

Lady Margaret Beaufort: The Power of the King's Mother and the Emergence of the Early
Modern State in England

By

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Course: HIST 449, Honours Graduating Essay

Instructor: Dr. Courtney Booker

A graduating thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts (Honours)

in

The Faculty of Arts

History Department

We accept this thesis as confirming to the required standard

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University of British Columbia

April 12, 2019

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Arlene Sindelar. Over the two years I have researched and written this thesis her support has been unwavering. I am tremendously grateful for the time and energy she has put into discussing endless facets of late-medieval England with me, and its various fascinating and powerful womenfolk. Thank you for bearing with my Latin skills, ever increasing (but always lacking) knowledge of paleography, and my effusive love for Margaret.

I would like to thank Dr. Courtney Booker and his pedant hat for teaching me the details of grammar. I am grateful for his criticism and the pressure he put on me to find my argument. My thesis would be completely different today without his advice. Moreover, he has truly brought me into the fold of the medievalist community both at UBC and internationally. I am so thankful that I was lucky enough to have him as my Honours Chair.

I am grateful for the entire 2018–2019 Honours cohort, whom I love immensely. They have all helped me clarify my ideas and have given me wonderful advice. Thank you for keeping me grounded and for making me laugh at two in the morning when I have far too much still to do. I will miss looking across the room, making eye contact, and knowing that we are thinking about the exact same thing. Furthermore, I would like to thank my roommate, Heidi Holland, who has continuously boosted my morale by making me laugh and baking desserts.

Another person without whom this essay (and my degree) would not have been possible is my wonderful Latin tutor, Jelena Todorovic, in whom I have found a lifelong friend. Thank you, Jelena, for all of your patience, kindness, and for being the type of person one wants to

make proud. It has inspired in me a lifelong interest in learning languages, and a love of real Turkish delight.

I would like to thank several specialists with whom I have spoken over the course of this paper. I am grateful to Tracy Deakin, the archivist at St. John's College, Cambridge for all of her help, but especially for helping me to navigate the archives and for assisting me with paleography. I would like to thank Professor Erik Kwakkel for answering my lingering paleographical questions. I would like to thank Dr. Christopher Friedrichs, for his books, support, and excellent conversations. I would like to thank Dr. Malcolm Underwood for kindly replying to my email inquiries. I would like to thank the UBC History Department, for giving me the incredible opportunity and resources to complete this project. Lastly and especially, I would like to thank the anonymous donor who made my archival research for this project possible. Their generosity is incredible and has changed the course of my academic career and life goals.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother and father, Anne and Jonathan. Thank you for listening to me talk about Margaret for the last nine years. At twelve I was odd, but now I'm just academic. Thank you for always supporting me, for letting me rant over countless dinners, for engaging with my fascination and asking questions that have made me think, for reading chapters of this paper, and for always giving me wonderful, supportive advice.

I have wanted to research and write about Margaret for almost half of my life, and to have done so is a dream come true. I am indebted to all the people listed here and to all of those unlisted who have, through endless hours of cumulative conversation, helped me clarify my ideas, introduced me to new concepts, and who have allowed me to vent my passion. I am infinitely grateful and forever changed.

Introduction

In the south aisle of the Lady Chapel in Westminster Abbey, there is a wooden bench from which tired visitors can survey the room and listen to the audio material provided by the Abbey. Many of the occupants of the surrounding tombs would be unfamiliar, but one may recognize the name Mary Queen of Scots, whose tomb dominates this small aisle. The oldest tomb in this room, however, is one that does not immediately command the viewer's attention. Near the back of the aisle is a gilt-bronze effigy of an elderly woman at the end of her life. Hands riddled with fine wrinkles and wandering veins clasp in prayer as they would have in life. Beneath the garments of widowhood, her solemn face stares resolutely upwards towards the heavens. This effigy marks the tomb of Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of King Henry VII and the Countess of Richmond and Derby, who lived from 1443 to 1509. Descended from kings, she engineered her son's usurpation of the English throne and wielded considerable influence in the early Tudor court.

Much has been written about Margaret Beaufort by scholars of both late-medieval England and of women in the Middle Ages; however, because of her gender, there have been significant debates over the centuries regarding her role in the early Tudor court. It has only been in the last thirty years that a degree of consensus has been reached on the subject, due to a thorough study of her archives by two established late-medieval historians: Malcolm Jones and Michael Underwood.¹ Since the publication of this study, it has been almost universally acknowledged that Margaret played a significant and unusual role in her son's government, and most scholars of the early Tudor period have used Jones and Underwood's book as their primary,

¹ Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

and sometimes only, source of information on Margaret's influence. Consequently, she is now acknowledged to have been her son's partner and chief advisor. Due to the relatively recent provenance of this consensus, the contemporary opinion on Margaret has yet to be fully incorporated into "mainstream" history of the early Tudor court.

Margaret was clearly influential, and many scholars of Henry VII and the early Tudor court reference her, but it is most often in a passing manner or in reference to her role in the Wars of the Roses. Though her position in the court has been elucidated, her influence on subsequent historical developments and especially on the development of the modern English state remains to be fully determined. In the last decades of the Wars of the Roses, modern statehood had begun to develop in England. This has been defined as the emergence of a strong concept of sovereignty that overrode lesser allegiances, increasingly autocratic monarchs, a modern bureaucracy recruited from the middle classes at the command of the monarch, and reformed financial and consultative administration.² Though some argue that these tendencies did not appear in England until the 1600s, most agree that they emerged earlier during the late Wars of the Roses and in the early Tudor court. According to Gerald Harriss and Penry Williams, two mid-twentieth-century Tudor historians, the developments occurred over time and with a large degree of continuity as government developed out of the medieval era. As recently as 2004, Michael Hicks noted that some of these changes to the state can be seen during the reign of Edward IV, from 1442 to 1483.³

Tudor historians have concurred, and have noted that the early Tudor rulers, Henry VII and Henry VIII, significantly altered social and political structures, which modified the

² Michael Hicks, *Edward IV* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 150–151.

³ Hicks, *Edward IV*, 151.

relationship between the king, noblemen, and gentry. These changes included altering the relationships among central government and local control by expanding the land held by the crown, the court, and royal administration, as well as by changing the makeup of the king's council, regional institutions, and military resources.⁴ These changes drastically increased the sovereignty of the English king and centralized the government.

Given Margaret's significant role during Henry VII's reign, one would expect that scholars studying the emergence of the English state would have considered her impact on these trends, and yet this is not the case. Likewise, biographers of Margaret, such as Jones, Underwood and Norton, have yet to situate her efforts into the context of larger governmental trends. In my thesis, I set out to assess Margaret's impact and to put it in the foreground of historical discourse on the early Tudor regime. To consider the base of Margaret's power and the extent of her authority and influence, I rely on biographical and historical scholarship about her, as well as research from primary sources from her archives and governmental archives.⁵ In the context of scholarship on the rise of the modern English state, I argue that Margaret increased the sovereign power of the monarch in three ways: by aiding in the expansion of the royal demesne; by expanding royal administration over regional institutions; and by changing the makeup of the king's council. She was the brilliant and powerful matriarch of the Tudor family, who devoted

⁴ S.J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government: 1485–1558* (Houndsmills; London: MacMillan Press Ltd. 1995), 24.

⁵ In my definition of "agency" I follow the formulation of Helen Maurer, an established historian of late-medieval queens. Maurer states that "authority" is the publicly recognized "right to make certain decisions and to require obedience." She notes that in women's history it is important to separate power from authority. To this end, she defines "power" as the ability to "gain compliance" through influence or persuasion, and/or coercion (Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 5). Lisa Benz St. John adds that "power" is now usually described as "agency" (Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England*, (New York: Macmillan, 2012), 9)." In this context, "power" brings with it the ability to act independently in a way that "authority" does not. Consequently, following the lead of Maurer and St. John, my use of power and agency in this thesis will be synonymous.

herself to empowering her son and his heirs. In doing so, she helped set in motion the rise of the modern English state.

Chapter One: Lady Margaret Beaufort

Rise to Power

Margaret was born on May 31, 1443, the only daughter of John Beaufort, first Duke of Somerset and Margaret Beauchamp, a relatively minor heiress from a well-to-do gentry family.⁶ She was the great-great-granddaughter of Edward III through her great grandfather, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and was a distant cousin of the King, Henry VI. The first decades of her life were dominated by the Wars of the Roses, a civil war of succession between the Lancastrian kings and their cousins, the Yorks. In 1455, at the age of twelve, she married Edmund Tudor, the half-brother of the Lancastrian King of England, Henry VI, and within months her new husband left to fight for the Lancastrian cause. In November 1456, Edmund was captured by York forces and died of the plague at twenty-six.⁷

Shortly after her husband's death, Margaret gave birth to her son, Henry Tudor, in January 1457, at the age of thirteen.⁸ In 1458, she married again, the second son of the Duke of Buckingham, Henry Stafford. The Duke was the most powerful Lancastrian magnate, and after his death, Henry Stafford maintained that allegiance until the victory of the Yorkist King,

⁶ The Beauchamp/Beaufort Hours, Royal MS 2A XVIII f. 30, accessed February 10, 2019. http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_2_A_XVIII; Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 27–28.

⁷ *Blyth's Oration at Cambridge*, in *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII*, ed. James Gairdner. Volume I (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861) 422–3; “Nam et dum in utero portaret te mater, vix discrimen pestis evasisti quae teneriores foetus facile consuevit interimere, de qua et pater tuus princeps illustris interiit.” This oration was given at Cambridge before King Henry VII, Margaret, and Henry's son Arthur, Prince of Wales. The editor of this text, Gairdner, claims that it bears “internal evidence of having been composed by John Blyth, bishop of Salisbury, who was chancellor of the University between the years 1493 and 1495.” However, Charles Henry Cooper, who wrote a biography of Margaret a decade later in 1874, and Jones and Underwood believe that this oration was given by Margaret's confessor and friend Bishop John Fisher, who also had connections to Cambridge and was the chancellor of the university after 1504.

⁸ The Beauchamp/Beaufort Hours f.28; *Blyth's Oration at Cambridge*, 422: “quae tum annum non implevit quartum-decimum.”

Edward IV in 1461.⁹ Both Stafford and Margaret were pardoned for their Lancastrian past, but they were forced to surrender the guardianship of Margaret's son Henry, whose estates and title were confiscated, and who was granted as a ward to one of Edward IV's supporters. However, in 1469, Henry Tudor's guardian was executed by Lancastrian forces during a rebellion against Edward IV. The throne oscillated between the two royal houses before Edward IV took hold of it relatively securely in 1471, after the deaths of Henry VI and his son. Fearing the vindictiveness of Edward IV, Henry Tudor fled with his uncle to Brittany at Margaret's recommendation.¹⁰ Margaret's husband subsequently died of wounds suffered in battle, widowing her once again.¹¹

Margaret's final marriage occurred in 1472, to Thomas Stanley, a well-established magnate in the west. He was trusted by the Yorkists, so Margaret began to petition for the restoration of Henry's lands, in the hope that he could return to England.¹² Edward IV intended to acquiesce to her request but died in 1483, before this could take place. His brother, Richard, claimed the throne from his nephews, whom parliament declared illegitimate, causing political turmoil.¹³ Richard III's usurpation split the York faction into two parts: those who supported the new king and those who were horrified by the mistreatment of the two young princes. Margaret sought to safeguard the preparations that had been made under Edward IV for Henry's return, but Richard III proved suspicious — Margaret and Stanley were not in royal favour.¹⁴ Margaret subsequently aligned herself with the Yorkist faction that was conspiring against Richard. In July

⁹ Elizabeth Norton, *Margaret Beaufort: Mother of the Tudor Dynasty*, (Stroud: Amberley, 2011) 51; Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 41.

¹⁰ Bernard Andre, *The Life of Henry VII*, (New York: Italica Press, 2011), 11–13; Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 56–8.

¹¹ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 95.

¹² Draft Pardon of Edward IV, WAM 32378 Dorse “sciatis quod nos de gratia &c pardonavimus, remissimus et relaxavimus Henrico comiti Richemondie [...] Filio et heredi Edmundi nuper comitis Richemondie [...] [omnimodos] &c.” This text has no date; Agreement: Inheritance of Henry of Richmond, SJLM/4/4/2.

¹³ *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers*, ed. Henry T. Riley (London: H.G. Bohn, 1854), 489.

¹⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 62.

1483, she participated in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue Edward IV's sons from the Tower of London. A chronicle from Benedictine Abbey of Croyland reported in 1486 that "a rumour was spread that the sons of king Edward [...] had died a violent death, but that it was uncertain how."¹⁵

A plan was then formulated by Margaret and the dowager queen, Edward IV's widow: Henry would invade England and claim the throne; if successful, he would marry Edward IV's eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York. It was hoped by both the Lancastrians and Yorkists that this would put an end to the civil war by uniting the houses. For this purpose, a rebellion was staged against Richard III in 1483, but it was unsuccessful. Richard placed Margaret under house arrest in her husband's power by a bill of attainder which forced her to forfeit her titles, estates, income, and inheritance. In short, Richard did all he could to punish Margaret without alienating Lord Stanley, who controlled a significant amount of land in England.¹⁶

By 1485 it was well known that Henry planned to invade England, and in August he did so, landing at Milford Haven in Wales.¹⁷ His army and Richard III's met at the battle of Bosworth Field, and it was only due to the support of Margaret's husband, Thomas Stanley, and his brother, who at the last minute betrayed King Richard, that Henry won the battle and Richard

¹⁵ *Ingulph's Chronicle*, 491. This quotation comes from the second continuation of the Croyland Chronicle, which was written in April 1486 and covers the period from 1459 to 1486. The author is anonymous but was a doctor of canon law and member of Edward IV's council. He therefore had Yorkist leanings. Due to the time it was written, the author would have been aware that the Tudors would usurp the throne and prove victorious. It is important to consider, therefore, that despite the Yorkist leanings of the chronicler the author would likely have been beholden to the general Tudor narrative (James Gairdner, "Did Henry VII Murder the Princes?" *English Historical Review* 6, no. 23 (1891): 447).

¹⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 64–5; Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 116–123.

¹⁷ *Henry, Earl of Richmond, before he was King, to his friends in England*, in *Letters of the Kings of England: Now First Collected from the Originals in Royal Archives, and From Other Authentic Sources, Private as Well as Public*, ed. J.O. Halliwell. Volume 1. (London: Henry Colburn Publisher, 1846) 161; *The Beauchamp/Beaufort Hours*, Royal MS 2A XVIII, f.31v.

III was killed.¹⁸ Henry was crowned at Westminster on October 3, 1485.¹⁹ After many years of tumult and dissension, Henry held the throne, making Margaret the king's mother.

The Historical Dispute: Domestic Religious Woman or Powerful Political Figure?

Since this thesis concerns Margaret's role during Henry VII's reign, it will discuss only the historiography regarding Margaret's activities between Henry's coronation in 1485 and her death in 1509. The seminal work on Margaret Beaufort is *The King's Mother*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, which was published in 1992. Jones and Underwood completed a thorough thematic study of the life of Margaret, using the full range of archival sources available. They argue that she was a political survivor and pragmatist, charismatic and well-respected in the spheres of religion, politics, and business.²⁰ They suggest that historians have obscured her dynamism and political activity by focusing chiefly on her piety and stoicism, and they attempt to correct this warped image with a more well-rounded portrait of her.²¹ Jones and Underwood convey her humanity, and place her less admirable traits (like avarice) in context by setting them against "her outstanding qualities, her courage, presence of mind, family loyalty, and a deeply felt awareness of the spiritual responsibilities of high office."²²

Works regarding the life of Margaret Beaufort written since the publication of *The King's Mother* have nearly unanimously accepted the portrait sketched by Jones and Underwood, and have taken for granted their appraisal of the balance between her religious and political roles, their representation of Margaret's relationship with other personalities in the early Tudor court,

¹⁸ *Circular letter of Henry VII after the Battle of Bosworth Field AD 1485*, in *Letters of the Kings of England now first collected from the originals in royal archives, and from other authentic sources, private as well as public*, ed. J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps (London: Henry Colburn Publisher, 1846), 169–170; *The Beauchamp/Beaufort Hours*, Royal MS 2A XVIII, fol. 31v.

¹⁹ *The Beauchamp/Beaufort Hours*, Royal MS 2A XVIII, fol. 32v.

²⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 251–2.

²¹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 5.

²² Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 259.

and their assessment of Margaret's character.²³ Before Jones and Underwood, there was no consensus within the scholarly community regarding Margaret's role or character:

historiographical opinions ranged from celebrating her to demonizing her.²⁴

Contemporary Tudor historians and authors vary in the degree to which they discuss Margaret's actions after 1485. Bernard Andre, an official Tudor historian writing in the early sixteenth century, does not mention her after 1485, though his narrative ends in 1497, well before her death.²⁵ Another early Tudor historian, Polydore Vergil, claims that Henry was a monarch who "chose to rule rather than be ruled," and that because of this independence no single councillor held sway over his policies. Vergil specifically singles out Margaret, stating that not even she held sway over him, though she was "extremely prudent." However, Vergil extolls her patronage and calls her the "most pious woman," stating that she was important throughout King Henry's reign, having a share in almost all his public and private resources.²⁶ Tudor chroniclers like John Stow and Edward Hall mention her little, though the latter repeats almost verbatim Polydore Vergil's evaluation.²⁷ Erasmus, writing about his friend the Bishop, John Fisher,

²³ For example, Elizabeth Norton in her 2011 biography of Margaret uses the work of Jones and Underwood two decades beforehand. In her appraisal of the political contributions of women in the Early Tudor court through family politics, Barbara Harris relies almost exclusively on Jones and Underwood for her information regarding Margaret's role. In his examination of Early Tudor Government, S.J. Gunn does the same. Biographies of various Tudors since 1992 have also relied on Jones and Underwood's work. (Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*; Barbara Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers*, (Oxford University Press, 2002); Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*; Arlene Naylor Okerlund, *Elizabeth of York*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)).

²⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 4. For a full discussion of historiography, see Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 1–16.

²⁵ Bernard Andre, *The Life of Henry VII*.

²⁶ Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia (1555 version)*, edited and translated by Dana F. Sutton, last edited May 25, 2010, accessed March 03, 2019. <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/>: "Quid quod ne matri quidem, foeminae prudentissimae, istuc postremo permissum;" "Margarita Henrici mater, mulier sanctissima;" Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 4.

²⁷ Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle Containing the History of England, during the Reign of Henry the Fourth, and the Succeeding Monarchs, to the End of the Reign of Henry the Eighth, in Which Are Particularly Described the Manners and Customs of Those Periods*, ed. Henry Ellis and Richard Grafton, (London: Printed for J. Johnson [etc.], 1809), 504; John Stow, *Annales, or, A Generall Chronicle of England* (London: A. Matthews, 1631).

extolled Margaret's support of religious institutions and the Bishop.²⁸ Though none of these Tudor historians write extensively about Margaret after 1485, they all present her as venerable.

Many historians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were less flattering than those of the earlier centuries. Though he was not writing about the period after 1485, George Buck in his biography of Richard III (which has a strong Yorkist bias) claims that Margaret was "a politic and contriving" woman.²⁹ Since Buck wrote in 1623, well after the Tudor reign, it is reasonable to assume that his opinion is coloured by Margaret's actions after 1485. In 1708, the Cambridge historian Thomas Baker failed to mention nearly anything except religious work in his summary of Margaret's life. Later in that century, another historian, Horace Walpole, noted cheekily that Margaret "ceded her *no* right to the crown, while she employed herself in founding colleges" and other devotions, implying that he believed her right to the crown was negligible.³⁰ The image of Margaret created by these early historians was highly religious and was also intended to counter the propaganda of the Tudor reign that emphasized the Tudor right to the throne. Some of these historians, like Buck and Walpole, were eager to underscore that the Yorkists had been the rightful kings of England and criticized Margaret on this account.

