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Henry VIII and François I on Tour: Monarchy and Mobility in Renaissance England

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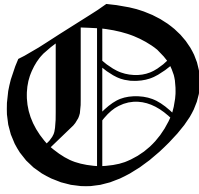
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Abstract: What can we learn about Henry VIII's progresses by comparing them with the provincial journeys undertaken by François I of France? There are good reasons to study these twin emblems of Renaissance kingship in tandem, in spite of historiographical and linguistic obstacles. François and Henry met twice and were intensely aware of one another. Their reasons for travelling around their territories have often been analysed in similar terms: to police the provinces, connect with a range of political communities, engage in visible acts of piety, and go hunting. In both England and France, royal travel has been conceived as an exercise in propaganda and the projection of power. If a culture of royal mobility was common to both kingdoms, however, its scale and meaning could also be quite distinct. Reviewing a range of research on sixteenth-century royal journeys written in both English and French, this article brings these differing approaches into dialogue as a step towards establishing a comparative methodology, thereby helping to identify what was particular about Henry VIII's progresses. The itineraries of Henry and François demonstrate the scale and ambition of their tours around their respective realms. For François, being on the move was an everyday and endless political necessity, which he also seems to have rather enjoyed. For Henry, his longer-range royal progresses were more of a disruption to a mode of government that was substantially settled at Westminster and Whitehall by the early Tudor period. For both rulers, however, mobility was essential to the practice of personal monarchy, asserting the real presence of the king within the shifting balance of power at the royal court and beyond.

Keywords: Henry VIII; François I; itineraries; progresses; personal monarchy; court; propaganda; England; France.





On 28 April 1989, readers of the British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* were treated to a front-page photograph of some curious goings-on across the water in the Pas-de-Calais.¹ The setting was the previously peaceful commune of Coquelles, where a Channel Tunnel boring machine had just broken through at the end of its nine-month and 3.2-kilometre journey from Sangatte on the French coast. Searching for an historical parallel to mark this moment of Anglo-French unity, the organisers of the event had settled on the Field of Cloth of Gold summit meeting between François I and Henry VIII, which had taken place nearby in 1520. Giant cut-outs of the two kings posed incongruously either side of the service shaft, shoulders squared and arms akimbo, as the last of the tunnel rubble slipped away. There were fireworks, music, and dancing, as indeed there had been when the real Henry and François tourneyed, prayed, and grappled together some 469 years earlier.

If the longer-term relationship between these twin titans of the Renaissance would not bear too much examination—Henry VIII never relinquished his claim to the French crown; the Field of Cloth of Gold was followed by two English invasions of France and a French naval assault on the Isle of Wight—the royal bodies framing the Channel Tunnel excavations did, at least, have the virtue of being readily recognisable. Portraits of Henry and François painted by Hans Holbein and Jean Clouet have been so widely copied and disseminated, within the lifetimes of the two rulers but also subsequently, that the outsized versions reproduced at Coquelles were probably already familiar to the watching crowd. Within their national historiographies, François I and Henry VIII are both emblematic of the sovereign states that were coalescing around them. But they also embody the reality of personal monarchy, the power and presence of kings themselves, as an enduring element in sixteenth-century government. Fundamental to the exercise of that kingship was the combination of mobility and magnificence on display at the Field of Cloth of Gold, referenced once again in the Channel Tunnel celebrations. Invoking the memory of monarchs who were constantly on the move to usher in a new age of travel between Britain and France may be less bizarre than it first appears.

Describing this same 1989 event (albeit sourced from the *Times* rather than the *Telegraph*), the historian of royal ceremonial Sydney Anglo used it to launch a challenge to scholars working in this field, not excluding himself. Anglo's 1992 study *Images of Tudor Kingship* packed a punch despite its slender size. Emphasising the “limitations and

¹ “A giant Channel Tunnel boring machine,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 April 1989, 1.

transience” of Renaissance royal majesty, he distanced himself from his own pioneering research on Tudor pageantry and discounted the political impact of all but the simplest of symbols.² Anglo’s critique of his earlier work introduces a core theme for scholars working on the mobility of early modern monarchs and their courts, namely, the value of royal travel as propaganda and projection of power. If the intricacies of courtly art and performance were aimed mainly at the elite (and had to be explained even to some of them), then the broader political significance of royal spectacle is not in doubt. Paramount within that assertion of power was the substance of flesh and blood. As Kevin Sharpe has trenchantly put it: “the most important presentation of kingship was the king himself.”³ Those encounters between rulers and ruled took place in diverse environments: presence chambers and tilt-yards, royal chapels and urban spaces, in the field, and—as discussed at further length here—on tour. Whatever we may think about contemporary belief in cults of kings and queens, from Sharpe’s metaphysical “extension of royal authority into the interiority of subjects,” to John Adamson’s cooler appraisal of the correlation between courtly opulence and the actual strength of a regime, the person of the monarch was a vital factor in securing compliance; and as has recently been argued for England at least, “monarchy was never so personal as in the time of progress.”⁴

Mindful of the role of the body natural within the body politic, this article asks what we can learn about Henry VIII’s royal progresses by comparison with the provincial tours undertaken by his contemporary, sometime friend, and constant rival François I. It reviews a range of recent research on sixteenth-century royal journeys written in both English and French, as a step towards establishing a comparative methodology and thereby helping to identify what was particular about Henry’s progresses. Like several contributions to this special issue, this one is informed by the “Henry VIII on Tour” research project funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.⁵ Key themes were also debated at a 2025 conference at the Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours, hosted by Le

² Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, 1–2, 99.

³ Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 157.

⁴ Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 70; Adamson, “Making of the Ancien-Régime Court,” 38; Cooper and Hayes-Davies, “Progresses and Personal Monarchy,” 30.

⁵ “Henry VIII on Tour: Landscape, Communities and Performance” (AH/X000540/1: Historic Royal Palaces, University of York, Newcastle University, 2022–2025).

