

Blunting Lances and Razing Towers: Masculine Performance and Early Tudor Reforms

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ABSTRACT

JACOB BURT: Blunting Lances and Razing Towers: Masculine Performance and Early Tudor Reforms

(Under the direction of Barbara J. Harris)

This study examines the effects of early Tudor reforms on the traditional models of masculinity of the sixteenth-century English nobility. It traces the origins of those models of proper manhood in literature and chronicle accounts, and then examines how those models were subtly refigured by the attempts of Henry VII and Henry VIII to control tournaments and castle building, two stages upon which nobles could perform their masculinity. The study finds that by stressing opulence over martiality in both cases, and by restricting the use of martial imagery to no other person but the crown, the Tudor kings contributed to an environment of change that allowed new models of masculinity, and in particular that of the polite gentleman, to develop.

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Introduction

In 1531, at the height of Henry VIII's reign, a respected knight with a rising fortune and a gift for letters endeavored to find a metaphor that would help illustrate the characteristics of true nobility. The knight, Sir Thomas Elyot, wished to describe to Henry VIII and the English nobility in his *The Boke Named the Governour* the "fourme of a juste publike weale."¹ To do so, he settled upon an image utterly unlike that which previous authors had used to allegorize noble virtue. Rather than the sword, the shield, the lance, the tower, or any other traditionally noble, traditionally masculine symbol, Elyot chose a dance. He was aware that dancing was historically unpopular amongst moralists and other "excellently lerned" people, who were of the opinion that "daunsinge generallye is repugnant unto vertue."² Elyot acknowledged that Saint Augustine had warned against dancing, and that it was "lascivious...and provoked sinne," rhetoric not unlike that which scholars used to describe women, whom they considered to be the antithesis of nobility.³ Yet Elyot pressed

¹ Donald W. Rude, ed. *A Critical Edition of Sir Thomas Elyot's The Boke named the Governour* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 5. "The form of a just public weal."

² Ibid., 85. For further discussion of the negatives of dancing in a paralleling religious context, see P.H. Cullum, "Clergy, Masculinity and Transgression in Late Medieval England," in D.M. Hadley, ed. *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999), 187-188. Cullum explores the association of certain actions, including dancing, with feminine weakness.

³ Ibid., 85. Historians have analyzed and interpreted a great deal of medieval English misogynistic rhetoric in the last fifty years, illuminating its role in creating and perpetuating patriarchal subordination of women. For example, see Merry Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13-17; Shannon McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy, Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 2; Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 24-26; Kim Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 7-15. The most popular example throughout Europe in the later middle ages was the *Malleus Maleficarum* of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. The two Dominican friars, explaining why women were

on, suggesting that the commingling of gendered characteristics symbolized by the dance – masculine “fiersenesse” combined with feminine “mildenesse,” “hardynesse” with “timerositie,” and “shamefastnes” with “appetite of generation” – “do expresse or sette out the figure of very nobilitie: whiche in the higher astate is contained, the more excellent is the vertue.”⁴ In doing so, Elyot explicitly outlined a new model of right rulership and a new way to conceptualize nobility – a way which reflected subtle changes in the expression of noble masculinity and power in the reigns of the early Tudor monarchs.

Sir Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke Named the Governour* and his own rise to prominence in the early sixteenth century reveal a developing tension during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Elyot’s legal skills earned him the favor of Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII’s second Lord Chancellor, who appointed him Clerk of the King’s Council in 1523.⁵ The king was impressed enough by Elyot’s service as a clerk to knight him in 1530, and after *The Boke Named the Governour* was published the following year, Henry elevated Elyot to the position of ambassador to the court of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor.⁶ Elyot, like many of his contemporaries, advanced not through traditional service in battle, but rather through civil service. Indeed, the nobility of England as a whole had begun a process of gradual change which saw its political role move from one based on martial service to one based on court

far more likely to be seduced by the devil, wrote that women were “a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic danger, a delectable detriment, an evil of nature, painted with fair colours!” Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, Rev. Montague Summers, trans. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971), 43.

⁴ Ibid., 93-94. “Do express or set out the figure of very nobility: the higher the estate in which it is contained, the more excellent the virtue.”

⁵ Ibid., xviii.

⁶ Ibid., xx.

service.⁷ The Tudor monarchs granted lands, titles, and positions as trusted advisors to this new breed of noble.⁸ As they changed the type of service the crown required, Henry VII and Henry VIII also manipulated forms of masculine expression to subtly refigure what it was to be a noble man, effectively building a new type of counselor, clerk, and courtier. A gender-based evaluation of the early Tudor period reveals the way that the Tudor kings likewise affected the public imagining and performance of manhood as they crafted their monarchies.⁹

The early Tudor monarchs contributed to the refiguring of masculinity by restricting two traditional venues of martial, and thus masculine, expression: the tournament and the building of nobles' castles. In doing so, the kings modified both the public stages upon which noblemen performed their gender and the behaviors the crown considered acceptable while there. Henry VII and VIII ensured that the pageantry of the tournament was more important than the actual jousts by reducing both the physical danger of the combat and the emphasis on the results. Further, Henry VIII adopted the role of the tournament champion for himself,

⁷ See Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), 673; S.J. Gunn, "Off with their heads: the Tudor nobility 1485-1603," in J.S. Moore (ed.), *The House of Lords: a Thousand Years of British Tradition* (London : Smith's Peerage Ltd., 1994), 52-65. Maurice Keen, *The Origins of the English Gentleman* (Charleston: Tempus Publishing, 2002), 97 and J.R. Lander, *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1976), 15-16. For an alternative interpretation, in which the author portrays the nobility's situation as more static across the sixteenth century, see G.W. Bernard, *Power and Politics in Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 20-45 and the introductory article to G.W. Bernard, ed. *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 1-48.

⁸ For example, see John Russell, First Earl of Bedford, who received his title after thirteen years of service, mostly as a diplomat, in Henry VIII's privy chamber. Diane Willen, *John Russell, First Earl of Bedford: One of The King's Men* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981), 17. See also S.J. Gunn, "Sir Thomas Lovell (c. 1449-1524): a new man in a new monarchy," in J.L. Watts (ed.), *The End of the Middle Ages?* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 117-154 and D. Lockett, "Crown patronage and political morality in early Tudor England: the case of Giles, Lord Daubeney," *English Historical Review*, cx (1995), 578-595.

⁹ The definition of gender used here is based upon Joan Scott's landmark article on the subject. She explained, "The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way." See Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), 1067.

competing alongside the other aristocrats in the tournament and, in many cases, outshining them, thus appropriating and monopolizing traditional masculinity for the crown. Both kings also made a concerted effort to reduce the power of the magnates in the countryside by curtailing their right to fortify new or existing residences, restricting the nobles' means to display their defensive prowess, diminishing their might in comparison with the many fortresses of the crown. Since both participation in tournaments and the fortification of buildings were opportunities for public display of martial characteristics, by restricting them Tudor monarchs forced the sixteenth-century nobility to find alternate ways to express their power, and thus to perform their masculinity in a political and social framework that had traditionally afforded powerful warriors its most prominent positions. Slowly, the reforms affected the parameters of noble virtue by eroding their connection to a bellicose past and replacing it with values more suited to the sphere of Elyot's dance.

Examining the effects of Tudor reforms on masculinity addresses a number of historiographical issues, first and foremost the debate over just how innovative these reforms were. Several historians, most notably G.R. Elton, have argued that the changes wrought in the bureaucracy, economy, and political composition of England's court during the first half of the sixteenth century were nothing short of revolutionary.¹⁰ The resulting backlash was led by David Starkey, who noted that many of the changes Elton explored, including those in the structure of the King's court and chamber, could be traced back to the century prior, to the court of Edward IV – Starkey asserted that “On Professor Elton's own criteria, therefore, Yorkist England was no less an age of reform than the Cromwellian era of the following

¹⁰ See G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

century.”¹¹ While the debate remains one of the most vivid and enduring examples of the continuing volatility of interpretations of sixteenth-century English history, Elton’s theories about revolutionary reform have largely, and successfully, been debunked.¹² Still, not everything the Tudor kings did to manipulate their government and its most powerful players had precedent in the fifteenth century. Their pageantry in tournament presentation was unrivalled by their predecessors, and their restrictions on castle building represented a stark departure from the policies of Henry VI and Edward IV, so much so that the Tudor efforts to control fortified structures, and those who would possess them, seem indeed to be revolutionary.

Examination of Tudor tournament and castle reforms also addresses a gap in the historiography of medieval and early modern masculinity. For all of the scrutiny the first half of the sixteenth century has received from political, economic, and social historians, it has yet to be adequately explored for its impact in the evolution of manhood. The April 2005 *Journal of British Studies* included a special feature on the emerging importance of studies of masculinity in English history. Collectively, the contributing authors called for a concerted exploration of the effects of political and social structures on manhood, particularly since earlier studies shed little light on the subject.¹³ At the crux of the problem, they argued, rests the definition of masculinity. Discourse on its meaning has not yielded a consensus.

¹¹ David Starkey, “Which Age of Reform?” in Christopher Coleman and David Starkey ed., *Revolution Reassessed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 26.

¹² See Christopher Coleman and David Starkey ed., *Revolution Reassessed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

¹³ Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, “What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500-1950,” *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Apr. 2005), 276. Other relevant articles in the same volume include Alexandra Shepard, “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700,” 281-295; Karen Harvey, “The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-1800,” 296-311; and Michele Cohen, “ ‘Manners’ Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830,” 313-329.

Scholarly definitions range from “a set of cultural attributes associated with normative notions of maleness,” which implies a static, shared, prescribed concept, to “the subjective experience of male identity,” inferring a self-awareness that could be constructed individually and differ from man to man.¹⁴ In light of this disparity, the authors of the *Journal of British Studies* feature suggested that historians analyze masculinity as “a form of social status integral to relations of power,” acknowledging that interactions among groups of men can affect concepts of manhood as powerfully as relationships between men and women.¹⁵ A consideration of the masculine performances of the politically powerful noblemen of early Tudor England in tournaments and building projects lends itself well to exposing the relationship between political influence and manhood. It also begins to fill in that lacuna that exists for masculinity studies of the sixteenth century, one which – as Alexandra Shepard suggested, leaves us “a long way from the whole picture.”¹⁶ Revealing that picture begins with an understanding of the nature of medieval and early modern masculinity itself.

¹⁴ Shepard, “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700,” 288.

¹⁵ Ibid., 288-289. See also Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3, and John Tosh, “What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 38 (Autumn, 1994), 179-202.

¹⁶ Shepard, “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700,” 287.

Medieval Masculinity

At its core, masculinity is performative; the acting of gender roles works to define gender itself in a process of cyclical evolution.¹⁷ Several historians and literary critics have noted that the process was particularly evident in the structured patriarchal political setting of late medieval and early modern England.¹⁸ The nobility, comprised of men who inherited land, titles, and seats in the House of Lords as the king's "peers," formed the top level of this structure.¹⁹ From their vantage point, the nobles influenced lower levels of the English social ladder with their values and expressions of gender - they set the standards to which the gentry aspired.²⁰ These standards of gender performance formed as nobles pursued and maintained their honor, the social currency which assured and maintained their status as members of the ruling elite.²¹ Traditionally, a primary component of this noble honor was masculine expression through violence.

¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge Press, 1990), 25.

¹⁸ See Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-12 and Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, 11.

¹⁹ A complete list of the peerage during the reign of Henry VIII, for example, may be found in Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1986), 259-263.

²⁰ As sociologist R.W. Connell explains, "at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted." In this case, that form was the noble form, which trickled down to the gentry and below along lines which, according to G.W. Bernard, reached "even the uneducated and the poor." See R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 77-81 and Bernard, *Power and Politics in Tudor England*, 44. See also Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 39-42.

²¹ The king and his nobles beneath him did not simply award land and titles at random, nor did magnates and gentry serve kings or lords simply because they were their social superiors. Rather, the respect the crown afforded a member of the peerage, and the accompanying patronage or service the monarch would grant the noble, was directly proportional to the level of *noblesse*, also called 'honor' or 'worship,' the noble had accumulated. Michael Hicks, in his survey of the political systems of fifteenth-century England, defined

Medieval theories on the physiological differences between men and women stressed the importance of physical strength in the perception of maleness.²² Thus, the stronger one was, the more manly he or she seemed; a vital part of raising a boy, the prescriptive literature on childrearing suggested, was to develop his strength.²³ Medieval adolescents developed this prowess in both structured sports, such as hunting and fencing, and by fighting, taunting, and posturing within peer groups to form social structures that mirrored the hierarchies they perceived in the world around them.²⁴ The importance of violent expression in their youth was not lost upon the nobles as they reached manhood. They still sensed that in many cases their interests would be best served through violent expression, a notion reinforced by popular contemporary literature.²⁵

In 1483, William Caxton translated and printed Raymond Lull's *Book of the Ordre of Chyualry or Knyghthode*. In doing so, he updated the text for the late fifteenth-century noble audience, warning that the "book is not requysyte to euery comyn man to haue/ but to noble

worship as "standing in society...it meant the integrity of behavior based on social status." Part of the quality of honor was inherited, since the wealth that accompanied the lands a noble held contributed to his overall social position. Hicks identified five ways nobles could earn honor. The first was through *largesse*, the way the noble dispersed the wealth his lands afforded him. The second was *franchise*, his public persona – the way he comported himself at requisite functions and ceremonies. The third was *loyalty* to both the crown and his servants. Fourth was family *honour*, the state into which each noble was born and the familial standards to which each noble would be expected to adhere. Finally, there was *prowess*, the noble's physical and martial strength. The patronage one earned as a result of these characteristics in turn acted as a further honor, since it fed both the noble's ability to wield largesse and his ability to impress others publicly. Michael Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2002), 19, 57.

²² Elizabeth Foyster discussed medieval and early modern treatises on the differences between the sexes in Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), 28-31.

²³ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁴ Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 146. Also discussed in Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 31.

²⁵ Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 312.

gentylmen that by their vertu entende to come & entre in to the noble ordre of chyualry.”²⁶

Throughout the text, Caxton emphasized the importance of noble qualities, and particularly those qualities linking nobility with masculine strength and martial prowess. According to the *Book*, at the creation of the world God divided the people into groups of thousands. From each thousand, Caxton wrote, God chose “a man moost loyal/ most stronge / and of most noble courage.”²⁷ These chosen were given horses, armor, and weapons “most noble and moste couenable to batayll.”²⁸ He ended the creation myth suggesting that “who that wyll entre in to the ordre of chyualrye/ he must thynke on the noble begynnyng of chyualrye.”²⁹ Thus, Caxton urged his readers – those “noble gentylmen” – that in order to fulfill the destiny of their class, they must hearken back to the genesis of their order, accepting the armor and weapons God gave them and ensuring that they had the strength and courage to wield them.

Further on, Caxton elaborated on the importance of physical strength to bear arms. He emphasized that “A man lame / or ouer grete or ouer fatte / or that hath any other euyl disposycioun in his body / For whiche he may not vse thoffyce of chyualrye is not suffysaunt to be a knygt For hit shold not be honest to thordre of chyualrye / yf she receyued a man for to bere armes / whiche were entatched corrupt & not myghty.”³⁰ After again establishing

²⁶ Alfred T.P. Byles, ed. *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), 121. “The book is not a requirement for every common man to have / but is required for noble gentlemen that through their virtue intend to come and enter into the noble order of chivalry.”

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁸ Ibid., 16. “Most noble and most convenient for battle.”

²⁹ Ibid., 16. “Who that would enter into the noble order of chivalry / must remember the noble beginning of chivalry.”

³⁰ Ibid., 63. “A man lame / or over great or over fat / or that has any other evil disposition in his body / because of which he may not use the office of chivalry is not sufficient to be a knight, for it should not be

physical prowess as the basis for nobility, the author proceeded to catalogue the virtues of knighthood, representing each one in the form of a weapon or piece of a knight's armor, reminding his readers that violence and virtue were inextricably linked. The sword signified a noble's Christianity, the pommel and hilt resembling the Cross. A knight's spear symbolized the straightness and evenness of truth. Maces and poleaxes stood for strength of courage, and the knight's shield the political role of the nobility itself, for "in lyke wyse as the knyght putteth his sheld bytwene hym and his enemy / Ryght soo the knyght is the moyen bytwene the prynce and the peple."³¹ Caxton related every aspect of the medieval noble's life to his role as a warrior, and a noble's ability to prove his worth depended upon his physical prowess and ability to wield weapons. However, despite Caxton's pleas to adhere to Lull's lessons, sixteenth and early seventeenth-century writers began questioning the basis of masculine honor in violence, in response to the evolution of the Tudor monarchs.

Influenced heavily by humanist thought from continental Europe, authors like Sir Thomas Elyot sought to change the negative public perception of the aristocrat trained for civil service. Whereas noble audiences had embraced programs of martial training, as in Caxton, they were reluctant to follow the tenets of a classical education.³² Elyot identified

honest to the order of chivalry / if she received a man for to bear arms / who was assembled corruptly and was not mighty."

³¹ Ibid., 76-82. "In the same way as the knight puts his shield between himself and his enemy / Right so is the knight the middle way between the prince and the people." The list also includes the helmet (humility), hauberk (defense against vice), leg harnesses (duty to punish criminals), spurs (speed and diligence), gorget (obedience), dagger (trust in God), gauntlets (thankfulness), saddle (surety of courage), horse (high ideals), bridle (restraint), reins (service and fearlessness), testier (reason), horse's barding (temporal goods), coat (duty as protector), coat of arms (the awarding of praise and blame), and the banner (the mark of honor).

³² The program of instruction for universities in medieval Europe generally included training in seven "liberal arts" – grammar, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, and music. Students could then proceed to specialize in medicine, philosophy, or law. See Judith Bennett and C. Warren Hollister, *Medieval Europe* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002), 250. For a late medieval explanation, see John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Book VII in G.C. Macaulay, ed. *The Complete Works of John Gower*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901).

three reasons – pride, greed, and a lack of teachers – that explained “why gentlemen in this present tyme be nat equall in doctryne to the auncient noble men.”³³ Elyot lamented that among the nobles, there were some who, because of their pride, “Without shame dare affirme, that to a great gentilman, it is a notable reproche to be well lerned, and to be called a great clerke: which name they accounte to be of so base estimation, that they never have it in their mouthes.”³⁴ Elyot, perhaps seeking to justify the course he took to gain his prominent position in Henry VIII’s court, advocated a return to civic education, stressing that “where governours of realms...employ theyr study and mynde to the publike weale... there a publike weale must nedes be both honorable and welthy.”³⁵ Toward that end, *The Boke Named the Governour* contained a regimen for the cultivation and continuation of noble virtue that was quite different from William Caxton’s fifty years prior.

Elyot did briefly acknowledge the benefits of training with weaponry, but he saw its virtue in its ability to provide exercise, rather than as preparation for military service. He wrote, “Amonge these exercises, it shall be convenient to lerne to handle sondrye waipons, specially the sworde and the batayle axe: which be for a noble man moste convenient.”³⁶ More directly, he warned against other pursuits that might involve direct conflict, like

³³ Rude, ed. *The Boke Named the Governour*, 55. “Why gentlemen in this present time be not equal in doctrine to the ancient noble men.”

³⁴ Ibid., 55. “Without shame dare affirm, that to a great gentleman, it is a notable reproach to be well-learned, and to be called a great clerk: the name of which they account to be of so base estimation, that they will never speak it.”

³⁵ Ibid., 29. “Where governors of realms...employ their study and mind to the public weal...there a public weal will be both honorable and wealthy.”

³⁶ Ibid., 79. This is all the mention Elyot makes of training in weaponry for hand-to-hand combat. By comparison, he dedicates 23 lines to running, 93 lines to the benefits of swimming, and 404 lines to the positive effects of dancing for the would-be leader. For an explanation of the predominance of martial training for medieval noble youth, see Maurice Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages, 1348-1500* (London: Allen Lane, 1990), 227-228.

“footeballe,” which was “nothings but beastly furie, and extreme violence: wherof procedeth hurte, and consequently rancour and malice to remaine with them that be wounded. Wherefore it is to be put in perpetuall silence.”³⁷ Just as Elyot sought to have his audience abjure violence, other contemporary writers in prominent political positions began to adopt similar viewpoints.

Henry VIII’s third Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, likewise rejected the possibility that violence was a viable avenue toward manly honor. In his *Utopia* of 1516, an allegorical critique of all things English, More created an idealized world where he envisioned that princes “detest war as a very brutal thing; and which, to the reproach of human nature, is more practiced by men than by any sort of beasts. They, in opposition to the sentiments of almost all other nations, think that there is nothing more inglorious than that glory that is gained by war.”³⁸ He continued by emasculating the concept of violence, explaining that, if faced with a conflict they cannot avoid, the Utopians “accustom[ed] themselves daily to military exercises and the discipline of war, in which not only their men but their women likewise are trained up.”³⁹ More ended his discussion of the Utopians’ views on war by asserting that “in no victory do they glory so much as in that which is gained by dexterity and good conduct, without bloodshed.”⁴⁰ More, too, valued the diplomacy of the pen and laurel over the force of military might; and so, as early as 1516, a

³⁷ Ibid., 109. “Football, wherein is nothing but beastly fury, and extreme violence: whereof proceeds hurt, and consequently rancor and malice do remain with those who are wounded. Wherefore it is to be put in perpetual silence.”

³⁸ Frederic R. White, ed. *Famous Utopias* (Putney: Hendricks House, Inc., 1981), 89.

³⁹ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 91.

leading English scholar suggested an alternative to the traditional masculine model of cultivating and earning honor. However, he did not do so in an intellectual vacuum.

