Beth Marie Kosir, "Richard III: A Study in Historiographical Controversy,"

The controversy surrounding Richard III still endures five hundred years after the end of his reign, lasting two hundred and fifty times longer than the length of his brief reign. The two sides of the debate offer very different portraits of Richard indeed. Ricardians, as advocates of Richard III are known, feel that Richard can best be described using his motto, *Loyualte me lie* (Loyalty binds me). His supporters do, however, acknowledge his faults, and see him as having been thrust into a position of power that was far beyond his capabilities after England had been subjected to nearly one hundred years of factional fighting amongst the nobility. Richard's detractors, on the other hand, paint a very different picture of the short-reigning monarch, far more in keeping with the Tudor image of Richard III. For them, Richard is a misshapen, evil man, who is the personification of divine retribution, resulting from a usurped crown nearly one hundred years prior to his reign and over fifty years before his birth. England was being visited with the sins of Richard III because of the tragedy of Richard II. Not surprisingly, no English monarch has been named Richard since the death of Richard III, August 22, 1485. The previous two Richards also met with untimely deaths and had reputations that have often been called into question.

It is the last of the Richards, however, who continues to provoke heated debate. How can two such differing images of the same man possibly coexist? If Richard III can be considered an historical figure, which he undoubtedly is, a good historian should be able to go back to the records of his time — public documents, correspondence, household accounts, and other primary sources — and piece together a snapshot of the man in his time. Modern historians would argue that this is certainly possible. By analyzing Richard III's acts of Parliament, his communications with friends and family, and his expenditures for public and private purposes, a diligent historian would be able to distinguish between Richard, the man, Richard III, the king, and Dickon, the friend and family man. Other than the often arduous task of translating Middle English into modern English, this would seem to be an easy task, if access to the records was obtained.

Just as this would be a relatively easy task in 1996, it would have been a much easier task in 1496, eleven years after Richard's untimely death. Historians could have interviewed people who had been alive during Richard's lifetime and, perhaps, even had personal knowledge of Richard, in all his roles. Then why, if the task of researching him would have been relatively simple for even a modern historian, are there such disparate representations of Richard? History, prior to the beginning of the eighteenth century, was not the objective, neutral, and scientific study that we in the twentieth century like to believe it is. History was often used and studied to teach moral lessons. It fulfilled a dual purpose; it was for people to learn *about* and to learn *from*. Consequently, to make history more palatable, or to make a stronger moral statement, bits of fiction were often sprinkled into the descriptions of actual events, in an effort to insure that all those who partook of that history, either in written or oral form, had no doubt as to the moral of the story.

A good example of history as a moral lesson occurs in ***The Mirror for Magistrates,*** a collection of poems "written" by historical English villains who pleaded with readers not to make the mistakes they had. The tragic poem "written" by Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester (his title before becoming Richard III) incorporates many of the evil deeds attributed to Richard by his early detractors (1). As more ghosts of villains confessed their foul deeds, an updated edition of ***Mirror*** was issued. Since Richard's poem did not appear in the 1599 edition, printed a full seventy-four years after Richard's death, it is unlikely that the spirit of Richard was moved to confess his heinous deeds a mere four years later than the second edition. ***Mirror*** is transparent fiction to a twentieth-century observer, having been "ghost written" long after the deaths of the villainous autobiographers; nonetheless, it qualified as history under the broad umbrella of the Middle Ages' definition of history. It was a guideline for future members of the nobility not to make the same mistakes as their predecessors. Unbeknownst to its publishers, ***Mirror*** would also serve to provide a source of material for one of the greatest writers the world has even known.