Stodium Loire Valley Institute for Advanced Studies: this article draws on those discussions and others.⁶

French and English historiographies can find themselves separated by issues of scholarly convention as well as language, complicating any potential dialogue between them. The following discussion attempts to bridge that gap by comparing the journeys around—and in two cases, between—their realms undertaken by Henry VIII and François I. Two recent edited collections, the first published in French and the second in English, deserve particular attention.⁷ A key challenge for scholars working on Renaissance royal mobility is understanding the practice as it was perceived and rationalised at the time. The experience of motion was common among the regimes of early modern Europe, indeed it demands to be incorporated into the very definition of the royal court. And yet the purpose of what the English called “progresses” generally has to be inferred, teased out from itineraries and records of royal entries or instances of touching for the king’s evil, rather than transcribed from any conveniently explanatory treatises in the State Papers. This is one of the factors that make a comparative perspective so valuable. There are good reasons to study Henry VIII and François I side by side, in spite of the methodological and linguistic obstacles strewn in the way. François and Henry met on two occasions and were otherwise intensely aware of one another. Their reasons for travelling around their territories have often been analysed in similar terms: to police the provinces, connect with a range of political communities, project an image of piety, and go hunting. Travel created opportunities for both kings to slip the leash of royal ritual regulating life at court, and to assert their identity in environments beyond the palaces of the Ile-de-France or the standing houses of the Thames Valley. Royal travel has also been conceived as a kind of propaganda, though this interpretation is up for debate.

An innovative article by Etienne Faisant has examined the movements of the sixteenth-century French court by comparison with English royal journeys.⁸ What follows is a kind of counterpoint to Faisant’s argument, asking what we can learn about Henry

⁶ “Performing Royal Power in Renaissance England and France: Insights and Impact,” 15–16 January 2025.

This conference was generously funded by Le Studium Loire Valley Institute for Advanced Studies. A Le Studium Visiting Researcher residency at RicercarLab/CESR between October 2024 and January 2025 allowed me to discuss this research with Monique Chatenet, Etienne Faisant, Jean Senié, Philippe Vendrix, and Caroline zum Kolk, among others. I gratefully acknowledge their contributions to the present article, while taking responsibility for any missteps on my part.

⁷ Bove, Salamagne, and zum Kolk, *L’itinérance de la Cour*; Musson and Cooper, *Royal Journeys*.

⁸ Faisant, “French Kings on the Road.”

VIII's removings and progresses in light of the itinerance of François I. If a culture of royal mobility was common to both realms, its scale and significance could also be quite distinct. For François, "*roi-voyageur par excellence*" in Caroline zum Kolk's phrase, travel around his kingdom was an everyday and unceasing political necessity which he also seems rather to have enjoyed.⁹ Henry too was often on the move, but his royal progresses properly defined were more of a departure from a schedule of government, by then substantially settled at Westminster and (from the 1530s) Whitehall, in order to meet a specific need or set of circumstances. Each progress thus requires its own explanation within the search for any overall typology. For both rulers, however, mobility was vital to the practice of personal monarchy, asserting the real presence of the king within the shifting balance of power at the royal court.

Comparing mobility

Just as it lends itself to interdisciplinary approaches (history and archaeology, literary and performance studies, anthropology, musicology), the study of royal travel benefits from a comparative international perspective. With few exceptions, the princely courts of early modern Europe were essentially itinerant. As John Adamson observes, they were at different points on their individual journeys towards finding a permanent "seat" (the papacy and some other Italian states in the lead, Brandenburg-Prussia bringing up the rearguard) but sufficiently similar in their overall trajectory that they may usefully be compared.¹⁰ Monarchs also visited each other's realms to strengthen and publicise the alliances between them. Thus the Holy Roman emperor Charles V was hosted by Henry VIII for six weeks in 1522, reviewing the English fleet at Dover before a joint progress to Canterbury and a spectacular royal entry into London.¹¹

The journeys of brides and grooms to meet their future spouses are a useful means to compare royal mobility across international borders, with specific relevance to questions of gender, diplomacy, and representations of power. On her arrival from Spain in 1501, Katherine of Aragon's progress from Plymouth to marry Prince Arthur connected a remoter English region to the splendour of the royal court, and enabled demonstrations of loyalty to the crown in a locality still blighted by the rebellions that had taken place four

⁹ zum Kolk, "La Sédentarisation de la Cour."

¹⁰ Adamson, "Making of the Ancien-Régime Court," 10–11. On monarchy and the practice of itinerance, see also zum Kolk, "Introduction," 9.

¹¹ *Itinerary of Henry VIII; Anglo, Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy*, 188–206.

years earlier.¹² Following the failure of his own marriage to Katherine, Henry VIII chose English women for his second and third wives. But the arrival of his fourth from the duchy of Cleves in December 1539 occasioned another bridal journey and the reception of a foreign princess. As argued by Valerie Schutte, Anne's painstaking journey from Düsseldorf to the still English town of Calais, then onward through Kent towards a splendid welcome at Greenwich, was her "crash-course of preparation to be queen."¹³ Princes also travelled to get married: Patrik Pastrnak's analysis of Maximilian I, who journeyed from Vienna to Ghent, and Maximilian II (from Augsburg to Valladolid) compares royal progresses with what he calls the "ritual transition" from one state to another.¹⁴

The ambassadors who joined their royal hosts on tour provide another kind of comparative perspective. Jean Senié's study of Archbishop Ippolito d'Este, son and envoy of the Duke of Ferrera, shows how he shadowed François I during his circuits of France in an effort to maintain his own influence at court.¹⁵ Reports of royal journeys and hunting expeditions flowed from one court to another, lending them a diplomatic significance beyond their domestic contexts. In early July 1519, Henry VIII set out from Windsor on a three-month progress around Surrey, Sussex, Kent, and Essex in honour of four French "hostages" who had come to the English court as a chivalric guarantee that François would pay him the agreed 600,000 crowns for returning the captured city of Tournai. The tour took in Woking Palace, Guildford Priory, Penshurst Place, Havering-atte-Bower (where Queen Katherine presided), and an extended stay at New Hall, where a masque costing £207 was put on.¹⁶ By showing off the best of England—its royal and aristocratic houses, magnificent ceremonial, abundant landscape, and excellent hunting—Henry and Katherine made a series of claims about the wealth and stability of their rule. That the court was also hosted by the Dukes of Buckingham and Norfolk, Lord Bergavenny, and senior members of the county gentry reinforced the message that Tudor monarchy was

¹² Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, 28.

¹³ Schutte, "Anne of Cleves: Bound for England," 107. For Henry's greeting of Anne at Rochester, the Greenwich reception, and a water pageant when Anne and Henry travelled to Whitehall see Warnicke, *Marrying of Anne of Cleves*, 129–146, 175.

