

The Poet Laureate as Stabilizer: Bernard André and the  
*Vita Regis Henrici Septimi*

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The nearly complete absence of contemporary history for the latter years of the fifteenth century leaves the early life and reign of Henry VII (r. 1485-1509) shrouded in obscurity. We hear complaints about the scarcity of sources during that time as far back as the sixteenth century, when Polydore Vergil attributes it to the "careless spirit of our age."<sup>1</sup> More recently, Charles Ross has called the second half of the fifteenth century "a period of disquieting hiatus between the traditions of historical writing of earlier centuries and the still developing forms of Renaissance history."<sup>2</sup>

Bernard André's *Vita Regis Henrici Septimi*, written between 1500 and 1503, is the one nearly contemporary account for Henry's childhood, exile, and early reign, by an individual who knew Henry VII before he became king. Little is known of André's life besides a pastiche of isolated facts.<sup>3</sup> He was a native of Toulouse, an Augustinian friar, and a doctor of canon and civil law. Contemporary documents sometimes refer to him as "the blind poet," and we know that he already suffered from blindness when he came to England. Perhaps he sailed with Henry's entourage in 1485, for he says he met Henry in London after Henry's arrival there following the Battle of Bosworth Field. The king must have had high regard for his abilities, for André held the post of tutor to Henry's eldest son, Prince Arthur, and perhaps to the future Henry VIII as well.<sup>4</sup> In his writings, through a heavy use of classical allusion as well as imitation of classical styles, André reveals himself to be a thoroughgoing humanist. He describes himself, and is recorded elsewhere, as the court poet and royal historiographer, positions he held under both Henry VII and Henry VIII, until his death around 1522.<sup>5</sup>

André's *Vita* has not found favor with most historians, who have accused him of "extreme carelessness and want of judgment," of "elegant toadyism to a royal paymaster," of being not only "blind" but "probably indolent."<sup>6</sup> André's account does contain manifest inaccuracies; his account of events is often threadbare and confused, and his understanding of historical complexities unimpres-

sive. He seems to have considered himself first a poet—we see him taking consolation from the fact that Homer, too, was blind—and only second an historian. As a result, he writes as much poetry and panegyric as history. In the end, we may be inclined to agree with the Elizabethan John Speed, who described André, ironically, as “having as well the title of poet laureate as of the king’s historiographer (how hardly soever those two faculties meet with honor in the same person).”<sup>7</sup>

Still, it seems high time to reassess the value of André’s *Vita*. In the last two decades, specialists in humanism have obtained fruitful results by analyzing the *Vita* not as an authoritative history but as a humanist document.<sup>8</sup> Such an approach, I believe, has potential for the historian as well, for two reasons: first, to reveal André’s motivation for writing the *Vita* when he did; second, to show how André’s preoccupations reveal, by implication, the preoccupations of Henry VII at the time of its composition. An analysis of the *Vita* indicates his concerns with four important issues: the legitimacy and noble lineage of the Lancastrian dynasty; Henry’s legitimate claim, through his mother Margaret Beaufort, to be the heir of that dynasty; Henry’s descent, through his father, from the ancient kings of Britain, Cadwallo and Cadwalader; and the ludicrousness of the challenges to Henry’s regime by the pretenders Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck.

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André’s references to the Lancastrian dynasty all suggest an abiding concern to broadcast its legitimacy and noble lineage. Thus a goodly section of the *Vita* is taken up with recounting how Henry VI, that “holy king,” had the crown wrenched from his hands by Edward, earl of March, who, “vexed and maddened by a Fury, longed to rule the kingdom *as a tyrant*” (my emphasis).<sup>9</sup> This passage and others clearly paint Edward and the House of York as a usurping faction. André’s assertion that the saintly king, whose miracles were known far and wide, was murdered by Edward’s brother, that “thirster after human blood” (*humani sanguinis sitor*) Richard III, intensifies the contrast between the “legitimate” Lancaster family and the bloodthirsty, ambitious, “usurping” House of York. Likewise, André’s description of the meeting between Henry VI and the young earl of Richmond, and of the king’s prophecy of Richmond’s future greatness, becomes part of Tudor tradition, finding its apotheosis in Shakespeare. Symbolically, the

meeting came to represent for the Tudors the passing of legitimate authority from Lancaster to Lancaster. Building on this myth, André has Henry upon his arrival in England exhorting his troops to help him "reclaim with God's help our ancient right that has been neglected until this day since the slaughter of the blessed Henry the Sixth."<sup>10</sup> In his later attempt to effect the canonization of Henry VI, Henry Tudor was himself trying to increase esteem for the Lancastrians and odium for the Yorkists, who had murdered the "holy man."<sup>11</sup> André's account clearly reflects Henry's desire to canonize his Lancastrian predecessor. It is interesting to note in this context that André once uses the classical Latin word *divus* to describe Henry VI;<sup>12</sup> this is the preferred humanist word for *saint* (remember *divus Augustus*), as opposed to medieval *sanctus*; and the same word André later uses to describe St. Thomas à Becket.<sup>13</sup> This usage supports the possibility of a virtual canonization of Henry VI.<sup>14</sup>

