FOREWORD TO THE YALE EDITION

by George Bernard

Chrimes's *Henry VII* deserves republication. Described by reviewers as 'sober, sensible, well-structured and magisterial', 'beyond question the best and fullest account of the reign written so far', it remains the most recent book-length study of the reign.¹ Chrimes begins by giving an account of Henry Tudor's younger years, leading up to his usurpation after the battle at Bosworth Field in 1485. He then provides a meticulous survey of England's institutions of government under Henry VII. He examines the workings of the council and of the various branches of the royal administration. A concluding chapter deals with the character of the king's relationship with the political nation. If, as Chrimes frequently regrets, he had not conducted any substantial research himself in unpublished records, especially legal records (for which he was berated by Elton)² he had a good grasp of the printed sources for the reign, using parliamentary statutes to throw light on a variety of concerns. And he drew skilfully on recent research, in monographs, articles, notably J. R. Lander's on bonds and obligations, and unpublished Ph.D. theses, such as R. S. Schofield's on parliamentary taxation. Throughout Chrimes has written authoritatively, presenting his conclusions as manifest common sense.

Characteristic of his approach is a tendency to play down the importance and the novelty of Henry VII's reign. That the Welshness of Henry VII has been exaggerated is Chrimes's opening gambit. The rebellion of 1487 did not shake Henry's throne. There was 'nothing of an innovatory nature in parliaments'. The laws passed in the reign were 'hardly of sufficient novelty or substance to confer on Henry any great reputation as a legislator'. It is 'difficult to find much evidence that Henry VII's government attained any marked success in tackling the perennial problems of law enforcement'. In economic and social matters Henry 'had no consistent policies and took few measures in those fields that were not conventional or repetitious'; Henry's 'relations with the papacy and the church were in no way remarkable'. On the face of it, this might seem perversely negative, calling into question the purpose of the book.

¹ See reviews by C. D. Ross, *Welsh History Review*, VII (1974), 243-5; T. B. Pugh, *History*, LX (1975), 447-8; *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 January 1973, 62; and G. R. Elton, *Historical Journal*, XVI (1973), 627-29 (for quotations).

² Elton, review, *op. cit.* 628.

But Chrimes's claims for the unexceptionability of the reign were in fact teasingly polemical. His implied target was a tenacious historiographical tradition that, after offering a highly coloured view of the Wars of the Roses and of a weakened monarchy, then proceeded to present Henry VII as a 'new monarch' who transformed the institutions and the practice of government. On the contrary, Chrimes claimed, Henry was an entirely conventional late mediaeval ruler. Yet that was not, for Chrimes, as negative or as inconsequential a standpoint as it might seem. His approach no doubt reflected a conservative historian's suspicion of deliberate reform.¹ Instead, he treats the very uneventfulness of Henry's way of ruling as developing from the achievement of mere stability into a steady purposefulness that served as a springboard for what he presents in his final pages as the fluorescence of Tudor England.

Chrimes's book deserves republication not simply for its merits as an history of the reign, but also as an historiographical document in its own right. It is a fine late example of a style of historical investigation and writing whose heyday was in the middle third of the twentieth century. It reflects a belief in the importance and the beneficence of public administration, no doubt sharpened by Chrimes's own experiences as a civil servant during the Second World War. What mattered were the structures and instruments of what were treated as government departments. It is revealing that the *Festschrift* presented to him on his retirement comprised a series of studies of 'the actions of British government and administration' ranging from the tenth to the twentieth centuries, and including discussion of the hundred, the justiciarship, the collectors of customs.² No doubt historians writing today are more cynical about the effectiveness and the disinterestedness of governments.