This opinion of Margaret initially carried through into the nineteenth century, but then began to shift considerably. Initially, it was generally agreed that Margaret did not participate in politics after 1485 and historians remained focused on her religious works. In his unfinished biography of Margaret from the early nineteenth century, John Britton vilifies her as popish, arrogant, and unloving. He states that she left the court after her son obtained the throne and claims that she avoided a governmental role, focusing instead on literature and piety. However,

²⁸ Extracts Regarding Margaret, Countess of Richmond, Lansdowne MS 978/74 f.83.

²⁹ George Buck, *The History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third* (London: W. Wilson, 1623), 36.

³⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 7.

Britton contests historians who depict Margaret as an ascetic by showing that she attended royal feasts.³¹

Writing around the same time as Britton, Caroline Halsted offers a depiction of Margaret that is more flattering; nonetheless, at the point in her narrative when Henry takes the throne she avoids discussing Margaret's public role, claiming that it is advisable for the biographer to "retreat from public to private life, and again limit attention to considering the Countess of Richmond in her domestic career."³² Halsted's advice shows a classic Victorian sensibility, which considered the domestic and private to be the female sphere, and the public to be the male sphere. By limiting her consideration of Margaret's actions to the domestic sphere, Halsted anachronistically casts her as a Victorian lady. She puts great effort into demonstrating that Margaret's role during her son's reign was feminine in the Victorian sense, claiming that Margaret "never appeared at court in any other character than that of the affectionate parent, a bright example of obedience and submission to the laws of the land." Halsted emphasizes Margaret's family relationships as well as her educational and literary pursuits, and claims that Margaret influenced court manners.³³

Despite these attempts to relegate Margaret to the domestic sphere, Halsted occasionally gives the reader the sense that there is more to the story. Though she asserts Margaret's non-interference in politics, she cannot help but note that Henry VII consulted her "on all matters of real importance." The language Halsted uses to describe Margaret emphasizes her ideal

³¹ John Britton's *Memoir of Margaret*, MS Oo.6.89.

³² Caroline A. Halsted, *Life of Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, Mother of King Henry the Seventh* (London: Smith, Elder and Co. Cornhill, 1839), 162.

³³ Halsted, *Life of Margaret Beaufort*, 164, 169–170.

Victorian traits. She describes Margaret as having “humane and gentler feelings,” which are difficult to reconcile with the evidence of her political ruthlessness.³⁴

Also writing in the 1830s, Edmund Lodge agrees with Halsted’s assessment. He notes that Margaret stepped “out of the usual sphere of her sex,” but claims that she confined herself to literary pursuits and avoided any role in government.³⁵ He insists that she obeyed Henry VII as sovereign with simplicity, and claims that she seemed to forget that “in the opinion of no small party, he reigned [...] by her tacit appointment.” Lodge takes issue with earlier negative depictions of Margaret’s character, stating that history has treated her “with complaisance” rather than justice, and notes that her positive attributes have been underrepresented. Nonetheless, he too agrees that she retreated from court after Henry took the throne.³⁶

Later nineteenth-century biographers were more wholistic in their portrayals. Published in 1874, Charles Henry Cooper’s biography of Margaret was the most detailed prior to that of Jones and Underwood written over a century later. Cooper casts her as capable and politically astute, credits her with an important role in the monarchy after 1485, and describes her domestic and religious as well as governmental and political actions.

In 1899, Margaret Domvile’s biography of Margaret reflected this change in historical opinion. Like Cooper, she gave Margaret a more public and, from a Victorian perspective, masculine role. Domvile acknowledges this conflict, noting that social norms in late medieval England “made it easy for the Countess of Richmond to take a prominent part in public affairs

³⁴ Halsted, *Life of Margaret Beaufort*, 175, 187.

³⁵ Edmund Lodge, “Margaret of Lancaster,” in *Portraits of Illustrious Personages of Great Britain Engraved From Authentic Pictures in the Galleries of the Nobility and the Public Collections of the Country with Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Their Lives and Actions*. Volume I. (London: Harding and Lepard, 1835), 1. Lodge restarts the page numbers with every chapter, therefore though this is from page 1 of the chapter on Margaret, it is not from the first page in the book.

³⁶ Lodge, “Margaret of Lancaster,” 1–3.

without overstepping the limits imposed by her sex and position.” Indeed, as Domvile continues, “through the Middle Ages women had a considerable and uncontested share in the serious business of life.” It is tempting to read this assertion as a criticism of Victorian sensibilities as much as it is an appraisal of late Medieval societal norms. Domvile notes that Margaret’s role after 1485 was unusual, claiming it was necessarily so because the throne would have belonged to her had women at the time not been excluded from sovereign power.³⁷ Domvile believes Margaret was more focused on charity and piety after 1498, but addresses her political role both before and after this time as well.³⁸

Twentieth-century opinions of Margaret’s role after 1485 are divided. Some historians returned to the suggestion that Margaret retired from the public eye to focus on domestic matters, like raising her grandchildren, as well as on piety and patronage. Louise Creighton expounded this theory in 1909, stating that Margaret never tried to take any part in public affairs.³⁹ E.M.G. Routh concurs in her 1924 biography of Margaret. Though Routh acknowledges that Margaret was consulted often by Henry and claims that Henry owed her his crown, she also states that Margaret “did not concern herself actively in questions of government nor foreign policy”; rather, Margaret’s interests were “religious, intellectual, social, and domestic.”⁴⁰ As late as 1979, Alison Plowden expounds this same opinion. Although she acknowledges Margaret was often at court and aided the king on multiple occasions, Plowden concludes that after 1485, Margaret

³⁷ Margaret Domvile, *The King’s Mother: Memoir of Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (London: Burns & Oates Lmt., 1899), 112.

³⁸ Domvile, *The King’s Mother*, 173.

³⁹ Louise Creighton, “Margaret Beaufort” in *Some Famous Women*, (London; New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 64.

⁴⁰ E. M. G. Routh, *Lady Margaret: A Memoir of Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond and Derby, Mother of Henry VII* (Oxford University Press, 1924), 63.

“retired from political life.”⁴¹ In 1982, Linda Simon wrote a biography of Margaret — the first to appear since the feminist advances of the twentieth century — in which she shows Margaret in much the same fashion. Simon says next to nothing about Margaret’s political involvement, instead focusing on her traditional female roles as a mother and grandmother, as well as on her patronage and piety.⁴²

Beginning in the 1970s, other historians began to claim once again that Margaret remained politically important and active after 1485. In 1977, Pearl Hogrefe anticipated the work of Jones and Underwood. Not only did she acknowledge Margaret’s piety and patronage, as all biographers of Margaret do, but she also gave a detailed account of Margaret’s importance in English domestic politics during her son’s reign. She convincingly claims that Margaret played a special role in controlling Northern England.⁴³

In 1992, Jones and Underwood demonstrated that Margaret did not retire after 1485 and showed that she was a political giant during her son’s reign, as his political ally. They achieved this by analyzing her archives and other primary sources pertaining to her life, and by assessing her activities from various perspectives to elucidate the full range of her activities, such as those pertaining to religion, patronage, and politics. Since the publication of their biography of Margaret, few historians have contradicted their general argument regarding Margaret’s role in Henry VII’s reign.⁴⁴ Most notably, in her 2011 biography of Margaret, Elizabeth Norton

⁴¹ Alison Plowden, “My Lady the King’s Mother” in *Tudor Women: Queens and Commoners* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1979), 17.

⁴² Linda Simon, *Of Virtue Rare: Margaret Beaufort, Matriarch of the House of Tudor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982).

⁴³ Pearl Hogrefe, “Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby” in *Women of Action in Tudor England* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977), 136–154.

⁴⁴ Favourable reviews of Jones and Underwood include: C.S.L. Davies, Review of *The King’s Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The English Historical Review* 110, no. 437 (Jun., 1995): 717-718; A. L. Rowse, Review of *The King’s Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood,

acknowledges Margaret's political and even regal role.⁴⁵ However, her overall analysis of Margaret's life post-1485 still emphasizes Margaret's familial and religious role over her political one. The research of Jones and Underwood is thorough, and because Underwood was the archivist of Margaret's papers and archives, they had access to the fullest range of sources regarding her life. Like many others since 1992, I will rely on the groundwork they have laid in my research regarding Margaret's life.

Contemporary Review 260, no. 1517 (Jun., 1992): 329+; Diarmaid MacCulloch, Review of *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 24, no. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 739-740; Thomas J. Wyly, Review of *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 432-434; Lorraine Attreed, Review of *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *Speculum* 69, no. 1 (Jan., 1994): 184-186; S.J. Gunn, Review of *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *Welsh History Review (Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru)* 16, no. 3 (Jun., 1993): 394-396; Roy Martin Haines, Review of *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *Canadian Journal of History* 28, no. 2 (Aug., 1993): 336-338; Retha M. Warnicke, Review of *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 24, no. 4 (Winter, 1992): 633-634; R. N. Swanson, Review of *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 13, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 171. Unfavourable reviews include: Eric Ives, "A Good Crumb," Reviews of *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, by Antonia Fraser and *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, by Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *History Today* 44, no. 11 (Nov., 1994): 60. Ives book review is primarily concerned with Fraser's book; however, he does include a paragraph about *The King's Mother* in which he asserts that there is not enough data to "enable a firm decision" regarding Margaret's role after 1485. He is very much in the minority with this opinion, and I myself disagree with his stance.

⁴⁵ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*.

Chapter Two: “Madame, My Most Enterely Wilbeloved Lady and Moder”

The significance of Margaret’s role and the extent to which she influenced later trends in the Tudor regime, depends on understanding three things: the basis of Margaret’s power, her relationship with her son, and her role in the court. This assessment demonstrates that she had the agency to act in a manner unusual for a medieval noblewoman and why she was so influential. Contextually, this background information about her role in the early Tudor court is necessary to understand how Margaret could contribute to governmental change and provide an influential legacy. Despite her marriage she was an independent actor legally and religiously; she had a special and trusting relationship with her son, the king; and she was a visible political actor in London. All of these unusual aspects of her position empowered her to effectively rule in a partnership with her son.⁴⁶

An Unprecedented Marriage: The Femme Sole and Her Vow of Chastity

“Le roy le voet.”

“The king wills it.”⁴⁷

With these words, Henry VII granted his mother, Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, the freedom to act independently of her husband. It was November 1485, the first Parliament of King Henry’s reign, and time to reorder the court to suit the prerogatives

⁴⁶ By “partnership” I mean that they cooperated with each other on relatively equal terms within their own relationship to accomplish similar objectives. Henry, as the king, held much more power than Margaret. However, I argue that the position he put her in, the power he invested in her, and the regard in which he held her advice suggest they worked as equal partners in their personal relationship, and that they worked together towards the same goals privately and publicly.

⁴⁷ *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England: 1275–1504*, Volume XV, Richard III: 1484–1485; Henry VII 1485–1487, ed. Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge, London: The Boydell Press, 2005), 126–7.

of the new dynasty. As part of these changes, Parliament passed two acts regarding Margaret. The first Act reversed the legislation that had robbed Margaret of her properties under the reign of Richard III, deeming it “entirely void, annulled and of no force or effect.”⁴⁸ This brought Margaret’s marriage settlement with her husband, Lord Thomas Stanley, back to its original terms negotiated in 1472.

The second Act of November 1485 stated that she would enjoy all her properties and titles, and could pursue any legal action as any “single unmarried person might or may do at any time,” despite still being married.⁴⁹ This act gave Margaret legal and economic independence which was of much greater long-term significance than the repeal of Richard III’s measures and constraints on her activities.⁵⁰ The Act allowed Margaret to “take and receive all manner of enfeoffments, estates, leases, releases, confirmations, presentations, bargains, sales, gifts, deeds, wills and writings of lands and tenements and all the hereditaments as well as of all kinds of goods, chattels and other things, to her own use only or to the use of such as shall please her,” and also let her revise her will as she pleased.⁵¹ Effectively, this Act authorized her to manage her properties and goods without the consent of her husband, Lord Thomas Stanley, making her legally and financially independent. Additionally, the act authorized her to revise her will of her own volition, another action that usually required the permission of a woman’s husband.

⁴⁸ *The Parliament Rolls*, XV, 126–7: “utterly voided, adnulled, and of no force ne effect;” Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 98.

⁴⁹ *The Parliament Rolls*, XV, 126–7: “eny other sole persone not wyfe ne covert of eny husband, at eny tyme myght or may do.”

⁵⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 98.

⁵¹ *The Parliament Rolls*, XV, 127: “take and receyve all maner feoffementes, states, lessees, relessees, confirmacions, presentacions, bargens, sales, yeftes, dedes, willes and writynges, as well of londes and tenementes and all maner of hereditamentes as of all maner goodes, catalles and other thynges, to her owne use only, or to thuse of suche as shall please her.”

The second Act declared Margaret a *femme sole*, and it was the economic and legal separation of Margaret's business from that of her husband that made her an autonomous agent during the reign of Henry VII. However, despite negotiating this transition in her legal status, her marriage was successful, and the powerful Lord Stanley was kept in the royal fold. The terms of Margaret's marriage and her legal status as a woman during the reign of Henry VII differed from those of most late-medieval English noblewomen. Consequently, she was entrusted with enormous wealth, expanding the land effectively held by the crown and enabling her to play an independent governmental and regional role.

The *femme sole* was a legal construct that operated as part of a binary opposed to the notion of a *femme coverte*, the term for the legal position of a married woman in England.⁵² Under common law, all of a woman's property came under her husband's control and became his legal responsibility upon marriage. Any actions taken in court had to be pursued jointly. A married woman was thus referred to as either a *covert de baron* (covered by her husband) or *femme coverte* (covered woman).⁵³

The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England, known as "*Glanville*," was written between 1187 and 1189. It shows how little a *femme coverte* could do without the permission of her husband, stating that a married woman "could not contradict [her husband] in any matter nor act against his will."⁵⁴ Because all of the property of a wife became her husband's upon marriage, she was also unable to make a will that contradicted the intentions of her husband. As the treatise notes, a wife could not "without her husband's authority" dispose of possessions that

⁵² Cordelia Beattie, *Medieval Single Women: The Politics of Social Classification in Late Medieval England*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 25.

⁵³ Beattie, *Medieval Single Women*, 25.

⁵⁴ Ranulf de Glanville, *A Translation of Glanville*, ed. John Beames (Washington: John Byrne & Co. 1900), 135.

belonged to her husband. As all her property fell into this category, it meant that until widowhood women had no right to make a will, because they had no chattels.

Although the author of *Glanville* suggests it would be “kind” and “credible” of the husband to allow his wife to dispose of a “reasonable division, namely up to that third part of his chattels which [...] she would have obtained had she survived her husband,” there was no guarantee he would allow her to dispose of any of his chattels, it merely behooved him.⁵⁵

Legally, a wife was bound to the will of her husband where all matters were concerned, and his permission was essential to all her ventures. Because of this, the agency of the *femme coverte* was stifled by the authority that her husband held over her life. This contrasted with the agency of a *femme sole*, who was economically and legally independent from her husband. By specifically stating in the act of November 1485 that Margaret was to hold all of her possessions as a *femme sole* and could make a will as she pleased, Henry lifted her from the constraints that had been placed upon her by the event of her marriage. Despite being a married woman, theoretically *coverte*, she henceforth legally acted as though she were a *femme sole*.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Glanville, *A Translation of Glanville*, 80.

⁵⁶ Margaret was by no means the first woman in England to become a *femme sole*. Widowed women in England effectively held *femme sole* status and were regarded as independent persons able to plead in the courts and act as the heads of their households and estates (Jennifer C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*, (New York: Longman, 1992), 34). The *Liber Albus* was compiled in 1419 and sought to instruct and guide the mayors of London. In this book, it states that because “the Wife herself is in a legal sense under the absolute power of her Husband,” both her body and any of her belongings “should be considered to be fully at the disposal of the Husband (John Carpenter and Richard Whittington, *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, trans. Henry Thomas Riley (London: Richard Griffin and Company, Stationers Hall Court, 1861), 97).” While a woman was married, she could not hold property or make her own contracts, as both she and all her belongings became those of her husband upon marriage. This only changed with widowhood. *Glanville* notes that a widow could sue in court to regain her marriage portion, dower, or any other rights in property that should be hers that her husband had alienated during his lifetime, because it was unfair for a “woman to lose any right by her husband’s act,” as she was unable to contradict him (*Glanville, A Translation of Glanville*, 135). The implication of *Glanville*’s statement is that as a widow, a woman could now do as she pleased and alter some decisions made by her husband in his lifetime. It acknowledges that she lacked agency while a *femme coverte*, but equally acknowledges that as a widow she gained the agency that she previously lacked. Widowhood was the most common way for a woman to hold the status of a *femme sole*. However, widowhood was not the only path to *femme sole* status. For purely economic reasons, working women in London from the 1300s onwards sometimes registered themselves officially as a *femme sole* with the Mayor and aldermen of London (Marjorie K. McIntosh, “The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status in England, 1300–

It was unprecedented for an aristocrat of Margaret's status to be given the power to act as if she had *femme sole* status while she had a living husband. Scholars have claimed that in Margaret's case, her *femme sole* status was a statement of intent, the product of excellent legal advice, and most likely her own initiative.⁵⁷ The nature of Margaret's elite social station meant that the status brought with it more than economic freedom, and allowed her to use her enormous talent and intelligence to empower herself and her son rather than her husband. According to English Law, her husband would otherwise have been the primary beneficiary of her capabilities, because he would have been legally able to control her actions and would have owned her land and chattels.

The implementation of *femme sole* status separated Margaret from her husband's family and ensured that her loyalty to the crown was undivided, without dangerously alienating her

1630," *Journal of British Studies* 44, 3 (2005), 410; Barbara Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law, and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 276). The status of a *femme sole* enabled them to conduct their business dealings independently of their husbands. The *Liber Albus* states that where trading was concerned, a *femme sole* was considered "bound as a single woman as to all that concerns her said craft (Carpenter and Whittington, *Liber Albus*, 181)." Were legal problems to ensue, the woman was sued independently, and "neither the husband nor his goods" would "be charged or interfered with (Carpenter and Whittington, *Liber Albus*, 181)." For example, "if a wife, as though a single woman" sought to buy or sell property in London, she would be legally responsible for her own actions and could "be impleaded and sued as a single woman [...] notwithstanding that she was *coverte de baron* (Carpenter and Whittington, *Liber Albus*, 181–182)." Despite having the ability to exercise this independence, women acting on their own represented only a small percentage of the buyers or sellers of property in London (Hanawalt, *Wealth of Wives*, 269). A woman registering as a *femme sole* was also advantageous for her husband. Not only could he claim that he held no responsibility were her business dealings to land in hot water, but in times of economic pressure, it enabled couples to shift goods or cash from one spouse to the other (McIntosh, "The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status," 410; Caroline M. Barron, "The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London," *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1989), 40). This would otherwise be impossible, as according to common law spouses were unable to exchange gifts. The justification for this was the fear that gifts would be made due to the lust or excessive poverty of one party (Bracton, *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae* (The Laws and Customs of England) Latin text of George Woodbine. Translated by Samuel E. Thorne, Volume II, 97, accessed February 11, 2019. <http://amesfoundation.law.harvard.edu/Bracton/Framed/mframe.htm>: "et re vera donations itner virum et uxorem constante matrimonio valere non debent, et est causa ne fiant propter libidinem vel unius eorum immoderatam egestatem.") *Femme Sole* status provided the working women of London with more economic flexibility; however, it brought no political opportunities (Barron, "The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London," 40.) Neither a *femme sole* working woman in London nor a *femme sole* widow could hold a political office or an official role in the justice system. *Femme sole* status allowed women to have economic independence, but it did not give them any more political independence than they otherwise had as a wife.