Popular continental humanist thought had reached England from Italy and Burgundy, and its effects, in the rhetoric of authors like More and Elyot, were apparent. About the same time More finished his *Utopia*, an Italian aristocrat and author, Baldesar Castiglione, was completing his *Il Cortegiano*, or *Book of the Courtier*. Published in 1524, *The Book of the Courtier* was, as several critics have suggested, an echo of “contemporary humanist aspirations.”⁴¹ It was also, like *The Boke Named the Governour*, a treatise on proper virtue, nobility, and masculinity. Though not printed in English until 1561, it epitomized the application of humanism to the aristocratic lifestyle, was representative of continental thought on the subject, and influenced authors like Elyot who had access to Castiglione’s work in the Italian.⁴² The parallels between the two authors on the virtues of martial nobility are indicative of the humanist influence on English thought. Castiglione’s characters in the *The Book of the Courtier* engaged in a discussion of the proper values of the ideal nobleman. One of the characters told a story of a conversation between a nobleman and a lady. The man had just refused a dance, asserting that “such frivolities were not his business,” echoing those critics with whom Elyot contended when he suggested his metaphor for noble virtue.⁴³ His business was, rather, fighting. The lady replied that the man should have himself “well greased and stowed away in a cupboard” with his battle gear in order to “avoid getting rustier

⁴¹ Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, George Bull trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 12.

⁴² Ibid., 13.

⁴³ Ibid., 58.

than you already are.”⁴⁴ Thus, continental authors like Castiglione portrayed the martial noble as outmoded, already “rusty” and growing moreso. English authors, influenced by the influx of humanist literature, followed suit. Yet the shift in emphasis in prescriptive literature alone was not enough to change the practice of noble masculinity; it was as much a sign of change as a cause.

A different sort of influence wrought immediate changes on a practical level – the pressure brought to bear by Henry VII and Henry VIII on traditional methods of masculine expression. Manhood required proving, and to do so necessitated a structured setting where the nobility (and those trying to become noble) could perform their gender role in front of a captive audience.⁴⁵ For the medieval and early modern English nobility, there was no finer show, and no finer place to show off one’s masculinity, than the tournament.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁵ Both Elizabeth Foyster and P.J.P. Goldberg explore the concept of showing off, or “asserting,” masculinity, particularly in times of leisure. See respectively: Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 31, and P.J.P. Goldberg, “Masters and Men in Later Medieval England,” in D.M. Hadley, ed. *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999), 66.

To Win a Place with Show: Tudor Tournaments

As a venue for masculine performance, tournaments were unparalleled. Chroniclers claimed that crowds as large as fifty thousand people gathered for particularly important tournaments (though this was probably hyperbole), and those holding the contests could reasonably expect at least twelve thousand people to attend.⁴⁶ Once there, the spectators would watch from double-tiered viewing stands around a field resembling a soccer pitch or American football field.⁴⁷ Jousts, which chroniclers mention occurring in English tournaments as early as 1141, afforded the spectators the chance to see individual knights spar in competitions resulting in a clear winner – the knight who remained on his horse after the pass was the victor.⁴⁸ Thus, assuming that a noble thought himself martially superior to his adversary, the tournament provided a stage upon which the noble could assert that superiority in front of thousands of witnesses. Indeed, medieval and early modern tournaments invariably featured a variety of opportunities to win what Caxton called “grete fame and renomee.”⁴⁹ However, the form of those opportunities changed over the centuries.

The earliest tournaments in England were unmitigated bloodbaths. Roger of Hoveden, a twelfth-century chronicler, wrote that in order for a youth to be able to face a real war, he had to first “have seen his blood flow and felt his teeth crack under the blow of his

⁴⁶ Alan Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* (Dobbs Ferry: Sheridan House, 1987), 74.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁹ Byles, ed., *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, 124.

adversary and have been thrown to the ground twenty times.”⁵⁰ Two forces of knights would face each other on a field of combat with no fixed boundaries, no rules, and no judges to prevent trickery, unfair odds, or attacking a man while he was prone or injured.⁵¹ Rather than pursuing honor for its own sake, the participants were more likely to fight for profit, since the victorious parties would have the right to ransom whomever they captured. The development of the tournament more familiar to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century audiences occurred slowly, with both technological advancement and the influence of romantic literature, which codified tournament etiquette and gave audiences a stylized vision of what to expect, contributing to a more structured contest with preset rules and events.⁵² Thus, a transformation occurred in tournament format that moved it from Roger of Hoveden’s teeth-cracking, blood-shedding free-for-all, to a spectacle that would result in, as one letter written to Cardinal Wolsey describing a tournament in 1514 related, “no great hurt, and of our Englishmen none overthrown nor greatly hurt but a little of their hands,” even though it was a tournament that began, “as roughly as ever I saw.”⁵³ Regardless of the format of a tournament or the amount of violence that occurred therein, though, it always remained a vital proving ground for masculine dominance.

The nature of the later tournaments, and particularly the jousts, lent itself to a gendered, masculine, eroticized reading of the proceedings. Knights and nobles, wielding lances that were unmistakably phallic, attempted to assert themselves over the rest of the field of men. In doing so, they would prove both their physical dominance among men and

⁵⁰ Quoted in Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵² See Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 13-22 and Ruth Huff Cline, “The Influence of Romances on Tournaments in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Apr., 1945), 204-211.

⁵³ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 2, 5606.

their worth to women. The latter was a product of the influence of romance literature, which popularized the theme of courtly love. The overt sexual imagery of the joust was not lost on the medieval and early modern audience; a poem read in a libel case before Star Chamber in 1615 quipped:

Besse Bourne did go in Venus fields with Cole to try a battle
She had prepared a ruthlinge shielde, and she meant to try his mettle,
Then mark your ward look to your guard for fear lest you be spoiled.
Lo where she lies with open thighs, wherein she must be foiled,
See how she yarks, and finely jerks and plays the woman manfully
And takes delight to follow the fight till that she brought me on my knee.
With that I flung her on her back, so that I will victor be,
Quoth she your lance I mean to crack before that you do conquer me,
But I again laid on amain and charged her most gallantly,
My lance was long and wondrous strong and I crased her buckler piteously.⁵⁴

Competitors strove to win the prize of the woman's virginity, whether literally or through a symbolic gift, like a kiss or ring.⁵⁵ As the gendering of tournaments increased throughout the middle ages, their popularity did as well.⁵⁶ Prior to the Tudor period, tournaments began the process of transformation from open fields of battle where masculinity could be asserted through uncontrolled violence to structured displays where masculinity could be acted. As the contests evolved, kings and nobles took advantage of the opportunities they provided to display nobility and earn honor. But it was the Tudor monarchs that perfected the tournament as a vehicle for the expression of opulence, rather than masculine prowess; earlier tournaments, no matter how expensive or grandiose, did not reach the levels of spectacle of

⁵⁴ Quoted in Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 28.

⁵⁵ Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 18.

⁵⁶ Arthur Ferguson, *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1960), 16-17.

those of the sixteenth century.⁵⁷ Such was their opulence that some began to complain; the archbishop of Armaugh in a letter to John Bouchier, Lord Berners in 1518 denounced Henry VIII's tournaments as "rich, with pomp enough, and too much expense."⁵⁸ This represents a notable departure from those earlier tournaments: those of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries continued to emphasize martial aspects of each contest over the pomp, a trend reflected in literary and chronicle descriptions of the events.⁵⁹

French chronicler Jean Froissart, a frequent guest of the English kings in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, wrote a history of events around and during the Hundred Years War. In 1390, he attended a tournament between English and French retinues at Saint-Inglevert. His chronicle description of the events highlighted the violence of each joust, focusing on the results each time:

Sir John Holland (Earl of Huntingdon) began by sending one of his squires to knock on the war shield of my lord Boucicaut. Boucicaut came out of his tent in full armour, mounted his horse, and took up a shield and then a stout lance with a good steel point. The two knights rode to their separate ends and, having eyed each other carefully, they clapped spurs to their horses and came together at full speed. Boucicaut hit the Earl of Huntingdon in such a way that he pierced his arm without wounding him. Both knights rode on and stopped neatly at the end of their course. This just [joust] was much admired.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Edward IV held several tournaments that hinted toward the types of events the Tudor monarchs would hold; much like Henry VII and VIII after him, he was enthralled by the atmosphere and wealth of the Burgundian court. However, Edward's emulation of the Burgundians was erratic at best, and it was Henry VII that "consciously set out in a far more consistent manner than Edward to model many aspects of the newly-established court on that of Burgundy." Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 22.

⁵⁸ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 2, 4383.

⁵⁹ Ferguson notes that "Not, indeed, until the sixteenth century is it apparent that the tourney has ceased to have any real bearing on the practical business of soldiering." Sydney Anglo adds "the fifteenth century, disturbed by civil strife, witnessed a decline in public spectacle and court entertainments. Certainly the few surviving descriptions of court revels under Edward IV do not indicate any noteworthy ingenuity or novelty." *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry*, 17 and Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 98-99.

⁶⁰ Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, Geoffrey Brereton, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968), 374.

The remainder of Froissart's account consisted of one hundred thirty-five more descriptions of jousts similar to Holland and Boucicaut's.⁶¹ The author was interested chiefly in the results of each contest, asserting that at least one competitor had "done enough for that day and could leave off with honour."⁶² Nearly a century later, on the eve of the Tudor accession to the throne, authors continued to describe tournaments in this fashion.

Like Froissart, Sir Thomas Malory was more interested in the results of a tournament than the spectacle. Each tournament description in his *Le Morte D'Arthur*, published by Caxton in 1485, read like a catalogue of names, with little text devoted to appearances or opulence, save when a knight was not as he appeared to be, whether by disguise or through magic. Malory's description of the tournament following the quest of Sir Gareth of Orkeney was typical of his style:

Then Sir Brian de les Isles and Grummore Grummursum, knights of the castle, encountered with Sir Aglovale, and Sir Tor smote down Sir Grummore Grummursum to the earth. Then came in Sir Carados of the dolorous tower, and Sir Turquine, knights of the castle; and there encountered with them Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Lamorak de Galis, that were two brethren. And there encountered Sir Percivale with Sir Carados, and either brake their spears unto their hands, and then Sir Turquine with Sir Lamorak, and either of them smote down other's horse and all to the earth, and either parties rescued other, and horsed them again.⁶³

The repetitive, staccato listing of jousts echoed Froissart's, with both authors more focused on the feats of arms and the names of the winners than any symbolic significance in the tournament itself – a cross-genre parallel that emphasizes the universal nature of this type of

⁶¹ Ibid., 375.

⁶² Ibid., 378.

⁶³ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur* (New York: Random House, 1993), 223. Malory's romance represents both the pinnacle of the English romantic literature tradition and the beginnings of its passage – while it remained popular throughout the sixteenth century, no major English Arthurian romances followed until Lord Alfred Tennyson finished his *Idylls of the King* in 1874.

portrayal.⁶⁴ Through the fifteenth century, authors like Malory continued to cling to the jousts as important stages upon which the competitors could show off their martial prowess.

