

A Sainly Rescuer for a Shakespearean Villain: The Hours of Richard III and Saint Ninian

I

Richard III (1452–1485) is one of England's archetypal anti-heroes, a mendacious and ambitious, fratricide and infanticide whose usurpation of the crown incurred just punishment. His reputation for wickedness had developed even before he died and became an enduring cultural legacy in Shakespeare's play (Hanham). Despite historical criticism of this characterisation, Richard's anti-heroic notoriety remains the context in which historians hoping to comment on Richard's personality often work. Among the fragments of information that allow the historian to approach the issue of Richard's psyche are a number of documents pertaining to Richard's devotion to Saint Ninian of Whithorn (Galloway) (4th–5th Century). Richard's interest in this 'Scottish' saint is usually presented as having origins in Richard's ambition to conquer parts of lowland Scotland. However, such an analysis largely sidesteps discussion of Richard's character, except in implying political ambition, tacitly accepted to be uncontroversial. While these motives should not be wholly dismissed, they are unlikely to have been the sole or even the most important grounds for Richard's interest in Saint Ninian. In worshipping Ninian, Richard displayed a style of devotion that was, for his time and social context, entirely conventional, suggesting not political concerns, but pious motives. The only element of Richard's religion that actually appears unusual was the choice of Ninian himself, and even that may not have been particularly odd in the context of late-medieval, northern-English devotion to the saint. This article will address some of the issues that have arisen from Richard's anti-heroic fame and will then proceed to analyse his devotion to Ninian and the possible and probable significance of this manifestation of a particularly medieval Christian form of 'hero-worship' for our understanding of Richard's character.

II

Richard's personality has captivated commentators and historians from his own time to this. Yet the awareness of the tenuousness of the myths and models of his character has an almost equal longevity. Thomas More, for example, writing on Richard's motivations for usurping the crown opined that "whoso diuineth vppon coniectures, maye as wel shote to farre as to short" (Sylvester vol. 2, 9). This self-consciousness has extended to some of the more recent commentaries on Richard's religious beliefs. In their 1997 study of what remains of Richard's library, Sutton and Visser-Fuchs explicitly avoided using his books to make more than very tentative claims concerning Richard's piety. Here the response to the cultural legacy of Richard was reactive, engendering great, perhaps overmuch, caution into the analysis of Richard's religious behaviour. They concluded that while there are possible indications of an independent mind, evidenced by his possession of an English paraphrase of the Old Testament and a Wycliffite New Testament, his books do not allow one to draw any definite conclusions concerning his character (Richard III's Books 82–85). By contrast, Jonathan Hughes was more directly influenced by the idea of a historical anti-hero, and he deployed Richard's book of hours to construct for the king a persona through which his usurpation of the crown could have been rationalised as the consequence of religious zeal and a sense of personal destiny. However, his claims are difficult to accept in full. They are based on the belief that a speculative reading, derived from a limited number of texts that survive from Richard's library can be said to be authoritative (Hughes 25–26, 131 and 104–153). Richard's literary and cultural legacy has stimulated a fascination with personality that his historians have always had to negotiate, even if it is not the focus of their studies.

Richard's anti-heroic reputation need not constrain historical writing. In similar cases from the later middle ages, where relatively substantial documentation pertaining to the piety of an individual exists, the evidence is usually perceived by historians to function less problematically as a window onto an individual's religion, or that of their immediate social milieu. Such evidence tends not to engender such grandiose extrapolations as some of those which have developed out of analyses of Richard's piety. Michael Hicks's examination of the will of Lady Margaret Hungerford (d.1478), for example, illustrated that personal documents may be used to reach conclusions on the religious complexion of an individual without undue speculation. Similarly Kathryn Smith's treatments of fourteenth century books of hours demonstrates the potential of these texts to shed light on the religious lives of their users. While Hughes relied heavily on conjecture in his analysis of Richard's book of hours, he argued correctly that it was a document that could shed light on his private religious life. This book of hours and specifically the Collect of Saint Ninian (Lambeth Palace MS 474, fol. 1r), when examined in relation to Richard's religious foundations and to his policies in the north of England, can yield revealing insights into his personal beliefs and concerns, even if those beliefs and concerns should turn out to have been largely conventional.