Modern historical fiction writers, in general, do endless research to capture the period about which they are writing *as it really was*. But Shakespeare, who is by far the person most repsonsible for Richard's reputation, felt no such compunction. In order to create dramatic tension, Shakespeare used poetic license to collapse time, bring characters back from exile, and transform three-year-old Richard into a middle-aged soldier. If playgoers accepted Shakespleare's history plays as dramatic fiction, which for the most part, they are, there would be no problem. For centuries, however, the English have learned their history through Shakespeare's plays. The Duke of Marlborough once said that Shakespeare was the only history he ever read. That, perhaps, is the tragedy, as Norrie Epstein suggests in her book, ***The Friendly Shakespeare.*** "In some cases, Shakespeare's fictional accounts of people and events have become more real than actual history. More people know Richard III as the hunchback villain of Shakespeare's play than the real Richard, who by all accounts was a rather nice man." (2)

Shakespeare, who created a depiction of Richard that has lasted for four hundred years, likely made use of the above-mentioned fictional ***Mirror,*** as it covered the same time period as his two tetralogies of history plays, from ***Richard II*** to ***Richard III***. (3) But, since truth is often stranger than fiction, at least the truth of Richard's early historians, Shakespeare made use of non-fiction historians as well. Sources that would have been available to him are: Richard Grafton, and more notably, Raphael Holinshed. (4) Shakespeare used Edward Halle as well, since Holinshed was often a mere rewording of Halle, who, in turn, relied heavily on St. Thomas More, Holinshed remained Shakespeare's primary source (5). For an example of the plagiaristic tendencies common to early historians, compare the descriptions of Richard found in Grafton (translated from Middle English by this researcher):

> Richard duke of Gloucester, the third son of which we must now entreat, was in wit and courage equal with the others; but in beauty and lineaments of nature far underneath them both: for he was little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, the left shoulder much higher than the right, hard favored of visage…(6)

with Holinshed from ***Shakespeare's Holinshed*** by Richard Hosley:

> Richard, the third son of whom we now entreat, was in wit and courage equal with either of them, in body and prowess [moral good, probity] far under them both; little of stature, ill featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than the right…, hard favored of visage…(7)

The descriptions are remarkably similar, perhaps differing only in their translation from Middle English to modern English. Grafton was published in 1543 and Holinshed in 1587. The obvious lateral use of one test to inform the other does not allow for progress in the study of history. Before moving away from Shakespeare, for a closer look at the early historians of Richard III, it may be beneficial to look at his play, ***Richard III.***

Theater historian, Alice I. Perry Wood, in her exploration of Shakespeare's ***Richard III,*** provides an interesting insight. After the initial popularity of ***Richard III,*** from the reign of Elizabeth I to Charles I, it was rarely staged again until the eighteenth century (8). Wood offers several suggestions, some more logical and reasonable than others, for the decline in popularity of the English chronicle plays, of which ***Richard III*** was one. But perhaps the most likely reason had to do with the growing economic distance between the court and the populace (9). To realize a profit at the theater, producers needed to present plays that would be widely accepted and engage the emotions of the audience. Elizabethans were able to gloat over the fall of the House of York, and more specifically Richard III, but as memories faded and time passed, Richard and the Wars of the Roses dissolved into the medieval past.

Elise Lathrop analyzes the stage upon which Shakespeare set his plays. Lathrop acts as historian in her treatment of ***Richard III,*** and questions the reality of Shakespeare's time sequences, places, and characters (10). Although many of her comments about Shakespeare's collapsing of time for dramatic effect are not specific to ***Richard III,*** she does focus on the physical appearance of Richard. Lathrop cites the description of Richard given by Rous, who, as will be shown, bowed to the the power of the Tudors in the final edition of his book on Richard's life, but suggests that Richard did have thick shoulders, even if he wasn't deformed (11). Lathrop, like many other historians seems to forget that Richard was a great soldier and had practiced at the lists from the time he was a small child, perhaps handling a sword much too heavy for him in an effort to emulate his much idolized older brother, Edward. This continual practice would cause excessive muscular development in his sword arm, when compared to his shield arm.

In her description of Richard's possible involvement in the execution of his brother, Clarence, Lathrop remains on the fence. While she allows that Richard and Edward IV both had good reasons to want Clarence dispatched, as did Edward's consort, Queen Elizabeth, Lathrop is careful not to assign guilt (12). Clarence's atrocious behavior toward Edward IV, Richard, and his sister-in-law, Anne (later to become Richard's wife, as well), could scarcely have won him any supporters.