The chroniclers of the Tudor period, however, viewed the tournament quite differently, and perceived that the significance lay not in who won, or by what force of arms, but rather in the symbolism and extravagance of the event itself. Tudor authors were particularly concerned with the colors worn by the competitors, often using more ink to record how each man appeared than which ones emerged victorious. Charles Wriothesley, a herald at Windsor, chronicled the Tudor period through the beginning of Edward VI's reign. Wriothesley described a tournament held by Henry VIII in 1540 in a manner starkly different from Froissart or Malory. He wrote,

Chalengers came into the listes that daie rytchlie apparayled and their horses trapped, all in white velvett, with certaine knightes and gentlemen riding afore them apparayled all in white velvett and white sarcenett, and all their servants in white sarcenet doblets and hosing, after the Burgonion fashion.⁶⁵

After remarking on the “rytchlie apparayled” competitors, Wriothesley briefly listed the names of the most powerful nobles present, remarked on an unlucky misstep by one knight's horse, and then devoted the rest of the passage to a description of the post-tournament feast.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Chronicle (Froissart) to romance (Malory), though the lines between the two often blurred, as authors embellished both history and oral story tradition in equal measure. For a discussion of the oft-fictional nature of chronicle accounts, see Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 19-28.

⁶⁵ Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, From A.D. 1485 to 1559* (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1875), 117. The basic structure of a tournament included two teams: the challengers and the answerers.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 117. Among those present were the Earl of Surrey, Lord William Haywarde, Lord Clinton, and Lord Crumwell. The complete text of the description of the actual jousts is as follows: “and that daie Sir John Dudley was overthrowen in the fieelde by mischance of his horse by one Mr. Breme defendant; nevertheless, he brake many speares valiantlie after that; and after the said justes were donne the said challengers rode to Durham Place, where they kept open howseholde.” The passage ends, “they had all delicious meates and drinckes so plenteouslie as might be, and such melodie of minstrelsy, and were served everie meale with their owne servants after the manner of war, their drume warning all the officers of

Other Tudor chroniclers described tournaments in a similar way. Recounting a joust early in Henry VIII's reign, Edward Hall wrote that the "kyng & his bend [band] were all in grene sylke, & the erle of Essex & his bende in blew, garded with gold, & all the speres were paynted of the same colours."⁶⁷ Like Wriothesley, he provided a cursory acknowledgement that an actual tournament took place ("There was a good running & many a spere brast") but did not record a single result. Instead, he described the nobles' concern that Henry might get injured in the course of the competition; they would have far preferred that he be a "loker on, rather then a doer."⁶⁸ Both chroniclers' interest in the display of the tournament closely mirrored that of their monarchs. The early Tudor kings saw the jousts and sports as a way to manipulate spectacle in order to achieve political ends.⁶⁹ Henry VII and VIII perfected the Burgundian tournament model that Edward IV had attempted to adopt with only moderate success. As a result, it became more difficult for the nobles and would-be nobles competing in the tournament to win favor through displays of their martial, masculine prowess; the Tudor audience, led by their chroniclers, simply no longer valued such accomplishments as keenly as their forbearers. To be sure, Tudor tournaments still awarded those who performed well in the field. However, a challenger might have been just as likely to catch the attention of chroniclers with his ermine-cowled cloak or bright green doublet as he was with his sturdy lance.

householde against everie meale which was donne, to the great honor of this realme." Thus, according to Wriothesley, the ones who earned the realm the most honor that day were the hosts.

⁶⁷ Edward Hall's complete chronicle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & York*, is scanned in its entirety at <<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/printedbooksNew/index.cfm?textID=halle&PagePosition=1>> (10 November 2005). The tournament account may be found at 12r, in the third year of Henry VIII's reign.

⁶⁸ Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & York*, 12r.

⁶⁹ For a thorough consideration of all types of Tudor political spectacle, see Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*.

No English king had ever used the tournament and its pageantry toward political ends as skillfully as Henry VII. Faced with a factionalized kingdom unconvinced of his right to the throne, Henry perceived the need to unify his noble subjects and solidify his ancestral claims. He found ceremony an ideal way to accomplish both things. A device, or set of guidelines, for Henry's coronation found in the *Rutland Papers* described the oath the king expected all his "temporall lords" to swear to him. The oath verbalized the loyalty Henry expected from his nobles: "I, [name] become your ligeman of lif and lymme and of erthly worship; and feith and trouthe I shalbere vnto you, to lyue and die ayenst all maner of folke; so God me help and his halowes."⁷⁰ A lavish service and ceremony followed the oath. In 1501, Henry's son Arthur prepared to marry Katherine of Aragon. To mark the occasion, the king held a procession and tournament that lasted for a week after the ceremony. On each day, the knights entered the lists in an elaborate parade of pageant cars, each one more grandiose than the last. On the first day, the duke of Buckingham entered in a moving pavilion set with turrets and pinnacles. The marquis of Dorset followed, led by a hermit dressed in black. William Courtenay was next, his float designed to resemble a dragon led by a giant. Guillaume de Rivers' pavilion represented a ship floating on a faux sea, and the Earl of Essex rode through in a marvelous car decorated to appear as a green mountain.⁷¹ Each symbol contributed to the Tudor mythology – the dragon represented Welsh ancestry and the ubiquitous repetition of white and red rose patterns recalled the union of the houses of

⁷⁰ William Jerden, ed. *The Rutland Papers* (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1842), 19. "I, [name] become your liegeman of life and limb and of earthly worship; and faith and truth I shall bear unto you, to live and die against all manner of folk; so God me help and all his saints."

⁷¹ Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 100.

Lancaster and York at the end of the Wars of the Roses.⁷² As one historian wrote, Henry's tournaments were "never mere entertainment (though entertaining they certainly were), extravagant fantasy, or archaic exercises of obsolete military skills."⁷³ Rather, they were complex displays where the spectacle, not the martial, was paramount. Henry's perfection of the tournament as a showcase for political imagery subsumed the importance of masculine prowess at the tilt and foreshadowed the culmination of the Tudor tournament style under his son Henry VIII.

Henry VIII held many tournaments during his reign, spending lavishly to ensure that each was more spectacular than the last. For a single joust in 1511, Henry VIII had an artificial forest-float constructed within the house of Black Friars at Ludgate. An entry in the *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII* described the forest:

Hawthorns, oaks, maples, hazels, birches, fern, broom and furze, with beasts and birds embossed of sundry fashion, with foresters sitting and going on the top of the same, and a castle on the said forest, with a maiden sitting thereby with a garland, and a lion of great stature and bigness, with an antelope of like proportion after his kind drawing the said pageant or forest, conducted with men in wodwoos' [madmen of the woods'] apparel, and two maidens sitting on the said two beasts; in the which forest were four men of arms, riding, that issued out at times appointed; and on every of the 4 quarters of the forest were the arms of the four knights challengers. And for the second day were provided and made 4 rich pavilions, one crowned, the other three with balls of bornd gold.⁷⁴

The letter proceeded to catalogue the purchases necessary for the construction of the float, including fifty-six dozen sheets of silver paper at four pound four shillings apiece, eight hair

⁷² Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 24. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's influential history of the British kings (*Historia Regum Britanniae*), Merlin prophecies that a red dragon – representing the British – would, after facing considerable threats both domestic and foreign, rise to defeat the enemies of Britain and reign over England. See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, 171-172.

⁷³ Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 25.

⁷⁴ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 2, 1510.

brushes at eight pence each, and two dozen embossed birds at six shillings apiece. Most of Henry VIII's tournaments were accompanied by similar imagery and pageantry. He outdid himself, and all English tournaments that came before, however, at his masterpiece: the Field of Cloth of Gold.

The Field of Cloth of Gold was a tournament held in 1520 near the English-controlled territory of Calais in France.⁷⁵ There, Henry VIII met with the French king Francis I, consummating a treaty signed two years prior and celebrating the betrothal of his two year-old daughter with the one year-old Dauphin Francis.⁷⁶ Each monarch's entourage included three thousand men, not counting the servants of the Queens or other ladies in attendance.⁷⁷ Thus, the tournament's audience was huge, with crowds from nearby Calais and Guynes swelling the numbers even more.⁷⁸ Henry and Francis did not miss the opportunity to show off in front of such a large international crowd. The kings built upon the field a massive Tree of Honour – a construct thirty-four feet high and one hundred twenty-nine feet in circumference. Wrapped around either side were two other trees: a hawthorn representing England and a raspberry for France.⁷⁹ From these trees the heralds would hang the shields of the competitors and, below, tablets with the names of each knight. Three larger central shields represented each of the three events: the jousts, exercises of horsemanship, and hand-to-hand combat at the barriers. Any knight wishing to compete had to touch the appropriate

⁷⁵ A complete list of the peerage attending the Field of Cloth of Gold may be found in George E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage* (London: The St. Catherine Press, 1910), 694-696.

⁷⁶ Joycelyne Russell, *The Field of Cloth of Gold: Men and Manners in 1520* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 1.

⁷⁷ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 3, 869.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 303.

⁷⁹ Russell, *The Field of Cloth of Gold: Men and Manners in 1520*, 112.

shield and have his name placed on a tablet beneath.⁸⁰ Thus, the kings set a spectacular stage for the month-long celebration. As one onlooker remarked, the pavilions “exceeded the pyramids of Egypt,” and the “eloquence of the muses would be insufficient to describe it;” – “Apollo himself would remain abashed if he were to attempt it.”⁸¹ However, though the tournament was at the center of the festivities, it was by no means the sole attraction.

Edward Hall was impressed by the pageantry that preceded the tournament proper. Like the tournament celebrating Prince Arthur’s marriage in 1501, the Field of Cloth of Gold started with an ambitious array of processions, banquets, and masques – dances in which the attendees disguised themselves. Hall marveled at the companies of lords at one of the masques, each group wearing stylized costumes, complete with gowns lined in green taffeta, silver thread, and gold cloth. One company even wore beards fashioned from a thinly-spun wire of pure gold. The nobles represented inhabitants of the “farre Estland,” a fanciful caricature that, for all its golden and silvery splendor, served little purpose other than to display wealth and entertain – the Field of Cloth of Gold bore little resemblance to the martial and masculine proving grounds of the early tournaments.⁸² Nevertheless, it was still a tournament, and there were still jousts to run, challenges to meet, and points to make. All that remained was to establish the rules of engagement.

The restrictions on each event at the Field of Cloth of Gold exemplify the transitions tournaments went through during the Tudor period. Though still feats of skill requiring

⁸⁰ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 3, 870.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 870.

⁸² Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & York*, 80r and 80v. “Far Eastland.”

mastery of both weapon and horse, the events featured rules that distinguished them sharply from their predecessors. Among the kings' parameters were:

1. In consequence of the numerous accidents to noblemen, sharp steel not to be used as in times past, but only arms for strength, agility, and pastime.
2. The challenge to commence 11 June, and continue for a month, or so long as the two Kings shall be together, when the said gentlemen will answer all comers with blunt lances in harness, with or without crampons, without any fastening to the saddle that might prevent mounting or dismounting with ease.
4. The said gentlemen shall give one encounter to all comers with blunt casting lances, and four strokes with blunted single-handed swords. With the double-handed swords, as many strokes shall be given as the judges think fit, but no closing allowed.⁸³

While the blunted lances and swords effectively reduced the danger to the noble competitors, they also lowered the stakes of each encounter. Organizers also wished to limit the field to one course, because there might be “shocks and hurts,” which would be to “the danger of the masters.”⁸⁴ Thus, while the symbolic significance of tournament display was strengthening exponentially under the Tudors, the resemblance to actual battle (and the masculine courage required to compete) faded. The rules reforms helped shift the focus from the peril of the tournament to the pageantry and also enabled Henry VIII to further justify his own participation, which redirected whatever emphasis on masculine prowess remained from the nobility to the crown.

