

Introduction

On March 26, 2015, the bones of King Richard III of England were laid to rest in Leicester Cathedral. Among the attendees were an Oscar-nominated actor, a member of the royal family, and the University of Leicester team that unearthed his remains in a car park.¹ This unlikely assemblage displays the ongoing interest in and importance of this polarizing figure. As a king who ruled a mere two years, from 1483 to 1485, his impact on the larger history of England has been of little import. But his story has been dramatized and fictionalized by authors from the sixteenth century and beyond, in ways that are demonizing, sympathetic, or somewhere in between. The struggle has, arguably, been over the body of the king which was lost to history in the years of the Reformation. This conflict has centered on the classification of Richard's body as much as the possession of his physical remains, and many historians and biographers have attempted to write the definitive version of Richard.

Richard's remains were discovered in 2012, but they were not confirmed to be his until scientific investigations concluded in 2013. The recent discovery of the body has reopened the debate over what some call the "real Richard," spawning a forum for scholarly work on Richard's discovery in Clemson University's *Upstart* journal. As Alice Dailey puts it in her article for the forum, the discovery of the remains does not reveal the "anatomy of the interior man that the skeleton alone cannot provide" (np). Archaeologists dug up Richard's body, not his mind and heart, the things that made him human. In the press

¹ In August of 2012, archaeologists from the University of Leicester began their search for the remains of Richard III in association with the Richard III Society. Their discovery of a skeleton beneath a car park was revealed on February 4, 2013 to have been the body of Richard, who had been buried beneath the choir of the Greyfriars Monastery. Examination of the body revealed wounds consistent with the historical record of Richard's death, including a blow to the head that would have killed him instantly and a humiliation wound to the buttocks that echoes stories of his battlefield disgrace (University of Leicester).

conferences that followed the discovery and assessment of the remains, the archaeologists and scientists attempted to put their findings in the context of battlefield history and human facts. Dailey describes these reports as “[conferring] upon Richard’s bones the history of a real human being who suffered from idiopathic adolescent-onset scoliosis and died from a nasty blow to the head” (np).

Another article for the forum by Ari Friedlander begins by questioning the validity of the assertion that the remains in the car park were indeed those of Richard III. Although the science is suggestive, Friedlander says that it is not conclusive. What makes the remains those of Richard, he says, is belief and “the seemingly more prosaic evidence from the historical record” (np). He claims that “[the] skeleton is Richard’s because it feels to us like Richard’s,” which he supports with varied accounts of Ricardian supporters seeing the facial reconstruction for the first time (np). They overwhelmingly see the face of “Good King Richard,” the name given by the chairman of the Richard III Society. Friedlander asks valid questions: “What does a tyrant’s face look like? Or that of a good king?” (np). These are some of the same questions raised by earlier texts about Richard, which ask their readers to determine whether appearance is linked to the soul.

This is the debate that contextualizes the many interpretations and representations of Richard since his death: Who was Richard III, and are the early accounts justified? His body has shifted and changed appearance over the centuries, in works such as Thomas More’s *The History of King Richard the Third*, William Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, Sir Clement R. Markham’s *Richard III: His Life and Character*, and most recently, Philippa Gregory’s *Cousins’ War* series. These changes mark the movement of culture and the increase in humanity’s understanding of the world. Advances in science severed the link between

Richard's body and his mind, a link which was of vital importance in More's and Shakespeare's renderings of the king, and which is lacking in Markham's and Gregory's interpretations. The difference between history and historiography is one of fact versus interpretation, which are conflated in the public discourse of Richard III since his discovery.

For the purposes of this paper, the histories and biographies of Richard being discussed will be considered historiographies, or interpretations of the past and events for which the authors were not present. Historiography, as defined by *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, is "the study of the ways in which historians have interpreted the past" (Rampolla). The histories give an impression of attempting to be accurate simply because they are called a history rather than a novel or an interpretation, and it is obvious that fictional depictions of Richard will have taken more creative license with the monarch. More took liberties with Richard's physical form and created several new descriptions for himself, some of which found their immortalized home in Shakespeare's play. Markham claims that he wrote the biography of Richard, but it is more of a revisionist history than a factual, substantiated account of his life. The depiction of Richard in each source can allude to common ideas at the time, as well as hint at the cultural, social, and political ideas of the era in which they were written.

Many of the depictions of Richard, including More's and Shakespeare's, employ the language of monstrosity in their descriptions. Investigating Richard's reputation through the lens of monster theory will aid in assessing the cultural and theoretical implications of each Ricardian representation. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's collection, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, features an essay by the editor that lays out seven basic theses. Cohen says that this is an attempt to create a set of standards by which a person can read cultures by the monsters

they create. They are by no means infallible; Cohen himself states, “I offer by way of introduction to the essays that follow a set of breakable postulates in search of specific cultural moments. I offer seven theses toward understanding cultures through the monsters they bear” (Cohen 4). In the depictions of Richard III that follow, each author has written in a particular cultural moment, and by looking at their choices, it may be possible to make inferences about their influences. Not all of Cohen’s theses can be successfully applied to the transformation of Richard III from man to monster, but those that can provide a new way of reading the various depictions of the last Plantagenet king.

Cohen’s first thesis, “The Monster’s Body is a Cultural Body,” states that a monster is born at a metamorphic crossroads, incorporating “fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence” (4). The initial demonization of Richard III, written down by John Rous in 1491, occurred in the very specific moment of Henry VII’s rise to power. By making Richard a deformed monster, Rous and others contributed to assuaging the fear of a new monarch who stood as an upstart against centuries of Plantagenet rule. The crown had already changed hands several times during the Wars of the Roses, and Henry Tudor was untested and had spent most of his life living in Wales or Brittany. Cultural fears of the day, such as deformity, weakness, and an evil mind, were projected onto Richard’s body to create a man to whom no one would rally.

In his second thesis, Cohen says that “The Monster Always Escapes.” This is true of Richard, who has been reinvented across the centuries, both as tyrant and misunderstood monster. Even after the monster is dead, he “turns immaterial and vanishes, to reappear someplace else” (4). The monster never truly dies, as is evidenced by the smear campaign of the Tudor dynasty that lasted long after Richard’s death at Bosworth. The threat of Richard’s

reign and the legitimacy of his relatives haunted Henry VII and his son, Henry VIII, in the form of Perkin Warbeck, a man claiming to be one of the slain Princes in the Tower who had escaped to Flanders, and Margaret Pole, the daughter of George of Clarence, who supported her son in his bid for power after the separation from the Church. This fear was such that the historians under Tudor patronage, including John Rous, were paid to write the Tudor-approved version of the events of 1483-1485.

Cohen's third thesis states that "The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis." By way of explaining this, Cohen says that the "refusal to participate in the classificatory 'order of things' is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration" (6). The many versions of Richard that existed by the end of the sixteenth century present this hybrid image, giving the king a hunchback, a limp, a withered arm, and multiple birth narratives that were themselves contradictory. Physically, Richard was an amalgamation of the evil deformities that medieval sources attributed to sin. In a more theoretical sense, Richard was beyond classification in his status and nobility. He was a king who was not meant to be king, a man who seized power during the crucial period between the death of one king and the crowning of another. In his lifetime he became a royal duke, then a king, and then a murdered usurper without a title.

In the explanation of his fourth thesis, "The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference," Cohen mentions Richard III as one of his examples. He explains a monster as "difference made flesh," which is made to function "as dialectical Other or third-term supplement" (7). The term Other in this context refers to a person or being outside of the accepted norm; in Richard's case, his abnormal body casts him as an Other to the

“able-bodied” men he is compared to. Cohen goes on to discuss the varying types of differences that can lead to monstrous representation, landing on political and ideological difference as the catalyst for Richard’s historical depiction. Calling him “the most illustrious of these propaganda-bred demons,” Cohen refers to Thomas More’s description of Richard as a hunchback who was born feet-first and with teeth (8-9). Richard’s transformation, Cohen argues, is monster theory at its best: “culture gives birth to a monster before our eyes, painting over the normally proportioned Richard who once lived, raising his shoulder to deform simultaneously person, cultural response, and the possibility of objectivity” (9). Cohen’s article was published in the collection in 1996, nearly two decades before the discovery of Richard’s body, and his version of Richard reflects that. This may only strengthen his argument that the process of Richard’s Othering is monster theory in action, given that physical deformities were made to separate and demonize a man who was, according to the revisionist history popular before the discovery in 2012, perfectly normal in appearance and character. This, Cohen argues, creates a monster of history, which is “defeating, self-deconstructive, always in danger of exposing the sutures that bind its disparate elements into a single, unnatural body” (9).

One can abstractly apply Cohen’s fifth thesis, “The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible,” to Richard III and his Othering. Monsters are positioned at the limits of knowing, standing as a warning to others against exploration beyond the borders. As Cohen says, “[the] monster prevents mobility (intellectual, geographic, sexual), delimiting the social spaces through which private bodies may move” (12). Richard’s position as a monstrous being instructed other would-be usurpers and contenders for the throne that there was only defeat and infamy on the other side of such attempts. Henry VII stood to lose his throne to

any with a solid claim to the throne, as Richard's had been, if they attempted to challenge him. Richard's fate was a warning against pretenders like Perkin Warbeck, who had supposedly come back to seek his rightful title.² The construction of monstrosity around the figure of the usurper functioned as a boundary that was not to be crossed, as well as a strict delineation between the old regime and the new.

The sixth thesis, "Fear of the Monster Is Really a Kind of Desire," suggests that monsters are often linked to forbidden practices. Cohen posits that the same "creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint" (16-17). While it is a loose interpretation, Richard's monstrosity can be applied here, as his actions may have held a certain allure to others attempting to gain social status. Second, or even third sons like Richard, may have used Richard's actions to legitimize their own bids for power and followed his example of killing those in their way. This attraction, Cohen suggests, comes from the juxtaposition of hatred and curiosity: "We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair" (17). Cohen theorizes that the monster is a projection of an Other self that allows escapism and fantasy to have a safe outlet, until the monster crosses the boundaries that have been delineated for it. This may be the reason that authors and historians have continued to write about Richard, in an attempt to use his monstrous body to play out the near-miss that was his reign. Henry VII can be seen as a hero, a savior of an England that was previously under the control of a tyrant. From a point of view other than Richard's own, the story is a seductive rendition of classic epic tales in which a monster is slain and a saintly figure prevails.

² Warbeck announced his identity in 1490 and came ashore in Ireland to seek support for his claim in 1491. He was captured by Henry VII in 1497, made to sign a confession that stated he was not the true Richard of York,

The final thesis, “The Monster Stands at the Threshold...of Becoming,” places the monster in the interpreter’s hands. Monsters, Cohen says, “ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misinterpreted what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions....our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression. They ask us why we have created them” (20). This suggests another reason that Richard has been reincarnated so many times over the centuries. Authors and historians have attempted to understand the biases and cultural phenomena that have created the Richard III known in popular literature, seeking to recreate him and recast him in a role other than tyrant and murderer. Whether because society has moved away from the type of Othering found in Richard’s case, or because today’s culture is engaging in a large-scale rehabilitation of monsters in general, Richard has found new advocates and enemies alike.

In reading various depictions of Richard III from multiple time periods through the lens of Cohen’s theses, a picture begins to emerge of the changes in culture and political thought. The discovery of the remains in Leicester creates a modern cultural moment for the discussion and analysis of Richard’s role in history, and the meaning, or lack thereof, to be found in his body. While previous scholars had only historical texts to analyze, modern scholars will have bones and scientific reports over which to read the historical accounts that have so colorfully characterized the short-lived monarch. The use of monster theory allows the multiple histories and biographies of Richard to be read as differing legends of a monster that change with the times and the culture. Beginning with More and Shakespeare, we see the beginning of Richard’s monstrosity and the cultural moment that inspired it, while Markham provides an attempt to reshape and reform Richard’s body into something pure and good. In Gregory’s account, we find a more balanced account, but one that still absolves Richard of

and executed in 1499 after two years of remaining a “guest” at Henry’s court.

most of the crimes laid upon his shoulders by More and Shakespeare in their influential works. By comparing these four accounts, we can see Richard's cultural trajectory more clearly and follow the written history of his body, which preceded the physical discovery of his remains.

“Little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed”³: Thomas More

Aside from Shakespeare's Richard, the most well-known version of the king is arguably that of Sir Thomas More, who lived and wrote in the early sixteenth century. His work, *The History of King Richard the Third*, was published posthumously in 1543 in both Latin and English by his nephew (More xv). Although the specific dates of composition are not known, More's nephew suggested that it was begun around 1513. Some passages, however, date after 1513, including the opening reference to Thomas Howard II as the Earl of Surrey, a title which he did not claim until 1514 (xxii). The Latin and English versions were written separately, not merely translated, and have important differences in language and content. The Latin version concludes with Richard's coronation, forming a more complete narrative than the English version, which ends with the murders of the Princes in the Tower. The English version is more readily available and includes more Christian imagery than the Latin version, which is more classically influenced. In an introduction to his edition of the English version of More's *History*, George M. Logan asserts that “Shakespeare's Richard is essentially More's, and between them, these two great writers established what still remains the popular view of Richard, as a man both physically and morally deformed, a consummate dissembler hell-bent on attaining the throne at whatever

cost in human life” (xv). While More had an obvious influence on Shakespeare’s work, his was not the only account of the monarch that played into that depiction of Richard. The two interpretations can be seen as separate entities, born of two different times and under two different rulers. More’s depiction lacks the physicality of Shakespeare’s Richard, who was meant to be seen on the stage, but he also includes powerful rhetoric that propels his Richard to his disastrous end.