III

Richard acquired his book of hours at a time when such texts were at their most popular. Books of hours were a remarkable fifteenth-century phenomenon; greater numbers of them survive from this period than any other kind of book, including the Bible (de Hamel ch. 6; Wieck). They were essentially an adaptation and abbreviation of ancillary devotions from the breviaries used by monastic orders to celebrate the eight liturgical hours of the day: Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. Each service consisted of a number of psalms, hymns, canticles, lessons and prayers with antiphons and versicles with their responses, arranged according to a 'use' particular to a given region or institution (Duffy 209–11). In England, the most common uses were those of Sarum (Salisbury) and Eboracum (York), but there were uses peculiar to the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Augustinians and others. The form of worship embodied by the books of hours was modelled on official liturgy, but was also distinct from it. It was

flexible and adaptable; books of hours might be used in private but could also be used to follow the divine service as it was performed by members of the clergy. A book of hours would have simultaneously enabled a kind of religious independence while signalling spiritual attachment to the forms and practices of the official church.

Richard's book of hours was unusual in a number of particulars. Produced in the 1420s, it had not originally been made for Richard himself; given the rather complicated and heavily abbreviated instructions for seasonal variations in the hours of the Virgin on fols. 9–14, the first owner probably had clerical training. Before Richard acquired it, almost sixty folios of additional prayers were added to the book (Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *The Hours*). Though none of them was itself unusual, the prayers and their rubrics promised divine aid for a wide range of spiritual and worldly problems. Taken as a group, their number and comprehensiveness was uncommon and may have formed part of the book's attraction for Richard. Sharing the belief of his contemporaries in the instrumentality of prayer, that is to say in the intrinsic power of a particular form of words to request the help of divine grace, Richard may have wanted a book of hours that offered a full range of choices (Duffy 218–20).

Richard acquired the book of hours after his accession to the throne in 1483. Among his additions was an entry in the calendar for his birthday on the second of October where he refers to himself as *Ricardus Rex*, and a long prayer (fols. 181–83) in which he is again referred to as king. In addition to these changes, Richard also added a long, litany-like devotion at the end of the book (fols. 184–184v). Yet the most prominent of his additions is the collect of Saint Ninian on the very first page (fol. 1). Translated, the prayer reads "O God who converted the people of the Picts and the Britons through the teaching of holy Ninian your confessor to the knowledge of your faith, grant of your grace that by the intercession of him by whose learning we are deepened in the light of your truth we may obtain the joys of heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen".¹

IV

As the collect states, Saint Ninian was reputed to have converted the Picts in the fourth or fifth centuries before the arrival of Saint Columba (521–597). His shrine was at *Candida Casa* (the White House) at Whithorn in Galloway. He is thought to

have been a Northumbrian development of the historical Finnian of Movilla, a sixth-century Irish missionary to the Picts (Clancy). There is a short record of Ninian's life in Bede's (c. 673–735) *Historia Ecclesiastica* (c. 731), but the origins of the shrine's popularity as a pilgrimage destination seem to lie with the twelfth-century *Vita* written by the Cistercian abbot and author Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167) (Colgrave 222; Clancy 23). By the later middle ages, Ninian appears to have been a fairly popular saint of localised significance within the Scottish borders. It was unusual, though not unheard of, that Richard as an Englishman should have chosen to associate himself with Ninian; devotions to Ninian have been used in the analysis of other books of hours as evidence of manifest Scottish ownership (Deswick 109). Yet, not only did Richard locate Ninian's collect prominently in his book of hours, on the very first folio, the saint was also specified in the foundation charters of all four of his religious foundations. These were the chantry at Queens College Cambridge (1477), and the colleges of priests at Middleham (1478) and at Barnard Castle (1478), all of which pre-date clear evidence of Richard's aspirations to conquer lowland Scotland, and the college at York Cathedral (1483).² At all four, Ninian was either a dedicatee or a principal feast and Ninian was the only saint mentioned in the foundation documents (where we have them) of all of them (Searle 89; Raine, "The Statutes" 160–70; *Victoria County History* vol. 2, 129–30; Horrox and Hammond vol. 1, 201).