Moreover for all his emphasis on stability and on government treated as administration, Chrimes was too scrupulous an historian not to deal with the emergencies and excitements of the reign, even if they are understated, and sometimes seem to qualify his claims. He devotes a full chapter to the pretenders and plotters against the usurper king, though treating their failure as inevitable ('the career of Perkin Warbeck had to run its course'), and thus minimizing the sense of emergency that characterized the reign, especially its first half. He drew on Lander's research on bonds and obligations, considered the vexed question of whether Henry's character deteriorated into avarice as he grew older, and came close here to admitting, against the thrust of his overall purpose, that Henry VII's regime was becoming destabilized, indeed verging on tyranny, in the late 1500s.

Some seven or eight years after the completion of his book in July 1972, Chrimes offered an assessment of 'significant contributions' made by scholars since. He did this piecemeal, point by point, rather than in any reassertion or development of

¹ For an assessment of Chrimes as professor of history, see C. H. Knowles, 'Stanley Bertram Chrimes (1907-84)', *Welsh History Review*, XII (1985), 420-2.

² H. Hearder and H. R. Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration* (Cardiff, 1974).

any general ideas.¹ He discussed in detail a point on which a new discovery invalidated what he had written. He then accepted that he had been wrong to deny that there was a statute made in 1428 or 1430 relating to Queen Katherine of Valois's remarriage: there clearly was, although not on the surviving parliament roll, but in a bound volume of statutes in Leicester Borough Archives.² Characteristically he gave greatest attention to Nicholas Pronay's work on central administrative records. The act '*pro camera stellata*' was intended to give authority to the Lord Chancellor. The expansion in Chancery litigation came not from landowners' litigation over landed property but from towns and merchant classes over mercantile law and financial problems.³ He saluted the publication of M. Blatcher, *The Court of King's Bench: a study in self-help* (1978), on whose earlier thesis he had drawn. He noted the greater and more accurate detail provided in J. A. Guy, *The Cardinal's Court: the impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (1977): C. G. Bayne, on whom he had relied, had found only 194 of the three hundred cases now known. Chrimes here alluded briefly but without giving details to one case discussed by Guy, but already included in Bayne's edition, that could have been used to throw more light on Henry's character. On 16 February 1493 in the case between William Doget and John Radcliffe, Lord Fitzwalter, steward of the king's household, the king, 'personally present and speaking with a great vehemence in the presence of his whole council', intervened against Fitzwalter. It is a remarkable glimpse of a monarch playing a leading part in the resolution of disputes.⁴ Chrimes concluded his report on recently published contributions by considering parliaments. His characteristic, robust common sense appeared in his rejection of the claim that Henry's gaining the throne in 1485 was 'some sort of major event in parliamentary history': it 'manifestly was not', he pronounced.⁵ Chrimes also considered two detailed studies of the 'abduction act' of 1487 but insisted that it did not show that Henry VII was a 'systematic legislator'.⁶

¹ S. B. Chrimes, 'The reign of Henry VII: some recent contributions', *Welsh History Review*, X (1981), 320–33.

² R. A. Griffiths, 'Queen Katherine of Valois and a missing statute of the realm', *Law Quarterly Review*, XCIII (1977), 248–58 and G. O. Sayles, 'The royal marriages act, 1428', *Law Quarterly Review*, XCIV (1978), 188–92.

³ N. Pronay, 'The Chancellor, the Chancery and the Council at the end of the fifteenth century', in H. Hearder and H. R. Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration* (Cardiff, 1974), 87–103.

⁴ C. G. Bayne and W. H. Dunham (eds), *Select Cases in the Council of Henry VII*, *Selden Society*, LXXV (1958), 23–5; J. A. Guy, *The Cardinal's Court* (Brighton, 1977), 15–17, 19; T. B. Pugh, 'Henry VII and the English Nobility', in G. W. Bernard (ed.), *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester, 1992), 53–4.

⁵ Chrimes was rejecting W. H. Dunham and C. T. Wood, 'The right to rule in England: depositions and the kingdom's authority, 1327–1485', *American Historical Review*, LXXXI (1976), 738–61, and agreeing with J. W. McKenna, 'The myth of parliamentary sovereignty in late medieval England', *English Historical Review*, XCIV (1979), 481–506.