More writes in the newly revived classical tradition, which regarded history as a rhetorical venue for entertainment. The aim was to be truthful, yes, but it was also intended to be as interesting and dramatic as possible. In this, More has, according to Logan, achieved “one of the summits of this tradition,” which was revived by the humanists of the Renaissance (xxxix). In his article for *History Today*, A.R. Myers questions whether More was attempting to write history at all: “[His] story is much more like a drama, unfolded in magnificent prose, for which fidelity to historical fact is scarcely relevant” (Myers np). More’s account is at once riveting and dramatic, indeed reading more like a novel than an historical account, with none of the dryness of sources like the *Croyland Chronicle*.⁴ Myers credits More’s depiction of Richard with the version that persisted in the subsequent Tudor chronicles of the sixteenth century, as “it was embodied with only slight alterations in...those of Hall, Grafton, Holinshed and Stow, and formed the basis of much of Shakespeare’s picture” (np).

In addition to the classical influences that Logan cites, Retha M. Warnicke posits in her essay, “More’s *Richard III* and the Mystery Plays,” that the English *History* has many

³ (More, 9)

⁴ The *Croyland Chronicle* was a largely Yorkist account of the events in England. The period between 1453 and 1486 was recorded by the second continuator of the chronicle. The chronicle itself was not printed until 1684, well after More’s time, and the contemporary records of Richard and the Yorks were unavailable for

similarities to the medieval morality and mystery plays.⁵ The framing of the narrative, Warnicke suggests, is easily related to “the moralities’ rise-and-fall framework” that concerns the fall of a tyrant (Warnicke 762). This is mirrored in Shakespeare’s work, which also follows the rise-and-fall action and five-act structure of the medieval morality plays. Warnicke extends this comparison to the mystery plays, which were biblical pageants that depicted scenes from creation to the Last Judgment, and states that, in addition to following the framing of the morality plays, they “also explore the nature of tyranny and sacrifice” (762). More, she claims, was also concerned with tyranny and sacrifice, positing Richard as the tyrant and his enemies as the sacrifices.

At the start of his work, More appears to be echoing the classical traditions of chroniclers such as Tacitus. In its rhetorical style, the opening of More’s *History* resembles Tacitus’s account of the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Logan tells us that More “[prefaces] his history of tyranny with a reminder of the better times that immediately preceded it,” much as Tacitus does with the history of Rome in the later years of Augustus (More xxxvii). More gives us an account of King Edward IV before his untimely death, telling of the time of peace that had settled over England. The hostilities between York and Lancaster, which had dominated the landscape for most of living memory, had ceased under Edward’s definitive rule, and More argues that the people were greatly pleased with their illustrious king. This is the setup for Richard’s ultimate betrayal and downfall, during which he ruins the peace in England and renews the conflict between York and Lancaster for a final time. The rhetorical reasons for this are many, but it succeeds in painting Richard’s brief rule as a tumultuous,

nearly two hundred years (Myers np).

⁵ Mystery plays were performed “on or near the celebration of Corpus Christi, a day set aside by the Church to honour the Eucharist” and “these cycles presented a series of biblical pageants from the creation to the Last Judgment” (Warnicke 762). These plays were often similar to the morality plays, which used the same

evil blip in an otherwise idyllic period.

Logan says, however, that this was not the time of peace that More would have readers believe. “There were intermittent hostilities with Scotland, and in his final few months Edward seems to have been planning to renew hostilities with France,” which would have broken the pact made with the French king that won Edward money and prestige (xxxviii). This appears to be the only flagrant flouting of historical fact in More’s *History*, but it is a bold rhetorical move. It seems to be solely for the purpose of setting up Richard’s regime for a longer fall, although it also serves the purpose of echoing Tacitus and his classical roots.

More pays special attention to Edward IV in the *History*, likely as an early foil to Richard himself. As Warnicke posits in her article, Edward is “a figura of Christ” positioned opposite Richard’s devil, and the initial praise of his reign is meant to highlight this contrast (Warnicke 768). More’s descriptions are almost loving, reverent to an extreme that is interesting for a Tudor chronicler: “He was in visage lovely, of body mighty: strong and clean-made...In which time of his latter days, this realm was in quiet and prosperous estate: no fear of outward enemies, no war in hand nor none toward, but such as no man looked for...” (More 6). He is a golden oldest son, with a bearing that is kingly and vibrant. Though More admits that Edward was given to overeating and overindulging in later life, he does not linger over the fact that Edward himself was a usurper. King Henry VI was removed from the throne twice, both times by Yorkist armies under the control of Edward. In spite of this, More gives Edward plenty of praise in the beginning of the *History*, as well as a deathbed speech that eloquently warns his family against division and infighting, which Warnicke also claims is reminiscent of Christ. She says that “[the] king also warns against the ‘pestilente

serpente' of 'ambicion and desyre of vainglorye and soueraintye', all sins of Lucifer, the first traitor" (Warnicke 768).

The relationships between the brothers are paramount to More's introduction to his *History*, as they are in Shakespeare's play. George of Clarence, the middle York child, is another of More's golden examples: "a goodly, noble prince and at all points fortunate, if either his own ambition had not set him against his brother, or the envy of his enemies his brother against him" (More 9). His appearance is made pertinent as another contrast to Richard, and More casts him as almost a victim in his own story:

[Heinous] treason was there laid to his charge, and finally,
were he faulty or faultless, attainted was he by Parliament and
judged to the death, and thereupon hastily drowned in a butt of
malmsey; whose death King Edward (albeit he commanded
it)...piteously bewailed and sorrowfully repented. (9)

More questions George's guilt even here, when history shows that George committed treason on more than one occasion. Seeking to be king himself, George commits in thought the sin that Richard manages to commit in deed, though More pardons him and enters this apologetic view into the history books.

All of these descriptions and points of contrast are provided before we receive a clear glimpse of Richard himself. Unlike Shakespeare, More does not open his work with the titular character, nor does he seem to focus on him until after his more perfect and stately brothers are given full attention. Finally, after nearly 1000 words of description of England before the tyranny of Richard, More gives us this: "Richard, the third son, of whom we now entreat, was in wit and courage equal with either of [his brothers], in body and prowess far

under them both: little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favored of visage, and such as in states called warly, in other men called otherwise” (9-10). This picture greatly contrasts with the descriptions of Richard’s brothers, which More himself acknowledges, and is far more concerned with the body than with the disposition. Rather than describing Richard’s temperament or his deeds to that point, More stresses his appearance and highlights everything that was wrong with Richard in comparison to his brothers. It is as if we are to get more from his physicality than his personality, as if More wishes us to know Richard first and foremost by his disfigurements.

Richard is invariably associated with sin and vice, pointing to the outward appearance predicting the inner self. Warnicke draws another comparison to the mystery plays, suggesting that More’s depiction of Richard was intended to call to mind the sinner of the popularized mystery plays. In judgment scenes in the plays, for example, “the cursed are segregated on the left-hand side of God and are forced to carry their wicked works on their backs, thereby visually assuming hunchbacked shapes” (Warnicke 767). This also coincides with More’s representation of Richard’s shoulders, having his left higher than his right, which is the opposite of other accounts. This, Warnicke posits, is because “the devil favoured the left side” and More wanted to further associate his Richard with Lucifer (767).

As if he has told us all we might need to know about Richard, More goes on to suppose a connection between visage and personality: “He was close and secret...lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart; outwardly companable where he inwardly hated, not letting to kiss whom he thought to kill; dispitious and cruel, not for evil will alway, but ofter for ambition” (10-12). His outer appearance informs us of his cruelty and villainy, making the connection between appearance and inward character that is cemented in Shakespeare’s

depiction. It isn't clear which came first, the tales of Richard's outer appearance or the tales of his wickedness, but they are now forever forged into a chain of cause and effect. More's is, however, the first known account to describe Richard as "crook-backed," one which would widely be recognized as myth until it was confirmed by Richard's exhumation in 2012.

Another rumor of deformity is attributed to Richard himself, according to More. After he has taken the throne from the young Prince Edward, Richard accuses Queen Elizabeth and Jane Shore of cursing him with their witchcraft. More shows us the scene: "And therewith he plucked up his doublet sleeve to his elbow on his left arm, where he showed a wearish, withered arm and small (as it was never other)....And also no man was there present but well knew that his arm was ever such since birth" (More 55-56). More's implication here is that Richard is telling lies, and everyone knows it. He has been deformed since birth, and no number of accusations can change that. His body betrays him in its deformity, although he tries to use it to his advantage, and his lies are revealed through his physical shape. Any attempt by Richard to take back his own body and make it conform to his purposes is shifted, until it matches the purposes of everyone else.

In order to set Richard even farther apart from the general population, and especially the nobility, More gives an account of his birth as difficult and backwards:

It is for truth reported that the Duchess his mother had so much ado in her travail to birth him that she could not be delivered of him uncut, and he came into the world with the feet forward, as men be borne outward, and (as the story runs) also not untoothed. Either men of hatred reported the above for truth or

else nature changed her course in his beginning – in the course
of whose life many things were unnaturally committed. (More
10)

Even though he puts these tales into his book, More does acknowledge that they could be the plot of a resourceful, unkind enemy. He gives credence to the stories, however, when he suggests that “nature changed her course in his beginning—in the course of whose life many things were unnaturally committed” (10). Here again we see a connection between outer appearance and inner self, which goes back to nature herself creating him a monster for a reason. Nature knew, More seems to say, that Richard would be an evil man, so it proceeded to give him a body and birth that would match that. Indeed, it seems that Richard was never a baby, never something innocent that could be free of ire or guilt. He was always fully formed and made for his purpose.

In addition to these charges of physical deformity and visible evil, More goes on to detail the acts of Richard that can be seen as villainous. This is given as part of Richard’s nature, on which More comments freely. He says that Richard often killed or defamed “either for the surety or increase of his estate. Friend and foe was much the same; where his advantage grew, he spared no man death whose life withstood his purpose” (12). His ruthlessness knows no bounds, and he fails to show mercy to even the most innocent of souls. More paints a picture of a tyrant, a man who will stop at nothing to meet his own ends. Any relationship was just a farce; Richard would not hesitate to kill even his own brother, it seems. This certainly smacks of monstrosity. The description of Richard as a power-hungry man with no scruples shows him to have no compassion, no human quality that would redeem him in our eyes. The deeds of Richard are more damning evidence than the

deformity, although they seem to back each other up and give each other credence.

More begins with the charge that Richard killed Henry VI, “being prisoner in the Tower, as men constantly say, and that without commandment or knowledge of the king—which would undoubtedly, if he had intended that thing, have appointed that butcherly office to some other than his own born brother” (12). This portrays Richard as murderous without cause, suggesting that he went without orders from the king to kill an opponent for the York crown. There is no motive suggested for this slaying, only the aftermath that suggests Richard had slain a man considered a saint by many. Richard’s slaughter of the innocent is a recurring theme in the legend that grew up around the dead king.

The second heinous crime laid at Richard’s feet is the usurpation of the crown from his nephew Edward (later called Edward V). More suggests that this plotting began early, at the very latest shortly after Richard was granted the protectorate. Warnicke again points to the mystery plays, suggesting that this scene is reminiscent of Lucifer’s claim on God’s throne. Quoting from Jerome Taylor, she says that “Lucifer’s folly as he lays claim to the majesty and throne of God in the opening scenes of the [mysteries] is the figure and prototype of all subsequent earthly tyranny” (Warnicke 763). This link to the devil supposes that Richard is merely another incarnation of evil, an offshoot of the original tyrant. More shows Richard’s plotting, saying that Richard suggested “...that they should allege bastardy, either in King Edward himself, or in his children, or both, so that he should seem disabled to inherit the crown by the duke of York, and the prince by him” (More 69-70). This rumor displays Richard’s political mind and his ability to deal with threats in an initially nonviolent way. He is not without understanding of traditional ways of deposing leaders, and one would assume that this legal decree of illegitimacy would have secured the crown for Richard.