The collect locates Richard in a decidedly Northern-English *milieu*, where there was interchange between Scottish and English devotional cultures; it invokes the ancient peoples of both kingdoms, "*populos pictorum et britonum*". The text in Richard's book of hours matches almost word for word a collect recorded in the 1491 Arbutnott missal, the only complete manuscript source for the liturgy of the medieval Scottish use (Forbes 369). Richard was directly or indirectly in contact with the cult in Scotland (Higgitt 202). From 1470, Richard became the Warden of the Western March towards Scotland, guarding the borders against Scottish incursions (Horrox 37). It was almost certainly here that Richard acquired his devotion to the saint. Though many of Richard's biographers have followed Paul Murray Kendall in arguing that his affection for the north of England began with his time spent in the household of the Earl of Warwick, before 1469, this northern adoption only really found material expression after 1471 and his acquisition of most of the, then deceased, Earl of Warwick's

lands (Kendall 52; Hipshon 56–57). However it may have happened, Richard became a northerner rather than being born one and so it is safe to suggest that his devotion to Saint Ninian was part of his enculturation (Hicks). Sutton and Visser-Fuchs have stated that Ninian was the patron saint of the Western March, but there does not seem to be any clear evidence for such a claim, saving that of the March's proximity to the shrine (*The Hours*, 37).

Carlisle was a natural stopping point for pilgrims travelling from England to the shrine. The royal fortress of Carlisle was only ninety miles from Whithorn and Richard, it seems, was known there, since he donated money to the cathedral chapter and aided the rebuilding of the castle (Summerson 101–102); it may have been through his connection to this location and its connection by pilgrimage routes to Ninian's shrine that Richard developed his interest in the saint. The full extent of this traffic from England is unknown. In 1414 the King of Arms for Ireland requested that after his death a man should make pilgrimage on his behalf to a number of shrines, including those of Saint Mary in Carlisle and Saint Ninian in Whithorn. In 1472, a similar request was made by William Ecopp, rector of Heslerton (East Riding of Yorkshire) (Pollard, *The North of England* 92; *Testamenta Eboracensia* vol. 3, 199–201). Pilgrim traffic to Whithorn from England seems to have been substantial enough in the early fifteenth-century for James I of Scotland to try to regulate it, commanding in 1427 that visitors to the shrine from England or the Isle of Man should wear insignia signalling whether they were coming or going, and that they should not stay for more than fifteen days (Paul 20). This traffic was also of long continuance; in 1506 William Tyrwhit, described as a "knycht", obtained safe-passage for himself and a party of sixteen other "inglishmen" to visit the shrine (Livingstone vol. 1, 185–86). It is surprising, considering this traffic, to find that archaeological records of Whithorn do not suggest very great economic interaction with England. Almost none of the English coin finds are of the fifteenth century, nor indeed has analysis of skeletal remains suggested a high proportion of persons foreign to the west coast of Scotland outside the ranks of the clergy (Hill et al. 350–51 and 551; Lowe 63 and 83). However, the fourteenth-century Scots *Life* of Ninian suggested, probably somewhat exaggeratedly, that the saint enjoyed Europe-wide fame, with pilgrims coming to the shrine from all countries west of Prussia. Perhaps more illuminating is the fact that among the miracles that are attributed to Ninian by the

V

Scots *Life* that had not been simply copied from Aelred's *Vita*, at least two are said to have been performed for Englishmen. This suggests a persistent, if alien, English presence in the thinking of the cult's Scottish adherents (Metcalf 63, 68–72 and 72–81). Though there is no evidence that Richard ever made the pilgrimage, there evidently was a cultic connection between Whithorn and the North of England.