⁵⁷ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 99; Malcolm Underwood, email message from author, Feb. 21, 2019.

husband and his family. Margaret's continued marriage to Thomas Stanley linked the burgeoning dynasty to one of the most powerful English families – the Battle of Bosworth might have come to a very different conclusion had Margaret's husband and his brother not stepped in at the last minute and swayed the tide of battle to the Tudors' side. On the other hand, Margaret's *femme sole* status allowed Henry VII to treat his mother as an independent legal entity. Had Margaret not been a *femme sole*, any power or wealth invested in her would legally have belonged to her husband, and he could have overruled her opinion on how that wealth was used. A wife was expected to identify and ally with her husband's family and connections.⁵⁸ By granting Margaret the status of a *femme sole*, Henry made it possible to empower her without giving further leverage to the Stanleys, since Margaret could use any wealth granted to her for her own purposes. Additionally, he released her from the loyalty she owed the Stanley family as a *femme coverte* and enabled her to pursue business and legal opportunities for purposes of her choice alone, even if her purposes ran counter to those of her husband, which they sometimes did. This enabled her to work with Henry in partnership as an independent agent separate from her husband and his allegiances.

After granting Margaret *femme sole* status, Henry VII invested great wealth in his mother. The Patent Rolls are filled with licences and grants to Margaret, including great amounts of property with an annual income amounting to more than a thousand pounds.⁵⁹ Although Stanley received revenues from properties held by Margaret before her *femme sole* status, all

⁵⁸ Jennifer Ward, *English Noblewomen*, 102.

⁵⁹ *Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII*, edited by William Campbell, volume II, Rolls Series (London: Eyre and Stottiswoode, 1877), 130–132; Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 100. For context, in the thirteenth century a high-quality riding horse generally cost about ten pounds, and a draught horse ten to twenty shillings. In the early fifteenth century, tallow candles cost 1.5 pence per pound, and wax candles 6.5 pence per pound. For a longer discussion of the cost of various items in the late Middle Ages, see: Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c.1200-1520 Revised Edition* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72, 74.

properties granted to Margaret after 1485 by her son were for her use alone. King Henry did not intend for Stanley to profit from his grants to his mother.⁶⁰ Margaret had what Malcolm Underwood has called a “special position” as a “de facto trustee” for the crown, as the majority of her estates would pass to King Henry upon her death.⁶¹ Granting her land was, therefore, a way of recognizing her position without alienating land from the crown in the long-term.⁶² This was the beginning of a ruling partnership between mother and son which persisted for the entirety of King Henry’s reign. The combination of her new legal status and these estates gave Margaret unprecedented independence and authority for a married woman in England and enabled her to be an active participant in English politics, governance, and administration autonomously of her husband.

Nearly fifteen years later in 1499, Margaret took her independence a step further by undertaking a vow of chastity before Richard Fitz-James, the Bishop of Rochester.⁶³ She subsequently renewed the vow upon her husband’s death in 1504, after “good deliberation” for her “sinful soul,” noting that she had made this vow as fully as possible in her husband’s lifetime.⁶⁴ Her vow of chastity likely had multiple motives. First, it was politically advantageous.

⁶⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 99.

⁶¹ Malcolm G. Underwood, “The Lady Margaret and Her Cambridge Connections,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13, no. 1 (1982): 75.

⁶² This will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

⁶³ Lady Margaret’s Vow of Chastity, Add. MS 5825; Charles Henry Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby*. (Printed at the University Press, 1874), 97–8. Accessed 2 July, 2018. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6i23p6>.

⁶⁴ Lady Margaret’s Vow of Chastity, Add. MS 5825; The Beauchamp/Beaufort Hours, Royal MS 2A XVIII f. 31. Taking a vow of chastity while married was unusual for an aristocratic woman in England, although it was a religious act sometimes undertaken by widows. A vow of chastity preceded life in a virginal (also called spiritual) marriage where a couple forswore sexual relations (Pat Cullum, “‘Give Me Chastity’ Masculinity and Attitudes to Chastity and Celibacy in the Middle Ages” in *Gender & History* 25, 3 (2013): 623). This vow could be taken after many years of marriage or even after having had children, and if this was the case was called a continent marriage (Cullum, “Give Me Chastity,” 628). Margaret’s vow in the last years of her life fits into the latter category. Continent marriages developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but remained rare in England (Cullum, “Give Me Chastity,” 628-9). Aside from Margaret, there are few examples. In 1321, William de Sibbilton and his wife Isolde took a joint vow of chastity, and in 1451, Peter Percy sought to be ordained as a priest because his wife, Elizabeth de Holm, had taken a vow of chastity three years earlier at over sixty years of age (Cullum, “Give Me

In the late 1490s, King Henry had become increasingly suspicious of some branches of the Stanley family.⁶⁵ It was beneficial for Margaret to separate her household at this time by undertaking the vow and moving into her own residence so that King Henry could more securely invest power and trust in her.⁶⁶ Second, Margaret likely had religious motivations.⁶⁷

By becoming a *femme sole* and pledging a vow of chastity, Margaret gained the advantages of widowhood while still married, allowing her to act autonomously of her husband during the reign of her son. The increased influence and legal independence that her *femme sole* status and vow of chastity granted to her were usually hallmarks of the medieval widow. Indeed, before the fifteenth century, it was not uncommon for a dowager, particularly one of wealth, to exercise the authority previously held by her husband within her family.⁶⁸

Chastity,” 629). In the early fifteenth century, Margery Kempe, the daughter of a mayor of Norwich, convinced her husband after much strife, to allow her to take a vow of chastity (Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. and ed. Lynn Staley (New York; London: Norton & Company, 2001), 18–20). There are a few other examples that could be listed; however, in all of these cases, the vow was taken by individuals even farther below Margaret’s status (For a more complete discussion of vows of chastity taken in both England and throughout the rest of Europe, see Cullum, “Give Me Chastity;” and Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton University Press, 1993)).

⁶⁵ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 154.

⁶⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 154.

⁶⁷ Since she renewed her vow after the death of her husband. Bishop John Fisher was one of Margaret’s closest companions and her confessor. Upon Margaret’s death, Fisher wrote a long eulogy for the Countess, in which he detailed her religious activities. Strikingly, he described her in her old age praying at length while kneeling, despite noting that this action was “so painful” to her that “many times it caused in her back pain and disease” (J. Fisher (ed. J Hymers), *The Funeral Sermon of Margaret Countess of Richmond and Derby, Mother to King Henry VII and Foundress of Christ’s and St. John’s College in Cambridge, Preached by Bishop Fisher in 1509: With Baker’s Preface to the Same, Containing Some Further Account of Her Charities and Foundations, Together with a Catalogue of Her Professors Both at Cambridge and Oxford, and of Her Preachers at Cambridge (Including Baker’s Preface)*, edited by J. Hymers, (Cambridge University Press, 1840), 114). Nonetheless, she never failed to recite daily the Crown of our Lady, which involved sixty-three Aves. At every Ave, she kneeled (Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Margaret*, 114; “And yet nevertheless dayly, when she was in helthe, she fayled not to say the Crowne of our Lady, which, after the maner of Rome, conteyneth sixty and thre Aves; and at every Ave to make a knelynge”). Margaret was willing to endure prolonged pain to fulfill her religious devotions. For a woman of her disposition, a vow of chastity probably had both political and religious dimensions.

⁶⁸ Linda E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage and Politics in England 1225–1350* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 133. Linda Mitchell has noted that these empowered dowagers overcame the gendered subordination expected of them and were often denounced with the title of virago (Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, 133-136). The term virago had both positive and negative connotations. Initially, this term was used as praise for female saints and was sometimes used to characterize powerful women. Eventually, however, this term came to take on a pejorative meaning, used to describe dowagers seen as over-powerful and domineering by

By taking on the rights of a widowed dowager while still in the confines of marriage, Margaret prematurely transcended the boundaries of matrimony, giving her the powers of a matriarch at a relatively young age. Although a widow after 1504, the powers invested in her by Henry VII in 1485 allowed her to achieve her full political capacity twenty years earlier. These powers allowed her to participate in the reign of her son as an independent agent, loyal only to the crown, the king, and the dynasty she had helped to fashion. Any authority she exercised relied to some degree on this freedom.

Despite her independence, her marriage still functioned as intended. Margaret's union with Stanley was unlikely initially a love match, nor were children necessary. It was not the first marriage of either party involved. Stanley already had a brood of children by his first wife, making heirs a non-issue. Margaret had already been widowed twice, and at 28, after a thirteen-year childless marriage, was likely fully aware that she had been too damaged by her first experience of childbirth to become pregnant again. Rather, the match between Margaret and Stanley had always been politically fueled. Both extremely wealthy and influential, they had backed opposing sides in the Wars of the Roses, ensuring their safety no matter the monarch

their contemporaries. In the ninth century, a monk of Halberstadt wrote a hagiography of Saint Liutberga, a daughter of Hesse. In it, he called her a virago for overcoming the "imbecility of her sex," thus overcoming her gender (Vita S. Liutberga, edited by G. H. Pertz, in *Medieval Sourcebook: The Life of St. Liutberga, 9th Century*, translated by Jo Ann McNamara, 1997, accessed January 15, 2019. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/liutberga.asp>). Mitchell credits this change in attitude to the intellectual humanist movement, which resulted in more rigid definitions of appropriate behaviour and religious belief, and greater influence of classical culture, in conjunction with the popular perception of an overabundance of influential virago-dowagers (Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, 134–6). For example, in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* he uses the term "virago" as an insult, saying of the Assyrian queen: "O Sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee!/ Virago, though Semyrame the secounde!/ O Serpent under femynynytee./ Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybound!" (Chaucer, II. 358–61) in Geoffrey Hughes, "Virago," in *An Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English Speaking World*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2006) 484–5). By Margaret's lifetime, these powerful dowagers would have served as a precedent for a powerful woman taking on a more masculine role. To our knowledge, Margaret was not considered a virago in her own age. She was not considered a "she-wolf," unlike the queens of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who attempted to seize and wield power, because her power was condoned by the monarch. The term "she-wolf" was used frequently in the fourteenth and fifteenth century to describe royal women who were seen as having overstepped their place by trying to seize power unsuitable for a woman, such as Margaret of Anjou.

presently in power. After Margaret became a *femme sole*, Stanley was compensated with estates and titles, and always held a privileged position at court as the stepfather of the king. In 1485, he was made the High Chancellor of England, one of the most powerful governmental positions, and the Earl of Derby.⁶⁹ A year later he was appointed Lord High Constable of England and High Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster, among other estates and offices. These rewards were fitting, given both how imperative Stanley's support had been in Henry's success usurping the throne and the nature of his marriage with Margaret. According to the Tudor historian Polydore Vergil, it was Stanley himself who placed King Richard's crown on King Henry's head in the aftermath of the battle at Bosworth.⁷⁰

Despite Margaret's independence, she and the Tudor dynasty thus maintained the support of the patriarch of the Stanley family. This alliance was crucial. In early 1495, the Tudors faced a rebellion claiming to support a Yorkist prince. Thomas Stanley's brother joined the rebellion, but Stanley himself remained stalwart to the dynasty, and the rebellion was quashed. Had Margaret and King Henry VII alienated Thomas Stanley when they gave Margaret a privileged position in court, the rebellion could have been much more successful. Stanley had a hegemony in North-West England based in the counties of Chester and Lancaster, and, like Margaret, considerable political acumen.⁷¹ Henry VII could not have granted his mother the status of a *femme sole* without rewarding Stanley for his compliance, and Margaret's vow of chastity required her husband's permission. The marriage of Margaret and Stanley, despite its unusual terms, had to satisfy them both.

⁶⁹ Domvile, *The King's Mother*, 101.

⁷⁰ "Quo viso, Thomas Stanleius coronam Ricardi inter spolia repertam capiti protinus imposuit." Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, edited by Dana F. Sutton, <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/>.

⁷¹ Michael J. Bennett, "Stanley, Thomas, first earl of Derby (1433–1504)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26279>.

The political alliance of Margaret and Stanley successfully served its purpose, especially on public occasions. The two public figures working in tandem helped to propagate the image of a strong Tudor dynasty that had the support of the nobility. For the Stanley family, it increased their prestige to be so close to the inner royal circle.⁷² In early 1495, after the rebellion for which Stanley's brother was executed for treason, Stanley and Margaret travelled together to Lathom Hall in Lancashire to grieve and to retire from public view.⁷³ Even during this politically fraught episode, Margaret remained with her husband, demonstrating by her presence that she believed him innocent of treason despite his brother's rebellion. Later that year, King Henry travelled north to Lathom and Knowsley, estates of Stanley, to visit the couple.⁷⁴ Though this was a personal visit, it also served the purpose of public relations. Nothing could have demonstrated more clearly that Margaret and Stanley remained in royal favour and that King Henry still trusted them both. After her vow of chastity, Margaret separated her daily activities from those of Stanley and set up her own establishment at Collyweston. However, Stanley visited her frequently there and had rooms reserved for his personal use.⁷⁵

By investing Margaret with the powers of widowhood while she remained married, King Henry and Margaret retained the loyalty of the Stanley patriarch while allowing Margaret to

⁷² On the 30th of October in 1485, Margaret "wept marvellously" as her husband, as High Constable, officiated her son's coronation ("For when the Kyng her Son was Crowned, in all that grete tryumphe and glorye she wept mervaylously;" Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Margaret*, 126; Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 31–32). In 1487, she and Stanley spent Christmas with the royal family, and were heralded as the "powerful and excellent princess and mother of our sovereign the King, Countess of Richmond and of Derby" and the "very noble and powerful step-father of our sovereign the King" (John Ives, *Select Papers Chiefly Relating to English Antiques*. London: M. Hingeston near Temple-Bar, in the Strand, 1773), 157–8; "puissant et excellent princesse a mer du roy notre souveraine countesse de Richemonde et de Derby;" "de tresnoble et puissant seigneur le beauper de roy notre souveraine"). In 1489, Margaret and Stanley could again be found side by side, celebrating Easter at Hertford with the royal court (Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 45). In 1494, at a feast celebrating the creation of Margaret's toddler grandson Henry as the Prince of York, Margaret wore her coronet and Stanley the cap of estate, demonstrating their power and prestige (Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 56).

⁷³ Halsted, *Life of Margaret Beaufort*, 184.

⁷⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 153.

⁷⁵ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 153.

become her son's independent political agent. Both her *femme sole* status and vow of chastity set her apart from other married aristocratic Englishwomen. Her agency was not due to her marriage or to her widowhood but rather had been vested in her by the king, as a tenant-in-chief of the crown, with the specific intentions of enabling her to be an independent political actor. In assessing her role in the formation of a more modern English state, the significance of this empowerment cannot be overlooked or disregarded.

The exact extent of Margaret's authority and agency are difficult to gauge, but her objectives are clear. Her loyalty always lay with her son and the Tudor dynasty, and her priority was always the safety and security of her family. Henry VII had few nobles whom he could truly trust, since most had switched allegiance multiple times throughout their lives. His own Queen had been his enemy for most of his adolescence.⁷⁶ One glaring exception to this rule was his mother. Margaret had no other children, and Henry's success and well-being was by far her greatest priority. This assured loyalty, combined with proven political acumen, resulted in Margaret's empowerment in 1485. It was this empowerment that enabled her to participate in her son's reign, and it was only due to this freedom that she could aid in governmental change that secured the safety of the dynasty.

Mother and Son

The Calendar of the State Papers of Spain records the notes of the Spanish Ambassador in England to his monarchs, King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile. On July 18, 1498, the ambassador De Puebla lists the most influential persons in England, and at the top of this list is the mother of the king. Writing later about the queen, he notes that she is "kept in

⁷⁶ Henry would have been raised a staunch Lancastrian. As the eldest daughter of the first and most important Yorkist king, Henry would have known of Elizabeth only as the daughter of the enemy. He had probably never met her before invading England, and their marriage was entirely political and arranged by their mothers.

subjection by the mother of the king.”⁷⁷ On the July 25, he notes that “the King is much influenced by his mother and his followers in affairs of personal interest and in others” adding that “the Queen, as is generally the case, does not like it.”⁷⁸

The comments by the Spanish ambassador demonstrate two dynamics central to the court of Henry VII. First, that Margaret Beaufort was widely acknowledged to be the principal advisor to the king, and second, that she was often with the king and queen at court, so often that the Spanish were concerned about the independence of the queen. The concern of the ambassador regarding the relationship of the queen and Margaret implies that Margaret could have been seen as overstepping her position, perhaps acting like she was a queen though she was not. The

⁷⁷ *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, Volume 1, 1485–1509, edited by G. A. Bergenroth, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1862, July 18, 1498, accessed April 21, 2018, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/spain/vol1>).

⁷⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, July 18, 1498. This comment appears to imply tension between the Queen and her mother-in-law. However, this does not seem to have been the case. J.L. Laynesmith notes that the comments of the Spaniards must be contextualized by the tradition of conflict between wives and mothers-in-law in Spanish literature. In fact, as Laynesmith has shown, the two women worked together on many occasions (J.L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445–1503*. (Oxford University Press: 2004), 208–211). When the Venetian ambassador Andrea Trevisan visited the Queen on October 11, 1497 she was with both her son Prince Arthur and Margaret (“Venice: 1497,” in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 1, 1202–1509*, ed. Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1864), 252–266. *British History Online*, accessed March 9, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol1/pp252–266>). Both women worked to keep Princess Catherine in Spain until she was of an age that they considered safe for marriage, and both reached out to Catherine of Aragon in a joint letter requesting that she speak French, to better acclimatize the Spanish princess to the English court (*Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, July 25, 1498; Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, 211). They also shared more personal pursuits. Together the two women made a devotion to St. Bridget of Sweden, commissioned Caxton for an edition of *Fifteen O’s*, and Margaret’s household at Collyweston had separate rooms permanently reserved for the Queen (Laynesmith, *Last Medieval Queens*, 211–212). It should be noted that there has been significant debate around the nature of Queen Elizabeth’s relationship with Margaret Beaufort. Some, like Laynesmith, argue very convincingly that the relationship between the two women was by-in-large cooperative and warm. It is certainly evident that Margaret cared for her daughter-in-law. Not only did she keep the rooms at Collyweston, but in a letter to her Chamberlain, the Earl of Ormond (whom she shared with the Queen) from 1497, Margaret remarks that “the king, the queen, and all our sweet children are in good health” (Letter of Margaret to the Earl of Ormond, SC 1/51/189 “the king the queen and all our sweet chyldryn be yn good hele,”), noting that the queen had recently been slightly ill of late, but that she was now well, “god be thankyd.”. These statements evidence Margaret’s care for the well-being of the Queen, as well as her close ties to the immediate royal family. However, some scholars have used the same evidence to argue that the relationship between the two women was problematic. This argument has been put forward by many, including recently Arlene Naylor Okerlund in her book *Elizabeth of York* (Okerlund, *Elizabeth of York*). I find the argument of Laynesmith concerning the Spanish opinion more convincing. For more on each argument see Laynesmith’s *Last Medieval Queens*, 181–219. For discussion of Queens and Queen Mothers in Spanish literature see specifically 208-209 and Okerlund, *Elizabeth of York*, 88–87.

Spanish were not misguided in their concern because Margaret advised her son and was trusted by him. Indeed, her role resembled that of a queen rather than that of a noblewoman.

