected to both roses and hawthorn specifically. As Virginia Henderson has pointed out, throughout the Middle Ages the rose had been an “important and pervasive Marian and Christological symbol,” used to represent either the Virgin Mary or her specific qualities, such as purity, as well as Christ’s Passion.³⁰ Hawthorn, a member of the rose family, also carried another specific appeal for Henry. Both roses and hawthorn can be linked to both Christ and the Virgin Mary, at once representing purity, divinity, Christ’s passion, and renewal. However, during the Middle Ages, hawthorn was also believed to have been the wood from which Christ’s Crown of Thorns was made; Henry choosing this plant as a representative symbol further reflects the comparisons made between himself and Christ both before and after seizing the throne.³¹ If we consider hawthorn in this context, the symbol also again reflects the divine intervention that Henry regularly alluded to as having sanctioned his reign.

However, there is another reason why the hawthorn bush was an appealing symbol to Henry. If we look at the hawthorn plant on its own, rather than just as a member of the rose family, it becomes clear that its colours carried additional significance for Henry. When looking at an image of a hawthorn bush (fig. 4 and 5), the elements that are most notable are its colours: the green of the leaves, the red of the berries, and the white of the flowers. Each of these colours are symbolically important to Henry, and represent a message that he wanted to convey about his kingship. Red, as we have already seen, was a particularly potent colour during the Middle Ages, and was one Henry clearly associated himself with, as seen through his use of the red rose and red dragon symbols. Hawthorn also pairs its red berries with white flowers, reflecting not only the most popular colour contrast during the Middle Ages, but also the opposing colours of York and Lancaster. The combination of red and white on hawthorn

³⁰ Henderson, “Retrieving the ‘Crown in the Hawthorn Bush’”, 240, 241.

³¹ Henderson, “Retrieving the ‘Crown in the Hawthorn Bush’”, 254.

bushes also provided another means for Henry to convey the message of unity that accompanied his kingship. The red berries and white flowers appearing together reflected the union of Lancaster and York through Henry and Elizabeth's marriage, while the green of the leaves represented the renewal and rebirth that their new, united dynasty would bring to England. While it is likely that Henry's choice of the hawthorn bush as a royal emblem was an extension of his use of the rose, the natural colours of the plant also seem likely to have played a role in his choice. The apocryphal story of Richard's crown being found among the spoils of war underneath a hawthorn bush, while not contemporary to Henry's reign, likely emerged from Henry's use of the hawthorn emblem and its divine associations.

Henry's use of the rose and hawthorn symbols ultimately reflect the image he was attempting to create for himself as a unifier. The foundation for Henry's vision of unity relied heavily upon his marriage to Elizabeth of York; without her, the symbols and visuality that Henry used to depict the unity he sought to implement would be redundant. Henry's use of the red rose and the hawthorn bush allowed him a visual means of conveying unity: by creating a contrast with the Yorkist white rose, Henry also created a means through which he could visibly display the coming together of York and Lancaster. Importantly, Henry's image of himself as a unifier extended beyond just himself. The dynasty that Henry and Elizabeth created was to carry on this image of unity, as will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

“...the second hope of our kingdom”: British history, Arthurian legend, and a new dynasty of ‘saviours’³²

In late September 1486 (either the 19th or 20th), Henry had cause to celebrate. His wife, Elizabeth of York, had just given birth to their first child, a brand new heir for a brand

³² André, *Henry VII*, 37.

new dynasty. The baby, a boy, had been born, as deliberately organised by Henry, in the city of Winchester, the city which Thomas Malory in his *Le Morte d'Arthur* had identified as the original site of Camelot.³³ Fittingly, the baby was named Arthur, after that most famous of British kings. Arthur's birth was of course a moment of personal celebration and joy for Henry and Elizabeth, but it was also an event which reflected the personal ambitions of Henry, and fed into the image of saviourhood and unity that Henry was constructing, not only for himself, but for his family and subsequent dynasty. Of course, Henry was not by any means the first king to interact with Arthurian legend, or even to draw personal links between these stories and his own life and family; Edward I had overseen the supposed discovery of the tombs of Arthur and Guinevere at Glastonbury Abbey, and Edward III had his own round table constructed.³⁴ Further, as stated above, Arthurian legend, and the legendary history of Britain more generally, were topics that formed a body of literature and intellectual discourse in medieval England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, which has become known as the Matter of Britain.³⁵

However, while an interaction with Arthurian legends and the broader Matter of Britain was not unusual, especially for kings of England, the way in which Henry chose to interact with these concepts, namely through naming his eldest son and heir Arthur, was unusual indeed. As mentioned above, every aspect of Arthur's birth was carefully planned by Henry. Prior to the actual birth, Henry had already decided that, if the baby was a boy, he was to be named Arthur, and as such, the baby needed to be born in Winchester, the place that had so recently been identified by Malory as the site of the legendary king's equally legendary

³³ Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Book 2, chapter 19, ed. William Caxton. Project Gutenberg. Accessed online at: <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1251/1251-h/1251-h.htm#chap46>>.

³⁴ Caroline Shenton, "Royal Interest in Glastonbury and Cadbury: Two Arthurian Itineraries, 1278 and 1331", *The English Historical Review* 114, no.459 (November 1999): 1251.

³⁵ J. Lacy Norris, Geoffrey Ashe, and Debra N. Mancoff, *The Arthurian Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 2.

seat.³⁶ A close representative or reflective association with the figure of Arthur and his court was relatively commonplace for medieval kings; naming their heir after him, however, was far less so. Despite the popularity of Arthur and his permeation throughout the literary and intellectual culture of medieval England, the name itself was little used across the varying social strata of the country. The only other royal Arthur to have come before Arthur Tudor, in an English context at least, was the ill-fated Arthur of Brittany, son of Constance of Brittany and Geoffrey II of Brittany.³⁷ Arthur's father Geoffrey was the son of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and brother of Kings Richard I and John.³⁸ Geoffrey became duke of Brittany after marrying Constance of Brittany, the daughter of Conan IV, the former duke of Brittany and earl of Richmond, titles which Arthur inherited upon Geoffrey's death in 1186.³⁹ Had Geoffrey been alive following his brother Richard I's untimely death in 1199, he likely would have inherited the throne given the fact that Richard had no children; Geoffrey's death preceding Richard's therefore left the succession subject to dispute between their other brother John, and Geoffrey's son Arthur.⁴⁰ Aside from Arthur of Brittany, there existed no other historical figure that could feasibly have influenced Henry's decision to bestow this name upon his son, aside from King Arthur. While Henry may have felt connected to Arthur of Brittany on some level (and this idea is purely speculative), given Henry's years spent in Brittany and France, their shared Earl of Richmond title, and their disputed claim to the throne, this is unlikely given the near three hundred years between them. It is far more likely that, in naming his son Arthur, Henry was indeed taking inspiration

³⁶ Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King Who Never Was* (Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2016), 19.

³⁷ J.C. Holt, "King John and Arthur of Brittany" *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 44 (January 2000): 83-84, 86-87.

³⁸ Holt, "King John and Arthur of Brittany," 84.

³⁹ Kathy P. Carter, *Arthur I, Duke of Brittany, in history and literature*, PhD Thesis (Florida State University, 1996, 1). Accessed at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304300553?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&_oafollow=false&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>.

⁴⁰ Carter, *Arthur I*, 2.

from King Arthur himself, and specifically, from a particular theme common in Arthurian legend: that is, the idea of Arthur as a returning hero, and as a saviour and unifier of Britain.

Since at least the twelfth century, King Arthur had been associated with saviourhood and resurrection. In almost every version of the stories telling of the death of the legendary king, Arthur is either predicted to one day rise again, is said to be merely sleeping on the isle of Avalon awaiting the time he is needed again, or his fate is simply unknown – it was not certain whether he was alive or not, which still kept hope of his return alive.⁴¹ Notably, the theme of Arthur's return and the place of Arthur within historical and political prophecy were not, in fact, originally part of the Welsh tradition – Welsh political prophecy typically invoked the names of Cynan, Cadwaladr, and Owain, rather than Arthur, and until the twelfth century made little mention of his eventual return.⁴² Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, was the architect of the prophetic and returning Arthur through his integration of Arthur into prophetic structures in his writing, and through his conflation of both Welsh and Breton stories and material.⁴³ Geoffrey was the first author to refer to Arthur's journey to Avalon, writing that, following the battle of Camlann, "Arthur himself, our renowned king, was mortally wounded and was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to."⁴⁴ Geoffrey's wording here is vague; he notes that Arthur was mortally wounded, but leaves his fate undetermined – there is no certainty as to whether he is alive or dead.⁴⁵ Such ambiguity left room for gaps to be filled, and certainly, various versions of Arthurian legends commented on what they believed Arthur's fate was. If we read of Etienne de Rouen's Arthur of the Breton tradition in his *Draco Normannicus*, written between 1167-1169, Arthur is to one day return, and with him an army, to take back the rightful claim of the

⁴¹ Victoria Flood, "Arthur's Return from Avalon: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Legend," *Arthuriana* 25, no.2 (Summer 2015), 84.

⁴² Flood, "Arthur's Return," 84.

⁴³ Flood, "Arthur's Return," 84.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, 261. Flood, "Arthur's Return," 85.

⁴⁵ Flood, "Arthur's Return," 86.

Britons to their land.⁴⁶ If Wace is telling the story in his 1150 *Roman de Brut*, in the Norman tradition, Arthur's end was shrouded in doubt, although the Britons believed that he one day would return:

“So the chronicle speaks sooth, Arthur himself was wounded in his body to the death. He caused him to be borne to Avalon for the searching of his hurts. He is yet in Avalon, awaited of the Britons; for as they say and deem he will return from whence he went and live again. Master Wace, the writer of this book, cannot add more to this matter of his end than was spoken by Merlin the prophet. Merlin said of Arthur—if I read aright—that his end should be hidden in doubtfulness. The prophet spoke truly. Men have ever doubted, and—as I am persuaded—will always doubt whether he liveth or is dead.”⁴⁷

Despite the fact that the idea of Arthur returning was thus not a particularly Welsh theme, Arthur himself was nonetheless an important figure in Wales. For the Welsh, rather than a returner, Arthur represented triumph over the Saxons and a return to Welsh self-governance. What does seem to be a commonality across both the Welsh, Breton, and Norman-French versions of Arthurian legends is the idea of Arthur as a saviour and avenger, a vanquisher of invading enemies, and a unifying figure. I argue that, given this commonality across the Arthurian traditions that Henry would have encountered most before becoming king, it is this idea of Arthur that he was invoking by giving the name to his son. Arthur Tudor was to represent a triumph over enemies, and importantly, the unification of Britain. This idea is certainly the sentiment offered by Henry's court historian Bernard André who, in a poem celebrating Arthur's birth in 1486, highlighted his connection to the famous king, writing that

⁴⁶ Flood, “Arthur's Return,” 92.