Further expressions of English interest in the saint are comparatively rare.³ Yet Richard was not alone among Englishmen in venerating Saint Ninian;⁴ though Ninian was a rather idiosyncratic choice as a principal focus for Richard's devotional life, his devotion to this saint was far from unique. While often thought of as a Scottish saint, Ninian belonged to multiple worlds. He was the product of the eighth-century Northumbrian church, before the kingdoms of England and Scotland existed. No records concerning the saint's work pre-date Bede's brief account in the *Historia*. Clancy has suggested that Bede's source for Ninian's life was probably Pehthelm (d.735/6), the first historical Bishop of Whithorn. Ninian, represented as a Roman-trained British bishop, would have been the ideal precursor for Pehthelm, himself a reforming Anglo-Saxon bishop. It is likely that Ninian was created to reinforce the cause of the Northumbrian Church in southern Pictish territories. Ninian's cult originated with Aelred's *Vita*, after the writing and dissemination of which topographical names and church dedications in Scotland began to appear (Clancy 6–9). Subsequent writing on Ninian relied heavily on Bede and Aelred, including the fourteenth-century Scots poetic *Life* and the lessons and prayers in the 1510 Aberdeen Breviary (Metcalf 41–83; MacQuarrie et al.). This English connection was reflected in the notional subjection of the bishops of Whithorn to the diocesan authority of the Archbishops of York. Only with the erection of Saint Andrews into an Archdiocese in 1472 were Whithorn's official ties to the Church in England severed (Oram 74–75). Ninian's Scottish-ness was, by Richard's time, a relatively novel development. Thus, when considering Ninian in Richard's piety one must be tentative about assigning a national character to the saint at a time when the Church was international and borders were fluid (Ditchburn 193).

In spite of Ninian's supranational origins, Richard's veneration of this 'Scottish' saint has repeatedly been cast as a reflection of his ambitions to conquer lowland Scotland.⁵ Richard's enmity with the Scots is well known; he led the 1482 invasion of Scotland, and in 1483 Edward IV (1442–1483) awarded him an hereditary wardenship which entitled him to hold, as a palatinate, as much land as he could conquer from the Scots within a limited area of Western Scotland, including the West March and Galloway (Grant 115). This argument certainly cannot be dismissed, but does not really get to the nub of why Saint Ninian's collect occupied so prominent a place in so personal a document as Richard's prayerbook. Neither does it necessarily reflect political and cultural realities of Anglo-Scottish border relations in Richard's time. It was under the traditional banner of Saint Cuthbert rather than by public invocation of the blessing of Saint Ninian that Richard went to war against the Scots (Pollard, "St Cuthbert" 117–18). The dates are also problematic; Richard's first displays of devotion to saint Ninian were in 1477 and 1478 at the Cambridge and Middleham foundations. At this time, Anglo-Scottish relations were still in *détente*, with Edward IV paying annual advances on his daughter's dowry to James III (1451–1488) (Grant 119). Alexander Stewart (1454–1488), who would become Edward's ally and pretender to the Scottish throne in the 1480s, was still extremely hostile towards the English in the 1470s (Grant 120–21; Tanner). Richard may have had different intentions to those of his brother but wars of conquest were an unrealistic prospect at the time that his devotion to Ninian became prominent.