The relationship between Henry and Margaret has been the subject of much speculation by each of their biographers. Many earlier historians have suggested that their power dynamic was uneven, with Margaret being subservient to her son. Jones and Underwood decisively contest this notion and cogently argue that their relationship was a partnership on relatively equal terms. Though they spent much time apart before 1485, Henry and Margaret remained in contact through letters. Unfortunately, none have survived from this time, but a handful do survive from King Henry's reign, and they show a complex relationship founded on unconditional love and mutual understanding of what was best for the dynasty. They also show that the relationship of Henry and Margaret was one of business as much as it was the devotion of a mother to her son, and a son to his mother – there was nobody else whom Henry could address as “Madame, my most entirely well-beloved lady and mother.”⁷⁹

In a long 1504 letter to Margaret regarding her Cambridge colleges and the debt owed to her by French nobles, Henry VII acquiesces to all her requests, which he notes were conveyed to him in her last letter. He informs her that he has given her all she has asked for, and goes further, claiming: “not only in this but in all other things that I may know should be to your honour and pleasure, and will of your self, I shall be as glad to please you as your heart can desire.”⁸⁰ He also references the role she has played in his life and political success, telling her: “I know well that I am as much bound so to you as any Creature living.”⁸¹ After this, he delves into a

⁷⁹ Letter from Henry to Margaret, SJLM D91.23, 110–111. This quote, in its original language, provides the name for this chapter.

⁸⁰ Letter by Henry VII n.d. 1504, SJLM D 91.23, 110–111.

⁸¹ Letter by Henry VII n.d. 1504, SJLM D 91.23, 110–111.

discussion of the debt owed to her by France, which she has just granted to him.⁸² He gives her his opinion of the situation and beseeches her to send him her “mind and pleasure,” stating that he “is and shall ever be at [her] will and commandment.” In another letter from 1504, Henry asks Margaret whether he may promote her confessor, noting that he would not promote him without her “mind and pleasure.”⁸³ In the first of these two letters, Henry also mentions that Margaret has asked for “a general pardon for all manner causes,” which he granted her. By doing this, he gave her free reign to do what she wanted — both pardoning her for any past offences and for any future ones. Essentially, this put her above the law and ensured that nobody could complain about her actions. This general pardon shows the trust that Henry had in Margaret; he enabled her to do almost anything that she wanted. In the last decade of Henry’s reign Margaret was more active in the administration of the realm, especially the North and Midlands. It is significant that this pardon was given in 1504, during this last decade. It demonstrates the importance of Margaret’s administrative role, and also shows how Henry supported her in such a powerful position. In his chronicle, Polydore Vergil assessed the partnership between the two, noting that Henry gave her a share of most of his public and private resources.⁸⁴ The pardon granted in his letter certainly supports Vergil’s assessment.

These two letters demonstrate that Henry regularly sought the advice of his mother. It is telling that though so few letters from Henry to Margaret remain, those that do clearly indicate that he valued her opinion and actively sought it out both in matters personal to her and in more general matters concerning the state and government, such as his plea to hear her opinion in all

⁸² This debt had been inherited by Margaret from her father. It was owed for the ransom of the Duke of Orleans during the Hundred Years War.

⁸³ John Britton’s Memoir of Margaret, MS Oo.6.89.

⁸⁴ Polydore Vergil, *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, A. D. 1485–1537*, edited by D. Hay, in *Medieval England 500-1500 A Reader*, second edition, edit by Emilie Amt and Katherine Allen Smith (University of Toronto Press, 2018), 411.

things. Though Margaret held no official position on his council, these letters and the opinions of the Spanish ambassador demonstrate that she was his primary councillor behind the scenes — a role traditionally held by English queen consorts.

After discussing business matters like Margaret's colleges and the French debt to the family, the tone of Henry's 1504 letter shifts dramatically and rather sweetly to that of a son to his mother. He apologizes (as all children are wont to do) for not writing often enough, but also for the length of the letter. He notes to her that his vision is suffering, causing him to use a scribe more often to write his letters rather than his own hand. However, he informs her that this letter is written with his own hand and calls himself her "most humble and loving son."⁸⁵ This letter shows how Henry and Margaret's relationship transcended that of a councillor and a king; it was also a relationship bound by the love of a mother and son. They do not discuss only political and business issues but also confer on personal issues and health problems. Discussing such personal matters and weaknesses demonstrates that Henry trusted Margaret's loyalty completely, as a king would not show weakness to someone he did not trust entirely.

Margaret's letters show this relationship from her perspective.⁸⁶ In a letter from 1501, Margaret, like Henry, begins by discussing important political matters, such as: Henry's correspondence with the French king over the debt of the Duke of Orleans and the steps taken by Margaret to recover the money owed to her; Margaret's tenants in Kendall, whom she wants to keep retained under her for the future use of King Henry's son, the Duke of York; and the late King Edward's bastard son. However, at the end she shifts to a more personal tone. She informs him that the day she is writing this letter, the Day of Saint Anne, is his birthday. Clearly, she is

⁸⁵ Letter from Henry to Margaret, SJLM D91.23 pp.110-111.

⁸⁶ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 66.

thinking about her “good and gracious Prince, King, and only beloved son” on his birthday, as any mother would.⁸⁷ Like Henry’s letters, those by Margaret show that the relationship between the two was both personal and political. This close and personal relationship with the king enabled Margaret to have an important and acknowledged political role in the Tudor court, in which she actively took part.

Political Actor

The relationship of trust between mother and son resulted in Margaret developing significant political power as an advisor to Henry. Nowhere is this more apparent than in foreign policy and in Henry’s relationship with other nobles. In January 1504, Archduke Philip of Burgundy and self-styled king of Castile and his wife Queen Joanna left Flanders for Spain.⁸⁸ Unfortunately for them, they were not to reach their destination for some time. A storm arose, and Philip’s flagship, with two other ships, was shipwrecked on the Dorset coast. On January 31, King Philip arrived in Windsor and was greeted by Henry VII. Margaret was absent but was residing not far away at her estate in Croydon.⁸⁹ This does not mean she was uninformed, and in fact, it is her very absence that allows the historian to be certain she was interested in the developments at Windsor and knew of the goings-on in great detail. One of her men at court sent her frequent dispatches by rider, which detail the exact events of this meeting and of the next few days. The writer of these letters notes for Margaret not only who was in attendance and what

⁸⁷ *A Letter From Margaret, King Henry VII’s Mother, From The Original In Her Own Hand*, ed. Edited by L. Howard, in *A Collection of Letters from the Original Manuscripts of Many Princes, great Personages and Statesmen, Together With Some Curious and Scarce Tracts, and Pieces of Antiquity*, 155-157 (London, Printed for the Author, 1753), accessed at: <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=kings&tabID=T001&docId=CW102612104&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE> on April 20, 2018.

⁸⁸ Vergil, *Anglica Historica*; Thomas Penn, *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 213-215.

⁸⁹ Penn, *Winter King*, 218.

occurred, but also gives an interpretation of the feelings involved to give her an impression of the atmosphere at court, and of the relationship between Henry and Philip.⁹⁰ Even when not present, Margaret was watching.

Margaret also played an important role in diplomacy. At the marriage of Prince Arthur and Princess Catherine of Aragon, Margaret had hosted the Spanish nobles present for Catherine's wedding at her London house, Coldharbour. At this event she had shown off the riches of the English royals, hanging cloth of Arras on the walls, and serving a rich array of food on gold and silver plates.⁹¹ This feast was part of the festivities celebrating the marriage of her grandson, and this display of wealth showed off the riches of the royal family she was representing. Her household in London would have felt like an extension of the royal court, and events like these show that it was used as such. These events also publicly demonstrated the importance of Margaret in the royal hierarchy. Anglo-Spanish relations were a key part of Henry VII's foreign policy, and it was of the utmost importance that the Spanish retinue find the English royals impressive. It was the Tudors who were the new family in European politics and needed to prove that they were there to stay. Margaret's monitoring of state visits and her role in diplomacy demonstrate that Margaret was politically minded and part of the inner royal circle, both attributes that were essential to her own personal projects.

Margaret also helped Henry by hosting nobles viewed as potential threats in her household in order to keep them close and under supervision. Her investiture with independent estates had created an opportunity for her to establish an alternate court that could never be a threat to his reign, as Margaret's allegiance was with Henry, and his success her highest priority.

⁹⁰ Account of the Meeting of Henry VII and Philip King of Castile for Margaret Beaufort, SJLM 9/2/2.

⁹¹ Routh, *Lady Margaret*, 92.

Should Margaret's husband have changed allegiance, those in Margaret's care would not have been compromised; the king could rest assured that Margaret would never allow treason among them. Having her own establishments enabled Margaret to set up her own ménage where members of the nobility problematic to the crown could be held hostage at the king's behest. Margaret's unwavering loyalty ensured that these nobles were still under the eye of the crown, though away from the king's court.

Two important nobles who lived with Margaret at either Coldharbour or Collyweston during the reign of Henry VII are Edward Stafford, third Duke of Buckingham, who lived with Margaret with his brother Henry, and Edward Plantagenet, seventeenth Duke of Warwick. Examining these cases show how Margaret worked in tandem with the king by holding important noble children in her care. Margaret's independent establishments gave her the opportunity to aid the crown as she wished.

When a nobleman died leaving a young heir, the wardship of this minor was either sold for cash, bestowed as a political favour, or granted to someone to whom the king owed money.⁹² This new guardian controlled not only the heir's estates but also their person.⁹³ Historians have estimated that about a quarter of the aristocracy died leaving a minor heir, so wardships were a frequent occurrence.⁹⁴

⁹² Joel T. Rosenthal, *Nobles and the Noble Life 1295–1500* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1976), 63.

⁹³ Sue Sheridan Walker, "Widow and Ward: The Feudal Law of Child Custody in Medieval England," in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 159.

⁹⁴ Rosenthal, *Nobles and the Noble Life*, 63. It was not uncommon for noble dowagers to gain possession of the wardship and marriage of important noble heirs; indeed it was one way through which English noblewomen came to control vast estates. In the late fourteenth century, for example, Elizabeth Daubeney held the wardship and estates of her grandson (heir to the estates of her husband Lord Botreaux) for fifteen years while he was a minor (Carole Rawcliffe, "The Politics of Marriage in Later Medieval England: William, Lord Botreaux and the Hungerfords," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51, 3 (1988): 165).

Wardships were extremely lucrative for the monarch, and were especially convenient for Henry VII, since many noblemen had died or been stripped of their lands and incomes after the civil war, allowing some important wardships to be granted to Henry's supporters. Such royal distribution of wardships ensured that the children who had grown up in the York court, whether Lancastrian or Yorkist by blood, were raised by those loyal to the crown. On August 3, 1486, Margaret was granted the "wardship and marriage of Edward Stafford, son and heir of Henry, late Duke of Buckingham, and custody of the possessions of the said late duke" and of Edward's brother Henry.⁹⁵ Edward's and Henry's father had been beheaded in 1483 by King Richard for rebelling against him in favour of Henry Tudor, which left young Edward the most politically valuable and wealthy heir in England.

Margaret's wardship of Edward and Henry Stafford exemplifies her acting as a political agent of the crown, rather than as a self-interested landlord.⁹⁶ This wardship initially was not one of much fiscal value to Margaret; her revenue from this wardship went to the royal family, and some historians have gone so far as to suggest that it was an extension of the royal treasury.⁹⁷ Rather, the wardship of the Stafford brothers was first and foremost of political value. Their lands were substantial, and Edward Stafford was Henry's richest subject.⁹⁸ As the guardian of the Stafford brothers, Margaret oversaw their upbringing and education, thus influencing the political leanings of one of Henry's most important noble subjects upon his reaching majority. In

⁹⁵ *Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII*, 532.

⁹⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 108.

⁹⁷ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 109–111. This was because the young duke's mother was given a dower including substantial property. Indeed, Margaret suffered an overall loss until 1488, when she reformed her administration, including the system of accounting, that resulted in her turning a profit. As for her involvement with the royal treasury, an example from 1488 to 1493 demonstrates her use of these funds. The accounts of Margaret's treasurer, William Bedell, show that money from the Stafford wardship subsidized the household of the Prince of Wales, contributed to work at the king's estate at Windsor, and once paid the staff in the royal chapel.

⁹⁸ Carole Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham: 1394–1521* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), 35–36. For a full discussion of the wealth of the Stafford family, and of the life of the Second and Third Dukes of Buckingham, see this book, especially chapters 2 and 3.

addition to this, the Stafford brothers had the potential to threaten seriously the Tudor crown. At the end of Henry VII's reign, Edward Stafford was the closest male to the English throne aside from Henry's own son.⁹⁹ In 1519, during the reign of Henry VIII, the Venetian ambassador reported that it was thought the Duke of Buckingham (Edward) would "easily obtain the crown" if the king were to die without a male heir, demonstrating that Edward's claim to the throne was openly recognized.¹⁰⁰

The Wars of the Roses had fostered an environment where the stability of the king was constantly questioned, and where enemy factions were always looking for cracks in the establishment that could lead to an opportunity to seize the throne. During the Tudor reign, the sister of the Yorkist kings, Margaret, ruled Burgundy. Unhappy that her brother had been overthrown in England, she actively harboured Yorkist enemies of the Tudor crown and twice lent money and resources to support rebellions against Henry VII of England, perpetrated in the name of Yorkist heirs.¹⁰¹ These events contributed to the paranoia felt by both Henry VII and his son and successor regarding their grasp on the crown. The two monarchs ensured that most nobles with any drop of Plantagenet blood were eliminated.

Margaret's wardship of the Stafford brothers was a great success. Not only did she make a small profit from their wardship, but she ensured the loyalty of the highly important Duke of Buckingham for the next generation.¹⁰² Had the Stafford brothers been raised in an environment

⁹⁹ Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, 37.

¹⁰⁰ "Venice: October 1519," in *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 2, 1509–1519*, ed. Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1867), 556–565. *British History Online*, accessed January 30, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol2/pp556-565>.

¹⁰¹ The first of these rebellions was in the name of Edward Plantagenet, the Earl of Warwick. The second in the name of Richard Plantagenet, the youngest of the Princes in the Tower whom the rebels claimed was alive (despite not having been seen in over fifteen years) and ready to rule England.

¹⁰² Though he was impetuous and wealthy, with the means to rise against the Tudor crown, Edward Stafford never rebelled, and remained a loyal subject of his kinsmen. Perhaps rebellion was not in his nature or perhaps his loyalty was ingrained in him as a child. Nevertheless, on May 13th, 1521, twelve years after Margaret's death, during the

where they were imbued with the notion that they had a claim to the throne, they could have easily spearheaded a rebellion. After all, though their father died in a rebellion in support of Henry Tudor, it is widely thought that their father had hoped to use the opportunity as a guise for his own coup d'état.¹⁰³ These events occurred less than three years before Margaret gained the wardship of his young children and would have been fresh in her mind. By raising the Stafford children in her household, Margaret worked to ensure that there was one less potential threat to her son's crown and her dynasty.

Like the Stafford brothers, Edward Plantagenet, seventeenth Duke of Warwick, lost his father at a young age. He was just ten years old when the Tudors took the throne, and his Yorkist heritage ensured that he was at the center of political intrigue and made young Edward the most significant dynastic threat to the Tudors at the time of Henry VII's coronation.¹⁰⁴ John Rous, an early Tudor historian writing sometime between 1480 and 1500, argued that Richard III

rule of her grandson Henry VIII, proceedings were brought against Edward, now 43, and his guilt was considered a foregone conclusion. Though he had been a close companion of Henry VIII, it was his enmity with Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's chief minister, that ensured he was charged with treason and beheaded based on trumped-up hearsay (Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, 40–43). The Duke and Cardinal Wolsey had differed in their opinions on foreign policy; the Duke advised King Henry to fight the French, contrary to the Cardinal who supported peace. This difference would cost the Duke of Buckingham his life, as the King supported the Cardinal's policy at this time. The success of the Cardinal caused the Duke to retire to his castle in the countryside, where he requested permission from the King to raise an armed bodyguard to visit his Welsh lordships. The Welsh lords were a genuine problem, and historians have noted that the Duke had a genuine need for bodyguards when dealing with his Welsh tenants. Nonetheless Wolsey used this as evidence that he was raising an army to rebel against the King. After the Duke's execution, Wolsey assured a French bishop that Buckingham had been beheaded for opposing the Cardinal in French matters ("Henry VIII: September 1521, 1-10," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 3, 1519-1523*, ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1867), 631-650. *British History Online*, accessed February 17, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol3/pp631-650>. No. 1556; Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, 44). The notion of treason appears to have been a convenient way for Henry VIII's chief minister to get rid of a noble with problematic opinions on foreign policy.

¹⁰³ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 63–64; Rawcliffe, *The Stafford*, 32; John A. Wagner, *Encyclopedia of the Wars of the Roses*, (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2001), 40. Historians have even suggested that Margaret duped their father into rebelling by suggesting to him that he pursue his claim to the throne (Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 64; Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c. 1437–1509* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 212).

¹⁰⁴ His uncles, Edward IV and Richard III, were the Yorkist kings of England. That his father, George, Duke of Clarence, had been beheaded by his brother Edward IV as a traitor did nothing to assuage concerns about his Yorkist blood.

proclaimed Edward to be the “heir apparent in the royal court,” and that “in ceremonies at the table and chamber he was served first after the king and queen.”¹⁰⁵ Because of his political importance, it was vital that Edward remain in Tudor custody. Should he have fallen into the hands of latent Yorkists, he could have participated in or become the figurehead of a rebellion. For this reason, Margaret acted as Edward’s jailor for the first year of King Henry’s reign, before he was transferred to the Tower of London in 1486 for increased security.¹⁰⁶

That Henry trusted his mother to keep Edward Plantagenet in confinement shows the extent to which he was willing to rely on her. At Coldharbour, Edward was under the watchful eye of Margaret, and safely in Tudor hands while Henry secured his throne. However, Edward was apart from Henry VII’s main court and was thus kept out of the public eye. The Tudors likely would not have wanted the nobles seeing Edward daily, because it would have been a reminder that Edward and other potential candidates for the throne existed. Margaret’s guardianship of Edward during the time of transition to the new dynasty ensured that the boy was close, without being too close for comfort. Once the Tudors’ hold on the crown was more secure, he was imprisoned in the Tower. Until that time, Margaret ensured that this threat was contained.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ John Rous, “Historia Johannis Rossi Warwicensis de Regibus Englie” MS Cotton Vesp. A. XII f. 131v–136r, quoted in Alison Hanham, “Excursus: John Rous’s Account of the Reign of Richard III,” in *Richard III and His Early Historians 1483–1535* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 123. Hanham has translated this text from the original Latin into English. For the full Latin text, see Cotton MS Vespasian A XII f.271, which can be found at <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/john-rous-history-of-the-kings-of-england> (accessed February 4, 2019). Some historians have doubted the veracity of Rous’ account. For this opinion, see Hazel Pierce, *Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury 1473–1541* (University of Wales Press, 2009), 9. In her memoir written many decades later, Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria and lady-in-waiting to Mary I, called him Prince Edward, thus acknowledging his proximity to the throne. Henry Clifford and Edgar Edmund Estcourt, *The Life of Jane Dormer Duchess of Feria*, Edited by Joseph Stevenson (London: Burns and Oates, 1887), 77.

¹⁰⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 67.