⁶ E. W. Ives, 'Agaynst taking awaye of women': the inception and operation of the Abduction Act of 1487', in E. W. Ives, R. J. Knecht and J. J. Scarisbrick (eds), *Wealth and*

What would Chrimes have noted if preparing a similar report today? He rightly began his book with Henry Tudor's early life. T. B. Pugh corrected misconceptions that he spent his early years in Wales. Henry Tudor left his birthplace, Pembroke Castle, in March 1457, when he was two months old. On her way back to England his mother Lady Margaret met the duke of Buckingham's second son Sir Henry Stafford when she was staying near Newport, Gwent, and she married Stafford early in 1458. The next years of Henry's life were spent with his mother in England, perhaps at Bourne, Lincolnshire. When he was five years old, Henry Tudor became a ward of William, Lord Herbert, and the next seven years were spent in the Herbert household at Raglan and Chepstow, Gwent. The young Henry Tudor was present at the disastrous battle of Edgecote on 26 July 1469 when so many Welsh gentry were killed.¹ The formative nature of his experiences, especially during his exile in Brittany, have been imaginatively assessed by C. S. L. Davies.² The battle of Bosworth Field has attracted much attention, most notably that of Colin Richmond. The vital part played by French arms and money (though intended to plunge England into civil war rather than to unseat Richard III and replace him by Henry Tudor) has increasingly been recognized.³ There has been more work on Ricardian resistance, the pretenders, and the underlying problem of security that a usurper faced.⁴ Chrimes was relatively brief on Henry's diplomacy with foreign rulers: C. S. L. Davies' essay on the European context of

Power in Tudor England (London, 1978), 21–44; A. Cameron, 'Complaint and reform in Henry VII's reign: the origins of the statute of 3 Henry VII, c.2', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LX (1978), 83–9; cf. more generally D. J. Guth, 'Enforcing late medieval law: patterns in litigation during Henry VII's reign', in J. A. Baker (ed.), *Legal Records and the Historian* (London, 1978), 80–96.

¹ Pugh, review, op. cit.; M. K. Jones and M. G. Underwood, *The King's Mother. Lady Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992), 40–1, 48.

² C. S. L. Davies, 'Henry Tudor and Henry VII', *History Sixth*, I (1987), 1–4; see also R. A. Griffiths, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Gloucester, 1985); I. Arthurson and N. Kingwell, 'The proclamation of Henry Tudor as king of England, 3 November 1483', *Historical Research*, LXIII (1990), 100–6; and Jones and Underwood, op. cit.

³ C. Richmond, '1485 and all that, or what was going on at the Battle of Bosworth?', in P. W. Hammond (ed.), *Richard III: Loyalty, Lordship and Law* (Gloucester, 1986), 172–208; Pugh, 'Henry VII and the English Nobility', op. cit. 49–51.

⁴ M. J. Bennett, *Lambert Simnel and the Battle of Stoke* (Gloucester, 1987); D. Luckett, 'Patronage, violence and revolt in the reign of Henry VII', in R. E. Archer (ed.), *Crown, Government and People in the fifteenth century* (Gloucester, 1995); Luckett, 'The Thames Valley conspiracies against Henry VII', *Historical Research*, LXVIII (1995), 164–72; I. Arthurson, 'The rising of 1497: a revolt of the peasantry?', in J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond (eds), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), 1–18; Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491–97* (Stroud, 1994); idem, 'Espionage and Intelligence from the Wars of the Roses to the Reformation', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, XXXV (1991), 143–54; M. K. Jones, 'Sir William Stanley of Holt: politics and family allegiance in the late fifteenth century', *Welsh History Review*, XIV (1988), 1–22 – very brief on events of 1495; D. Dunlop, 'The "Masked Comedian": Perkin Warbeck's adventures in Scotland and England from 1495 to 1497', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXX (1991), 97–127.