André intended to make it perfectly clear that Henry VII's claim to the throne of England rested solely on his descent through his Lancastrian mother Margaret Beaufort. While we can be pretty sure that in fact his marriage with Elizabeth, daughter of the Yorkist King Edward IV, was intended to reinforce Henry's claim to the throne, André certainly never admits as much, and implicitly denies such a motive, stating that Henry never considered whom to marry until *after* his coronation. The implication is that the king relied exclusively on his own claim to the throne, not Elizabeth's. André reinforces this point when he sets Elizabeth talking to herself, making it seem as if even the idea for the marriage originated with her: she fears that "he may be ready to take another for his wife, one across the sea, more beautiful than me, younger, richer, and worthier." Her hope is to arrange a personal interview: "Ah, if I could only speak to him, perhaps in our conversation I could get him to happen onto this subject [of marriage]."<sup>15</sup> The marriage comes to pass, we are told, not out of any desire to unite two royal houses, but simply because "God . . . assented to her maiden fancy" (*puellari desiderio annuens*).<sup>16</sup> Henry's own concern to assert this claim can perhaps be seen in his attempt to date his reign from the day *before* Bosworth Field; Richard's proclamation against Henry recognizes this fact when it specifies that "Henry Tydder . . . usurpid upon hym the name and title of royal astate of this Realme of Englund."<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Pickthorn has noted that later public documents always refer to Richard III as "king in deed, but not of right," yet speak of Edward IV, with a marvelous inconsistency according

to the Lancastrian version of English history, as "that most noble prince."<sup>18</sup> André's account of Elizabeth is in perfect harmony with the spirit of these documents: both imply that Henry VII relied on his Lancastrian descent for the throne of England.<sup>19</sup>

André was also concerned to trace the Tudor dynasty back through Henry's grandfather Owen Tudor to Welsh princes, then, following Geoffrey of Monmouth, to Cadwalader, son of Cadwallo, and at last back to Brutus or Brute, the Trojan founder of Britain.<sup>20</sup> Tracing Tudor descent through Henry's paternal line added luster and reinforcement to a branch of the Lancastrian line whose legitimacy was not ironclad: the descent through John of Gaunt's illegitimate children and the kinship with Henry VI were flimsy supports with which to prop the ideological and genealogical legitimacy of the regime (see figure at end of article).<sup>21</sup> André's treatment of this legendary descent at the beginning of the *Vita* has been called "the most impressive statement of Henry's British origin."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, with a single sentence André denies the legitimacy of every king since the Conquest, and not a few from before it: the interval of time between Cadwalader (d. 689) and Henry VII, "Cadwalader's legitimate successor," is dismissed as "the period in which the kingdom of the Britons was interrupted" by "the barbarity of the English, so long as the English ruled."<sup>23</sup> Practically the entire Middle Ages becomes nothing more than an intermediate period between the fall and reestablishment of the Briton kingdom. Whatever their value as history, André's statements are certainly evidence enough that Henry VII took his British origins seriously, for their value as propaganda if for nothing else.

The clearest invocation of Henry's own claims to British ancestry came in 1486 when he chose the name *Arthur* for his first-born son, and Winchester, with all its connections to Arthurian legend, as the place of Arthur's birth.<sup>24</sup> In his treatment of Arthur's birth, though, it seems André's humanist instincts got the better of him, and he missed a chance to reinforce Tudor legitimacy by associating the royal line with King Arthur. He was not alone among Henry's court circle of humanists to do so. In fact, as Carlson has shown, three continental humanists—André, Giovanni Gigli, and Pietro Carmeliano—celebrated the occasion of Arthur's birth in poetry, but not one of them seized on the association between King Arthur and Henry Tudor's British ancestry. André makes no mention at all of King Arthur's name, but instead, borrowing from Tibullus, fashions the London celebration of Prince Arthur's birth

into a classical feast, complete with triumphal laurels, flowing wine, dancing children, and shouts of "Io paean."<sup>25</sup>

In short, André blithely disregarded in this instance the significance that Henry himself certainly understood and wished others to grasp when he named his son Arthur and chose Winchester as his birthplace. Instead, André molded a classical frame around a medieval picture: he was imitating Virgil and Tibullus when he should have been invoking King Arthur and the Round Table. But after all, he was only following his instincts as a classical humanist. Identification with the classical world came as naturally to him as execration of the medieval interval, to which Arthurian lore belonged.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting André's treatment of the pretender conspiracies of Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck. These uprisings receive a much fuller treatment than most other events described in the *Vita*. Together they account for nearly one quarter of the text (excluding the *Dedicatio* and *Praefatio*). Over 17% concerns Perkin Warbeck alone, and without a single poem as padding. Here André provides the most coherent, forceful, and straightforward account of any episode in the *Vita*; he even ends his story in 1497 with the denouement of the affair: Henry spares the lives of Perkin's accomplices, who in return shout, sigh, and give "greatest thanks" to the king.<sup>27</sup>