The third, most horrible crime attributed to Richard is the murder of his two young nephews, the Princes in the Tower. More addresses this in several parts, beginning with the accusation of bastardy and ending with the deed itself. Richard is said to have appointed Sir James Tyrell for the murders, who then chose the princes' keeper Miles Forest and another man, John Dighton, to commit the crime. More says that the princes were murdered in their beds, where Forest and Dighton

so bewrapped them and entangled them, keeping down by
force the featherbed and pillows hard unto their mouths, that
within a while, smothered and stifled, their breath failing, they
gave up to God their innocent souls into the joys of heaven,
leaving to the tormentors their bodies dead in the bed. (More
99)

This is a romanticized version of the deaths of two young boys, in which More juxtaposes their innocence with the corrupted devilry of their murderers. Even their burial is undignified, as the two men supposedly buried them at the foot of the stairs beneath a mound of stones (100).⁶ More suggests that Richard was unhappy with this arrangement, wanting instead to bury them in a finer place due to their father's position. Here, More comments "Lo, the honorable nature of a king!" which succinctly reveals his feelings about Richard III (100).

In another tie to the mystery plays, Warnicke sees Richard's abduction and subsequent killing of his nephews as further evidence of inspiration. She points to

⁶ In 1674, workmen in the Tower discovered a wooden box containing the bodies of two children. Found beneath the foot of the staircase in the White Tower, these were assumed to be the bodies of the two princes, partially because the location so closely matched More's account of the burial. After an initial examination of the bodies in 1933, no testing has been allowed on the bodies or other possibly-royal skeletons related to the

Buckingham's statement after the abduction, in which he calls Prince Edward a lamb and Richard a wolf. These, Warnicke says, are symbols of Christ and the devil in the mystery plays, and the murder suggests Christ's sacrifice (Warnicke 768). It is suggested in Warnicke's article that Richard's fear of his nephews reclaiming the throne is meant to "immediately recall [the actions] of Herod, who, for fear that Christ would grow up to seize his throne, ordered the slaughter of innocent Hebrew babes" (775). It is no coincidence that More refers to the princes as babes, even though they were adolescents at the time of their murder, and it appears that he wished to attribute inarguable innocence to the boys.

More includes in the same section, prefaced with "God never gave this world a more notable example...what wretched end ensues from such pitiless cruelty," the only description of Richard's death that he was able to include in this unfinished manuscript (101). After detailing the punishments of the three conspirators, More says "King Richard himself, as ye shall hereafter hear, slain in the field, hacked and hewed of his enemies' hands, harried on horseback dead, his hair in despite torn and tugged like a cur dog. And this mischief he received within less than three years of the mischief that he did" (101-102). This reference to a dog, Warnicke argues, is another allusion to the devil, as it was well known in England that "ancient legends told about how [the devil] metamorphasized into animals, especially the dog, wolf, and boar" (Warnicke 767). It was God's justice, then, that felled the last Plantagenet king on the battlefield of Bosworth, and Henry Tudor was the instrument of God's wrath. The monster Richard was vanquished, his body torn and disfigured, reduced to a canine state rather than basic human dignity.

“That dog had his teeth before his eyes”⁷: William Shakespeare

Perhaps the best-known representation of King Richard III comes from William Shakespeare, the Elizabethan playwright. Shakespeare’s history plays take tales of England’s kings and dramatize them for the general public, combining intrigue, power, and lust to create enduring portraits of real people. Richard III’s reputation could be said to have suffered most at the hands of Shakespeare, although the Bard took his rumors of Richard from sources such as Holinshed’s *Chronicles* and Thomas More’s *History*. The concept of Richard’s deformity being inseparable from his villainy can be traced back to Shakespeare’s sources, but this theory finds new traction in the play’s representation of Richard. The embodiment of treachery inhabits every scene, although any single reading of Shakespeare can be shown to be problematic. While Richard is clearly a deformed villain, the reader is invited to question the amount of control Richard exercises over his own form and morality. In his book *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III*, Philip Schwyzer says that “[for] most English people before Shakespeare’s play, mention of the body of Richard III would bring to mind not the image of a halting hunchback, but that of a naked corpse on a horse’s rump” (Schwyzer 20). Shakespeare’s play had the power to change the image of a king, from a pitiable creature to a malformed tyrant in search of power.

Shakespeare begins his play with a soliloquy given by Richard himself. The story begins similarly to that of Thomas More’s *History*, the classical-revival nature of which is mirrored in Richard’s opening lines. The country is seemingly in a time of peace within the back-and-forth of Edward IV’s reign, which Richard has helped to achieve:

Now is the winter of our discontent

⁷ (4.4.49)

Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures. (*Richard III*

1.1.1-8)

Richard here, with a mocking tinge, touts his brother Edward's rule as a coming of light and peace that banishes the cold unrest of previous years. By associating this victory solely with Edward, Richard acknowledges that he is not getting the credit he deserves, and his mockery of the king betrays just how bitter he is of the fact. The Yorks are victorious, and their weapons have been exchanged for delights of the flesh, which plagued the historical King Edward until his death. Their days are filled with celebrations and merriment, which are a sharp contrast to the formerly contentious times, but Richard is not able to share in this happiness. This was a false sense of peace, but Shakespeare uses it to highlight Richard's coming villainy. "Why, I in this weak piping time of peace have no delight to pass the time," Richard says, almost as an excuse for his planned ill behavior, claiming that he is more suited for war (1.1.25).

Edward IV is also introduced through Richard in the same soliloquy that mocks the peace that has settled over England. The brothers are put at odds from the outset, acting as physical and moral foils, with Richard defining their roles himself. "And if King Edward be as true and just/As I am subtle, false and treacherous," Richard says, he will easily be able to

pit the king against their third brother, George of Clarence (1.1.36-37). Edward's first bodily appearance in the play shows him in poor health but attempting to make further peace before he dies. After Richard enters, greeting Edward, Edward proclaims that the day truly is happy, for they have "[made] peace enmity, fair love of hate,/Between these swelling wrong-incensed peers" (2.1.51-52). The peace from the first scene is further reinforced, serving to underscore the true villainy in Richard's schemes. Although Edward has placed George in the Tower, it is Richard who plots his murder before the audience.

Shakespeare, like More, seems to create George as a hapless victim of prophecy and treachery. Although prophecy plays a large part in the play, it is never used to excuse Richard and his actions, and instead it is more inclined to comment on his future downfall or his evil heart. George enters the play after we already know Richard is planning to have him killed, and we see that he is suspected of plotting to murder King Edward's children. George tells Richard:

He hearkens after prophecies and dreams;
And from the cross-row plucks the letter G.
And says a wizard told him that by G
His issue disinherited should be;
And, for my name of George begins with G,
It follows in his thought that I am he. (1.1.54-59)

In an irony not lost on Richard, the letter G is later revealed to refer to Richard of Gloucester rather than George of Clarence. This unhappy mistake is the downfall of George, who is murdered while imprisoned in the Tower of London, on Richard's command. Shakespeare seems to neglect all of George's previous treasons, and indeed fails to mention any of them,

which would have been plenty of motive for Edward to put him in the Tower. Clarence's fate is relegated to prophecy and Richard's scheming. While More and other sources mention nothing of Richard being the one to murder George, Shakespeare seems to have thought it best to attribute all the evil deeds of the play to Richard rather than someone else. His murder spree, as well as the length of time in which it appears to have been committed, places him in the vein of a serial killer.

In the same opening scene, Shakespeare foregrounds his Richard, who steps onto the stage and tells the audience all the things that have been laid upon his body to be read like a text.

I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them; (1.1.18-23)

Given the mocking nature of the beginning of this soliloquy, it is difficult to decide whether Richard is truly describing his deformity, or if he is poking fun at what others have said of him. He does not seem to be a man affected by his appearance, as he does not hide himself away or make excuses for himself. It is, as he says, a fault of nature that he was born this way, and it seems here that he would have us believe he was born too early. It is an almost comical representation of disability, with a mental image of Richard slinking through the streets, causing dogs to bark and children to scream in terror, but it also inspires some sympathy. This could merely be a way for Richard to tell the audience what he wants it to

hear, and to give an excuse for his later horrifying behavior, but it could also be used to describe the lifetime of ridicule Richard has faced because of his deformity. He is almost pitiable in this scene, as if he is recounting things others have said to him, and he shows a remarkable amount of self-loathing. He seems to believe that he is not fit for court life and this merriment that has taken over an atmosphere of war and revenge on those who stole the Yorks' throne.

The Richard of Shakespeare is given several versions of his birth narrative which are contradictory, just as much of Richard's narrative is contradictory. The first is given by Richard himself, who claims that he was brought "Into this breathing world, scarce half made up," as if he was premature or unformed (1.1.23). This image is one of innocence, of a childlike quality, and Richard uses it to show that he is unfit for this world into which he has been forced. It becomes almost an excuse, a way to ignore or attribute his behavior to something that is less monstrous, less in his own control. Richard wants people to think he can't help being the way he is, and he takes control of the stories of his early life by spinning them his own way. In her article "Richard III's Baby Teeth," Bethany Packard argues that Shakespeare used his Richard to show the power that came with "reclaiming and reinterpreting the stories of his birth but also by embracing all of their contradictory manifestations" (Packard np). The suggestion that Richard is using his rhetorical prowess to provide a spin on his deformities and birth is evidence that Richard is aware of his physicality and knows how to use it to his advantage. Richard's malleability can be highlighted or hidden when it suits his purpose, which flouts the concept of a linked inner and outer self.

Richard's ability to use his body negatively is perhaps best displayed in the scene

beside the dying King Edward. Richard claims he is the perfect man to be the Protector of the realm and of Edward's children "Because I cannot flatter and look fair,/ Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,/ Duck with French nods and apish courtesy" (*Richard III* 1.3.47-50). Instead of being unprepared, Richard creates himself as an unassuming man with no ambitions, when inside he is already plotting to take the crown through the same method other characters have used to defame him: rumor. Katherine Williams suggests in her article "Enabling Richard" that "[in] direct opposition to his initial boast about his ability to dissemble, Richard claims that his body prevents him from mastering social graces" (Williams np). By placing the blame on his body, Richard displays the power of the rhetoric of his form, which is often used against him by other characters of the play. He is able to play into the expectations of the other characters by invoking or playing out the moral logic of his body when it suits his purposes.

Shakespeare's second version of Richard's birth is nearly the exact opposite, casting Richard as a baby long in the womb and more mature than he ought to have been. Richard's younger nephew, Richard of York, comments on this narrative to his grandmother: "Marry, they say my uncle grew so fast/ That he could gnaw a crust at two hours old/ 'Twas full two years ere I could get a tooth./ Grandam, this would have been a biting jest" (*Richard III* 2.4.27-30). This is more in line with Thomas More's version of Richard's birth, but the speculation and rumor that surround the narrative give Richard a monstrous quality. His boundaries are undefined, and he has no official story that marks his entrance into or purpose in the world. He is beyond the realm of the traditional, and he did not have the same start that every other person does. This is where Richard passes from the human monster into something else, almost as if he is a legend that is being spoken of quietly and in secret.

The mention of Richard's congenital teeth refers back to a scene in *3 Henry VI*, in which Richard is speaking with King Henry in the Tower. Henry accuses Richard of being born evil, with the owls and the dogs crying out at his birth in an ill portent. As if to further suggest his evil, Henry says, "Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born,/To signify thou camest to bite the world" (*3 Henry VI* 5.6.54-55). After stabbing Henry to death in the middle of his commentary on Richard's birth, Richard gives an impassioned monologue about the state of his birth:

For I have often heard my mother say
I came into the world with my legs forward:
Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste,
And seek their ruin that usurp'd our right?
The midwife wonder'd and the women cried
'O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!'
And so I was; which plainly signified
That I should snarl and bite and play the dog.
Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it. (5.6.71-80)

With this statement, Richard seems to be saying two things at once: that he was born to "play the dog" and that he will make his mind as crooked as his form, which implies that it was not originally created so. He is playing to those who believe that his body informs his soul, but Richard recognizes the distinction and plays upon it. This confusion further complicates the question of outer and inner morality, about which Richard himself seems to be conflicted. The connection between Richard and dogs is invoked throughout the plays. Philip Schwyzer

suggests that this comparison is the height of Othering: “The techniques of twenty-first century interrogators confirm that reduction of the human to dog-like status remains the very index of abjection” (37-38). Richard is dehumanized and reduced to an animal state, which would suggest that he has no control over his sinful impulses⁸, but his original purpose seems valiant, as he claims he wanted to “seek their ruin that usurp’d” his family’s rights to the throne. Interestingly, he invokes heaven when he discusses his body, implying that he is a work of God rather than the devil. He will, however, let the devil shape his mind so that he can better fit the form that he has been given.

Babies born with teeth have been the subject of lore and mystery since ancient times, according to Jeri Tanner in her article “The Teeth in Folklore.” She credits the idea that “[to] be born with teeth is to be born either a curse or a blessing to mankind” with the concept of Richard III’s natal teeth (Tanner 97). A Tudor assumption held that being born with teeth was a token of murder and tyranny to come, which helped shape Shakespeare’s Richard (98). Citing a 1298 birth record, Tanner also asserts that some medieval and early-modern people believed that natal teeth were a sign of demonic parentage, which would have been another strike against Richard (98). Though the rest of her article focuses on other sorts of tooth issues, such as aches and teething, Tanner displays the importance of teeth in early English and Western folklore.