⁴⁷ Wace, *Arthurian Chronicles: Roman de Brut*, trans. Eugene Mason (Project Gutenberg, 2003), no page number. Victoria Flood, “Arthur's Return,” 94.

“On this day [that is, Arthur’s birth] our age may behold the brilliant likeness of great Arthur in the image of a boy,” and that

“Highest Jupiter could give the Britons nothing greater than this so long as the Fates are just, nor will he give them anything greater even though the Age of the Proud King return.”⁴⁸

The “great Arthur” and “Proud King” André writes of here refer to the King Arthur of legend; according to André, Arthur Tudor is the next incarnation of his legendary namesake, and represents a new age of Arthurian kingship that the Britons have been waiting for. André also refers to Arthur Tudor directly as “Arthur the Second” and as “the second hope of our kingdom,” which highlight the continuity and connection between Arthur Tudor and the famous king. Francis Bacon, in his seventeenth-century biography of Henry, similarly wrote that once Arthur was born “the king (in honour of that British race, of which himself was) named [him] Arthur, according to the name of that ancient worthy King of the Britons....”⁴⁹

To choose this name, however, was an almost entirely unique decision. Despite the popularity of King Arthur and the legends that accompanied him, especially amongst royalty, no king of England had been named Arthur themselves, or had named any of their children after him. In fact, the name Arthur is a significant and easily identifiable outlier, especially if we consider it within the context of English male naming conventions during the Middle Ages, particularly between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. In *Studies on the Personal Name in Later Medieval England and Wales*, Dave Postles and Joel T. Rosenthal have shown that during this period, the pool of the most common or popular male first names was, by modern standards at least, incredibly small; in Rosenthal’s analysis of Proof of Age

⁴⁸ André, *Henry VII*, 40, 41.

⁴⁹ Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.

proceedings (a legal procedure establishing the age of an heir) during the reign of Henry IV, he found that out of 1,151 jurors examined, 79.6 per cent bore the same five names – *John, William, Thomas, Robert, and Richard*.⁵⁰ Similarly, in Virginia Davis' work on medieval name popularity reflected in English ordination lists between the years 1350 - 1540, these five names once again appear most regularly, accounting for about three quarters of the total names recorded in the lists.⁵¹ Davis' work has also shown that, after the five names listed above, the names, *Henry, Nicholas, Walter, Roger, and Hugh* were also relatively popular names during the mid-fourteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries, with each of these names respectively accounting for anywhere between 1.5 to 3.5 per cent of given names during this period.⁵² The pool of popular names in medieval England was therefore small, and not hugely creative; they were often chosen, it seems, to reflect tradition and continuity, to maintain familial connections, and to create a tie to "spiritual guardians or men of substance".⁵³ While certainly invoking the name of a man of royal, literary, and ideological significance, Henry's choice of the name Arthur as the name of his eldest son is unusual when we consider the general trends of naming demonstrated here. Additionally, preceding Henry VII on the throne in the fifteenth century were five (crowned) kings – Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI, Edward IV, and Richard III.⁵⁴ These names all regularly appear in the above-mentioned Inquisitions Post Mortem and Proofs of Ages (though admittedly not as often as John or Thomas), and have a clear link to both previous English kings and English saints. Similarly, the eldest sons of these kings also reflect the naming trends of this period – the sons of Henry IV, Henry V and Edward IV all carried the names of their fathers, which also happened to be amongst the

⁵⁰ Joel T. Rosenthal, "Names and Naming Patterns in Medieval England: An Introduction," in *Studies on the Personal Name in Later Medieval England and Wales*, ed. Dave Postles and Joel T. Rosenthal (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), 5.

⁵¹ Virginia Davis, "The Popularity of Late Medieval Personal Names as Reflected in English Ordination Lists, 1350-1540", in *Studies on the Personal Name in Later Medieval England and Wales*, ed. Dave Postles and Joel T. Rosenthal (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), 105.

⁵² Davis, "Late Medieval Personal Names," 110-111.

⁵³ Rosenthal, "Names and Naming Patterns," 5.

⁵⁴ Edward V, one of the ill-fated "Princes in the Tower" never had a coronation.

popular names of the period, and Henry VI named his son Edward, presumably after Edward the Confessor.⁵⁵ Arthur, in contrast, was a Brythonic name, a term which refers to the languages of Welsh, Cornish, and Breton.⁵⁶ Even within the context of fifteenth century kingship alone then, Henry's choice of the name Arthur clearly breaks with tradition.

While of course each of the above examinations of naming practices are not representative of the entire population of medieval England – Proofs of Age and Inquisition Post Mortems typically only provide us with data on the upper classes – they are still useful for contextualising Henry's naming decision-making. What the discussion of these various naming trends indicates is that Henry overtly rejected them; Arthur was not named after a godparent, a saint, or an immediate family member, and his name was certainly not overly common or popularly used in fifteenth-century England.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, this was the name that Henry wanted for his heir and, what is more, he had chosen this name prior to Arthur's birth, as is further evidenced by his insistence on the birth taking place in Winchester. On the surface, Henry's decision, while unorthodox, is understandable: invoking the name of such a mammoth figure in history certainly helps to bolster the legitimacy of a dynasty with such otherwise shaky foundations. However, Henry's choice of the name Arthur also serves as an example of how Henry brought notions of saviourhood, and specifically the idea of a returning saviour or hero, into the fabric of his kingship and attempted to make these ideas synonymous not just with himself, but with his dynasty. Bestowing this particular name was an unusual and rather eccentric choice, invoking the figure of Arthur himself, however, was not. Henry certainly does appear to have had some personal interest in Arthurian legend, evidenced by his possession of an astrological treatise containing the Prophecy of Merlin,

⁵⁵ Reilly O'Hagan, ““There is longing for Harry, there is hope for our race”: The Welshness of King Henry VII of England,” Unpublished Honours Thesis 2022, 44-45.

⁵⁶ Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21.

⁵⁷ O'Hagan, “There is longing for Harry,” 45.

excerpts from the Prophecy of the Eagle (attributed to Merlin Silvestris), and a short poem on Brutus.⁵⁸ As historian Joanna Frońska has explored, read in a Tudor context these texts emphasise Henry's (and indeed his dynasty's) role as a saviour liberating the kingdom and as Cadwalladr's heir, uniting the kingdom in a new era of peace.⁵⁹ The symbolic meaning behind Arthur's name, and the image that Henry wanted to convey of his family – that is, of them as saviours, unifiers, restorers of justice and righteousness – was clearly what concerned Henry most, and was something that would not have been lost on his subjects. Arthur represented the continuation of Henry's saviourhood and, given his name, was in many ways the apex of this image. His death in 1502, aside from being a deeply personal tragedy for Henry and Elizabeth, also served as a death blow to the image of continuing, dynastic saviourhood that Henry had curated.

Using both material symbols and his own family, Henry ultimately curated an image of himself, and the dynasty he created, as unifiers. Henry's kingship was to usher in a new age of peace, stability, and continuity, goals which were intended to be achieved through unifying the country under a new dynasty that encompassed and combined the old factions which had torn the country apart during the years of civil war. Henry's use of the red rose and then his creation of the combined red and white rose reflected, at least in theory the cessation of dynastic feuding and a new beginning for England (in reality, Henry still faced Yorkist challenges and pretenders to the throne until the end of the 1490s). By drawing on the symbolism behind the colours and symbols that he chose, and by selecting a name for his son

⁵⁸ Frońska, "The Royal Image and Diplomacy", 8.

⁵⁹ Frońska, "The Royal Image and Diplomacy", 8.

shared by one of the most legendary kings of Britain, Henry was making a strong statement about who he was as king. The use of the rose symbol, and its accompanying colours of red, white, and green spoke to the renewal and unity that Henry's reign would bring, with his iconographical references to Hawthorn also drawing parallels between himself and Christ. Similarly, the choice of the name Arthur for his son spoke to Henry's desire to both legitimise himself and his line through highlighting a connection to King Arthur, but also reflected a desire for unity: the historic Arthur was, in most contexts, a unifier of Britain, a role that Henry also seems to have strived to embody. Despite the loss of both Elizabeth of York and Arthur later in his reign, Henry's image as a unifier lasted, even, as we shall see in the next chapter, centuries after his reign.

Chapter 4: *Saviour to Anti-hero? The Posthumous Reception and Legacy of Henry's Saviourhood*

"...fumus et umbra. A smoke that soon vanisheth, and a shadow soon passing away..."¹

So said the Bishop of Rochester, John Fisher, at King Henry VII's funeral in 1509. Referring to the king's worldly problems and successes which had now, with death, faded away, his words are also a fitting description for Henry himself. As the introduction to this thesis mentioned, Henry's legacy is more opaque than those of his descendants, and even some of his predecessors. The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to assess Henry's posthumous reputation in its entirety. Such an analysis is outside of the scope of this thesis, and has already been admirably attempted by other scholars, most notably Sydney Anglo in 1987, who argued that Henry's character and reputation remain defined by 'those same elements which were commented upon and assessed by his earliest critics - the quality of his intelligence and the extent of his avarice'.² Instead, in this chapter, I intend to trace the reputation and legacy of Henry's saviourhood specifically. Did this image of Henry survive past his own reign? Were elements of the image challenged, watered down, or forgotten completely? What, if anything, remains of the image that Henry so carefully created for himself?

In the centuries following Henry's reign, and as both popular and academic history has begun to reframe both the Tudors and Richard III, it becomes increasingly clear that, unsurprisingly, the image of Henry has undergone changes. Realistically, it is questionable whether Henry's people and the nobility ever truly bought into Henry's depiction of himself

¹ John Fisher, "Funeral Sermon on Henry VII 1509", in *The English Works of John Fisher: Bishop of Rochester*, ed. John E.B. Mayor (London: The Early English Text Society, 1876), 270.