Why did André think these uprisings led by Yorkist pretenders deserved such a prominent place in his work? André's placement and treatment of the Warbeck affair certainly suggests, despite the lengthy treatment given it, that he is trying to belittle it all, as though the exposure and defeat of the impostor Warbeck came about effortlessly. Describing Perkin's arrival at Cornwall, André writes, "When our most serene king heard of that worthless fellow's arrival, 'Well look,' [Henry] said smiling, 'we are being attacked again by that prince of rascals. Go, then; and lest any massacre occur through the ignorance of my subjects, let us try to get hold of Perkin through flattery.'"<sup>28</sup> A sentence later, André confides that "the king had sent for his troops not to fight against a scoundrel, but to protect the fatherland and the people from disasters."<sup>29</sup> André's Perkin, who is of course of mean birth, is no worthy opponent for the legitimate and true king. In the face of such an adversary as King Henry VII, he at last realizes the utter folly of his behavior, confessing to his men that the "virtue and favor of King Henry, the most victorious of kings, have so united with the will of

God that all our strength is completely useless and trifling, and is crippled and wasted against him."<sup>30</sup> Henry's virtue and the will of God have united to demolish the pretending foe.

Yet despite André's dismissal of the pretender—a "Little Butterfly" (*papilio*) he calls him in the *Vita*—Perkin had not gone down as easily as André would have it. He had received aid from almost every important European monarch except Ferdinand and Isabella—who were trying to arrange the marriage of their daughter Catherine to Prince Arthur—and had even married into the Scottish royal family. Henry himself confided to De Puebla, the Spanish ambassador in England during this period, "that Perkin had deceived the Pope, the King of France, the Archduke, the King of the Romans, the King of Scotland, and almost all Princes of Christendom."<sup>31</sup> And as even André had to concede, in lamenting tones, some of the greatest men of the kingdom had supported or promised to support him. Sir William Stanley (the man whose actions at Bosworth Field gave Henry the throne), Sir Robert Clifford, William Worsley, dean of St. Paul's, a host of other lay and spiritual lords, and even trusted servants in Henry's court had cast in their lot with the Little Butterfly from Tournai.<sup>32</sup> The Perkin Warbeck conspiracy, in short, shook Henry's kingdom from top to bottom, but you would hardly know this by reading André. The reason he devotes so much attention to the Simnel and Warbeck revolts may be to show, or perhaps to convince contemporaries, such as Ferdinand and Isabella, what trifling affairs the uprisings really were, how little chance there ever was for success, how absurd were the claims of any pretenders. But why? What need was there to resurrect the old ghosts who had haunted Henry's early years as king?

Certainly the years surrounding the writing of the *Vita*, from 1500 to 1503,<sup>33</sup> were a nervous time for the first Tudor monarch, and it is to this historical context that we now turn. After the two pretender conspiracies, Henry was especially eager to waylay any fears that Ferdinand and Isabella may have had about the stability of the dynasty since he was arranging for the marriage of his heir Prince Arthur to Catherine of Aragon. Our examination of the important themes of the *Vita* suggests another of André's concerns: to convey the impression of a stable regime. Considering the shakiness of the Tudor dynastic situation around the time of the *Vita's* composition, Henry had good reason to be concerned.

He had been remarkably lenient toward Simnel and Warbeck, allowing young Lambert Simnel—who claimed to be Clarence's son Edward, the earl of Warwick, and hence to have a better claim

to the throne than did Henry—to take a position in the royal kitchens. Even though Perkin Warbeck had posed a very serious threat to the throne, Henry allowed him a position in the royal household after defeating him in Cornwall in 1497, remanding him to the Tower only after he tried to escape in 1498.

By 1499 Henry had had enough. Warbeck was hanged, and the earl of Warwick, Edward IV's nephew, who had been pining away in the Tower the entire reign because of the direct threat he posed as one of the last "sprigs of the white rose," was beheaded.<sup>34</sup> With these events Henry's dynastic situation seemed secure on the surface: Ireland had been quiet since 1495; another nephew of Edward IV, Sir Edmund de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, had made his peace with Henry; preparations were going ahead for the marriage of Henry's daughter Margaret to James IV of Scotland (September 1499 to January 1502); and, most importantly, the marriage of Arthur to Catherine of Aragon was celebrated by proxy in May 1499.<sup>35</sup> By January 1500, the Spanish ambassador De Puebla could write to Ferdinand and Isabella,

This kingdom is at present so situated as has not been seen for the last five hundred years till now. . . . Now it has pleased God that all should be thoroughly and duly purged and cleansed, so that not a doubtful drop of royal blood remains in this kingdom, except the true blood of the king and queen, and above all that of the lord prince Arthur.<sup>36</sup>