In light of this, and of Ninian's Northumbrian and, later, English connections, the question may be raised as to whether Richard regarded the saint as distinctly Scottish at all; there is nothing in his devotions that suggests that he did. Richard owned a history of Britain called the *Fitzhugh Chronicle*, in which Ninian was very briefly mentioned. The chronicle, later published by Twysden as *Brompton's Chronicle*, copied Bede's account of Ninian and the saint is presented as "a Brittonic Bishop of Rome" – "*episcopum Britonum Romae*" (Twysden col. 786). It is entirely possible that for Richard, Ninian was part of the British heritage, adopted by the English aristocracy from writings such as those of Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1100–c.1155). While this does not explain Richard's devotion to Ninian, it does,

perhaps, show that devotion in a different light, one less overtly connected to his military ambitions in Scotland.

A contemporaneous display of devotion to Ninian also suggests the weakness of the argument that devotion to Ninian was an expression of English claims to lowland Scotland. Hugh Hastings (Richard's steward of the manor of Pickering), making his will in 1482 before going to war in Scotland alongside Richard, left wax to be burned before an image of Saint Ninian at Tickhill friary; the war and the bequest have been presented as connected (Hughes 37). However, the context for this devotion does not appear to have been the upcoming invasion of Scotland, but rather that of Northern English piety. The wax left to Tickhill was given alongside identical gifts to other Northern-English shrines; those of "Seynt Thomas of Loncastre" and of "Seynt Petir of Millen" in Pontefract and that of "Seynt Marie Virgyn" in Doncaster (*Testamenta Eboracensia* vol. 3, 274). Though Ninian rarely enjoyed English interest, it does not follow that what interest was shown must express a desire for Scottish conquests; most Englishmen who fought the Scots showed no interest in Saint Ninian. In the case of Hugh Hastings, that interest is as likely to have been a manifestation of his connection to Richard and of their mutual northernness as of a desire to subjugate the Scots.

Linked to the accepted argument is the assertion that Richard was channelling the claims of the Archbishops of York to metropolitan authority over Whithorn. In 1464, a long notarial instrument, detailing precedents for the submission of the bishops of Scotland, including that of Whithorn, was composed by the Church of York. A copy of this seems to have been obtained by Richard in 1484 as it is included in *Harleian Manuscript* 433, Richard's Signet Register. Such claims to ecclesiastical authority were inextricable from those of political authority, the Archbishop of York being a major servant of the English crown, though the text actually assigns the duty of implementation to the Scottish monarch (Horrox and Hammond vol. 3, 89 and 76–98). While one could easily imagine the claim being advanced in the likely event of war (Richard was evidently reluctant to make peace with the Scots while he was king), it was not used in this or in any other way. It may well be that its inclusion in the Signet Register represented a *quid pro quo* in which, in exchange for being allowed to found his college of priests at York Cathedral, Richard would, in the event of war with the Scots, advance to metropolitan claims of the Archbishops

of York. In which case, the document represents the political interests of York Cathedral, rather than Richard's. Regardless, the actions that Richard took, founding chantries and, in particular, placing the collect into his book of hours, do not have the character of political statements, excepting perhaps his 1484 grant to the Church of York for a massive college of one hundred priests to sing "in the worship of god oure lady seint George & seint Nynyan" (Horrox and Hammond vol. 1, 201). This may just as easily have been a preparation for his intended burial in the Cathedral as Dobson has suggested (*Church and Society* 250–51). Additionally, Richard's choice of the Use of Sarum for his Queen's and Middleham foundations and indeed for his book of hours problematizes these actions as statements of support for York. Richard's appropriation of Saint Ninian seems to be connected rather to his own hopes for salvation rather than to his ambitions of conquest.