the Wars of the Roses offers a model of what might be done for Henry VII's reign as a whole, and shows how crucial foreign intervention might be in domestic politics, and how English domestic politics were part of the 'Great Game of fifteenth century Europe'.¹ Steven Ellis has deepened understanding of the government of Ireland.²

In the twenty-six years since Chrimès wrote, there has been relatively little on the details of administrative institutions on which Chrimès concentrated. David Starkey has argued for the conscious erection of a new department, the Privy Chamber, in 1495 following the execution of Sir William Stanley, though Starkey's chronology has been questioned, and the exact significance of this development in Henry's reign is unclear.³ Chrimès would no doubt have enjoyed a meticulous discussion of the Great Council, occasional consultative meetings of noblemen.⁴ But fiscal policy and financial administration in the reign has been relatively little studied since Chrimès wrote.⁵ How should the king's success in doubling his

¹ C. S. L. Davies, 'The Wars of the Roses in European context' in A. J. Pollard (ed.), *The Wars of the Roses* (Basingstoke, 1995), 162–85; Davies, 'Richard III, Brittany and Henry Tudor', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* XXXVII (1993), 110–26; and idem, 'Bishop John Morton, the Holy See and the accession of Henry VII', *English Historical Review*, CII (1987), 2–30, argues that papal support was secured before Bosworth. See also A. V. Antonovics, 'Henry VII, king of England, "by the grace of Charles VIII of France"', in R. A. Griffiths and J. W. Sherborne (eds), *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1986), 169–84. More specific papers by J. M. Currin have, not altogether convincingly, put the case for Henry as no less a warrior-king, influenced by the culture of chivalry, than his predecessors, and certainly not a man of peace: they depend too much on taking Henry as sincere when he threatened war, but disingenuous when he talked of peace (J. M. Currin, 'Henry VII and the treaty of Redon (1489): Plantagenet ambitions and early Tudor foreign policy', *History*, LXXXI (1996), 343–58; idem, 'Pierre le Penne: Henry VII of England and the Breton plot of 1492: a case study in "diplomatic pathology"', *Albion*, XXIII (1991), 1–22; idem, 'Persuasions to peace: the Luxembourg–Marigny–Gaguin Embassy and the state of Anglo-French relations, 1489–90', *English Historical Review*, CXIII (1998), 882–904; idem, 'To play at peace: Henry VII, the Anglo-French war, and the Chieregato–Flores mediation of 1490', paper read at Merton College, Oxford, 5 February 1998.)

² S. G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland: crown, community and the conflict of cultures 1470–1603*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 1988).

³ D. Starkey, 'Court and Government', in C. Coleman and Starkey (eds), *Revolution Reassessed* (Oxford, 1986), 31–2; idem, 'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the privy chamber, 1485–1547', in idem (ed.), *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil war* (Harlow, 1987), 75–6. For doubts on the chronology, see S. J. Gunn, 'The courtiers of Henry VII', *English Historical Review*, CVIII (1993), 38 n.3.

⁴ P. J. Holmes, 'The Great Council in the reign of Henry VII', *English Historical Review*, CI (1986), 840–62.

⁵ An exception is J. M. Currin, '"Pro Expensis Ambassatorum": diplomacy and financial management in the reign of Henry VII', *English Historical Review*, CVIII (1993), 589–609, a survey of the funding of ambassadors; D. Lockett, 'Henry VII and the South-Western Escheators', in B. Thompson (ed.), *The Reign of Henry VII* (Stamford, 1995), 54–64; and, more wide-rangingly, S. J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government 1485–1558* (Basingstoke, 1995), 109–62.

revenues (to the point of being able to make huge loans to the Habsburgs in the mid-1500s) without regular parliamentary taxation be explained, not least in the light of the large-scale Cornish revolt against taxation in 1497? How far was Henry seeking to extend royal rights against his leading subjects, by exploiting his rights over them as their feudal lord?

