

Chapter 10

Narrative Historiography and the Rules of Succession

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Now let these alterations of regiments be remembred...and teach vs that therein the iudgements of God reuealed themselues to speciall purposes. And whatsoeuer hath beene mentioned before, either concerning the subuersion of people, the desolation of prouinces, the ouerthrow of nobles, the ruine of princes, and other lamentable accidents diuerslie happening vpon sundrie occasions: let vs (I say) as manie as will reape fruit by the reading of chronicles, imagine the matters which were so manie yéeres past to be present, and applie the profit and commoditie of the same vnto our selues; knowing (as one wisely said) *Post sacram paginam chronica viuum veritatis typum gerere*, that next vnto the holie scripture, chronicles doo carie credit.

Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1587)¹

Clandestine succession tracts were accessible to few, chronicles and abridgements to many. One need not have had a copy of Robert Persons' *Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of Inglande* (1595) to hand, however, to learn that England had once been an elective monarchy and perhaps to infer that some form of election might serve as a basis for a future settlement. Tudor chronicles, many of which had been the work of several hands or had been updated, revised, or continued after the decease of the original author, were hardly innocent of polemical meaning even if that meaning was not always consistent or unequivocal. Sometimes ambiguity was the object. By

¹ 'A notable aduertisement touching the summe of all the foresaid historie', in *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 6 vols. (London, 1807-8, repr. Routledge 1965), I: 766. Unless otherwise specified, all further references will be to this edition.

retailing a variety of conflicting viewpoints, chroniclers from Hall to Holinshed frequently transferred the burden of interpretation and application on to the reader who was cast in the role of a judge. It thus makes sense to assess how historians conceptualised a range of contested royal accessions and consider how their treatment of England's constitutional past might have guided late sixteenth-century readers' thinking about the likely outcome of the unfolding succession crisis.

The principal chronicles available to Elizabethans in printed editions were those by Robert Fabyan, Edward Hall, Richard Grafton, John Stow, and the teams of writers associated with the two editions of 'Holinshed'. John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* too belongs in the list, for although its concerns were quite different, to separate it out as ecclesiastical history would obscure the significance of Foxe's distinctive slant on England's secular past. There was also Lord Berners' translation of the much earlier *Chroniques* of Jean Froissart, several continuations of the English version of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, and a host of epitomes and abridgements of which the most popular was that by Thomas Lanquet and Thomas Cooper. Polydore Vergil's humanist *Anglica Historia*, on which Hall and the others drew extensively, and which would be much cited in late Elizabethan succession tracts, was accessible in three progressively revised and expanded Latin editions published in Basle (1534, 1546, and 1555) and several posthumous Continental printings. Vergil's history was not, however, published in English.²

What inferences might an Elizabethan reader have drawn from these works about the rules of succession in England? On scanning the chronicles, we find that many describe in terms of election the accessions of sundry ancient British, Saxon, and Danish kings as well as those of a goodly number of their post-Conquest successors. Both outright usurpers such as Richard III and apparently innocent beneficiaries of depositions such as Edward III are shown to accede to the throne through some form of election even if that of Richard is dismissed by Sir Thomas More and his followers as 'mockishe'.³ Perhaps, then, we should not be surprised that for all the differences

² C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century with an Appendix of Chronicles and Historical Pieces hitherto for the most Part Unprinted* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913; repr. New York: Burt Franklin); F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1967, repr. University of Toronto Press, 2004); Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974-1982); May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Daniel Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and 'The Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); *idem*, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and *idem*, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Denys Hay, *Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian and Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), esp. pp. 79 ff. Surveys such as Gransden's and Kingsford's focus on sources and influences, and assess the accuracy, and structural and stylistic properties of the various accounts. Discussing manuscripts and printed texts side by side, they make it hard for the reader to get a sense of what was available in print at any given point. In this respect, Levy's and Woolf's studies are much more helpful. My concern in this chapter is specifically with the printed history books that were accessible to Elizabethans in fairly recent editions and which may therefore be assumed to have shaped their political and historical outlook. Controversialists such as Persons and Wentworth and historical playwrights and poets such as Shakespeare, Peele, Marlowe, Warner, and Daniel, relied largely on printed not manuscript sources. That is why it is less relevant to my argument that Hardyng produced two versions of his chronicle, one Yorkist, one Lancastrian, that Fabyan may also have written the *Great Chronicle*, or that a partial translation of Vergil's history circulated in manuscript since the only version of Hardyng's work that was printed was the Yorkist one, and since both the *Great Chronicle* and the incomplete translation of Vergil remained unprinted until the nineteenth century.

³ *The history of king Richard the thirde*, in *The workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght* (London, 1557), p. 67. The English version of More's *Richard III* was first printed in Richard Grafton's continuation of John Hardyng's *Chronicle* (1543), and it was later incorporated into Edward Hall's *Union* and the two editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Both Grafton and Hall omit the reference to Richard's 'mockishe eleccion' which does, however, reappear in Holinshed. The theory of Richard III's election gained more legitimacy in the Jacobean period following William Camden's discovery of the Act of Settlement of 1484 that marked a parliamentary ratification of Richard's title to the crown. Camden announced his discovery in the 1607 edition of the *Britannia*; the complete text was printed by John Speed in the 1611 edition of the *History of Great Britaine*. See David Weil Baker, 'Jacobean Historiography and the Election of Richard III', *HLQ* 70, 311-42.

between them both Persons and his Scottish adversary Sir Thomas Craig saw the founder of the Tudor dynasty, Henry VII, as an elected king. Historians from Hardyng, Hall, and Holinshed to Sir Francis Bacon listed election among Henry's claims to the crown, a fact rarely if ever remarked by students of Shakespeare's *Richard III*.

The Mists of Time

Pre-Conquest depositions and elections were recorded matter-of-factly. Composed in the mid-fifteenth century, John Hardyng's metrical *Chronicle... From the First Begynnyng of Englande, vnto the Reigne of Edwarde the Fourth* coolly recounts the deprivation of the ancient British King Constance and election of Vortiger, and then the latter's replacement by his son Vortimer.⁴ The stress throughout is on unanimity and consent. King Edwin's is another beneficial deposition, one effected by Parliament which Hardyng anachronistically imports into the Saxon era, 'Whom his barons, for cause he was vndigne, / [Made hym his crowne for to resigne;] / Deposed hym then out fro his regiment / At the parliament, by [theyr commen] assent'. Without delay, writes Hardyng, 'His brother Edgare, by a commen assente, / Was chosen kyng, as chronicles recorde' (p. 213).

Another ancient exemplum of legitimate deposition and election retailed by chroniclers from Hardyng to Holinshed and dramatized in the early Stuart play *Nobody and Somebody* (c. 1603-1606) was that of Archigallo and Elidure, sons of the British king Morindus. The elder, Archigallo, is admitted to the crown but proves an evil king, is duly deposed and supplanted by his brother Elidure whom the nobility and commons elect to rule in his place. Far from avid for power, Elidure persuades them to allow him to step down and to re-admit Archigallo. They do so; and Archigallo, now suitably chastised and reformed, lives out his days as a model prince. Holinshed approvingly draws out the moral: 'When Archigallus was thus restored to the kingdome, and hauing learned by due correction that he must turne the leafe, and take out a new lesson, by changing his former trade of liuing into better, if he would reigne in suertie: he became a new man, vsing himselfe vprightlie in the administration of iustice, and behauing himselfe so woorthilie in all his doings, both toward the nobles & commons of his realme, that he was both beloued and dread of all his subiects'.⁵ One wonders what the Elizabethan reader was expected to think about either desirability or viability of such 'due correction' of modern princes.

Grafton and Stow

It might be objected that we should not set too much store by accounts of constitutional arrangements in ancient Britain or Saxon England. So what of the post-Conquest era? How do the chroniclers deal with medieval kingship? Later we shall consider what historians and imaginative writers made of the titles of Richard III and Henry VII. Now let us compare the treatment of the accessions of Edward III and Henry IV in two fairly unexceptionable works: Grafton's *Abridgement of the Chronicles of Englande* (1570) and Stow's *The Chronicles of England from Brute vnto this present yeare of Christ 1580* (1580). Although sporting Grafton's name on the title page, the *Abridgement* provided little more than a regurgitation of material from earlier such compendia.

⁴ *The Chronicle of Iohn of Hardyng. Containing an Account of Public Transactions from the Earliest Period of English History to the Beginning of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth. Together with the Continuation by Richard Grafton, to the Thirty Fourth Year of King Henry the Eighth* (London, 1812), pp. 107-11. Hardyng's *Chronicle* was published by Richard Grafton in two separate editions in 1543, both with a prose continuation to the time of Henry VIII. For his continuation, Grafton had drawn on Vergil's *Anglica Historia*, also incorporating More's *Richard III*. Henry Summerson, *ODNB* article on Hardyng; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, II: 279; Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, pp. 16-17, 24, 173, 177. Summerson notes that Hardyng interpolated topical interjections into his accounts of ancient British kings. As regards more recent history, Hardyng portrayed the advent of Henry IV as a type of election before mounting a defence of the hereditary title of the House of York. The deposition of Henry's grandson, he explained, was a direct result of the earlier violation of the hereditary principle (*Chronicle*, pp. 350 ff.). On the differences in the depiction of Richard II's deposition in the two versions of Hardyng's chronicle, see Summerson's *ODNB* article; Felicity Riddy, 'John Hardyng's *Chronicle* and the Wars of the Roses', *Arthurian Literature*, 12 (1993), 91-108.

⁵ *Holinshed's Chronicles*, I: 460; cf. Hardyng, *Chronicle*, pp. 68-9; Anon., *No-Body and Some-Body. With the true Chronicle Historie of Elydure, who was fortunately three severall times crowned King of England* (London, 1606).

Grafton's 'original' contribution amounted to a hastily put together report on recent events up to and including the Northern Rebellion and the excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570. To examine Grafton's *Abridgement*, then, is effectively to see how national history was depicted in a series of digests extending from Lanquet and Cooper's *Epitome of Chronicles* (1549, 1559 (a pirated edition by Henry Marsh with a continuation by Robert Crowley), 1560, 1565) and its recensions such as Grafton's own earlier editions of the *Abridgement* (1562, 1563, 1564) and Stow's *Summarie of English Chronicles* (1565, 1566, 1567, 1570, 1573, 1575, 1579).⁶ This is not to say that there weren't minor variations – Grafton seems occasionally to have added Protestant spin to episodes from a distant past, and Stow came to rely on his own researches in the later editions of the *Summarie*. Essentially, however, these popular and accessible if admittedly pedestrian pieces adopted virtually the same approach and sometimes the same wording.

Not least because of its drive towards compression which left little scope for nice discriminations, the *Abridgement* appears remarkably sanguine about depositions and elections. Its assessment of Edward II is entirely negative; and there is no question but that he was rightfully deprived of the crown. Unlike in Marlowe's *Edward II* which, as we shall see, highlighted the Barons' invocation of papal deposing power, here it is the king's party who are allied with the pope, a sure sign of their corruption.⁷ The blunt reference later in the narrative to Richard II 'knowledgyng and confessyng in open Parliament, that he was worthely deposed for his demerites & misgoverning of the Common weale' suggests that this king too deserved to lose the throne.⁸ The lawfulness of Henry IV's claim, however, is less certain. He 'was ordeyned kynge of England', we are told, 'more of force (as it appeared) then by lawfull succession or election' (fol. 98^r). Significantly, this sentence, which was copied verbatim by *every* abridger and epitomiser from 1549 onward, and which was also recycled by authors of more substantial historical works, suggests that lineal descent and election are both perfectly acceptable modes of succession, and that Henry IV's conformed to neither.⁹

Stow's *Chronicles*, a far more ambitious project, likewise gives no indication that Edward II's deposition or Edward III's election was irregular. It does, however, elicit the reader's sympathy by dwelling on Edward's pathetic condition. Curiously, Stow reverses the order of events. First comes 'a Parliamente, where by common decree, they elected *Edwarde* hys eldeste sonne'. Edward

⁶ On Tudor accounts of medieval past, see McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*; Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*: chapter X: 'Sixteenth-Century Historians and Fifteenth-Century History', pp. 228-52; on the Lanquet-Cooper *Epitome* and subsequent abridgements, see Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, pp. 177-9. As Kingsford has noted, the 1570 and 1575 editions of Stow's *Summary* were based on more independent labours (*English Historical Literature*, p. 268). For a discussion of the emergent sense of proprietary interest among the chroniclers of the 1560s, see Alfred Hiatt, 'Stow, Grafton, and Fifteenth Century Historiography', in *John Stow (1525-1605) and the Making of the English Past: Studies in Early Modern Culture and the History of the Book*, ed. Ian Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie (London: The British Library, 2004), pp. 45-55.

⁷ *Graftons Abridgement of the Chronicles of Englande. Newly and diligently corrected, and finished the last of October, 1570* (London, 1570), fol. 79^r.

⁸ Fol. 98^r. Here the *Abridgement* conflates Richard self-deposition in the Tower, the ratification of his resignation by Parliament, and election of Bolingbroke. Cf. the much earlier continuation of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*: 'Sone after this kynge Rychard was broughte to the tour of london / and thenne was ther a parlement / In whiche kynge Rychard was deposed of his Crowne / And kynge Henry chosen and taken for the kynge / to whome kynge Rychard resygned the Crowne and the Royamme of Englonde' (*Prolicionycion* [sic] (Westminster, 1482), fol. CCCC^r).