This was exactly what Henry would have wanted De Puebla to say. Yet according to Don Pedro de Ayala, at this very time Henry was troubled. In 1499 he had asked the same priest who prophesied the death of Edward IV and the end of Richard III to tell him how his own end would come about. "The priest, according to common report, told the King that his life would be in great danger during the whole year, and informed him, in addition to many other unpleasant things, that there are two parties of very different political creeds in his kingdom." Henry, says Ayala, told the priest to tell no one of the prophecy, adding that Henry "has aged so much during the last two weeks that he seems to be twenty years older" and has grown "very devout," hearing sermons every day during Lent and continuing his devotions "during the rest of the day."<sup>37</sup> While such rumors are impossible to verify, they do suggest the king's tortured mind and anxiety at this time.

Real danger to the dynasty soon followed. Henry's third son Edmund died in June 1500;<sup>38</sup> in October 1500 a strong prop to the throne died, John Morton, Henry's Chancellor and the cardinal of Canterbury; in 1501 Suffolk and a younger brother fled to Flanders, a month or two before Arthur and Catherine's formal marriage; and worst of all, within five months of the marriage, Arthur died. The sole male heir to the Tudor line was now the ten-year-old and "as yet not very robust second son" Henry.<sup>39</sup> Were he to die, only Margaret and Mary would be left, but a queen-regnant had never been accepted on the throne of England. In addition, other than Arthur's ill-starred marriage, Henry had not yet managed to conclude a marriage alliance with a single important royal house.<sup>40</sup> It appears that even some of Henry's faithful began looking beyond Henry's family for the next king. Sometime around 1500 Henry became ill, giving rise to John Flamank's report in which Sir Hugh Conway, treasurer of Calais, described the king as "a weke man and syklow, not lykly to be no longe lyvis." Happening to be among "many grett personages" who were discussing possible successors to Henry, Flamank reported that some spoke of Buckingham, "sayng that he was a noble man and woldbe a ryall ruler." Others spoke of "your troytor Edmond De la Pole," but none "of my lord prynce."<sup>41</sup> Dying male heirs, escaping Yorkist pretenders, delays in contracting marriages for his children, and the king himself sick enough that some were discussing a Yorkist successor—surely these must have been anxious years for Henry, and for those, such as André, who were attached to his court.

Perhaps this, then, is the reason for the seemingly paranoid behavior of Henry in the years that followed, behavior most evident in his efforts to track down Edmund de la Pole.<sup>42</sup> Upon hearing from his friend Sir Robert Curzon that the Emperor Maximilian was willing to aid anyone of "King Edward's blood to get back his rights," Suffolk fled the country in 1501 for the emperor's court, only to find Maximilian considering the European situation to be such that it was necessary for him to treat with Henry for Suffolk's return. Maximilian requested from Henry a loan of £10,000 for his Turkish crusade, which Henry promised as a gift outright if Maximilian handed over the De la Pole brothers. Henry had the Spaniards working on his behalf: through their ambassador, Don Juan Manuel, they too were trying to lay their hands on Suffolk (April 1502).<sup>43</sup>

The above treaty was agreed upon 24 April 1502, though with little ceremony or public celebration. No doubt Henry wanted the

affair over with as soon as possible. He had paid a very high price for an agreement that was by no means a done deal, considering Maximilian's past record of support for Yorkist pretenders. Henry had indeed gotten Maximilian to agree not to give further aid to English pretenders, but who could say whether Maximilian would live up to the agreement? In fact, Henry's fears on the subject were well-founded, for it seems highly probable that Maximilian never intended to fulfil his side of the bargain, and although the Emperor could do little to help Suffolk realize his dream of claiming England's throne as his own, he at least helped him pay off his debts several times.<sup>44</sup>

Another disaster struck Henry in February 1503 with the death of his queen, Elizabeth of York. Although we are now beyond the scope of André's *Vita*, Henry's behavior in these years is instructive for what it reveals about his preoccupation with the security of his dynasty. Two years after Elizabeth's death he began considering another matrimonial alliance for himself in order to ensure the succession, but these plans never materialized.<sup>45</sup> In January 1504, with Suffolk still at large on the Continent, he called his first Parliament in six years, perhaps, as Wilhelm Busch suggests, in order to address the delicate state of affairs. It is here more than anywhere that Henry's actions reveal the state of his troubled soul. Such was his obsession with Suffolk that in 1504, with Suffolk still at large in the imperial town of Aix, and with Maximilian still temporizing, Henry threw away every trading concession he had won from the Hanseatic League over the past decade, simply to obtain the member towns' assistance in corralling Suffolk. Henry simply could not count on Maximilian's loyalty. Even as late as 1508, it seems, when the succession would seem to have been much more assured, Henry transferred two Yorkists, Thomas Grey, second marquis of Dorset, and Lord William Courtenay, from the Tower to Calais, where they stayed until Henry's death.<sup>46</sup> It is at least clear from this overview that Henry VII worried about the problems of security, "full of apprehensions and suspicions," as Bacon put it.<sup>47</sup> Surely the series of conspiracies, plots, and rebellions during his reign would have made any monarch suspicious and fearful.<sup>48</sup>