The most significant writing on the reign has dealt with relationships of power. M. M. Condon offered a perceptive sketch suggesting that in certain respects the power of the Crown and of Crown officials, most of them legally-trained, was growing, but that nonetheless she was struck by 'a certain superficiality of achievement despite all the auguries of change: an impermanence, a fragility caused in part by the tensions which Henry VII himself created in binding and dividing the ruling elites themselves'.¹ S. J. Gunn studied Henry's courtiers in detail² and offered sketches of councillors who were ennobled, Giles, Lord Daubeney,³ and Sir Charles Somerset, of humbler administrators such as William Smith, of long-established noblemen who held court office, and of clerical courtiers. In so doing, he brought out the magnificence of Henry VII's court. These men served as the king's negotiators with foreign ambassadors, and, at a different level, in the suppression of rebellion and the invasion of France; they benefited from offices, royal patronage and favours. Gunn went so far as to hint at a turbulent politics of court faction (citing the fall of Sir William Stanley in 1495, the destruction of Lord Fitzwalter in 1495-6, the fining of Archbishop Rotherham in 1495, the arrest of Sir William Courtenay in 1502; the disgrace and resignation of Richard Guildford in 1505-6; the arrest of Thomas, marquess of Dorset, in 1507, the sudden resignation of Sir James Hobart in 1507).⁴ Here Gunn reflected the influence of the heated debates on the politics of Henry VIII's reign, the vexed question of whether Henry VII's son and heir was puppet or puppeteer, a weak man the plaything of factions, or a strong man ruling as well as reigning. Chrimes was in no doubt that Henry VII was his own man, and that both policy and administrative acts were indeed his. An anonymous reviewer suggested against

¹ M. M. Condon, 'Ruling elites in the reign of Henry VII', in C. Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in later medieval England* (Gloucester, 1979), 109-42; cf. Condon, 'From "caitiff and villain" to *Pater Patriae*: Reynold Bray and the profits of office', in M. Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), 137-68; M. R. Horowitz, 'Richard Empson, minister of Henry VII', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LV (1982), 23-49; and D. Luckett, 'Crown office and licensed retinues in the reign of Henry VII', in R. E. Archer and S. Walker (eds), *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England* (London, 1995), 223-38.

² Gunn, 'Courtiers', op. cit. 23-49; idem, '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, 1998), 117-54.

³ See also D. Luckett, 'Crown patronage and political morality in early Tudor England: the case of Giles, Lord Daubeney', *English Historical Review*, CX (1995), 578-95.

⁴ Gunn, 'Courtiers', op. cit. 46-9, endorsed in the case of Sir William Stanley by C. S. L. Davies, 'The Crofts: creation and defence of a family enterprise under the Yorkists and Henry VII', *Historical Research*, LXVIII (1995), 261-2.

him that John Morton, who was to become Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor, and Reginald Bray were the true powers behind the throne: in 1483 they promoted Henry's claims in order to restore and to advance their own fortunes, and they allegedly managed their successful candidate until their own deaths, when Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley took up the role. Unfortunately a brief review offered no scope for the citation of any evidence in support and no one has published any elaboration of such an argument, although John Watt's presentation of an inexperienced monarch readily led by his legally-trained officials, influenced by the ideas of Sir John Fortescue, comes close.¹ Sybil Jack has questioned the common assumption that unlike his father Henry VIII took little interest in financial administration, by pointing out that both kings signed financial memoranda: the thrust of her argument is to suggest that Henry VIII was not negligent, rather than to raise doubts over what such evidence might conclusively tell us about Henry VII.² Gunn notes changes in the way in which Henry VII authorized accounts: after 1504 instead of signing each entry in the Chamber accounts, he now signed once on each page.³

The dynamics of power in Henry's reign have also been at issue in discussions of Henry VII's relations with his nobility. Did Henry VII need, let alone seek, to reduce the power of the nobility? Was the prominence of churchmen and lawyers on the King's Council intended to diminish noble influence? Was the lack of favour shown to Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham, and Henry Percy, fifth earl of Northumberland, typical of a 'policy' against the nobility? Were the bonds and obligations that were such a feature of the reign part of it too? Was the increased rigour in the exploitation of the king's feudal rights further intended to weaken the power of the nobility?