¹⁴ Pastrnak, "Travelling Grooms," 114.

¹⁵ Senié, "Ippolito d'Este et l'itinérance curiale."

¹⁶ *Itinerary of Henry VIII*; Samman, "Progresses of Henry VIII," 61. The situation of the four French hostages recalls the circumstances of the French king Jean II, captured by Edward III in 1357 and escorted on a royal progress from Plymouth to Westminster, where a grand Arthurian banquet was staged: Cooper, *Lost Chapel of Westminster*, 58.

consultative and consensual, while also sharing the expense of royal tours in a tactic that would later be developed into an art form by Elizabeth I.

News travelled in the opposite direction in April the following year, when the English envoy Sir Richard Wingfield reported on an afternoon spent boar hunting with the French court in the countryside around Blois. One of four gentlemen of Henry's privy chamber and a former marshal of Calais, Wingfield accompanied François on the chase and witnessed the king personally spear the cornered boar, then cut off its right foot "affter theyr fasshon." Engaging the ambassador in conversation, François suggested that the French were the only real masters of the craft; ever the diplomat, Wingfield replied that in the English style of hunting, whether with hounds or greyhounds or bows, no-one could surpass his royal master. The whole subject, he assured Henry, would prompt "moche ado betwene You in the debatyng" when the two kings met.¹⁷ A similar account came from Amiens in 1527, when Sir Anthony Browne supplied Henry with a detailed description of François's hunting day: breakfasting in the forest at 8 o'clock, receiving the reports of his hunt-masters, leading a discussion with attendant gentlemen about which deer should be pursued, and—following the inevitable kill—returning for supper and sociability at "sum hous near hand," where the king's bed had been set up.¹⁸

Hunting as diplomacy took physical form in the summer of 1532, when French envoy Giles de la Pommeraye travelled with Henry VIII and his soon-to-be queen Anne. Pommeraye received gifts of a greyhound and a hunting horn in advance of the couple's anticipated reception by François I later that same year—with significant implications for Anne's acceptance, and the future legitimacy of the English royal succession.¹⁹ The material culture of the court on the move is also glimpsed in the dispatches of French ambassador Charles de Marillac, who accompanied Henry on his longest and largest progress north in 1541. Marillac noted "the richest tapestry, plate and dress" brought up from London, and the frenzied preparations in York to turn the former monastic precinct of St Mary's into a temporary royal palace.²⁰ Keeping pace with a monarch on the road could be taxing, as explained by Mary Hill Cole in her analysis of Elizabeth I's progresses. Inviting ambassadors to ride with her broadened the audience of the pageants and performances at which Elizabeth excelled. But it also gave agency to the queen herself, especially in her extended

¹⁷ *State Papers Henry VIII* vi, 58.

¹⁸ Knecht, "Court of Francis I," 9.

¹⁹ Hayward, "Clothing and Livery on Progress," 74.

²⁰ *LP* xvi, 1183; Cooper and Hayes-Davies, "Progresses in the Reign of Henry VIII," 21, 28.

marriage negotiations: at one moment showing favour by travelling to Nonsuch in order to receive the French ambassador, at another evading access (as Cole argues) in a deliberate ploy to disrupt expectations and maintain her own manoeuvrability.²¹

This brief list of examples illustrates both the value, and some of the difficulties, in adopting a comparative approach to royal mobility. The movement of monarchs around and between their territories remained a fundamental feature of early modern Europe, albeit with key differences between the relatively compact polities ruled by the Valois and the Tudors and the composite monarchies of the Habsburgs. Orbits were influenced by the gravitational pull of metropolitan centres like London/Westminster, Brussels, and Paris, as well as by the development of the court in its palatial architectural setting. Zum Kolk's discussion of the process of "*sédentarisation*," however, demonstrates that the dominance of capital cities should neither be over-emphasised nor predated. In 1528, François I promised to spend more time in Paris and its environs than in other parts of his dominions, but the evidence of his itinerary shows that the city subsequently saw even less of him than before.²²

Understanding the big picture of royal itinerance, if indeed there are overall patterns to find, demands a spread of historical and linguistic competence which few individual scholars are likely to possess. One response has been the collected volume, which pools multiple research strands and skills but creates the additional problem (generally left to the editors) of integrating diverse stories into a coherent whole. An important contribution to the genre is *L'itinérance de la Cour en France et en Europe*, published in 2021 as the proceedings of a colloquium held in Paris two years earlier. The book covers a chronology from the emperor Hadrian to Napoleon III, and landscapes from Hainaut to Hungary. The individual essays are rich in data and supported by extensive use of maps and tables. What binds them all together, however, can be harder to discern. As Boris Bove comments in his conclusion, the multiplicity of French words used to describe imperial, royal, and courtly itinerance in different periods, places, and contexts is itself an obstacle to mutual comprehension.²³ Integrating these insights with the research presented in the 2023 *Royal Journeys in Early Modern Europe* collection, or the work on royal progresses

²¹ Cole, *Portable Queen*, 150–151.

²² zum Kolk, "La sédentarisation de la Cour," table 1.

²³ Bove, "Conclusions," 354: "*itinérance, voyage, nomadisme, pérégrination, transhumance, déplacement, séjour, circulation, mobilité, espace résidentiel, région-résidence, région capitale n'évoquent pas exactement le même type de mobilité.*"

emerging from the “Henry VIII on Tour” project, requires a translation between modes of academic discourse as well as language, bridging the conceptual gap between the arts and humanities (where the study of Renaissance courts is conventionally located in anglophone scholarship) and the more scientific methodology favoured in France.