⁹ Cooper-Lanquet (1549), fol. 250^v. In Grafton's *A manuell of the Chronicles of Englande* (London, 1565), the recital of the transition from Edward II to Edward III is severely abbreviated: there is no mention of the specific grievances against the king or the role played by Parliament in his deposition: the focus is on the queen who, with the help of Sir John of Hainault, pursues and imprisons the king who is later murdered by Mortimer. The next section moves straight to the reign of Edward III without any explanation of the manner of his succession (fol. xliii^v-xliiii^r). Grafton's propensity towards compression makes his narrative of Henry IV's accession virtually nonsensical: we hear of Bolingbroke's return and his attack on and imprisonment of Richard who promptly resigns the crown to him: given the breathlessness of the account one could be forgiven for deducing that the resignation occurred at Flint Castle (fol. lviii^{r-v}). The familiar formula questioning Henry's title is reproduced at the start of the section devoted to his reign.

is then notified of ‘theyr election, and required ... to renounce the Kyngly dignitie and Crowne to hys sonne’.¹⁰ In Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, Daniel’s *Collection*, and Marlowe’s tragedy the king is threatened that *unless* he resigns the crown Parliament will bypass his son and elect someone else instead. Stow’s hapless king is suitably apologetic for his misconduct: ‘the Kyng aunswared with teares, that hée was very sorie that hée hadde behaued hymselfe so euill towards the people of hys Kingdome, but séeyng the matter was so vnrecouerable, he prayed them all to forgiue hym, and thanked them that they had chosen his eldest sonne’ (p. 351). That neither Grafton nor Stow expressed reservations about the ‘election’ of Edward III may have been because he was the deposed king’s first-born son and thus next in line anyway. Nor did the prince appear prematurely to angle for his father’s crown.

The case of Henry IV was altogether different. Stow gives a detailed account of his election by Parliament. Westminster Hall, he says, had been ‘hung and trimmed sumptuously’ in anticipation of this solemn event; and ‘a royall chayre [set vp], in purpose to chose a new king, neare to the whiche the Prelates were set, and on the other side sat the Lords, and after the commons in order, first sat the Duke of *Lancaster*, then the Duke of *Yorke*, the Duke of *Aumerle*...’. Everything proceeds in an orderly manner and with the utmost seriousness. The Archbishop of Canterbury delivers a sermon; a doctor of law reads out the instrument of Richard’s resignation; and, having rejected other candidates one by one, those assembled choose Henry as their king. One can see why the ensuing passage so appealed to Persons that he quoted it at length in the *Conference*:

... this instrument being red, the Archbishop perswaded them to procéede to the election of a new K. & perceyuing they were al contented, for ther wer not past four persons that wer of king *Richards* part (& they durst say nothing (he asked each of them whom they wold haue to their King, whether the Duke of *Yorke* or not? and they aunswared no, he asked if they would haue his eldest son the D. of *Aumarle*, and they sayd no? he asked if they would haue his yongest son, and they sayd no? and so of diuerse other, then staying a while, he asked if they wold haue the D. of *Lancaster*, and then they aunswared they would haue none other. ... Then y^e Archbishops comming to the Duke, fell on theyr knées declaring to him how he was chosen King, and willed him to take regarde if he would consent thereto. then the D. being on his knées rose & declared yt he accepted the realm, sith it was ordayned by God. Then y^e Archbishop red what y^t new K. was bound vnto, & with certain ceremonies signed him with the crosse, then he kissed the Archbishop, and they toke the ring, with which the Kings be wedded to the realme, and bare it to the Lord *Percy*, that was Conestable, who receyuing it, shewed it to al the assembly, and then put it on the kings finger, the King then kissed the Conestable, and then the Archbishops led him to the Royal, and ye K. made his prayers on his knées before it, and after spake vnto them all, first to y^e Prelates & then to the Lords & al other, & so set him down in the seate, & thus he was inuested, and K. *Richard* put down ... (pp. 540-1)¹¹

All the ingredients dear to Persons are here. The election is orchestrated by England’s chief prelate; legal proprieties are observed; the outcome is unanimous; the new king conducts himself with apparent piety and humility and attributes his elevation to God’s will; and, finally, in accepting the crown, he subscribes to unspecified articles, an act suggestive of the contractual nature of

¹⁰ *The Chronicles of England from Brute vnto this present yeare of Christ 1580* (London, 1580), p. 350.

¹¹ Stow reprinted this passage unchanged in his *Annales of England, faithfully collected out of the most autentically Authors, Records, and other Monuments of Antiquitie, from the first inhabitation vntill this present yeere 1592* (London, 1592), pp. 512-13; the corresponding entry in the Table prefaced to the book reads: ‘Henry earle of Hereford returned into England and was elected king’ (sig. b4^r). Persons, *Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of Inghland* (Antwerp, 1594 [1595]), Pt. II: 73-4; cf. Pt. I: 117-18. Persons seems to be quoting from the *Annales*.

kingship.¹² Although on the following page Stow transcribes the by now hackneyed assessment of Henry IV's claim omitting, however, the parenthetical qualifier 'as it appeared' – Henry, Stow says, was 'ordayned king of *England*, more by force than by lawfull succession or election' (p. 542) – that is not enough to erase the favourable impression created by the description of the ceremonial scene of Henry's parliamentary investiture. In its novel bibliographical context, the sentence carries less force than it did in its previous incarnations. Neither Grafton nor Stow, moreover, calls Henry a usurper; and their appraisals of his reign are highly complimentary.

How representative were Grafton's *Abridgement* and Stow's *Chronicles*? In what ways did their presentation of election depart from the earlier works of Froissart, Fabyan, and Hall? My object is not to devise a stemma, discover lines of influence, and assess which passage derives from what source. So far as we know, the circulation and transmission of history books in our period was fairly haphazard; and few readers would have had access to or been in possession of more than one chronicle.¹³ Rather, let us see how those earlier texts construe the proprieties of succession and consider whether anything significant has changed by the later sixteenth century.

Froissart

The Frenchman Jean Froissart completed by c. 1404 his narrative of western European history covering in England the period from Edward III to Richard II. Undertaken at Henry VIII's behest, the English translation by Lord Berners, *Cronycles of Englande, Fraunce, Spayne, Portyngale, Scotlande, Bretayne, Flaunders*, was printed in 1523-25. The book was re-published in 1542 and 1563; and epitomes of it appeared as late as 1608 and 1611. To set the scene for the enthronement of his hero Edward III, Froissart opens with a brief retrospective on the deposition of Edward II. The transition involved a straightforward substitution, ratified by Parliament, of the eldest son and heir for the inept father: 'Wherfore they concluded that suche a man was nat worthy to be a kyng nor to were a crowne royall / nor to haue the name of a kyng. But they all accorded that Edward his eldeste son who was ther present / & was ryghful heyre shuld be crowned kyng in stede of his father / so that he wold take good counsell sage and true about hym / so that the realme from thensforth myght be better gouerned than it was before'.¹⁴ Bringing forward Edward III's accession, Parliament constrains him to take counsel.

Froissart's Richard II cuts a sorry figure. The chronicler and court poet who knew Richard personally is far more critical of him than was once assumed.¹⁵ He emphasizes the widespread dissatisfaction with Richard's government, especially among Londoners, and the nomination by Richard of Henry Duke of Lancaster as his heir. During an interview in the Tower granted at his

¹² The Archbishop, Stow records in a later passage, would remind the king of his promise and oath in the Laymen's Parliament of 1404 (pp. 559-60); again, Persons invokes this passage to bolster his case for contractual kingship (*Conference*, Part I: pp. 115-16). It's worth comparing Persons' approving treatment of the king's ecclesiastical policy with Foxe's stinging denunciation of it in the second (1570) and subsequent editions of the 'Book of Martyrs': 'king Henry the fourth who was the deposer of king Richard, was the first of all English kings that began the vnmercifull burning of Christes saints, for standing against the Pope' (*Actes and Monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church with an vniuersall history of the same* (London, 1583), p. 518. I quote from the fourth and last edition published in Foxe's lifetime available at http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/main/5_1583. Unless otherwise specified, all further references will be to this edition.

¹³ Woolf, *Reading History*; *idem*, *The Social Circulation of the Past*.

¹⁴ *Cronycles of Englande, Fraunce, Spayne*, trans. Johan Bouchier, Lord Berners, 2 vols (London, 1523-5), I: fo. vi^r. On Froissart, see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, II: 90-1; Michael Jones's *ODNB* article; P. F. Ainsworth, *Jean Froissart and the Fabric of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

¹⁵ G. B. Stow, 'Richard II in Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*', *Journal of Medieval History*, 11 (1985), 333-45.

request, Richard apologises for the mistreatment of Lancaster and volunteers to resign the crown to him. In response, Lancaster not only rubs in Richard's inadequacies as ruler but also questions his legitimacy, an unexpected charge not mentioned in other accounts. The formal scene, which takes place in the Tower, of Richard's self-divestment of regal authority and transfer of the crown to Lancaster is followed by Lancaster's assertion of his title in Parliament by right of conquest, descent, and Richard's resignation: 'the same duke chalenged the realme of Englande / and desyred to be kynge by thre reasones. Fyrst by conquest. secondly bycause he was heyre. And thyrddly bycause Rycharde of Burdeaux had resygned the Realme in to his handes by his free wyll / in the presence of certayne dukes / erles / prelates / and barones in the hall within the towre of London'. The answer is a resounding yes – 'all the people with one voyce sayd / that their wylles was to haue him kynge / and howe they wolde haue none other but hym'. Unlike in Stow, where the Archbishop of Canterbury is in charge of the proceedings, naming, even if merely *pro forma*, other candidates, in Froissart, the initiative rests wholly with Lancaster. Whereas in Stow, Lancaster undertakes to abide by certain articles, in Froissart, it is the people who swear loyalty to their new king: 'And than the people lyfted vp their handes a hygh / promysing hym their faythe and allegyaunce' (II: fo. CCCxiv^v). The elaborate description, unique to Froissart, of the coronation, complete with the public acclamation and the challenge issued by the king's champion, omits any reference to the coronation oath. In contrast to Froissart's treatment of the shift from Edward II to Edward III which, we have seen, was very much driven by Parliament, there is less sense here of Parliament acting as an autonomous, sovereign body. Rather, it is swayed and directed throughout by Lancaster.

Fabyan

The London citizen Robert Fabyan's *Newe Cronycles of England and Fraunce* adopted a City-centred perspective on events of national importance such as the falls of Edward II and Richard II. Composed by 1504 and printed posthumously in 1516, the book was re-issued with continuations in 1533, 1542 and 1559. In 1534, the Court of Aldermen ordered a copy of the 1533 edition to be available to its members.¹⁶ Fabyan makes much of Parliament's lead in the removal of Edward II, which, he stresses, was both anticipated and approved by the citizens. As in Froissart, that the crown should go to Edward's son is a matter of course, 'And thus was Edwarde the seconde deposed and his sonne made kynge'. The legitimacy of what happened is reinforced by the deposed king's heartfelt repentance for having 'so greuously offended god', to which he reportedly gave voice in a series of Latin complaint poems. Fabyan prints an English translation of one of them. Like many a plaintive ghost in Baldwin and others' *The Mirror for Magistrates*, the royal speaker laments his abandonment and betrayal by those he once advanced. He quickly corrects himself, however; and, turning away from earthly concerns, implores God to forgive 'the great offence before by me doone'.¹⁷

Richard II's culpability too is made apparent as is the City's and the country's detestation of him. Fabyan's censure as 'eyull disposed' of the Londoners who were ready to assault the captive king *en route* back to the capital sits uneasily with his earlier blow-by-blow account of Richard's misgovernment, in particular the king's brutal and unscrupulous treatment of the City. The point is, of course, that whereas Richard has flouted the law, the mayor and other municipal officers obey

¹⁶ On Fabyan, see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, II: 245-7; Mary-Rose McLaren's *ODNB* entry. Gransden notes Fabyan's pro-Lancastrian bias. For a discussion of civic chronicles which circulated extensively in manuscript, see McLaren's *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century: A Revolution in English Writing* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002).

¹⁷ *Fabyans cronycle newly prynted, wyth the cronycle, actes, and dedes done in the tyme of the reygne of the moste excellent prynce kynge Henry the vii. father vnto our most drad souerayne lord kynge Henry the .viii.* (2nd edn., London, 1533), fo. LXXXII^v-LXXXIII^r.

and enforce it: it is they who ‘nat without great difficulte’ avert the impending disturbances. That Fabyan’s catalogue of grievances contains a protest against the king’s arrogation to himself of the power to nominate knights of the shire who have been normally elected by their constituents serves to highlight the civic dimension of the narrative. Richard’s wilful pursuit of ‘his singuler causes’ contrasts sharply with the commitment by the ‘burgeses of cyties & townes’ to ‘the commen causes’ (fo. CL^v). Another distinctive feature of Fabyan’s narrative is the inclusion of a number of texts absent from Froissart, Stow, and, understandably given the constraints of space, the various abridgements. Among them are: the instrument of Richard’s resignation, the sentence against him by the parliamentary commissioners, and the archbishop’s oration celebrating the advent of Henry IV. Although Fabyan deliberately excludes the articles against Richard, he directs the reader to where they can be found, namely, ‘in the boke of the Mayres, and yere of Drewe Barentyne than mayre of London’ (fo. CLIII^f).