Henry VIII was an active participant in tournaments throughout the early part of his reign. At the Field of Cloth of Gold, he ensured that he was the central figure on the English side for the majority of the festivities. In a telling display that symbolized both contemporary Anglo-French history and, perhaps, the changing role of the tournament in English noble society, Henry began the jousts with an elaborate gesture:

⁸³ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 3, 870.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 807.

The king of England was dressed in cloth of silver, richly jeweled, with white plumes. When the two companies approached, the Kings descended the valley, gently, with their constables bearing naked swords. On coming near, they gave their horses the spur like two combatants about to engage, but instead of putting their hands to their swords, each put his hand to his bonnet. They then embraced bareheaded, dismounted and embrace again, and took each other by the arm to a fine pavilion all like cloth of gold, which the king of England had prepared.⁸⁵

Feigning violence, the two kings stopped short and embraced instead, enacting the truce between the two countries by avoiding the battle that would have proved one side physically stronger, determining a hierarchy of victor and vanquished. With the tournament finally opened, Henry set himself up to receive all challengers, the king of France by his side.⁸⁶ Later, the attention of the crowd would turn to the two kings again as they competed against each other, both in archery, at which Henry was victor, and wrestling, at which the faster French king seemed to have the upper hand.⁸⁷ Henry relished the attention; at every tournament he attended until 1527, save one, he acted as the chief challenger. At the one exception, the Christmas tournament of 1524, he was the chief answerer.⁸⁸ During his reign, there were few opportunities for others to gain notoriety for their on-field victories – the glory, Henry ensured, would be his alone.

Even the monarch's most trusted friends and advisors were not exempt from the changes wrought by the early Tudor kings. Charles Brandon, whom Henry VIII created duke of Suffolk in 1514, was a member of the king's inner circle and a favorite throughout his life. Brandon was a spectacular athlete and soldier in his own right, and excelled in tournaments.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Vol. 3, 310.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Vol. 3, 306.

⁸⁷ Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 154.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 113-114.

However, those masculine qualities which in the past had earned so many nobles greater renown proved problematic for Brandon. In a tournament in May of 1516, Brandon took his familiar place as Henry's first aid.⁸⁹ The duke performed spectacularly well, outdoing the king by a wide margin. Henry was outraged, and as a result swore never to joust again unless it was with "as gud a man as hym selfe."⁹⁰ The following year, Henry replaced Brandon with Sir Henry Guildford, a new member of the king's privy chamber.⁹¹ Most of the time, though, the duke knew how to manipulate the intricacies of the Tudor tournament to his advantage: even when he was only an answerer he managed to be the center of the opening pageant, and when he did compete alongside or opposite Henry he would intentionally limit himself, allowing the king to win.⁹² As a result, he retained his close ties with Henry VIII and his position of political prominence. By sublimating his own martial prowess and traditional masculinity, Brandon contributed to the king's dominance of the tournament stage. Henry VIII had successfully affected a monopoly of violence in the crown, leaving others scrambling to find alternative ways to express their masculinity.⁹³

In the same tournament account at which he was so impressed by the rich apparel of the competitors, Charles Wriothesley described how, on the second day of May in 1540, with only one day of jousting complete, "Mr. Anthony Kingston and Richard Crumwell were

⁸⁹ The first aid would challenge or answer the second competitor after the king chose his opponent.

⁹⁰ Quoted in S.J. Gunn, *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk c. 1484-1545* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 67.

⁹¹ Ibid., 67. Gunn notes that historian David Starkey suggests that the resulting change was "a symbolic representation of the capture of the king's favour by the new set of intimates." Gunn suggests, though, that by the Field of Cloth of Gold, Brandon had managed to return to the king's good graces off the field, and so managed to resume his place on it.

⁹² Ibid., 10.

⁹³ For more on the Tudor monopolization of violence, see James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England*, 308-332.

made knightes at their said place.”⁹⁴ The “said place” was the house where Kingston and Crumwell had hosted the king and queen the night before. Wriothsley hinted that it was the incredible plenty of their table and the sumptuousness of the décor which earned them the honor that day, moreso than the jousts.⁹⁵ Later in 1565, during the reign of Elizabeth, Robert Dudley, the earl of Leicester, used the pageantry surrounding tournaments to cement his political prominence.⁹⁶ After a tournament at which Dudley had been the appointed lead challenger, he held a series of revels dealing with the subject of marriage; Dudley was not interested in allowing the chance tournaments presented for display to pass, and his romantic designs upon the virgin queen have since become the stuff of legends. Dudley’s drama depicted a debate between the Roman gods Juno and Diana – the former advocating marriage and the latter chastity. Jupiter decided in favor of his wife and marriage, prompting the queen to whisper to the visiting Spanish ambassador, “this is all against me.”⁹⁷ The post-tourney revel presented Dudley with an ideal opportunity to continue his pursuit of the queen. The spectacle, in this case, offered a more powerful display of the earl’s ambitions than he could have managed on the field.

By the end of the sixteenth century, even the messages behind the displays had changed, reflecting the shift, to which Henry VII and VIII had contributed, from traditionally martial nobility to civic nobility. Evidence of this shift is visible in examples of tournament imprese from the period. Imprese were, according to William Camden, an Elizabethan

⁹⁴ Wriostheley, *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, From A.D. 1485 to 1559*, 117.

⁹⁵ See note 45, above.

⁹⁶ Richard C. McCoy, “From the Tower to the Tiltyard: Robert Dudley’s Return to Glory,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (June, 1984), 425-435.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 431.

herald and historian, “a devise in picture with his [a noble’s] Motte, or Word, borne by noble and learned personages, to notifie some particular conceit of their owne.”⁹⁸ Author Henry Peacham, Camden’s contemporary, catalogued many of the imprese he saw in his *Minerva Britanna*, a collection of emblems he dedicated to the young Prince Henry in 1612.⁹⁹ Many of the imprese Peacham documented are illustrative of the change in values associated with the tournament. One in particular was especially vivid. Peacham drew his picture of logical impossibility against a backdrop of gently rolling hills and a sky creased by lines of clouds, echoing the geography of his native England. In the drawing, the hand of God descended from the sky, holding a balance. Upon the balance rested a set of objects. On the left plate lay a cannon; on the right, a golden pen and laurel wreath. Miraculously, the scale tipped in favor of the pen and laurel, lifting the physically heavier cannon into the sky. Beneath the picture, Peacham wrote a poem. The verse explained that while the cannon, representing the military arts of Mars, the Roman god of war, could defend the kingdom with its might, the pen and laurel (symbols of wisdom and peace -- the province of Jupiter’s daughter Pallas Minerva) were responsible for guiding Mars’ hand and preventing any future harm – they were the “better part” of the two forces.¹⁰⁰ Peacham hoped that both poem and picture would act as

⁹⁸ Excerpt from Camden’s *Remaines Concerning Britain* (1605) quoted in Young, *The English Tournament Imprese*, 1.

⁹⁹ A complete scan of the *Minerva Britanna* may be found at <<http://f01.middlebury.edu/FS010A/STUDENTS/contents.htm>> (10 November 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Image and poem reproduced in Alan Young, *The English Tournament Imprese* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1988), 192. The complete poem is as follows:

Behold a hand, extended from the sky;
 Doth fteddilie a peized balance hold,
 The dreadfull Cannon, in one fcale doth ly,
 The Bay ith’other, with a pen of Gold;
 Due to the Mufe, and fuch as learned are,
 Th’other Symbole, of th’art Militar.

/ Behold a hand, extended from the sky;
 / Does steadily a poised balance hold,
 / The dreadful cannon, in one scale does lie,
 / The laurel in the other, with a pen of gold;
 / The due of the Muse, and such as learned are,
 / The other symbol is of the arts military.

Prince Henry's "guide (as that golden branch to AENEAS) to a vertuous & true happy life."¹⁰¹ The book seemed well-suited toward that end. The poems accompanying each emblem explained Peacham's intended lesson; in this case, that Henry should pursue with greater vigor the virtues embodied by the pen and laurel rather than those of the "dreadfull Cannon."

Peacham's design suggests that the anonymous noble imprese owner had as his particular conceit a preference for the province of Pallas Minerva over Mars; he favored the arts of the pen over those of the sword and cannon that had been the focus of his class's political and social role throughout the middle ages. Other Tudor imprese mottos bore similar messages: one read *Cedant arma togae* – "Let arms give way to the toga" – while still others bore depictions of altars of peace, laurel trees (which represented both peace and learning), or hands holding pens.¹⁰² Though tournaments continued to be popular throughout the early modern period in England, the message behind the spectacle, and the "particular conceits" of the participants, had changed.

The early Tudor kings had perfected a tournament that effectively sublimated individual martial accomplishment (for all save the crown) in favor of royalist symbolism and opulence of display. Tournaments still resembled their medieval antecedents in the types of events they featured. However, the weaponry, pageantry, and opportunities for masculine

Though MARS defendes the kingdome with his might,	/	Though Mars defends the kingdom with his might
And braues abroud his foe, in glorious armes,	/	And braves abroad his foe in glorious arms,
Yet wifer PALLAS guides his arme aright,	/	Yet wiser Pallas guides his arm aright
And beft at home preventes all future harmes:	/	And best at home prevents all future harms:
Then pardon * Soveraigne, if the pen and bay,	/	Then pardon * Sovereign, if the pen and laurel,
My better part, the other downe doe wey.	/	My better part, the other down does weigh.

¹⁰¹ <<http://f01.middlebury.edu/FS010A/STUDENTS/Minerva/front02.JPG>> (10 November 2005).

¹⁰² Young, *The English Tournament Imprese*, 49 and passim.

expression were evolving – a pattern that the nobility could not escape, even when they left the fields and headed toward home.

From the Tiltyard to the Courtyard: Fortification and Castles

Whereas the tournament offered the noble a brief opportunity to display his masculinity, his home stood as a permanent testament to his identity. Castles had the potential to project power, wealth, and social standing.¹⁰³ They were part of a material culture that men and women used to express their social identity.¹⁰⁴ Much like the traditionally violent tournament, noble houses projected an image of masculine prowess. The outward appearance and utility of the space was overwhelmingly masculine. Men paid for nearly all of the homes and the majority of the occupants were male.¹⁰⁵ In the middle ages, and continuing on into the early sixteenth century, their residences focused on displaying martial aspects of the man's character; moats, gatehouses, towers, crenellation, and fortified curtain walls were the norm.¹⁰⁶ All spoke of a resident ready and able to defend his domain; indeed, one of the traditional functions of any noble house was to act as barracks for the noble's retainers.¹⁰⁷ Part of the fortifications' role was to impress visitors. Noble and royal

¹⁰³ For the relationship between noble country houses and power displays, see S.J. Gunn and P.G. Lindley, "Charles Brandon's Westhorpe: an Early Tudor Courtyard House in Suffolk," *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 145 (1988), 272; Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 2-3; and Bernard, *Power and Politics in Tudor England*, 175.

