THE TUDOR-PERCY EMBLEM IN ROYAL MS. 18 D ii

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The subsequent enquiry aims to elucidate the meaning of the curious drawing in Brit. Mus. Royal MS. 18 Dii, fo. 200, illustrated herewith in Plate XIV.

The opulent manuscript book which contains it is a miscellany begun soon after the middle of the 15th century for Sir William Herbert and continued into the Tudor period for the Percies, to whom it probably passed in 1476 on the marriage of Maud Herbert to the fourth Earl of Northumberland.[1] The drawing itself shows no stylistic relation with either of the two ' professional ' series of illuminations in the same book, even though it is roughly contemporaneous with those added early in the 16th century by an artist of the Flemish school.[2]

As will appear at a later stage of our argument, the Tudor rose with its Latin verses can only be a reference to Henry VIII, while the adjacent items of the book all point to a date quite early in his reign. A text of Lydgate's *Kyngis of Englande* beginning on fo. 181 has among its addenda a stanza written soon after his accession.[3]

On fo. 186 commences a long verse chronicle of the Percy family by William Peeris, priest and secretary to the ' Magnificent ' fifth Earl ;[4] this contains clear internal evidence dating its composition between 1516 and 1523.[5] Running from fo. 195b to fo. 210, both before and after our drawing, comes a series of didactic poems or ' proverbs ', originally inscribed on the walls and ceilings of the Percy houses at Wressle and Leconfield for the edification of the fifth Earl's children,[6] hence also very roughly attributable to the early years of Henry VIII.[7]

The drawing itself is described—inadequately, as will appear—in the catalogue of the Royal MSS :

' Picture in colours representing Christ, holding the sun, in the centre of a red and white rose emitting fire and drops of liquid, with verses ' Ex paterno trono radii splendoris | Ex matre candor virginii decoris | Ex patre flos rubii coloris | Ex utroque redemptio nostri amoris ', and lower down on the page a scroll surmounted by an eye

[1] G. F. Warner and J. P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western MSS. in the Royal and King's Collections*, ii. 309–310. On other dating-problems see Gavin Bone in *The Library*, 4th ser., xii. 292 n.

[2] Some are reproduced in Warner and Gilson, *op. cit.*, iv, plate 105.

[3] Cf. *infra*, p. 98.

[4] Three other MS. versions are at Alnwick (*Hist. MSS. Comm. 3rd. Rep.*, p. 108) and in Bodleian Dodsworth MS 50, fo. 119 *seqq.* An incomplete text, from this last, is printed in J. Besly, *Reprints of Rare Tracts illustrative of the History of the Northern Counties* (Newcastle 1845), i. 9.

[5] It mentions on fo. 194b the marriage of Margaret, daughter of the fifth Earl, to Sir Henry Clifford, which took place *c.* 1516 : he died, however, in 1523 (Warner and Gilson, *op. cit.*, ii. 309).

[6] Mostly printed in F. Grose, *Antiquarian Repertory*, edn. 1780–84, iii. 265, iv. 271, and in edn. 1809, iv *passim*. Cf. also Flugel in *Anglia*, xiv. 471 *seqq.* On the fifth Earl's household cf. *The Northumberland Household Book* (edns. 1770, 1827, 1905) and E. B. de Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*, i, ch. viii.

[7] Some of the lines were ' on the roufe of my Lorde Percy closet ' at Leconfield, a reference to the future sixth Earl, born 1502.

and underneath it drops falling on the letters COR.[1] On the scroll are verses :

> ' I receyue noo lighte but of thy bearmes (*sic*) bright,
> The leight beneuolent causith cor to relent,
> For remembrynge thy goodenes contenuall, which remanith perpetuall,
> Cor cannot but of dutie he muste distill ;
> Yet he saith dutie cannot recompence a cordinge too his goode will '.[2]

The verses are correctly transcribed, but on closer scrutiny the picture yields a different and a more mundane, if more interesting, significance. Though the human figure may just conceivably have a secondary symbolism,[3] there seems no reason to envisage the improbability of a figure of Christ inside a Tudor Rose. In supposing with confidence that it symbolises the youthful King, we may find support in the close parallels occurring in the Plea Rolls of the King's Bench, several of which have representations closely resembling this in face, hair-style, and ermine cape.[4] In such pictures the King is characterised rather by his insignia and letters giving his name than by any close attempt at portraiture ; we know, for example, that he already wore a beard during these early years, but in a recently reproduced series of these miniatures from the Plea Rolls I do not observe this feature earlier than 1527–8.[5] Our own drawing seems less expert than these official but still anonymous miniatures ; we cannot ascribe it to any known artist, and it contains nothing beyond the powers of a provincial scribe with little or no training in the art of miniature. Its significance lies in subject-matter, not in technique.