The dynastic situation of the Tudors during the years when André wrote the *Vita* accounts for the emphasis he placed on the four themes mentioned above: the legitimacy of the Lancastrian dynasty, Henry's legitimate claim to be the heir of that dynasty, Henry's Welsh descent, and the folly of the Pretenders. These points

of emphasis suggest that André's purpose in writing the *Vita* was not, as he has it, "to write as faithfully as possible about the life and deeds of Henry the Seventh,"<sup>49</sup> but to counteract any doubts among the elite at home and abroad about the legitimacy and stability of the Tudor dynasty.<sup>50</sup>

The *Vita* survives in a single manuscript that is generally supposed to have been presented to Henry VII, though when the presentation actually occurred is uncertain.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the work circulated only in manuscript, if at all, sets it apart from the later but more accessible printed works of Polydore Vergil, Thomas More, Edward Hall, and Francis Bacon.<sup>52</sup> Yet this fact by itself should not surprise us. Until about 1520, English humanists had to look abroad for publication of works that interested them; Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* at first circulated in manuscript (1512-13) and did not appear in a printed edition until 1534. André's first and only foray into the world of print did not come until 1517 with the publication of his *Hymni Christiani* at Paris.<sup>53</sup> In short, it took some time before English humanists considered printing a practical or even a desirable way to distribute a text. I believe that André intended his manuscript to be read by a small group at court, perhaps by fellow humanists such as Gigli, Carmeliano, John Skelton, and Cornelio Vitelli; almost certainly by the king; probably by the Spanish, French, and imperial ambassadors; and maybe even by Ferdinand and Isabella, who we know had a very special interest in a strong and stable Tudor dynasty.<sup>54</sup> Their demands for Suffolk's surrender in April 1502, and De Puebla's dispatch of 1500, which assured them of the general peace and a stable succession, are certainly evidence of their concern about challenges to the dynasty.

The *Vita* may thus have begun as an attempt by André to buttress the Tudor claim to the throne of England. The urgency of such a work may have declined somewhat with the landing of Catherine in England and her subsequent marriage to Prince Arthur. Although Edmund and Richard de la Pole were still at large, their younger brother William and his kinsman Sir William Courtenay were safely locked away, and Edmund and Richard had not succeeded in raising much domestic or foreign support to challenge Tudor control of the realm. Hence André himself may have decided in 1502 that there was no longer much point to his labors, and perhaps the death of his pupil Prince Arthur affected him enough that he lost interest in completing the work.

Considered and analyzed as a humanist document, and not simply for what it states but for what it intimates, André's *Vita* reveals

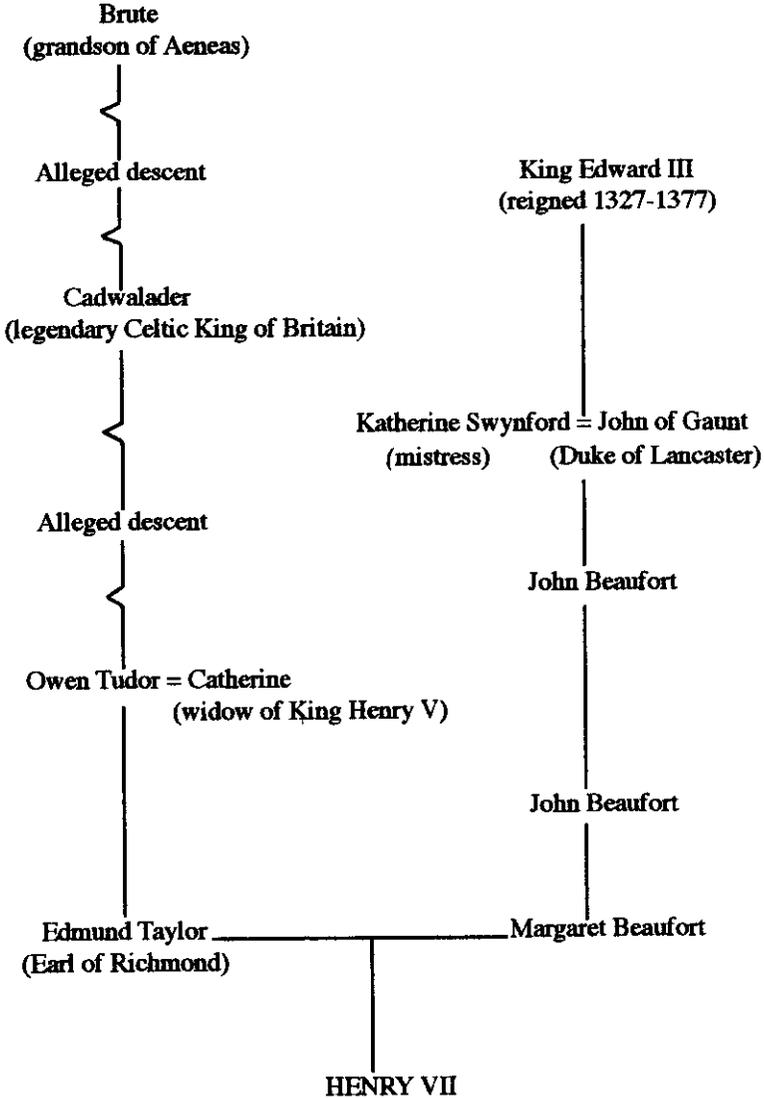
a persistent concern to bolster Tudor claims to the throne. I am happy to see in a new edition (1996) of Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* that Jerry Weinberger has defended that work's value as a historical document on grounds similar to those that I have used for André. "Today," he writes,