² Sydney Anglo, "Ill of the Dead. The Posthumous Reputation of Henry VII," *Renaissance Studies* 1, no.1 (March 1987), 28.

as their saviour, and it is to be expected that such an image would inevitably lose its shine and appeal over time. Even in Henry's own lifetime, towards the end of his reign, the triumphant image of the saviour was waning. The deaths of his wife Elizabeth of York and son Arthur had deeply shaken the legacy of unity and saviourhood that Henry had hoped to leave, and his financial extortion of the nobility had made him increasingly unpopular. However, this is not to say that in the centuries after Henry's reign we cannot see some remnants of his saviour image. If we trace Henry's image after his death through the remainder of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, we find that elements of Henry's saviourhood, particularly his image of himself as a unifier and promotion of Richard III as a villain survived in a diluted form. Such a dilution is to be expected, both due to the natural passage of time, and due to Henry's own inscrutability and the potency of the images that formed around other monarchs, including his own descendants. What, then, can we say of Henry's legacy, particularly as it pertains to the saviour image that he so carefully cultivated? Is his comparative indistinctness in both popular and scholarly histories evidence of a complete failure of his royal image? And what, if anything, did Henry's image morph into after his death when he no longer had control of it? This chapter will examine the legacy of Henry's saviourhood and will consider some of the themes intertwined with this legacy, namely Henry's image shift from saviour to miser, the connection between his image and Richard III's, and the place of a supposed saviour-king in the twenty-first century.

The first section of this chapter will examine historiographical interpretations of Henry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the extent to which a key legacy of Henry's image – the continuation of the vilification of Richard III – was cemented during this period. In particular, this section will consider the prevailing image of Henry as miserly and avaricious popularised by Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall in the sixteenth centuries, and the continued success of the image of Richard III as a tyrannous, unnatural ruler. Of course,

writers such as the anonymous author of the *Crowland Chronicle* and the Italian friar Dominic Mancini were some of the first to depict Richard as a tyrant and a villainous usurper, with Mancini's *The Usurpation of Richard III* being the only account of the events of 1483 to have been written prior to Henry's usurpation.³ However, Henry certainly built upon their ideas and capitalised on public sentiment that characterised Richard as a tyrant and a murderer, as did the biography of Henry written by Bernard André and the works of Vergil and Hall.

Additionally, in the second section of this chapter, more 'popular' interpretations of Henry's reign from Shakespeare and popular poems and ballads will be used to further track the development of his royal image. While Henry's personal image of saviourhood may not have survived, a legacy of this image can be seen in the pervasive demonisation of Richard III which continued throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, which has only in the last decade or so been more fully explored and challenged. The third section of this chapter will then jump forward to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to explore the current state of Henry's image. Though accounts of Henry's reign were also produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – James Gairdner's biography in 1892 and Wilhelm Busch's in 1895 pre-eminent among them – these largely drew upon the interpretations of Vergil and Bacon in their assessments of Henry rather than new evidence.⁴ Of particular relevance to this section, and to questions of Henry's image more broadly, is the 2012 discovery of Richard III's skeleton in Leicester, which challenged the narrative about the king that first emerged during Henry's reign. Finally, Henry's ongoing legacy in Wales will be examined in this section, with particular attention paid to the erection of statues of Henry in

³ A.J. Pollard, "Dominic Mancini's Account of the Events of 1483", *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 38 (January, 1994): 152.

⁴ Wilhelm Busch *England Under the Tudors: King Henry VII, 1485-1509* (London 1895). James Gairdner, *Henry the Seventh* (London: Macmillan, 1892).

Cardiff's City Hall in 1916 and outside Pembroke Castle in 2017. These efforts to commemorate Henry in Wales speak to the continuing connection between Henry and his homeland, and allow us an insight into what a late medieval saviour king looks like in a modern society. Though Henry's image has inevitably transformed, the images and mythology he created around himself, his family and his rivals still echo well into the twenty-first century, influencing our perceptions of the Wars of the Roses, the Tudors, and of course Richard III.

“...that king to whom both Unions may in a sort refer...”: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Interpretations of Henry's Saviourhood⁵

After Henry's death, several histories were produced throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which provided assessments of his reign and character. Despite Henry's best efforts at longevity, the image that he had curated for himself began to be challenged almost immediately after his death. In 1509, Thomas More, whose political career had begun during Henry's reign, penned a coronation ode for the impending accession of Henry VIII to the throne. In it, More paints a scathing portrait of Henry VII's kingship, describing the accession of Henry VIII as marking ‘...the [end] of our slavery, the beginning of our freedom, the end of sadness, the source of joy...,’ indicating that he considered Henry VII's reign as a dark age for England.⁶ Later in the ode, More makes more explicit references to some of the harsher elements of Henry's reign:

‘Now there is enjoyment in any profit which managed to escape the many sly
clutching hands of the many thieves.

⁵ Bacon, *Henry the Seventh*, 3.

⁶ Thomas More, *Coronation Ode of Henry VIII*, 1509. Made available online by the Centre for Thomas More Studies and Yale University Press: <<https://thomasmorestudies.org/ctms-editions/>>.

No longer is it a criminal offense to own property which was honestly acquired
(formerly it was a serious offense).

No longer does fear hiss whispered secrets in one's ear, for no one has secrets either to
keep or to whisper.

Now it is a delight to ignore informers. Only exinformers fear informers now.⁷

In these lines, More is referencing Henry's use of parliamentary attainders, bonds, recognisances, and fines against the nobility, especially in the latter part of his reign.⁸ Such measures were part of the fabric of medieval political life, however Henry's use of them as a means of enforcement have been interpreted as particularly severe by both his contemporaries such as Thomas More and Polydore Vergil, and by many of his modern historians. Historians such as J.R Lander have argued that though he implemented fewer attainders than his Yorkist predecessors, the conditions for their reversal became more severe and expensive.⁹ Lander states that Henry's use of recognisances and bonds to ensure loyalty and contain potential threats to his security increased after 1500, and that these measures were applied to far greater numbers of the nobility than had been under his predecessors.¹⁰ However, as highlighted by T.B. Pugh, since the reign of Henry V (r. 1413-1422) it had become standard government practice 'for the king to take recognisances for great sums of money, in an attempt to curb outbreaks of aristocratic lawlessness.'¹¹ The Yorkist kings Edward IV (r. 1461-1470 and 1471-1483) and Richard III (r.1483-1485) further developed this system of financial penalties to include an obligation to appear before the king and council as part of some recognisances.¹² Additionally under the Yorkists, people who defaulted on their

⁷ More, *Coronation Ode*, 1509.

⁸ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 215.

⁹ Lander, "Bonds, Coercion, and Fear," 339.

¹⁰ Lander, "Bonds, Coercion, and Fear," 339.

¹¹ T.B Pugh, "Henry VII and the English Nobility", *The Tudor Nobility*, ed. G.W, Bernard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 59.

¹² Pugh, "Henry VII and the English Nobility", 59.

obligations were liable to forfeit large amounts of money nearly impossible to pay.¹³ Henry's use of bonds and recognisances, therefore, was not something new or particularly unusual, though it did intensify in the last seven years of his reign to boost royal finances.¹⁴ Despite Henry's relatively common use of financial penalties, this practice has become an entrenched criticism of his rule, and a key piece of evidence to support accusations of avarice, as seen in More's work.

More also refers in the above passage to Henry's restrictions on retaining, a practice by which a lord recruited followers, offering the protection of their interests in return for exclusive service.¹⁵ Henry had expanded the means through which unlawful retaining could be detected and reported, and offered rewards to those that acted as informers.¹⁶ The fact that More could express this opinion of Henry so openly, especially for the occasion of the coronation of his son, indicates that he believed this interpretation of Henry to be popularly held, and that he expected that Henry VIII would agree, or at least would not take offence.¹⁷ More's polemic against Henry VII was criticised (though not, it would seem, by Henry VIII), both for its criticism of the late king and for its poor Latin.¹⁸ While More did amend some of his Latin mistakes in the Ode, he did not remove the criticism of Henry VII; given More's prominent position at the court of Henry VIII (until later in the sixteenth century), it would seem that the new king bore no ill will regarding the indictment of his father.¹⁹ Henry's financial methods of control were also noted by other sixteenth and seventeenth century historians, leading to an image of Henry as a king governed by avarice, particularly in the latter years of his reign. In his *Anglica Historia*, first published in 1534, the Italian-

¹³ Pugh, "Henry VII and the English Nobility", 59.

¹⁴ Pugh, "Henry VII and the English Nobility", 67.

¹⁵ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 209.

¹⁶ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 215.

¹⁷ Anglo, "Ill of the Dead," 33.

¹⁸ Anglo, "Ill of the Dead," 33.

¹⁹ Anglo, "Ill of the Dead," 33.

born scholar Polydore Vergil was one of the first people to write extensively of Henry's avarice, and popularised the idea of Henry as a miserly, wealth-hoarding king. Born in Urbino in 1470 and residing in England from 1502, Vergil was commissioned by Henry to write a history of England. Despite its royal patronage, Vergil's account, particularly of Henry's reign, is largely measured and fair, containing both criticism and praise of the king. Though the implied purpose of Henry asking Vergil to write a history of England was, of course, to present him and his family favourably, Vergil did not always toe the Tudor party line in his work.²⁰ Vergil questioned the legitimacy and authenticity of the Arthurian legend that Henry (and indeed numerous other kings of England) put such stock in, and directly critiqued Henry for his perceived severity and avarice.²¹ For example, in his description of Henry's character towards the end of book twenty-four, Vergil writes that, after navigating several conspiracies and rebellions, Henry 'began to treat his people with more harshness and severity than had been his custom' to ensure greater loyalty and obedience from them.²² As part of Henry's new approach,

'...all of his subjects who were men of substance when found guilty of whatever fault he harshly fined in order by a penalty which especially deprives of their fortunes not only the men themselves but even their descendants, to make the population less well able to undertake any upheaval and to discourage at the same time all offences.'²³

Vergil writes that this policy brought large sums of money into the royal coffers, assisted by informers who 'dangled before the king's eyes ways of making money, and poured into his ears the crimes of many, by which the treasury could be filled with enormous spoils...'.²⁴

²⁰ Denys Hay, "Introduction," in *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, A.D. 1485-1537*, ed. Denys Hay (London: Royal Historical Society, 1950), xxix.

²¹ Hay, "Introduction," xxix.

²² Polydore Vergil, *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, A.D. 1485 - 1537*, ed. Denys Hay (London: Royal Historical Society, 1950), 127.

²³ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 129.

²⁴ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 129.

Vergil concludes that as a result of this policy, Henry ‘by degrees lost all sense of moderation and was led into avarice.’²⁵ Subsequently, this interpretation of Henry as avaricious stuck, and was reiterated, to various degrees, in the chronicles and histories of later authors.