VI

The prominence of Saint Ninian in Richard's book of hours was bound up with the saint's prominence in Richard's religious foundations. Just as the book of hours, in its pristine state, was an adaptation of liturgical practices to suit the requirements of private devotion, so too was Richard's incorporation of the collect into his book of hours a sign of this interpenetration of official and personal religious performance. The placement of the collect within the detailed liturgical routine specified by Richard in the statutes for the Middleham foundation is suggestive of a twofold role for Ninian in Richard's devotion: as a this-worldly protector as well as a post-mortem intercessor. According to the statutes, after matins is sung, the anthem of Saint Ninian and the collect (almost certainly the same one as in the book of hours) directly follows the anthem *Libera nos* and again, subsequent to evensong, a memory of Saint Ninian immediately succeeds the said anthem (Raine, "The Statutes" 164–65). *Libera nos* comes from the canon of the mass; in the use of Sarum it sits between the *Pater noster* and the *Agnus Dei*. It echoes many of the themes of the *Pater noster*, invoking the deliverance of God through the intercession of Mary, as well as Peter and Paul and all the saints: "Give graciously peace in our days and mercifully help us with your assistance and may we be ever free from sin and from all troubles secure" (Legg 225).⁶ The anthem of Saint Ninian (probably one that is the same or similar to the anthem in the

Arbuthnott Missal as no other is recorded before the sixteenth century) itself contains similar themes saying of Ninian: “You throughout the lands and throughout the sea do not cease to free Christian captives from their harsh fetters. Be our spiritual guardian, delivering us, the inhabitants of this place, from evil things” (Forbes 369; Dreves vol. 40, 299).⁷ Richard singled out Ninian as a named intercessor, to go alongside Mary, Peter and Paul as a source of help in the face of worldly tribulation; a particular advocate to help him in this life.

This choice may have been connected to contemporary developments in the cult of Saint Ninian. Ninian’s symbol was the chain; a later medieval development and nothing, it seems, to do with his early cult but rather a result of a growing desire for rescue miracles. His cult may have been influenced by that of much more well known Saint Leonard, whose shrine at Saint Leonard de Noblat, near Limoges, was filled with votive offerings of the fetters of freed captives (Higgitt). Richard, it may be speculated desired this kind of sacred protection, for him Saint Ninian was to be a deliverer in times of trouble. This preference echoes the tone of the litany-like prayer that Richard had included on folios 184–184v. Adapted so as to mention Richard by name, this prayer probably originated in the fourteenth century and it invoked Scriptural examples and the events of the Passion as part of a request for divine help. Though the rubric is missing in Richard’s Book of Hours, it likely promised, as per the rubric for the same prayer in other books of hours, deliverance from worldly calamity (Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *The Hours* 67–78). This rescuing quality was not unique to Saint Ninian, Richard’s devotion to him seems to have been an instantiation of a preoccupation with protection from danger and affliction that was conventional for the time and which was addressed by other sources of religious solace. However, the choice of Ninian himself was most likely a consequence of Richard’s personal identification with the religious milieu of the north of England.

VII

Though the relief that Saint Ninian was reputed to give seems to have been predominantly of a this-worldly variety, Richard’s liturgical specifications show that he felt Ninian to be a prominent part of his security in the next world. Both the Middleham post-matins and post-evensong liturgical sequences proceeded, after their

respective invocations of Saint Ninian, to use prayers and psalms connected to prayer for the dead. The post-matins sequence continued with the *De profundis* (Psalm 130/129), which was usually sung as part of the *Placebo* (Vespers for the dead), and then the collect *Fidelium* from the mass for all the faithful departed (Legg 442). Richard specified that after he died, this sequence was to be embellished with the collect *Deus cui proprium est*, also from the mass for all faithful departed, and a further collect for the repose of Richard and his wife, Anne Neville. Similarly, the evensong sequence was finished with the psalm *De profundis* (Raine, “The Statues” 164 and 165). In the case of the post-matins sequence, this would also have followed the *Dirige* (matins for the dead) on Richard’s obit; Ninian’s anthem and collect would have come in the midst of prayers for the dead. However, *Fidelium*, *Deus cui proprium est* and *De profundis* were all invocations of divine, rather than any kind of intercessory aid, so the connection to Ninian might have been looser. Nevertheless, Ninian was to be Richard’s companion in death as well as life; it was a relationship that he clearly envisaged as an eternal bond.