The Richard of Shakespeare’s play emerges fully grown, coming onto the stage as a man in full possession of his power, almost in parallel with the stories of his having teeth and hair when he was born. He is never shown with a moment of innocence or loyalty. There is

⁸ The medieval and Renaissance construct “The Great Chain of Being” taught that there was a hierarchy among living things, beginning with inanimate objects like metals and stones; then trees and vegetation; then animals; then humans; and finally, angels, who were the link below God, who was the top of the chain. Humans were to aspire to rise in the chain, or to be more like the angels, but sin brought humans to the level of animals, which

no trace of a boy who admired his golden older brother; only a cynical view of King Edward IV as a man who “capers nimbly in a lady’s chamber/ To the lascivious pleasing of a lute” (*Richard III* 1.1.12-13). At the outset, we are presented with a man who is “rudely stamped” and “Cheated of feature by dissembling nature;” a man who plots evil deeds and villainous tricks (1.1.16,19). The audience is meant to understand how Shakespeare’s Richard feels about himself, or at the very least how he realizes others speak of him, and it is meant to act as a preparation for an amoral character committing amoral deeds. Bethany Packard suggests that Richard “presents his personality as both determined by the nature of his birth and made malleable by it. Richard describes himself as born ready to fight and to command” even though he also claims that he was unformed and ill-made (Packard np). This confusion is characteristic of both the history plays and the historiography written about Richard, both of which seem unable to settle on any single narrative and instead rely on rumor and hearsay.

Rumor and legend are used to great effect in *Richard III*, creating a sense of mystery and unease. The doubt that surrounds Richard, even when he is simply Duke of Gloucester, spreads even to his own family. The young York’s version of Richard’s birth is said to have come directly from Richard’s nurse, although she died long before York was born. The rumors, then, have no definite source, just as Richard himself has no beginning, and confusion abounds. Kai Wiengandt, in his book *Crowd and Rumour in Shakespeare*, suggests that “The dialogue [between York and the Duchess] illustrates that in the realm of rumour, origins are fictions. Nevertheless, the legend about Richard’s teeth—a bogie rumour that has fossilized—begins the fashioning of Richard as a wolf-man attracting collective hatred” (Wiengandt 139). At the same time his nephew York is repeating the rumor of Richard’s birth, the Duchess of York is expressing her fears that he is treacherous. When told that

did not have souls and could not aspire (E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*).

Richard is indeed gracious, the Duchess replies, “I hope he is, but yet let mothers doubt” (*Richard III* 2.4.22). It is generally the mother figure who has the most faith in her children, but even Richard’s own mother is doubting his character.

Richard’s treachery extends beyond the scope of his first soliloquy, in which he tells the audience that he intends to cause chaos and be the ruin of his brother Clarence. At times, Richard seems as if he merely wants trouble for trouble’s sake, as if a life of peace bores him. This unfounded warmongering is one way in which Richard plays out the morals his deformed body sets for him, although it is unclear whether he is doing it intentionally or because of his deformity. Another possibility within the scope of the drama is that Richard is a version of a medieval Vice character, who symbolized all of the vices in morality plays of the sixteenth century.⁹ He himself says that he is like Vice, after he has hinted that he will kill Prince Edward: “Thus like the formal Vice, Iniquity,/I moralize two meanings in one word” (3.1.82-83). Richard’s ability to confound meaning is further shown in his interactions with York, Prince Edward’s younger brother. After being asked to give York his dagger, Richard says, “My dagger, little cousin? With all my heart” (3.1.111). He certainly intends to give York his dagger, but not as a gift—he intends to kill him with it. York is just as adept at crosstalk, dangerously intelligent and wise for a young boy. He is almost a match for Richard, who is the master of dissembling, but York can beg a child’s ignorance, while Richard cannot.

Richard believes that the boys are the product of their mother only, which would mean that their loyalties lie not with the Yorks, but the Woodvilles, having been raised by her

⁹ See “The Origin of the Figure Called ‘The Vice’ in Tudor Drama” by Frances Hugh Mares. Vice was a comic character in the medieval morality and mystery plays, which was often intended to represent all the vices or sins. “He is not subject to the limitations of other characters, and seems often to be outside the moral law” (Mares 14). Often a Vice character would go by a specific name, such as avarice or iniquity.

family in their years away from court. Commenting on York's behavior to Lord Buckingham, his co-conspirator, Richard says, "O, 'tis a parlous boy,/Bold quick, ingenious, forward, capable./He is all the mother's, from the top to toe" (3.1.153-155). The shrewdness with which York answered his uncle Richard shows almost a reversal of roles, in which Richard is the child and York is the man. This banter is another way for Richard to attempt to conceal his villainy, but York is the only one to see through Richard to his evil heart. Although Richard needs to put aside the princes to attain the throne, another reason he later puts them under guard in the Tower may be because they are able to see the real Richard.

Shakespeare addresses the conspiracy of the Princes in the Tower and the *Titulus Regis*¹⁰, the Act of Parliament which named Edward IV's children bastards and Richard king, in much the same way More did. Richard tells the Duke of Buckingham to spread tales of the illegitimacy of both Edward IV and his children while the princes are being held in the Tower:

Tell them, when that my mother went with child
Of that insatiate Edward, noble York,
My princely father, then had wars in France,
And by true computation of the time
Found that the issue was not his begot—
Which well appeared in his lineaments,
Being nothing like the noble Duke my father.

¹⁰ The *Titulus Regis* was a 1484 Act of Parliament that proclaimed Richard's rights to the throne. It declared that Edward IV's children by Elizabeth Woodville were illegitimate due to a precontract he had with Lady Eleanor Butler. Because George of Clarence was attainted and executed for treason, his children forfeited their right to the throne, so Richard was next in line. The Act was overturned by Henry VII in 1485 to restore his wife, Elizabeth of York, to legitimacy. All copies of the Act were removed from record and destroyed, but a copy survived and was found in the Tower nearly a century later (Richard III Society).

Yet touch this sparingly, as 'twere far off,

Because, my lord, you know my mother lives. (3.5.84-92)

It would almost seem that Richard seeks to spare his mother from such ruin, but it could also be an attempt to save face. A man who disparages his own mother is sure to be looked upon unkindly, so Richard is likely attempting to make himself look as discreet and pious as possible while insinuating these underhanded deeds. Indeed, it is only when Richard is in company that he shows any sort of compassion for others; when he soliloquizes to the audience, he speaks rashly and harshly, referring to the children of his brother Clarence as “brats” and refusing to let anyone see the princes (3.5.102). Richard is just as adept at utilizing rumor and deceit as those around him, which would seemingly make him more politician than monster. This also displays his ability to change and act the part he needs to play in any given moment. In combination with his body, however, Richard’s cunning mind and deception become unnatural and evil.

After the successful spread of rumors, to which the public reacts with ominous silence, Richard is called before a group of lords to be offered the kingship. He styles himself as a pious man at prayer, tasking Buckingham with portraying him as such.

Not sleeping to engross his idle body,

But praying to enrich his watchful soul.

Happy were England would this virtuous prince

Take on his grace the sovereignty thereof.

But, sure I fear, we shall not win him to it. (3.7.76-80)

Richard again finds himself contrasted with Edward, but these differences are shown in a good light rather than finding Richard lacking. Although it is a false piety, Richard shows

himself to be the opposite of the lascivious Edward, who has just been rumored to be the bastard father of bastard children. This is Richard using his body in a way that highlights his inability to flirt and carouse, instead making himself a servant of God and England.

Going even further to cast his treachery in a kinder light, Richard ensures that the nobility requesting him to become king acknowledge that he is unworthy: “Alas, why would you heap this care on me?/I am unfit for state and majesty./I do beseech you, take it not amiss” (3.7.194-196). Richard refuses the crown multiple times, at the urging of Lord Buckingham, who pleads with Richard at his own request. Because Richard is so seemingly unwilling, the other lords are forced to beg and chase after him, resulting in the unique position of Richard not being the one to suggest his own crowning. He tells them, after he finally concedes, that they must defend him if any slander is brought against his reign:

But if black scandal or foul-faced reproach
Attend the sequel of your imposition,
Your mere enforcement shall acquittance me
From all the impure blots and stains thereof;
For God doth know, and you may partly see,
How far I am from the desire of this. (3.7.221-226)

This plot deceives the lords of Parliament, but Richard does not succeed in tricking his own mother and Queen Elizabeth, who are invested in crowning Prince Edward.

After it is revealed that Richard has been named king in place of Prince Edward, the Duchess of York is quick to lament her motherly status. “O my accursed womb, the bed of death!/A cockatrice hast thou hatched to the world,/Whose unvoiced eye is murderous,” she says, in the presence of Queen Elizabeth and Lady Anne, Richard’s wife (4.1.53-55). She at

once blames herself for Richard's evil and curses her own reproductive system for birthing him. From the beginning of the play, Richard has been characterized as being wholly different from his brothers, a fact which his mother now highlights and complains about. It is not insignificant that Richard was the final living child of the Duchess of York, who must see him as a curse upon the rest of her line. The women surrounding Richard, according to Katherine Williams, "insist that he is monstrous, a term that recalls a range of early modern English anxieties: the monster as portent of divine wrath, as symbol of political upheaval..." (Williams np). Their opinion of Richard's body is entirely different from Richard's, as he constantly changes and "his form remains unclear until Richard highlights his shape—positively or negatively—for his rhetoric for specific purposes" (np).

The play seems to want to blacken Richard's name as fully as possible, creating him a monster in as many ways as can be thought of. As if determined to become unredeemable, Richard decides to add the sin of incest to his long list, racking up more crimes for which he will later be condemned. He feels insecure in his kingship and decides that he must murder the princes. His coronation has gone smoothly, although the public does not seem to adore him as they ought to do. To commit the deed, Richard enlists James Tyrrell, who takes the position of assassin after Buckingham shies at the prospect of murdering children. While planning to murder the princes, Richard gives an aside to the audience.

I must be married to my brother's daughter,
Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.
Murder her brothers, and then marry her?
Uncertain way of gain, but I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin.

Tear-filling pity dwells not in this eye. (*Richard III* 4.2.62-67)

After condemning his entire family, Richard decides that he needs the disgraced princess to hold the Yorks close to himself. He is aware of how much he has alienated himself through his sin, which he believes “will pluck on sin” and lead him on this new course. This plot is carried out after the murder of her brothers, which is described in romantic language similar to that employed by More.

Shakespeare recounts the murders of the two young princes in terms of innocence being slaughtered. James Tyrrell, the man who had the murders carried out, soliloquizes about the boys’ deaths: “Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,/And in their summer beauty kissed each other./A book of prayers on their pillow lay” (4.3.12-14). The princes’ beauty and perfection are put in contrast with Richard and his deeds, which are black and evil and falsely associated with God. Tyrrell also calls the murders the “tyrannous and bloody act” which was “the most arch deed of piteous massacre” that ever occurred in England (4.3.1-2). Richard is no longer just a villain or a tyrant, he is the most evil man who has ever lived in England, and he is called so before the play is even over.

After the murders are done and he has been informed of the events, Richard seeks the princess’s hand through her mother, Queen Elizabeth, who parries and attacks him for nearly two hundred lines. At the end of their back-and-forth, Elizabeth accuses Richard a final time of ending her line: “Yet thou didst kill my children” (4.4.353). He replies with, “But in your daughter’s womb I bury them,/Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed/Selves of themselves, to your recomfiture” (4.4.354-356). Philip Schwyzer considers this a confirmation of Richard’s title: “Richard speaks as if, in killing the princes, he has also in some sense summoned them, assimilating them into his own dynastic person. As far as the

body politic¹¹ of Edward V is concerned, this is arguably true enough; in terms of legal theory, the body that was Edward's is now Richard's" (Schwyzer 53). While this statement is obviously something that should not be said to a grieving mother, it can also be seen as Richard's own attempts to convince himself that he is now secure in his throne. His will be the line of succession, not Edward's, and his claim will be strengthened with the marriage to Elizabeth of York.

Richard becomes a monster from the beginning of his life when his mother comes out against him, and this draws his evil lineage back to his life in the womb. Just a few scenes after he convinces Elizabeth to give him her daughter, in a reaction to Richard's crimes, the Duchess of York condemns her relationship with Richard, which has always caused her strife:

Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
Thy school days frightful, desp'rate, wild, and furious;
Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous'
Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody'
More mild, but yet more harmful; kind in hatred.
What comfortable hour canst thou name
That ever graced me in thy company? (*Richard III*)

¹¹ According to Schwyzer, there was a "legal doctrine that a reigning monarch possessed two bodies, the undying 'body politic' and the mortal 'body natural.' Following the burial, where the late king's servitors signified the end of their loyalty by breaking their staves and casting them into the open grave, the body politic was supposed to pass to the successor, while the body natural moldered in the ground" (Schwyzer 18). This technically did not make Richard the king until Edward V was dead, which would have been a possible motive for him to make the princes' deaths known.

