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I

Prince Arthur's Preparation for Kingship

STEVEN GUNN

WHAT KIND OF KING would Prince Arthur have made? We cannot know. We cannot even make a very educated guess, for we do not know enough about Arthur in his fifteen years of life. The problem was recognized by Francis Bacon in his *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*. 'Of this Prince', wrote Bacon, 'in respect he died so young and by reason of his father's manner of education, that did cast no great lustre upon his children, there is little particular memory.' Bacon's picture of the prince is thus a stereotype of worthy royal youth: 'strong and able', 'very studious and learned beyond his years and beyond the custom of great Princes'; Edward VI without the Protestantism.¹ Yet perhaps we do not have to give up quite as easily as Bacon. Record does remain of Arthur's activities, of the activities of those around him, of activities done in his name. By setting these in their context in his father's style of kingship and the politics of early Tudor governance, we may still seek some insights into the making of Arthur the king.

Arthur's education was certainly high powered.² It began conventionally enough, in a nursery overseen by Lady Elizabeth Darcy, who had also been mistress of the king's nursery under Edward IV. She did her job well, to judge from her rewards: a £20 pension from the prince's Duchy of Cornwall estates and, perhaps even more conducive to a relaxed retirement, royal grants of red wine totalling 420 gallons a year.³ Arthur's instruction continued in the hands of an anonymous teacher of basic literacy and then, from the age of four or five, under the expert eye of Master John Rede. When appointed Arthur's tutor, Rede had just spent six years as headmaster of Winchester College. He had been a fellow and would later be warden of New College, Oxford, an institution forward in its interest in the new humanist studies. His contemporaries there included William Grocyn, the leading Greek scholar in England, William Warham, later archbishop of Canterbury and patron of Erasmus, and the humanist grammarians William Horman and John Stanbridge, later headmasters of Eton College and Magdalen College School. Rede thus presumably taught Arthur according to the most advanced educational ideas available in the England of his day. The results can be seen in the convolutedly learned Latin letters Arthur wrote to his future wife in 1499.⁴ Rede's role continued until roughly the time of the prince's marriage in 1501, but in 1496 he was joined by Bernard André, the blind French poet retained by Henry VII to glorify his reign in classical-style Latin verse. What Rede had started André continued in accelerated vein.

In his life of Henry VII, André provides a list of twenty-four classical and renaissance authors whose works the prince had read or even memorized by his sixteenth year: grammarians, poets, orators and historians. The list is self-consciously up-to-date, featuring the heroes of Italian humanist

pedagogy and scholarship, Guarino of Verona and Lorenzo Valla, three works by the classical master-stylist and inspiration of humanist political engagement Cicero, and various ancient texts rediscovered through the efforts of fifteenth-century manuscript-hunters and translators from the Greek. These were not the only texts André and Arthur studied together. André wrote a commentary on Augustine's *City of God*, dedicated it to the Oxford- and Bologna-educated theologian John Burton, who was also in Arthur's service, and equipped it with an index for the prince's benefit.⁵ He also compiled more than a dozen lost educational works, probably intended for Arthur, and commentaries on some of the authors he claimed Arthur had read – Pliny, Terence, Virgil, Aulus Gellius – which they might have used together.⁶ The presence of Cicero's works in Arthur's study is confirmed by the survival of a copy of his *De officiis* printed on vellum and decorated for the prince's use.⁷ Meanwhile other scholars were eager to join Arthur's tutorial team. Thomas Linacre, England's first great humanist physician, who had studied in Florence, Rome and Padua, advertised his suitability by dedicating to the prince his Latin translation of the basic Greek astronomy textbook of Proclus, *De sphaera*. The work was printed at Venice in 1499 by Aldus Manutius, the pre-eminent humanist printer of the age, but it does not seem to have got Linacre a job.

We do not know if Arthur found all this Latin hard going, though he did at least have an English version of the *Aeneid* to help him, published by William Caxton in 1490 with a dedication to the prince, 'my tocomynge naturell & souerayn lord'.⁸ For the humanists the utility of classical learning was self-evident, but what kingly skills would Arthur really have derived from his curriculum? If well absorbed, the orators Cicero and Quintilian would have trained him to argue, to persuade, to analyse problems in a flexible way, and, perhaps even more important, to listen to and understand the persuasions of others and thus to receive and weigh up counsel as a responsible monarch should. At the very least large doses of ancient and renaissance rhetoric might have insulated him against flattery: Linacre's account of his 'incredible devotion ... and great respect' for Arthur, 'prince most illustrious and ornament of all your age' seems to have been like water off a duck's back for all the reward he got.⁹ Ancient historians, meanwhile – Caesar, Livy, Tacitus, Thucydides and as many others again on Arthur's curriculum – were seen to teach the art of politics by example. Even if they did not, one still had to know the history to understand the references in contemporary diplomatic rhetoric: hence André's composition of what seems to have been a set of speeches addressed to Arthur by imaginary Athenian and Spartan ambassadors.¹⁰ Even the parliamentary sermons of Henry VII's reign made frequent reference to the classics, Livy and Ovid in 1485, Sallust in 1491 and Livy again in 1497; while Henry and his son did not have to deliver these equivalents of the queen's speech in person, it was as well they should understand their contents.¹¹