it does not matter if Bacon got some things wrong or even made them up. The work is not read as a factual source for Tudor history, or even as an accurate interpretation of social and economic forces at work in England at the time. . . . What matters is not Bacon's accuracy as a historian, but the view of human nature, historical change, politics, and government embodied in his work.<sup>55</sup>

So too with the *Vita*. Instead of viewing it as a flawed and incomplete factual narrative, I believe we should be asking, among other questions, what it can tell us indirectly about the concerns of Henry Tudor. Then we may find its importance to consist not in its authority as a relation of history "as it actually happened," but instead in its status as a humanist document suggesting—entirely unwittingly, and despite all assurances to the contrary—the precariousness of the Tudor dynasty.

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ABBREVIATED PEDIGREE OF HENRY TUDOR



Notes

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913) 257.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Ross, *Richard III* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1981) xxxiv. For similar judgments, see James Gairdner, *Memorials of King Henry the Seventh* (Rolls Series, 10) vii; Wilhelm Busch, *England under the Tudors, I, King Henry VII*, trans. Alice M. Todd (1895; New York: Burt Franklin, 1965) 391; and G. R. Elton, *England, 1200-1640* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1969) 22.

<sup>3</sup> The *Vita* is published by Gairdner in *Memorials of King Henry the Seventh* (Rolls Series, 10) 1-75. For André's life, see *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Andreas, Bernard"; Gairdner's preface to the *Memorials of King Henry the Seventh* viii-xiii; A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 1:33, 2:xii; William Nelson, *John Skelton Laureate* (New York: Russell, 1964) 14-31, 239-42; F. Roth, "A History of the English Austin Friars," *Augustiniana* 15 (1965): 622-28; Peter G. Bietenholz, ed., *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985) s.v. "André, Bernard"; and David R. Carlson, "Authorial Self-Fashioning: Collected Works, in Manuscript and Print, in Bernard André's Later Career, 1509-17," *English Humanist Books. Writers and Patrons, Manuscript and Print, 1475-1525* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993) 60-81, 203-15, esp. 204, n. 4.

<sup>4</sup> See David R. Carlson, "Royal Tutors in the Reign of Henry VII," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 253-79.

<sup>5</sup> Dryden held both positions as well 175 years later.

<sup>6</sup> The opinions of Busch, *King Henry VII* 394; Ross, *Richard III* xxii-xxiii; and H. A. L. Fisher, *History of England: 1485-1547* (London: Longmans, 1934) 486.

<sup>7</sup> John Speed, *The Historie of Great Britaine* 728; quoted in Gairdner, *Memorials* xviii.

<sup>8</sup> For André's role in the new humanism see Constance Blackwell, "Humanism and Politics in English Royal Biography:

The Use of Cicero, Plutarch and Sallust in the *Vita Henrici Quinti* (1438) by Titus Livius de Frulovisi and the *Vita Henrici Septimi* (1500-1503) by Bernard André," *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Sanctandreami*, ed. I. D. McFarlane, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, no. 38 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1986) 235-37; and "Niccolò Perotti in England—Part I: John Anwykyll, Bernard André, John Colet and Luis Vives," *Res Publica Litterarum* 5 (1982) 17-19 (a study of the English humanists' attempt to establish a correct Latin and even English style in England through the use of Niccolò Perotti's *Rudimenta grammaticae* and *Cornucopiae*); David Carlson, "King Arthur and Court Poems for the Birth of Arthur Tudor in 1486," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 36 (1987): 147-83; "Politicizing Tudor Court Literature: Gaguin's Embassy and Henry VII's Humanists' Response," *Studies in Philology* 85 (1988): 279-304; "Authorial Self-Fashioning" (see n. 3 above); and George B. Parks, "Pico della Mirandola in Tudor Translation," in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Edward P. Mahoney (New York: Columbia UP, 1976) 354-55. See also D. R. Woolf, "The Power of the Past: History, Ritual and Political Authority in Tudor England," in *Political Thought and the Tudor Commonwealth*, ed. Paul A. Fideler and T. F. Mayer (London: Routledge, 1992) 20-22.