Only one factor differentiates the human figure from a conventional picture of the young Henry VIII ; this is the substitution of a crown of flames (not a halo !) for the royal crown : this change harmonises, however, with the central theme of the sun, which appears, duly labelled *Sol*, in the young King's hand. In all its forms, this association of the sun with monarchical power antedates the Tudor age. Its origins recede not merely into the symbolism of medieval Empire, but back into classical antiquity.

Richard II had among his cognizances the sun in splendour and the

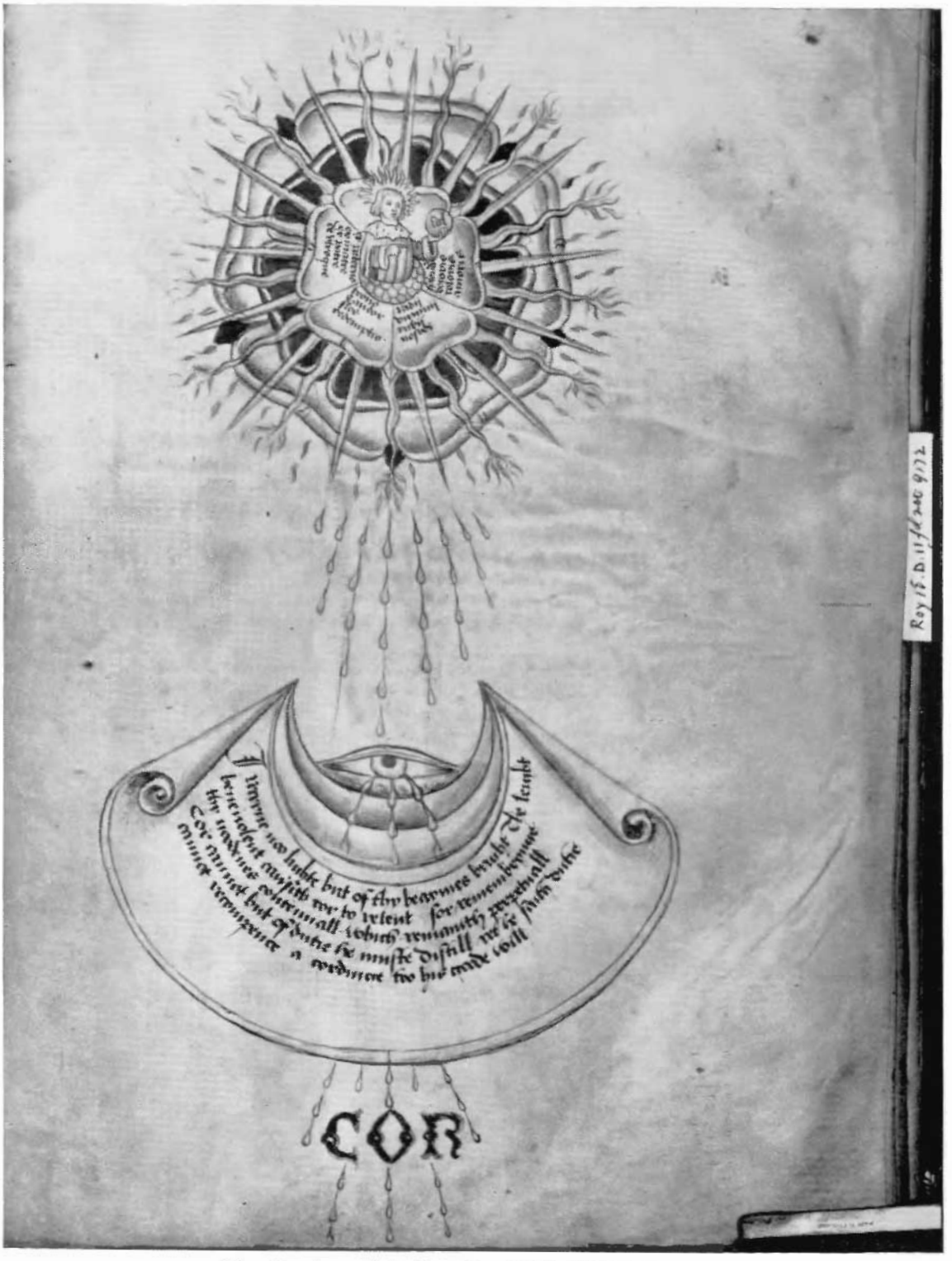
[1] A term probably derived from the still popular writings of the Rolle school, in which *cor* commonly signifies love. Cf. C. Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers : Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*, ii, pp. xi, xiv.

[2] Warner and Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

[3] Cf. *infra*, p. 99.