Looking beyond Europe, the potential parallels are exciting while also posing the risk of comparing apples and oranges. David Robinson’s survey of courtly spectacle, ritualised hunting, and stately journeys into the provinces in Ming Dynasty China cites Sharpe’s and Anglo’s research on Tudor England in support of his argument that the regime “invested heavily in an essentially open-ended campaign of persuasion.”²⁴ But there were also stark differences between the two societies, including the role of religion within the state (various versions of Christian sacred kingship in Europe; a blend of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist philosophies in China), and any expectation that imperial ritual and ceremony might be publicly visible or classifiable as propaganda. A colloquium comparing mobility, ritual, and bureaucracy in Tudor England and Song dynasty China found various points of contact whilst acknowledging the different periodisation of history in medieval and early modern Europe and pre-modern China.²⁵

Henry VIII and François I: identities and itineraries

Given the challenge of bringing such a diverse range of scholarship into productive dialogue, the case-studies of sixteenth-century England and France offer a promising route forward. Henry VIII and François I are naturally compared. Similar in age and attitude, they devoured news of their respective military capability, courtly magnificence, political acumen, and physical appearance. Both men were uncommonly tall: Henry was 6 feet 1½ inches or 1.87 m, François an exceptional 1.99 m or 6 feet 5 inches, according to their armours preserved at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds and the Musée de l’Armée in Paris.²⁶ Associated with virtues of masculinity and martial prowess, their height would also have made them plainly visible in royal processions and when travelling around their

²⁴ Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court*, 1–2.

²⁵ “Ritual and Political Culture in Tudor England and Song China,” Chinese University of Hong Kong, 8 December 2019. Thanks are due to co-organisers Prof Cheung Hiu-Yu and Dr Tu Hsuan-Ying, and to the World University Network for funding this series of exchanges between scholars in the UK, Hong Kong, and mainland China.

²⁶ Foot combat armour of Henry VIII (Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds, object number II.6): Rimer, Richardson, and Cooper, eds., *Henry VIII: Arms and the Man*, 116–117. Equestrian armour of François I (Musée de l’Armée, Paris, object number G 117): Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, 338, no. 8.

kingdoms: a fact not so insignificant when assessing the physical presence of a king. On tour, they must have been especially intimidating on horseback. Both kings preferred to ride their own horses, decked out with distinct harness and trappings to identify them as would have been the case on the battlefield.²⁷ François was given a carriage or "*coche*" in 1540 (perhaps a concession to gout, which reduced his mobility during his final years, in another parallel with Henry VIII), but otherwise travel by wheeled transport or horse-litter was more usual for queens or the high-status women of the court.²⁸ Riding to a destination made the king and his closest companions faster and more agile than the rest of the royal train confined to a basic road network, and allowed them to scope the ground for good hunting—another obsession for both monarchs. Symbolically, it also alluded to classical and medieval representations of rulership, and displayed the king's physical fitness to rule.

From the signing of the "universal" peace treaty of London in 1518, revived with a "perpetual" peace in 1527, Henry and François were formally bound by ties of friendship sustained in their correspondence. In July 1542, for instance, Henry addressed François in French, in a diplomatically sensitive letter, occasioned by the French king's willingness to look to the Ottomans for support in his campaign in Italy, as "Right excellent, right high and mighty prince, our dearest brother, cousin, companion, and perpetual ally."²⁹ Henry VIII was additionally a "pensioner" of the kings of France, on a considerably larger scale than either his father Henry VII or grandfather Edward IV had been: a million *écus d'or au soleil* poured into the English treasury between 1525 and 1534, a sum roughly equivalent to the entire yearly revenue of the English crown.³⁰ More than mere protection-money, these payments denoted a complex exchange of honour and patronage, though their precise meaning was also open to interpretation. Henry could perceive the money as just compensation for his gracious forbearance, for the time being, in not reclaiming "his" kingdom of France. But, as Glenn Richardson notes, accepting it also made him a tributary, to some degree even a servant, of the French crown.³¹ Richardson makes a similar point about the treaty of London: Henry VIII believing he had obtained the advantage—clipping

²⁷ For example the royal saddles, tack, and horse houses in green and white with dragon and greyhound described in a warrant of 1511: Hayward, "Clothing and Livery on Progresses," 75.

²⁸ Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, 126; Faisant, "French Kings on the Road," 42. On the issue of François's gout, I am grateful for the suggestion of the anonymous reviewer.

²⁹ "*Treshault tresexcellent et trespuissant prince, nostre treschier frere cousin compere et perpetuelle Allie*": TNA, SP 1/171, fol. 157r.

³⁰ Girý-Deloison, "Henri VIII Pensionnaire de François I^{er}."

³¹ Richardson, *Renaissance Monarchy*, 55–56.

François’s wings in Italy, leaving the French king “obligated” to him—while François also felt he had gained the upper hand.³² Henry aspired to a *de haut on bas* relationship with François, but the discrepancy in the fiscal and material power of their two realms kept getting in the way. Perhaps it was this that ignited Henry’s brooding jealousy “*pour son homologue d’outre-Manche*,” as François’s biographer Robert Knecht describes him.³³

Important work has been done to compare François I and Henry VIII, to illustrate the political and cultural connections between their two kingdoms, and by extrapolation to illuminate Renaissance monarchy itself. The five hundredth anniversary of Henry’s birth in 1991 inspired a new historiography in both English and French, as well as a major exhibition at Greenwich presenting the artistic and material evidence of England’s complicated attitude towards Europe.³⁴ Some of this work directly addressed the mutual influences betwixt France and England: for example, Sylvie Béguin’s essay on artistic rivalry between François and Henry, or Eric Ives’s characterisation of the francophile Anne Boleyn and her “decisive” influence on Henry VIII’s religious thinking.³⁵ The baton was subsequently picked up by Glenn Richardson, in his comparative monograph *Renaissance Monarchy* (including Charles V in the mix) and then in a series of detailed studies of the Field of Cloth of Gold. This was the first of two occasions when François and Henry travelled long distances to meet in person. Their month-long encounter in 1520 was an extended tournament and exercise in brinkmanship; as Richardson concludes, a “field” in its contemporary sense of a battlefield, where war games were acted out underneath a thin disguise of sportsmanship and Renaissance self-fashioning.³⁶ Undertaking a long journey to meet a fellow ruler was a gesture of willingness and faith, sometimes also a bargaining chip: François told Henry how happy he was to have travelled across his huge realm to meet his brother, demonstrating his commitment to peace while at the same time reminding his visitor just how much bigger (thus, more powerful) France was than England.³⁷ A second meeting took place in October 1532, when each king hosted the other for five “outrageously expensive” days: François entertaining Henry at Boulogne, and

³² Richardson, *Renaissance Monarchy*, 74.

³³ “for his counterpart across the Channel”: Knecht, “Marignan: François I^{er}, ‘Vainqueur des Suisses,’” 23.

³⁴ Starkey, ed., *A European Court in England*; Giry-Deloison, ed., *Deux Princes de la Renaissance*.