Chrimes's principal contribution to such discussion was to draw on and largely to endorse an argument by J. R. Lander which was in the making as he wrote. Lander claimed that Henry VII deliberately threatened and oppressed the English nobility as a class by unjust exactions, particularly by the terrifying system of suspended penalties that bonds and recognizances represented.⁴ A recent survey of these bonds and obligations by S. Cunningham argues that 'it was the success with which Henry VII employed bonds before 1492 in enforcing the loyalty of those suspected of involvement in rebellion which did much to make bonds and

¹ *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 January 1973, 62; J. L. Watts, "A New Foundation of is Crowne": monarchy in the age of Henry VII', in Thompson (ed.), op. cit. 31-53, esp. 48-50.

² S. M. Jack, 'Henry VIII's attitude towards royal finance: penny wise and pound foolish?', in C. Giry-DeLoison (ed.), *François Ier et Henri VIII. Deux princes de la Renaissance (1515-1547)*, (Lille, 1996), 145-63.

³ Gunn, 'Courtiers', op. cit. 24.

⁴ J. R. Lander, 'Bonds, coercion and fear: Henry VII and the peerage', in *Florilegium historiale: essays presented to Wallace K. Ferguson* (Toronto, 1971), 328-67, reprinted in Lander, *Crown and Nobility 1450-1509* (London, 1976), 267-300.

recognizances the cornerstone of a later policy to undermine the disruptive aspects of noble and gentry power'.¹ But Cunningham pushes his argument too strongly. He implies that Henry VII's purpose in obliging the fourth earl of Northumberland to carry out the collection of unpopular taxation in 1489 (in the course of which he was murdered), was to test his loyalty to the king, to tarnish his reputation as a good lord and to divide him from his tenants and servants by associating him with unpopular royal policies.² A more extreme version of such an argument had earlier been offered by Mervyn James, who went so far as to say that Henry VII actually engineered the earl's death to deal with the threat that he supposedly posed.³ Chrimes would no doubt have doused such speculation with sceptical cold water. It would have been a desperately risky strategy. Taxation was, after all, necessary, and it was not uncommon for great noblemen to act as, in effect, royal agents in its local administration, especially in times of difficulty when there was resistance. That subsequently 'only' six rebels were executed and some 1,500 were pardoned⁴ is not evidence of collusion between king and tax protestors but rather a characteristic, and sensible, way of dealing with such resistance. After the protests against the 'amicable grant' in 1525, some five hundred individuals were indicted in King's Bench but the cases were not pursued: in effect they were let off. But in no sense is that evidence of collusion between king and tax protestors intended to weaken the local standing of noblemen who were seeking acquiescence in the grant.⁵

Further support for the weakening of noble power in the later fifteenth century has come from Christine Carpenter, on the basis of intensive research on Warwickshire: instead she has argued for the increasing importance in local government in the reign of Henry VII of the gentry. The difficulty in such arguments lies in distinguishing what was unique to a particular county and what represented a national trend.⁶ Carpenter has gone on to extend to the whole realm her conclusions for Warwickshire. Henry VII, she argues, did not understand how to rule

¹ S. Cunningham, 'Henry VII and rebellion in north-eastern England, 1485-1492: bonds of allegiance and the establishment of Tudor authority', *Northern History*, XXXII (1996), 42-74, at 47.

² Cunningham, 'Bonds', op. cit. 66-70.

³ M. E. James, 'The murder at Cocklodge', *Durham University Journal*, LVII (1964-5), 80-7: a rare example of a relevant article not mentioned by Chrimes.

⁴ Cunningham, 'Bonds', op. cit. 69.