However, despite Vergil’s critique of Henry, his work also reflects some of the themes of saviourhood that Henry incorporated into his image. In particular, Vergil’s account reiterates one of the core elements of Henry’s image and personal notion of saviourhood: unity, and Henry specifically as a unifier. At the beginning of his account of Henry’s reign, Vergil writes that Henry’s ‘chief care’ after taking the throne was to

‘to regulate well affairs of state and, in order that the people of England should not be further torn by rival factions, he publicly proclaimed that (as he had already promised) he would take for his wife Elizabeth daughter of King Edward...’²⁶

Here, the rival factions that Vergil refers to are of course York and Lancaster. According to Vergil, one of Henry’s priorities upon acceding to the throne was to put an end to the civil conflict that had plagued England, a feat that he would achieve through marriage to Elizabeth of York. Through Henry and Elizabeth’s marriage, writes Vergil, ‘the two houses of Lancaster and York were united and from the union the true and established royal line emerged which now reigns.’²⁷ Henry’s role as a unifier who would bring an end to civil war was one that he had adopted from the very beginning of his reign, as we have seen, with Elizabeth of York (and the dynasty that she and Henry would subsequently create) being an essential element of this role. The fact that Polydore Vergil, who knew Henry personally, describes the king in this way speaks to the extent to which unity was a central pillar of Henry’s kingship, and evidently remained so in the decades following his reign.

²⁵ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 129.

²⁶ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 5.

²⁷ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 7.

In contrast to portraying Henry as a unifier, Vergil built upon the characterisation of Richard III as a villain. Vergil identified Richard as the mastermind behind the murder of his nephews Edward V and Richard duke of York, an idea we have seen in earlier chronicles and Henry's royal biography and letters. Vergil stated that after Richard had taken the throne, 'he determynd by death to dispatche his nephewys, because so long as they lyved, he could never be out of hazard....'²⁸ Further, Vergil described Richard's appearance, constructing an image of a deformed and monstrous king:

'He was lyttle of stature, deformyd of body, thone showlder being higher than thother, a short and sowre cowntenance, which semyd to savor of mischief, and utter evydently craft and deceyt...The whyle he was thinking of any matter, he dyd contynually byte his nether lyppe, as thowgh that crewell nature of his did so rage agaynst yt self in that lyttle carkase.'²⁹

In describing Richard in such a way, Vergil continued the positioning of Henry and Richard as antithetical, a theme we first see in some of Henry's earliest letters. Vergil's Henry was by no means perfect, as is evident from his descriptions of Henry's avarice. However, when considered against Richard's villainy, Henry shone by comparison.

The histories and biographies of Henry which followed Vergil's borrowed from his account, meaning that for the most part the view of Henry in the sixteenth and even seventeenth centuries changed little. While Vergil's assessment of Henry as avaricious stood the test of time, we also can observe Henry's role as a unifier (and Richard's role as Henry's antithesis) being expressed in other major histories and works on the king. Edward Hall's *Chronicle*, first printed in 1548, similarly reaffirms the unity and peace that Henry sought to

²⁸ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 187-188.

²⁹ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 226-227.

represent. Hall writes, much like Vergil, that Henry confirmed his decision to marry Elizabeth ‘heyre of the house of Yorke’ after Bosworth, a decision which

‘...gayned the fauour & good myndes of all the comen people, much extollyng and praysyng the kynges constant fidelyte and his polletique deuyce [device], thinkyng surely that the daye was now come that the seede of tumulteous faccions & the fountayne of ciuyle [civil] dissencion should be stopped...’³⁰

Hall writes that Henry’s decision to marry Elizabeth pleased the English people, as they saw the marriage as a means for ending the factional civil war that had dominated the political landscape in England. Though Hall’s description of events differs little from Vergil’s, it nonetheless does indicate that the perception of Henry as a unifier, particularly through his marriage to Elizabeth, was one that remained largely unchallenged even into the mid-sixteenth century.

In his work, Hall also reflects Henry’s self-styled role as a liberator, writing that as Henry entered London after his victory at Bosworth, the ‘Mayre, the Senate, and the magistrates’ welcomed him to the city and came

‘gladly to touche and kysse that victorious handes whiche had ouercome so monstruous & cruell a tyraunt... and rendryng immortall thanks to him, by whose meane & industry the comen wealth of the realme was preserued fro finall destruccion & perpetual calamite...’³¹

Here, Henry is very much framed as the liberator, who not only freed England from civil war, but also removed the tyrant (that is, Richard III) who had ruled over the kingdom. Hall’s description of Richard III not only as a tyrant but as cruel and monstrous reflects the

³⁰ Hall, *Hall’s Chronicle*, 423.

³¹ Hall, *Hall’s Chronicle*, 423.

characterisation of him that was developed first in Henry's reign, indicating that this view of Richard also survived into the mid-sixteenth century. Such comments are a further demonstration that, superficially at least, Henry's image of himself as a liberator and unifier did endure past his own reign.

In the seventeenth century however, Henry's role as a unifier took on an additional political meaning, serving as the blueprint for a larger union between England and Scotland. Following the accession of James VI of Scotland to the throne of England in 1603 as James I, and the resulting union between the English and Scottish crowns, Henry was given credit as an architect of this new union. James VI was descended from Henry through Henry's eldest daughter Margaret, who had married James IV of Scotland in 1503 as part of Henry's peace agreement with Scotland, a union which would eventually lead to the uniting of the kingdoms.³² James VI himself acknowledged Henry as a unifier in a speech given before Parliament in 1603, in which his comments on his descent from the Tudor king:

'First, by my descent lineally out of the loynes of Henry the seuenth, is reunited and confirmed in mee the Vnion of the two Princely Roses of the two Houses of LANCASTER and YORKE, whereof that King of happy memorie was the first Vniter, as he was also the first ground-layer of the other Peace.'[sic]³³

In this passage, James depicts himself as the inheritor of the unity that Henry had first established, in England by bringing an end to civil war, and between England and Scotland. Such a comment indicates that Henry's portrayal of himself as a unifier remained into the

³² Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 91.

³³ James VI and I, *Speech of 1603-1604 in The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), 271. Source originally found in David M. Bergeron, "Francis Bacon's Henry VII: Commentary on King James I." *Albion* 24, no. 1 (1992), 18.

seventeenth century, and became a political tool that could be repurposed to fit the needs of another king.

Francis Bacon, perhaps Henry's most famous biographer, also continued the interpretation of Henry as a unifier into the seventeenth century. Bacon wrote his 1621 biography of Henry during his period of public disgrace and expulsion from London for accepting gifts from people with trials still pending while Lord Chancellor.³⁴ When he returned to London nearly four months later, Bacon presented his work on Henry VII to James VI and I for approval.³⁵ Bacon's biography was dedicated to James' son the future king Charles I, and emphasised the unity that Henry had brought to the kingdom which Charles was to one day inherit:

‘...I have endeavoured to do honour to the memory of the last King of England that was ancestor to the King your father and yourself; and was that King to whom both Unions may in a sort refer: that of the Roses being in him consummate, and that of the Kingdoms by him begun.’³⁶

Bacon here attributes not only the union of York and Lancaster to Henry ('the Roses'), but also the union of Scotland and England that took place upon the ascension of James VI of Scotland to the English throne. Bacon later reasserts this idea of Henry as a unifier, and particularly as a figure who brought an end to civil war, writing that as Henry entered London after winning the crown, the citizens 'thought generally that he was a Prince as ordained and sent down from heaven to unite and put to an end the long dissensions of the two houses...'.³⁷

Bacon does temper his description of Henry somewhat, acknowledging the accusations of Henry's avarice by also describing him as a Solomon of England, a would-be compliment if

³⁴ Brian Vickers, *Introduction*, in Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of Henry the Seventh*, xi-xii.

³⁵ Vickers, *Introduction*, xii.

³⁶ Bacon, *Henry the Seventh*, 3.

³⁷ Bacon, *Henry the Seventh*, 10.

not for the fact that ‘Salomon also was too heavy upon his people in exactions.’³⁸ Ultimately though, Bacon’s work, similarly to Vergil’s and Hall’s, demonstrates that Henry’s images of unity and liberation did survive, even if slightly watered down, in the centuries after Henry’s reign.

The sixteenth-century interpretations of Henry and his reign, particularly Polydore Vergil’s, largely dominated studies of Henry up to the twentieth century, forming the basis of many of the works on the king up until the modern day.³⁹ In 1892, the historian and records scholar James Gairdner wrote the first modern biography of Henry, yet this work still primarily reinforced the image of Henry created in earlier centuries, particularly that of Bacon.⁴⁰ Though Gairdner refutes the claim that Henry was avaricious, he relies heavily on Bacon’s portrait of the king, upholding the view of Henry as a wise if inscrutable peace-maker.⁴¹ As we have seen in the introduction to this thesis, a more expansive and critical school of historiography on Henry would not truly emerge until later in the twentieth century.

‘Come hither, England’s Hope...’: Popular and narrative portrayals of Henry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries⁴²

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Henry’s self-styled roles as liberator and unifier were not only repeated in histories and biographies of the king. We can also observe these elements of Henry’s saviourhood in some of the popular literary texts of this period – namely the works of William Shakespeare, and popular poems and ballads. Specifically, the plays *Henry VI Part Three* (written 1591) and *The Tragedy of Richard III* (written 1591) by Shakespeare, and the ballads *The Rose of Englande* and *The Most Pleasant*

³⁸ Bacon, *Henry the Seventh*, 196.

³⁹ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 274.

⁴⁰ Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 277.

⁴¹ Gairdner, *Henry the Seventh*, 209-210.

⁴² William Shakespeare, *Henry VI Part 3*, Act 4 Scene 6. Accessed online via the Folger Shakespeare Library: <<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/henry-vi-part-3/read/4/6/>>.

Song of Lady Bessy written between the late sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries demonstrate that Henry's projected image of himself as both unifier and liberator were identified and continued in non-scholarly, popular accounts of history as well. None of these texts, of course, were produced specifically for Henry; they were written after his reign, and after many of the people who were involved in the events they recount had died (although Shakespeare was still very much writing under a Tudor monarch). The two ballads in fact form part of the Stanley cycle, a series of largely anonymously-authored ballads and poems celebrating the role played by the noble Stanley family in two key battles fought between 1485 – 1515: Bosworth and Flodden.⁴³ Nonetheless, each of these texts reflect the image of saviourhood, unity, and liberation that Henry sought to project throughout his kingship.