¹⁰⁷ It should be remembered how close Edward Plantagenet was to the crown. His uncles had both been kings of England (Edward IV and Richard III). His survival up to this point was probably due mostly to the fact that his lineage was tarnished. His uncle (Edward IV) had beheaded his father (The Duke of Clarence) for treason. Though he spent much of Richard III’s reign imprisoned, it meant that unlike his cousins, the sons of Edward IV, he was not

Conclusion

Henry and Margaret's letters, the opinions of the Spanish Ambassador, Margaret's role with the Spanish delegation, and Margaret's housing of the Stafford brothers and Edward Plantagenet all demonstrate that Margaret worked for the crown and was entirely loyal unto it. They also reveal the unwavering trust Henry placed in Margaret. She had helped him take the throne, and he knew that her overarching priority was exactly the same as his: the safety and security of the Tudor dynasty. It is this special partnership between Henry and Margaret that allowed her to have an independent political role in her son's reign, separate from that of her husband. Without this relationship between mother and son, Margaret would not have held the influence she did, and wielded the power and authority that enabled her to influence and change the very nature of the English state and how it was governed. Empowered by Henry, Margaret changed the way England was governed to secure her son's and her family's hold on the throne. To do this, she had to increase the power of the monarch and his family relative to the most powerful nobles. To end the war that had plagued Margaret's entire life, she would need to create a dynasty immune to aristocratic threats. It was for this reason that she enlarged the royal

murdered during Richard's reign. Nonetheless, with Edward IV's sons dead and a Lancastrian descendent on the throne, Edward Plantagenet was the closest living Yorkist heir to the throne. Fifteen years later, Edward was unwillingly and unwittingly implicated in the plot of a Yorkist pretender and beheaded in 1499. In his chronicle, Edward Hall (d. 1547) suggests that Edward was mentally damaged from his long imprisonment under both Richard III and Henry VII. He suggests that he "coulede not descerne a Goose from a Capon," let alone participate in a rebellion. For more, see Hall, *Hall's Chronicle*, 490. Jane Dormer's memoir, written decades after these events and probably based on public understanding, states that Edward was beheaded to ease the concerns of the Spanish monarchs about the security of the Tudor throne before the marriage of their daughter to Prince Arthur. She says, "the death of Prince Edward Plantagenet, [...] whom (most innocent) Henry VII put to death to make the kingdom more secure to his posterity, and to induce King Ferdinand to give his daughter, this Catharine, in marriage to Prince Arthur." With Edward's death, the legitimate male Plantagenet line came to an end and the Tudors could sit on the throne with more security than any English king in half a century. Clifford and Estcourt, *The Life of Jane Dormer Duchess of Feria*, 77–78.

demesne, expanded royal control over regional institutions, and changed the nature and makeup of the council of the king.

Chapter Three: Sovereignty, Monarchy, and the Modern English State

Henry VII and Henry VIII significantly changed the social and political structure of England, modifying the relationship between the crown, the aristocrats, and the gentry. These changes resulted in a more centralized state headed by a visible, powerful, and sovereign king.¹⁰⁸ Margaret played a significant role in this development. She did not consciously seek to change the nature of the state, nor could she have known that her actions were part of a larger trend towards more centralized and sovereign kingship in England. Her son had usurped a monarchy on the brink of collapse, and her motivation for increasing sovereign power was to secure her family's hold on the monarchy and to prevent civil wars like those that had plagued much of her lifetime. To increase and secure the power of her son, Margaret aided in the expansion of the royal demesne, the expansion of regional royal administration, and changed the form and makeup of the council of the king. Changes like these increased the power of the monarch and ensured that a civil war of succession did not break out again in the sixteenth century. By securing her family's hold on the throne, Margaret contributed to much larger developments in English governance and royal sovereignty.

The Modern English State

Michael Hicks has suggested that the new way of governing that emerged around 1500 amounted to a more comprehensive concept of sovereignty, which overrode other allegiances and powers in the kingdom. This resulted in increasingly autocratic kings, a more modern bureaucracy recruited from the middle classes, and reformed financial and

¹⁰⁸ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 24.

consultative systems — all hallmarks of the modern English state. Hicks notes that most historians agree that this type of modern state emerged but argue over when it happened. Some, like the famous Tudor historian Geoffrey Elton, place the inception of these ideas in the 1530s. Others, like Gerald Harriss and Dr. Penry Williams, make the case that there was considerable continuity between the York and Tudor eras. Hicks himself believes that the emergence of some developments can be located in Edward IV's reign.¹⁰⁹

Steven Gunn discusses this governmental change in his book on early Tudor government but approaches it from another perspective. He notes that the wide-ranging debates leave little doubt that there were changes to government practice under Henry VII and Henry VIII. In his opinion, what remains to be entirely settled are what historians have “debated all along: the causes, effects, timing, interrelationship, permanence, and significance” of the developments during the early Tudor regime.¹¹⁰ Gunn claims that the root of these changes was the determination of the Tudor monarchs to be obeyed, and he concludes that to affect this Henry VII and Henry VIII modified the relationship between the king, noblemen, and gentry as well as the relations between the central government and local administration of towns and outlying regions. The changes of Henry VII and Henry VIII centred on expanding crown lands, the court, and royal administration, as well as on changing the nature of the king's council, regional institutions, and military resources.¹¹¹ As recently as 2017, Alec Ryrie has concurred with Gunn, claiming that during the sixteenth century, governance in the British Isles changed to radically simplify its structures,

¹⁰⁹ Hicks, *Edward IV*, 150–151. Stephen Alford, “Politics and Political History in the Tudor Century”, *The Historical Journal* 42, no.2 (1999): 535–536.

¹¹⁰ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 1–2. For a full and detailed exegesis of the historiographical debate, see pages 2–5. For a fuller discussion of the political history and historiography of this era, see Alford, “Politics and Political History in the Tudor Century,” 535–548.

¹¹¹ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 24.

eliminating “idiosyncrasies, privileges, and semi-independent jurisdictions,” resulting in an expanded central government at the expense of more peripheral local authority.¹¹²

The debates demonstrate that there was governmental change during the Henrician Tudor regimes. This process seems likely to have been one that was neither linear nor consistent, attributes that have likely caused much of the discourse among historians. Margaret Beaufort contributed to the gradual changes in the governing of England under her son, Henry VII, by aiding in the expansion of the royal demesne, in the expansion of regional institutions, and the makeup of the king’s council. I do not contend that these changes were the definitive ones that created early modern statehood and sovereignty in England. Alone, they did not revolutionize the English government. Rather, they are pieces of a larger puzzle — one that began in the late Middle Ages, and one in which Margaret’s role has yet to be considered.

The Expansion of the Royal Demesne

A key aspect of the centralization of the state under the Tudors was the expansion of the royal demesne, from which other changes stem. It changed the financial resources available to the crown, the relationship between the crown, noblemen, and gentry, as well as royal involvement in regional institutions. Margaret contributed to the expansion of the royal lands by accepting the properties given to her by her son, by increasing the value of the lands she controlled, and by claiming lands as hers by right of inheritance that would have, under most previous administrations, belonged to other aristocrats.

¹¹² Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485–1603* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 53.

From the 1470s onward, Edward IV changed the relationship of the landed gentry with the crown by expanding the royal demesne to an unprecedented size. He combined his inherited estates, from the York family, with the Duchy of Lancaster and the older crown lands. To this, he added land confiscated from political enemies, and purchased land with money from taxation. In the past, such confiscated land had more often been granted to supporters of the king.¹¹³ Edward IV's new approach expanded the quantity of land held directly by the crown, in comparison with the land held by magnates or gentry.

Policies that involved land acquisition continued under the early Tudors. When Henry VII took the throne in 1485, he absorbed the patrimonies of York, Lancaster, and Neville within the estates of the crown.¹¹⁴ This property had been the base of power for major English noble families who had in the past been important players in dynastic conflicts. By absorbing all their lands into the demesne of the crown, Henry VII reduced the power of his chief rivals in England and their potential to rise against the monarchy. These actions left Henry with greater resources than had been available to the Plantagenet kings. Although royal lands during Richard III's reign were three times larger than during the reign of Henry VI, by the end of Henry VII's reign the territory was five times larger.¹¹⁵ Henry VII's policies regarding land acquisition and his heavy taxation resulted in an unflattering legacy: a reputation for avarice. He paid a political price for his refusal to endow noblemen with control over local regional affairs in the name of the king, which had been common under past kings.¹¹⁶ Though it made Henry's position on the throne

¹¹³ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 25, 114.

¹¹⁴ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 220.

¹¹⁵ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 25–26.

¹¹⁶ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 115.

more secure to hoard the land that fell into his hands, it also increased the likelihood of political dissidence among the nobles.

One way that Henry VII dealt with this conundrum was by granting land to his mother, possibly at her suggestion, given the partnership between the two.¹¹⁷ Margaret's father's death during her infancy had endowed her with a landed wealth of over £1,000 by the age of twelve.¹¹⁸ Jointures from her first two marriages added to this sum, and by the time she married Thomas Stanley in 1472, her inheritance and jointure together were probably worth over £1,500 per annum.¹¹⁹ Although wives participated in the administration of property during their husbands' lives, it was usually as a subordinate partner or deputy.¹²⁰ Margaret fulfilled this role, which gave her experience managing large quantities of land.

As discussed above, usually the only women who controlled their inheritances and incomes were widows, who were a significant part of the landholding society.¹²¹ Noble widows held vast estates that enabled them to conduct business, receive guests, travel, and display their power and splendour. Elizabeth de Burgh, Anne Stafford, and Margaret de Brotherton all held lands equal to those of the wealthiest noblemen.¹²² By making Margaret a *femme sole*, Henry VII specified that — in contrast with the norm — the properties granted to her were for her use alone, and that these properties and their revenues were held independently of her husband.¹²³ After 1485, Margaret was not the subordinate of Stanley in the management of her estates but controlled them independently.

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹¹⁸ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 95.

¹¹⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 96–8.

¹²⁰ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 150.

¹²¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, 109.

¹²² Ward, *English Noblewomen*, 108.

¹²³ Parliament Rolls, XV, 127. See Chapter Two.

Henry, in consultation with Margaret, enabled her to separate her estate from that of her husband between 1485 and 1487, making her an independent political entity, and expanding the land under the effective control of the crown. Margaret, Henry, and Stanley negotiated a settlement whereby her revenues from both her fraternal and maternal inheritance and jointure were split between Margaret and Stanley. Nevertheless, Margaret controlled all these properties, and her officers brought Stanley his share. In exchange, she received an annual pension from Stanley of £200. Finally, all property granted to Margaret after Henry's accession to the throne in 1485 she held independently.¹²⁴ These lands were granted for life, and they reverted to the crown upon Margaret's death, at which time Henry also gained her inheritance. Effectively, she held these lands on behalf of the crown. In March 1487, Henry VII granted to Margaret large quantities of land as life estates in Devon, Somerset, Hertford, Derby, Westmorland, York, Northampton, Rutland, Lincoln, Dorset, Lancaster, Cambridge, Suffolk, and a house in London called Coldharbour.¹²⁵ These lands provided her with a base of wealth and power, predominantly in the Midlands and west-country. Their annual income amounted to over one thousand pounds, and her total income for 1487–88 was almost two thousand pounds.¹²⁶

By managing and keeping this land, Margaret aided Henry in expanding the royal demesne. Though this land would not have been counted in any tally of royal land, it was still property that would revert to the crown and was not under the influence or power of local noblemen or magnates. Margaret also used the lands she held as though they were crown lands,

¹²⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 99.

¹²⁵ *Patent Rolls in Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII*, 130–132. For an analysis of why these specific properties were granted to Margaret, see Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 100–104.

¹²⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 100.

endowing royal projects with her revenue, such as Henry VII's chapel at Westminster Abbey.¹²⁷ This land was held by her but effectively belonged to the crown to further the monarch's goals, and supported the king's politics. It reverted to the crown upon Margaret's death.

By 1502–1505, Henry VII's average net annual income from the crown lands was in the region of £40,000.¹²⁸ In reality, the land and monetary resources controlled by the crown were much larger, in part because land held by Margaret and other members of the royal family, like the royal children, added even more income to the coffers available to the king. Simultaneously, Henry was stingy with his grants and restorations to aristocrats outside his family and kept the wealth and power of the aristocrats strictly in check. During Henry's reign over half the peerage was at some time or another bound by bond or recognisance. Of the 138 individuals attained in Henry's reign, only 46 were restored while he held the throne. The peerage overall shrank during his reign from 55 in 1485 to 42 in 1509.¹²⁹ These trends in the control of the peerage exacerbated the gap between their resources and those of the royal family.

Margaret's resources were substantial and increased over Henry's reign, demonstrating that though she was officially merely an aristocratic woman, her true position was that of the king's mother and she held land in accordance with this role. By 1495–6, Margaret's annual revenue had risen to over £2,200, and after Stanley's death in 1504, the charges owed to him from her inheritance and jointure were freed, adding roughly another £600 to her annual revenue.¹³⁰ Should any rebellion have been raised against the monarch, these were funds and

¹²⁷ "Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond," Westminster Abbey, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/margaret-beaufort-countess-of-richmond>.

¹²⁸ Gunn, *Early Tudor Court*, 114.

¹²⁹ Richard Rex, *The Tudors* (London: Tempus Publishing Inc, 2002), 25-26.

¹³⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 106–108.

resources that were automatically at the disposal of the Tudor regime, and Margaret was able to recruit soldiers from all of these estates. Therefore, by accumulating land from and for her son, Margaret contributed to the expansion of the royal demesne in a manner that was politically safer for Henry than accumulating the land himself, which could have led to noble dissatisfaction.

This noble dissidence for various reasons manifested itself in two rebellions that occurred during Henry's reign, one in 1487, and one intermittently from 1495 to 1499. On both occasions, the rebellion was crushed by the Tudors.¹³¹ This demonstrates that the noble dissent never reached heights that left the Tudors bereft of aristocratic allies, but also shows that the Tudors held enough resources under their control to defend the throne. By granting land to Margaret rather than directly hoarding it himself, Henry circumvented some dissatisfaction that could have made these rebellions, especially the second, more threatening. Additionally, Margaret's ownership of such a great quantity of land would have increased the funds and man-power at the disposal of the Tudors to defeat these rebellions. Likely with this objective in mind, Margaret worked to increase the royal land and revenue available to the dynasty in two ways: by increasing the value of the lands she controlled and by claiming property that by right should have descended to other aristocrats.

Margaret's annual revenue increased from £1,960 in 1487–88, to over £2,200 by 1495–6.¹³² Though some of this increase resulted from land acquired by inheritance or grants, it was also due to her excellent management of both her properties and the men retained in her household that increased the value of her lands and the efficacy with which they were run. Margaret's financial success was due to her fastidious attention to detail. She inspected charges

¹³¹ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 164-8; 177-8.

¹³² For context regarding this amount see footnote 57.

on her accounts assiduously, feudal dues were exploited remorselessly, and she was more than willing to pursue the smallest of financial dues.¹³³ Her signature is ubiquitous throughout the fragment surviving paperwork in her archives at St. John's College, Cambridge. In the accounts of her cofferer from 1498 to 1499, Margaret signs each week's expenses with "Margaret R," demonstrating that she examined and condoned the expenses being taken on her behalf.¹³⁴ Margaret's signature can also be seen in the accounts of Miles Worsley, Margaret's cofferer from at least 1502, and the account of her expenses for the repair of Coldharbour by Sir Roger Ormeston.¹³⁵ Her signature on the expenses of each week shows the frequency with which she engaged with the business end of estate management and finances, and indicate that all financial matters were subject to her final approval rather than that of one of her officers. This ensured that she was never taken advantage of and that she could personally see to it that management was as efficient as possible. Additionally, she managed or improved her land to increase its worth. She constructed a tidal sluice at Boston in Lincolnshire that halted financial losses due to flood damage and personally supervised the diversion of a large watercourse to a water mill within her manor at Sampford Peverell.¹³⁶

Margaret also took great care with those she employed in her households, ensuring they were efficient and cooperated with one another.¹³⁷ When she set up her own establishment and main residence at Collyweston in Northamptonshire after her vow of chastity in 1499, she maintained a domestic estate suitable to her rank in which she employed, among others, a

¹³³ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 106–108.

¹³⁴ Account of J. Clarell, SJLM/1/1/2/1.

¹³⁵ Account of J. Clarell, SJLM/1/1/2/1; Account of Sir Roger Ormeston, SJLM 1/1/4/1.

¹³⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 104, 133; "2 Henry VII, 1487, April 10," in *Calendar of the Patent Rolls: Henry VII*, Volume I, 1485–1494 (Hereford: The Hereford Times Limited, 1914), 171–172.

¹³⁷ For a very thorough discussion of Margaret's administration of her properties, see chapters 4 and 5 of Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*.

chancellor, chamberlain, and comptroller of the household.¹³⁸ Margaret did not tolerate any dissension or conflict among these head officers.¹³⁹ Bishop Fisher suggested that “if any factions [...] were made secretly amongst her head officers” or if any conflict arose, she found a solution with great discretion.¹⁴⁰ This shows an emotional intelligence concerning the sentiments among her staff and a concern for the dynamic in her households. This smoothing of egos and cooperation made the business of her estates more efficient so that they could work together rather than independently or even at each other's expense.

Because of Margaret's attention to detail, she was no less discerning with the lower-ranking members of her household and her tenants as she was with her officers. Henry Parker, Lord Morley, himself a high-ranking officer who began his career in Margaret's household as her cup-bearer, recalled that though she conversed with bishops regularly, she also knew the names of her many dependents and visited them if they became ill.¹⁴¹ She was an attentive landlord and was often able to assist those she deemed worthy. Writing to Reginald Bray, an employee of both herself and the king, she requested that he aid one Sir Walter Strickland in the latter's suing of the king. Strickland was her tenant in Kendal, Cumbria. She stated that he had ruled his land with “good rule and demeanour,” “diligently” keeping “order and peace.” She noted that it is this that had moved her to help him achieve his objectives.¹⁴² This is one instance

¹³⁸ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 44.

¹³⁹ Lorraine Attreed and Alexandra Winkler, “Faith and Forgiveness: Lessons in Statecraft for Queen Mary Tudor,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 4 (2005): 986–7.

¹⁴⁰ Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 116. “Yf ony faccyons or bendes were made secretly amongst her hede Officers, she with grete polycye dyde boulte it oute; and lykewyse if ony styfe or controversy, she wolde with grete discrecyon study the reformacyon thereof.”

¹⁴¹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 249.

¹⁴² Correspondence of Reginald Bray, WAM 16016.

of many where Margaret aided one of her tenants, showing both the care she took in administering her estates and the wide social circle in which she took an interest.¹⁴³

Margaret's managements of her households and the people within them ensured that when her lands passed on to the crown, they were more lucrative than when she had received them. Being an intelligent and strategic woman, devoted to securing a Tudor dynasty, she was well aware that the improvements she made to the estates were advantageous to her son and grandson who ultimately inherited her lands.¹⁴⁴

Margaret also preserved the lands she had inherited and added to them, ensuring that the land she passed on to the king as his inherited estates was substantial. When she founded two Cambridge colleges in the last decade of her life, she did not grant them land she held from her inheritance. Instead, she bought land from her own income specifically to endow the colleges. This was made easier due to her close relationship with the king, who gave her a general release allowing Margaret to do anything she wanted with her properties without asking permission of the king or making a payment to King Henry VII or his successors.¹⁴⁵ Not only does this release demonstrate the king's trust in Margaret, but it also shows her independent action from the king. This liberty made it far easier for Margaret to acquire land and put the land she acquired to use.

¹⁴³ Margaret generally held an interest in the education and careers of those in her household. Jones and Underwood address the subject in Chapter 5 of *The King's Mother*.