⁵ Cf. M. J. Bennett, 'Henry VII and the northern rising of 1489', *English Historical Review*, CV (1990), 34-59; and M. A. Hicks, 'Dynastic change and northern society: the career of the fourth earl of Northumberland 1470-89', *Northern History*, XIV (1978), 78-107.

⁶ C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: a study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), esp. chap. XV. Similar themes have been developed in other local studies, eg. C. S. L. Davies, 'The Crofts: creation and defence of a family enterprise under the Yorkists and Henry VII', *Historical Research*, LXVIII (1995), 241-65; and A. J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses: lay society, war and politics 1450-1500* (Oxford, 1990).

with the nobility but rather sought to control them by methods approaching terror.¹

The nature of Henry VII's relations with the nobility has been magisterially treated by T. B. Pugh.² Pugh challenged Lander, arguing that bonds and recognizances were not unprecedented. Fiscal reasons – the need to increase royal revenue in order to buy off the rulers of the Low Countries lest they took up the Yorkist pretender Edmund de la Pole – largely explain their increased frequency from 1502. Many noblemen found bonds and recognizances useful instruments as they arranged wardships and marriages. Between 1502 and 1509 only twenty-seven out of forty adult nobles were involved in any form of bonds and recognizances, and only sixteen out of forty were involved as principals rather than as sureties. Only a few noblemen were listed in Edmund Dudley's petition, drawn up after the king's death and listing those whom he believed had been harshly treated by the king. In short, while Henry VII's ministers may well have worsened terms and conditions, most bonds and recognizances were taken for lawful purposes, often justly, and at least understandably: to deal with Yorkist sympathies, excessive retaining, or insanity. The treatment of Thomas, marquess of Dorset, was not harsh but an understandable precaution. If the treatment of the Suffolk heir Edmund de la Pole was unjust, his late brother's behaviour made it inevitable. If the punishment of George Neville, Lord Abergavenny, was disproportionate, the Yorkist sympathies he had felt during the rebellion of 1497 had just been damagingly revealed in 1506. Richard Grey, earl of Kent, brought his own troubles on himself by his profligacy.³ Pugh did, however, accept that some magnates were treated with excessive severity, grievously wronged, or brought to a state of dependence on Henry's goodwill by the use of bonds and recognizances, notably the fifth earl of Northumberland and the Stanleys, while Henry VII acted harshly and arbitrarily over lands or titles in his dealings with the Berkeleys, Edward Courtenay, earl of Devon, Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham and the

¹C. Carpenter, 'Henry VII and the English Polity', in Thompson (ed.), op. cit. 11–30; Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses* (Cambridge, 1997), 219–51.

²T. B. Pugh, 'The magnates, knights and gentry', in S. B. Chrimes, C. D. Ross and R. A. Griffiths (eds), *Fifteenth-Century England, 1399–1509* (Manchester, 1970), 115–16; Pugh, 'Henry VII and the English Nobility', in Bernard (ed.), op. cit. 49–110; cf. A. Cameron, 'The giving of livery and retaining in Henry VII's reign', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, XVIII (1974), 17–35.

³G. W. Bernard, 'The fortunes of the Greys, earls of Kent, in the early sixteenth century', *Historical Journal*, XXV (1982), 671–85; D. Lockett, 'The rise and fall of a noble dynasty: Henry VII and the Lords Willoughby de Broke', *Historical Research*, LXIX (1996), 254–65; sees Robert (d. 1521), second Lord Willoughby de Broke, as damaged by unjustified financial exactions – 'a clear and deliberate policy of forcing Robert II into an increasingly awkward financial position'. But Lockett at once concedes that the penalties may have been the consequence of his own propensity to use excessive force to solve private disputes.

queen's younger sisters. But he questions whether such instances justify any general characterization of Henry as anti-noble. After all, the peerage was relatively weak compared to the might of a competent adult king. There was no risk of an aristocratic league against the crown: none of the ten major families of the higher nobility was strong enough to launch a rebellion against Tudor rule. And in more general terms there was an identity of general interest between Crown and landed classes that would qualify any notion of a king deliberately seeking to reduce the power of the nobility.¹