[4] Erna Auerbach, *Tudor Artists* (1954), plates 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 35 and plate 11. In a part of King's College chapel begun in 1512 is a Tudor rose containing the rayed half-figure of a woman in rich robes. Though without a halo, she has been accepted as the Virgin and an Ave painted on the open book which she holds. She is much more likely to be Elizabeth of York. Mr. Dufty, who draws my attention to this figure, also notes among the painted decorations of Henry VIII's palace of Nonsuch a Tudor rose containing the half-figure of a crowned woman. Obviously, a head enclosed in a flower can also occur at the mere whim of an artist, as in the Jesse Tree in Bibl. Nat. Paris MS Lat. 9584, an Italian MS of *c.* 1400.



Drawing from Brit. Mus. Royal MS. 18 D ii, fo. 200
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' sun-burst ',[1] while the second seal of Edward IV has a background diapered with quatrefoil spaces charged alternately with radiant suns and—similarly to our drawing—roses *en soleil*.[2] Suns and roses again appear in various combinations in his third and fourth seals.[3] Richard III used, amongst other badges, the sun in splendour and placed his white Rose in the ' sun of York '.[4]

Among the badges of Henry VII the ' sun-burst ' again figures :[5] the Tudors also took over the *rose en soleil*, which occurs, for example, in Henry VIII's second seal.[6] That in the upper part of our drawing might be described more accurately as the sun in splendour (with its customary wavy and straight beams indicative of heat and light) superimposed upon a Tudor rose.

So much for the royal sun. Extending our attention to the lower half of the picture, we may note a useful parallel in Brit. Mus. Cotton Faustina B ix, fos. 241b–242, a manuscript of Edward IV's reign, where in the course of Galfridian prophecy we find in antithesis to the royal *sol*, the use of *luna* to symbolise the house of Percy. Here *luna* is said to have suffered eclipse and to have lost *dua cornua*, i.e. Hotspur and his father, and then eventually to have recovered in conjunction with *sol*, typifying Edward IV.[7] Referring back to our drawing with this earlier clue in mind, we perceive the familiar crescent of the Percies carefully depicted along the upper edge of the scroll, so as to make the Percy moon receive light from the Tudor sun.[8]

In Percy legend this silver crescent is provided with obviously fictitious crusading origins.[9] With much more probability it seems to be linked in its earliest stages with the shire and earldom of Northumberland, perhaps even with ancient Northumbria.[10] At all events, crescents appear on a Northumberland shrievalty seal of 1444, apparently unconnected with the Percies,[11] and they begin to figure among the Percy badges from the time of the first Earl, in fact from 1396, when one appears on the Earl's shrievalty seal.[12] Thenceforth the crescent occurs regularly upon the standards, seals, and armorial glass of the successive Earls, usually in combination with some other device placed between its horns, for example, a locket, a sprig of leaves, a lion, and a turret.[13] It receives

[1] J. Woodward, *Heraldry, British and Foreign*, ii. 217 : *Boutell's Heraldry*, ed. C. W. Scott-Giles, p. 164, fig. 329.

[2] W. de Grey Birch, *Catalogue of Seals . . . in the British Museum*, i. 36, no. 301.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 37–39, nos. 312–317.

[4] A. C. Fox-Davies, *Complete Guide to Heraldry*, p. 468, fig. 678 ; compare Shakespeare, *Richard III*, i, 1. Sir Hilary Jenkinson. *The Later Court Hands*, p. 106, fig. 59 reproduces Richard's badge from a Coram Rege roll. His banner was powdered with golden suns (Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 222).

[5] Fox-Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 468, fig. 681.

[6] Birch, *op. cit.*, i. 43, no. 371.

[7] H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Dept. of MSS in the British Museum* (1883), i. 319. A similar passage occurs in Cotton Vespasian E. vii, fo. 88b, the MS itself being of Percy *provenance* (*Ibid.*, i. 300).

[8] The crescent is shaded blue, presumably to represent silver.

[9] W. H. D. Longstaffe in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, iv (1860), p. 179. This article is still the most voluminous account of the old heraldry of the Percies.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 180–182.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 185–187, 191, 193–194, 196–197, 203–205, 211–214, 217–218, 223–224. Cf. de Fonblanque, *op. cit.*, i. 534.

prominent mention in the Elizabethan ballad *The Rising in the North*:

'Earl Percy there his ancyent spred,
The Half-Moone shining all soe faire'.[1]

In Tudor times the Percy moon was in fact no matter of recondite reference; it mingled naturally with the Galfridian animal-prophecies, the usual background to popular sedition. In December 1537 the parishioners of Muston, Yorkshire, charged their vicar, John Dobson, that he quoted in the alehouse a rhyme about the fall of the hated Thomas Cromwell, and prophesied that 'the moon shall kindle again, and take light of the sun, meaning by the moon the blood of the Percies'.[2] This happened, of course, while the Percies lay under attainder for their share in the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Appropriately illuminated by the sun and the moon, we may now turn to interpret the details. Some of them admit of argument. The word COR may mean not merely the heart of the Percy 'distilling' duty under the Tudor sun's rays, but also conceivably carry a pun upon the 'horn' of the Percy moon, or, indeed, upon the bugle-horn which, since the time of the fourth Earl, had been a Percy badge derived from earlier relationship with the Bryans.[3] Another pun may be intended between 'I' and 'eye', since the words 'I receyue noo lighte' are surmounted by an eye. The Percy locket, the most common object placed here in the crescent, sometimes bears close resemblance to a pair of eyes,[4], and may conceivably have suggested this part of his design to the artist.