Yet the classics were not enough. To function effectively in the politics of North-West Europe a king of England also needed to speak fluent French, and Giles Duwes, a Fleming who later served as royal librarian, taught Arthur French as he was to teach his brother, sisters and niece Princess Mary. Sadly Arthur seems to have missed the chance to practise on

the family holiday, as he was left behind when his father and mother travelled to Calais to meet the Burgundian court in 1500; but there were plenty of francophones around him.¹² Two of his chamber servants, Thomas St Martin and Edouard de Carteret, and the dean of his chapel Jean Neele, hailed from Jersey.¹³ His father's courtiers included various Bretons and Frenchmen, one at least, Rowland de Vielleville, with one of the names drawn from the romances that Henry must have heard so often in his thirteen years at the Breton court; names that may, indeed, have influenced the naming of Arthur himself.¹⁴ As for the courtly skills that went with Franco-Burgundian culture, we know that the prince had learned to dance 'right plesant and honorably' by 1501.¹⁵

Martial virtues were also important in a king, and while we know little of Arthur's military training we do know he was bought an expensive bow when he was five.¹⁶ Installed as a knight of the Garter at the age of five, taking a full part in the order's ceremonies at the chapter of 1500, greeted by St George and the Nine Worthies at his entry into Coventry in October 1498, entertained by jousting at his marriage, he was familiar with the strong chivalrous side of his father's court.¹⁷ That he, or those around him, knew how to use the romantic aspects of that chivalry is hinted by the inscription found on a manuscript associated with the creation of knights of the bath at the time of his marriage, in which an admirer recommends himself 'tant humblement comme je puis' to 'Katherine ma tressouverainne princesse' and prays her 'amouusement' to remember him.¹⁸ Beside its entertainment value, such courtly romance had a political side in pledging loyalty to queens and princesses, just as chivalrous prowess had a political purpose in subduing 'rebelles' and 'outward enmyes', as King Arthur, spokesman for the Nine Worthies, told the prince at Coventry in 1498.¹⁹

Thus the wider culture of the early Tudor court shaped Arthur's kingly style as much as his formal education. Even the songs sung to Arthur at court turned the metaphorical language of heraldic badges to political intent.

I love the rose, both red and white.
Is that your pure perfytt appetite?
To here talke of them is my delite.
Joyed may we be
Oure prince to se, and rosys thre

wrote Thomas Phelyppis, while Edmund Turges more concisely prayed

From stormy wyndis and grevous wethir
Good Lord, preserve the Estrige Fether.²⁰

But survival at the lonely heights of politics was also a matter of self-discipline, pious patience amidst troubles and identification with the sufferings of the Saviour, all themes prominent in the songs of the Fayrfax Book which may well have been put together for use in Arthur's household.²¹

Arthur might have needed consolation and constancy to cope with the heavy burden of expectation placed upon him. From the moment of his birth court poets – Bernard André, Pietro Carmeliano, Giovanni Gigli – lauded him as the bringer of a new golden age, a pacifier of civil wars greater

than those of the ancients, a prince whose advent merited imperial triumphs.²² Welsh poets were predictably excited by his name: 'May Arthur – the world lies open to him – be a great force in battle and an emperor', wrote Dafydd Llwyd; 'I watch for the victories that go with his name'.²³ At his knighting and creation as prince of Wales and earl of Chester on 29 November 1489, Bernard André and John Skelton added further praises.²⁴ More lavish still were the pageants in London for his marriage in 1501, which presented him to Katherine as 'A prince of all princes the very flouré', and likened him not just to King Arthur, but to the star Arcturus, to the sun and to Christ.²⁵ Arthur had a lot to live up to.

Medieval English history suggested that the best training for effective kingship was independent political and military experience before one's accession, like that gained by Edward I or Henry V. Fortunately for Henry VII there was no long-running civil war or Welsh rebellion, like those of Edward's and Henry's youth, in which to train Arthur. He did appoint his son warden-general of the Marches against Scotland at the age of two and three-quarters and keeper of England during the king's campaign in France at the age of six, but in both cases the prince was a figurehead for an active deputy or council.²⁶ More substantial was Henry's imitation of Edward IV in setting up his son with an independent household and council based in the Welsh Marches at an early age. Arthur's council, led by John Alcock, bishop of Worcester, who had played the same role for the future Edward V, was in operation from 1489–90, and his household servants were being appointed at the same time, often by transfer from the king's household: thus John Wallaston, chief clerk of the king's kitchen, stepped up to become cofferer of Arthur's household.²⁷ By 1493 council, household and prince were established at Ludlow and from then on Arthur spent most of his time in the English marcher counties.²⁸ Here the prince could learn to rule, a process in which household and council were equally important.