As Chrimes recognized in his final chapter, much turns on an assessment of Henry VII's character. Chrimes's discussion of Henry's religion and of his works of piety was developed by Howard Colvin and Anthony Goodman, who study his patronage of the Observant Franciscans, further work at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, St George's Chapel, Windsor, the Savoy Hospital, the Westminster almshouses and the chapel originally intended for Henry VI in Westminster Abbey.² But that piety did not prevent an aggressive attitude towards the rights and revenues of the church.³ Chrimes was alert to the influence of Henry's early historians, especially Polydore Vergil and Francis Bacon, on subsequent writers, citing S. Clark's Ph.D. thesis,⁴ a theme elaborated, though somewhat inconclusively, by Sydney Anglo, who appears to think assessments of the character of rulers inappropriate.⁵ Did Henry's health decline and his character deteriorate in his final years? Chrimes, in his final chapter, makes excellent use of Edmund Dudley's petition, recently discovered by Christopher Harrison, to illustrate Polydore Vergil's charge of avarice (explicit in his manuscript history, more implicit in the printed version) against the king. The king was 'much sett to haue many persons in his danger at his pleasure', Dudley wrote. What is sometimes characterized as a policy against the nobility might better be seen as a more general political misanthropy, a composite of suspicion and greed and intense personal involvement in matters of government.

Much then has been researched and argued in the years since Chrimes's book appeared. But to synthesize such a range of aspects is challenging indeed, and it is not surprising that no one since Chrimes has attempted it. It is a curious feature of the historiography of Henry VII's reign that, as Anglo put it:

¹ G. W. Bernard, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), op. cit. 1-48.

² H. M. Colvin, *History of the King's Works, III, 1485-1660 (Part I)* (London, 1975), 1, 187-222; A. Goodman, 'Henry VII and Christian renewal', *Studies in Church History*, XVII (1981), 115-25.

³ See for example P. I. Kaufman, 'Henry VII and sanctuary', *Church History*, LIII (1984), 465-76.

⁴ See now S. Clark, 'Bacon's *Henry VII*: a case study in the science of man', *History and Theory*, XIII (1974), 97-118. The most recent edition is B. Vickers, *Francis Bacon's 'Historie of the raigne of King Henry the Seventh'* (Cambridge, 1998), interesting on Bacon's intellectual context but weak on recent writing on the reign of Henry VII.

⁵ S. Anglo, 'Ill of the dead: the posthumous reputation of Henry VII', *Renaissance Studies*, I (1987), 27-47.

... the mainstream of historical research has concentrated less on synoptic views of the reign and more (as is our wont) on the meticulous scrutiny of special areas and problems in a scatter of detailed and, often, highly technical monographs and articles. There can be no doubt that our knowledge of the political, administrative and financial workings of Henry VII's reign is more comprehensive than that of our predecessors. Yet the gap between this sophisticated grasp of minutiae and generalized assessment is striking.¹

Maybe, as Chrimes might have responded, that reflects the character of the sources available to the historian of Henry VII's reign. Too often, on the most important questions, what we have is meagre. In consequence, as Elton put it, after listing what Henry VII did, 'the man behind this achievement remains not so much mysterious as dim'.² Chrimes's book is a far-from-unworthy attempt to penetrate that gloom.

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¹ Anglo, 'Posthumous reputation of Henry VII', op. cit. 46. Synoptic surveys, none of them full-length, include R. Lockyer and A. Thrush, *Henry VII*, 3rd ed. (London, 1997), A. Grant, *Henry VII* (London, 1985), A. Goodman, *The New Monarchy. England 1471-1534* (Oxford, 1988), and S. J. Gunn, 'Henry VII', *New Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, forthcoming).

² Elton, review, op. cit. 627.