Turning first to the ballads, we find Henry presented, to varying degrees, as the hope of England, who would free it from tyranny and bring an end to civil strife. In *The Rose of Englande*, which the previous chapter touched on briefly, the events of the Wars of the Roses and Henry's ascent to the throne are recounted in a loosely allegorical fashion, with the imagery of gardens, flowers, and personal political badges and emblems being used to identify the main players.⁴⁴ England in the ballad is depicted as a healthy, flourishing garden, and the Lancastrian royal line, unsurprisingly, is represented as a red rose.⁴⁵ In the fourth and fifth stanzas of the ballad, Richard III is introduced, represented by his standard, the boar, and is depicted as a disrupter and attempted destroyer of the Lancastrian line:

'Then came in a beast men call a bore,

And he rooted this garden vpp and downe;

⁴³ Ian Forbes Baird, "Poems Concerning the Stanley Family (Earls of Derby) 1485-1520", PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (1990), 32.

⁴⁴ C.H. Firth, "The Ballad History of the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 2 (1908), 23.

⁴⁵ Child (ed.), "The Rose of Englande" stanzas 1 and 2, 331.

By the seede of the rose he sett noe store,

But afterwards itt wore the crowne.

Hee tooke the branches of this rose away,

And all in sunder did them teare,

And he buryed them vnder a clodd of clay,

Swore they shold neuer bloome nor beare.⁴⁶

Richard here is depicted as uprooting the garden that was England, and scattering potential Lancastrian inheritors (described here as ‘the seede of the rose’ and the ‘branches of this rose’). The ballad noted though, that despite Richard’s actions, the seeds of the red rose would one day wear the crown, a reference to Henry Tudor’s eventual triumph, and a likely call back to the prophecy supposedly made by King Henry VI that one day Henry Tudor would wear the crown. Throughout the ballad, Henry is presented as the hope of the kingdom, who will provide salvation and, importantly, who will end the bloodshed that has occurred since Richard became king. In stanzas eighteen and nineteen, which describe Henry entering England, Henry stops his forces from executing a bailiff at Shrewsbury who has prevented his entry into the town:

‘But hold your hand,’ saies Erle Richmond,

‘For his loue that dyed vpon a tree!

For if wee begin to head so soone,

⁴⁶ Child (ed.), “The Rose of Englande” stanzas 4 and 5, 331.

In England wee shall beare no degree .'⁴⁷

Here, the Henry of the poem invokes the image of Christ ('for his loue that dyed vpon a tree') and states his reluctance to resort to violence, claiming that if he were to do so, he would receive no respect in England. After asking the bailiff why he has opposed Henry's army and finding out that he did so out of respect for the office of the crown (rather than Richard himself), Henry praises the 'loyall service by him done' and pardons him, proclaiming that no harm shall come to the bailiff by his hand.⁴⁸ Throughout these lines, and indeed throughout the ballad, Henry is depicted as just and merciful, a figure who seeks to bring peace to the land that has been uprooted by Richard's violence. Such a depiction indicates that the themes which had characterised Henry's saviourhood and image as king, in particular his role as the antithesis to Richard III and desire to rid England of tyranny, were still present in popular accounts of Henry's rise to power.

Similarly, another ballad titled *The Most Pleasant Song of Lady Bessy*, also reinforces Henry's image as a liberator and saviour. This ballad, written in the mid to late sixteenth century places Elizabeth of York at its centre as the protagonist, who appeals to Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby, for assistance in defeating Richard III and bringing Henry back from exile to take the throne:

'Remember Richmond banished full bare

And lyeth in Brittain behind the sea;

You may recover him of his care,

If your heart and mind to him will gree,

⁴⁷ Child (ed.), "The Rose of England" stanzas 19, 331.

⁴⁸ Child (ed.), "The Rose of England" stanzas 22-23, 331.

Let him come home and claim his right,

And let us cry him King Henry.⁴⁹

From the beginning of the ballad, the idea that Henry has a right to the throne and should be proclaimed king is established. As the ballad continues, Elizabeth lays out the many crimes of Richard III, accuses Richard of poisoning his wife Anne, and explains how, along with Robert of Brakenbury and James Tyrell, Richard ‘doomed these two Lords [Edward V and Richard Duke of York] to dye: they had neither justice nor right, but had great wrong...’.⁵⁰ Such crimes, in the ballad, reinforce the need for Henry to return from exile and wrest the throne from Richard. The *Song of Lady Bessy* finishes with the marriage of Henry and Elizabeth, which further highlights the unity that formed such a key element of Henry’s image of himself and his dynasty:

‘A bishopp them married with a ringe

The two bloods of great renowne.

Bessy said, Now may we singe,

Wee two bloods are made all one.’⁵¹

These final lines are a clear reflection of an idea which, as we have seen, was an essential part of Henry’s saviour image: unity, specifically achieved through his marriage to Elizabeth of York and the dynasty they created. Though *The Song of Lady Bessy* highlights the roles of Elizabeth and Thomas Stanley in Henry’s ascension to the throne, we can still find remnants

⁴⁹ Anonymous, *The Most Pleasant Song of Lady Bessy*, ed. Thomas Heywood (London: Richard Taylor, 1829), 2.

⁵⁰ Heywood (ed.), *The Most Pleasant Song of Lady Bessy*, 3.

⁵¹ Heywood (ed.), *The Most Pleasant Song of Lady Bessy*, 48.

of the image Henry created for himself (and, by extension, the image he created for Richard III) scattered throughout.

Finally, we must turn to the creator of one of the most enduring images of tyrannical kingship and Richard III: William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's Richard is 'subtle, false, and treacherous,' and is presented, absolutely, as having planned the murders of his own nephews to usurp the throne.⁵² Perhaps one of the most recognisable characteristics of Shakespeare's Richard, though, is his physical appearance. In the play, Richard is 'rudely stamped' and

'Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them...'⁵³

Shakespeare's image of the deformed, monstrous Richard is not entirely original; Thomas More in particular played a role in constructing the image of Richard being 'little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right...', as did Vergil and Hall.⁵⁴ Physical disability or difference was also often linked to sin and immorality in medieval and early modern Christian society, as will be discussed further later in this chapter.⁵⁵ Perhaps it is not so surprising, then, that it is Shakespeare's Richard, written during Tudor period and reflecting the period's beliefs and prejudices, that has in large part shaped the view of Richard in the centuries after his death.⁵⁶ Richard's villainy as described by

⁵² William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard III*, Act 1 Scene 1. Accessed online via the Folger Shakespeare Library: < <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/richard-iii/read/1/1/>>.

⁵³ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act 1 Scene 1.

⁵⁴ Thomas More, "The History of King Richard III," in *The Essential Works of Thomas More*, ed. Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 101.

⁵⁵ Abigail Elizabeth Comber, "A Medieval King 'Disabled' by an Early Modern Construct: A Contextual Examination of *Richard III*," in *Disability in the Middle Ages: Reconsiderations and Reverberations*, ed. Joshua R. Eyles (London: Routledge, 2010), 185.

⁵⁶ Siobhan Keenan, "Re-reading Shakespeare's *Richard III*: Tragic Hero and Villain? *Linguaculture* 1 (2017): 27.

Shakespeare is well-established, and well-studied; there is little need to expand further upon it here. What does require further study, however, is Shakespeare's depiction of Henry. Contrary to the argument of historians such as Thomas Penn, who asserted that Shakespeare 'omits Henry VII altogether from his sequence of history plays,' we do find Henry in Shakespeare, and, in fact, the version we find bears significant resemblance to the Henry we have encountered over the course of this thesis.⁵⁷ It is true that Henry does not have a dedicated play in the Shakespearean canon, however he does make a brief appearance in *Henry VI Part 3* and is the opponent to Richard in *Richard III*. Despite his comparatively little 'stage-time,' Shakespeare does manage to convey an image through both plays of Henry as a saviour.

In *Henry VI Part 3*, Henry appears as a youth, addressed by his hereditary title of Earl of Richmond. Upon meeting the young Henry, King Henry VI describes him as 'England's hope,' proclaiming that

'If secret powers
Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
His looks are full of peaceful majesty,
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,
His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself
Likely in time to bless a regal throne.'⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), xxv.

⁵⁸ Shakespeare, *Henry VI Part 3*, Act 4 Scene 6.

This speech by Henry VI draws upon the story from early in Henry's reign recorded initially by Bernard André, in which Henry was taken to London by his uncle Jasper Tudor to meet his namesake Henry VI, who announced that the young Henry would one day be king. Though it is unlikely that Henry VI made such a proclamation (especially given he had his own son and heir at the time), its repetition by Shakespeare indicates that it was a potent enough story to survive after Henry's reign to the end of the sixteenth century. Further, Henry VI's speech reflects the idea, again seen in Henry's own letters, that Henry was indeed the rightful inheritor of the throne, and that, by extension for Shakespeare's audience, that the Tudors as a dynasty were the natural rulers of England.

Shakespeare expands upon the idea of Henry as the rightful claimant to the throne in *Richard III*. In this play, as we have seen above, Richard is clearly presented as the villain, whose actions and character are in direct opposition to Henry's. Shakespeare's Henry only appears in the latter part of the play, but his characterisation reveals that elements of the real Henry's image had indeed survived. Towards the end of the play, as the Battle of Bosworth is about to begin, Henry addresses his soldiers, in a speech full of the saviourhood imagery that we have come to expect of him. To rally his forces, Henry highlights Richard's faults, asking his men:

'For what is he they follow? Truly, gentlemen,
A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
One raised in blood, and one in blood established;
One that made means to come by what he hath,
And slaughtered those that were the means to help him;
A base foul stone, made precious by the foil

Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;
One that hath ever been God's enemy.'⁵⁹

This Henry is surely familiar to us now. In this scene, Henry describes Richard as a tyrant and as homicidal, claims that he made in real life as far back as 1484 in his letter sent from France. Shakespeare's Henry also asserts that Richard is a usurper, 'falsely set' on the throne of England, and an enemy of God, both claims that the real Henry made in his letters, and which were later repeated by Bernard André and his later biographers. This speech contains some of the cornerstones of Henry's saviour image – the idea that Richard is a tyrant, a murderer, and ungodly – and emphasises the comparative righteousness of Henry's cause. At the end of the play, once Henry has emerged victorious from battle, Shakespeare emphasised another element of Henry's saviourhood: the unity that his kingship would bring. Speaking to his army, Henry promises that he 'will unite the white rose and the red' and proclaims

'O, now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together,
And let their heirs, God, if Thy will be so,
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days.'⁶⁰

Again, such sentiments are familiar to us. The unity that Henry's marriage to Elizabeth would bring to England, and the peace that would emerge from this union and from their dynasty were crucial for Henry's image and his legitimacy as king, and are themes that Shakespeare too has looked to when creating his version of Henry. An investigation of Henry as he appears in Shakespeare's plays suggests that Henry's self-styled role as a ridder of tyrants and

⁵⁹ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act 5 scene 3.

⁶⁰ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act 5 scene 4.

a unifier survived after his reign, and influenced popular depictions of him well into the Elizabethan era.

