

Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and John N. King, eds. *Henry VIII and His Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xi + 286 pp. \$95. ISBN: 978-0-521-51464-4.

The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry VIII's accession to the English throne produced a flood of new scholarship on this most famous of kings. This is one of several new books that have focused less on Henry himself than on reactions to him over the succeeding 500 years: the others are Tatiana C. String and Marcus Bull, eds., *Tudorism: Historical Imagination and the Appropriation of the Sixteenth Century* (2011), and Thomas S. Freeman and Tom Betteridge, eds., *Henry VIII in History* (forthcoming 2012). These analyses provide a fascinating examination of the shaping of academic and popular perceptions of Henry VIII that is frequently insightful and illuminating.

The essays in *Henry VIII and His Afterlives* assess representations of Henry VIII from his own reign (1509–47) through to the judgments of twentieth-century historians. A strength of the book is its interdisciplinarity: it draws on the expertise of scholars from literature, history, music, art history, and religious studies.

It opens by considering contemporary reactions to Henry. Peter Happé focuses on the use of court interludes for political purposes, even beyond those intended by their authors. John N. King, continuing an argument that he has made elsewhere, contends that after the break with Rome, “the Henrician image bears an imprint of Protestant ideology” (34). Crucially, King notes that these images, which use biblical typology, were not produced by the king, but were designed to flatter him into fulfilling the aspirations of evangelicals at court. Dale Hoak then considers Henry VIII's reign as a transition to modernity (something he admits runs the risk of anachronism) and provides a fascinating examination of Henry's use of magnificence and his obsession with the pursuit of glory.

Alec Ryrie pursues the theme of Henry's afterlives under his children and the attempt to conscript Henry's memory to shore up different religious perspectives. Ryrie exposes the central conundrum under Edward and Mary: if one recognized the royal supremacy, could one oppose the monarch's religious actions? Mark Rankin focuses on Elizabethan and Stuart courtier poets, in whose writings we see the emergence of Henry as a mythic figure who could be malleably deployed in service of a range of causes, especially English Protestant nationalism. Ronald Paulson's entertaining chapter explores the overwhelmingly negative

eighteenth-century reactions to Henry. Jonathan Swift's judgment on Henry was characteristic: "Dog of a King."

Tatiana C. String's chapter on Henry VIII's codpiece brilliantly analyzes Holbein's full-length picture of the king as a bearer of sixteenth-century ideas of masculinity. It leads neatly into Christopher Highley's investigation of the treatment of Henry VIII's "remains," especially his armor, which, Highley suggests, served as a monument to Henry in the absence of any official funeral statue. Central to the display was Henry's armored codpiece, and a curious ritual emerged at the end of the seventeenth century in which visitors would "prick . . . the royal prick case" to aid conception. The infamously lustful (but actually impotent) monarch had become a talisman of potency.

Matthew Spring stresses the lasting importance of Henry's musical contribution: less as composer and musician and more through his expansion of the musical establishment of the court. Spring also draws attention to an overlooked tutor from Henry's early life: his French lute teacher, Giles Duwes. Tom Betteridge's analysis of two television series and a historical novel is a model of how to interpret and use popular culture, while Andrew Fleck reveals how two tales from the 1590s summoned Henry VIII up as a nationalist nostalgic fantasy. Finally, Peter Marshall provides a fantastically useful overview of twentieth-century judgments on Henry VIII, reminding us both of the circularity of historical argument and of the way in which our conclusions are as much a product of our age as our protagonist's (for example, J. C. Flügel's 1920 Freudian analysis of Henry's childhood, newly evinced in David Starkey's *Henry* in 2009).

*Henry VIII and His Afterlives* gives an extremely interesting overview of changing reactions to Henry VIII over the centuries. The essays don't all directly address the overall theme and the book might have been improved by a more concerted chronological structure. Nevertheless, as a book about the writing of history and historical treatments of Henry VIII, it makes a significant contribution to existing scholarship.

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