³⁵ Béguin, “Rivalité Artistique et Diplomatique”; Ives, “‘Entente Évangélique,’” 102.

³⁶ Richardson, *Field of Cloth of Gold*, 209.

³⁷ Richardson, “Context and Consequences of the Field of Cloth of Gold,” 209–212.

Henry reciprocating at Calais.³⁸ The summit of 1532 has been less well remembered than the Field of Cloth of Gold, not least because of the visual record. Two famous paintings in the Royal Collection, now known as *The Field of the Cloth of Gold* and *The Embarkation at Dover*, are conventionally taken as a pair and dated to the 1540s, when Henry VIII had political and military reasons to recall the events of 1520. But as Brett Dolman has argued, the absence of contemporary evidence and the "compositional dissonance" between the two canvases cast some doubt on this tradition; the possibility remains that *The Embarkation at Dover* actually depicts Henry's visit to Boulogne, as hinted in the earliest surviving account of the two paintings.³⁹ At any rate, the progress of 1532 deserves attention as another moment when François and Henry symbolically hosted and feasted each other within each other's dominions.

The most recent intervention in the debate around Henry VIII and François I is also the most closely related to the theme of royal mobility. Surveying the "fundamentally nomadic" French monarchy across the span of the sixteenth century, Etienne Faisant contrasts the itinerance of François I and his successors with the movements of the English court. As Faisant points out, understanding the differences between the apparently similar practice of royal mobility in France and England not only helps us to gain perspective, but can also lead to new research questions.⁴⁰ The first conundrum is linguistic: the English distinction between "removing" between standing royal houses, and taking the court on a full-scale "progress" into the provinces, does not translate into French—neither the words, nor the concept. Francophone historians describe the "*itinérance*" of sixteenth-century kings and queens as the essence of life at court. When Simon Thurley writes about "the itinerant Court" in England, however, he means something more specific: the regular movements of Henry VIII and his entourage around the Thames Valley, rather than further afield.⁴¹ Extending Faisant's approach, the remainder of this article asks what other relevant questions might result from contrasting Henry VIII and François I, and posits some answers from the English rather than French side of the Channel.

³⁸ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 307.

³⁹ Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 405793, 405794; Dolman, "The Field of Cloth of Gold and Tudor History Painting," 172, 189.

⁴⁰ Faisant, "French Kings on the Road," 33.

⁴¹ Cooper and Hayes-Davies, "Progresses and Personal Monarchy," 22–24; Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 67.

Faisant’s argument is informed by the database of French royal itineraries digitised and made available since 2013 by the Cour de France.fr project.⁴² The itinerary for François I is based on the *Catalogue des Actes de François I^{er}*, edited by Paul Marichal and printed between 1887 and 1908 as one component of a wider state initiative to publish records relating to the later Middle Ages and Renaissance. In fact, the impulse to document the mobility of the French monarchy dates back even further, to the mid-eighteenth century and the historian and collector Charles de Baschi, Marquis d’Aubais. His efforts to publish twenty-five French royal itineraries, what he called the “backbone” of history, bear comparison with the work of the English printer and antiquary John Nichols, who compiled the wealth of historical and literary remains published as *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, in a series of volumes between 1788 and 1823.⁴³ As demonstrated by Boris Bove and Caroline zum Kolk, the digitisation of the medieval and early modern French royal itineraries increases the scope and accuracy of statistical analysis, overturning some long-standing assumptions in the process. For the sixteenth century, the data reveals that the rulers of France (and especially François I) actually travelled much more than their medieval predecessors.⁴⁴ This offers a clear contrast with Henry VIII, who focused less on the long-range military patrols which had been the norm into his own father’s reign, and more on his expanding portfolio of properties in the south-east. The altered rhythm of English royal progresses is indicative of how internal security had improved since the Wars of the Roses and its aftermath of pretenders and regional rebellion under Henry VII. It also offers some insight into Henry VIII’s acquisitive personality and mission to build up the landholdings of the crown, although it turned out to be a tainted inheritance for his son Edward VI.

A rich source of new data is also revising our understanding of mobility in Tudor England. If the raw materials for François I were already available, then compiling the first full itinerary for Henry VIII has been a substantial piece of collaborative primary research. A hand-written version, perhaps dating from the late nineteenth century, is of uncertain provenance and has never been printed; replacing it has been a key objective of the “Henry VIII on Tour” project.⁴⁵ Bringing the French and English itineraries together allows for

⁴² *Itinéraire de François Ier*, <https://cour-de-france.fr/article3662.html>.

⁴³ zum Kolk, “Introduction,” 12–14; Pooley, “Pioneer of Renaissance Scholarship.”

⁴⁴ Bove and zum Kolk, “Mobilité royale au prisme des itinéraires du roi,” 29–30.

⁴⁵ The hand-written itinerary for Henry VIII is TNA, OBS 1/1419. Working from it, Simon Thurley estimated that Henry VIII “made some 1,150 moves between houses with his Court”: *Royal Palaces*, 73.

some statistical comparisons to be made. For François I (r. 1515–1547), 67% of the days of his reign are documented in his itinerary.⁴⁶ Turning to Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547), the figure is closer to 99%: a remarkable testimony to the survival of manuscript evidence in Exchequer records, State Papers and comptrollers' accounts, as well as the efforts of the researchers working on them.

For the four key progress years on which this project focused (1511, 1522, 1535, 1541), just a single day remains unaccounted for.⁴⁷ Henry, it can be calculated, visited 313 distinct locations during the course of his reign. The figure for François is even more arresting: 783 different places across a far wider arc, taking in Italy and Spain as well as virtually every region of France.⁴⁸ Henry VIII was no stranger to life on the road, but of the two François I was the truly dedicated traveller.

Mobility, personal monarchy, and the court in England and France

Meetings between monarchs took place only once in a while, but the logistics of conveying François and Henry to Calais and Boulogne were entirely familiar to both regimes. Movement from one place to another—in England "removings" or "progresses," according to scale and time of year; journeys "*en séjour*" or "*par les champs*" in France, less seasonally dependent—were a more or less predictable part of life at court.⁴⁹ Authoritative studies of the architecture and social culture of the courts of sixteenth-century France and England, by Monique Chatenet and Simon Thurley respectively, both embed the experience of mobility within their analyses of space and function. For Chatenet, the kings of France were "nomads," at least until Catherine de' Medici imposed a greater degree of stability in and around Paris. Taking the prize for the most adventurous was François I, a "giant" and "force of nature," who described annual circuits of the Loire and the Ile-de-France, and frequented Lyon and Provence, Languedoc and Aquitaine, Champagne and Burgundy; Normandy and Brittany were less visited, but not left out. According to Chatenet, François's choice of itinerary was determined by his passion for hunting as much as any

⁴⁶ *Itinéraire de François Ier*; Bove and zum Kolk, "Mobilité royale au prisme des itinéraires du roi," table 1.