4.4.167-175)

The Duchess describes Richard as being terrible from the start, as if he was born into the world as an evil child. He became tempered as he grew older, but she states that his evil found a new, more frightening way of showing itself. Instead of exhibiting his devilry, Richard hides it, and his mother recognizes his villainy. This effectively separates her and the rest of the Yorks from Richard, and she publicly proclaims her hatred of him. She is not aligned with him, but rather desires to throw in her lot with his opponent, Henry Tudor. The murders of the young princes were the last straws in Richard's precarious bid for the crown, which alienates him from his family and allegiances. The duchess curses him before her exit, wishing him a bloody end that will match his bloody deeds.

The only character who assigns any blame to the Duchess in regards to Richard's behavior and existence is Queen Margaret, the wife of King Henry VI, who appears after the deaths of the princes:

From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death:
That dog had his teeth before his eyes,
To worry the lambs and lap their gentle blood;
That foul defacer of God's handiwork,
That reigns in galled eyes of weeping souls;
That excellent grand tyrant of the earth
Thy womb let loose to chase us to our graves.
O upright, just, and true-disposing God,
How do I thank thee that this charnel cur

Preys on the issue of his mother's body,

And makes her pewfellow with others' moan. (4.4.47-58)

From Queen Margaret, the bearer of prophecy and curses, this is easily dismissed as the revenge of one wronged mother on another. However, it is Richard who brought most of the ruin down upon Margaret's head, as he murdered both her husband and her son in what seems to be the space of a few days. Margaret appears to suggest that it is fitting that Duchess Cecily, who bore Richard into this world, now also feels the sting of Richard's villainy. He began by murdering enemies, but he has begun to commit the sin of fratricide, killing members of his own family. This unnatural shift is connected by Margaret to the Duchess of York, who began the cycle and birthed the hell-hound, who must now be struck down by the glorious Henry Tudor. The dog imagery foregrounds itself once again, comparing Richard to something less than human and suggesting that Richard knew how to kill before he was able to discern friend from foe ("had his teeth before his eyes"). He goes against God in his villainy, destroying everything God has built, and this conjures comparisons to the devil.

The bitter end that Richard meets in Shakespeare's play is similar to that of Thomas More's *History*, which has Richard dragged from his horse and humiliated after death. This similarity suggests that More was an influential source on Shakespeare's play, and perhaps also corroborates this version of Richard's death. Before the Battle of Bosworth, where Richard is to face Henry on the field of battle, Henry is visited by the ghosts of those whom Richard has murdered throughout the play. These ghosts praise Henry and bless him, wishing him luck and fortune on the battlefield. This is a poor omen for Richard, who only receives curses and condemnations from the ghosts. Henry Tudor gives an impassioned battlefield

speech railing against Richard, asking his troops to fight hard and bravely to save England from the clutches of a usurper:

Truly, friends,
A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
One raised in blood, and one in blood established;
One that made means to come by what he hath,
And slaughtered those that were the means to help him;
A base, foul stone, made precious by the foil
Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;
One that hath ever been God's enemy. (5.5.199-206)

Richard is described as both base and foul, which can comment just as easily on his mind as his body. If the two are linked, then Richard is not fit for the throne of England because he is deformed, both in body and soul. Henry is an able-bodied, brave, valiant Englishman who has come to reclaim the throne for those who have rights to it. Richard's throne was won by blood, but so too will Henry's. This could suggest a doubt being cast on Henry's reign, because his rise was not so different than Richard's, in that he killed the current king to place himself upon the throne.

Richard's last line of the play is cowardly, showing his true colors as he calls for an escape: "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (5.7.13). Betrayed by everyone he thought to be on his side, Shakespeare's Richard seeks any method of removing himself from a battle he feels is cursed. He believes he has seen six of Henry on the battlefield that day and has struck five of them down himself, but he has not managed to kill the real Henry Tudor. This battle ends with Richard's death, but the audience does not see his body defiled. Instead,

the play ends on a note that exalts the Tudors and condemns the tyranny of Richard's reign.

Shakespeare ends his play with the implication that God's champion has won out, which further casts Richard as a blight and an ungodly king who must be destroyed for England to prosper. *Richard III* ends with a monologue by the newly crowned King Henry, who announces the end of war: "We will unite the white rose and the red./ Smile, heaven, upon this fair conjunction,/ That long have frowned upon their enmity" (5.8.19-21). Instead of Richard, Henry will marry Elizabeth of York and unite the houses of York and Lancaster forever. He goes on to describe the horrors of war and the glory of peace, which will surely follow his victory. In his final lines, he prays that God will bless his heirs. "Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,/ With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days./ Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,/ That would reduce these bloody days again" asks Henry, warning the audience of the consequences of ending the reign of peace and plenty that follows the ascension of the Tudors (5.8.33-36). As in Thomas More's account, the monstrous Richard is defeated and England is made safe. The strife and turmoil that existed in England during the Wars of the Roses have died with Richard, creating in him a metaphor for the last days of civil war in the country. This places deformity and disfigurement at the heart of conflict, and uses monstrosity to justify the reign of a new monarch who is able-bodied and chosen by God.

“Too grotesque, and too grossly opposed to his character”: Clements Markham

The first biography of King Richard III to openly accuse Henry VII of tampering with Richard's reputation was written by Sir Clements R. Markham in 1906. *Richard III: His Life and Character* was, according to Markham in his preface, written after years of study because the “caricature of the last Plantagenet King was too grotesque, and too grossly opposed to his character derived from official records” (Markham v). The book is set up in two sections: biography and the addressing of rumors. Markham completely refutes each account from various early-modern sources, including John Rous, Polydore Virgil, and Cardinal Morton, who he claims to be the true author of Thomas More's *History*.¹² This work comes after the discovery of the bodies of two young boys purported to be the York Princes at the foot of the White Tower in the Tower of London, which occurred during the reign of Charles II.

A review of Markham's book by N.M. Trenholme is critical of the approach of the author, whom Trenholme accuses of being “partizan throughout, exalting the conduct and character of the Yorkists and debasing the Lancastrians” (Trenholme 134). The book is presented in the form of a trial, going so far as to call one of the chapters “Henry Tudor in the Dock,” and this is another point of contention for Trenholme. The judge and trial, he says, are not fair and balanced, which undermines each of the claims Markham puts before his readers. Trenholme's most important point is that “Markham does not bring forward new evidence of any great value and yet he acquits Richard of all crime or baseness” (135).

Although he presents an exact opposite opinion of Richard from most of those entered into

¹² More's main source for his *History* is considered to be Cardinal Morton, with whom he lived for a period during his youth. Certain events referred to in More's work have been dated to around or after 1513, more than

historical record, Markham has the benefit of years of advances in science and psychology, which would have certainly influenced his reading of Richard. These changes may be the reason Markham approaches his defense so enthusiastically, which Trenholme seems to dismiss as zealotry.

In his article “The Character of Richard III,” A.R. Myers tends to agree with Trenholme’s assessment of Markham’s work: “With the vehemence and forensic skill of a defending counsel, he argued that all the evidence against Richard is tainted, either because it was written by those who hated him or because it was composed to please the Tudors, whose interest it was to besmirch his character” (Myers np). Myers, like Trenholme, recognized that Markham “was fond of using a ‘must have been’ to resolve the doubt in Richard’s favour” (np). Unlike the early reviewer of Markham’s work, however, Myers does point out that Markham did have some ground to stand on with his case. There was very little contemporary evidence for Richard’s character, and most of what was available was positive or, at the very least, neutral. Myers suggests that Richard—and Markham’s villain Henry Tudor—is “more satisfactorily explained, not as a complete villain, but as a complex character” (np). This suggests a degree of humanity in both men that has been absent from most portrayals, including Markham’s.

Markham’s work opens with a brief history of the time before Edward IV’s reign, beginning with Richard’s birth at Fotheringhay. Richard was one of four boys to survive infancy, but his oldest brother Edmund died with their father at Pomfret, leaving only three York boys to band together. After his victory at Towton in 1461, Edward was eager to complete his coronation. Here, Markham takes time to share the offices and titles given to the other York brothers: “Immediate after the coronation, George was created Duke of Clarence;

a decade after Morton’s death in 1500 (More xxii, xxv).

and Richard Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Carlisle, and Earl of Richmond, a title which had merged in the crown after the attainder of Edmund Tudor. Richard was created a Knight of the Garter in 1465” (Markham 38). This deluge of honors seems to have fallen mostly on Richard, leaving George without the same favor. Edward must have thought highly of Richard, who was only eight at the time of Edward’s accession.

When it came time to bury their father in a manner befitting his station, Edward chose Richard to honor him: “...the Duke of Gloucester, then in his fourteenth year, was appointed by the King to be chief mourner” (39). Whether in an attempt to honor the brother who knew their father least, or in a vote of confidence for Richard’s future, Edward clearly laid a great honor on his brother’s shoulders. He later sent Richard to the home of the Earl of Warwick, who helped Edward win the crown and was his closest confidant. Richard trained as a knight with his cousin Warwick, who was the nephew of the Duchess of York, Richard’s mother. It was here that “he was the playfellow of his cousin Anne Nevill, and an attachment was probably then formed between them, which was destined to bear fruit in after years” (40).

Bearing in mind that Markham lived three centuries after most of the histories of Richard had been written, it can be assumed that he is here laying the groundwork to refute rumors that cropped up later in Richard’s life. Markham emphasizes the titles given to Richard by his brother Edward, and he also gives a probable reason for Richard’s marriage to Anne, which many of the earlier sources found suspect. This trend can be seen throughout most of the biography section of the book, but Markham does raise pertinent questions about the validity of comments made in earlier centuries.

Markham’s description of Richard is similar to others that came before his, but it varies at several important junctures. He says that “Richard was short in stature, with a

delicate fragile frame, the right shoulder being slightly higher than the left. But he had been inured to warlike exercises, and was fond of hunting and all manly sports. He had light brown hair and a very handsome face, full of energy and decision, yet with a gentle and even melancholy expression” (40). He declines to comment on any sort of deformity, attributing his description to a portrait at Windsor Castle. His reading of Richard’s features would have the benefit of three centuries of changes in fashion and perceptions of beauty, but Markham does give a more sympathetic view of Richard.

This sympathy continues in Markham’s admiration for Richard’s loyalty, which was displayed when the Earl of Warwick attempted to overthrow King Edward after he fell outside his control. The fault, from Markham’s perspective, lay with Edward’s sympathies toward the Woodvilles, his wife’s family. This affinity led to a rebellion conjured up by Warwick and Margaret of Anjou, King Henry VI’s deposed queen. Markham claims that “Warwick had used all his arts of persuasion to induce the younger brothers of the King to be false to their allegiance. With Clarence he succeeded; but Richard never wavered for a moment. His loyalty to his brother was not to be shaken” (41). Richard is here portrayed as the stalwart supporter of his older brother, while George is the villain. This is a definite departure from early-modern portrayals of George, whom Thomas More and Shakespeare both cast in the role of victim.

Markham goes on to briefly describe the insurrection in King Henry’s name, including Edward’s short exile in Holland. Richard shared his journey and his grief, staying by Edward’s side throughout the miserable affair. The eventual reunion of the York brothers is here attributed to Richard: “The negotiations between King Edward and Clarence were conducted throughout by their younger brother Richard, and to him is due the credit of the

reconciliation which took place. He thus restored one brother to his throne, and reclaimed the other from dishonour” (48). George returned just in time, giving Edward’s forces the advantage in the upcoming Battle of Barnet.

Richard’s mediatory abilities were not the only useful tactics in his arsenal. Edward trusted him with important commands throughout their war of reclamation. At Barnet, “...young Richard Duke of Gloucester, who was only eighteen, had charge of the right wing” and led a fierce attack of Warwick’s left wing (49). Warwick himself fell in the battle, and Richard lost his early mentor. This battle prowess would follow Richard throughout his life, earning him titles such as Lieutenant-General of the North and Warden of the Marches in 1480 and Commander of the Scottish Invasion in 1482.

One of the crimes laid at Richard’s feet by earlier historiographers was the murder of Prince Edward of Lancaster. Markham addresses this with a battlefield account of the Battle of Tewkesbury, where the prince fell at the age of seventeen. This final insurrection in King Henry’s name was the last contest of Edward’s reign, and Markham speaks of the Lancastrian forces reverently.

The brave young Prince, who led the main battle of the
Lancastrians, bore himself valiantly, and played the man
before his people in that supreme moment of his life. Of that
we need have no doubt. Borne away in the rout, and followed
closely by the victorious enemy, he was slain between
Gastons and Tewkesbury. (75)

The scene is only described from a picture done by an eyewitness. The prince is killed from behind by a blow that strikes off his helmet. No mention is made of Richard’s whereabouts,

nor are any of the other major players in the York army given mention.