<sup>9</sup> "stimulatus accensusque Furia, ad regni tyrannidem aspiravit," *Vita Regis Henrici Septimi* 18. All translations from the *Vita* are my own.

<sup>10</sup> "antiquumque jus nostrum post beati Henrici Sexti trucidationem hactenus intermissum redhibere Deo juvante" (*Vita* 30).

<sup>11</sup> Sydney Anglo, "The *British History* in Early Tudor Propaganda," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 44 (1961): 17, n. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Vita* 22. The place where this occurs is the rubric to the prayer of Henry just before his death: "Divi Henrici Oratio."

<sup>13</sup> *Vita* 60.

<sup>14</sup> I suggest this as a possibility, and nothing more for the present. Just prior to the passage where the name of Henry VI is modified by *divus*, is another passage where it is modified by *sanctus*. It

also occurs in a heading: "De crudeli Sancti Regis morte." Here, I take the word to mean not "saint" but "holy" or "pious" (*Vita* 21). And see above, note 10, where the deceased Henry is called *beatus*. André's lack of consistency is not a problem. What is important is the cumulative effect of these adjectives on the reader.

15 "fortasse trans mare me forma, ætate, fortuna et dignitate majorem hic habiturus est. . . . O si cum illo communicare possem, forsitan inter loquendum in hanc sententiam incidere possem" (*Vita* 38).

16 Although André makes no mention of the possible union when discussing Elizabeth's thoughts or in any other passage before the marriage, after it he is eager to show that now all ancient enmities, all "furious and unending hatred," have passed away (38-39). In the same vein, he later speaks of the two royal houses as "those red and white flowers blossoming on one and the same branch" (41). Some of the poems appearing later in the text also make use of rose imagery; see esp. the poems on the birth of Prince Arthur (40-41) and on the creation of Arthur as Prince of Wales (44).

17 For the date of Henry's accession, see Kenneth William Murray Pickthorn, *Early Tudor Government; Henry VII* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1934) 14 and n. 5; and S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972) 50 and n. 3. The quotation is found in James Gairdner, ed., *The Paston Letters*, vol. 3, *Edward IV—Henry VII* (Westminster, England, 1895) no. 883.

18 Pickthorn 14.

19 Some historians place little stock in such dynastic claims. Charles Ross, for example, emphasized Henry's claim by "right of conquest," and S. B. Chrimes practically denied the existence of the "Wars of the Roses." Ross, *The Wars of the Roses* (New York: Thames, 1976) 93-94. Chrimes' position is mentioned in A. J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988) 5, which also contains a historiographical survey of the Wars of the Roses (5-19).

20 See J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1950) 251-56.

- 21 Anglo 17, n. 2.
- 22 Anglo 24. Anglo goes on to say that André “states that the ancient prophecy to Cadwalader [of ultimate British triumph over the Saxons] has been fulfilled in the person of Henry VII,” and cites pages 9-11 of Gairdner’s published version. I can find no evidence of a prophecy of this kind in those pages or anywhere else in the *Vita*. André only says that Henry VII is the legitimate successor to Cadwalader (*Vita* 9-10).
- 23 “Tempore jam ex illo usque ad Henrici Septimi illius legitimi successoris in Angliam adventum Britonum regnum Anglorum sævitia intercalatum est, et Angli regnare cœperunt” (*Vita* 10).
- 24 For the importance of Winchester in Geoffrey see Tatlock, *Legendary History of Britain* 36-39. Winchester Castle also contained (and still contains) a table thought to be the original Round Table of King Arthur.
- 25 David Carlson, “King Arthur and Court Poems for the Birth of Arthur Tudor in 1486” 156-62. André does make a link between Prince Arthur and King Arthur elsewhere. See *Vita* 10, 44.
- 26 *Vita* 166.
- 27 *Vita* 75.
- 28 “Serenissimus rex noster audito nebulonis adventu subridens, ‘Et ecce iterum ab isto nebulonum principe tentamur,’ ait. ‘Ite, igitur, et ne meorum per ignorantiam subditorum strages aliqua accidat, Pirquinum blandis experiamur habere modis’” (*Vita* 71).
- 29 “Rex vero copias miserat, ut non in nebulonem pugnarent, sed ut patriam populumque a malis defenderent” (*Vita*).
- 30 “Videtis Henrici regum victoriosissimi virtutem et gratiam cum Dei voluntate ita conjunctam, ut adversus illum omnes vires nostrae cassae prorsus ac nullae debilitentur et concidant” (*Vita* 71-72).
- 31 *Calendar of Spanish State Papers, Henry VII*, vol. 1, 186.
- 32 Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, ed. *Chronicles of London* (Ox-

ford: Oxford UP, 1905; Dursley, Gloucestershire, England: Sutton, 1977) 203-05. For a recent treatment, see Ian Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491-1499* (Dover, NH: Sutton, 1994) 85-86.