⁴⁷ *Itinerary of Henry VIII*. I am grateful to Patrick Gibbs and the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture for guidance in interpreting this data.

⁴⁸ *Itinerary of Henry VIII*; *Itinéraire de François Ier*; Faisant, "French Kings on the Road," table 3.1.

⁴⁹ I am grateful to acknowledge the advice of Etienne Faisant on French terminology for movements of the court.

political considerations.⁵⁰ Thurley's account of Henry VIII on tour during the same period highlights the "giests" (lists of locations circulated in advance) that set out the planned movements of the court, while also showing how they could be altered at short notice by adverse weather, shortages of food, or reports of sweating sickness and plague. For Thurley, too, the primary reason for most English progresses "was not political, it was pleasurable—the pursuit of good hunting."⁵¹ The distinction between politics and hunting, pleasure and statecraft could be seen as too binary: historians are increasingly aware of the range of meanings invested in different kinds of hunting during the early modern period.⁵² The warning not to imagine political significance in everything is nevertheless welcome, drawing us back to the discussion of power where we began.

Taking the royal court on tour was disruptive, expensive, and often probably quite exhausting for all concerned. Valuable items could get lost, broken, or stolen in transit. The orderly conduct of council meetings and other aspects of government were interrupted, though Elizabeth I seems consciously to have capitalised on that fact and we should not discount the possibility that Henry and François did the same. In an English context, rules of access and courtly discipline were more difficult to police outside the architectural settings of the principal royal houses. For Henry VIII's fifth queen Catherine Howard, who allegedly took advantage of the northern progress of 1541 to pursue an affair with a gentleman of the privy chamber, Thomas Culpeper, the results were catastrophic. The psychological strain of being constantly on show, making the next ceremonial entry or formal act of devotion on unfamiliar terrain, is rarely acknowledged in scholarship that wants to emphasise the successful performance and representation of Renaissance royal power. Fortunately for them, François and Henry both possessed the charisma and stamina to match their height.

Why did the kings of France and England spend so much time on tour? Whether they actually enjoyed travelling around their territories, as Peter Sillitoe has claimed for Henry VIII, can be difficult to detect in the sources.⁵³ Henry's reducing progress circuit in the second half of the reign, fear of contagion on the 1535 progress (curtailing the festivities planned at Bristol), and menacing treatment of the city of York during his visit

⁵⁰ Chatenet, *Cour de France*, 15–19.

⁵¹ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 67–68.

⁵² Richardson, "Hunting at the Courts of Francis I and Henry VIII"; Neighbors, "Elizabeth I, Huntress of England."

⁵³ Sillitoe, "Courtly Space," 77.

in 1541 all tend to point the other way. By contrast, François I's appetite for travel seems only to have increased the longer that he reigned, even when his health began to fail; unlike some of the ambassadors who trailed him, he seems to have been entirely at ease in a humble farmhouse or a tent in the middle of the countryside.⁵⁴ Against the drawbacks of going on tour should be set the opportunity to interact with communities beyond the usual closely-guarded circles of royal advisors, to inhabit the ancient role of the king as dispenser of justice, and generally to escape what John Adamson has called "the gilded fetters of ceremonial" governing life at court.⁵⁵ Henry VIII's summer progresses, as distinct from his more frequent movements between the standing houses, fell outside the six major feasts of the liturgical year running from November (All Saints') to June (Whitsunday), freeing him to travel with a reduced-strength riding chapel.⁵⁶ With time for hunting, feasting, visiting new places, and watching plays, the journeys undertaken by Henry and François share elements of the "summer holidays" that supplied the stage for the great Elizabethan country-house entertainments.⁵⁷ But they also asserted the centrality of personal monarchy within government, extending the range of informers and advisors to an extent that could leave royal ministers distinctly nervous, and requiring local elites to organise displays of fealty and submission. Travel also enabled monarchs to get to know the landscapes and people that they ruled over. For Henry VIII, this meant surveying and occupying the dissolved monasteries and other houses that he was fast acquiring by the 1530s, taking possession of them (as he blithely assumed) to the permanent benefit of the English crown.

Mobility, in short, was essential to the very definition of the court. In France as in England, the expectation that they would move from one place to another had profound implications for the ways in which royal households (*maisons*, *hôtels*) were organised. As described by Faisant, the sixteenth-century French court had no real home; engaged in a perpetual act of travelling, it had to carry all the necessities of daily life with it, from furniture and clothing to the animals of the royal menagerie.⁵⁸ Contemporaries imagined the court as a vast *cortège*: between 8,000 and 12,000 people in its largest state under

⁵⁴ Chatenet, *Cour de France*, 19; Faisant, "French Kings on the Road," 34–35.

⁵⁵ Flannigan, "Justice on Progress"; Adamson, "Making of the Ancien-Régime Court," 33.

⁵⁶ Kisby, "Kingship and the Royal Itinerary," table 1.

⁵⁷ Wilson, "Harefield Entertainment," 315.

⁵⁸ Faisant, "French Kings on the Road," 44.