¹⁴⁴ This would have been especially evident to her son after 1498 when she returned to Edward Stafford the lands she had managed on his behalf while he was her ward. During her thirteen-year tenure as his guardian she had managed his estates with such effectiveness that when he took over his estates he implemented sweeping reforms across both those properties and others that were entirely based on those made by Margaret while she had held his estates (Rawcliffe, *The Staffords*, 129). Margaret's awareness can be seen in a plea to the king from the early sixteenth century, in which she reminds him that he should aid her in protecting her lands, as they will one day be inherited by him (Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 129–30). Given her success improving these lands, she likely expected her own heir to find her method of reforms equally useful when she passed on her own lands and inheritance.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Henry to Margaret, SJLM D91.23. Pardon of Henry VII, SJLM/5/6. For more regarding this general release, see Chapter Two, Section Two: "Mother and Son."

To endow land to Christ's College, Cambridge, Margaret bought estates from families that had been under political attainders, allowing her to fulfill her charitable works without alienating any of her property or diminishing the inheritance that passed along to the crown upon her death. Her actions disadvantaged those aristocrats and gentry whose allegiance to the crown was in question since they could not be able to regain the lands granted to the colleges. In a legal memorandum after Margaret's death, her executors took measures to protect the college should there be any legal suits for restitution of property.¹⁴⁶ Her actions in this instance both maintained the land held by the crown and disenfranchised local lords.

Margaret also added to her inherited lands by claiming as part of her inheritance estates that had formerly been part of the patrimonies of other noble families. Many of the lands granted to her in 1487 had historically belonged to members of her family but were lands to which she had little or no claim. Though it is impossible to know whether the initiative was Henry's or Margaret's, actions she took before the March 1487 grant often indicate her interest in the particular properties with which she had family connections.

In the March 1487 deed, Henry granted Margaret most of the lands of the forfeited estates of Henry Holland, Duke of Exeter, which by right of inheritance should have belonged to the Grey or Neville families. Margaret's personal interest in these holdings is evidenced by her acquisition and renovation of the Holland house of Coldharbour in September 1485 — less than two months into her son's reign. By the time Henry granted her the property in March 1487, the windows were already glazed on the water side with the Beaufort escutcheon.¹⁴⁷ Margaret had

¹⁴⁶ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 221. List of Causes, SJLM/7/3/4.

¹⁴⁷ Michael K. Jones, "Collyweston – An Early Tudor Palace" in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, edited by Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1987): 134; Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 100–101.

some claim to this house as the granddaughter of Margaret Holland, since it was one Exeter's properties acquired from their Holland inheritance. However, Margaret also coveted other parts of the Holland estate to which she had no claim whatsoever. Some estates should have been inherited by Edward Plantagenet upon his coming of age, but they were granted to Margaret before his majority.¹⁴⁸

Other lands in the 1487 grant to Margaret also should have been inherited by Edward Plantagenet, such as some estates that had once belonged to her uncle, Edmund Duke of Somerset or her great-uncle the Cardinal Beaufort. In the case of the latter, Margaret submitted a bill to parliament claiming various lands as the Cardinal's heir. All these lands Henry granted to her, although her claim to the lands was absurd, something both she and Henry would have known. Eventually, Margaret returned some of these lands to the crown in exchange for a life estate in Canford.¹⁴⁹

In these instances, Margaret used her position and influence to add land to Henry's inheritance. She would have known that she had no rightful claim to most of these lands; however, she obtained them by exploiting the situation of the rightful owners, either underaged or disadvantaged by their previous allegiances. Although they were granted by Henry, her actions reveal that the initiative for her claiming them came from Margaret, and her family connections to these territories gave the grants the colour of legitimacy. She often acquired parts of them before receiving them as formal grants. Her hand in the matter is most overt regarding Cardinal Beaufort's lands since Margaret formally petitioned for them.

¹⁴⁸ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 100–102.

¹⁴⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 102.

By claiming these lands as part of her inheritance, Margaret diminished the estates of other English noble families, most obviously the inheritance of Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury. Edward Plantagenet's imprisonment made him an easy target, but his grandfather had also been Warwick the Kingmaker, who in the early decades of Margaret's life had supported the Yorkist king, Edward IV, in usurping the throne from Margaret's Lancastrian relative, King Henry VI. For Margaret, there was likely satisfaction in collecting part of the lands that had belonged to this magnate of the fifteenth century, an enemy of her family, into her own hands and those of the crown by claiming them as her inheritance. The injustice of Edward Plantagenet's lands being granted to Margaret was redressed under Henry VIII, who returned them to Edward's sister and heir Margaret Pole, in 1513.¹⁵⁰ However, by claiming these lands, Margaret tangibly enhanced the extent of her inherited properties that were passed on to her heir, her grandson, and therefore amalgamated into the inherited lands of the crown.

Margaret willingly accepted the land that Henry granted to her for life, that eventually reverted to the crown. She not only accepted her role but actively pursued it by accumulating property and, by extension, the land under the eye of the monarchy and royal control, which she could then pass on to her heir, the king of England. Though her involvement is obvious in these instances, in others it can be presumed from her behaviour. For both her hereditary lands and her life estates Margaret worked to increase the revenues they produced and therefore the landed income that her heir would inherit.

By aiding in the expansion of the lands held by the crown both during Margaret's life and after her death, she helped increase the power of the monarchy relative to the aristocracy, partly

¹⁵⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 102–3.

because many of the lands she claimed came from the patrimonies of the aristocracy but also because the quantities of land acquired by her reduced land that could be granted to aristocratic families by the king. In past regimes, land was often used as a gift of patronage. The political unhappiness of the elites at Henry's unwillingness to continue this practice demonstrates that this was still the expected way of doing things. By granting lands to his mother, Henry could make a display of patronage that did not put the monarchy at risk. By claiming land that should have been inherited by others, Margaret added to the royal domain and diminished the income of those noble estates. The sovereignty of the crown that developed over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries partly rested on the financial and physical strength of the monarch to overcome challenges from the landed elite. Henry VII accomplished this, and his success can be credited to the sheer amount of property held by or for the crown. Margaret, the excellent strategist and manager, took an active part in this transition to a wealthier and more powerful monarchy. It was not only her son whom she was enriching and protecting but her descendants as well, who in the future inherited a more secure monarchy.

The Justice of My Lady: Royal Administration of Regional Institutions

The difficulty controlling the North of England was well recognized before the Tudors took the throne. Though the administration of the southern and central parts of England was unusually centralized and uniformly governed during the late Middle Ages, the Scottish borderlands and the North was less so and more problematic.¹⁵¹ In the fifteenth century, there

¹⁵¹ For more on this topic, see Steven G. Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: The Making of the British State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 3–77. The ease of rule in the central and south regions was due to the fact that these regions were the original area of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy and were receptive, therefore, to monarchical authority. Additionally, they had favourable agricultural conditions that resulted in their exploitation by waves of settlers. This resulted in their being well-populated and organized. This contrasts with the more northern and outlying territories, where government that was suitable in the south and central parts of England was less suitable, due to decentralized and more egalitarian power structures (Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power*, 5–7).

had been a proliferation of regional alliances which were the direct result of the power of aristocratic magnates, and most of the military elite in England below the titled aristocracy owed allegiance to and wore the livery of one of these regional rulers. These lords ruled in their regions virtually as independent sovereigns, and when numbers of them allied against the crown (as during in the Wars of the Roses) it was difficult for the crown to overcome them due to the king's comparative lack of resources.¹⁵² In light of these past problems, one of the early but long-lasting priorities of Tudor policy was to ensure that it was impossible for the aristocracy to rise in this fashion against the Tudor monarchy. For this reason, Henry VII and, presumably, his chief advisor, Margaret, renewed and strengthened policies of Edward IV that prevented lords from retaining men outside of the household. An exception to this rule was Margaret herself, who had a license to retain in her name, allowing her to employ a great number of people.¹⁵³

¹⁵² F.A. Inderwick, *The King's Peace: A Historical Sketch of the English Law Courts* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co; New York: Macmillain & Co, 1895), 168; David Starkey, *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, New York: Londman, 1987), 82.

¹⁵³ In 1461, in his first parliament, Edward IV introduced a group of articles that were unusual. They began by distinguishing "livery of sign" from "livery of clothing," and stated that no spiritual or temporal lord or anyone of a lower degree was allowed to give the livery of a sign, mark or token of company. Regarding livery of clothing, the articles stated that they could not be given by any lord or person of a lower degree except to the men in his household, menial men, officers, and councillors. In 1468, this was added to legislation. All retainings by indenture beforehand were declared null and void, except those for household servants, officers, or those of a lord's council (J. M. W. Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, (University of Pennsylvania Press), 211–12). From then on, all retaining or giving liveries outside the household would be illegal. In Henry VII's first parliament, he upheld these changes and required all lords and knights present to take an oath that they would not retain illegally. In the context of the civil war, these policies made logical sense as they restricted the ability of the elites to develop a retinue that could then be used to challenge the authority of the crown. All the major parties in the Wars had been able to muster large retainues to their support both politically and militarily. Therefore, by eliminating this ability of the nobility on a wide scale, Edward IV and Henry VII hoped to diminish their capability to rebel against the king and create alternate centers of power.

However, both kings created exceptions to this rule. Edward excepted his son the Prince of Wales, making it known that the Prince was able to retain and give his livery and sign at his pleasure (Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, 213). Henry VII enabled nobles to retain by licensing them to do so, but required that all the names of those retained be submitted to his secretary. This gave him flexible control over the distribution of armed forces. In addition, Henry VII's officers distributed the king's livery, to prevent lords using retainues for their own purposes (Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 40; Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, 220). One of those licensed to retain was Margaret, whom the king wished "specially in our name to accept and take into our service" those she thought worthy (Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 81).

Historically in England, the Welsh Marches and the North had been problematic. London's location in the South-east made it naturally distant from the North and made ensuring justice and loyalty in that region naturally more difficult. However, it was dangerous to delegate control of these areas, because they could be exploited to endanger the monarchy by launching a challenge to the throne. Richard III, and initially Henry VII, responded to this problem by keeping the wardenship of these regions in their own hands, appointing lieutenants from the lesser peerage or gentry.¹⁵⁴

For the Tudors in particular, there was fear that the North would rebel, as it had been a Yorkist stronghold and had supported Richard III in the Wars. Before Henry VII, however, these regions were already notoriously difficult to govern. One solution to the problem was to have auxiliary members of the royal family head regional councils. For this, there was a precedent: Edward IV had created regional councils in the North and Welsh Marches to curb regional powers and established a council ruled by his brother, Richard Duke of Gloucester. These regional councils were not controlled by the king's council, though they were supervised from Westminster. These councils, similar to the king's council, focused on equity.¹⁵⁵

Henry VII appointed his son, Prince Arthur, the Warden-General of the Scottish Marches with one of Henry's most trusted nobles, Thomas Howard, as his deputy.¹⁵⁶ The development of these councils contributed to the increasing centralization of power in the family of the king, but was also a feature of the centralization of power already occurring. Henry VII's increased taxation and regulation at the end of his reign made more administrative work, which in turn

¹⁵⁴ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power*, 48–49.

¹⁵⁵ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power*, 36; Alan Harding, *The Law Courts of Medieval England* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.; New York: Barnes and Noble Inc, 1973), 106-108.

¹⁵⁶ Roger Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain 1471–1714* (New York: Londman, 1985), 8.

required further delegation. To lighten his load and also to extend royal control into these northern regions, Henry empowered Margaret to set up a court of equity at her estates in Collyweston.¹⁵⁷ From this location she administered justice in her own name as well as the name of the king, and could keep a close and personal watch on these regions for the monarch, using her own considerable resources and landed power to control these regions on the king's behalf.

The extraordinary nature of Margaret's regional power becomes apparent in the context of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, enacted more than 400 years after Margaret's death. This legislation finally allowed English women in 1919 to be appointed Justices of the Peace, stating that a person could not be "disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function."¹⁵⁸ After the Act was passed, a London daily paper reported on seven women who were to become the first justices of the peace.¹⁵⁹ These women were not the first justices, and the debate over whether women could preside as justices was not a new one. Margaret was a justice of the peace, which elicited much discussion both during and after her lifetime. In 1503, the lawyer Thomas Marowe stated that a *femme sole* could be made a justice of the peace by commission and that a married woman could also be made a justice by commission, but that there would be legal ramifications due to her marriage. Other lawyers agreed: Humphrey Coningsby suggested that widows could be appointed as justices of the peace; Robert Brudenell suggested that a woman could be a bailiff; and Edmund Dudley argued that the king could

¹⁵⁷ Jones and Underwood, 85–91.

¹⁵⁸ R.H. Maudsley and J.W. Davies, "The Justice of the Peace in England" *University of Miami Law Review* 18, 3 (1964): 529; "Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, 1919" c.71 Regnal. 9 and 10, Geo 5. There were two arguments put forward in the twentieth century proving that without this act women could not act as justices of the peace: the common law disability of women which was verified by the English parliament in 1907, and the statute of Edward III which stated that men should be assigned to keep the peace. However, as Bertha Putnam pointed out in 1924, Edward's statute created "keepers" rather than "justices" of the peace, and therefore should have been irrelevant. (Bertha Haven Putnam, *Early Treatises on the Practice of the Justices of the Peace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. (Oxford University Press, 1924), 194.)

¹⁵⁹ Putnam, *Early Treatises*, 194.

appoint married or single women as justices.¹⁶⁰ Later in the early seventeenth century, attorney-general William Noye argued that women could be justices of the forest because Margaret had been a justice of the peace.¹⁶¹

However, Margaret was not only a justice of the peace. Rachel Reid, Bertha Haven, and Pearl Hogrefe together convincingly argue that Margaret held the position, if not the title, of High Commissioner of the Council of the North. The Council of the North was set up by King Edward IV in 1472 to improve government control of Northern England. The first Lord President of this council was Richard, then Duke of Gloucester and later Richard III. In the first years of his reign, Henry VII experienced multiple rebellions in the North, which had been extremely loyal to Richard III. Between 1507 and 1509, there is no record of an appointment for the office of High Commissioner of the Council of the North, indicating that the appointment may have been unusual.¹⁶² Bertha Putnam's work corroborates this notion, suggesting that the public discussion among contemporary lawyers may have taken place because the appointment of Margaret to the High Commission needed legal justification.¹⁶³ Reid and Hogrefe argue that it is unlikely Henry VII left the position vacant, due to his political troubles in the area with both the general population and nobles.¹⁶⁴

The lack of evidence in the Patent Rolls and Privy Seals is another indication that this appointment was unusual, as is the fact that Margaret's name is not on the commissions of the peace for the northern counties. This has puzzled scholars over the centuries because there were

¹⁶⁰ Putnam, *Early Treatises*, 195.

¹⁶¹ Hogrefe, "Margaret Beaufort," 151–2.

¹⁶² Hogrefe, "Margaret Beaufort," 150.

¹⁶³ Putnam, *Early Treatises*, 197.

¹⁶⁴ Hogrefe, "Margaret Beaufort," 150.

many arbitrations made by her that are easy to find.¹⁶⁵ Reid explains this by pointing out that, although Margaret's appointment was exceptional, she was well-suited to the position because of her loyalty to the regime and long-standing connections and interest in the North.¹⁶⁶ Though there are no Patent Rolls or Privy Seals indicating Margaret's role, her position in the North is referenced by a contemporary, Lord Darcy (1467–1537), a northern aristocrat with a family seat in Yorkshire.¹⁶⁷ In 1529, during the reign of Henry VIII, Darcy refers to the “commission that my lady the king's grandam had” in a petition against a commission in the North, which Henry VIII sought to put under the jurisdiction of his illegitimate son.¹⁶⁸ This shows that despite the lack of evidence in the Patent Rolls and Privy Seals for Margaret having been the High Commissioner of the Council of the North, she was known contemporarily to have fulfilled this role. This makes it indeed likely that the lack of records was due to the irregularity of the appointment.

Jones and Underwood agree that Margaret's appointment to preside over a regional court broke ground, but they and others otherwise complicate the narrative presented by Reid, Hogrefe, and Putnam. Some historians like Susan Walters Schmid and John A. Wagner suggest that the council during Henry VII's reign was used only sporadically for specific commissions; they claim that Margaret handled much of the administration of the North from the Midlands. They do not consider this to be the same council established by Edward IV, but rather a more informal one.¹⁶⁹ This explains the lack of official records about Margaret's appointment in the

¹⁶⁵ Rachel Reid, *The King's Council in the North* (London; New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), 88.

¹⁶⁶ Reid, *The King's Council in the North*, 89.

¹⁶⁷ Hogrefe, “Margaret Beaufort,” 151. Darcy held numerous offices in the North and was appointed the warden-general of the Marches of England toward Scotland with the special duty of suppressing riots in 1508; the same time at which historians believe Margaret was the High Commissioner in the North.

¹⁶⁸ Hogrefe, “Margaret Beaufort,” 150–151.

¹⁶⁹ Susan Walters Schmid and John A. Wagner (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Tudor England*, (ABC-CLIO, 2011), 304–5.

North. Their conclusion is based on Jones and Underwood's work that suggests Margaret's administrative role began as far back as 1499 when her council, operating from her household of Collyweston, began settling disputes as a court of chancery. Jones and Underwood argue that Margaret's authority was over an unofficial council of the Midlands, albeit one whose influence and jurisdiction ranged far into the North.¹⁷⁰ They claim that this council was occasioned due to a power vacuum in the Midlands, and to a need for greater delegation of power due to fiscal authority over the country established by Henry VII in the last decade of his reign.¹⁷¹

Margaret's letters corroborate this conclusion. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, Margaret wrote two letters to the mayor of Coventry regarding money owed to a man named Owen, a burgess of the city. In the first letter, she asks the mayor to examine the problem and bring it to a conclusion that is morally acceptable and in accordance with the king's laws.¹⁷² In the second letter, made necessary by his lack of compliance, her wording is stronger. She commands the mayor "in the king's name" to call before him the parties involved and examine their claims.¹⁷³ She says that this would be in accordance with "the king's pleasure and ours, and the due ministration of justice."¹⁷⁴ Both of these letters are signed from Collyweston, the estate from which Jones and Underwood determine she administered justice in the Midlands and North.

After Margaret's death, Henry VIII let this oversight of the North lapse. By 1525, he was contending with resistance to taxes in the North, which induced him to create another council there headed by his bastard son.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, Henry VIII had his young daughter,

¹⁷⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 87–88.

¹⁷¹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 89.

¹⁷² Letter of Lady Margaret to the Mayor of Coventry, Add. Ms 7592.

¹⁷³ Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 167–168.

¹⁷⁴ Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 167–168.

¹⁷⁵ Hogrefe, "Margaret Beaufort," 150–1.

Princess Mary, nominally lead a council in the Marches of Wales.¹⁷⁶ The struggles of Henry VIII to rule these regions demonstrate that strong leadership was needed to retain control. Margaret had provided such leadership in the North and Midlands.

Before 1499, the Stanley family had been building up considerable power and had been ruling the Midlands similarly to magnates of earlier centuries. After the rebellion in 1495, in which William Stanley (Margaret's brother-in-law) had taken part, Henry VII sought to curb this growing influence. For this reason, Margaret's household was separated from that of her husband, and she set up her court of equity in the Midlands with its northern jurisdiction.¹⁷⁷

By controlling these estates and administering justice through a court of equity, Margaret introduced a more direct degree of royal control over these regions. No longer did magnates from these regions hold sway, as they often had done in the past. No longer did subjects from these counties need to travel to London for royal justice. Margaret was able to freely administer justice on both the king's and her own behalf from her seat at Collyweston. This further centralized the justice system in the monarchy through his family. Henry VIII continued this strategy by granting these councils to his daughter and illegitimate son. This made the rule of the royal family more direct and visible in these counties far from the capital and extended monarchical authority in those regions. Margaret developed and encouraged this change in Henry VII's reign by using her excellent administrative skills and capability.

Councils of Kings: The Makeup of Government

The Tudors have been noted for their skill in choosing men to serve them. They governed with a reformed and efficient council, filled with men of the highest quality. Nothing exemplifies

¹⁷⁶ Starkey, *The English Court*, 82–83.