Richard had a keen interest not only in the form but also in performance of liturgy. For example, he empowered Richard Mellonok, gentleman of the chapel, to procure for him skilled musicians and child singers (Horrox and Hammond vol. 2, 163). The Middleham statutes were concerned for the proper performance of the liturgy: “the said deane, prests, and clerks shal distinctly, nother hastily ne to tarryingly, bot measurable and devoutely kep divine service daily”. Commands were also given for the form of singing, whether descant or “fabourden” for example (Raine, “The Statutes” 164). Richard’s high-minded view of the liturgy expressed in the Middleham statutes is also evident in the statutes for Queens’, though they were less detailed (Searle 89–91). It seems safe to argue that Richard was, in matters of his salvation, ecclesiastically and even liturgically minded and sought spiritual safety in the practices and routines of the Church. Dobson has noted that in northern England there was a pronounced investment in the idea of a chantry, noting that in 1483, there could have been no cathedral in the realm that matched York’s 150 or so perpetual chantries (“Politics and the Church” 13). It is possible, perhaps extrapolating from Ninian’s role as a liberator, that Richard believed the saint to be particularly effective in securing release from Purgatory; one might venture to say that Richard was interpreting the delivering power of the saint through ‘northern’ English eyes.

The presence of this Collect of Saint Ninian within Richard III's book of hours would have presented for the king a material connection to his foundations and his provision for his salvation. Rather like the pilgrims' badges and flysheets from saints' shrines that found their way into other books of hours, this collect could be thought of in terms of a reorientation of the rhythm of the book of hours towards a point of personal presence within it (Stevenson 111). With its prominence on the first page of the text, it might have been intended as a prelude to the rest of the book; a reminder, perhaps encountered every time that he opened it, alerting Richard to the sacred company in which he stood and the protection that he enjoyed. The collect was an emblem of his spiritual and material investment in his collegiate foundations and in Saint Ninian; a form of words that made present the places, people and the liturgies contributing to his salvation. In this way, Richard would have been able to carry with him, wherever he went, the saving effects of his collegiate establishments. If nothing else, the presence of the collect in his book of hours reinforces the notion that Richard had an intense personal and emotional investment in the power of chantry foundations.

It should also be borne in mind that Richard may have envisaged saying the prayer at the services performed by the priests at Cambridge, Middleham and at his planned foundations at Barnard Castle and York. His itinerary for 1483–1484 shows that he spent time at all these places; his foundation of a college of priests at Barnard Castle was to have been only part of a much broader scheme of remodelling the fortress between 1483 and 1485 into a place of residence (Edwards 1–7, 15 and 18–22; Pollard, "St. Cuthbert" 109). If, as Dobson has suggested, Richard might have wanted to be buried at York, then one might tentatively suggest that Richard was establishing a series of habitations, culminating in a final resting place. This reinforces the idea that the collect in the book of hours was meant to provide a kind of reminder, a piece of this network of intercessory institutions that Richard could keep with him when his itinerary took him away from these sites of spiritual security. It would, perhaps, not be surprising if, as tradition holds, the book was part of the loot taken from Richard's encampment following the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 (Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *The Hours* 39; Jones and Underwood 68).⁸

VIII

Thus an impression of Richard's religious life and the relative importance of particular aspects of worship begins to emerge. The Collect of Saint Ninian was part of a network of private and liturgical worship that reveals both Richard's personal investment in collegiate foundations and also in the cultural heritage of northern England. If Richard was not a northerner before 1471, his attachment to Saint Ninian perhaps reveals how much of a northerner he was by the time of his accession. Ninian was never referred to in any of the texts associated with Richard as a 'hero'. Yet the role that he fulfilled in Richard's life, as an interventionist rescuer may be broadly characterised as heroic. If so, then his case demonstrates the importance of the trans-temporal formation of medieval saints when examining and locating this form of medieval 'heroism'. Anchored in the narratives of his life produced by Bede and Aelred, Ninian's heroism in the fifteenth century made present an aspect of a Northumbrian identity that preceded the harder borderlines that developed between the kingdoms England and Scotland. Ninian was part of the Brittonic heritage of both England and Scotland and could evidently be adopted by either nation without necessarily implying antagonism toward the other.