Even if Shakespeare had wanted to be scrupulously accurate because it would advance the cause of dramatic effect, his sources would not have allowed him to do so. To gain a more accurate understanding of the sources Shakespeare used, it is necessary to trace their sources, the most eminent being St. Thomas More. Much of the historical weight given to St. Thomas More's history of Richard III arises not from More's investigative skills or his thoroughness of subject, but from his reputation as a man of intelligence, wit, and piety. Until his opposition to Henry VIII's plan to divorce his wife warranted More's execution, leading to his eventual canonization, *St*. Thomas More was simply *Sir* Thomas More. He was a man of considerable intellect, yes, but he also had a creative streak. Since's More's ***The History of King Richard III*** was the forerunner of Halle, Holinshed, and Grafton (Shakespeare's primary sources), it is imperative to evaluate his intentions, or at least as closely as modern historians can interpret those intentions.

In Alison Hanham's book, ***Richard III and His Early Historians,*** she titles her chapter on the work of More, *"Sir Thomas More's Satirical Drama."* She suggests that the Richard III in More's work is a literary figure and not an historical one (13). An argument for this theory can be found in the way More inserts *first-hand* dialog throughout his work. More's ***History*** can almost be read as a play rather than as a serious non-fiction work (14). From the second paragraph on page 70 of ***History*** to the top of page 77 [in Hanham's work], the entirety is in quotes. At first blush, if the book happened to be opened at that point, it would seem that quotations marks might have been a convention of the times. However, many portions of the book are not set off by quotation marks, so it can only be assumed that More intended these and other passages to be read as conversations. Whether or not More actually expected the reader to believe that he was witness to all the conversations he included, only More himself can know.

Hanham also argues that More's work is a satirical commentary on historians, both of his day and of the past, and that his use of such phrases as, "as wise men say," and "it is for truth reported" are designed as a signal to the reader that what is about to follow is not at all likely to be true, or that the wise men may, in fact, not be all that wise(15). A commonly quoted passage from More's ***History*** serves as a good example:

> Some wise men also ween that this drift covertly conveyed, lacked not in helping forth his brother Clarence to his death, which he resisted openly, howbeit somewhat (as men deemed) more faintly than he that were heartily minded to his wealth [welfare]. And they that deem thus think that he long time in King Edward's life forethought to be king in case that the king his brother (whose life he looked that evil diet should shorten), should happen to decease (as indeed he did) while his children were young. And they deem that for this intent he was glad of his brother's death, the Duke of Clarence, whose life must needs have hindered him so intending; whether the same Duke of Clarence had kept him true to his nephew, the young king, or enterprised to be king himself.
>
> But of all this point is there no certainty, and whoso divineth upon conjectures may as well shoot too far as too short. (16)

Out of this entire passage there is only one idea that is not couched in with the conjecture of which More speaks, and the reader has to hunt to find it; that Richard openly resisted the death of his brother Clarence (17). But as More suggests, if one is to make a guess about the truth, it might as well be the wildest guess possible.

More's description of Richard III and the manner of his birth lend credence to Hanham's suggestion that More would not hesitate to alter history to suit his literary purposes(18). Richard's appearance, according to More, was hunchbacked, ill-favored, and short, while at his birth, "as the fame runneth," was two years in the making and required that his mother be cut (19). Since More was used as the basis for many future historians, his rather scant details of Richard's supposed deformity were quickly enhanced, and finally given full flower in Shakespeare's play.

While the problematic aspects of More's ***History*** lie not in literary intent or even in historical accuracy (when it is viewed as a satire), they do arise from the uses made of More's work. Historians for generations have clung to the

saintly Sir Thomas More as the last word on Richard III, but they have been clinging to a straw man. Even Hanham, who acknowledges that More's ***History*** is not to be taken too literally, and is far closer to the traditional camp then the revisionist camp where Richard is concerned, agrees that, "It was thus the least authentic of the early accounts of Richard that had the greatest influence on subsequent opinion…" (20). More cannot be either credited or blamed for the renown which his work has achieved. He left ***History*** unfinished, and presumably, to his knowledge, unpublished. More's brother-in-law, William Rastell, put the finishing touches on ***History*** and then submitted it for publication thirty years later. Rastell admits, quite honestly, in the forward to ***History***, that the published work may contain more or less than More intended (21).