¹⁰⁴ The following section owes its unifying theory to the work of Roberta Gilchrist, who addresses spacial relationships in buildings as important in gender construction. See her "Medieval Bodies in the Material World: Gender, Stigma, and the Body" in Sarah Kay and Miri Ruben, ed. *Framing Medieval Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 43-61.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ See Charles H. Coulson, *Castles in Medieval Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 29, 64-65, particularly for the symbolic nature of castles and their relationship to the aristocracy in the middle ages.

¹⁰⁷ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 15.

households were constantly on the move, and as such a noble could reasonably expect to have to host another noble's retinue, or even the king's, at any given time.¹⁰⁸ In 1522, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V visited England, touring the countryside with Henry VIII. An excerpt from the *Rutland Papers* details part of the plans for that journey: "Item, at tyme conuenient to remove from Cauntobury to Sittingborne, and to devise conueneint places of gentlemen's houses nere adionyng thereunto where the king and themperor may be most honorably lodged."¹⁰⁹ The nobles who owned castles along their route would have had to move quickly to prepare both the castle and their protocol to welcome their royal visitors. Upon approach, each noble host would participate in a ritual of greeting for an honored guest. If the approaching guest was a baron or higher, the host would open the gatehouse doors and allow the noble to ride into the courtyard on horseback. The officers of the household would await his arrival with their wands of office presented, and if the man was an earl or above, the officers would hand over their staves to the visiting household and give their positions away to the retinue of the guest for the duration of his visit.¹¹⁰ The ceremonial nature of the approach suggests the importance of the appearance of the house; the first impression was the noble's best opportunity to display his character through his home. In the middle ages, the audience expected that character to be martial.

¹⁰⁸ J.T. Cliffe, *The World of the Country House in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2. For example, Charles Brandon, shortly after being created duke of Suffolk, played host to both Henry VIII and Charles V at a house in Southwark. The property was still under renovation, but apparently Henry was impressed enough by what had been completed so far: thirteen years later Henry asked Brandon to give him the house in exchange for one in Norwich. Brandon complied. See Gunn and Lindley, "Charles Brandon's Westhorpe: an Early Tudor Courtyard House in Suffolk," 272.

¹⁰⁹ Jerdan, *Rutland Papers*, 74.

¹¹⁰ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 64.

The Book of the Order of Chivalry was as explicit about the role of the castle as it was about tournaments. Caxton wrote, “Thoffyce of a knyght is to haue a castel and horse for to kepe the wayes / and for to deffende them that labouren the londes and the erthe.”¹¹¹ Thus, upon approach, a proper castle would project its ability to withstand assault and protect the land. Literary sources reflected this expectation, as when Gawaine first saw Bertilak’s castle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*:

Thrice the sign of the Saviour on himself he had made,
When in the wood he was aware of a dwelling with a moat
On a promontory above a plateau, penned in by the boughs
And tremendous trunks of trees, and trenched about;
The comeliest castle that ever a knight owned,
It was pitched on a plain, with a park all around,
Impreguably palisaded with pointed stakes.¹¹²

Gawain was duly impressed by the Green Knight’s castle, and though he approached as a single knight, weary after a long journey, rather than in grand fashion accompanied by a liveried retinue, the battlements had their intended effect. They displayed power in no uncertain terms, and their usefulness in doing so made them an attractive tool for the medieval and early modern nobleman. Indeed, expressing one’s masculinity through martial fortifications of a house could earn the noble the respect and awe of his peers. However, it

¹¹¹ Byles, ed., *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, 41. “The office of a knight is to have a castle and horse to keep the ways / and to defend those that labor on the lands and the earth.”

¹¹² Brian Stone, trans., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 50-51. As Gawain drew nearer to the castle, the poet continued the description of the castle’s defenses:

The knight, still on his steed, stayed on the bank
Of the deep double ditch that drove round the place.
The wall went into the water wonderfully deep,
And then to a huge height upwards it reared
In hard hewn stone, up to the cornice;
Built under the battlements in the best style, courses juttred
And turrets protruded between, constructed
With loopholes in plenty with locking shutters.
No better barbican had ever been beheld by that knight.

could also draw the attention of a king wary that his most powerful subjects would grow too mighty to control.

English monarchs had long sought to regulate their subjects' building projects. For the homes of those wealthy enough to afford it, these projects were fortified manor houses, or castles. By the end of the thirteenth century, the main symbol of a fortified structure, and thus the primary way to convey fortified prowess in one's dwelling, was crenellation.¹¹³ The word derives from "crenel," – "one of the open spaces or indentations of an embattled parapet, used for shooting or launching projectiles upon the enemy."¹¹⁴ The staggered, saw-toothed skyline of crenellation was so ubiquitously recognized as a symbol of strength that it became the characteristic around which the monarchs structured their regulation of fortification. "Licenses to crenellate," as they were known, became a common fixture in the legal records of medieval England. From 1200 to 1536, the crown granted approximately 460 licenses to people and institutions wishing to make their buildings appear more defensible.¹¹⁵ A typical license is represented by one granted to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, in 1437, by Henry VI: "License also for the said Duke and duchess to crenellate their manor-house or mansion of Grenewich, and to build and crenellate a tower within the said park."¹¹⁶ With this license, the duke of Gloucester had the king's permission to add that sign of aristocratic

¹¹³ Coulson, *Castles in Medieval Society*, 82.

¹¹⁴ "Crenel, n. 1" *Oxford English Dictionary*. Ed. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner. Second ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. 4, 7.

¹¹⁵ Charles H. Coulson, "Hierarchism in Conventual Crenellation: An Essay in the Sociology and Metaphysics of Medieval Fortification," *Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 26 (1982), 69.

¹¹⁶ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Henry VI* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1901), Vol. 3, 74.

prowess to his dwelling in Greenwich; whether the crenellations actually would have helped him defend his home was not of primary concern.

Several historians, among them Charles Coulson and Maurice Howard, argued that defensibility was never actually the foremost goal of those who sought licenses to crenellate.¹¹⁷ They point to the granting of a number of licenses to houses of worship to suggest that it was the “sign of honour and social status” that drew people to crenellation, moreso than the utility of the battlements.¹¹⁸ During the period of licensure, the crown granted fifty-eight total licenses to religious institutions – institutions that, according to Coulson, desired that “cherished recognition of their standing and affinity with the greatest castle-holding magnates of the kingdom.”¹¹⁹ Henry VI was one of the kings who granted a license to a church. In 1451, Henry VI granted “license for Thomas, bishop of Bath and Wells, to enclose the churchyard of the cathedral church of Wells and the precinct of the houses of them and the canons of the church in the city of Wells with a stone wall and to crenellate the same and make towers there.”¹²⁰ That the caretakers of religious houses – places which did not normally play a role in regional defense – sought and obtained licenses to crenellate reinforced that the crenel was a symbol of power, a symbol of nobility. It was that aspect which made a license to crenellate a valuable commodity indeed.

Much like the proliferation of ceremony that accompanied Tudor tournaments, a pronounced change occurred from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century in the licensing of building projects. However, unlike the increases experienced in tournament spending and

¹¹⁷ Maurice Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House* (London: George Phillip, 1987), 50.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹⁹ Coulson, “Hierarchism,” 71.

¹²⁰ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Henry VI*, Vol. 5, 473.

pomp, the early Tudor period saw a sharp downturn in licensing to crenellate. An analysis of the *Calendar of Patent Rolls* reveals that in the fifteenth century, during his thirty-nine year reign, Henry VI granted ten licenses to crenellate, most importantly among them those to the duke of Gloucester, the earl of Salisbury, the earl of Suffolk, and Richard, duke of York, the man who would later work to dethrone Henry.¹²¹ These licenses invariably addressed crenellation, but could also allow for additional fortifications, like that granted to Sir Roland Lentall in 1434: “License, by advice of the council, for Roland Lentall, knight, and Lucy his wife, to crenellate, turrellate, and embattle their manor of Hampton Rychard, co. Hereford, and make a fortalice [fortified structure] there.”¹²² Henry VI could also grant them to multiple petitioners at the same time. In 1426 he granted a license to a group of men, including the Bishop of Winchester, Sir Robert Frampton, and Henry Merston, a clerk, “to enclose, crenellate, enturret and embattle, with stones, lime and ‘brik’ their manor of More in Rykmersworth.”¹²³ Overall, Henry’s licensing practices saw his subjects obtaining permission to crenellate approximately once every three years. His successor, Edward IV, was even more willing to allow crenellation to occur.

The *Calendar of Patent Rolls* documents that Edward IV, during his twenty-one year reign, granted licenses to crenellate to nine men, for an approximate rate of one every 2.33 years, higher than that of Henry VI.¹²⁴ The number of structures crenellated under license during his reign was higher still: several of the licenses permitted crenellation of multiple

¹²¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Henry VI*, Vol. 1-5.

¹²² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 446.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 351.

¹²⁴ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward IV, Henry VI*, Vol. 1-2; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III*, Vol. 3.

manors. In 1477, John Pylkyngton, knight, received permission “to build walls and towers around and to crenellate his plot or manor within the parish of Wakefield, co. York, called ‘Pylkington Hall,’ newly built by him, and his other plots or manors of Bradley, Elfletburgh, and Turneham Hall, co. York.”¹²⁵ There is also a hint within one of the licenses of the possible consequences of crenellating without a license, as in 1482 Edmund Bedyngfeld, esquire, obtained license “to crenellate his manor of Oxburgh, co. Norfolk and pardon to him for any offences already committed in that behalf.”¹²⁶ Of what penalties he was pardoned the record did not show, but that he was pardoned indicates that Edward IV was both aware of unlicensed building that might occur and that the crown was willing to take issue with it in court. Still, Edward’s licensing practices represented an increase in the rate of licensure during the fifteenth century. This trend, however, ended upon Edward’s death. The Tudor kings who followed shortly thereafter took a much different approach to licensure and to the fortified properties of their aristocratic subjects.

Wary of the chaos of the Wars of the Roses and the power plays of overmighty subjects that had toppled his Lancastrian and Yorkist predecessors, Henry VII understood that bastions of power in the hands of those not under his immediate control could be troublesome. In 1487, he issued a warrant for the arrest of Sir Henry Bodrugen and his associates, who had “withdrawn themselves into private places within the counties of Cornwall and Devon, and stir up sedition and rebellion.”¹²⁷ Castles and manors in the

¹²⁵ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III*, Vol. 3, 71. Neither the reign of Edward V, which lasted less than a year, or Richard III, which lasted less than three, will be considered here, as they are too brief to compare accurately with the longer reigns of their predecessors and the early Tudor monarchs.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 308.