Prince Edward of Lancaster was betrothed to Anne Neville at the time of his death, and George of Clarence was married to Anne's sister Isabella. Because of this family connection, George was given Anne's wardship when she was brought back to London after Tewkesbury. Markham says, "The Duke of Clarence was grasping and selfish. He had no stability of character, was vacillating, and easily influenced by bad advisers. It is not clear how his sister-in-law escaped from his clutches; but his object was to prevent her from marrying and to seize her share of her parents' property, as well as that of his wife" (81). The Neville girls were the wealthiest heirs in the country at the time, and George stood to inherit a large chunk of land and money from Isabella alone. Markham questions his character and again casts him as the villain, setting up Richard as Anne's savior.

The year after her betrothed's death, Anne Neville became the wife of Richard of Gloucester. Markham, unlike many earlier sources, claims that Richard sought and received the king's permission before marrying Anne. After the marriage was approved, the inheritance of the Warwick girls was split between Richard and George, with Middleham Castle going to Richard and Anne. Markham attaches special, nostalgic significance to Middleham: "Here [Richard] had passed his early youth, had formed his most enduring friendships, and had first seen his cousin Anne" (82). It is also at Middleham, in their ten years of residence, that Richard and Anne gained the support and love of Yorkshire and the north, which would aid Richard in his final years.

While in the north, Richard exhibited his administrative abilities. In listing some of his accomplishments, Markham comments that, "By his skill and energy, he subdued part of the western border of Scotland for an extent of more than thirty miles, bringing portions

under obedience to the King of England...His administration was so able that it was remembered long after as a very model of efficiency” (85). Richard, it appears, was a capable leader and well-liked administrator, and he also spent time and money building churches at several castles in the north. There is nothing in Markham’s biography to suggest that Richard was interested in any business other than that of the north, of which Edward seemed to give him full reign.

Richard’s time in the north came to an end with Edward IV’s death in 1482. According to Markham, the Woodvilles had been seizing power through their influence with Edward, and their presence caused chaos. Upon his death, it is said that “King Edward IV left the care of his son’s person and the government of the kingdom during the minority to his brother Richard, without any colleague. Richard Duke of Gloucester was a prince who had shown valour and generalship in the field, wisdom and ability in his civil administration” (89). Markham notes that it is Edward’s implicit trust of Richard that caused him to leave the kingdom to his brother. The Woodvilles, on the other hand, attempted to overturn the wishes of the king and oust the Duke of Gloucester from power.

The events that followed this announcement of the new Protector are the main concern of the second half of Markham’s book. He insists that the revelation of illegitimacy had every merit, and that Richard was determined to take care of his nephews despite their status as bastards. Markham also takes issue with the notion that the boys were trapped in the Tower after Richard became king:

The allegation that they never left the Tower is derived from the insinuations of very unscrupulous enemies. It is much more likely that they resided in the royal household, and were the

companions of the King's other nephew, the Earl of Warwick;
at least until it became necessary to place them in safe keeping
on the invasion of the realm by Henry Tudor. (125)

Markham cites the instructions for Richard's household as his proof of multiple children residing in the royal residence. A note in the instructions says that the children are to be together at one breakfast, which Markham takes to mean children of high rank. This note is made after the death of Richard's own son, Edward, the previous April.

Markham deals with Richard's coronation in true Yorkist fashion. He claims that "[never] was accession received with such unanimous consent by all ranks of the people. The attendance of a Woodville bishop and a Grey viscount gave grounds for the hope that even faction was at an end. On scarcely any other occasion was the aristocracy of England so fully represented" (126). Again, Markham's evidence seems to be the love the people bore Richard, and the fact that his nephew the Earl of Warwick was present at the coronation.

After two short years on the throne, Richard was deposed by Henry Tudor, later Henry VII. He fought bravely, riding with his vanguard onto the field of battle, and died in a similar manner. It is what happened after death that Markham takes issue with, saying "[shameful] indignities are said to have been perpetrated on the lifeless body of King Richard. They could have been prevented by a word from Henry, but that word was not spoken" (158). Richard was buried at the church of St. Mary, which belonged to the Grey Friars of Leicester. His tomb, and the church, were lost centuries before Markham took up Richard's cause.

In the conclusion of the book's biographical section, Markham gives one last summary of Richard's character: "Richard was most agreeable and ingratiating in his

manners, and where he was best known he was most liked. He formed friendships which endured the test of time. Those who knew and loved him in boyhood fought by his side on the fatal field at Bosworth” (164). This is a very different picture from the Richard of Thomas More and Shakespeare, the Richard who made false friendships and was just as apt to kiss as kill. For Markham, Richard is the victim of slander by the historians of a rival house. Henry Tudor, according to Markham, “had no valid title to the crown. It was not only the new king’s interest, but a necessity of his position, that he should cause grave charges to be brought against his predecessor, and that they should be accepted as true....Evidence in favour of Richard was destroyed” (167).

As his first major point of contention in the section focused on rumor, Markham takes issue with the idea of Richard’s supposed deformities. He cites Cardinal Morton (who he insists is responsible for Thomas More’s biography) as the creator of most of these myths, which he lists before beginning his argument: “It is stated that he has two years in his mother’s womb, that he was born feet foremost, with a complete set of teeth, and with hair down to the shoulders, that he was hump-backed, that his right shoulder was higher than his left, that his left shoulder was much higher than his right, and that one of his arms was withered” (185). These are the deformities that would be familiar to Shakespeare’s audience, or the viewers of the surviving portraits of Richard, which were doctored some time after they were painted. These are also the basis for the argument of body-soul connection and the outer self acting as a mirror for the inner self.

Markham begins by defending the charge of Richard’s back, saying that the other rumors cast enough doubt on their own. Again, he blames Morton, saying that “[w]e do not find this deformity mentioned by any contemporary except Morton. If it had existed it is

certain that so conspicuous a blemish would have been dwelt upon by all contemporary detractors” (185). The lack of earlier evidence, then, is all Markham needs to disbelieve this rumor. The same can be said about the suggestion of Richard’s uneven shoulders, which Markham attributes to Morton, Polydore Virgil, and John Rous. That Fabian and the Croyland monk, two contemporaries of Richard, mentioned nothing about this deformity makes the charges unfounded (186).

Markham goes on to provide knowledge of a semi-firsthand account, which was told to the seventeenth century writer George Buck: “Stow, the most honest of the later chroniclers, told Sir George Buck that he had talked to old men who had seen and known Richard, and who said that he was in bodily shape comely enough. In the two portraits drawn by Rous no inequality is visible” (185). In fact, Markham also cites an incident which occurred in York, where a man accused another of slandering Richard with the phrase “crouchback” (186). Richard was still so well thought-of in the north that this insult was answered with a beating.

The defense of Richard’s sword arm is possibly Markham’s best-laid argument concerning the deformities. Clearly having no love for Cardinal Morton, Markham again blames him for the rumor of Richard’s withered arm, which is also portrayed in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. In a concise statement, Markham says

The story of the withered arm comes from Morton. That astute prelate always had an object in making his statements. This particular tale was invented to draw off attention from the real charge made by the Protector against the Woodvilles. It served its turn, and may be dismissed as false without any hesitation.

For it is not mentioned by a single other authority. The victor of Barnet and Tewkesbury, the leader of the brilliant charge at Bosworth, who unhorsed Sir John Cheney and William Brandon, must have had serviceable arms. (186-187)

It should be noted that the Woodvilles were the relatives of Henry Tudor's new queen, Elizabeth of York. Although her family was much hated during Edward IV's reign, it would have been in the interest of Tudor historians to cast them in a friendly light. Markham does make a good point in reminding his readers of Richard's military prowess, both before and after the supposed withering of his arm. As his brother Edward's most trusted general, Richard must have been an excellent swordsman, and his training with Lord Warwick at Middleham in his early years would have prepared him for battle.

Markham sums up the reasoning behind all this commentary on Richard's appearance by blaming the Tudor propaganda machine: "The object of the Tudor historians in commencing their grotesque caricature of an imaginary monster with these stories of his personal deformity is transparent. They intended to make him detestable from the outset. They calculated that improbable crimes would be more readily believed if the alleged perpetrator was a deformed hunchback born with teeth" (187). Richard had to be sold to the public as a monster; otherwise, Henry Tudor would be just another usurper in a line of usurpers.

While the Tudor historians were extreme on one end the argument, Markham seems determined to discredit each and every one of their charges against Richard. Moving on from the rumors of deformity, Markham goes on to attack Richard's supposed assassination of King Henry VI and his son Prince Edward of Lancaster. Prince Edward's murder at

Tewkesbury was first suggested by Fabyan, but it received its famous treatment from Polydore Virgil. Markham dismisses Virgil as a protégé of Pope Alexander VI, the Borgia pope so renowned for his vicious deeds (190). The story thus became one of King Edward allowing his brothers, Clarence and Gloucester, and a number of other attendants to murder the prince. Holinshed, says Markham, is the one who adds Richard as the first to strike. Here, Markham says, “we have a striking example of the gradual growth of a legend which has eventually become embedded in history. Its original conception was due to an Italian, not to an English brain” (190).

Next, the murder of King Henry VI comes under Markham’s scrutiny, a crime which he again attributes to the Tudor historians. It was said that Richard went behind Edward’s back and murdered King Henry in his bed at the Tower, striking him down with a sword as he slept. Markham argues that “[t]his grossly improbable rumour bears the evidence of its origin clearly marked. It was put forward in the reign and in the interest of Henry VII. It was a rumour manufactured by his paid writers and their followers” (193). That an eighteen-year-old Richard was able to sneak into the Tower and bypass more than a dozen men on his way to the room, Markham believes, doesn’t follow. He also claims that contemporary accounts of the deed do not suspect Richard in any way. The Croyland monk, who wrote of Henry’s death, only mentioned that the king’s body was found lifeless in the tower, and the monk juxtaposes Henry’s “martyr” with the murderer’s “tyrant” (195). Markham believes that this alludes to King Edward, and that the language used in the chronicle points to the account being written during Edward’s lifetime. No suspicion, then, is cast upon Richard until the Tudor historians began their smear campaign.

One rumor, which is most memorable from Shakespeare’s dramatization, is that

Richard coerced Anne Neville into marriage. This is made most vile by her supposed marriage to Edward of Lancaster, whom Richard is said to have killed. Markham has an easy response to this charge: “The answers to this are that Edward was not her husband, that Richard did not murder him, and that Richard did not force Anne’s inclinations. No marriage between Edward and Anne ever took place” (200). He also refers back to his biographical section, in which he claims that Richard’s and Anne’s marriage was a love match, and that Anne was Richard’s constant companion throughout their lives together. Shakespeare also blames Anne’s death on Richard, who then wanted to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York. This came directly after Anne’s passing, which Markham believes weighed heavily on Richard, who had also recently lost his only son. Markham’s response to this rumor, too, is simple: “As soon as it came to Richard’s ears, he gave it formal and public contradiction” (140).

The final, most important contradiction Markham seeks to make is that Richard did not murder his nephews, the Princes in the Tower. He devotes an entire chapter to the subject, which makes only a small attempt to be impartial, and subheads it “Acquittal.” Markham believes that this accusation of murder rests upon the idea that Richard had committed all of the acts described above. The murder of the princes was a scandal that hung over Richard’s reign, but it would also cast a pall over Henry Tudor’s succession. This, then, was the reason that the Tudor historians took up the story and blamed it on Richard, “for it was a matter of the most vital importance to Henry VII, not only that the boys should have been murdered, but that it should be believed that the crime was perpetrated before his accession” (233).

What follows is a list of reasons Richard would not have feared his nephews’ claims

to the throne. Markham believes that the *Titulus Regis*, the act of Parliament that declared Edward's sons illegitimate, would have been enough to make Richard feel secure in his crown. He also cites the love between Richard and Edward as reason enough for Richard to take care of his nephews, bastards or not. Markham goes on to claim, as he did in the biographical section, that Richard's accession was recognized and attended by a majority of the nobility, and that "[i]t should be borne in mind that Parliament was unanimous in recognizing the title of Richard III" (235). No one had taken up for Edward's illegitimate sons, according to Markham, and he believes that they presented no danger to Richard. At the time of the alleged murders, no uprising had been detected from Buckingham or Henry Tudor.

The love Richard bore his relations forms the main portion of Markham's argument against the murders. While Edward's two sons were placed in the Tower, seemingly for their own protection, Richard treated the other heirs of his elder brothers with consideration. Markham notes that Edward's five daughters were treated well after they came under Richard's protection, and that the inarguably legitimate son of George of Clarence was knighted and given high position at court. Markham believes that "therefore, [we] know that Richard did not look upon the children of his elder brothers as enemies to be destroyed, but as relations to be cherished" (236).