Shakespeare, like More, perhaps never intended his works to be published. In Elizabethan England, plays were not considered literature. They were comparable to the screenplays of today. Other than blockbuster hits, rarely is the screenplay of a film ever published in a printed form for consumption by the public. While Shakespeare hints in ***Julius Caesar*** that his plays, on stage, will endure for generations:

> "How many ages hence
> Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
> In states unborn and accents yet unknown!" III, i. (22)

he would not have predicted the legacy of his plays. In general, there is much more credibility attached to the printed word than to what is merely heard. There is a responsibility that accompanies the printed word that does not accompany the heard word. In a court of law, almost any document has more evidential value than does hearsay. For Shakespeare, drama was art, a representation of reality, not reality itself, even if the plot was of a historical nature. Modern readers can distinguish between fiction and non-fiction much more readily with the help of the Dewey Decimal system. In libraries that employ it, a reader knows that if a book has a numerical code it is non-fiction, but if it has only an alphabetical code, it is fiction. There was not so clear cut a disctinction during either More's or Shakespeare's time.

One of More's chief sources, Polydore Vergil, not wholly supportive of Richard III's rise to the throne, is more of a contemporary of Richard. He was the paid chronicler of Richard's successor, Henry VII. Vergil, in no way implicates Richard in Clarence's death. He does refer to the prophecy that someone with the initial *G* will keep Edward IV's children from the throne, and since the Duke of Clarence's name is George, Edward considers him a likely candidate (23). Since the Renaissance was a particularly superstitious age, a prophecy of that sort would certainly be grounds for a treason trial. As a number of authors after him have done, Vergil adapts the results of the situation to fit the prophecy, by suggesting that *G* stood not for Geroge, but for Gloucester (24). Although Edward, according to Vergil, bemoans the fact that no one pleaded for Clarence, Richard is nowhere mentioned specifically, other than in the prophecy (25).

Vergil, like More, is sparse on the details of Richard's appearance. Richard, Vergil notes, "was lyttle of stature, deformyd of body, thone showlder higher than thother, a short and soure countenance, which semyed to savor of mischief, and utter evydently craft and deceyt" (26). What is noteworthy about Vergil's description of Richard is the location that he chooses for its insertion in his text. Vergil reserves his description of Richard for the final paragraph of his book on Richard III. For over five centuries much has been made of the supposedly deformed body of Richard, and, as Renaissance belief dictated, the deformed soul that must accompany it. For whatever reason, Richard's physical appearance seems to be a trifling afterthought for Vergil.

John Rous, another near-contemporary of Richard and a chantry priest, wrote two histories of Richard III, one in English and one in Latin. Both V.B. Lamb in ***Betrayal of Richard III,*** and Arthur Kincaid, in an appendix to Sir George Buck's ***The History of King Richard III,*** note Rous' about face after Richard's death (27). The English version portrays Richard as a man not unlike many men of his time, but the Latin version, circulated after Richard's final defeat at Bosworth, presents Richard much as the monster vewed through Shakespeare's play (28). Praising Richard in one language while vilifying him in another lends support to the idea that Rous adopted the second, Latin version to please Henry VII.

According to Kincaid, Richard's near-contemporaries, Vergil and More, agreed that one of Richard's shoulders was higher than the other, but don't seem to be able to agree which shoulder it was (29). Richard's brother's, Edward IV and Clarence, were known as two of the handsomest men in Europe. Surely, had Richard been as malformed as many of the early historians suggest, more would have been made of it in contemporary sources,

such as the ***Croyland Chronicle,*** Fabyan, and Mancini, but this, however, is not the case. Since both Fabyan and Mancini were fairly hostile to Richard, according to Kincaid, the omission is even more glaring (30).