“Was he the one with all the wives?” or, The Invisible King? Henry VII in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries⁶¹

We have seen how, in the two centuries following Henry’s reign, his image began to change. While elements of his original saviour image survived, particularly the unifier component, and the denigration of Richard III’s character, new critiques of his character beginning in the sixteenth century, namely the accusations of avarice, also defined understandings of Henry. What, then, can we say of Henry’s image as it stands today? Who is King Henry VII to a twentieth and twenty-first century audience? What remains of Henry’s image of saviourhood, over five hundred years later? In some ways, not a great deal – at least not in the way that Henry envisaged. In fact, the modern view of Henry often mirrors Bishop Fisher’s phrase which opened this chapter – *fumus et umbra*. Henry is perhaps one of the least-known monarchs in English history today (at least in terms of his character), despite being the founder of one of England’s best-known dynasties. While historians of the Wars of the Roses, the Tudors, and late medieval England generally have provided assessments of Henry’s kingship, policies, and, to some extent, his character, knowledge of the first Tudor king outside of academic circles is more limited. However, the image of saviourhood that Henry projected was always meant to be seen by all his people, not just the nobility and scholars. His use of visuality and interaction with mythology and the founding stories and histories of Britain speak to a desire for his image to be accessible to those both within and outside of his court. With this idea in mind, the final section of this chapter will focus on where we find elements of Henry’s saviourhood surviving outside of modern scholarship.

⁶¹ My Pilates instructor’s question after asking about my thesis topic. I have been asked this question often throughout my research, and I think it speaks to the extent to which Henry is unknown and overshadowed even in people’s general knowledge and in popular history.

This section will begin with an examination of what is perhaps Henry's most enduring legacy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: Richard III as a villain and Henry as his antithesis (though the extent to which the latter part of this image survived is questionable). This chapter will then end where Henry's story first began – in Wales. This section will assess Henry's legacy in Wales, and what the perception of the first Welshman to sit on the English throne is in his homeland.

As stated above, perhaps the image that has survived most stridently into the twenty-first century is that of Richard III as the villain of the larger Tudor story. As we have seen, Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard popularised the image of him as deformed and villainous, and indeed this is an image which has largely survived into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, efforts have been made to rehabilitate Richard's image over the years, for example by groups such as the Richard III Society, and particularly in historical and disability studies. As Abigail Elizabeth Comber has emphasised in her examination of physical impairment and societal disabling in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, medieval Europe was an intensely Christian society, which 'looked to the Bible for social truths.'⁶² Throughout the Bible, the consistent 'social truth' offered was that impairment was often a punishment bestowed on individuals for sin.⁶³ Comber further argues that *Richard III* demonstrates how the connection between punishment and sin could also become

'dramatic evidence of latent immoral desires; ultimately, even the most minor textual hint of deformity could inspire an actor to embrace the impairment making it part of the character's very nature...'⁶⁴

⁶² Comber, "A Medieval King Disabled," 185.

⁶³ Comber, "A Medieval King Disabled," 185.

⁶⁴ Comber, "A Medieval King Disabled," 185.

Comber's examination of the negative connotations attached to disability in the Middle Ages is but one example of the shift that occurred in the twenty-first century regarding Richard III; as society and scholarship acknowledged the inherent ableism of Richard's characterisation, reassessments of the king increased. In 2012, Richard's reputation underwent another significant transformation when a collaborative archaeology project was launched by the University of Leicester and the Richard III Society to find the final resting place and remains of the late king.⁶⁵ Excavations quickly uncovered not only the Grey Friars church where Richard was believed to have been buried after Bosworth, but the complete remains of Richard himself.⁶⁶ The discovery of Richard's body, the curvature of his spine, and the evidence of the injuries he sustained in death contributed further to the rehabilitation of his image by confirming the ableist exaggeration of his appearance and the poor treatment of his body after death. Tellingly, the discovery of Richard's body and the subsequent increased attention on his reign and character does not seem to have increased interest in the man who usurped him – Henry. If anything, the increased popular and scholarly focus on Richard in the aftermath of the discovery of his body seems to have rendered Henry all the more invisible. If he is considered in discussions of Richard, he is often positioned simply as a propagandist, looking to strengthen his own claim by denigrating Richard (though notably, such characterisations do not consider this denigration in the context of royal image or saviourhood). Such a view is certainly reflected in John Ashdown-Hill's book *The Mythology of Richard III*, in which Henry is described as a propagandist and re-writer of history in order to improve his own standing as king, due to the fact that he 'had no valid blood claim to the throne.'⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Richard Buckley et al, "The king in the car park': new light on the death and burial of Richard III in the Grey Friars church, Leicester, in 1485", *Antiquity* 87, no.336 (June 2013), 520.

⁶⁶ Buckley et al, "The king in the carpark," 520.

⁶⁷ John Ashdown-Hill, *The Mythology of Richard III* (Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2015), 8. Ashdown-Hill's claim that Henry had 'no valid blood claim to the throne is factually incorrect; Henry was descended from John of Gaunt (1340 – 1399) and his mistress (though later wife) Katherine Swynford through his mother Margaret

Are there any places, then, where we can still find remnants of Henry's saviourhood? The answer to this question lies rather fittingly in Henry's homeland – Wales. Of course, this is not to say that Wales sees Henry as a saviour. As we have seen in chapter two, the extent to which Henry 'liberated' Wales was limited, and the very idea of such a figure is somewhat outdated in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. What can be observed in Wales, however, are small traces of Henry's Welsh saviourhood, reinterpreted and repurposed to fit a modern Wales. While he was not a particularly popular king in England in the twentieth century, there is evidence that in Wales, Henry was viewed as an important national figure and even as a hero. In Cardiff in 1905, a new City Hall was built, and inside it a



Fig. 6 Photograph of the statue of Henry VII in Cardiff City Hall. In R.A. Griffiths and R.S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (1985), 129.

Beaufort. The Beauforts had been legitimised (though with the initial stipulation that they could not inherit the throne) when John and Katherine married. On his father's side, Henry was also connected to Lancastrian royalty; his half-uncle was King Henry VI (1422 – 1461, 1470 – 1471). Though not the strongest claim, Henry did have an ancestral claim he could fall back on nonetheless.



Fig. 7 Statue of Henry VII outside Pembroke Castle, erected 2017. Photo from website of the Pembroke and Monkton Local History Society. <<https://pembrokeandmonktonhistory.org.uk/HenryVIIStatue.htm>>.

marble-lined reception area constructed, designed to house statues of a selected group of historical Welsh heroes.⁶⁸ Due to budget restrictions, the statues themselves were not commissioned until after an injection of funds from the Welsh politician David Alfred Thomas (later 1st Viscount Rhondda), who offered to pay for the statues that were eventually unveiled in 1916.⁶⁹ To choose the historical figures who were to be depicted in statue form, the Welsh newspaper *The Western Mail* ran a competition in which members of the public could suggest candidates to be immortalised in sculpture.⁷⁰ Three leading Welsh scholars - Sir Marchant Williams, Professor Thomas Powell, and Mr Llewelyn Williams, MP – acted as judges, and eventually chose eleven historical figures to be represented, including ‘Harri Tudur’ (see fig. 6).⁷¹ Cardiff’s Hall of Heroes was officially opened on 27 October 1916, in

⁶⁸ John B. Hilling, *The History and Architecture of Cardiff Civic Centre* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), 106, 109.

⁶⁹ Hilling, *Cardiff Civic Centre*, 110.

⁷⁰ Edgar L. Chappell, *Cardiff’s Civic Centre: A Historical Guide* (Cardiff, Priory Press, 1946), 24.

⁷¹ Chappell, *Cardiff’s Civic Centre*, 24-25.

an unveiling ceremony presided over by David Lloyd George, then the UK War Secretary.⁷²

Lloyd George's speech given during the unveiling ceremony (which was taking place in the middle of the First World War) reflects ideas of Welsh regional nationalism, highlighting the role of Wales' 'great men' in shaping the country that he argues was playing a vital role in the war effort.⁷³ According to a report from the *Stockton Herald*, Lloyd George stated that in the unveiling ceremony

'...they were honouring the great men of a little nation; such a small nation compared with the nations which were in the arena now; yet the little nations were never more alive, more important, than they were today in this conflict of gigantic empires.'⁷⁴

Similarly, the *Evening Mail* also reported on Lloyd George's unveiling speech, including his comments on the role of small nations in the current war effort, but also included further details of his speech. As quoted by the *Evening Mail*, Lloyd George stated that

'The first thing that struck one in going through the list [of statues] was how old was the civilisation of Wales...Wales was one of the oldest civilisations in Europe. In the days of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table Welshmen had a king who inculcated a code of honour which restrained the brute force of Europe for centuries.'⁷⁵

Lloyd George's comments at the unveiling ceremony reflect a sentiment present in Wales during the First World War, in which Wales felt a sense of empathy and connection to other small nations who were under threat. The experiences of 'gallant little Belgium' and 'gallant little Serbia' were often used in comparison with Welsh war efforts and experiences, as these

⁷² "Small Nations and Great Men. Mr Lloyd George on Welsh Heroes," *Evening Mail*, 30 October, 1916. British Newspaper Archive.

⁷³ "Small nations and Great Men," *Evening Mail*, 1916.

⁷⁴ "The Little Nations Never More Alive or More Important Than To-day," *Stockton Herald*, 4 November, 1916. British Newspaper Archive.

⁷⁵ "Small Nations and Great Men," *Evening Mail*, 1916.

countries were perceived by Wales as ‘small, defenceless nations like Wales itself.’⁷⁶

However, his comments on the unveiling of the statues also speak to a sense of pride in the long history and staying power of Wales. Lloyd George’s comments situate the Arthurian legends at the centre of Welsh history and identity; he claims Arthur as a king of Wales, and asserts that the chivalric ideas of Arthur and his knights played a role in restraining Europe. One wonders whether, given Lloyd George’s role in Welsh nationalist and devolution movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, he was also referring subtly to the brute force of England as well.⁷⁷ Either way, Lloyd George’s comments on the unveiling of the ‘great men of a little nation’ reveal that, in twentieth century Wales, Henry VII was viewed as having had a significant role to play in shaping the history and experiences of Wales. Though we do not have a concrete reason for Henry’s presence, being included in the list of heroes of Wales – a list decided upon by both members of the Welsh public and academics – suggests that at this time Henry was an important figure in Welsh national identity. Further, Henry’s appearance alongside other heroic Welsh leaders such as Llywelyn ap Gruffud, Owain Glyndŵr, and Boudica, the writer Gerald of Wales, and Saint David (Wales’ patron saint), indicates that Henry was an important heroic and cultural representative of Wales in the twentieth century.⁷⁸ Henry’s saviourhood, as he had originally envisaged and implemented, may not have survived completely intact, but through his selection as a ‘Welsh hero’, we can still observe glimmers of it.