No historical pronouncement on Richard III, let alone one limited to his devotion to Saint Ninian, could ever be expected to validate or dispel the spectre of Richard's reputation. Anti-heroism, like heroism, is a product of the collected memory of communities, which is often shaped by forces largely independent of historical writing. What this analysis, hopefully, has shown is that there is a middle way to be trod in history writing, between overly diffident and overly speculative responses to an anti-heroic reputation when interpreting the historical Richard's religious beliefs. Richard can be shown to be what he was, a conventionally pious Medieval Christian, who sought the protection of the saints in both this world and the next. Though it is tempting to try and explain Richard's devotion to Saint Ninian as a reflection of his political ambitions in lowland Scotland, an explanation that rests less on ulterior motive and more upon religious preference sits better with the pattern of Richard's actions. In short, Richard constructed a piety out of unusual components and highly personal preferences that was nonetheless, conventionally orthodox.

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1 “*Deus qui populos pictorum et brito-/num per doctrinam s[an]c[t]i Niniam con-/fessoris tui ad fidei tu[a]e noticiam conu[er]tisti: / concede propicius. ut cuius erud[i]tione verita-/tis tu[a]e luce / perfundimur eius intercessione ce-/lestis inte gaudia consequamur: Per [christum]/d[omi]n[u]m n[ost]r[u]m. Amen.”*

2 Middleham was of short continuance and the Barnard Castle and York foundations were proposed but apparently not completed before his death:

3 The only known dedications of churches in England are the chapels of Saint Ninian in Whitby (Yorkshire) and in Fenton (Cumbria) (Dowden 156; Woodwark).

4 This is shown by the scattering of bequests in contemporary York wills (*Testamenta Eboracensia* vol. 3, 274 and vol. 4, 116–117 and 128–129). Images of the saint existed at Tickhill friary, and in the churches of Stokesley (Yorkshire) and Saint Crux in York, and in 1496 Margery Salvin donated a bone of saint Ninian (possibly his arm) to the Greyfriars of York (Summerson 93; *Testamenta Eboracensia* vol. 2, 199–201). There seems also to have been an altar to Ninian at York Cathedral by 1483 (Raine, *Fabric Rolls* 305n; Gee 347–48).

5 Historians such as Dobson, Higgitt, Hughes, Grant, Pollard, Sutton and Fuchs have all suggested that Richard’s appropriation of Ninian was related to “claims that the English might have to the regions of Scotland that Ninian Christianised and civilised” (Dobson, “Politics and the Church” 249 n.85; Higgitt 202; Hughes 37; Grant 116; Pollard, *North Eastern England* 192; Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III’s Books* 62). This is a compelling argument in light of the see of York’s lapsed claim to sovereignty over Scottish bishoprics, in particular that of Whithorn (Horrox and Hammond vol. 3, 76–98).

6 “*Da propicius pacem in diebus nostris ut ope misericordie tui adiuti. Et a peccato simus semper liberi. Et ab omni perturbacione securi.*”

7 “*Tu per terras et per mare/ Dire vinctos liberare/ Non cessas Christicolis./ Esto nobis spiritalis/ Tutor, salvans nos a malis/ Loci huius incolas.*”

8 Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509), the mother of Henry VII (1457–1509) is known to have come into possession of the book after Richard’s death. The Stanleys received the spoils from the battlefield at Bosworth, they displayed the hangings from Richard’s tent in the hall of their Lancashire residence at Knowsley, and being married to Thomas Stanley (1435–1504), it is likely that it was as loot from Richard’s camp that this Book of Hours came into Lady Margaret’s hands.

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