Having illustrated the Parliament’s resolve to advertise the legality of their proceedings ‘in auoydyng of all suspeccon and surmyses of ylle dysposed persones’ (fo. CLIII^f), Fabyan turns to the aftermath of Richard’s deposition when ‘the realme stode voyde without hede or gouernoure’ (fo. CLIII^v). As in Froissart, the Duke of Lancaster rises to claim the crown. He pointedly eschews mentioning Richard’s resignation, and instead stresses his royal descent and God-given victory: ‘I ... am dyscended by ryght lyne of the bloode commynge from that good lorde kynge Henry the thyrde / & through y^e ryght that god of hys grace hath sente to me, wyth helpe of my kynne & of my frendes to recouer the same / y^t which was in point to be vndone for default of good gouernaunce & due iustyce’. The choice of vocabulary is telling. Whereas in other versions of the speech the duke refers explicitly to conquest, Fabyan’s Henry speaks of his providential intervention for the good of the country. The same theme is sounded by the archbishop. Having understood that the Lords are willing to admit Henry, he asks the Commons ‘yf they wolde assente to the lordes / whych in theyr myndes thoughte the clayme by the duke made to be ryghtefull and necessary, for the welthe of the realme & of them all. wherunto with one voyce they cried, ye, ye, ye’ (fo. CLIV^f). Again, the wording matters: Lancaster’s claim is defined as at once rightful and necessary. Whether his hereditary title such as it is would be enough to make Henry king is left unclear. The archbishop’s sermon dwells on the benefits of and divine sanction for Lancastrian succession: God himself has liberated England from the yoke of an immature and misguided ruler and appointed a proper man to rule in his stead. Fabyan nowhere questions the justice of either Richard’s deposition or ‘the admission of kyng Henry’ (fo. CLV^{r-v}); and his recurrent designation of the former as ‘thys noble prince kyng Rycharde’ (fo. CLII^v), embedded as it is in an exhaustive record of the king’s misdeeds, seems less a half-hearted apology than authorial irony.

Froissart, Hardyng, Fabyan, and, later, Grafton and Stow recounted the vicissitudes of succession without mounting theoretical defences in favour of any particular form of it. Yes, they all believed that in the normal course of events the next in line should be king; however, what they thought was constitutional or else divinely justified in abnormal circumstances such as acute royal misrule varied and was anyway often coloured by partisan animus. To glance, as we have done, at how these writers elucidated two highly sensitive regnal transitions is but to begin to gauge their political outlook. The sampling is nonetheless instructive, for it has allowed us a glimpse of the variety of shades and inflections characterizing perceptions of monarchical succession within the broadly accepted frame of heredity that Elizabethan readers would have encountered in printed accounts of national history.

Hall

With Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (1548; 2nd edn. 1550)¹⁸ we come to a work in which the rules of succession are articulated and debated more directly and in greater depth and detail than in any of its sources and forerunners. Daniel Woolf has noted that Hall wrote his history teleologically or 'backward' from the destined point of arrival embodied in the union of the white rose and the red.¹⁹ Given Hall's overarching aim to celebrate the advent of the Tudors, which gives a formal and chronological structure to his narrative that earlier accounts conspicuously lacked, one might expect the *Union* to provide a coherent explanation of how the succession to the English crown should work. That, however, is not what we find.

Of the major English chronicles printed before Elizabeth's accession only Hall's sought to mitigate Richard's wrongdoing.²⁰ The scholarly consensus has long held that Hall figures Richard's deposition as the original sin in a scheme of divine retribution and punishment issuing in a series of prolonged and bloody civil wars to which only Richmond's providential triumph at Bosworth and marriage to Elizabeth of York put paid. Yet the *Union* is no simple endorsement of the Tudor myth.²¹ Hall, Peter Herman has argued, is sceptical 'toward royal authority and the pieties of providential historiography' and presents both the deposition of Richard II and the election of Henry IV as legitimate.²² In fact, the situation is more complex. If we view Hall's opening account of Richard's fall and Henry's rise in isolation, then yes, the process does seem lawful and orderly. But to leave the matter there would be to disregard the interpretative frameworks Hall deliberately sets up, and the tensions both between and within them. For unlike in the accretive and loosely structured chronicles of his predecessors, in Hall's tightly organized narrative the meaning of each element is dependent on, indeed created in relation to, all the others. Essentially, Hall's reader is offered two perspectives on the past, providential and constitutional. Those sometimes converge and sometimes part ways which is why rather than choosing between them, one has continually to judge the unfolding narrative with reference to both. Each political actor contends that providence is on his side; but the confirmation whether this is so is either withheld or, if given, endlessly qualified.²³ Nor is the book's constitutional outlook free from contradictions. Whether indefeasible hereditary right ought to be preferred to election, which puts the demands of public good before strict lineal descent, is never made clear. Or, rather, we find that constitutional propriety and morals do not necessarily go hand in hand.

Historians of historiography used to lament the inferiority of Tudor chronicles to the humanist tradition launched by Polydore Vergil and Sir Thomas More, only tentatively followed by

¹⁸ Hall left the unfinished manuscript to Grafton who after a fair amount of revision and tidying up, especially of the section on the final years of Henry VIII, printed it in 1548, bringing out a second edition in 1550. An edition of 1560 was made up of left-over sheets of the second edition that Mary Tudor's government had suppressed. Large chunks of Hall's text would be incorporated into the chronicles of Grafton, Stow, and the two versions of Holinshed. See Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, pp. 174-7; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, II: 470-1.

¹⁹ *The Idea of History*, p. 9.

²⁰ In doing so Hall followed Polydore Vergil: see Vergil's assessment of Richard in *Anglica Historia (1555 version): A hypertext critical edition* by Dana F. Sutton at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/20eng.html>.

²¹ The older view, endorsed by Levy and Gransden, of Hall as a straightforward Tudor apologist has been questioned by P. C. Herman in his 'Henrician Historiography and the Voice of the People: The Cases of More and Hall', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 39 (1997), 261-83, and more recently, his *ODNB* article on Hall.

²² *ODNB* article.

²³ How does one square Hall the narrator's paean to Henry V, 'whose life ...cruel Atropos before his tyme abbreviated', and Richard Duke of York's charge that Henry V's life was cut short by God in punishment for his father's usurpation? See *The Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (London, 1548), fol. lxxxii^v, clxxx^v. Appeals to providence, notes Fritz Levy, were notoriously unstable: 'the game could be played on, time without end, though the rules were vague – who knew in what generation the punishment would fall' (*Tudor Historical Thought*, p. 172).

Hall, and at last coming of age in the politic histories of John Hayward, Robert Cotton, Samuel Daniel, and Francis Bacon.²⁴ This has led to evaluations of Hall's *Union* according to how far it approximates to the scholar's idea of what his history should have been. It is more profitable, it seems to me, to consider the uses to which Hall put what he learnt from humanist historians: selectivity in the choice of material, focus on motives and personalities, and thematic shaping of the narrative within the sequential arrangement by reign. Of the strictly narrative techniques, the subtle playing off of the chronicler's voice against the speeches of the historical actors, and the deliberate return later in the narrative to past events which are now re-assessed from a new angle, serve to unsettle any interpretation the reader might have begun to form of political developments and the rationale behind them.²⁵

These techniques repeatedly destabilize our view of the principles of succession. Hall's depiction of the advent of Henry IV seems to support election in both theory and practice. The theoretical case is made by the Archbishop of Canterbury who, urging the Duke of Lancaster on behalf of 'a great number of the nobilitie and in maner all the comminaltie' to return to England and assume the throne, explains that in issuing the invitation they have been guided by a desire to secure 'a gouernour and ruler whiche should excell and florische in wysedome, pollicie and iustice aboue all other' and highlights the reciprocal benefits that will accrue to the new king and his subjects. That the bad prince – Richard – will have to be deposed first is in a sense irrelevant, since the argument for election as a means of finding the best man for the job holds irrespective of whether the throne becomes vacant because of deposition, abdication, assassination, or the current incumbent's death of natural causes. Even as he persuades Lancaster to seize what amounts to a Machiavellian *occasione* – 'Now occasione is offred, refuse it not', the archbishop invokes divine sanction for the majority vote in his favour. The duke should accept the sceptre and restore peace, justice, and equity 'to thentent that wise, sage and good persones (whose desire and appetite is euer to liue well) maie honour, loue & embrace you as a gouernour and kyng sent from God'.²⁶ The public recognition of Henry as God's anointed, the archbishop implies, will be conditional upon the quality of his performance as monarch.

Hall's step-by-step narrative of Lancaster's rise shows how election can work in practice. Parliament, it appears, is legally empowered to regulate succession; and heredity is an important but not a decisive factor. Richard's speech of abdication as given in *The Union* is, so far as I have been able to establish, the first to emphasize that the king is formally resigning the crown to make possible a legitimate parliamentary election: 'that it shal be lefull to you, to electe and chose my cosyn germayne, Henry Duke of Lancastre, a man mete for a realme, and a prince apt for a kyngdome, to your kyng and souereigne lorde' (fol. ix^r). Although the election itself is not described, Hall indicates that 'with one voyce bothe of the nobles and comons' Henry 'was published, proclaymed & declared kyng' (fol. ix^v). No sooner is this unanimous decision taken, however, but cracks are beginning to show. Despite having ostensibly won the vote of the nation, Henry feels compelled further to justify and confirm his title. In the run-up to the coronation, he is reduced to making a spurious genealogical claim alongside those of conquest, adoption, nomination, and Richard's resignation (fol. x^r).²⁷ From his first Parliament, he secures a succession act, the text of which Hall reproduces, 'for the auoydance of al claimes, titles and ambiguities to be

²⁴ A reaction to that trend was set in train in the 1990s by Annabel Patterson and Richard Helgerson. See Patterson, 'Rethinking Tudor Historiography', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 92 (1993), 185-208, and *idem*, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Richard Helgerson, 'Murder in Faversham: Holinshed's Impertinent History', in *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500-1800*, ed. Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 133-58.

²⁵ See Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, for a challenge to the once common view that plays are polyvocal, chronicles univocal.

²⁶ Fol. iv^v-v^r. Naturally, the reader will assess the validity and viability of this argument in the context of what Hall reveals about the personalities and character traits of those involved, for example, Lancaster's dissimulation.

²⁷ Cf. Hardyng's commentary on the fabrication of the bogus title in his *Chronicle*, pp. 290-1.

made vnto the croune and diademe of the realme had his dignitee ligne and succession enacted, confirmed and entayled by the assent of the high courte of Parliamente as foloweth worde by worde' (fol. x^v). After the one-off provision of election, the succession is formally vested in Henry and his heirs. These precautions notwithstanding, the king soon faces conspiracy and open rebellion.

If we paused here, we'd arrive at a conclusion not unlike Herman's, namely, that 'There is nothing in the act of deposition itself which goes against either religion or law', and that civil war erupts not because Henry's title to the crown is bad but because of '[a]ristocratic ambition'.²⁸ Hall, it is true, does not voice overt disapproval of either the deposition or the election.²⁹ Yet he invents powerful speeches for his protagonists which do precisely that. The most crushing assault on the legality and morality of Henry's rule comes from Richard Duke of York whom Hall has deliver an impassioned oration to Parliament, replete with biblical and historical exempla and couched in the language of public good, in vindication of indefeasible hereditary right. York denounces Henry IV as a usurper and a regicide, recites the calamities visited upon Henry's heirs and England at large as punishment for the usurpation, and, styling himself the country's providential saviour, asserts the title of the House of York in a lengthy genealogical disquisition.³⁰ Even so, that title, as he openly acknowledges, needs to be judged, approved, and formally recognized by Parliament.

What are we to make of the language and tenor of York's speech? Richard II, 'the trew and indubitate heyre', York contends, 'was lawfully and iustly possessed of the croune' until Lancaster 'by force & violence, contrary both to the duety of his allegiaunce, and also to his homage, to him both done and sworne, rayseed warre and battayle' and 'wrongfully vsurped and entruded vpon the royall power and high estate of this Realme and region... And not therewith satisfied and contented, compassed and accomplished, the death & destruccion of hys naturall prince'. Following Richard's murder, 'the right & title of the croune, and superiorite of this Realme, was lawfully reuerted and returned' to Roger Mortimer, Earl of March from whom it has now devolved to York. He is therefore 'the very trew and lyneall heyre'. Ever since 'the fyrste vngodly vsurpacion of the forenamed Henry, vntruely called kyng Henry the .iiij' who 'toke vpon him the scepter, and the croune, and wrongfully bare the name and stile of a king', England has been destitute of 'peace, loue, and quietnes'. Nor has God allowed the heirs of 'the firste vsurpar' to escape scot-free: his son, Henry V was cut off in the flower of youth 'for the offence of his vntrew parente'. During the reign of his grandson, the child-king Henry VI, 'with what great tormentes & affliccions God hath whypped & scorged this miserable Isle'? According to York, the country's fate has been more miserable than that of 'the Israelites, when Athalia slew all the bloud Royal, except litle Ioas, and tyrannously vsurped the croune', of 'the Romaines, when Iulius Cesar toke vpon hym, without lawe or auctoritie, the name and stile of Emperour', and of the English themselves in the aftermath of 'the iniurious vsurpacions, of Herralde sonne to Godwyn erle of Kent, and Stephen of Bloys, erle of Bulleyn'. 'God', affirms York, 'of his ineffable goodnes, lookyng on this countrey, with his eyes of pitie, and aspect of mercie, hath sent me in the truth, to restore again this decayed kyngdom, to his auncient fame & old renoume'. Challenging his 'iust and true title', York professes trust in God's 'diuine ayde, and the assistence of you, the peeres of this Realme'.³¹

²⁸ *ODNB* article on Hall.

²⁹ When it suited him, Hall could be quite vocal in making his opinion known, as when in his account of the Abbot of Westminster's attempt to unseat Henry, he rails against clerical corruption and sedition (fol. xi^r-xii^r).