⁷⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880 – 1980*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 160.

⁷⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, “Welsh Nationalism: The Historical Background,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6 no.1 (1971): 159.

⁷⁸ The full list of statues (taken from Chappell, *Cardiff’s Civic Centre*, 1946):

Dewi Sant (St David, Patron Saint of Wales, 6th century); Hywel Dda (Howel the Good, the ‘law giver’, 10th century); Buddug (Boadicea/Boudicca, British queen, 1st century); Llewelyn Ein Llyw Olaf (Llewelyn the Last Prince of Wales, 13th century); Harri Tudur (Henry VII, Founder of the Tudor dynasty, 15th-16th Centuries); Esgod Morgan (Bishop Morgan, 16th century, Translator of the Bible into Welsh); Williams, Pantycelyn (18th century, Revivalist and Hymn Writer); Dafydd ap Gwilym (Eminent Welsh Poet, 14th century); Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales, scholar and writer of 12th and 13th centuries); Owain Glyndwr (Welsh independence hero, 14th-15th centuries); Sir Thomas Picton (British General, 18th-19th centuries). Note that Cardiff’s city council voted to remove Picton’s statue in 2020 due to his involvement in the slave trade and authorisation of the torture of a fourteen-year-old girl while he was Governor of Trinidad.

Cardiff's Hall of Heroes, however, is not the only place where we can find Henry immortalised in statue in Wales. In 2013, the author and historian Nathen Amin submitted a petition with 144 signatures to the Senedd Cymru (the Welsh Parliament, previously the National Assembly for Wales), asking for funding for a statue of Henry to be erected in his birthplace of Pembrokeshire.⁷⁹ In the petition, Amin stated that despite being the birthplace of the first Tudor king, 'there is no statue or memorial in the town of this man', adding that erecting a statue of him 'could improve the economy of the town as a Tudor must-visit place.'⁸⁰ The invocation of the Tudor name and dynasty would become an important theme in the journey to the creation of the statue. Upon consideration of the petition, the Senedd Cymru agreed to seek the opinions of Pembroke Castle Trust and Pembroke Town Council in regards to the erection of a statue.⁸¹ Pembroke Town Council was supportive of the petition; the then town clerk Karen Didcote wrote to the Senedd Cymru that the council would 'clearly support the Welsh government funding of a statue of Henry VII in Pembroke.'⁸² Pembroke Castle Trust was also supportive of a statue, however stated that they were not in a financial position to fund one.⁸³ The push for a statue of Henry gained momentum in October 2015, when the Pembroke and Monkton Local History Society launched a grassroots campaign for additional funding to bring the statue to fruition. Pembrokeshire County Council was ultimately able to provide a grant of £20,000 towards the project, with later injections of £10,000 from Valero Refinery and £12,000 raised from donations from the public.⁸⁴ The

⁷⁹ Nathen Amin, "P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke", submitted to Senedd Cymru 15 January 2013. Accessed at: <<https://business.senedd.wales/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=5324&Opt=3>>.

⁸⁰ Amin, "P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke", 2013.

⁸¹ P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke, "Meeting Minutes: 16/04/2013". Accessed at: <[Items at meetings - P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke](#)>.

⁸² 'Pembroke Town Council to the Chair,' as part of P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke. Accessed at: <[Items at meetings - P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke](#)>.

⁸³ 'P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke – Correspondence from Pembroke Castle Trust to the clerking team, 14.10.2013'. Accessed at: <[Items at meetings - P-04-447 Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke](#)>.

⁸⁴ Tom Sinclair, "Pembroke: £40,000 raised for Henry VII statue", *The Pembrokeshire Herald*, 19 October 2016. Accessed at: <<https://pembrokeshire-herald.com/29185/pembroke-40000-raised-henry-vii-statue/>>.

statue was to be positioned on Mill Bridge in front of Pembroke Castle, and was eventually unveiled on 10 June 2017 (see fig. 7). Following the erection of the statue, the city council also announced it would conduct a feasibility study to examine the possibility of building a Henry VII visitor centre to share Henry's story, inspired by one built in Leicester for Richard III after the discovery of his remains.⁸⁵ Pembroke city council hoped that the erection of the Henry statue would put Pembroke more prominently on the Tudor trail, and would highlight the important role that Henry had in both English and Welsh history. In 2024, Nathen Amin published a book titled *Son of Prophecy: The Rise of Henry Tudor*, which further examined Henry's connections to Wales, Welsh culture, and prophecy, as well as explored Henry's early life before kingship.⁸⁶

Henry's statue in Pembroke is representative of the shift his image has undergone, even from as recently as the twentieth century. The Henry reflected in the Pembroke statue is noticeably less heroic than the one depicted by the statue in Cardiff, and is less focussed on national pride in favour of historic and local value. The statue does not reflect saviourhood or heroism, but it does indicate that the city feels an ongoing connection to the king who was born there. Further, the statue and the decision to erect it suggests that Henry, while no longer particularly connected to saviourhood, is now in Pembroke representative of something potentially much larger, and far more lasting: the Tudors. This shift in image from Henry the saviour to Henry the first Tudor is also perceptible in popular histories and social media. In 2011, historian Thomas Penn published a popular biography of Henry titled *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England*, which explored the Henry's reign and the foundations of the Tudor dynasty. In it, Henry is the quintessential Machiavellian archetype (Penn even includes an excerpt from *The Prince* at the beginning of the book), described by Penn as controlling,

⁸⁵ "Henry VII statue delivered to Pembroke 'hometown'," *BBC News*, 8 June 2017. Accessed at: <[Henry VII statue delivered to Pembroke 'hometown' - BBC News](#)>.

⁸⁶ Nathen Amin, *Son of Prophecy: The Rise of Henry Tudor* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2024).

paranoid, and avaricious.⁸⁷ Though not a wholly original interpretation of Henry and his reign, Penn's biography, particularly through its title, situates Henry firmly within a Tudor context. Henry's role as the founding Tudor is also highlighted by The Henry Tudor Society, founded on Facebook in 2013. The society's description states its purpose to 'discuss, debate and deliberate the life and times of Henry VII, the first Tudor king of England.'⁸⁸ Here again, Henry's role as the founder of the Tudor royal house is emphasised. It is illuminating to note the frequency with which Henry is referred to as 'Henry Tudor' in popular historical books and groups; few other kings of England, indeed if any, are referred to by their surname. It is an anachronism which speaks to the way in which Henry's image has shifted away from that of the saviour and has been largely replaced as that of founder of the Tudor dynasty.

Throughout the consultation process for the Pembroke statue, Henry's role as the founder of one of Britain's most significant royal dynasties was emphasised, with the city of Pembroke clearly enthusiastic about its place on the Tudor history trail. Perhaps in Wales, this is now Henry's image: not a saviour, but certainly a national figure and leader of a dynasty, and for many, still a source of historical and local pride. As Pembroke city councillor Linda Asman stated: 'in the end, Richard III was defeated by Henry, and Henry should be getting far more attention.'⁸⁹ Henry would likely agree.

Over the course of this chapter, we have seen how Henry's image has transformed from saviour, to miser, to Welsh national hero, to Tudor-trail place marker. Henry's image of himself as a saviour was challenged almost immediately after his death by his sixteenth-

⁸⁷ Penn, *Winter King*, xix.

⁸⁸ Facebook homepage of the Henry Tudor society accessible at: <<https://www.facebook.com/HenryTudorSociety>>.

⁸⁹ "More than £40k raised for Pembroke's Henry VII statue", *BBC News*, 19 October 2016. Accessed at: <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-37695578>>.

century biographers, although elements of his saviourhood remained, particularly the image of him as a tyrant-slayer. In sixteenth-and-seventeenth-century popular literature, we can similarly still find traces of Henry's saviourhood, of him as liberator and unifier, though in a more simplified form. Throughout these centuries, Henry's image remained entangled with that of Richard III; despite Henry's vilification of Richard, and perhaps rather ironically, it was Richard who remained the more recognisable figure, even as a villain. As we get further away from Henry's own context, inevitably the image of him as a saviour becomes fainter, and far less accepted. Important interdisciplinary work in the fields of sociology, disability studies, and history has contributed to scholarship critiquing the ableism present in many popular and historical depictions of Richard III, allowing for reassessments of his kingship and character. Such assessments also inevitably require scholars of Henry VII to consider the legacy of his saviourhood which relied so heavily upon negative characterisations of his rival. As we enter the modern era, little is left of Henry's saviourhood, although we can still find traces of it in Wales. Wales retained an image of Henry, not as a saviour, but in the throes of the First World War as a heroic figure, and in the twenty-first century, as a source of historical pride and connection to one of Britain's most famous dynasties.

Conclusion

‘...my crown is called content:
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.’³¹¹

Contentedness and kingship are qualities that rarely go hand in hand, as Shakespeare has Henry’s half-uncle Henry VI point out in the lines above. Certainly, after examining Henry VII’s life and reign, this sentiment rings true. The royal image that Henry designed for himself – that of saviour, liberator, and unifier – appears self-assured, as royal images were designed to be, reflecting the presumptuous confidence that characterised Henry’s portrayal of himself even before his accession. However, as we have seen over the course of this thesis, Henry’s decision to present himself as a saviour also reveals a lack of contentedness: it reflects a very real need to legitimise himself, his kingship, and his family, and to create a distraction from the fact that he should not, necessarily, even be on the throne. Henry’s saviour image, then, belies a contradiction of sorts: it reflects both grandiose self-assuredness and genuine insecurity. The image is contradictory, but in being so it is reflective of Henry himself.

An examination of Henry’s saviour image reveals a king that is at once capable, considered, ambitious, and anxious. Henry’s depiction of himself and, to a lesser extent, his family as saviours and unifiers belies a need not only for legitimacy, but for political stability in the wake of the Wars of the Roses. The triumphant image of the saviour concealed a sense of discontent, unease, and real anxiety present in Henry. Henry’s need for legitimacy and his subsequent moulding of himself into a saviour is born, primarily, out of a sense of discomfort and insecurity particularly associated with being an outsider thrust (admittedly in many ways

³¹¹ William Shakespeare, *Henry VI Part 3*, Act III, Scene 1.

of his own volition) into a position of power and responsibility. Henry's underlying discontentedness with his position, and his need for stability and legitimacy are reflected through his decisions made before and after becoming king: his decision to 'rebrand' himself as a saviour, rather than a usurper; his intent to unify York and Lancaster; his choice to associate his family with Britain's legendary past; and his representation of himself as the antithesis to tyranny all reflect the anxieties of a king looking to bolster his legitimacy wherever he can by attempting to cover as many bases as possible. As a result, his image was multi-faceted, and often contradictory.