Dominic Mancini, a true contemporary of Richard III, admits in ***The Ursurpation of Richard III*** that he does not know how Richard ruled England because he left directly after the coronation (31). Mancini does, however, mention the custom of English kings to stay in the Tower the evening prior to the coronation, and he records that the Archbishop of Canterbury reluctantly crowned Richard (32). In his notes to Mancini's text, Armstrong explains that the Archbishop was not present at the coronation banquet, and likely not even in London (33). A contemporary of Richard's, Mancini may be, but his knowledge of the players in the medieval English court was woefully lacking. Mancini also neglected to mention a custom which was common at the time. English kings, and their consorts, were being anointed during that period in the French fashion, naked from the waist up. Certainly, if Richard had been hiding the gross deformities laid at his feet by later historians, he would have disbanded the practice as his successor had done. Perhaps it was Henry VII who had something to hide, not Richard III.

Mancini, in fact, makes no observations about Richard's supposed deformities, and Armstrong in the appendix cites a contemporary of Richard III's, Nicholas von Poppelau, a traveler from Silecia, who suggests only that Richard was thinner than himself and frail, but with a "great heart" (34). Rous, it seems, is the first and only true contemporary of Richard's to hint at any deformity, and that only after Richard's death and the accession of Henry VII.

In the matter of Clarence's death, Mancini finds the queen and her faction to blame, accusing Richard only of seeking to avenge Clarence's death (35). Although Mancini cannot be held accountable for Shakespeare's implication of Richard in the death of Clarence, it is from Mancini that Clarence's having been drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine was first drawn.

Mancini's treatise on Richard's rise to power was written as a communication to Angelo Cato, Archbishop of Vienne, to satisfy Cato's curiosity about the events occurring in England at that time. Just as it is doubtful that More ever intended his work on Richard III to be published, it is equally unlikely that Mancini expected historians to use his work as a resource, as his own hand attests, "…consequently I shall write, that which I think you require, as best I can, and howsoever it may be done … and shall be more concerned to please you, then to be remembered as a pattern for authors" (36). Mancini then suggests that he should not be held responsible for exact names, dates, etc., only that his work should seem as a model of the man, not the true man, and by doing so he hopes that Cato will understand more of Richard's rise to power than he can actually glean from Mancini's words (37). Thus, tracking back, chronologically, from Shakespeare's sources to the contemporary chronicler of Richard's time; there are plagiarists, a satirist, a chantry priest who can't make up his mind, a paid chronicler for Richard's enemy, and a gossip who doesn't want to be held responsible for accuracy. Is it any wonder that the character that Shakespeare created seems larger than life and bears no resemblance to a real flesh and blood man?

Surprisingly, the effort to lighten Richard's black reputation appeared while the Tudors were still in power, albeit from an anonymous writer. This first defense of Richard was published during the early sixteenth century. Considering the political climate at that time, anonymity does not necessarily preclude authenticity or accuracy. This anonymous author, reprinted in ***To Prove a Villain*** by Taylor Littleton and Robert R. Rea, appears not to have met Richard, because he or she readily accepts the hunchbacked, misshapen, and ill-favored description of Richard. The author, however, does not see these disabilities as hindrances, but rather as blessings (38). While Edward IV and other medieval kings known for their good looks were concerned with preserving those looks, Richard had an opportunity to concentrate on improving his mind. (39).

The fault, in the black portrayal of Richard III, lies not with the deeds that Richard may, or may not, have done to warrant such an evil reputation, but with historians who seek only to identify those vices and faults, and not the virtues, suggests the anonymous author, "Yet to acknowledge the virtues of the vicious is such a right, that what historian willingly omitteth them, therein becometh vicious himself" (40). A similar logic is used for denying Richard's culpability in Clarence's death. If Richard indeed helped Clarence to meet with an early demise, then when Edward IV later repented his decision, blame would certainly have been laid at the doorstep of Richard (41). The loyalty shared between Richard and Edward was as close as between any two brothers, and Edward showed his trust in Richard by naming him protector of his heir, in the event of Edward's death during young Edward's minority. Surely, a man who believed that his brother could be implicated in the murder of a close blood relative would not trust his own son to those murderous hands.