³⁰ Cf. also the Bishop of Carlisle's parliamentary speech in defence of Richard in which Lancaster's title is impugned. Without denouncing the man 'whom others call king' as usurper, Carlisle implies as much (fol. x^r). In summarising York's challenge of the crown, Grafton's 1570 *Abridgement* refers to Hall; but the agreement that York should be Henry VI's heir is stated so briefly that the reader is not offered *any* explanation as to why York's claim was judged valid by Parliament, i.e. here there is no going back to Henry IV and his alleged usurpation (fol. 114^r).

³¹ Fol. clxxvii^r-clxxxii^r. Hall follows York's oration to the peers with a vignette retailing the fall of the crown hanging in the Lower House, which the common people take as the omen of the impending division and change dynasties (fol. clxxxii^r).

York's eloquent rehearsal of what happened in 1399 counters the description given in the opening pages of the *Union*. What seemed lawful is now denounced as criminal. What seemed the work of providence is now stigmatised as ungodly. What seemed to promise peace, prosperity and good government is now impugned as the chief cause of national suffering and civil war. In short, the ostensibly legitimate accession of Henry IV is dismissed as downright usurpation. The clash of perspectives and political languages within Hall's narrative anticipates the more ideologically acute and stylistically accomplished exchanges John Hayward composed for his politic history *The First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henri III* (1599), in particular the confrontation between the Archbishop of Canterbury, the champion of election, and the Bishop of Carlisle, the defender of heredity.³² Hall's book prefigures too the pamphlet war between Persons and his critics. Persons, we recall, cited the parliamentary installation of Henry IV to strengthen his case for election. In castigating that act as a violation of the laws of God and man, Persons' adversaries deployed at once the vocabulary of blood descent and the precedents from scripture and history identical to those exploited by Hall's Duke of York.

How far are we to trust York's re-reading of the past? What of the notion of hereditary kingship that underlies it? The upshot of York's intervention is a compromise: Henry VI is to retain the crown for life but York 'or els ... the next heire of his line or linage' is to succeed him. That surely suggests that 'the peeres, prelates, and commons of the realme' (fol. clxxii^r) agree with York's argument even if they pragmatically delay its implementation. But how far is *their* judgement to be accepted? Like its predecessor's removal of Richard II, the present Parliament's regulation of succession has all the hallmarks of probity and legality. Yet when Hall revisits this episode later in the story, he casts doubt on the justice of what transpired: the entailment of the crown to York, he says, was determined 'either for righte or for fauoure' (fol. i^r, second pagination). Overall, the *Union* demonstrates that, as Persons' Scottish opponent, Sir Thomas Craig, would argue at length in attacking the idea of election, parliamentary acts are endlessly revocable.³³ What one Parliament decrees, another overturns. And so it goes. Hall chronicles the various twists and turns of the prolonged civil discord; and the reader is left to make sense of the welter of competing claims and viewpoints.³⁴

Now of course we are not to doubt that Richmond's victory at Bosworth is providential. But is his accession *legitimate* and, if so, on what does the legitimacy rest? Is he king by birthright or election? Admit Henry Earl of Richmond ousts a tyrannical usurper and Henry Duke of Lancaster a hereditary tyrant,³⁵ what is the difference between them? Genealogy is more prominent in Hall than in earlier chronicles if only because he expressly deals with dynastic conflict and, beginning as it

³² *The First and Second Parts of John Hayward's Life and Raigne of King Henri III*, ed. John J. Manning, Camden Society, 4th series, vol. 42 (London, 1991), pp. 113-15, 116-17 (Arundel) and pp. 142-9 (Carlisle). Hall's Carlisle is less outspoken than Hayward's: the earlier historian reserves the attack on Henry for the Duke of York. On Hayward, see F. J. Levy, 'Hayward, Daniel and the Beginnings of Politic Historiography', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 50 (1987), 1-34; Lisa Richardson, 'Sir John Hayward and Early Stuart Historiography' (unpublished PhD thesis, two volumes, Cambridge, 1999); and, *idem*, 'Plagiarism and Imitation in Renaissance Historiography', in *Plagiarism in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 106-18; Rebecca Lemon, *Treason by Words: Literature, Law and Rebellion in Shakespeare's England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 23-51.

³³ Written in Latin and prepared for publication by the end of 1602, Craig's tract was not printed until the eighteenth century as *Concerning the Right of Succession to the Kingdom of England, Two Books* (London, 1703). For discussion, see Chapters 8 and 9 above.

³⁴ Consider, for instance, Hall's portrayal of the election of Edward IV first by the council and then by the people assembled in St John's fields, of Richard III by citizens assembled at the Guildhall, and of Richmond by soldiers at Bosworth and God himself or Buckingham's recital of how he planned to seize the crown by getting himself elected by Parliament.

³⁵ On early modern conceptions of tyranny, see Robert S. Miola, 'Julius Caesar and the Tyrannicide Debate', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39 (1985), 271-89; Rebecca W. Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

were *in medias res*, has to summarize the lineages of those involved. Title, dedication, and preface too reveal a preoccupation about lines of descent which Grafton's engraved frontispiece prefaced to the second edition would further intensify. This obsession with blood produces a troubling paradox: if one blood line holds priority over another as it logically must then why the need for the matrimonial union of the supposedly 'indubitate heire of the hous of Lancastre, and the other of Yorke'? Why not accord preference to whom it is due and have Elizabeth of York succeed in her own right? Why should Henry be made king *before* the wedding ceremony? We are told that 'the olde deuided controuersie...was suspended and appalled in the person of the moste noble puissant and mighty heire kyng Henry the eight' (fol. i^{r-v}); but what if Henry and Elizabeth had had no children? Hall partly displaces these complications by refusing to state the exact principle of succession in England or even indicate if one exists, an understandable evasion given the weakness of the Tudor claim. Perhaps we should not be asking such questions of Hall's narrative since they amount to anachronistic second-guessing of God who, contemporaries believed, can override any man-made law. But then Hall clearly wants us to think about the constitutional ramifications of the union of Lancaster and York. Otherwise why would he highlight the various deals and machinations behind the installation of the Tudors? In his book, however, those ramifications remain equivocal.

Printed under Edward VI, the *Union* was proscribed by Mary because of its reformed outlook and approving account of Henry VIII's divorce from her Catholic mother, Catherine of Aragon. It was only re-issued in 1560, after the arrival of Elizabeth.³⁶ Elizabeth's coronation entry provides an early indication of the chronicle's reception under the new dispensation. As we've seen in Chapter Three, the first *tableau*, 'The Uniting of the Two Houses of Lancaster and York', derived its iconography from the frontispiece to Grafton's second edition of Hall: Elizabeth was depicted in the company of two royal couples, her grandparents Henry VII and Elizabeth of York and her parents Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. The commemorative booklet, which underlined that 'such as will search chronicles' will best appreciate its meaning,³⁷ testifies that the devisers of the pageant, Grafton among them, were alive to the man-made genesis of the Union and that they subtly misrepresented what had actually happened by amplifying the role of Elizabeth of York at the expense of Richmond's. While this adjustment was entirely appropriate in a show complimenting the new female ruler by analogy with her namesake and ancestor, it also demonstrates that the entertainment was designed to bring to the fore the politics of compromise behind that development.

The 'Uniting' served to confirm Elizabeth's right to the throne, apprise her of the responsibilities and covenantal nature of kingship, and urge her to perpetuate the Tudor line. In the early parliaments, exhortations for the queen to marry and name a successor routinely admonished her to ponder 'In what miserable case ... was this your realme it self when the title of the Crowne was tossed in question between two royall howses of Lancaser and York, till your most noble progenitors King Henry the vijth and the Lady Elizabeth his wife restored it to settled unity and left the crowne in certain course of succession'.³⁸ By the 1580s if not earlier, that the Tudor line would die with Elizabeth became plain. This prompted fresh applications of the Union of Lancaster and York and so of Hall's book. Time and again the late fifteenth-century dynastic deal was summoned to express anxiety about the uncertain future. Epilogues to two contemporary plays about Richard III, one an academic trilogy in Latin, the other an anonymous vernacular offering by a major professional company, the Queen's Men, sounded that very theme. Thomas Legge's note to his

³⁶ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964-69), II: 57-60; Marcia Lee Metzger, 'Controversy and "Correctness": English Chronicles and Chroniclers, 1553-1568', *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 27 (1996), 437-51, at pp. 439, 442.

³⁷ *The Queen's Majesty's Passage and Related Documents*, ed. G. Warkentin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 81.

³⁸ The Commons' petition, 28 January 1563, in T. E. Hartley (ed.), *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, 3 vols (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1981-95), I: 91. See also 'A speech touching the nomination of a successor to the Crowne at the putting in of a bill for the same' in Elizabeth's second Parliament, I: 131.

Richardus Tertius, produced at St. John's College Cambridge in 1579, calls for 'an Epilogue ... where in lett be declared the happy uniteinge of both houses, of whome the Queenes majestie came, and is undoubted heyr, wishinge her a prosperous raigne'. Ostensibly flattering, the Epilogue underscores, in a less than tactful reference to Elizabeth as 'a virgin who overcomes the hoary locks of age', that the queen on whom the security of the country rests is waxing old.³⁹ Similarly, the lengthy epilogue to *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (c. 1588?), a play we shall examine in detail alongside Shakespeare's *Richard III*, closed the temporal gap between 1485 and the time of performance, inducing the audience to compare the consensual solution arrived at by their ancestors with the precariousness of their own situation: 'For if her Graces dayes be brought to end, / Your hope is gone, on whom did peace depend'.⁴⁰ That Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars* (1595, 1601),⁴¹ an *ottava rima* rendition of events retailed by Hall which took Lucan's *Pharsalia* as its model, never reached the desired happy ending too shows the falling off in the ideological currency of the advent of the Tudors by the close of the sixteenth century.

Hostile re-readings of the Union by Catholic polemicists, chiefly Nicholas Sander and Nicholas Harpsfield, alleged that the Tudors had incurred divine punishment, the offspring of the chief culprit, Henry VIII, dying childless one after another.⁴² There were also burgeoning re-readings of the fifteenth-century dynastic union as a foreshadowing of the union of crowns in the person of James Stuart, a latter-day Henry VII. Though the explosion of such encomia lay in the future, adumbrations of the new paradigm surface in surreptitious succession tracts such as Peter Wentworth's and Sir John Harington's replies to Persons, both of which cited James's direct descent from Henry VII and Henry's 'prophecy' of the Anglo-Scottish union in support of the Stuart title. 'I speak it frome my heart, of both houses', writes Harington,

...let it be ever a doubtte, and ever a question, which blood is the nobler, in the issue of Henry viiith that of York or that of Lancaster, so the united blood may ever reigne over us and never faile us, that if once succession may be established it may never againe be disunited. Let the peerless Princes of that lyne, I meane the K. of Scotts and his issue, have the person and amiableness of Edward the Fourth, the wisdom and providence of Henrie the Seaventh, the bounty and royaltie of K. Henrie the Eight and his daughter Marie, the felicitie and quiet daies and long life of Queen Elizabeth, and then let Mr. Dolman [i.e. Persons] and his lawyers dispute tytles, object bastardies, suppose lykelyhoodes of infinite daungers and doubttes.⁴³

³⁹ *The Complete Plays*, ed. with a trans. and commentary by Dana F. Sutton, 2 vols. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), I: 323, 321.

⁴⁰ *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (Oxford: The Malone Society Reprints, 1929), sig. I2^r.

⁴¹ Daniel, *The First Fowre Bookes of the ciuile wars between the two houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (London, 1595); *The Works of Samuel Daniel newly augmented* [containing inter alia books 1-6 of *The Civil Wars*] (London, 1601); and *The Civile Wars betweene the Howses of Lancaster and Yorke corrected and continued* (London, 1609). On Daniel as historian, see Woolf, *The Idea of History*, pp. 76-104.

⁴² Christopher Highley, "'A Pestilent and Seditious Book": Nicholas Sander's *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani* and Catholic Histories of the Reformation', in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 2006), pp. 147-67, at p. 156.

⁴³ Wentworth, *A Treatise Containing M. Wentworths Judgement concerning the Person of the True and lawfull successor to these Realmes of England and Ireland*, in *A Pithie Exhortation to her Maiestie for establishing Her Successor to the Crowne. Whereunto is added a Discourse containing the Authors opinion of the true and lawfull successor to her Maiestie*, in ([Edinburgh,] 1598), p. 76; Harington, *A Tract on the Succession to the Crown (A.D. 1602)*, ed. Clements R. Markham (London, 1880), pp. 80-1. Cf. also p. 18: 'If the union of the howses of York and Lancaster were a thing that bredd so much joy and quiet to this Realme as the best writers do testify, and the best subjectes do acknowledge, how much more just cause of joy shall they have that shall live to see the uniting of two nations of England and Scotland so often desyred'; and Craig who seems to categorize Henry VII's accession as a form of election (p. 59) even as he hails the Union as a providential conjunction of true heirs to the warring dynasties: 'But the joy of people was above expression after the happy Union of the two Families, by the Marriage between *Henry VII.* and *Elizabeth*, Heirs of *York* and *Lancaster*; while the Subjects seem'd to be deliver'd from a most dismal State, and to have obtain'd a lasting Tranquility. All those Evils flow'd from the passing by, Disclaiming and Renouncing the

Here too the questionable dynastic underpinnings of the Union that Hall's history did little to conceal are freely acknowledged. For Harington, heavily influenced by the Jesuit Giovanni Botero's concept of reason of state, what matters is the beneficial outcome of an admittedly compromise solution.⁴⁴ Hair-splitting enquiries into blood lines and descents will only breed discord and unrest.