¹⁷⁷ Jones and Underwood. 86–89

this more than the will of Henry VIII, which stipulated that during his son's minority, the country and king should be ruled by sixteen privy councillors. That Henry VIII willed his kingdom to his privy council demonstrates both the known competence of the council and the established power of the institution.¹⁷⁸ Under the Stuarts in the seventeenth century, the quality of men in council decreased, causing conflict between the executive and legislature, resulting in the king's council losing its effectiveness.¹⁷⁹ Margaret played a role in reforming this council in two ways: by restructuring the household of the king to develop the Privy Chamber, the precursor of the Privy Council established under Henry VIII; and by helping to select the men surrounding her son, preferring gentry, lawyers, and churchmen to nobles. By doing this, Margaret made her son the center of the English political system, protected him from noble factions that could bring an end to his reign, and set a legacy of conciliar choices that oriented both her son's and her grandson's reigns in the right direction. By taking these actions, she contributed to one of the hallmarks of the modern English state: the rise of a modern bureaucracy recruited from the middle class, loyal to the sovereign rather than to aristocratic magnates.

When Henry VII took the throne, the royal household was divided into two departments: the Household proper and the Chamber. The former was headed by the Lord Steward and dealt with more material and mundane things like food and drink. The latter, headed by the Lord Chamberlain, dealt with the personal needs and matters of the sovereign and ceremony. In 1495, Henry VII divided this Chamber by establishing in a set of household ordinances the Privy Chamber as its own independent entity, distinct from the outer Chamber, which still existed but

¹⁷⁸ D. E. Hoak, *The King's Council in the Reign of Edward VI*, (Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1–2, 34–35.

¹⁷⁹ H. G. Hanbury and D. C. M. Yardley, *English Courts of Law*, (Oxford University Press, 1979), 50; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Privy Council: United Kingdom Government," Encyclopaedia Britannica, last Edited May 30, 2008, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Privy-Council-United-Kingdom-government>.

now was left with a public ceremonial role.¹⁸⁰ In the outer Chamber, there were hundreds of aristocratic men headed by the Lord Chamberlain. The newly independent Privy Chamber was

¹⁸⁰ David Starkey cites two different versions of these ordinances, both of which are a copy from the 1530s as the original does not appear to have survived. One is from College of Arms, Arundel MS XVII 18ff, the other he says is printed from an inferior MS in the second volume of Jeffrey, ed. *The Antiquarian Repertory*, on page 184. I was unable to acquire the one from the College of Arms, as it is not digitized. The Jeffrey book does have a set of ordinances printed, and claims they were drawn up by Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, in 1526. They are copied from a manuscript in the possession of Thomas Lloyd. Starkey notes that this is from an inferior MS to the Arundel manuscript. The manuscript it was copied from was probably one drawn up for Henry VII, as Starkey identifies, because the King's mother is discussed on the second page, and Henry VIII's mother was dead well before he ascended to the throne. Though some parts have clearly been changed for Henry VIII, phrases have therefore been lifted from this manuscript of Henry VII.

After this I went to try and find the ordinances without the help of Starkey's footnotes. I came across a set of ordinances by Henry VII printed in 1790 by the Society of Antiquaries of London. They claim that these ordinances are from the December 31, 1494, and come from a copy in the then Harleian Library N 642, Fol 198–217. These ordinances are different from the ones published in Jeffrey's book, so cannot be from the same manuscript that was once in the possession of Thomas Lloyd. The Harleian manuscripts are now in the possession of the British Library, but I was unable to find this ordinance in their catalogue. However, in my personal research at the British Library I collected images of a set of ordinances labelled "'Serten artycles apoyntyd' by Henry VII on 31 Dec. 1493." Close examination of these ordinances and the set of 1494 ordinances published in 1790 have caused me to realize that they are the same ordinances, though the one published in 1790 has updated the language slightly. The British Library archives have mis-labelled this document. Both the manuscript and printed version of 1790 state in the text that they are from December 31, the ninth year of Henry VII's reign, which began in August 1485. This means that the 1790 printing has the date right, and the date for this set of ordinances is December 31, 1494.

Regardless, I do not believe that this is the ordinance Starkey is talking about. It is clearly dated 31 December 1494, and Starkey notes his ordinance is undated, and fervently argues that the ordinance he is talking about must be from 1495.

The 1790 book also has another set of ordinances from Henry VIII's reign, from 1526, that are labelled the Eltham ordinances. The Eltham ordinances are well known historically and were created by Cardinal Wolsey. Though these Eltham ordinances and the ordinance from Jeffrey's book were written at very similar times (Jeffrey's claims to be from February 4, and the Eltham ordinances claim to be from January), they differ in their content and are not the same text. This date, February 4, does not matter either way, as it was the date when Henry VIII published his ordinances, not the date upon which they were originally made for Henry VII.

To add to the confusion, Starkey later changes his tune. Though in 1987 he demonstrated that the ordinance he is discussing must be from 1495, in a 2008 book he suggests it was made in 1493/4. For this claim, he cites his own book (and in fact the exact pages) from 1987 where he argues that it was from 1495!

I believe his argument for 1495 is extremely convincing and shall be working on the assumption that the household ordinances of 1494 that I have are *not* the more interesting one that he is discussing. In the future if I continue this research I will seek out the manuscript in the College of Arms. (Starkey, *The English Court*, 73–78; Add. MS 4712 fols. 3–32, Royal Household Ordinances, 1493; David Starkey, *Henry: Virtuous Prince* (London: Harper Press, 2008), 237; *The Book of Henrie Erle of Arundell, Lorde Chamberleyn to King Henrie Theighte*, in *The Antiquarian Repertory: A Miscellaneous Assemblage of Topography, History, Biography, Customs and Manners Intended to Illustrate and Preserve Several Valuable Remains of Old Times*, edited by Edward Jeffrey (London: Edward Jeffrey, 1808) 184–208; *Articles Ordained by King Henry VII for the Regulation of his Household, A. D. 1494*, *From the Harleian Library, N 642, fol. 198–217*, in *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household, Made in Divers Reigns: From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary, also Receipts in Ancient Cookery*, edited by The Society of Antiquaries of London (London: John Nichols, 1790), 107–133; *Ordinances for the Household, made at Eltham in the 27th Year of King Henry VIII A. D. 1526*, *From the Harleian Library, N 642*, in *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household, Made in Divers Reigns: From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary, also Receipts in Ancient Cookery*, edited by The Society of Antiquaries of London (London: John Nichols, 1790) 135–207).

the opposite, numbering about half a dozen men, and none ranked higher than a gentleman. The explanation for this change is likely political. In 1495, there had been a rebellion against the king in which both his Lord Chamberlain and Lord Steward had been implicated. Their betrayal may have tempted Henry to set up the new Privy Chamber, staffed with qualified appointees raised up by the Tudor dynasty, who did not have independent political interests or agendas and were well qualified and excellent at their jobs since they had been selected for their merit and loyalty.¹⁸¹

In his assessment of this change, David Starkey compares these ordinances and Henry VII's determination to rule his household with the ordinances and determination to rule *her* household shown by Margaret. He notes Bishop Fisher's praise for her statutes and ordinances, which Fisher states she ordered to be read quarterly to encourage her officers to perform well.¹⁸² However, Margaret also created ordinances for the court at the king's command. In 1493, She introduced an ordinance for reformation of apparel for the court in time of mourning, and some years earlier had issued another for the preparations for and etiquette around the lying-in of the queen and christening of royal children.¹⁸³

Starkey argues that it was the 1495 rebellion in the name of Perkin Warbeck (pretending to be the dead Richard, Duke of York, the younger son of Edward IV) that induced Henry VII to create the Privy Chamber. These ordinances empowered the middle class, non-noble advisors who occupied this Privy Chamber and put a barrier between the ear of the king and the nobles, who now participated in the less influential and more performative (though still important) aspects of government. Starkey contends that this was the result of the betrayal of Henry VII's

¹⁸¹ Starkey, *The English Court*, 72–76.

¹⁸² Starkey, *The English Court*, 76; Lansdowne MS 860 A/84 fol. 296b, Ordinances for Women Mourners, made by Margaret Countess of Richmond, Mother of King Henry VII.

¹⁸³ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 53; Halsted, *Life of Margaret Beaufort*, 260; Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 116, 177.

Lord Chamberlain, William Stanley, and his Lord Steward, John, Lord Fitzwalter, who had been implicated in the 1495 rebellion. William Stanley's betrayal was doubly shocking since he had helped put Henry on the throne and was Margaret's brother-in-law. In February 1495, he was beheaded.

This rebellion changed the public relationship between Margaret and Stanley. Before the rebellion, the Stanley family had been gathering power in the Midlands and had begun to act like magnates above the law. After the execution of William Stanley, Henry VII kept a closer eye on the family and began to limit their authority. The reduction of the power of the Stanley family in the Midlands caused the power vacuum which Margaret filled when she took up her position as head of a council in the Midlands at Collyweston in 1499. These events were made possible by the separation of Margaret's household from Stanley's, which had occurred after her vow of chastity that same year. These arrangements had been made while Margaret was accompanying her royal son on a progress through the eastern counties in the summer of 1498, just three years after the rebellions and Privy Chamber's redefinition.¹⁸⁴

It is reasonable to believe that Margaret and Henry talked and planned together in 1495 regarding the changes to the Privy Chamber, as they would in 1498 while in progress. The administrative alterations have her mark all over them. She had made similar moves to decrease the size and increase the efficiency of her own households, which had contributed to the increase in her revenues from her estates.

In the summer of 1495, Henry and Margaret spent over seven weeks in each other's company. From June 25 until August 3, Henry was in Lancashire in the lands of Stanley. From

¹⁸⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 85–87.

September 4 to 11, he was with Margaret at Collyweston, her own estate. Halsted suggests that these visits were to comfort his father-in-law and mother in their grief for Stanley's brother, but she misinterprets this visit.¹⁸⁵ Margaret and Henry no doubt felt a great deal of emotion regarding the betrayal of one of their past friends and family members, but six months afterwards was the time to move on from grief to planning, to ensure that nothing like this could threaten the dynasty again. Hall describes this visit in his chronicle, stating specifically that the king intended to "recreate his spirits and solace himself with his mother the lady Margaret."¹⁸⁶ This statement has probably led to Halsted's interpretation, but Hall's statement was conjecture since he was not born until 1497. The emotions he ascribes to actors in his chronicle could have been part of his narrative. Second, the need to "recreate his spirits and solace himself" does not necessarily imply that the king is grieving.¹⁸⁷ It more likely means that the king was stressed and concerned and wanted the advice of his mother.¹⁸⁸ Since he often sought Margaret's advice in person and in correspondence, it is far more likely that he felt a serious need to discuss sensitive matters with his mother that summer. Given Margaret's experience in the court, her excellent management of her household and council, and her role as his primary counsellor, it is difficult to imagine that he would *not* have planned this significant change in the structure of the king's council with her. From this perspective, the visit to Collyweston almost looks like a follow-up meeting, to solidify plans before the household ordinances that created the Privy Chamber, which David Starkey has so firmly placed in 1495. This Privy Chamber was the precursor to the Privy Council, which exists to this day.

¹⁸⁵ Halsted, *Life of Margaret Beaufort*, 184.

¹⁸⁶ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 57.

¹⁸⁷ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 57.

¹⁸⁸ I also believe that the first of these visits, to Stanley's estates, was for public show to demonstrate that Margaret and Stanley were still solidly in favour and in the royal inner circle after the rebellion. I discuss this in Chapter 2 in the subsection "An Unprecedented Marriage: The Femme Sole and Her Vow of Chastity."

If Margaret did have a hand in the creation of the Privy Chamber, she added to the institutional privileging of skilled men from lower classes. From her perspective, these changes were an intelligent decision. The creation of the Privy Chamber, full of men of lower status, decreased the possibility of ruinous noble factions maneuvering for the attention of King Henry. It meant that those handling the most sensitive information about the king's wellbeing, finances, and opinions were trustworthy and did not have a motive to exploit this knowledge and authority. They were not part of the aristocratic cliques and could be loyal to the Tudor regime alone. By helping her son to negotiate these problems and create such an institution, she contributed to the creation of more modern bureaucracy, by encouraging a serious and confidential role for middle-class men in the king's council, loyal only to the king.

Margaret also took responsibility for finding men loyal to the Tudors who could be promoted into the king's service. When Henry assumed the throne in 1485, he had relatively few connections in England. He had been in exile for over a decade and consequentially had grown up away from his estates and the court. Luckily for Henry, Margaret had been in England that whole time, and her connections were significant to his success in usurping the throne. Consequentially, many of Henry's best advisors were trained in his mother's household or had previously been in her confidence.

Margaret was able to provide these men because of her great skill in managing her own household personnel. Decades after Margaret's death, Henry Parker, Lord Morley, then in his dotage, wrote to Queen Mary I and described his youth in the service of her great-grandmother. Particularly, Lord Morley remembered the care Margaret took with those she employed. He remembers that she continually employed over four hundred people, and marvels that even if

someone were of little importance, “she could call them by their name.”¹⁸⁹ Historians now estimate from Margaret’s funeral expenses that her household was more likely in the realm of two hundred to three hundred personnel.¹⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the familiarity of Margaret with those she employed in her household remains impressive. The license Henry had given her to keep retainers ensured that she also employed a great number of people outside her household who wore the Beaufort livery of the red rose or portcullis.¹⁹¹

In 1485, Henry needed to restore a system of collecting revenue for the crown, the organization of which had fallen to the wayside during the Wars of the Roses.¹⁹² To do this, he gathered a collection of men with proven skill in the financial arena, many of whom had been trained in managing the revenues of Margaret and the old Lancastrian estates.¹⁹³ Four of these men were Reginald Bray, Sir John Cutte, Hugh Conway, and Richard Guildford. All four had been in Margaret’s service and she had sent some to Henry before 1485, demonstrating that the trend of her councillors being transferred to his service began early on.¹⁹⁴

None of these men were aristocrats. All were trusted by Margaret, had been raised to significance by her, and were therefore loyal to her and the Tudors. Reginald Bray had been in Margaret’s service since the 1460s, when he was the receiver-general of her late husband, Henry Stafford. He continued in Margaret’s service after Stafford’s death and aided her in the 1483

¹⁸⁹ “Although that she had in her cheker roule contynually two and twenty score of ladies, gentylnen, yeomen and offycers, yet it ys a wonder to tell, ther was neither man nor woman, if thei were off any reputation, but she coule call them by ther names.” (Henry Parker, MS Add. 12060 ff. 20b–22, in Herbert G. Wright, introduction to *Forty-Six Lives*, in Boccaccio, *De Claris Mulieribus*, trans. Henry Parker, ed. Herbert G. Wright (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1943), xi–xii.)

¹⁹⁰ Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 158–9.

¹⁹¹ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 40; Jones and Underwood, *The King’s Mother*, 81.

¹⁹² Arthur Percival Newton, “The King’s Chamber Under the Early Tudors” *The English Historical Review* 32, 127 (1917) 348.

¹⁹³ Newton, “The King’s Chamber,” 348.

¹⁹⁴ Newton, “The King’s Chamber,” 348.

rebellion against Richard III when he either recruited or collaborated with many men who later became relevant in Henry VII's household, like Sir Giles Daubeney, Sir John Cheney, and Richard Guildford. Richard Guildford's wife later worked for Margaret. Bray's servant William Cope also ended up in Henry VII's service as his cofferer.¹⁹⁵ For his loyalty to Margaret and his services helping coordinate Margaret and Henry's efforts, Bray was immediately brought into the fold of the new government in 1485. He was made the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which was held by the crown, and became an under-treasurer of the exchequer. In 1486, he was appointed the treasurer of England temporarily, and afterwards played a key role until his death in the finances of government and became a counsellor to the king.¹⁹⁶ During this time in government, he continued to work for Margaret personally as well. They maintained correspondence until his death, and he was one of her financial officers until at least 1497.¹⁹⁷ The son of a gentleman and surgeon, Bray was one of what some have called the "new men" of the Tudor reign: low-born lawyers, financial officials, and household men.¹⁹⁸ It was a type of man that Margaret actively promoted.

Bray was far from the only one that worked for Margaret before being lifted into Henry's employment in 1485. Many whom Henry employed in 1485 had been in his mother's confidence or service before he took the throne. Richard Guildford had been brought into the 1483 conspiracy by Reginald Bray, who was working for Margaret, and with others joined Henry in

¹⁹⁵ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 165; M.M. Condon, "Bray, Sir Reynold [Reginald] (c. 1440–1503), Administrator," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last edited January 3, 2008, accessed April 3, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3295>.

¹⁹⁶ Sean Cunningham, "Guildford, Sir Richard (c. 1450–1506), Administrator," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last Edited January 3, 2008, accessed April 3, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11723>; Ann Hoffman, "Beaufort, Margaret," in *Lives of the Tudor Age*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977), 50–51.

¹⁹⁷ Account of Reginald Bray, WAM 32377; Correspondence of Sir Reginald Bray, 16015–17.

¹⁹⁸ Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017).

exile.¹⁹⁹ Hugh Conway delivered messages and money from Margaret to Henry when he was in exile and was sent back to England by Henry to prepare for his attempt to take the throne in coordination with Margaret. After Henry took the throne, Hugh was appointed keeper of the great wardrobe.²⁰⁰ Christopher Urswick had entered Margaret's service in 1482, was her confessor during the Buckingham rebellion, and had delivered messages to Henry and John Morton (the Bishop of Ely and another conspirator) on her behalf. He was appointed Lord Almoner when Henry took the throne. John Morton had plotted with Margaret before the 1483 rebellion. Both Morton and Urswick joined Henry in exile.²⁰¹ Some have, ignoring Margaret's role, claimed that John Morton was Henry VII's most trusted advisor in his reign.²⁰² Other men came into her service later and worked their way up. Sir John Hussey began in Margaret's service before being made the master of the king's wards. In a deposition to Henry VII, he later remembered that he had first come to Margaret's service in the second year of Henry's reign.²⁰³ Sir John Cutte was one of Margaret's legal advisors, William Smith worked for Margaret before becoming clerk of the hanaper, and William Cope was promoted to the king's cofferer. This functioned at all social levels; the architect William Bolton worked for Margaret, and she later secured for him the position master of the works for Henry's chapel at Westminster Abbey.²⁰⁴

Henry acknowledged his mother's skill at choosing trustworthy men to serve her. In 1504, he sought to promote her personal confessor, Bishop John Fisher, to a bishopric but was

¹⁹⁹ Cunningham, "Guildford, Sir Richard (c. 1450–1506), Administrator," <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11723>.

²⁰⁰ Nicholas, Orme. "Conway, Sir Hugh (c. 1440–1518), Royal Servant," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published May 26, 2016, accessed April 3, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/109666>.

²⁰¹ Andre, *The Life of Henry VII*, 30; Desmond Seward, *The Wars of the Roses and the Lives of Five Men and Women in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Constable, 1995), 292–3; J.B. Trapp, "Urswick, Christopher (1448? – 1522), Courtier, Diplomat, and Ecclesiastic," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last Edited September 23, 2010, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28024>.

²⁰² Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, 4–5.

²⁰³ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 80, 223.