¹²⁷ James Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), Vol. 2, 369.

countryside could provide their owners with visible displays of their power for local subjects, and thus not only act as defenses against the crown's armies in the case of a full-scale rebellion, but also work to foment that rebellion by projecting the rebel's power in a more visible way than that of the far-off king. Perhaps to counter this danger, Henry VII issued only five licenses to crenellate in his twenty-four year reign, three of which were to trusted members of his retinue. In 1487, Henry VII granted "to King's councilor John Guldeford, knight, in consideration of his expenses and losses in the king's service...license also for him and his heirs at their pleasure to crenellate the manors or tenements of Holden, Tenterden, Brockle, and Hertrigge."¹²⁸ Similarly, Richard Guldeford, his brother, also a councilor and a knight for the King's body, received at the same time "license for him and his heirs at their will to build with stone, lime and sand walls and towers," and "to crenellate such walls and towers."¹²⁹ A third councilor, Richard Emson, received his license in 1498.¹³⁰ The drop in licenses and their tendency to fall into the hands of those closer to the king represented a departure from the practices of the fifteenth century, a marked drop in frequency and a change in usage. However, even Henry VII's reluctance to grant licenses to crenellate pales in comparison to that of his son, who effectively ended the practice during his reign.

Henry VIII himself was a prodigious builder; historian Simon Thurley described him as an "energetic – and unflagging – builder of houses, alone of his passions his enthusiasm for the construction of houses never diminished."¹³¹ Indeed, he owned more houses than any

¹²⁸ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Henry VII*, Vol. 1, 150-151.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹³⁰ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Henry VII*, Vol. 2, 163.

¹³¹ Simon Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1.

king before him, or any king since, more than doubling the holdings of even his father.¹³² His works at Whitehall, Westminster, Hampton Court, and Greenwich featured impressive towers and gatehouses, so impressive that one author wrote in 1577 that “they are supposed to excell all the rest that he found standing in this realme, so they are and shall be a perpetuall president vnto those that doo come after, to follow in their workes and buildings of importance.”¹³³ While Henry VIII built to impress, though, others could not. Within Henry’s control of his subjects’ ability to build his stark departure from the traditions of earlier kings became clear. Henry issued exactly one license to crenellate during the entirety of his thirty-eight year reign. That license was to Edward Stafford, the duke of Buckingham, in 1510, to “impark 100 acres of land in the parish of Thournebury, Gloucestershire; also to castellate his manor or mansion of Thournebury.”¹³⁴ Even here, the license did not bear the wording allowing Buckingham to crenellate; it is, however, the closest Henry came to actually licensing crenellation. Two other licenses were issued allowing the building of walls and a tower – one of these was issued to Sir William Paulet, later the marquis of Winchester – and one to a group of justices of the king’s bench and common pleas allowing them to fortify within a newly-created park.¹³⁵ That was the extent of his licensing. Thus, as Henry built, he checked others’ ability to do so.

Henry had other methods at his disposal to undermine the building projects of his most powerful subjects. Even gaining a successful license did not ensure that the king would

¹³² Ibid., 1.

¹³³ Quote from William Harrison’s *Description of England*, quoted in Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England*, 39. See also Paula Henderson, *The Tudor House and Garden* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 39.

¹³⁴ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 1, 1157.

¹³⁵ Ibid., Vol. 1, 947; Vol. 5, 80; Vol. 6, 105.

not later interfere if he felt the display was a threat. The king could usurp control of the noble's builders as they worked. This system of impressments allowed the king to summon the skilled workers of England to work on royal projects at any time, effectively robbing the noble of his workforce and stalling his progress until the impressment was over.¹³⁶ Henry could also attain a noble, claiming his lands as forfeit in the process, to hold or redistribute at will.¹³⁷ Edward Stafford, the duke who received Henry's one license to build a militarily impressive structure, fell prey to attainder and worse, nullifying any gains he may have received as the beneficiary of Henry's earlier generosity.

Stafford began rebuilding his manor at Thornbury early in the sixteenth century. Much of the work he did reflected his interest in military strength, including a completely crenellated façade and a row of six towers at the front of the building.¹³⁸ Whether or not these additions had any actual military worth is a matter of historical debate, but the image they projected was not.¹³⁹ Henry VIII had Buckingham attainted and executed for treason in 1521, for he suspected the duke of harboring designs on the throne.¹⁴⁰ While the fortification of Thornbury was not the primary cause of the king's distrust of the duke, it likely contributed by convincing Henry that Buckingham was preparing for a fight, perhaps against

¹³⁶ Maurice Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House* (London: George Phillip, 1987), 30.

¹³⁷ Attainder (attainting) was a legal process whereby a noble's line was "tainted," usually by conviction of treason. As a result of attainder, the noble's line would be disinherited of title and property, which would revert back to the source that had granted it: the crown.

¹³⁸ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 69.

¹³⁹ For example, Mark Girouard suggested that the "crenellated skyline and superb array of no less than six towers" which Thornbury featured were "made nonsense of" by other parts of the castle's design, most notably its window structure – another suggestion that the act of crenellation carried more symbolic significance than actual military utility. See Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 69.

¹⁴⁰ Barbara J. Harris, *Edward Stafford, Third Duke of Buckingham, 1478-1521* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 199. The official charge against Buckingham was "compassing and imagining the death of the king."

royal forces.¹⁴¹ The public display of martial prowess certainly caught the attention of the duke's peers; it had the effect he intended, if not a desirable result – no waving of a royally signed license was enough to keep Buckingham's head atop his shoulders.

After Buckingham's death, as a result of his attainder all of his property reverted into the hands of Henry VIII. This gave Henry a vast amount of land to regrant to those he wished to reward, and regrant he did, as did the kings before him, in order to assure the allegiances of many of his noble subjects. And yet, despite a process of land disbursement that left a trail of records a full twenty years and more after Buckingham's death, Henry did not grant all of it away.¹⁴² Most notable among those properties he kept were the castle of Thornbury itself and an equally fortified castle at Tunbridge. No noble received the jewel of Buckingham's manors; instead, Henry appointed Sir William Kingston, a knight for the body, as steward and bailiff of Thornbury in 1522.¹⁴³ Later, Kingston would surrender his sole patent to his offices to progress into joint stewardship of the king's castle with Sir John Seyntlowe.¹⁴⁴ Tunbridge met with a similar fate. The recorder who detailed Buckingham's confiscated properties described Tunbridge as an imposing fortress indeed:

[Tunbridge] hath been and yet is a strong fortress for the three parts thereof; and the fourth part, on the south side, being fortified with a deep running watter....The other three parts of the castle being continued with a great gatehouse on the first entry, a dungeon and two towers are substantially builded, with walls and embatelling with good stone...And as unto the said gatehouse, [it] is as strong a fortress as few be in England.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 86. See also Girourard, *Life in the English Country House*, 69, and Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641*, 217-220.

¹⁴² *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 5, 80; Vol. 6, 105; Vol. 7, 293; passim.

¹⁴³ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 2, 866.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. 4, 2168.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., Vol. 3, 1286.

Like Thornbury, Henry VIII gave the stewardship of Tunbridge in 1522 to a trusted member of his retinue, Sir Thomas Boleyn, the treasurer of the household. He did not, however, grant it in perpetuity – he preferred to keep the castle within his own holdings.¹⁴⁶ The symbols of Buckingham's martial prowess, the crenellated towers of his noble stature, were in the hands of the king, taken in a visible and violent way – a fate shared by the mighty fortresses of others.

Thomas Darcy, Lord Darcy, had long been in residence at Pontefract Castle on the border with Scotland – a dangerous place to be, for relations with the Scots were tense even when there was not outright war. Charged with keeping the castle safe as a buttress against invasion, Darcy instead relinquished the castle to the Scots in 1536, in protest of what he viewed as the unchristian acts of the king.¹⁴⁷ In truth, he did not blame Henry entirely for the break with Rome. Thomas Cromwell was the target of a significant amount of Darcy's wrath. Lord Chancellor Audeley described Darcy's invective against Cromwell:

Cromwell, it is thou that art the very original and chief causer of all this rebellion and mischief, and art likewise causer of the apprehension of us that be noble men and dost daily earnestly travail to bring us to our end and to strike off our heads, and I trust that or thou die, though thou wouldest procure all the noblemen's heads within the realm to be stricken off, yet shall there one head remain that shall strike off thy head.¹⁴⁸

Darcy was correct – that one head remaining to whom Cromwell eventually answered was Henry VIII. However, it was also Henry who exacted punishment on Darcy first. Henry

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. 3, 2214.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol. 7, 38; Vol. 12i, 848, 900. In that same year, Henry issued the Acts of Parliament taking control of much of the northland from the bishops who held the land. This occurred fast on the heels of Henry's divorce and the Acts of Succession, which effectively broke England away from Rome. See Douglas R. Bisson, et al., eds., *A History of England*, Vol. 1 (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002), 250-259.

¹⁴⁸ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 12i, 441.

brought Darcy to the judgement of his peers and exacted punishment on the lord of Pontefract castle in 1537, beheading him just as he had done with Buckingham years before. Pontefract castle, with its eight towers, massive donjon, and 156 arrow loops, reverted to Henry's control upon Darcy's death.¹⁴⁹ He did not grant the stewardship of the fortress to another member of the peerage; it remained "The King's Castle of Pomffracte" in a letter from Sir Henry Sayville to Cromwell in 1537, and it was to a gentleman, and not a peer, that Henry bestowed stewardship of the lands and castles of Darcy's attainder.¹⁵⁰ He made Sir John Nevell chief steward of all Darcy's possessions in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Nottinghamshire, and did not grant Pontefract outright to anyone – it was far too important, and far too impressive, to give to a potentially rebellious member of the peerage.¹⁵¹

From those members of the peerage that suffered attainder, Henry was quick to seize fortified structures, and reluctant to give them up again. Henry, however, did not hoard the castles of only those who displeased him; he displayed a similar pattern of possessiveness even among those closest to the crown. Charles Brandon, the duke of Suffolk, Henry's same right-hand man that so adeptly navigated the pathways of tournament success, had accumulated through his service to and favor with Henry an impressive amount of property. Among those properties were Suffolk Place and Westhorpe. Both were favorites of Suffolk during his lifetime, and both featured houses which he built or renovated. Westhorpe in particular was a major project for the duke. He built it with a three-story gatehouse,

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., Vol. 12ii, 77.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., Vol. 12ii, 984.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., Vol. 13i, 646.

embattled brick walls, a moat, and massive corner towers.¹⁵² He spared no expense, and the twelve thousand pounds he spent was more than most other non-royal builders did during the period.¹⁵³ It is perhaps a sign of his favor with Henry that, when he began building in 1527, he did not receive a license to crenellate, though he was able to fortify the structure without penalty nonetheless. Still, the fates of Brandon's two greatest residences mirrored those of Pontefract or Thornbury: they both found their way into the hands of the king. When Brandon could no longer withhold payment on several significant debts to the crown, Henry surveyed Brandon's holdings and demanded, first and foremost, the two fortified houses. In 1535 Henry seized Westhorpe and Suffolk place, along with two other manors at Sayes Court and Wyverstone.¹⁵⁴ Henry's eagerness to possess fortified structures would not be sated, whether by taking them from convicted traitors or close friends.