It is mentioned in the biographical section that Richard would have kept his nephews at his residence until they were threatened by Henry Tudor's arrival. Markham argues that the princes were alive and well at least until March 1485, when it is mentioned in some accounts of Richard's household¹³ that orders clothing for the "Lord Bastard" (237). The

¹³ Markham here refers to a warrant in Rymer's "Foedera" which dates from March 9, 1485. This note directs Henry Davy to deliver clothing such as bonnets, jackets of silk, doublets, a gown, and two shirts to the Lord

thought here is that Edward, who was illegitimate and no longer prince, was styled the Lord Bastard due to the earldoms of March and Pembroke that his father passed down to him in his own right. Others have attempted to say that these items were intended for John of Gloucester, Richard's bastard son, but Markham claims that John "could not be and was not" the Lord Bastard (238).

This is a point that is considered ludicrous in N.M. Trenholme's review, which accuses Markham of making "[every] obscure reference in the sources of the time" into something "definite and full of meaning" (Trenholme 135). Trenholme compares Markham's work with that of James Gairdner, another Richard biographer of Markham's era. Gairdner concluded that Richard was reasonably well represented in the historical record, given that he could find no evidence of Richard's innocence. It is interesting to note that two authors have come up with such different portrayals of the same man with the same evidence to go on. Markham has given his evidence a spin that is in favor of Richard, which is what Trenholme disagrees with. Spin makes for an interesting argument, but according to Trenholme, "[historically] speaking such a work is a mistake" (135).

The final piece of evidence given in Richard's defense is the Queen Dowager's relationship with him after the murders were purported to have occurred. Markham claims that her behavior went above and beyond that of a woman who was tired of living in sanctuary and wanted to make peace. After sending for her son Thomas Grey in France and telling him to submit to the king, Elizabeth Woodville came out of sanctuary and lived in peace. "She remained on friendly terms with Richard until his death, and her daughters attended the festivities at his Court," which Markham argues could not have happened "if he

Bastard. It is noted that scholars have tried to discredit this source by saying that it refers to the illegitimate son of King Richard III (Markham 237).

had just murdered the...sons” she loved so dearly (Markham 238-239). Thus, Markham says, the princes must have been alive and well treated throughout Richard’s reign.

As if acquitting Richard was not enough, Markham moved on to accusing and convicting Henry Tudor. He describes him in the opening of this chapter, called “Henry Tudor in the Dock,” as if placing the monarch on trial, as a fortunate adventurer. His deception was natural, as he “passed his life as a fugitive and conspirator, cunning and dissimulation had become a second nature to him” (246). Markham describes his claim to the throne as dubious at best, which originated with Margaret Beaufort, an illegitimate daughter of the third son of Edward III. Margaret Beaufort, who outlived her son, never passed her claim on to Henry while he lived, and she would have had to come after the descendants of Edward III’s second son. Henry’s usurpation depended on the right of conquest, which he bolstered by marrying Elizabeth of York.

The marriage itself was complicated due to the act that declared Edward IV’s children illegitimate. Henry expunged the act, having every copy removed from record and burned. This also negated King Richard’s title, which was wrapped up in the act. This did not solve the problem of the York heir, Clarence’s son Edward of Warwick. Markham also claims that the young princes were still alive in the Tower, which is evidenced by the Act of Parliament that condemns King Richard. No mention is made of him murdering his nephews, but he is accused of cruelty and tyranny. Had King Henry known the princes were missing, Markham argues, he would most certainly have accused Richard of murdering them in his attainder (253).

Therefore, King Henry faced the problem of three legitimate heirs to the throne who had better claims than he himself did. After many years of what Markham calls hesitation,

King Henry put Edward of Warwick to death under dubious circumstances (255). The recall of the *Titulus Regis* placed Warwick third in line to the throne, if the princes were still alive in the Tower, so Markham argues that Henry had every reason to order them killed: “It is impossible that a man in his position could have had a stronger motive. He had denied the illegitimacy, and had thus made his wife’s brothers his most formidable rivals. He could not, he dared not let them live, unless he relinquished all he had gained” (254). After examining the treatment of Edward IV’s relatives at Henry’s hands, Markham declares that “[i]f the young princes were in the Tower when Henry succeeded, his conduct in analogous cases leaves no doubt of their fate” (255). This, according to historian A.R. Myers, “necessitates a Henry VII as completely villainous as the Shakespearean Richard” (Myer np). Perhaps Markham felt that it was necessary to provide another tyrant to take the blame away from Richard, or perhaps he truly believed that Henry Tudor was the murderer of the Princes in the Tower.

Sir Clements Markham was far enough removed from the reign of the Tudors that he felt no danger in his accusations against Henry VII. Other writers, such as Sir George Buck, were still under the thumb of Tudor descendants when they wrote their defenses of Richard III. Markham here seeks to rehabilitate the monster, while creating a new beast of Henry Tudor. Rather than acting as an impartial accountant who merely seeks the truth, Markham engages in a smear campaign that is comparable to Richard’s own defamation. Henry becomes the tyrannical usurper with every motive for murder, while Richard is the unfortunate victim of bad publicity and rumor mongering. This is a great departure from earlier writings on Richard, which sought to perpetuate and add to the legend of the deformed king.

“Loyalty binds me”: Philippa Gregory

If it can be argued that monsters are a product of their culture, as Cohen states in his first and second theses, then Richard III in our current social and political climate is a monster undergoing drastic rehabilitation. The introduction of the Richard III Society in 1924 solidified the growing desire to portray the truth about Richard, rather than simply accept the rumors about him. The society’s mission, as described on its website, is “to promote, in every possible way, research into the life and times of Richard III, and to secure a reassessment of the material relating to this period, and of the role of this monarch in English history” (RIII Society). With the renewed interest in Richard after the discovery of his body in Leicester in 2012, the society seeks to continue its mission of providing a “more balanced assessment of his character and role in history.” While not all members of the society will view Richard as an innocent bystander to a new political era, some parts of the mission seem bound and determined to debunk any and all misconceptions about Richard, including his alleged murders.

The post-modern era has created a vastly different image of Richard III through the lens of disability studies and the seemingly overwhelming desire to romanticize formerly horrific stories and creatures, such as dragons, vampires and werewolves. As given in Shakespeare’s text, Richard’s might be one of the most horrific stories of them all, and as such he has undergone a reconsideration by current audiences. In the same way the dragon has gone from a source of temptation in *Beowulf* to a companion and confidant in *Eragon*, Richard III has morphed from the monster of Shakespeare to one of the romantic heroes of Philippa Gregory’s *The Cousins War*’ series. Begun in 2009 with *The White Queen*,

Gregory's series focuses on the women of the Wars of the Roses, who, she feels, have been hidden or suppressed. *The White Queen*, which focused on Elizabeth Woodville, was followed in 2010 with *The Red Queen* (Margaret Beaufort), *The Lady of the Rivers* (Jacquetta Woodville) in 2011, *The Kingmaker's Daughter* (Anne Neville) in 2012, *The White Princess* (Elizabeth of York) in 2013, and the final installment, *The King's Curse* (Margaret Pole), in 2014. Gregory's depiction of Richard predates the exhumation of his remains in 2012, and she remained true to her revisionist history throughout the series.

Gregory states that she believes that "historical accuracy is important in the historical novel form" and that she "[strives] for total accuracy in [her] own," but she also knows that the author can only be as accurate as the current history on the subject. Her picture of Richard follows "the contemporary descriptions of Richard" and draws on reports from sources such as Thomas More. Her use of More's *History* can best be shown in the scene where Richard accuses Elizabeth Woodville of cursing him. Gregory can see two possible motives: "This may, of course, be Richard blackening the name of the dowager queen, or he may have genuinely believed that he had been injured by her." Richard's body receives enough attention from Gregory that it is obvious that she has an image to overturn. She says that "most modern historians thought that the lack of comment at the time about a 'hunchback' indicated that there was no hunchback," which is the reason she gives for omitting the deformity. Instead, she shows Richard as "smaller than his brothers, looking like his father who was small-framed and dark and not like his very tall brother Edward."¹⁴ As a monster being rehabilitated, Richard can have done no better than Gregory, who was revisionist to her core.

The series has become so popular that it was made into a television miniseries

produced by the BBC and Starz networks that combined *The White Queen*, *The Red Queen*, and *The Kingmaker's Daughter*. While not all the books feature Richard as a lead, he appears or is mentioned in four of the six novels of the series. Unlike the histories of Thomas More and Sir Clements Markham, this representation of Richard is clearly meant to be fictional, although it is grounded in historical research. The three novels that make up the BBC miniseries were penned before the discovery of Richard's body beneath the car park in Leicester, so the depiction of the king is just as speculative as any other.

Gregory's decision not to write Richard as a hunchback or a deformed monster, she says in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, "is an act of historical recovery" (Owchar np). In the interview, she cites the Tudor victory as the turning point for the opinion of the York family: "The Yorkists lost to the house of Lancaster, and history, of course, gets told by the victors. That's what Shakespeare tapped into in his play about Richard—that and a medieval belief that a malformed mind led to a malformed body." While other fictional representations reduce Richard to a coward calling for his horse at Bosworth, Gregory wanted to explore the political and personal motives of each player involved in the Wars of the Roses. She also states in her interview that each production of *Richard III* staged is "repeating the lesson that Richard was nothing but a hunchback villain. That's the tragedy." The Tudor smear campaign has worked so well that people of the twenty-first century see Richard as a monster, but Gregory has sought to change that with her novels.

In *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, the novel centered around Anne Neville, Richard is first described as a young boy of twelve as he attends the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. Anne, who is merely seven years old herself, says that he "always had the merriest smile and the kindest eyes, but now, on his best behavior at his sister-in-law's coronation dinner, he is

¹⁴ Personal correspondence with the author (Gregory, Philippa. Email correspondence. 13 Apr. 2015).

formal and quiet” (*Kingmaker’s Daughter* 6). Because Richard is the ward of Anne’s father, the Earl of Warwick, he and Anne have grown up together and often spend time in each other’s company. He hunts and rides horses, looking to Anne like a small squire following around a real knight, and his position as the new king’s brother makes him a favorite at the Warwick home of Middleham.

Perhaps it is the difference in appearance and manner that is presented in the fictionalized versions of Richard’s life that changes our sympathies. *The Cousins’ War* series takes place, more or less, in chronological order and takes care to show the passing of the years that separate the major events of the York family’s lives. Richard’s progression in the series shows him grow from a young boy, into the Duke of Gloucester, and finally, into King Richard III. In seeing him grow up, we are able to become more attached to him and understand his trajectory. Gregory’s Richard is loyal and good, always shown attempting to do what is right and honorable even when it does not benefit him. This contrasts greatly with the compressed timeline of Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, which takes almost a decade of events and turns it into a cohesive, linear play. There is no progression for Richard, and we never see him as a young boy, nor are we invited to sympathize with him.

The glimpse of the young Richard offered by Gregory’s work reveals a quiet, mildly mischievous boy who is perhaps wise beyond his years. Anne describes him as obsessed with Camelot and King Arthur, and as a boy who is “slight and dark-haired, utterly determined to become a knight” (18). He follows the code of chivalry and tells Anne that he would rather die than be dishonored, which is almost a foreshadowing of his fate in 1485. Anne feels a silent kinship with Richard, who shares her status as youngest child and least likely to inherit: “Richard and I know that we dream of great things, and know also that nobody must ever

know that we dream of greatness” (18).

Anne, who has grown up watching the political machinations of her father Richard Neville, is no stranger to upheaval and strife in England. She has never known peace, being only seven years old when Edward takes the throne from King Henry, and she seems destined never to remain in a state of relative calm for any period of time. The marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville was a political nightmare for the Nevilles, who were working to secure a marriage alliance with France for Edward. Anne’s perspective is, after the coronation of Elizabeth, one of enmity toward the Woodville faction. This is important, for it eventually places Richard in a situation of great difficulty within his marriage to Anne.

After a short while as king, Edward faces a rebellion by the very forces that put him on the throne. Anne’s father, Lord Warwick, allies with Edward’s brother George in order to rid the king of his Woodville advisors. This treason puts Anne and Richard on opposite sides, for Richard always remains loyal to his brother Edward. In this series, contrary to the works of More and Shakespeare, George is the odious traitor, not Richard. A rumor begins in 1469, in the middle of Warwick and George’s rebellion, that Edward is illegitimate. Again, unlike other versions of the tale, it is not Richard setting these rumors (44).

The events of Gregory’s *The White Queen* take place simultaneously with those of *The Kingmaker’s Daughter*, although they are told from the perspective of Elizabeth Woodville. This first novel of the series can help provide a different view of Richard, as well as fill in the gaps that are missing from Anne Neville’s account. Elizabeth was with Edward and Richard during the rebellion of Warwick and George, and is told by Edward that “Richard stays true to me, thank God” (*White Queen* 92). Edward describes Richard as honest and faithful, while Elizabeth thinks him an “awkward, sulky boy” (93). When she first

met him, however, Elizabeth described the twelve-year-old Richard as “as unlike his brothers as is possible, small and shy and dark-haired, slight of build and quiet, while they are all tall and bronze-headed and filled with their own importance” (76). She likes Richard at the beginning, thinking that he will get along with the sons she has from a previous marriage. Although not a golden boy like his older brothers, Richard seems to be described as steadfast and companionable, even though he is still young and just recently out of danger during his brother’s wars.