²⁰⁴ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 79–80, 223.

unwilling to do so without Margaret's permission. He wrote to her that he had in his days "promoted many a man ill-advisedly," and sought to recompense by promoting good, virtuous men.²⁰⁵ This letter demonstrates that Henry continued to rely on Margaret's advice throughout his reign and shows that the promotion of men from her service was not limited to his first years as king. By the time Henry wrote this letter to her he had been on the throne for almost twenty years. By encouraging her son to promote capable men tested in her own household, she ensured that the king had the most efficient and skilled officers around him, contributing to his success. These were men with proven loyalty to the family, whose motives and affiliations were not suspect, and whom the Tudors could trust because they had raised them from obscurity. This changed the makeup of the king's council and created a loyal bureaucracy sourced from the middle class, one of both Gunn's and Hick's requirements for the creation of a more modern English state.²⁰⁶

In the last months of Henry VII's life, Margaret was never far from his side. She moved to her establishment at Coldharbour and frequently sailed along the Thames to visit Henry in his palace of Richmond. When the king died on April 21, 1509, Margaret, herself sixty-five, was the chief executrix of his will.²⁰⁷ His funeral sermon was officiated by Bishop Fisher, and Wynkyn de Worde printed it at Margaret's request.²⁰⁸ When Henry, Prince of Wales, inherited his father's throne, becoming Henry VIII, he was two months shy of eighteen.²⁰⁹ Margaret took the initiative to ensure that the skilled and loyal consultative regime continued into her grandson's reign, as

²⁰⁵ John Britton's *Memoir of Margaret*, MS Oo.6.89. "I have in my days promoted mony a man inavisedly." I could see the meaning of the last word in this phrase being unadvisedly or ill-advisedly. I write it here to allow the reader to come to their own decision. Either way, the meaning is the same.

²⁰⁶ Hicks, *Edward IV*, 150–151. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, 24.

²⁰⁷ "Henry VIII: April 1509–May 1509, 1-14," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 1, 1509–1514*, ed. J S Brewer (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920), 8–24. *British History Online*, accessed February 21, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp8-24>. No. 1; 19.

²⁰⁸ Cooper, *Memoir of Margaret*, 111.

²⁰⁹ The Beauchamp/ Beaufort Hours, Royal MS 2A XVIII f.30v.

her son would have wanted. By making this a priority, she did as much as she possibly could to ensure that her grandson had good counsellors around him in his formative years, who could guide him while he learned the ropes of governance. She established a trend that persisted throughout the entire Tudor era — no matter the skill of the monarch themselves, they were excellent at choosing skilled, competent, and loyal men to advise them.

The medieval allegory of the wheel of fortune, indicating that luck could rise or fall swiftly, illustrated Margaret's life.²¹⁰ Fisher notes that "either she was in sorrow by reason of the present adversities, or else when she was in prosperity, she was in dread of the adversity for to come," adding that the greater her success was, the more she feared the future.²¹¹ He remembered that because of this fear, she cried at occasions that marked the success of her family: such as the coronation of her son, the marriage of Prince Arthur, and the coronation of Henry VIII.²¹² Margaret was likely anxious between Henry VII's death and Henry VIII's coronation. It had been almost ninety years since the English throne had successfully been passed from father to son; well before Margaret's lifetime.²¹³

Additionally, it seems that Margaret was concerned for Henry VIII as a ruler. As the second son, he was raised for the church, and it was not until the last years of his father's reign, after his elder brother's death, that he had begun to learn about governance. Henry VII's concern

²¹⁰ For a longer discussion of the medieval wheel of fortune, see: Charles M. Radding, "Fortune and Her Wheel: The Meaning of a Medieval Symbol," *Mediaevistik* 5, (1992): 127–138.

²¹¹ Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 126–127: "but the greter it was, the more alwaye she dredde the adversyte."

²¹² Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 126–127: "For when the Kynge her Son was Crowned, in all that grete tryumphe and glorye she wept mervaylously; and lykewyse at the grete tryumphe of the marryage of Prynce Arthur, and at the last Coronacyon, whereyn she had full grete joy, she let not to saye that some adversyte wolde followe.

²¹³ The last son to successfully inherit his father's throne was Henry VI in 1422. Henry VI's son, Edward of Westminster, died before inheriting the throne. Edward IV's son Edward V was never coronated as he was killed as a minor in the Tower of London. Richard III outlived his heir, also named Edward.

for his readiness to rule explains why he kept Henry with him for much of the last years of his reign.²¹⁴ Margaret, also concerned about Henry's lack of preparation for his role, worked to make this crucial transition go smoothly and ensured that Henry started his reign with the right counsellors. However, Margaret was ailing and had been since the summer of 1508.²¹⁵ One gets the sense that Margaret's immense will-power kept her alive just long enough to ensure that the throne passed smoothly to her grandson, since she died on June 29 in Westminster Palace, only five days after Henry VIII's coronation.

By the time she died, it was clear that the transition from one monarch to the next had been successful, and that councillors she trusted were going to be guiding the next regime. In the two-month interim between Henry VII's death and her own, Margaret had been busy. There was no need for a regent or minority government because Henry VIII was just two months short of his eighteenth birthday. Minorities were a dangerous time for the monarchy and presented an opportunity for ambitious aristocratic magnates to gain control over the monarchy or overthrow it. Most English minorities ended in failure or war. Edward V, who should have inherited the throne in 1485, was murdered before he could be crowned.²¹⁶ Henry VI's minority resulted in a king completely unprepared for his station, contributing to the Wars of the Roses.²¹⁷ It was a stroke of good luck that Henry VIII was able to succeed to the throne without a period of rule by a regent and council, and Margaret immediately set about organizing the transition of power and worked to ensure that Henry VIII's first council was to her liking.

²¹⁴ Starkey, *Henry*, 234–9.

²¹⁵ Norton, *Margaret Beaufort*, 206–207.

²¹⁶ The title 'V' is respectful. He was never coronated and is not considered to have ever reigned, as he was imprisoned from his father's death until his own. His throne was usurped by his uncle, Richard III. Edward was one of the two boys referred to as the princes in the tower.

²¹⁷ Hicks, *Edward IV*, 7-9.

Margaret resided in the court for the last two months of her life, providing her the opportunity to be politically active during this time. In the days after the death of Henry VII, Margaret moved to the Tower of London for greater security and organized both her son's funeral and her grandson's coronation.²¹⁸ At the funeral itself, she took precedence over every other royal woman, and it is likely that she chose the interim council to govern for Henry VIII until his coronation. One of the first actions of this council was to arrest two unpopular ministers from Henry's reign whom Margaret is thought to have disliked, and some historians have used this as evidence of the power she wielded during these months.²¹⁹ Some have also suggested that Margaret acted as her grandson's regent for those two months, but the evidence for this is scanty.²²⁰

Events moved quickly between Henry VII's death on April 21 and Margaret's on June 29. On June 11, Henry married Catherine of Aragon, securing the alliance with the Spanish King, Ferdinand of Aragon. Some historians have suggested that Margaret could have encouraged the marriage; pious, royal, and well-educated, it is likely she thought that Catherine was the perfect queen for England.²²¹ The coronation of King Henry VIII and Queen Catherine was set for June 24. Margaret played a leading role in preparations for the event, and the council met under her presidency in her chamber at court to agree to arrangements.²²² Remembering Henry VIII's coronation, Fisher recorded Margaret's tears, betraying her anxiety as she watched

²¹⁸ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 92. One contemporary source describes her as the head of the interim council for Henry VII.

²¹⁹ Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 92; Penn, *The Winter King*, 346.

²²⁰ Domville, *The King's Mother*, 205.

²²¹ Carolly Erickson, *Great Harry*, (New York: Summit Books, 1980), 53.

²²² Starkey, *Henry*, 296.

the occasion concealed from view behind a lattice. She feared that with such fortune, “some adversity would follow.”²²³

Margaret led the new king through the first two months of his reign, was his chief councillor, and guided his conciliar choices, much as she had during her son’s reign.²²⁴ Given Henry VIII’s age, it is unsurprising that she had a hand in choosing his first council. According to John Stow, a sixteenth-century chronicler, Henry’s first privy council was chosen on the “advice of his grandmother, Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby.” This time she selected men from among the most trusted of her son’s household. Stow lists the men chosen by Margaret: William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England; Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester; Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey and Treasurer of England; and George Talbot, Treasurer of England, Earl of Shrewsbury, and Lord Steward of the king’s household; Charles Somerset, Lord Chamberlain; Sir Thomas Lovell; Sir Henry Wyatt; Thomas Ruthall; and Sir Edward Poyning.²²⁵ Historians have commented on the fact that Thomas Wolsey, later the chief statesman of Henry VIII, was conspicuously absent from Henry’s first privy council. A.F. Pollard credits this absence to Margaret’s influence and suggests she did not

²²³ Fisher, *The Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 127.

²²⁴ Kenneth Pickthorn, *Early Tudor Government: Henry VIII*, (Cambridge University Press, 1951), 7.

²²⁵ Stow, *Annales*, 486.

“By the advice of his grandmother, Margaret Countesse of Richmond and Darby, divers grave personages were elected to be of his privy councell, whose names were Wil. Warham Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England, Richard Foxe Bishop of Winchester, Thomas Howard Earle of Surrey, and the treasurer of England, George Talbot Earle of Shrewsbury and Lord Steward of the Kings house-hold, Charles Somerset Lord Chamberlaine, Sir Thomas Louel, Sir H. Wyat, Doctor T. Ruthall, Sir Edward Poinings. These grave Counsellors, fearing lest such abundance of riches and wealth as the King was now possessed of, might move his young yeeres unto riotous forgetting of himself, gate him to be present with them when they sate in counsel, to acquaint him with matter pertaining to the politike government of the Realme, with the which at the first he could not well endure to be much troubled, being rather inclined to follow such pleasant pastimes as his youthfall peeres did more delight in.”

favour him.²²⁶ Although she had a great affinity for churchmen in matters of government, she nevertheless did not encourage his selection for this council.

Completing this list, though evidently not part of the first privy council, is Margaret's beloved friend Bishop John Fisher. In his *Apologia ad Carolum Quintum*, Reginald Pole recalls that on her deathbed Margaret exhorted Henry VIII to follow Fisher's counsel in all things, claiming that "she desired her grandson to have a deference for him" because he would contribute to "his felicity both here and hereafter."²²⁷ Though Pole was writing twenty years later, his mother was at court and could have been an eye-witness.²²⁸ Regardless of his testimony, it is hard to imagine Margaret would not have encouraged her grandson to heed the advice of her most trusted advisor and friend. Although Margaret herself was gone, her influence continued through those she promoted. The men to whom she entrusted the smooth transition of power all had extensive connections to her son's government and had proved their merit as servants of the Tudor state. Churchmen, nobles, and knights, they all knew Margaret well and had worked with her in Henry VII's court.²²⁹

²²⁶ A.F. Pollard, *Wolsey*, (London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co. 1953), 13.

²²⁷ Fisher, *Funeral Sermon*, 156.

²²⁸ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 6.

²²⁹ For a complete discussion of Henry VIII's council both in 1509 and over the course of the rest of his reign, see: William Huse Dunham Jr. "The Members of Henry VIII's Whole Council, 1509–1527," *The English Historical Review* 59, 234 (1944): 187–210. In her intervention, Margaret acted much like past dowager queens. It was usual for dowager queens to ensure the succession of their children through whatever means possible and to advise them. Dowager Queen Isabella of Angouleme had her nine-year-old son, Henry III, crowned immediately, only nine days after the death of her husband King John in 1216. This exigency was due to political tumult within England from the First Baron's War, which resulted in many barons rejecting the claim to the throne of Isabella's son (Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest*, volume II, (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848), 41). Dowager Queen Isabella also sent her second son away to Ireland for his safety, fearing the conflict in England. In the proclamation addressing this, the boy-king Henry III states that it was his mother who sent his brother away, upon being advised to do so (Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 42). This directly shows Isabella's hand in the course of events. Perhaps Margaret felt a similar fear that the English would reject the claim of her grandson. By the end of Henry VII's reign his financial policies had been deeply unpopular, and the throne had not passed peacefully from father to son for ninety years. Like Margaret, Isabella's priority was to see to the safe transfer of power by protecting her sons; however, unlike Margaret, Isabella held no role on the council and had nothing to do with his regency due to her unpopularity (Edward Black, *Royal Brides: Queens of England in the Middle Ages* (Sussex: The Book Guild Ltd, 1987), 62).

Margaret's role in the transition of power from Henry VII to Henry VIII was unusual in its circumstances, but a natural consequence of the exercise of power and authority she displayed. Although regencies usually existed in a time of strife when the direction of a dowager queen was needed to oversee the transition of power, it was usually less necessary if the throne passed from a king to his adult and able son. It had been almost a century since the throne had passed peacefully from father to son, and Margaret was his grandmother and a noblewoman rather than his mother and a dowager queen. Margaret was acting to protect her grandson's rights and coronation during this time of transition and given the nature of her role during her son's reign; it was natural that she aided in creating Henry VIII's first council and in ensuring that his reign began smoothly.

It is a skill to be able to choose advisors wisely and this was a skill Margaret had in abundance. In many ways, her work forming and influencing the councils of Henry VII and Henry VIII was her longest project and her largest contribution to the creation of the modern English state. Playing such a formative role in the creation of the Privy Chamber, she aided in

Other dowager queens, however, did participate in regency councils. Queens were generally safe choices to rule if their husband was absent or son young, as they usually had no blood claim to the throne, unlike male relatives. The administration of a royal cousin contributed to the Wars of the Roses in the mid-fifteenth century. When the king was a minor, the dowager queen could exert significant influence in government. Though queens and dowager queens were not appointed to the official office of regent, compliance to their commands was expected and they usually participated in the administration of the realm (St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 133–4). The most extreme example of this is the minority of Edward III, which was governed by his mother Isabella and her lover, Roger Mortimer. The circumstances were unusual in that she deposed her husband, and Isabella was an essential part of the regency council of Edward III's minority. In the end, she managed a coup d'état before being removed from power by her own son three years later (St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 139–145). The precedent of women participating in the government between reigns, however, remained. Minorities were few in England so most dowager queens did not need to worry too much about the transition of power. Their adult son would be able to do that work himself. Those who had to deal with the transitions of power were those dowager queens with young sons inheriting the throne. Regardless, acting as a councillor to one's ruling male relatives was a prerogative of almost any English queen or dowager queen; and by following in this tradition by superintending her grandson's ascension to the throne Margaret joined a long list of noblewomen. Eleanor of Aquitaine was active in both of her sons' reigns, reaching the apogee of her power under Richard I, arranging her son's marriage, advising him, and ruling on his behalf while he was abroad (Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine: Parent, Queen, and Duchess," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patron and Politician*, (Austin: University of Texas, 1976) 14–19).

reorganizing the court profoundly. Under Henry VIII, this council became paramount and, upon his death, ruled the country for Margaret's great-grandson, Edward VI. Additionally, many of the men she brought to the attention of her son and chose for her grandson played influential roles in government and were important to the running of the Tudor regime in these fundamental first decades of its reign. Her choice of men set an example for all her royal descendants to come. The men she chose were of proven skill, often from the middle classes, and well educated in law or philosophy at either Oxford or Cambridge. In the future, her son, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren would follow her lead, choosing men of similar backgrounds and abilities.

Conclusion

One need not read much about the Tudor era to realize that there were profound changes between 1485 and 1603. Some of these changes were sharp, having immediate consequences; others were gradual processes that redefined government and society in England, leading to the rise of the modern English state. Margaret's contribution to the changing political landscape falls into the latter category. By accepting the land that Henry VII granted to her for life, increasing the revenues of her estates, and accumulating property, Margaret aided in the expansion of the royal domain. These estates enabled her to play an important role in regional institutions and put her in a position from which she could administer justice through a court of equity, which in turn increased the direct control of the monarchy over problematic regions of England. Additionally, as her son's chief advisor, Margaret had a significant impact on the quality and characteristics of the men who served him. She helped establish the Privy Chamber, guided her son's selection of household and government office holders, and established the first council of her grandson, King Henry VIII. None of this would have been possible without her legal and religious independence, the close and trusting relationship between Margaret and her son the king, and her considerable political acumen.

The changes that Margaret contributed to were gradual, and part of a much larger set of trends that consolidated power and sovereignty in the hands of the monarch and his family. By the end of the Wars of the Roses, kingship had largely become elective — dependent on noble support and military might. The Tudors, under the influence of Margaret, sought to re-establish dynastic kingship to give themselves security on the

throne.²³⁰ By implementing these changes, Margaret sought to ensure the safety of her family. Though with hindsight the Tudor regime seems to have been secure, Margaret would have always remembered the Wars of the Roses, which had marred three decades of her life. To her, securing wealth and power in the family of the monarch was paramount, and motivated her every decision. As a result, she contributed to the rise of the modern English state by changing the nature of governance in England. Her input is critical to understanding the origins of the modern English state, and her contributions should henceforth be included in assessments of the evolution of English government and governance.

Though many of the historians referenced throughout this paper have extensively studied the modern English state, and many others have assessed Margaret's life, none have placed Margaret's achievements in the context of the origins of the modern English state. It is critically important that the history of medieval women not be sidelined from the general narrative of history, and that their contributions be normalized into the standard historical narrative. By examining Margaret's contributions to the royal demesne, institutional regional power, and the changes she made to the king's council, this paper has inserted Margaret into the narrative surrounding the creation of the early modern English state, correcting a major oversight in previous scholarship. Margaret was fundamental to the creation of a more powerful monarchy, supported the creation of a new middle-class bureaucracy, and assisted her son in reforming the king's council. These contributions cannot be overlooked, disregarded, or marginalized into women's history as they have been up to this point, a state of being this thesis hopes to amend.

²³⁰ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, 31–2.

Margaret, the master strategist, was the true founder of the Tudor dynasty. Without her, Henry VII would never have gained the throne, and without her advice and assistance, it is reasonable to question whether he would have kept it. The coronation of her grandson was one of the most triumphant moments of her life. For the first time in ninety years, the English throne passed from father to son without a hitch. In the next century, this hold on the throne would be tested by circumstance. First, it weathered the prospect of a long minority under Henry VIII's son Edward, who inherited the throne at just nine years of age. Second, it persevered through religious strife caused by the reformation. Third, it survived not one, but two regnant queens — the first two in English history. In the late fourteenth century, the ruling family could never have survived such perils, but the Tudors prevailed. Between the beginning of Henry VII's reign and the end of Henry VIII's, the royal family became so institutionalized that being a royal Tudor was the determining factor in the succession. By increasing the royal demesne, expanding royal control over regional institutions, and changing the nature and makeup of the king's council, Margaret was a key part of this change.

Margaret's tomb in the south aisle of Westminster Abbey in the chapel built by her son is a monument to the success of the Tudor dynasty but is also emblematic of Margaret's personal victory. Under the breathtaking fan-vaulted ceiling decorated with her own symbol, the portcullis, lie the many kings and queens of England descended from her, who could credit their place on the throne to her brilliance and ambition. It was as the mother of Henry Tudor that Margaret established her son on the throne; it was as the king's mother and the subsequent king's "grandam" that she established a dynasty.²³¹ To ensure her family's

²³¹ Hogrefe, "Margaret Beaufort," 151.

success and security, she had to alter the way England was governed, contributing to an outcome far greater than she could have anticipated — the emergence of the modern English state.

Appendix 2: Images



Image One: Portrait of Lady Margaret Beaufort at prayer by Rowland Lockey, c. 1565-1616. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge.²³³

²³³ Image sourced from: ArtUK, https://www.artuk.org/discover/artworks/lady-margaret-beaufort-14431509-at-prayer-countess-of-richmond-and-derby-mother-of-king-henry-vii-and-foundress-of-the-college-139441/view_as/grid/search/keyword:margaret-beaufort/page/1#.



Image Two: Portrait of Henry VII by an unknown Netherlandish artist c. 1505 © National Portrait Gallery, London. Reproduced with permission.²³⁴

²³⁴ National Portrait Gallery, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw03078/King-Henry-VII>.

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