Like he did with the role of tournament champion and all the masculine imagery that went with it, Henry VIII hoarded crenellated structures, whether by building his own or taking them from the peerage he sought to control. This furthered a monopolization of violence in the personage of the crown, and left the rest of the nobility scrambling to catch up. Henry, however, was not so quick to allow other peers to step into the power vacuums created by attainted peers; if the peerage was to recoup its losses, it would have to do so against an influx of new men. The turmoil created by overmighty nobles during the late fifteenth century might have acted as a warning to the early Tudor monarchs. Upon the death and attainder of one of that century's most powerful magnates, Richard Neville, the earl of

¹⁵² Gunn and Lindley, "Charles Brandon's Westhorpe: an Early Tudor Courtyard House in Suffolk," 278.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 274-275.

¹⁵⁴ Gunn, *Charles Brandon*, 135-136.

Warwick, Edward IV granted much of the earl's property to Richard, his brother, the duke of Gloucester. Richard received "the castles, manors, and lordship of Middelham and Scyrefhoten, co. York, and the castle and lordship of Penreth, co. Cumberland, with their members and all other lordships, manors, and lands in those counties which were entailed to Richard Neville, late Earl of Warwick."¹⁵⁵ Richard would later depose Edward's young son and ascend to rule as Richard III. The Tudors were aware of recent history. After Buckingham's attainder, the new gentlemen of the king's chamber obtained a staggering amount of lands and offices. In 1522, in the month of January alone, Henry granted portions of the Buckingham estate and offices upon his lands to nine gentlemen, among them Sir William Morgan, sewer of the chamber, Thomas ap Robertes, gentleman usher of the chamber, Edward Litilton, gentleman usher of the chamber, and Sir William Kingston.¹⁵⁶ By comparison, no member of the peerage received property or position that month from Buckingham's estates.

For all of the Yorkist policies those like David Starkey have identified as influencing the court of the early Tudor kings, fifteenth-century royal treatment of the fortified structures of the peerage was not among them. Henry VII and especially Henry VIII reduced the ability of their mightiest subjects to represent themselves martially through their residences, the most permanent and prominent displays of a noble's power. Their eventual abolishment of licenses to crenellate (the crown did not grant another after Henry VIII) indeed represented a revolution in the way the peerage was able to display its power.¹⁵⁷ The void created left

¹⁵⁵ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward IV, Henry VI*, Vol. 2, 266.

¹⁵⁶ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, vol. 3, 2016.

¹⁵⁷ Coulson, "Hierarchism in Conventual Crenellation: An Essay in the Sociology and Metaphysics of Medieval Fortification," 69.

room for new men, serving the crown in nonmilitary ways, to begin building, to begin representing their masculinity in their projects. Like in their service to the crown, though, these new men were not so quick to pick up traditional martiality.

Sir Richard Weston, one of the upwardly mobile civil servants whom Henry VIII rewarded so well, opted for both a location and style for his new residence that were decidedly nonmartial. He chose the location for building to begin in 1523, after Henry VIII gave him the valuable land from Buckingham's estates for his service first as the undertreasurer of the exchequer and then his work while a member of the king's privy chamber.¹⁵⁸ The land upon which Weston built Sutton Place was flat, no hills or dense woodland to obscure one's view of the estate upon approach. Nor was it set atop some ominous outcropping or foreboding rise; rather, its construction allowed the manor to come into view gradually, in stages, giving the traveler time to be impressed by its Italianate palatial opulence. Perhaps returning from the court in London, Weston would lead his retinue through well-kept gardens that led right to the door of his manor, broad paths unobstructed by drab protective walls. There was no dirty cesspool of a moat, no eyesore of looming guardtowers. The leisurely approach would give Weston's guests and fellow riders an opportunity to admire the low, evenly spaced decorative windows that ringed the first floor of the quadrangle-shaped house. They would no doubt be impressed by the detailed work of the stained glass and art panels in each one of the unmulioned windows and, as Weston hoped, they probably would have noticed the broader, but no less artistic, bay windows that punctuated the walls of the ground floor at regular intervals. The main hall door was likewise wide and inviting, the straight-paneled wood as much a backdrop for the delicate paisley metalwork of the hinge extensions as it was a functional entry. There was no

¹⁵⁸ Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, 336.

broad crossbeam to hide the art, and no murder-holes above the entry; indeed, if there had been, Weston would not have been able to commission the finely-carved frontispieces depicting twelve cherubim. The stately terra-cotta manor was a testament to the refined opulence Weston wished to project as a man of power during the reigns of the Tudor kings: the building's perfect symmetry, high and broad doors, elaborate windows, and expansive interior were magnificently planned, exquisitely ornamented, and utterly defenseless.¹⁵⁹

Weston's Sutton Place was at the architectural vanguard of the gradual change in design that took place throughout the sixteenth century. Medieval castles, cramped and ready for defense, were replaced by palaces built for comfort.¹⁶⁰ Gatehouses became smaller, more welcoming, some even receding into the structure of the house itself to form a unified façade.¹⁶¹ The message of these new gatehouses, as one historian observed, "seemed to have been to delight rather than to impress."¹⁶² Indeed, the socially and politically mobile men Henry VIII rewarded seemed to grasp the nuances of the new architectural symbolism quite well.

Like Weston, Sir Nicholas Poyntz rose quickly through the ranks of the gentry to find favor with Henry VIII. His grandfather had served with Henry VII at Bosworth Field in 1485, and had attended Henry VIII at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. In 1535, Nicholas was knighted for his service in Calais and Ireland. The ceremony most likely took place at his

¹⁵⁹ Description of both the manor house and the estate at Sutton Place are adapted from photographs and architectural plans found in H. Auray Tipping, *English Homes: Period II – Vol. 1, Early Tudor, 1485-1558*. (London: Offices of Country Life, 1929), passim.

¹⁶⁰ Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, 437.

¹⁶¹ Henderson, *The Tudor House and Garden*, 46. Henderson notes that the benchmark construction in this style was the Duke of Somerset's London house, which the duke began building in 1547.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 53.

home in Acton Court.¹⁶³ For the occasion, Henry VIII himself made the trip to Avon – a visit which required Poyntz to scramble to transform his house into something fit for the king. In doing so he profoundly changed the face of Acton Court. The original house Poyntz inherited was a compact structure surrounded by an impressive moat.¹⁶⁴ By the time he was finished, the moat was backfilled, the kitchens demolished, and a regular courtyard house erected to replace the medieval structure. Poyntz had added new north and west ranges, had rebuilt the south range, and had made the east range into a series of lodgings featuring decorative art invoking the Tudor dynasty, particularly plaster representations of the Tudor rose.¹⁶⁵ Hoping to impress the king, Poyntz replaced whatever defensive capabilities Acton Court had possessed by virtue of its moat and construction with the sprawl of opulence. His willingness to do so suggested an understanding that imposing defenses were beginning to fade out of vogue for the sixteenth-century nobleman. The king was rewarding new men with political power, and these men understood that with the changes in expectations of governmental service came changes in masculine performance.

John Russell, first earl of Bedford, epitomized the move toward a different sort of noble service to the crown. His language skills, caution, confidence, and ability to mediate were among his greatest strengths, and led Henry VIII to employ him primarily as a diplomat.¹⁶⁶ These assets did not, however, necessarily translate into military success. He performed poorly when called to serve the crown in quelling the rebellion known as the

¹⁶³ Robert Bell and Kirsty Rodwell, “Acton Court, Avon: An Early Tudor Courtier House,” in Malcolm Airs, ed. *The Tudor and Jacobean Great House* (Oxford: University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education, 1994), 55.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

¹⁶⁶ Willen, *John Russell, First Earl of Bedford: One of the King's Men*, 19-20.

Pilgrimage of Grace – his caution and use of delaying tactics allowed the enemy to continually regroup, making it difficult to eliminate the threat entirely. Russell admitted that, during his military service, he “lyved in more feare than he was feared.”¹⁶⁷ Despite his failures, though, the earl was a member of the king’s privy chamber. He was able to amass a considerable amount of land, including a gift of thirty thousand acres in Tavistock in 1539. However, rather than building a new manor house or rebuilding an old one, he chose to live in a town house, leasing most of the larger buildings at Tavistock to Dorothy, Lady Mountjoy, for her use.¹⁶⁸ The town house allowed him to remain mobile between his lands in the west and the court; he saw little need to own a fortified structure. Thus Russell’s military service was not part of what earned him the king’s favor; his political future rested in his identity as a diplomat and a courtier rather than as a warrior.

Noble country houses maintained their proud ambition throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the way their owners expressed that ambition began to change. The fortifications that announced a noble’s martial, masculine qualities slowly fell out of favor as the Tudor monarchs suppressed those who built to intimidate and rewarded those who built to delight. Henry VII and Henry VIII had successfully begun a process of change that reshaped the acceptable forms of masculine expression and, thus, masculinity itself. William Paulet, the marquis of Winchester, understood the change as well as any; like Russell and Poyntz, he carved himself a niche by being more closely aligned with the kings’ expectations. Paulet understood that as a subject of the Tudor kings, his success, like the sprawling new estate over the proudly embattled tower, was a result of being “sprung from

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 105.

the willow, not the oak.”¹⁶⁹ By punishing those who would represent themselves martially and monopolizing images of masculinity in the crown, the early Tudor monarchs had set the stage for a new masculinity to form.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 127.

Conclusions

Perceptions of proper masculine virtue continued to evolve over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gender historians of post-Civil War England have identified the emergence of a model of manhood which saw the conflation of politeness with manliness.¹⁷⁰ Philip Carter traced the development of this new mode of masculine behavior through the prescriptive literature of the period, finding that for the authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, politeness “proved superior to many existing forms of manly virtue which, on account of their association with elitism, violence, or boorishness, were judged detrimental to truly polite society.”¹⁷¹ The performance of polite masculinity required the adoption of characteristics previously regarded as feminine, including sentimentality and weeping.¹⁷² Prescriptive authors advocated social interaction with women, as they viewed the feminine sphere as the locus of refinement.¹⁷³ They took as their sources both contemporary continental examples and those from the ancient world.¹⁷⁴ Yet these examples alone would not have been enough to affect such a revolutionary change in the nature of masculinity. The foundations of the shift away from the medieval model of masculine behavior had been laid by the Tudor monarchs’ efforts to control the media through which noblemen could express their martial prowess. The reforms of the early

¹⁷⁰ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 1.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 210. See also Harvey, “The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-1800,” 301-302.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

sixteenth century made the reimagining of maleness in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries possible, though it was by no means sudden.

The Tudor world was, like its medieval predecessor, still a violent realm. Tensions with France remained high, occasionally resulting in periods of violence that were only interrupted, rather than eliminated, by events like the Field of Cloth of Gold. Tournaments could still be dangerous affairs, and many buildings remained fortified. However, within the continuity of violence there was capacity for change. Henry VII and Henry VIII's perfection of tournament pageantry shifted the emphasis of each event from the display of martial prowess to the symbolic presentation of finery and wealth. Likewise, their wary control of aristocratic building projects ensured that permanent representations of traditional masculinity in the fortification of country houses became a risky venture at best. Nobles gained power in the Tudor court from serving the kings in civil or diplomatic capacities, and faced fatal consequences for expressing themselves too assertively against the crown in martial ways. By controlling the outward expression of noble masculinity, the Tudor monarchs began to change what it was to be masculine, and thus what it was to be noble.

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