<sup>33</sup> André tells us in the preface that he began his work in 1500, and internal evidence shows that he finished it sometime between April 1502 and February 1503.

<sup>34</sup> Chrimes 92.

<sup>35</sup> Pickthorn, *Early Tudor Government* 9 and nn. 4-5; for Sir Edmund, earl of Suffolk, see Chrimes 92-93 and below.

<sup>36</sup> James Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1965) 113-14; see *Calendar of Spanish State Papers, Henry VII*, vol. 1, 213.

<sup>37</sup> *Calendar of Spanish State Papers, Henry VII*, vol. 1, 206. The letter is dated 26 March 1499, and De Ayala said that the interview between Henry and the priest took place "a few days ago," and hence before the proxy marriage of Catherine to Arthur.

<sup>38</sup> Edmund was just over a year old. Chrimes 93; Busch 167.

<sup>39</sup> Chrimes 93.

<sup>40</sup> Mortimer Levine, *Tudor Dynastic Problems* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973) 42.

<sup>41</sup> John Flamank's identity is uncertain, but he was evidently a spy in Henry's service. Gairdner suggested 1503 as a date for this document, but A. F. Pollard thought 1504 or 1505. Since in his recapitulation of the charges Flamank reports Sir Hughe Conway as saying that Henry's sickness occurred four years earlier, in either case the sickness would have occurred right around the time that André began the *Vita*, from 1499 to 1501; Gairdner, *Letters and Papers* 233, 239. Pollard, *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1913; New York: AMS, 1967) 240. See Chrimes 308, n. 1, who puts a *terminus ante quem* of 1506 to the document.

42 For the movements of Edmund de la Pole, the most complete account is still Busch ch. v.

43 Busch 168-74. Note that Henry also told Louis of France he was ready to give ten to twelve thousand gold crowns for Suffolk (175-76).

44 Busch 174-77.

45 See Chrimes 287-93, for a description of these plans. There is no firm basis for the belief that Henry considered marrying Catherine of Aragon himself after Arthur's death. The allegation appears only in a letter of Isabella to Estrada. She mentions it as a general rumor in England reported by De Puebla. Busch first exposed the frailty of the evidence on this point (*Henry VII* 378, n. 4), but the rumor appears as a plain statement of fact in many recent works: Levine 42; R. L. Storey, *The Reign of Henry VII* (London: Blandford, 1968) 89; J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1968) 7; Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *The First of the Tudors: A Study of Henry VII and His Reign* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman, 1980) 186; and Jasper Ridley, *Henry VIII* (New York: Viking, 1985) 32.

46 *The Chronicle of Calais in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII to the Year 1540*, ed. John Gough Nichols (London 1846; New York: AMS, 1968) 6.

47 Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*, ed. Jerry Weinberger (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1996) 209.

48 Chrimes 307-08.

49 "Henrici Septimi . . . vitam ac gesta perquam veridice scripturo, mihi imprimis operae pretium videtur" (*Vita* 5).

50 *Vita* 284; see also D. M. Kleyn, *Richard of England* (Oxford: Kensal, 1990) 147-49. Kleyn believes Perkin Warbeck truly was Richard of York, and that Ferdinand and Isabella believed he was too. But she maintains that the Spanish monarchs urged Henry to rid himself of the pretender.

51 Although the *Vita* was originally a separate manuscript, it is now bound as ff126r-228r of British Library, Cotton Domitian

A.XVIII; Carlson, "Authorial Self-Fashioning" 206, n.17. I am leaving aside for now the important question of the economy of exchanges involved between court humanists such as André and their patrons. For more on this subject, see Carlson, "Introduction," *English Humanist Books* 3-19, but esp. 6-9.

<sup>52</sup> Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* appeared in 1534, More's *History of King Richard the Third* in 1543, Hall's *Union of the Two Noble Families* in 1548, and Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* in 1622.

<sup>53</sup> Carlson, "Authorial Self-Fashioning" 80 and 205, n. 12.

<sup>54</sup> I am of course not denying the importance of "authorial self-fashioning" in the *Vita*: David Carlson has shown how the *Vita* may have functioned as a showcase of André's talents to the king, and as a reminder of past services ("Authorial Self-Fashioning" 67-68). Clearly André's self-consciousness is apparent not just in the inclusion of previously-composed poems, but in the references to his "mediocre ability" and "immoderate longing for glory" (*Vita* 3); in the implied comparison of himself to Homer, mentioned above (*Vita* 6); and in the role he seems to be playing, in the Preface, of no less a figure than Sallust (*Vita* 7-8; see Blackwell, "Humanism and Politics in English Royal Biography" 236-37). I am emphasizing here those more immediate political and diplomatic needs of his patron that André was seeking to address.

<sup>55</sup> "Introduction," *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* 9.