With the verses on the rose, 'Ex paterno trono', we tread much more solid ground: these very clearly refer to the double descent of Henry VIII from the houses of Lancaster and York, the theme of so many contemporary adulators from Edward Hall downwards. They are actually paralleled in a passage earlier in the manuscript: the final stanza added to Lydgate's *Kyngis of Englande*, to which reference was made above.

'After the vij Henry the viij Henry his sone Kynge
By right and titill ij succedithe to the crowne, a prynce moste gracious.
Owte of the white rose and the rede his ryall byrthe dothe sprynge;
The whyt most pure, the rede most varvant[5] is,
Whiche Kinge from the Kinge & Quene of all flowres springeth with flawr moste gracius.
From all extremyte he hath delyverde us'.[6]

These rude verses are incidentally not unlike those of William Peeris; the poor secretary may well have perpetrated them and, in addition, the verses upon our picture itself.

[1] Bishop T. Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. edn. 1847, i. 293.
[2] *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, xii (2). 1212 (i).
[3] *Archaeologia Aeliana*, iv. 199, 206, 211.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 197. By a curious coincidence this same resemblance gave rise to the Northumbrian expression 'The Duke of Northumberland's arms', meaning a black eye (*Ibid.*, p. 186).
[5] *Sic* for fervent. *New Eng. Dict.*, s.v., recognises 'vervente' and 'farvente'
[6] Brit. Mus. Royal MS. 18 D ii, fo. 183.

Much more significant, however, are the lines upon the scroll beginning ' I receyue noo lighte '. If the reader will now, with all the factors in mind, return to these lines and re-read them, the full political force of the emblem will become apparent. The Percy, whose forebears had shed so much blood in the Lancastrian cause, and whose father had virtually put the Tudor on the throne, is still conscious of the proud and defiant tradition of Hotspur. He is, nevertheless, constrained to ' relent ' before the benevolence of the reigning dynasty, and in dramatic style avows his loyalty to the young king ; he is the moon indeed, but one which shall henceforth draw light only from the greater luminary on the throne. We are looking upon a sepulchral monument of feudalism !

The immediate irony of this avowal will nevertheless be apparent to readers familiar with the subsequent story of the Percies. The fifth Earl's consistent loyalty was continued by his son, first bullied by Wolsey, then hopelessly in love with Anne Boleyn and plagued by an unhappy marriage. When, at the outset of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the sixth Earl's brothers went over to the rebels and were attainted ; when the leadership of the revolt lay in the hands of his followers, the dying nobleman, who had already made the King his heir, refused to alter his allegiance.[1] Having been restored by Mary, the Percies once more went to ruin in 1569 ; their shadowed history during and beyond the remainder of Elizabeth's reign supplies the gloomy postscript of our theme. Better it would have been had this device of the Magnificent Earl graven itself more deeply upon the later generations of the house of Percy.

The foregoing primary interpretation does not necessarily exclude some secondary elements of meaning. In the fanciful deviser's mind the sun may also have stood for the Sun of Righteousness. William Peeris, a possible author of the verses, accompanies his felicitations to his master with the wish that ' The most radiant sone of Righteousness . . . Give your good Lordship many good yeares, & send your Lordship grace & spetiall might | To overcome your enemies & longe to enjoy your right '.[2] These lines may also have a double significance. If, however, the same be true of our drawing, its religious sense can have been no more than partial and secondary, indeed an after-thought, since the greater part of the device, especially the Tudor rose and the verses, cannot be made to carry a religious symbolism.

A subsidiary yet distinct point of interest lies in the early date of this drawing. The recently revived interest in emblems has occasioned a too ready assumption that they were unknown in England until the times of Queen Elizabeth and Geoffrey Whitney, that they derive purely from the Italian work of Alciati, published in 1531.[3] The subject of our enquiry surely contains the essential characteristics of an emblem, and might well encourage us to search native manuscript sources for further prototypes of this once important mode of expression.

[1] References in G.E.C., *The Complete Peerage*, ix. 721–2.

[2] Bodleian Dodsworth MS 50, fo. 119v.

[3] Cf. Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, p. 37.