The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke supplied later historians, imaginative writers, and polemicists not only with raw material but also with a highly sophisticated political language. Far more so than in earlier chronicles, Parliament in Hall's account emerges as the *de facto* arbiter of succession. Not always taken for the right reasons, parliamentary rulings are prone to instability. Barring direct divine intervention, they are nonetheless the best there is. The scepticism that permeates the *Union*, a work that routinely pits issues of political principle against morals, and the attendant readiness to countenance pragmatic solutions are both offset by the author's willingness to give voice to alternative viewpoints.

'Holinshed'

Released for publication within days of Mary Stuart's execution,⁴⁵ the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587) provided food for thought to anyone exercised about the succession. With its exhaustive relation of the trial and execution of the Babington conspirators, the prosecution and sentence of the chief culprit and contender, Mary Stuart, and the relentless parliamentary pressure on the queen to allow the sentence to be carried out, *The Chronicles* registered the concluding stages of the Elizabethan Exclusion Crisis. It also anticipated the onset of a new national emergency: with Mary gone, English Catholics might well turn to the House of Spain, instigating a pamphlet campaign in support of their favoured candidate and bringing upon England a foreign invasion backed by the pope.

The book is often dismissed as the last gasp of the medieval chronicle tradition. Falling short, due to financial pressures, of Reynard Wolfe's original plan for a universal history in the mould of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, both the 1577 edition and its revised and expanded version a decade later are said to lack the conceptual edge and stylistic polish of later politic histories.⁴⁶ Approached on its own terms, however, this monumental project commands attention, and not only as the source of raw materials for Shakespeare, Spenser, and others. Already the first

rightful Heir of the Kingdom...No less Joy would undoubtedly ensue the happy Union of *England and Scotland* (*Concerning the Right of Succession*, pp. 91-2).

⁴⁴ On the impact of Botero's ideas, see Harro Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c.1540-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and *idem*, 'Orthodoxy and Reason of State', *History of Political Thought*, 23 (2002), 211-37.

⁴⁵ The final stage of government censorship of the book post-dated Mary's beheading on 8 February 1587 and was carried out in anticipation of the public reaction to it. The object was to tone down passages which might appear overzealous and vindictive. See Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 138-69, at p. 140; and *idem*, Introduction to *The Peaceable and Prosperous Regiment of Blessed Queene Elisabeth: A Facsimile from Holinshed's Chronicles* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 2005), pp. 1-18.

⁴⁶ Higden's work in John de Trevisa's translation, and with continuations by various hands, circulated widely in manuscript and print. *The Polychronicon* was the first historical work to be printed in English (William Caxton's editions of 1480 and 1482); later printings included Wynkyn de Worde's edition of 1495 and Peter Treveris' of 1527. See John Taylor's *ODNB* article on Higden; and *idem*, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); Gransden, *Historical Writing*, II: 43-57; Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 268; and *idem*, *Reading History*, pp. 13-14. On the making and significance of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, see Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, pp. 182-6; Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*. On its place in the chronicle tradition, see Woolf, *Reading History*, pp. 11-78.

edition did something unprecedented: with the emphasis firmly on the British Isles as an entity, the reader was invited to scrutinize the history, forms of government, national traits and customs, natural resources, and cultural and literary achievements across the three kingdoms. In terms of political philosophy, the multivolume collaborative venture yielded a massive and massively documented record of the parallel constitutional pasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland accompanied by corresponding descriptions of each. The implications of this organizational structure for the reader's understanding of the rules of succession in England cannot be overestimated. Abandoning the standard Anglo-centric structure of national historiography, the 1577 Holinshed fostered a comparative perspective. Bringing the story up-to-date and expanding the descriptive component by adding a chapter on Parliament, the second edition, the one exploited by poets, playwrights, and polemicists, opened up a unique vista for thinking about the succession. The reader's inferences and speculations about England's immediate future would have been shaped by the exceptionally detailed narrative of recent and very recent events that could in turn be considered alongside earlier political crises both at home and elsewhere in the archipelago and further assessed within the framework supplied by the synchronic descriptions of the three kingdoms.

At over 3.5 million words, not many people are likely to have read the book from beginning to end. Most would have sampled the contents of the mammoth folio tomes which the provision of chapter headings, indexes, and marginal notes – the product of Abraham Fleming's editorial oversight – made relatively easy to cross-reference. What of those with a special interest in political history? It is hard to imagine that late Elizabethan readers for whom drawing parallels between past and present was a mental habit would not have made connections between say the account of Edward II's abdication in favour of his son and that of Mary Stuart's in favour of hers. The narrative of Edward III's assumption of the crown is notable for its emphasis on parliamentary election. With the king imprisoned at Killingworth, Parliament decides on a deposition 'will[ing] to haue his sonne Edward duke of Aquitaine to reigne in his place'. What's required, however, is Edward's 'resignation of his crowne and title of the kingdome vnto his sonne'. Arriving at Killingworth in advance of the official parliamentary delegation, two bishops coerce Edward into resigning 'the crowne to his sonne' by threatening that unless he does so 'the people... would not faile but procéed to the election of some other that should happilie not touch him in linage'. Whether or not the threat was real is immaterial. What matters is that in issuing it, the bishops credit Parliament with the power not only to remove a legitimate king but also to choose a successor from *outside* the royal line. In the event, Edward complies and dynastic continuity is preserved. The report of how that comes to pass is suggestive. On hearing that the king has agreed to renounce the throne,

great ioy was made of all men, to consider that they might now by course of law proceed to the choosing of a new king. And so thervpon the nine and twentieth day of Ianuarie in session of parlement then at Westminster assembled, was the third king Edward, sonne to king Edward the second, chosen and elected king of England, by the authoritie of the same parlement, first (as before is said) confirmed by his fathers resignation: and the first day of his reigne they agréed to be the fiue and twentieth of Ianuarie, in the yeare 1326 after the account of the church of England, beginning the yeare the fiue & twentieth day of March, but by the common account of writers, it was in the yeare 1327.⁴⁷

Like Stow's description of the parliamentary installation of Henry IV in his *Chronicles* (1580) and *Annales* (1592), this passage too could easily be commandeered in support of Persons' thesis that the English crown is in part elective.

⁴⁷ *Holinshed's Chronicles*, II: 584-5.

James VI of Scotland is not presented in the *Chronicles* as king by election; however, his title too is confirmed by Parliament. The Scottish history reproduces ‘The tenor of the commission, whereby Marie the queene of Scots resigneth the crowne to hir sonne, appointeth his gardians, and maketh the earle of Murreie regent’ (V: 626-7). That document, which resembles ‘The tenor of the instrument whereby king Richard [II] resigneth the crowne to the duke of Lancaster’ in the English chronicle (II: 862), in turn serves as the basis of a parliamentary settlement of the succession:

On the fifteenth of December a parlement begun, being holden at Edenburgh before the earle of Murreie lord regent, in the which diuers acts and statutes were deuised, made, and ratified: as first concerning the queens demission of hir crowne, and resignation thereof made to hir sonne king James the sixt. And likewise concerning the instituting of the earle of Murreie in the regencie of the realme... Also there was an act made for the abolishing of the pope, and his usurped authoritie. (V: 631)⁴⁸

Like its early fourteenth-century English counterpart, the Scottish Parliament of 1567 endorses an incarcerated monarch’s abdication in favour of an under-age heir. Mary’s adherents naturally questioned the legality of that act. Bishop John Leslie, many editions of whose treatise in her defence were published both in England and elsewhere (and whose Latin history of Scotland (1578) was liberally cited in the second edition of the *Chronicles*), insisted that Mary had abdicated under duress, that ‘the colorable parliamente, wherebie ye gott your vsurped and vnnaturall kingdome ratefied and confirmed’ had had no right to depose her, and that her son’s had been an ‘vnnaturall coronation’.⁴⁹ The Elizabethan reader, however, was offered a view of the whole process as proper, constitutional and, implicitly, a *sine qua non* of the Scottish Reformation: the Parliament demotes the pope alongside the Catholic queen. The impression that Mary had deserved to lose her Scottish throne would have been reinforced by the *Chronicles*’ census of her treasonable activities since her arrival in England, culminating in her involvement in the Babington plot.

Both the English Parliament of 1327 and the Scottish Parliament of 1567 are sites of lawful depositions. So is the 1399 English Parliament as described in Hall’s *Union*, first edition of Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, and Stow’s *Chronicles*. The distinctive feature of the second edition of Holinshed is that William Harrison’s new chapter ‘Of the high court of parlement, and authoritie of the same’ in his *Description of England* lists both deposition and reformation of religion among legitimate transactions undertaken by the English Parliament.⁵⁰ The narrative of events in the

⁴⁸ One might note in passing the legal muddle to which this passage unwittingly testifies: the Earl of Moray is referred to as lord regent presiding over an assembly that is to award him the regency.

⁴⁹ *A defence of the honour of the right highe, mightye and noble Princesse Marie Quene of Scotlande and dowager of France with a declaration aswell of her right, title & intereste to the succession of the crowne of Englande, as that the regimete of women ys conformable to the lawe of God and nature* (London [i.e. Rheims], 1569), fol. 23^r. Elsewhere in the book, Leslie claims that once elective, most contemporary monarchies such as Scotland and England are now hereditary: ‘(albe it at the begininge princes reigned not by discente of bloude and succession, but by choice and election of the worthieste) the worlde was for the most parte constrained to repudiate election, and so often times for the better and the worthier to take a certaine issewe and offspringe of some one onlie person thowghe otherwise perchance not so mete’ (fol. 51^v). Based in part on Leslie’s vernacular *Historie of Scotland* (c. 1569-70), his *De origine moribus, et rebus gestis Scotorum libri decem* (Rome, 1578), to which Buchanan responded in his *Rerum Scotticarum historia* (1582), was not translated into English. See Tricia A. McElroy, ‘Executing Mary Queen of Scots: Strategies of Representation in Early Modern Scotland’, unpublished D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 2005), ch. 3, pp. 144-201. McElroy notes that the Scottish precedent for the ousting of Mary Stuart was the fate of James III against whom his disaffected subjects had rebelled and whom they had slain in 1488: significantly, the king’s son and heir, the future James IV, had sided with the rebels (pp. 193-5; cf. *Holinshed’s Chronicles*, V: 459). See also James Burns, ‘Pro Me Si Mereor In Me: Kingship and Tyranny in Scotland, 1437-1587’, in *Murder and Monarchy: Regicide in European History, 1300-1800*, ed. Robert von Friedeburg (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 149-58.

⁵⁰ *Holinshed’s Chronicles*, I: 291-7. The chapter was indebted to Sir Thomas Smith’s *De Republica Anglorum*. For a discussion of Harrison’s appropriation of Smith, see Mary Dewar’s introduction to her edition of Smith’s *De Republica Anglorum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Glyn J. R. Parry, ‘William Harrison and Holinshed’s *Chronicles*’, *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 789-810; Patterson, *Reading Holinshed’s Chronicles*, pp. 102-4. Cf. Cyndia

northern kingdom in 1567 suggests that the Scottish Parliament is similarly empowered. In rewriting a corresponding passage from Sir Thomas Smith's *De Republica Anglorum*, Harrison made several adjustments, one of which has a direct bearing on what sort of Parliament is at stake: with or without the monarch at its head. Smith definitely envisages king in Parliament. To say as he does that Parliament 'giveth formes of succession to the crowne' and 'defineth of doubtfull rightes, whereof is no lawe alreadie made' is effectively to anticipate the formulation of Elizabeth's 1571 Treasons Act which ruled it was treason to question whether the common law of the realm unmodified by statute was sufficient to determine the succession and to dispute the right of the Queen-in-Parliament to make further statutory provisions.⁵¹ By contrast, Harrison's claim that 'This house hath the most high and absolute power of the realme, for thereby kings and mightie princes haue from time to time béene deposed from their thrones' (I: 291) could be taken to mean that a headless Parliament can sit in judgement on a king. One way or another, read alongside Harrison's matter-of-fact statement of parliamentary prerogative, the various dethronements retailed in the body of the history look far less untoward than they did in the previous edition which lacked this sort of theoretical underpinning.

Phenomenally up-to-date in its recital of events occurring barely weeks before the manuscript went to the printers, the 1587 Holinshed impelled the reader to think about the succession.⁵² The seemingly endless catalogue of Catholic plots, conspiracies, and attempts on Elizabeth's life served to inculcate Mary Stuart who was envisaged as their principal beneficiary. Petitioning Elizabeth for a go-ahead for Mary's execution, the parliamentarians warn the queen, in addresses reproduced here alongside royal responses, that for her discontented subjects Mary is not just the rightful successor but the rightful ruler. By the time the *Chronicles* reached the market, Mary was safely dead; but that was no guarantee that the papists would desist from their treasonable doings. What would happen if Elizabeth were assassinated *now*? Or if she were to die a natural death any time soon? Even as they detail the punishments meted out to the Babington conspirators and eulogise the 'good quéene Elisabeth, by whom we enioie life and libertie, with other blessings from aboue', the chroniclers evince acute anxiety about the future, 'beséeching God we maie see a consummation of the world, before the scepter of the kingdome be translated to another. For (as the prouerbe saith) seldome commeth the better' (IV: 322). Moral-cum-prayer framed as a hyperbolic compliment to Elizabeth, passive voice and metaphor of translation of the sceptre,⁵³ proverbial

Susan Clegg, 'Patterson Reading Holinshed: "divers things notable, some things excellent"', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 61 (2000); 531-48.; and *idem*, "'By the Choise and Inuitation of al the Realme": *Richard II* and Elizabethan Press Censorship', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (1997), 432-48.