François I, or the size of a large town.⁵⁹ Henry VIII’s situation was somewhat different. London (or Westminster) and the south-east were more of a permanent base for both the monarchy and the administrative apparatus of the crown, though the king did travel further afield (the midlands in his younger years; once each to the west country and the north), and maintained houses in Oxfordshire (Ewelme, Woodstock, and Langley), Northamptonshire (Grafton), York (the King’s Manor), and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.⁶⁰ The English court was also smaller than the French, though could still be very substantial: Marillac counted between 4,000 and 5,000 horsemen leaving London for the north in 1541, and more than 200 tents.⁶¹ This was an exceptional progress, which might have been another royal meeting if James V of Scotland had joined his uncle Henry VIII at York. Other journeys were on a smaller scale, but still mobilised several hundred members of the household and a lengthy baggage train of carts and pack horses.⁶² Our vision of the early modern court is refracted by the survival of magnificent palaces and elite houses dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, adding colour and depth of field but at the same time skewing our perception towards fixed architectural settings. The use of experimental archaeology and digital humanities in research projects like “Henry VIII on Tour” and “Portable Palaces” thus has a double value: by generating virtual or material reconstructions to inform the public understanding of the past, they also make it easier to conceptualise the court in motion.⁶³

On this theme, it is worth noting the mutual influences of the French and English courts. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the exchange was more from England to France, as Henri III remodelled his royal apartments in the English style to give him more privacy.⁶⁴ During Henry VIII’s reign, however, the flow was in the opposite direction. Henry imported elements of French protocol into the inner workings of his court, creating a new cadre of “gentlemen of the privy chamber” to map onto François’s *gentilshommes de la chambre*. The cause may have been incidental—the need to pair up French and English “minions” for the celebration of the treaty of London—but the effect (so David Starkey

⁵⁹ Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, 15.

⁶⁰ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 69.

⁶¹ LP xvi, 941.

⁶² Kisby, “Kingship and the Royal Itinerary,” 32.

⁶³ For the “Portable Palaces” project at Historic Royal Palaces see:

<https://www.hrp.org.uk/about-us/research/research-projects-and-networks/portable-palaces/#gs.my9ihf>.

⁶⁴ Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, 183–184.

argues) was profound, reshaping Henry's privy chamber to create "an institutionalization of intimacy."⁶⁵ French influence on the structure of the English court should not be overstated: an attempt by Thomas Cromwell to impose a lord great master (*maître d'hôtel du roi*) on the household, ostensibly to reduce costs but also surely to maintain his own political supremacy, was short-lived.⁶⁶ Henry VIII continued to enjoy more privacy than François I, whose apartments were accessible to a wider range of notables than would have been permitted in England. The sequence and function of the royal chambers at Fontainebleau or Chambord (*salle du roi, chambre du roi, garde robe, cabinet*) were not the same as at Hampton Court or Dunstable Priory (guard or watching chamber, presence chamber, closet, privy chamber, bedchamber).⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the recasting of the privy chamber deserves consideration as a factor in the politics of Henry VIII on tour, particularly as it relates to his choice of host.

The tenor of the English court underwent a series of changes from c. 1529: a reflection of Henry's more personal practice of kingship following his disposal of Cardinal Wolsey (and acquisition of his houses), but also in response to the break from Rome and the need to construct a political consensus around it.⁶⁸ The progress westward in summer 1535 extended the king's affinity to a corps of county gentry on the outer reaches of the court, who might be relied upon to support the royal supremacy and any future transfer of church lands to the crown. Such a man was Nicholas Poyntz of Acton Court, who hosted Henry and Anne at his refurbished moated manor house in Gloucestershire. Robert Bell's essay on the royal visit to Acton notes Poyntz's connections with Richard Rich—whose perjured evidence had recently sent Thomas More to the scaffold, clearing the Tower before the king left London—and with Richard Cromwell, whose uncle Thomas shadowed the progress for two months while making a series of visitations to religious houses. Poyntz's grandfather had hosted Henry VII at Acton in 1486; his father had been at the Field of Cloth of Gold. Nicholas himself accompanied Henry and Anne at the Calais meeting with François I in 1532.⁶⁹ David Starkey and Susan Wabuda call it "a triumphal progress for

⁶⁵ Starkey, "Intimacy and Innovation," 82; Knecht, *Francis I*, 89–90.

⁶⁶ Loades, *Tudor Court*, 49–50.

⁶⁷ Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, 142–154, 163–171, 183–184, and figs. 72, 74, 75; Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 52–53, 120–127, 135–141, and fig. 157.

⁶⁸ Thurley, "The Court on the Move," 12. Neil Samman draws attention to the congruence between Henry VIII's itinerary and Cardinal Wolsey's before the chief minister's fall in 1529: "Progresses of Henry VIII," 72–73.

⁶⁹ Bell, "Royal Visit to Acton Court," 120–123.

reform," while also noting how the religious complexion of Henry's hosts became more conservative once Thomas Cromwell had returned to London.⁷⁰ The religious history of Henry VIII on tour deserves more sustained discussion, within the model of sacral kingship set out by John Adamson and the thaumaturgic royal touch as catalogued by Stephen Brogan.⁷¹ For the moment, we can note that Henry VIII's pre-Reformation practice of pilgrimage and later use of progresses to enforce the Supreme Headship offer points of comparison with François I, who presented himself as a moving image of the *Roi Très Chrétien*, healing the sick of scrofula and making his entry to towns under a canopy reminiscent of the Corpus Christi procession.⁷²

In her list of reasons for taking the French court on tour—defending borders and conquering new ground, ensuring that taxes were paid, strengthening the sinews of the state, going hunting—Monique Chatenet includes the desire to re-kindle the cult of monarchy.⁷³ The idea that the kings and queens of early modern Europe travelled around their realms to inspire emotions of awe and devotion in their subjects has a long history in the scholarly literature. Sydney Anglo's 1969 monograph *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* staked a claim for the Tudor royal progress as "an important and traditional instrument of royal propaganda," capable of impressing the people with "the reality of an authority which must, frequently, have seemed very remote." If royal entries to London or York tended to be cruder in their imagery than their French and Italian equivalents, they were at least visually splendid and could also be technically ingenious.⁷⁴ Caroline zum Kolk has noted the influence of studies of royal entries on the developing history of royal itinerance, an historiographical current which she terms "*l'école cérémonialiste américaine*."⁷⁵ Robert Knecht, for instance, has argued that the *entrées joyeuses* made by François I were effective royal propaganda because they involved so many local people in the "mystery of kingship."⁷⁶ Fifty years have now elapsed since the American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz explored the ceremonial forms employed by Elizabeth I and other rulers to take possession of their realms, especially the power of royal progresses to

⁷⁰ Starkey and Wabuda, "Acton Court and the Progress of 1535," 118.

⁷¹ Adamson, "Making of the Ancien-Régime Court," 27–33; Brogan, *Royal Touch*, 45–54.

⁷² Knecht, "Court of Francis I," 12; Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, 18. On Henry VIII's use of former monastic properties see Howard, "Monastic Lodgings."

⁷³ Chatenet, *La Cour de France*, 18.