However, Henry's image also further reveals his political astuteness, a quality that has been acknowledged by several of his biographers contemporary and modern, including Polydore Vergil, S.B. Chrimes, and Sean Cunningham. Henry clearly had a grasp of political image-making that perhaps he should not have had given his early life and period of exile, both of which had left him with essentially no personal understanding of what was required and expected of a medieval king.³¹² Given the fact that we can trace Henry's image-making beginning to take place prior to becoming king, it would seem that this understanding of the power and construction of an image was one that was somewhat innate to Henry, rather than a learned skill developed with the assistance of a council and advisors. Though Henry was exposed during his exile to the court cultures of the duchy of Brittany and the kingdom of France, and undoubtedly observed the styles of leadership present at both of these courts, his image-making decisions were often self-conceived and original. Henry's skill and involvement with image-making also helps to further contextualise his style of kingship; his close personal involvement as king in the day to day running of government mirrored the clear personal involvement he had in the formation of his image. An exploration of Henry's saviourhood image reinforces the interpretation found in many modern biographies of Henry

³¹² Cunningham, *Henry VII*, 282.

as a politically savvy individual, who took a significantly hands-on approach to kingship, but develops this idea further. Not only was Henry hands-on when it came to government, so too was he in relation to the construction of his royal image, an idea particularly reflected through his initial decision to style himself as a saviour prior to 1485, but also seen in his creation of the 'Tudor' or Union Rose, and his choice of the name Arthur for his son.

Henry's construction of his image, particularly that of him as a unifier, also reflects a sense of ambition and aspiration, particularly at the start of his reign. His careful attention to statecraft and administration, and the unification that shaped his marriage and family dynamic, speak not only to a work ethic and a need to cultivate legitimacy, but also to a genuine desire, and in practical terms, a need to improve the state of the kingdom he had become the leader of. England had been heavily scarred by the political upheaval and bloodshed of the Wars of the Roses. The conflict remains the longest period of civil war in England's history, post-Norman Conquest, and was, as Michael Hicks has asserted, more complex than both the Anarchy that occurred during King Stephen's reign (1135-1154) and the English Civil War (1642-1651).³¹³ The wars caused enormous instability and upheaval, comprising

'...three regional revolts, in 1450, 1489, and 1497 [the latter two in Henry's reign]; a host of private feuds, murders, ambushes, skirmishes, and sieges; thirteen full-scale battles...at least ten coups d'état and attempted coups; fifteen invasions...five usurpations, in 1461, 1470, 1471, 1483, and 1485; five kings – Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, and Henry VII – the first of whom actually reigned twice; seven reigns; and five changes of dynasty...'³¹⁴

³¹³ Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses*, 3.

³¹⁴ Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses*, 3.

Henry, as we have seen, was not untouched by these events; his connection to the throne had resulted in his flight into exile, and the fallout from the wars continued well into his reign. However, when Henry came to the throne, we can identify in him an ambition to be the figure who freed England from instability, or tyranny in Henry's own words, and to usher in a new era of unity and peace. Henry's decision to name his son after King Arthur, a figure who largely embodied hope, idealism, and unity, his creation of a new, unified rose icon for his family, even the colours that he used to represent himself (red, white, green) reflect rebirth, renewal, and by extension, a turn towards the new.

Henry's image was inherently multi-faceted; it reflected the contradictory qualities of anxiety and a need for stability, considered image-making and political skill, and ambition that characterised his life and kingship.

This thesis has shown is that Henry's royal image is more complex, considered, and innovative than has previously been acknowledged in scholarship. Over the course of this thesis, I have tracked the development of a particular aspect of Henry's image – his saviourhood – from before his accession to the end of his life, and have explored the two-pronged nature of his saviourhood. In chapter one, we observed the initial emergence of Henry's saviourhood during his time in exile and examined the origins of the two themes which would come to define the entire saviour enterprise: liberation and unity. The language that Henry used in his letters written in 1484 and 1485 justified his seizure of the throne not as a self-serving power grab, but rather as an act of liberation, to free England (and Wales) from the tyrannous rule of Richard III. In his letters, Henry depicted himself as the antithesis to Richard's villainy, and indeed they serve as some of the earliest examples of his saviourhood, indicating Henry's early grasp of political image-making. This chapter also

examined the ceremony in which Henry vowed to marry Elizabeth of York, a decision that laid the foundations for the unity that served as one of the vital prongs of Henry's saviourhood. Finally, this chapter also explored how the notion of saviourhood was applied to his homeland of Wales, even before becoming king. Henry's depiction of himself as a saviour of Wales reflected a connection to and interaction with the figure of the returning, prophetic hero that was so prevalent in Welsh bardic and literary culture, illustrated through his decision to fly the standard of the red Welsh dragon during the Battle of Bosworth.

Chapter two investigated what I term the first prong of Henry's saviourhood: his role as a liberator. This chapter undertook a close analysis of the biography Henry commissioned from court historian Bernard André, examining the ways in which André presents Henry as a saviour who freed England from the tyranny of Richard III. André's biography depicted Henry as the antithesis to Richard, serving as one of the earliest sources to portray Richard as a villain and, in turn, to portray Henry firmly as a hero, aside from Henry's own letters. Chapter two also considered Henry's image as a liberating saviour in relation to Wales. Henry's grants of exemption from discriminatory laws in Wales and denization of Welsh men living in England, while not extensive, reflect a sense of saviourhood directed towards his homeland that we can observe from his earliest letters. Though these minimal freedoms granted to Wales were not enacted by Henry until towards the end of his reign, they do nonetheless reinforce the liberator image that he had cultivated since before Bosworth.

In chapter three, I explored the relationship between Henry's image and the idea of unity, the second prong of his saviourhood. Creating a sense of unity in England was particularly important for fostering the stability and legitimacy that Henry needed as king, and was a theme that we can see through an examination of his iconography. Henry's use of the rose symbol and creation of the combined red and white rose reflected the unity that he sought to introduce to England. Further, Henry's relationships with his family, particularly his

wife Elizabeth of York and eldest son Arthur also reinforced the image of Henry as unifier and saviour. Really, Henry's representation of himself as a bringer of unity would not have been possible without his marriage to Elizabeth, which was a symbolic representation of unity between the warring factions of York and Lancaster. Additionally, Henry's decision to name his son Arthur, after the legendary King Arthur, further reinforced this image of unity. King Arthur was a figure who held cultural and historical significance for both England and Wales, and had long been associated with good kingship and the unification of Britain. Henry's family was thus essential for this aspect of his image to succeed.

Finally, chapter four considered the legacy of Henry's saviourhood. Almost immediately after Henry's death, the image of himself, inevitably, began to be challenged by writers such as Thomas More and Polydore Vergil. However, small semblances of Henry's saviourhood survived in the centuries after his death, which can be found in fifteenth and sixteenth century popular plays, ballads, and even in Vergil's account of Henry's reign. One of the most lasting legacies of Henry's image of saviourhood was his vilification of Richard III, a remnant which has survived, aided by More, Vergil, and Shakespeare, into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Aside from this vilification, much of Henry's original image of saviourhood is now lost to us. To end this chapter, I examined two modern depictions of Henry in statue form; one from Cardiff's town hall, erected in 1916, and one from Pembrokeshire, erected in front of Pembroke Castle in 2017. While less reflective of saviourhood, each statue represents a new, more modern public perception of Henry as Welsh national hero and Tudor founding father respectively.

In twentieth and twenty-first century historiography, historians have often lamented the difficulty in gaining a more personal view of Henry and his character. It is an issue I have

faced in my own work. We have so little evidence of Henry's nature, of who he was at his core, of what made him tick as a person. Intriguing though it is to consider, I do not know if we will ever be able to piece together a complete image of who he was; the same could be said, however, for most medieval monarchs. We know from Polydore Vergil that Henry was lively in conversation, we know he enjoyed hunting, we know from a letter sent to his mother that his eyesight was failing in his later years, however a complete picture of him remains out of reach.³¹⁵ What we can do, though, and what I have aimed for, is to do what the medievalist does best, and piece together the various evidence we do have to contribute to a fuller understanding of one aspect of Henry. In the case of this thesis, that aspect is how he wanted to be seen as a monarch. This is not the same as understanding Henry's character on a personal level, but it does strengthen our understanding of his kingship.

Despite the source-based difficulties, historians of Henry have made admirable efforts to examine the intricate details of Henry and his reign, and to construct a more complete image of him as a man. My work owes much to Henry's modern biographers, particularly R.A. Griffiths, S.B. Chrimes, and Sean Cunningham, who have mined the depths of the available source material to explore Henry's pre-kingship experiences, the early foundations and establishment of his reign, and the political and economic hurdles he faced as king. Imperative also to understanding Henry has been the work done on the people who surrounded him as king, an area particularly well-explored by Steven Gunn. Such studies also allow us to make educated deductions as to Henry's character – though of course we can never be completely sure of it. Examinations of Henry's early life, his responses to crises and insurrections, his methods of enforcement and punishment, his promotion of middling classes

³¹⁵ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 145. Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 302.

to positions in his court all help to craft an understanding of some of the qualities – anxiety, determination, innovation, for example – that he possessed.

What has not been assessed at length however, until now, is Henry's personal image of kingship, expressed through the portrayal of himself as a saviour of his kingdom. An examination of Henry's image is crucial to understanding not just his saviourhood, but also furthers our understanding of the administration, policies, and key decisions of his reign. We cannot fully understand key choices made by Henry before and after becoming king without understanding the image of saviourhood that he was simultaneously curating. Henry's approach to Wales, his decision to marry Elizabeth of York, his choice of the name Arthur for his son, his unprecedented decision to refer to himself as the king prior to Bosworth – to name but a few examples – can all be linked to the persona of the saviour that Henry sought to embody.

A detailed examination of Henry's royal image of saviourhood helps us to understand the foundations of his kingship and how he wanted to be seen. It also reveals the competing qualities of confidence and anxiety that characterised his reign. Exploring Henry's depiction of himself as a saviour and the construction of this image has revealed him to be a capable, innovative, and creative image-maker – a quality not often acknowledged in assessments of his reign. While the depiction of himself as a saviour has not stood the test of time in the way that Henry may have hoped, it nonetheless still reverberates well into the twenty-first century if you know where to look.

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