⁵¹ Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, p. 78; G. W. Prothero, ed. *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents*, 3th edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 60.

⁵² The regime was acutely concerned about how the *Chronicles* dealt with the 'later years', notably the administration of justice as evinced by the trial and conviction of Campion and other seminary priests, the Babington plotters, and above all Mary Stuart. Also sensitive was the treatment of Alençon, Leicester, and Anglo-Scottish relations (some of the cuts were designed to eliminate possible sources of irritation for James VI of Scotland). See Cyndia Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England*, pp. 138-69; and *idem*, Introduction to *The Peaceable and Prosperous Regiment*, pp. 1-18.

⁵³ Cf. Matthew Hutton's application of the idea of translation of kingdoms to the specific issue of the Elizabethan succession in a court sermon given before Elizabeth early in 1596: 'he, as if he had been a Jeremiah himselfe, and not an expounder of him, shewed how there were two speciall causes of translating of Kingdomes, the fulnesse of time and the ripenesse of sinne, that by either of these, and sometime by both, God in secret and just judgments transferred Scepters from kindred to kindred, from Nation to Nation at his good will and pleasure, & running over historically the great Monarchies of the world, as the Kingdome of Egypt and after of Israel swallowed up by the Assirians, and the golden head of Nabuchodonozor, the same head cut off by the silver brest and armes of the Medes. and Persians. Cyrus and Darius this silver consumed by the brazen belly, and this of the Graecians and Alexander, and that brasse stamped to powder by the Iron legges of the Romans and Caesar. Then coming neerer home, he shewed how oft our Nation had been a prey to forreiners, as first when we were all Brittans subdued by these Romans, then, when the fulnesse of time and ripenesse of our finne required it, subdued by the Saxons, after this a long time prosecuted and spoyled by the Danes, finally conquered and reduced to perfect subjection by the Normans whose posterity continued in great prosperity till the days of her Majesty, who for peace, for plenty, for glory, for continuance, had exceeded them all, that had lived to change all her Councillours but one, all officers twice or thrice, some Bishops foure times, onely the

wisdom, and a studiously non-committal stance *vis-à-vis* the identity of the prospective successor are hints enough not merely of circumspection but of genuine uncertainty about how in practice the transfer of the crown might be achieved, on what basis, and to whom.

One nightmarish possibility which the hated Catholic fifth-column were known to have been working towards would be the election of a popish successor. In a passage *The Chronicles* reprinted verbatim from an anonymous pamphlet, *A true and Summarie reporte of the declaration of some part of the Earle of Northumberland's Treasons* (1585), we read:

That in a letter sent to the said Allen from Rome, touching audience giuen by the pope to the ambassadors of certeine forren princes, betwéene the pope & whom a league was agréed on against the quéenes maiestie, there were inclosed certeine articles conteining in effect, that *the realme should be inuaded with twentie thousand men at the charge of the said pope and princes, that hir maiestie should be deposed, and some English catholike elected king*. That it was confessed that the comming ouer of so manie priests into the realme, was to win great numbers to the catholike partie, to ioine (if opportunitie serued) either with forren inuasion, or with tumult at home. [my emphasis]⁵⁴

Composed in the immediate aftermath of Henry Percy, eighth Earl of Northumberland's apparent suicide in the Tower, the pamphlet sought to prove that though never formally tried and convicted of treason the earl had in fact been deeply implicated in a web of Catholic conspiracy, including several plots to topple Elizabeth and set up Mary Stuart. Read after Mary's elimination, the report of an invasion designed to place a Catholic on the English throne and masterminded by the pope, his royal stooges on the Continent, and the English recusants at home, with Jesuit priests acting as intermediaries, would have seemed all too real a threat, not least because of the notorious intervention of the Holy League in the French Wars of Religion a decade earlier and the recent excommunication by Pope Sixtus V of the Huguenot heir to the French throne, Henri of Navarre and of his cousin Prince of Condé whose joint response to the excommunication could be found a few pages earlier.⁵⁵

An even more frightening scenario comes to light during the investigation of those implicated in the Babington plot. Written as if in anticipation of Mary's execution, the *Chronicles'*

uncertainty of succession gave hopes to Forreiners to attempt fresh invasions and breed feares in many of her Subjects of new Conquest, the onely way then said he that is in pollicy left to quase those hopes and to asswage these feares were to establish the succession. He noted that Nero was specially hated for wishing to have no Successor, that even Augustus was the worse beloved for appointing an ill man to his Successor, and at last insinuating as farre as he durst the neernesse of blood of our present Soveraigne, he said plainly, that the expectations and presages of all writers went Northward, naming without any circumlocution Scotland, which said he, if it prove an errour, yet will it be found a learned errour' (Sir John Harington, *A briefe view of the state of the Church of England as it stood in Q. Elizabeths and King James his reigne, to the yeere 1608 being a character and history of the bishops of those times* (London, 1653), pp. 188-9). See also Robert Southwell's *An Humble Supplication to her Maiestie* (1595 [really 1600]: 'Then the act of PARLIAMENT excluding straingers from the Crowne, (as she by diuerse meanes was diuoulged to be) woulde also haue added dainger to her claime, especially considering the auncient & deepe rooted dislike, betweene the *Scottishe* and the *Englishe*, no small motiue to a popular mutiny: but most of all her vehemency in the Catholicke religion, (against which both the Nobility, Cleargy, & commons were most violently bent) woulde haue made them ready in that respecte, to take heed of the least of these lettes, to exclude her from the Crowne, and *to translate the title* to some other more suteable, to their beleefe' (p. 43, my emphasis).

⁵⁴ *A true and summarie reporte of the declaration of some part of the Earle of Northumberland's treasons* ([London], [1585]), sig. Bii^r; *Holinshed's Chronicles*, IV: 607.

⁵⁵ On the secret agreement between Sixtus V and Philip II on how to deal with the English succession around the time of the Armada, see Francisco De Borja Medina, 'Intrigues of a Scottish Jesuit at the Spanish Court: Unpublished Letters of William Crichton to Claudio Acquaviva (Madrid 1590-1592)', in Thomas M. McCoog, S. J. (ed.), *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), pp. 215-45. 'The Answer of Henrie King of Nauarre, and Henrie Prince of Conde, to the Excommunication of Sixtus Quintus, now Pope', *Holinshed's Chronicles*, IV: 597-8.

account of their confessions moves beyond establishing ‘the Scottish queene to be the principall comforter, directer, and imbracer of these treasons’ and asks point blank to whom the Catholics would turn once she is gone. Having little hope of Mary’s Protestant son James, we are told, they will endeavour to concoct and publicise a fake claim for a Spanish prince or else seek papal investiture of their chosen candidate:

... being past expectation (as they terme it) of anie good from the king hir sonne, and not regarding the interest of anie other to the succession of this state, if she by death or otherwise maie not be aduanced vnto this kingdome: they are then determined to set the crowne on the house of Spaine, either by pretense of some putatiue title, to which effect some pamphlets haue béene alreadie composed; or rather (to auoid all controuersies) by some grant and inuesture from the see apostolike: for the dispatch wherof (as the conspirators confesse) doctor Allen an English fugitiue, and some others attend in Rome to sollicit the pope. Which being once performed, some of the grauer and more reuerend sort (as they call them) of our fugitiue diuines, must secretlie make their repaire hither, and in auricular confession persuade the principall catholikes of this land, and such as are able to swaie the rest, to fauor, mainteine and aduance that title of Spaine against all others, vnder paine of damnation. By meanes whereof it is intended that Spaine shall mount to so huge a greatnesse, as to be able of himselfe to giue lawes to all the states of christendome. (IV: 926)

Having argued for years that Mary’s lineal title is impregnable, the papists, ever the opportunists and equivocators, will have no compunction about abandoning the principle of indefeasible hereditary right to serve their confessional ends. As delineated here, the Catholic programme for the post-Mary era accords with the gist of Persons’ *Conference about the Next Succession* which, in 1587, was still seven years in the future. The sole difference is that in the English edition of the tract the Jesuit kept quiet about the pope’s deposing power, only adding a relevant chapter in a later translation which he personally presented to Clement VIII.⁵⁶ James VI saw a manifest affinity between his mother’s deposition at the hands of the Calvinists, of which Buchanan was the most vocal apologist, and the subversion of his right by Hispanophile Catholics such as Persons. In his own purposely oblique contributions to the succession debate, *A True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) and to a lesser extent *Basilikon Doron* (1599), the Scottish king engaged with the arguments at once of Buchanan’s *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* and Persons’ *Conference*.⁵⁷

Albeit in a muted and under-articulated way, the second edition of Holinshed evokes the tenets of both Catholic and Protestant doctrines of resistance and so hints at once at the positive and negative potential of election as a constitutional practice. Loudly condemning the plans to advance Mary Stuart or else elect a Catholic successor to Elizabeth, the book tacitly endorses the legitimacy of the rebellion of the Protestant Dutch against Spain and their offer in 1585 of sovereignty over the United Provinces to England’s queen ‘vnder certeine good and equall conditions, chieflie concerning the preseruacion of the exercise of the reformed religion, and of the ancient priuileges, liberties, franchises, and customs, and next of the administration of the affaires, policie, and iustice of the warres in the said countrie’.⁵⁸ The oration of the Dutch delegates in which the offer has been

⁵⁶ Peter Holmes, ‘The Authorship and Early Reception of *A Conference About the Next Succession to the Crown of England*’, *Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), 415-29, at p. 423.

⁵⁷ Peter Lake, ‘The King, (the Queen) and the Jesuit: James Stuart’s *True Law of Free Monarchies* in Context/s’, *TRHS*, 6th series, 14 (2004), 243-60; Glenn Burgess, ‘Becoming English? Becoming British? The Political Thought of James VI & I Before and After 1603’, in *The Struggle for the Succession in Late Elizabethan England: Politics, Polemics and Cultural Representations*, ed. Jean-Christophe Mayer (Montpellier: Astraea Collection, 2004), pp. 143-75.

⁵⁸ *Holinshed’s Chronicles*, IV: 619. Cf. the appointment of Leicester as governor general by the Dutch and Elizabeth’s fury at the news. On 10 February 1586, Elizabeth wrote to Sir Thomas Heneage in the Netherlands commanding Leicester to resign, publicly and openly, the supreme governorship of the United Provinces which she herself had previously refused: ‘the said election must be revoked’ (*Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 271). Two further glosses on the

made is printed immediately after the rehearsal of Northumberland's misdoings with its revelation of the schemes for election of a Catholic to the English throne. Elizabeth's public reply, 'A declaration of the causes moouing the queene of England to giue aid to the defense of the people afflicted and oppressed in the low countries', follows a couple of pages later. The proximity of these documents throws into sharp relief the complex entanglement of succession, resistance, and religion at the time the *Chronicles* was published. It attests too to the controversial resonance previously neutral terms such as election must have acquired in the context of recent developments at home and abroad. This semantic shift inevitably influenced how other parts of the book were read.

Like many earlier chronicles, its own previous incarnation among them, the 1587 Holinshed labelled as election the ascents of numerous English kings. Some were elected in and by Parliament (Edward III, Henry IV), others by citizens gathered in the Guildhall (Richard III), or by a skeletal council (Edward IV), or by soldiers on the battlefield (Henry VII).⁵⁹ Although greater legitimacy seems to accrue to parliamentary votes, the *Chronicles* does not promote a consistent view of medieval elections as either good or bad in principle. As in Hall, the legitimacy of particular instances of election is sometimes questioned by the chronicler, sometimes by a historical actor. Thus in repenting of his rebellion against Mary Tudor, Sir Thomas Wyatt compares himself, *inter alia*, to Henry IV. Previously billed as an 'elected king', Henry is now condemned as a rebel and a usurper whose treason against his sovereign God avenged on his offspring until the third generation.⁶⁰ We find yet another interpretation of this and other contested regnal transitions in Francis Thynne's discourse of 'The protectors of England collected out of the ancient and moderne chronicles, wherein is set downe the yeare of Christ, and of the king in which they executed that function', inserted after the account of the fall of Protector Somerset (III: 1036 ff.). Aware that his handling of the matter might be somewhat touchy in the current climate, the chronicler concludes with a feeble disclaimer of topical intent: 'Thus this much digressing from the protectors, and to returne to that course which I haue in hand, I will leaue the discourse of policies to obteine kingdoms, bicause they be no balles for me to bandie, and follow on my former intent as meeter for my simplicitie' (III: 1051).

Neither in 1577 nor in 1587 did government censorship affect the sections dealing with medieval history. On both occasions, it was the treatment of very recent past that the authorities found problematic. Modern scholars have frequently remarked on the aura of impartiality that permeates the *Chronicles*. However, there is a contrast between the first and second editions and between early and late parts of the chronicle. We may be given several competing views on the deaths of King John or Edward II; but no such latitude obtains in the rehearsal of crimes perpetrated by the Catholic enemies to queen and country in 'The peaceable and prosperous regiment of blessed Queene Elisabeth, second daughter to king Henrie the eight' which occupies over 400 pages of the third volume of the 1587 Holinshed. For all the ostensible neutrality and objectivity of its presentation, England's medieval past no less than Mary Tudor's troubled accession thirty odd years earlier could be and most probably were read with an eye to the present. By the late 1580s, certain historical exempla had become part of the public discourse of succession in a way they had not been before. Trotted out openly in parliamentary debates and printed pamphlets before the

episode, one public, one private, come in Elizabeth's last speech to Parliament on 19 December 1601 (*Collected Works*, pp. 348 ff) and in a letter to James VI of Scotland of 6 January 1603 (*The Letters of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. G. B. Harrison, (2nd edn., New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968), pp. 295-6).