⁷⁴ Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy*, 5–7, 21.

⁷⁵ zum Kolk, "Introduction," 17.

⁷⁶ Knecht, "Court of Francis I," 12.

"locate the society's center and affirm its connection with transcendent things by stamping a territory with ritual signs of dominance."⁷⁷ The interdisciplinary conversation has moved on but Geertz's work continues to be cited, an example being Jennifer Mara DeSilva's essay on ritual acts of taking possession in public spaces and the "impressionable minds" of people gathered in town squares or watching through windows.⁷⁸ Echoing Geertz's account of Elizabeth, Kevin Sharpe pictures Henry VIII "traversing not just the symbolic sites of the realm—parliament, lawcourts and cathedrals—but the wider geographies of royal palaces and hunting lodges, and, ultimately, the realm."⁷⁹

If "the realm" is taken to include Wales, or Ireland, or Devon and Cornwall, or anywhere north of York, then Sharpe's argument is difficult to accept in its entirety. Henry VIII's progress circuit was more limited than that of his royal predecessors, and (as we have seen) a lot less ambitious than the tours undertaken by François I. The assumption that kings were visible to their subjects on progress also needs to be revised or, alternatively, to be backed up with more documentation. Simon Thurley writes of Henry VIII's "anxiety to avoid unnecessary fuss" when removing from one house to another, which is not at all how England's most expansive king is usually remembered.⁸⁰ Etienne Faisant, too, questions the extent to which the peripatetic lifestyle of François I can be attributed to his desire to show himself off to his people.⁸¹ The itineraries of Henry and François can tell us where the king was at any given point, but not why he was there or how he was received. A royal visit was an opportunity to petition and negotiate, present gifts, and potentially get close to the monarch. But as Neil Murphy acknowledges in his study of French ceremonial entries, meaningful access to the king remained restricted and the allegorical performances staged along processional routes may have had little effect.⁸² Margaret Shewring's *longue durée* study of London water pageants staged for Anne Boleyn and other queens distinguishes between the details of the elaborate iconography and music, which must have been difficult to make out, and the more general impression of splendour that was broadcast to the crowds along the river bank.⁸³ The study of material culture offers

⁷⁷ Geertz and Centers, "Kings and Charisma," 153.

⁷⁸ DeSilva, "Taking Possession," 12.

⁷⁹ Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 173.

⁸⁰ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 73.

⁸¹ Faisant, "French Kings on the Road," 36, 45.

⁸² Murphy, "The Court on the Move," 51.

⁸³ Shewring, "The Iconography of Populism," 227.

future inroads into the subject, taking forward the techniques showcased by Maria Hayward in her analysis of the textiles and clothing that Henry VIII took on tour, and in Timothy Schroder's reckoning of the precious metals and jewels that proclaimed the magnificence of the court on the move.⁸⁴

Conclusion

Comparing the size, population, and (by implication) the power of England and France during the first half of the sixteenth century, David Starkey concluded that Henry VIII was "outclassed."⁸⁵ François I was richer, more obviously active as a warrior, better connected with Renaissance culture than his rival across the Channel. His style of *Roi Très Chrétien* was inherited from the deep past, not of recent minting like Henry's somewhat contradictory titles of Defender of the Faith and Supreme Head of the English church. So intent was Henry on imitating François that he adopted the French way of signing his letters and displaying his royal arms encircled with the Garter collar. Starkey concludes that England became "almost a cultural colony of France"; a verdict which underplays the influence of portrait artists like Hans Holbein and members of the Horenbout family, or the Italian style evident in the poetry of Thomas Wyatt, or the German artisans who transformed the manufacture of English armour, but does capture the particular blend of association and envy that characterise Henry's attitude towards the French king.⁸⁶

The introduction to *Royal Journeys in Early Modern Europe* speculates about what made sixteenth-century progresses exciting to see or to experience, the "unscripted moments" as well as the staged theatricality and ostentatious displays of wealth.⁸⁷ Henry was caught out, twice, by François at the Field of Cloth of Gold: during the famous wrestling match between the two kings, when François used an unexpected Breton manoeuvre to throw his opponent; and in Henry's own chamber at Guînes castle early one morning, when the French king burst in to declare himself Henry's servant and help him on with his shirt.⁸⁸ Comparing the two personalities, François comes across as more agile as well as more

⁸⁴ Hayward, "Clothing and Livery on Progress"; Schroder, "Magnificence on the Move."

⁸⁵ Starkey, ed., *A European Court in England*, 12.

⁸⁶ Starkey, ed., *A European Court in England*, 12, 85. Eric Ives similarly describes Henry VIII's England as a "colony" of France and francophone Burgundian culture "in artistic, literary and social terms": "Entente Évangélique," 83.

⁸⁷ Musson and Cooper, "Reconstructing Royal Journeys," 3, 5.

⁸⁸ Mickel, "Performing Power and Theatricalisation," 197–201.

mobile; Henry a touch ponderous, a stickler for form. But it is also worth remembering that the idea of the wrestling match was Henry's, not François's; one example of the spontaneity that either monarch could rise to, and a way to break through the suffocating protocol of the occasion. Improvisation was a core skill on tour, when monarchs took themselves away from the inherited rituals and sumptuous spaces of the royal palaces and led the court to new environments.

Whether defined as an art or a science, historical enquiry proceeds by innovation. Thanks to funded research in both the UK and mainland Europe, a large amount of data on early modern royal mobility is becoming publicly available to search and interpret. Understanding of the *itinérance* of French kings and queens has already been transformed; the new itinerary for Henry VIII's reign, the first full version to be compiled, promises to do the same. Also of value, however, are efforts to bring different interpretations of the data together to compare and contrast them. The impact may be increased when two adjacent national historiographies, written in different languages, are brought into dialogue around a common set of problems. This article has argued that Henry VIII's movements around his realm can be more fully appreciated with reference to those of François I, who was simultaneously the greatest threat to English national security and a profound influence on Henry and his regime. For the rulers of both England and France, the direction of travel and choice of location on tour were personal and defy easy categorisation. That was part of the point: by taking the court on the road, to be received by certain towns or to review fortifications or to show favour to chosen hosts or even to go on pilgrimage, Henry VIII and François I demonstrated their freedom to act and take counsel as it suited them. The body politic was in the hands of a great many people by the sixteenth century, but the body natural remained the king's own.

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