Henry was worried about his son's household, or so a letter he wrote one summer to Sir Henry Vernon, its comptroller, suggests. The king thanked Vernon that 'by your wise and poletike meanes his houshold is the better conducted and governed, which is greatly to your laude and praise', but he also urged him 'to dispose you to contynue and yeve your personal attendance there at such seasons as the counsaill of our said son shal thinke necessarie and expedient', warning that 'elles we must of urgent necessite appointe oon of our hede officers to exercise your saide rowme, and calle you to serve us in his stede'.²⁹ Henry had deliberately not placed a single nobleman in charge of Arthur's establishment, as Edward had appointed his brother-in-law Earl Rivers as 'governor and ruler' of his son.³⁰ Presumably he had wished to avoid the partisan use of the prince's power practised by the Woodvilles and the bloody outcome it had brought in 1483.³¹ The decision was also congruent with Henry's reluctance to entrust the rule of any region to a single magnate. But this left the seven-year-old prince nominally master in his own house, a house in which he had to learn to command and reward his servants with only the guidance of Vernon and his other senior household officers.

We can only infer that he learnt to command his servants, but he certainly learnt to reward them. From an early age the blessings he conferred

on his future subjects took tangible forms. His nurse Katherine Gibbes was pensioned with £20 a year, Agnes Butler who rocked his cradle with £3 6s 8d, and even the inhabitants of Farnham, the town where he was nursed, used the fact to claim from the king a licence to establish a chantry chapel without paying the usual fees.³² In 1489–90 it was still the king who granted offices, annuities and wardships to his son's servants – Thomas Fisher, yeoman of the prince's cellar, Richard Howell, marshal of the prince's household, John Whytyng, sewer to the king's first-born son the prince – but soon enough Arthur took on the role of benefactor.³³ At Christmas 1491 there were eleven yeomen and grooms of the prince's chamber.³⁴ By Arthur's death at least four of these eleven held offices on the prince's estates. John Anteknap was gate-keeper of Flint Castle; John Caterall was rider of the Cheshire forest of Mara and Mondrem; Walter Frost was receiver of Macclesfield; and William Northborough was bailiff of Prince's Risborough.³⁵ Two more recently appointed yeomen of Arthur's chamber, Henry Wright and Walter Sumester, were made bailiff of Drakelow and Rudheath in Cheshire and bailiff itinerant in Cornwall in 1496 and 1497, and Thomas St Martin, usher of the prince's chamber, was feodary of the Duchy of Cornwall honour of Wallingford from 1492.³⁶ For gentlemen servants there were opportunities to exercise delegated patronage, or the grant of more elevated offices. Sir Randal Brereton, described as the prince's servant, was given the next presentation to the rectory of Malpas, Cheshire in 1498, and duly presented John Brereton, clerk.³⁷ Maurice St John, who was to carry the canopy over the prince's corpse, was made parker and steward of the Duchy of Cornwall manor of Mere in Wiltshire.³⁸

Some of these posts carried substantial fees: £6 13s 4d at Macclesfield, £10 at Wallingford. But they were not just rewards. They mimicked the king's much wider use of a combination of office in an expanding royal household and office on the expanding royal estates to build a loyal political and military following, a king's affinity. Arthur had to learn to use the patronage at his disposal to build political loyalty. He was equipped to give that loyalty military shape by a licence to retain followers, by the distribution of livery clothing or badges or the administration of oaths, notwithstanding the statutes against such retaining which his father was in other cases quick to implement.³⁹ What loyalties he succeeded in inspiring we can guess only from hints that survived his sudden death. His chamberlain, Sir Richard Pole, built a carved screen in Aberconwy church to celebrate Arthur's marriage.⁴⁰ One 'Cokkis, a gentleman servitor to Prince Arture' recorded his service to the prince on his tomb at Ludlow.⁴¹ Arthur's secretary Peter Newton, granted three Cheshire offices by the prince, called his son and heir Arthur and presumably asked the prince to stand godfather to the boy.⁴²

As a future king, Arthur also had to learn to appropriate the patronage at others' disposal to the same ends. Thus we find him in 1501 writing to the university of Oxford to recommend one of his servants for the post of gentleman beadle of divinity. Though he had thoughtfully canvassed the support of the university's chancellor – conveniently none other than Bishop Alcock's successor as president of the prince's council, William Smith, bishop of Lincoln – his bid lost out to one backed by his grandmother Lady

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