⁵⁹ Although the main text does not describe Henry IV's assumption of the throne as election, the marginal note glossing the speech in which he asserted his claim in Parliament reads: 'The words of the elected king' (II: 867).

⁶⁰ 'For peruse the chronicles through, & you shall see that neuer rebellion attempted by subiects against their prince and countrie, from the beginning did euer prosper, or had euer better successe, except the case of king Henrie the fourth: who although he became a prince, yet in his act was but a rebell, for so must I call him: & though he preuailed for a time, yet was it not long but that his heires were depriued, and those that had right againe restored to the kingdome and crowne, and the vsurpation so sharplie reuenged afterward in his bloud, as it well appeared, that the long delaiue of Gods vengeance was supplied with more greuous plagues in the third and fourth generation' (IV: 28).

Treasons Act put a gag on the subject, they then migrated into surreptitious Catholic tracts such as *The Treatise of Treasons* (1572) and *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584) only to be taken up, if in a guarded and oblique way, by imaginative writers. Not for nothing do so many late Elizabethan plays and narrative poems centre on medieval history and, in the last years of the reign, on the abortive *coup d'état* designed to prevent the accession of the Catholic Mary Tudor. A sentence interpolated by Abraham Fleming into the second edition of Holinshed positively invited the reader to draw a comparison between Mary Tudor and her Stuart namesake and so re-assess the superficially legitimist narrative of the failed attempt to place the Protestant Jane Grey on the throne: 'Thus farre the troublesome reigne of Queene Marie the first of that name (God grant she may be the last of hir religion)' (IV: 154).

The 1587 *Chronicles* furnished several frameworks within which to ponder the succession. There was the nation's distant and not-so-distant past and the pasts of Scotland and Ireland supplemented by sketches of their present political make-up. There was religion and the impact it had had so far on the course of dynastic succession at home and abroad. There was the Continental dimension, notably the current developments in France and the Low Countries in which England was becoming increasingly enmeshed. Finally, the transcripts of trials, petitions, orations, pamphlets, and parliamentary speeches injected up-to-the-minute political vocabulary and ideas. The reader's thinking about the succession would have been shaped in equal measure by accounts of medieval depositions and elections, the failed Protestant *coup* against Mary Tudor, the ousting of Mary Stuart by her Scottish subjects, the Catholic attempts on Elizabeth, and the Dutch revolt against Spanish rule. For those familiar with recent pamphlet literature and with works of political theory originating in Scotland and on the Continent, especially France – the writings of Buchanan, Bodin, Languet, du Plessis-Mornay, or du Haillan,⁶¹ the *Chronicles*' recital of national history would have been yet more portentous. Think what someone aware of the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* or *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* might have made of the language of election pervading the narrative of Edward III's parliamentary installation or of the threat reportedly issued to Richard II by the nobility which brought together resistance and election: 'When the lords therefore vnderstood that he would not keepe promise with them, they were greatlie offended, insomuch as they sent him flat word, that if he would not come (according to promise) they would suerlie choose another king, that would and ought to obeie the faithfull counsell of his lords'.⁶²

Even discounting the multiplicity of contributors, sources, and texts reproduced verbatim, we can hardly expect the second edition of Holinshed to have maintained ideological coherence in the face of the rival claims of faith, morality, constitutional propriety, national pride, and foreign policy. A couple of years earlier, Thomas Bilson had tied himself in knots trying to demonstrate *The True Difference betweene Christian Subiection and Unchristian Rebellion wherein the Princes lawfull Power to commaund for trueth, and indepriuable right to beare the sword are defended against the Popes censures and the Iesuits sophismes vttered in their apologie and defence of English Catholikes* (1585). The clarion call for European Protestants to unite against the forces of the popish Antichrist could only go so far towards palliating the otherwise unsavoury implications of Elizabeth's interference on behalf of the Dutch in their fight against their lawful sovereign Philip II of Spain. Rather than seeking to extrapolate the line supposedly toed by the *Chronicles* as a whole, it therefore makes sense to consider, as we have done, the vocabulary and frames of

⁶¹ On the reception of Buchanan, see J. H. Burns, 'George Buchanan and the Anti-monarchomachs', in *Scots & Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603*, ed. Roger A. Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 138-58; Introduction to *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship among the Scots: A Critical Edition and Translation of George Buchanan's De Jure Regni apud Scotos Dialogus*, ed. & transl. Roger A. Mason and Martin S. Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Paul J. McGinnis and Arthur H. Williamson's Introduction to their edition of George Buchanan, *The Political Poetry* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1995); on the circulation in England of French writings, see J. H. M. Salmon, *The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959); Lisa Ferraro Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce: French Anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1996).

⁶² *Holinshed's Chronicles*, II: 792-3.

reference the book offered to its audience who in any event would have approached the contents with their own individual expectations, prejudices, and prior reading experience.

Foxe

One historical work they would all have come across if not read from cover to cover was Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'. In it they would have found a far more unified vision of England's past which evolved with each subsequent edition published in the author's lifetime. Foxe had a great deal to say on how kings should rule and conduct themselves. Written for the second edition of 1570 and reprinted thereafter, his pithy disquisition on the proper relations between church and commonwealth undertook a resolute and at times scathing appraisal of pre-Reformation English royalty. Foxe's criteria are simple: resistance to popish authority and protection of the church of Christ make for a good king, bowing down to Rome and harassment of proto-Protestants for a bad one. Monarchs who pursued the former course enjoyed long and happy reigns, those opting for the latter – short and/or calamitous ones. In this providential scheme, constitutional proprieties are not of great moment since both lineal kings and those whose right is somewhat shaky can prove either beneficial or else pernicious to God's flock. 'King Richard the third, vsurper' is the only English monarch so billed in the entire *Actes and Monuments*.⁶³

To speak of Foxe's political philosophy as radical would be to overstate the matter. At least on the face of things, he is far more orthodox than the mid-century evangelical advocates of resistance such as John Ponet, Christopher Goodman, Anthony Gilby, and John Knox.⁶⁴ It is nonetheless salutary to remember that one of the most widely accessible history books of the later sixteenth century provided a view of the national past that was in many ways at odds with that purveyed by the more properly 'secular' chronicles. True, some of Foxe's moral lessons would not be out of place in a Hall or a Holinshed. By reading of the fall of Edward II 'both kings & such as clime to be about them may take the better example by the same, the one to haue þ^e loue of hys subiects, the other to learne to flee ambition, & not to beare themselues to brag of theyr fortune and state, how hye so euer it be' (p. 374). A similar warning about the dangers of favouritism arises from 'the strange and also lamentable deposing of this king Richard the second ... Straunge, for that the like example hathe not often bene seene in seates royall. Lamentable, for that it cannot be but grieuous to any good mans hart, to see him eyther so to deserue, if he were iustly desposed: or if he were vniustly depriued, to see the kingly title there not able to hold his right, wher by force, it is compelled to geue place to might'. The legal process of deposition is not, Foxe says, 'greatly pertinent to my argument', and to report what can easily be found elsewhere would be both 'tedious and superfluous' (pp. 512-13). Yet his narrative of Richard II's fall is not as brief as the foregoing comments might imply. The story of 'King Edward deposed by consent of the parliament house, and his sonne Edw. chosen kyng' too is recounted in greater detail 'peradventure thē the profession of this Ecclesiasticall history wil well admit' (pp. 373, 374).

For Foxe the civil failings and virtues of kings are ultimately subordinate to the quality of their ecclesiastical government. Although he twice refers to the articles cited against Richard II in the parliamentary bill of deposition, he chooses to 'ouerpasse' them 'for the matter not greatly materiall in them contayned'. What is material is that Richard persecuted Wycliffe and his followers: 'among all other causes alledged in storyes agaynst him: none seemeth so much to be

⁶³ *Actes and Monuments*, p. 728. However, Foxe may be hinting at the illegitimacy of Henry IV's title when he describes him as 'successor to the lawful K. Richard 2' (p. 557).

⁶⁴ The political thought of Foxe has been little studied. On Foxe's ideas about monarchy, see Thomas S. Freeman, "'Great searching out of bookes and autors": John Foxe as an Ecclesiastical Historian', unpublished PhD dissertation (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1995), pp. 245-58. I am grateful to Dr Freeman for lending me a copy of his dissertation.

wayed of vs, or more hurtfull to hym, then this forsaking of the Lord and his word'.⁶⁵ Nor is Henry VII, who, according to Daniel Woolf 'was uniformly (and necessarily, under the Tudors) considered a good king',⁶⁶ immune from criticism. Having elucidated Henry's accession as the product at once of behind-the-scenes manoeuvrings – the Bishop of Ely's 'deuise' 'for the conioynng the two houses of Yorke & Lancaster together' is mentioned no fewer than four times (p. 728) – and of divine planning – Richmond 'by the prouidence of God had obtayned this triumphant victory, & Diademe of the realme' (p. 729) – Foxe treads carefully in sizing up Henry's reign. Even so, he upbraids the first Tudor for his merciless treatment of true believers, implying that the king's life was cut short in retribution thereof: 'after the burnyng & vexyng of these poore seruauntes of Christ aboue recited, when the persecution begā now in the Church to be hoate, God called away the kyng'. The final verdict on Henry VII is distinctly mixed: he may have possessed 'great vertues of singular wisdom, excellent tēperaunce, & moderate frugalitie'. Those were marred, however, by the 'defect' of not 'protectyng Christes poore mēbers, from the fire of the Popes tyrāny' (p. 777).

Foxe has his royal heroes and villains. 'Of all the Kings of England, from William Conquerour, to this king Henry vij', he says, 'were none which either longer continued, or more prosperously flourished, then King Henry the second, King Henry the third, King Edward the first, King Edward the third'. They are the prime 'Examples of kinges of England, which were blessed of God with long prosperitie, being enemies to the byshops of Rome' (p. 777). Corresponding bad princes whose ends were untimely or reigns miserable or both number Edward II, Richard III, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI. To anyone familiar with Shakespeare's history plays this lumping together in the villain category of the victor from Agincourt and his saintly if ineffectual son alongside Bolingbroke and the 'bottled spider' must seem peculiar at best. The authors of *Sir John Oldcastle* (1599), a late Elizabethan history play designed to counter Shakespeare's depiction of Falstaff in *1-2 Henry IV*, would bend over backwards not to incriminate Henry V as the persecutor of lollardy.⁶⁷ Foxe had no such qualms. For his aim was to school his own prince in how to govern church and state. Introduced in the 1570 edition, this critical survey of Elizabeth's predecessors as much as the revised version of her tribulations under her Catholic sister may have been designed to aid Foxe's and other militant Protestants' campaign for a further reformation of the English church.⁶⁸ That is probably why Foxe who wanted to jog his sovereign into action made no distinction between active persecutors and mere indolents: 'where the church of Christ either through the negligence of Princes, or thorough their setting on, the poore members of Christ be persecuted and deuoured: shortly after ensueth some iust recompence of the Lord vpon those Princes, that eyther their liues do not long continue, or else they finde not that quiet in the common wealth, which they looke for' (p. 776). Godly rulers, Foxe admits, do not always prosper. '[B]ut speaking of the duty of Princes, I note and obserue by examples of histories that such Princes as haue most defended the Church of Christ committed their gouernance, from iniurie and violence of the Bishop of Rome, haue not lacked at Gods hand great blessing and felicitie' (p. 777). Here was something to mull over for the queen whom God had miraculously preserved from the clutches of popish henchman. By the time the passage was reprinted for the third time in the 1583 edition of the

⁶⁵ Significantly, Foxe points out that 'during all the life of the saide king, I finde of none expresly by name that suffered burning' (p. 505) even as he criticises Henry IV for being the first English monarch to execute people for heresy. Elsewhere, he contends that Henry VI's downfall 'came not without the iust appointment of the Lord, either for that Henry of Lancasters house were such enemies to Gods people, and for the burning of the Lord Cobham and many other: or els for the uniuert displacing of kyng Richard 2 or els thirdly for the cruell slaughter of Humfrey the good Duke of Gloucester his uncle' (pp. 716-17).

⁶⁶ *The Idea of History*, p. 31.

⁶⁷ *The Oldcastle Controversy: Sir John Oldcastle, Part I and The Famous Victories of Henry V*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

⁶⁸ Thomas S. Freeman, "'The Reformation of the Church in this Parliament': Thomas Norton, John Foxe and the Parliament of 1571", *Parliamentary History*, 16 (1997), 131-47; Freeman and Elizabeth Evenden, 'Print, Profit and Propaganda: The Elizabethan Privy Council and the 1570 Edition of Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"', *English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), 1288-1307.

Actes and Monuments, Elizabeth had prospered long enough to earn, by Foxe's own criteria, the title of a godly prince.