Elizabeth’s next observation of Richard comes after Warwick’s rebellion has failed. She views him as the only York she can trust, especially with George back in the king’s good graces, and describes him at a celebration:

Of all the York boys he is the only one to resemble his father,
and he is dark and small-boned, a little changeling beside the
big-boned, handsome York line. He is a pious young man,
thoughtful; most at home in his great house in the north of
England, where he lives a life of duty and austere service to his
people. He finds our glittering court an embarrassment, as if we
were aggrandizing ourselves as pagans at a Christian feast.

(111)

This Richard is socially awkward and minimalist, preferring to live in quiet simplicity rather than at court. He does not seem the type to want the throne at all, much less at the expense of his brother’s heirs. Richard is also the brother who goes into exile with Edward when he is run out of the country by Warwick’s second rebellion for King Henry, and Elizabeth trusts that Edward is safe with Richard by his side (129).

At the Battle of Barnet, Elizabeth again praises Richard's efforts on his brother's behalf. Richard leads one of the flanks of the army, and George the other. Elizabeth says that "Richard is beloved of all the men. They trust him, though he is still only eighteen" (157). It is after the victory at Barnet that Richard goes on a collision course with Anne Neville, who in Gregory's version of the story has gotten married to Prince Edward of Lancaster.

Richard rescues Anne at Tewkesbury, where she is preparing to ride out with her mother-in-law Margaret of Anjou, Henry VI's queen. Anne describes him as a grave young man set in his duty, which is to bring her and Margaret of Anjou to Edward (*Kingmaker's Daughter* 129). This leads to Anne's virtual imprisonment within George of Clarence's household, which Sir Clement Markham mentions in his biography of Richard. In need of rescue once again, Anne appeals to Richard to release her from her captivity. "' I could be your champion,'" he says, calling back to the stories of Arthur and Camelot (158). There is no hint of the plotting and deception in Gregory's Richard that is essential to the Richard of Shakespeare. His attachment to Anne is more developed within Gregory's novels, while in Shakespeare's play Richard almost seems to delight in the challenge of wooing Anne over the body of her father-in-law.

Richard's marriage proposal to Anne in *The Kingmaker's Daughter* is almost the exact opposite of his proposal in *Richard III*. After months of conspiring to rid Anne of her captors, Richard makes an impassioned speech in Anne's rooms. In response to her protests that he will get all her inheritance, Richard says "'But think of what you might be right now. I can make you a royal duchess. You can make me a wealthy man. I can make you the equal of your sister and defend you from her husband. I will be a true husband to you. And—I think you know, don't you?—that I love you, Anne'" (175). Against More's accusations of

elopement, Gregory includes that King Edward knows and approves of Richard's marriage to Anne, which further legitimizes the match. Rather than marrying for money or convenience, Gregory's Richard marries for love.

While existing peacefully with Anne in their northern homes, Richard has little time for intrigue. He remains loyal to his brother Edward, even when George brings up the old claims about Edward's illegitimacy. It is only when George begins employing a sorcerer to predict King Edward's death that Richard must take notice. Much in the way Shakespeare's Richard wants his family to think that he is unworldly and uninterested, Gregory's Richard is politically removed and perfectly content with his lot, according to Anne (226). History remembers Richard having his brother murdered in Shakespeare's production, but Gregory has King Edward sentence his brother to death. Richard certainly cannot even think of his brother's punishment for treason, telling Anne that he "'shall insist that [Edward] holds him with honor, in his usual rooms in the Tower, where George can be well served by his own servants and kept quiet until we find an agreement'" (299). Anne instead blames Elizabeth Woodville for George's death; he is given the choice of execution methods, and he chooses to die by drowning in a barrel of the queen's favorite malmsey wine. The Woodvilles, rather than Richard, have ruined the house of York and set their alliance to ruin (312).

As in Markham's account of King Edward's death, Gregory places Richard in a position of trust with the dying king. He is made regent, sworn to protect the life and legacy of Edward's sons and heirs. Richard and Anne fear a king put on the throne by the Woodville clan, who are hated by much of the English nobility. Before the coronation, Anne thinks that "Richard is going to crown a boy who will grow up to be his deadliest enemy—however kindly we treat him" (346). It is Anne and Richard's mother, Duchess Cecily, who suggest

that Richard take the throne for himself rather than put Prince Edward there. Anne tells Richard to do as Edward did: ““He took the throne from Henry in battle not once but twice, and Henry had a far better right to it than the [Woodville] boy....He may be the king’s son but he is a boy. He may not even be his legitimate son, but a bastard, one of many. You are the king’s brother, and a man, and ready to rule. Take the throne from him. It’s the safest thing for England”” (347). The rumors and allegations normally attributed to Richard, the evidence laid down in the Act of Parliament that makes bastards of Edward’s children, come from Anne and Duchess Cecily.

Gregory attributes Richard’s usurpation to solid argument and Richard’s own sense of honor, which is affronted by the suggestion that a bastard would sit the throne of England. His every intention, according to Anne’s story, was to crown Prince Edward and oversee his reign until he came of age. The Woodvilles, who are so reviled by Anne and the Duchess, are no friends of Richard’s, but he considers it as his obligation to Edward to see the coronation through. According to Anne, a Woodville regency was to be avoided at any cost, and the people felt the same way: “The [Woodvilles] had made themselves so hated that the people would have taken almost any powerful ruler rather than a boy whose family would devour England” (353). The princes still reside at the Tower of London, where they were placed before Edward’s planned coronation, but they remain there while Richard and Anne are crowned.

The first suggestion that Richard murdered the princes comes from the Duke of Buckingham, Richard’s former friend who turns his coat to Queen Elizabeth’s side. Richard writes to Anne of Buckingham’s treachery: “Worst of all...Buckingham is telling everyone that the princes are dead and by my hand. This means the [Woodvilles] will fight to put

Tudor and Princess Elizabeth on the throne. This means that the country—and history—names me a murderer, a killer of children, a tyrant who turns on his brother’s son and takes his own blood” (359). Rather than exulting in the deaths of his nephews and rivals to the throne, Richard recoils from the brand of murderer. This is very different from the cold and calculating representations of Richard from earlier centuries, which have him ordering the princes’ deaths himself.

From Queen Elizabeth’s perspective in *The White Queen*, we discover that both York princes do not go to the Tower and their doom. Elizabeth, fearing the worst, switches her son Richard with a servant boy, sending her prince to Flanders to live in the country of his aunt Margaret. He writes to her as Peter, although he is called Perkin in Flanders, which is a nod from Gregory that suggests the later rebellion against the Tudors led by Perkin Warbeck is indeed a genuine York uprising (*White Queen* 328). King Richard III is now Elizabeth’s enemy, overthrowing her power and sitting on the throne meant for her son. As is told in Anne’s story, Elizabeth hears of her son’s death from the Duke of Buckingham’s slander.

Elizabeth does not believe that Richard killed the princes, citing reasons very similar to Markham’s argument: “He does not need to kill them to get his own way. He is triumphant already, without murdering my son. He got all he wanted without blood on his hands, so there is no need for him to kill Edward now. Richard is safe on the throne, the council has accepted him” (339-340). Instead, Elizabeth becomes convinced that Henry Tudor and his mother Margaret Beaufort are responsible for the murders in the Tower. Henry Tudor had everything to gain by defaming Richard and getting rid of the boys, who are obstacles to the throne. If his aim was to return to England a king, he had to remove as many obstacles as possible before taking the field of battle. Gregory, like Markham, cites all the motives Henry

Tudor might have had, contrasting them with the relative lack of motives Richard may have possessed. Gregory and her characters find these motives lacking, and instead decide to indict Henry Tudor with these murders and plots.

True to history, Anne Neville dies before Richard's defeat at Bosworth. This part of the story is filled in by Queen Elizabeth and her daughter, who outlive both Richard and Anne. Elizabeth's daughter, called Elizabeth of York, is in love with King Richard in Gregory's novels. She is courted by Richard, according to Anne's perspective, out of the desire to keep her from marrying Henry Tudor. Elizabeth herself believes he truly loves her, and talks of planning a life with him. This story line is brought up in Shakespeare as well, although Richard seeks to murder Anne in his quest for Elizabeth's hand. It is a testament to Queen Elizabeth's belief that Richard did not murder her sons that she allows him to court her daughter, believing that Elizabeth will be queen after Anne's death (*White Queen* 401).

Richard's death is a blow to both Queen Elizabeth and Elizabeth of York, who trusted that he would be victorious and return to London. Elizabeth the younger believed that he would marry her and make her queen, and her mother thought that this would restore the kingdom to rights (*White Princess* 2). They fear the rule of Henry Tudor, who is the murderer of their Prince Edward, and understand that his mother Margaret Beaufort is a formidable enemy. Richard was to be their saving grace, but now they must face a life under the rule of the Lancaster exile.

This faith in Richard is far different from the opinions held in other accounts of Richard III. Shakespeare's Queen Elizabeth despises Richard and sees him as a vile pretender, while More paints the saintly Woodvilles as the opposition to Richard's treachery. The monster, then, is reversed in Gregory's story, just as it was in Markham's biography.

Henry Tudor now dons the mask of deception, although he is a villain with no outward signs. Gregory's Richard is handsome and loyal and worthy of respect, although he is not a shining hero. He has his faults, as Gregory says all men do, but no deformity can be found on his body. Could this not, then, be seen as sending the same message of internal and external linkage that Shakespeare and More give? Gregory's Richard is not good in spite of his deformity, rather he is good without it. His redemption is both physical and personal, delving into his appearance as well as his personality.

Conclusion

The four depictions of King Richard III analyzed above represent an evolving legend of a man who had very little written about him in his lifetime. Without the tools of video, modern newscasts, and photography, it is impossible to debunk or confirm most of the accusations flung at this ill-fated king. The debate still centers on his body, which has been under scrutiny since before Thomas More's account of his uneven shoulders and hunchback, and Richard is still waiting on the judgment of the public. Examinations of the king must be done through hundreds of filters made up of historical and fictional accounts throughout the centuries. It is difficult to imagine Richard without running across a reference to Shakespeare, who has so shaped the popular opinion of the monarch that the two have become inseparable. In another of the *Upstart* articles, Jonathan Hsy makes a similar assessment: "Our access to Richard III (always-already) acknowledges—in dutiful and even perfunctory ways—the disruptive and intervening presence of the influential Shakespearian manifestation" (np). Now, the added layer of the body in the car park must be added to the

filters through which we see Richard, allowing the final aftermath of his reign to weigh heavily on any reading we might give him.

Philippa Gregory states that “history is constantly re-written and the historical record changing, so that one neither historian nor novelist can ever be sure that they are completely accurate.”¹⁵ The varying depictions of Richard display how people at the time of publication might have wanted to see him. In the Tudor era, Richard was a villain with no redeeming characteristics, so evil that even his body was twisted and deformed by his devilry. More recently, beginning with Markham’s revisionist biography, some authors have begun casting Richard as a misunderstood monarch, a man whose policies and actions have been ignored and lost to the centuries. The battle for Richard’s body extended to the place he would be buried; a heated debate erupted between the cities of Leicester and York, in which groups fought to control the final resting place of the monarch. With Richard’s body finally in the ground at Leicester Cathedral, history may at last put to rest the struggle for control over his physicality. While it is no longer possible to pretend that Richard’s deformities were the products of Tudor-era character defamation, modern audiences will be able to separate the body from the soul, the man from the monster.

Richard’s evolution can be traced through the centuries and charted in a way that allows us to see how perceptions change through time. Thomas More’s initial categorization of Richard placed him beside the most horrible of monsters. He shows him as a disfigured man who plotted from the moment he was born to take the crown from his brothers at any cost. Shakespeare builds on this depiction, consolidating sources and events to create a Richard more terrible and more villainous than even More intended. Shakespeare’s Richard is comparable to Iago from *Othello*, a man with no motives for the evil he undertakes,

although Richard can be said to be more sympathetic. While Shakespeare succeeds in creating a good villain, he also questions and undermines the connection between body and soul that More and others before him had assumed to be true. Sir Clements Markham reverses the legend of Richard so completely that he still, likely unintentionally, leaves the link between mind and body. His Richard is not deformed and good, nor is he beautiful and evil. He is an able-bodied man of loyalty and good intentions who finds himself blackened by the succeeding Tudor regime. Philippa Gregory, perhaps, presents the most unbiased depiction of Richard of the four, but her account still omits any hint of deformity. These sources show that society has come a long way from the initial defamation of England's shortest-reigning monarch, but there are still stigmas attached to disability that make us want Richard, if he was indeed a good man, to remain able-bodied and unblemished.

¹⁵ Personal correspondence with the author.

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