Foxe's view of English royalty is often strikingly different from, though not less illuminating than, Holinshed's. One would not turn to the 'Book of Martyrs' to learn about the laws of succession. On reading it, however, one might well conclude that primogeniture does not always work to the country's advantage and that in such circumstances tampering with the succession might not be amiss. For all Foxe's protestations of the inscrutability of divine decrees, his account of how 'our young Iosias' Edward VI attempted to bypass Mary Tudor in favour of Lady Jane Grey suggests that in this instance the martyrologist would have welcomed a violation of the hereditary principle. 'Albeit he in his will hadde excluded his sister Marye from the succession of the crowne, because of her corrupt religion', writes Foxe, 'yet þ^e plage which God had destinate vnto this sinfull Realme, coude not so be voided, but that shee beinge the elder and daughter to king Henry, succeeded in possession of þ^e crowne' (p. 1407). Yet if this passage might be taken as a qualified endorsement of opposition to a popish successor, elsewhere, that is, when a prince boasts Protestant or proto-Protestant credentials, Foxe upholds unconditional obedience to monarchical authority. '[T]hose most wicked papists' is how he brands the barons who rose against King John, 'their christian gouernor, appoynted to them of God whome they ought to haue obeyed, though he had bene euill, euen for very conscience sake' (p. 255).⁶⁹

Like Holinshed's *Chronicles* with its triple-kingdom perspective, the *Actes and Monuments* enabled the reader to weigh up England's constitution against those of other states, above all the empire and, to a lesser extent, the papacy. Foxe comments on the elections of sundry popes and emperors, astutely drawing out long-term repercussions of fraudulent manipulations of the electoral process. Foxe's providentialism which drives his reading of the reigns of English monarchs up to and including Mary and Elizabeth Tudor is equally applicable to foreign royalty. The horrid death of Charles IX of France, the perpetrator of the St Bartholomew Massacre, is a case in point: 'The constant report so goeth, that his bloud gushing out by diuers partes of his body, he tossing in his bedde, and casting out many horrible blasphemies, layed vpon pillowes with his heeles vpwrd, and head downeward, voyded so much bloud at his mouth, that in few houres he dyed. Which story if it be true, as is recorded and testified, may be a spectacle and example to all persecuting kinges and Princes polluted with the bloud of Christian Martyrs' (p. 2153).⁷⁰ All in all, Foxe's readers must have come away from his book with an abiding sense that there are more important things to look for in a king than the strongest lineal claim. For Foxe religion comes first; and he would have readily agreed with Persons that to exclude a claimant of a contrary faith is not only desirable but strictly necessary.

Chronicle History and Political Thought

How useful are Tudor chronicles as evidence of political culture and thought? Literary scholars tend to treat Hall and Holinshed as an inchoate mass of source material exploited in plays and poems. Dismissing them as inferior in concept and style to politic histories, historians of historiography ascribe to chronicles a fairly traditionalist and conservative outlook. Historians of political thought almost uniformly ignore them. So do constitutional historians. In 1994, Annabel Patterson identified the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* as a statement of ancient constitutionalism. I do not

⁶⁹ These words may have been written by Bale not Foxe. See Thomas S. Freeman 'John Bale's Book of Martyrs?: The Account of King John in *Acts and Monuments*?', *Reformation*, 3 (1998), 175-223.

⁷⁰ As Daniel Woolf reminds me, Foxe relies here on a topos derived from Lactantius' accounts of the persecutors of the early martyrs: the worse they are to the godly, the more horrible and usually early their own deaths. See also Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 73.

think we can attribute such coherence of purpose or effect to that undertaking. But I agree with Patterson that Holinshed, and the chronicle tradition more generally, could be used productively to reconstruct what contemporaries made, or might have made, of their political institutions and processes. That prose histories, especially the cheaper abridgements and epitomes, promptly responded to changing political circumstances has been recognized for some time. The topical slant of major chronicles as opposed to politic histories such as Hayward's *Henry IV*, which have been dissected over and over, too is beginning to be appreciated.⁷¹ What of the political ideas that underpin the depiction of monarchical succession? Were the chronicles more amenable to the construction put on them by Persons or his adversaries?

In discussing deposition and regicide in medieval England, Christine Carpenter quotes from the original instruments of deposition of Edward II and Richard III respectively as preserved in parliamentary rolls. We will not find such texts in Tudor chronicles of those times. Indeed, the chasm between *bona fide* constitutional documents that modern anthologies reproduce to illustrate fourteenth-century dynastic upheavals and the accounts of those upheavals in sixteenth-century chronicles is striking. Terminology is a particularly vexed issue. In explaining how the claims of the successors to deposed kings were being justified immediately after the fact, Carpenter insists that 'the deposing assemblies could not be termed parliaments' – and yet that's precisely how they are labelled by Tudor chroniclers.⁷² She also stresses that those such as Henry IV would not have wished to claim a 'parliamentary' title anyway (p. 111). Understandably, she says nothing about the idea of election. Yet in Tudor chronicles, titles of successors to deposed kings were described, *inter alia*, in terms of election.

Admittedly, not all chronicles use the word 'election'. Some refer to the making or the choice or the creation of a king. In the closing decades of the sixteenth century, a century that had seen the transformation of Poland from a hereditary monarchy into a purely elective one, and that had witnessed the emergence, mainly in Scotland and France, of resistance theories predicated on ideas of contract and election, the choice of vocabulary became increasingly significant. Persons, for one, drew attention to the very words used by John Stow to describe the popular acclamation of Edward IV: 'this consent of the people being had', he writes, '(or he being thus elected as Stowes words are)'.⁷³ In the second edition of Holinshed, we have seen, the reader would have encountered the 'elections' of medieval kings alongside testimonies that the papists hoped to elect a Catholic successor to Elizabeth and that the United Provinces aimed to choose her as their sovereign. In those latter days, an implicit criterion for distinguishing legitimate elections from illegitimate ones is religion.

In an aptly titled lecture, '*Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown*': *Dynastic Crises in Tudor and Stewart Britain 1504-1746*, John Morrill has argued that we need to take proper note of the impact of dynastic crises and the contingencies intrinsic to hereditary succession upon the course of early modern English and British history. He has also stressed that in order fully to

⁷¹ On mid-sixteenth-century chronicles, see Marcia Lee Metzger, 'Controversy and "Correctness": English Chronicles and Chroniclers, 1553-1568', *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 27 (1996), 437-51; on Hall as the first historian of the Reformation, see Tom Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformation, 1530-83* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 55-68; on Foxe's shifting conception of history, Betteridge, 'From Prophetic to Apocalyptic: John Foxe and the Writing of History', in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 210-32; on the significance of Foxe's revisions of his account of Elizabeth's tribulations during Mary Tudor's reign, see Thomas S. Freeman, 'Providence and Prescription: The Account of Elizabeth in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 27-55; on Foxe's revisions of the 'Book of Martyrs' in response to criticisms by the Catholics, see John King, 'Guides to Reading Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', in *The Uses of History*, pp. 129-45.

⁷² Carpenter, 'Resisting and Deposing Kings in England in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', in *Murder and Monarchy*, pp. 99-121, at p. 109. A typical anthology is B. Wilkinson's *The Constitutional History of England, 1216-1399*, 3 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1948-1958).

⁷³ *Conference*, p. 118 (first pagination).

understand how contemporaries conceptualised dynastic politics we have to attend not only to main-stream debates but also to the writings of English Catholics such as Persons.⁷⁴ It is equally important, I think, to consider how narrative accounts of medieval succession crises might have shaped the Elizabethans' assumptions about their country's constitution and political future.

National history as it was recounted in Tudor chronicles warranted a threefold conclusion: first, that the succession to the English throne had been repeatedly breached; secondly, that Parliament had long possessed and exercised the power to decide the succession by deposing unworthy rulers however strong their dynastic title and electing others in their stead; and, thirdly, that the English monarchy had thus not altogether ceased to be elective. Patrick Collinson has described as radical and innovative the confidential plans put forward in 1584-85 by Thomas Digges and William Cecil, first Baron Burghley for a legalised interregnum and an election of the successor to Elizabeth by Parliament.⁷⁵ The viability of such schemes was implicitly confirmed by the chronicles. An Elizabethan reader of a Stow or a Holinshed would have recognized that the transition from one ruler to the next had been frequently effected through some form of election. Naturally the chronicles recorded other claims advanced by or on behalf of the kings so elected: Edward III, for instance, had the best lineal claim as the son of the deposed Edward II. Nor did they necessarily endorse the solutions they described. Even so, narrative historiography provided massive documentary record of the country's messy constitutional past. Unlike Elizabethan apologists such as bishops Thomas Bilson and John Bridges, no historian made a concerted effort to cast England as a hereditary monarchy *par excellence*. The reader of the second edition of Holinshed was offered a view of Parliament as the highest court capable of deposing and electing kings. The occasional condemnation of such practices on moral grounds, for instance in the story of Richard II, went some way towards tempering but never seriously threatened the constitutional principle articulated in Harrison's description of parliamentary prerogative. Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs', for its part, put religion before any constitutional niceties.

This is not to say that the chronicles themselves were inflammatory or subversive. Unlike some of their Scottish and French counterparts which deliberately bent the past to underwrite the contractual dimension of kingship,⁷⁶ they gave little indication that in England the coronation oath inaugurates a contract of sorts between the ruler and the ruled. Recent scholarship has rejected the older view of Tudor historiography as blindly endorsing obedience to the regime and propagating what was once known as the Tudor myth. The complex interplay of ideological positions in Hall and in the two editions of Holinshed too has come under scrutiny, though we still need to know more about Foxe's political philosophy. Prose accounts, it has been shown, frequently embodied contradictory or incompatible reports and assessments of one and the same event. Precisely because of their omnivorous and discordant manner of retelling the past, prose histories readily lent themselves to all manner of ideological appropriation.

How does this pliability of history manifest itself with regard to the idea of election? In their interpretations of past constitutional arrangements, resistance writers on both sides of the Channel – Buchanan, Huguenots and later Catholic Leaguers, and Persons – argued from historical evidence that the Scottish, French, and English monarchies respectively had once been elective and limited,

⁷⁴ The Stenton Lecture 2003 (Reading: The Department of History, University of Reading, 2005). See also Morrill's 'Conclusion: King-Killing in Perspective', in *Murder and Monarchy*, pp. 293-9.

⁷⁵ 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I', in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 31-56.

⁷⁶ On François Hotman, Bernard du Haillan and other French historians, see Richard A. Jackson, 'Elective Kingship and *Consensus Populi* in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past and Present*, 44 (1972), 155-71; on Buchanan, see McElroy, 'Executing Mary Queen of Scots', ch. 2, pp. 87-143. Pace Annabel Patterson, neither 'Holinshed' nor any other Tudor historian can be said to have articulated a consistent theory of ancient constitutionalism or parliamentarism. Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*; see also P. C. Herman, 'Henrician Historiography and the Voice of the People: The Cases of More and Hall', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 39 (1997), 261-83.

and that vestiges of their elective past survived in contemporary coronation oaths. Tudor chronicles made plain that alongside heredity, conquest, adoption, abdication, and nomination, throughout English history quasi-elective solutions had often determined, or had been invoked to determine, the outcomes of succession crises. Hence the chronicles may well have been of greater service to those such as Persons who were intent on constructing a deeply unorthodox version of England's constitutional history than to legitimists such as Hayward or Craig who sought to refute it. In contrast to the welter of competing views about say the deposition of Richard II supplied between the covers of one and the same chronicle, in succession tracts we find carefully selected and rigorously ordered examples designed to prove a particular polemical point. The legitimist case was far more vulnerable to the power of historical counterexample than that for resistance and election. Persons' tract was twice reprinted, needless to say anonymously, in the mid-seventeenth century to bolster the republican cause.⁷⁷ The title of Henry Parker's rabidly anti-monarchical pamphlet most likely indebted to it, *The true portraiture of the kings of England* (1650), underlined 'that there hath been no direct Succession in the Line to create an hereditary right, for six or seven hundred years'.⁷⁸

If Hall, Stow, Grafton, and Holinshed described the assumption of power by Bolingbroke and Richard Duke of Gloucester and the Earl of Richmond as a form of election, whether legitimate and ethically justified or not, the suppression of that fact by a playwright or a poet is surely significant and warrants further investigation. Why did Shakespeare, for example, omit any reference to elections of Richmond and Bolingbroke from *Richard III* and *Richard II* respectively even though his sources named election among the titles advanced by both the future Henry VII and Henry IV? Marie Axton has noted the use of specific historical precedents in succession tracts and the pervasiveness of the same precedents in the drama. 'Plowden's exempla', she writes, 'permeate Heywood's *Edward IV* plays, Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*'.⁷⁹ Axton has not, however, gone back to the chronicle sources cited by controversialists and imaginative writers alike. Nor has she considered the shifting ideology of the narrative histories themselves or the topical resonance that particular episodes or terms in which they were described might have acquired long after the chronicles had been composed and published. Although some playwrights may have been aware of, perhaps even familiar with, individual succession tracts – George Peele's *King David and Fair Bethsabe* (1594), for instance, has strong affinities with Peter Wentworth's *Pithie Exhortation*, most would have formed their vision of England's constitutional past by reading the chronicle sources they used. Tudor historiography was the databank and the ideological and textual point of departure for both prose polemic and the drama.

⁷⁷ In 1648 and 1655 respectively: *Severall speeches delivered at a conference concerning the power of Parliament, to proeed [sic] against their King for misgovernment In which is stated* (London, 1648); *A treatise concerning the broken succession of the crown of England: inculcated, about the later end of the reign of Queen Elisabeth. Not impertinent for the better completing of the general information intended* (London, 1655). **Cf. the article in *The Month* which discusses appropriation of Persons in C17**

⁷⁸ Parker, *The true portraiture of the kings of England, drawn from their titles, successions, raings and ends, or, A short and exact historical description of every king, with the right they have had to the crown, and the manner of their wearing of it, especially from William the Conqueror wherein is demonstrated that there hath been no direct succession in the line to create an hereditary right, for six or seven hundred years: faithfully collected out of our best histories, and humbly presented to the Parliament of England / by an impartial friend to justice and truth* (London, 1650). Michael Mendle's *Henry Parker and the English Civil War: The Political Thought of the Public's 'Privado'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) does not refer to Persons' pamphlet.

⁷⁹ *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), p. 30.