Sir George Buck, the first known published revisionist, is quick to seize upon the language couching More's descriptions of Richard's deformed appearance, "Sir Thomas More himself, speaking of the supposed deformities of King Richard, doth not affirm that certainly he was deformed, but that he rather took it to be but a false speech. For he saith that King Richard was deformed, as the fame ran, and as men of hatred reputed or imputed" (42). In this same vein, Buck also suggests that earlier historians were perhaps eager to attribute the faults of those around Richard into Richard himself (43), although historians are not alone in painting an opponent with a black brush after a victory or when it seems profitable.

Like More, Buck aquits Richard of the guilt of Clarence's spilt blood, or as Mancini suggests, wine. While he does acknowledge that Vergil might be accurate in depicting that Richard did not speak loudly enough against Clarence's sentence of death, Buck claims that Richard's eventual silence was for another reason altogether. Edward IV, by the time of Clarence's execution in 1478, had had his fill of Clarence's treasonous activities and no voice could sway his decision. While Richard had opposed Edward's decision openly in the past, he knew when his words were no longer having any effect (44).

The second known historian who attempted a revision of Richard's reputation was Horace Walpole in ***Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard the Third.*** In a unique book, Walpole, while obviously a Ricardian, plays the devil's advocate. He often suggests in his book that he cannot prove or disprove Richard's guilt or innocence, but, as his title suggests, he has doubts. In a manner quite often foreign to historians, Walpole admits this in a supplement to ***Doubts***. While numerous scholars have been able to poke holes in a number of his theories, Walpole did have the courage of his convictions. That quality, in the history of any field, cannot be considered a bad thing. Walpole, of course, denies Richard's involvement in Clarence's death (46) and has nothing to say about Richard's possible deformity, other than that it is one of the slurs against Richard. Perhaps of the most significance, regarding Walpole's ***Doubts,*** is that the entire first printing of 1250 copies sold out by the day after its release (47). Published one hundred and fifty years after Sir George Buck's attempt to revise Richard's reputation, Walpole's ***Doubts*** still found a ready and willing audience.

Sir Clements Markham, a late nineteenth-century revisionist, deals so vaguely with Richard's involvement in the execution of Clarence that it is almost a non-issue, particularly in comparison with his other supposed crimes. Markham points out that the charges brought forth in Clarence's attainder, by themselves or added together, would not be enough to warrant death by the will of Edward (48). If the charges of Clarence's treason against Edward were not sufficient to demand death, numerous though they were, it would take a great leap of faith to fault Richard, who had far less cause to wish Clarence ill.

Markham suggests that the Tudors, in an effort to blacken all aspects of Richard's inner character, seek first to malign his exterior aspects, and that the descriptions of Richard as a deformed man are just so much Tudor propaganda (49). As was noted earlier, people living during the Middle Ages (and even the Renaissance) equated beauty of the body with purity of the soul, as well as the reverse. To plant the seeds of Richard's villainy takes little more effort than to expose knots in an otherwise healthy tree.

Nigel Balchin, in ***The Anatomy of Villainy,*** deals with Richard III, with the help of historical data, not from an historical perspective, but from a psychological perspective. Balchin itemized the most significant of Richard's supposed crimes, and one by one deals with the probability, based on both evidence and character analysis, that Richard comitted said crimes. Acknowledging the limited availability of contemporary evidence, Balchin suggests that the crimes that Richard is accused of committing were ascribed to him because of a "preconceived idea that he was a monster" (50). While Balchin does not claim to either convict Richard or to acquit him, he does suggest that there are other alternatives that are equally possible (51). This is something historians, both modern and early, for the most part, fail to do. If historians could place themselves in the role of prosecuting attorneys, where the burden of proof is beyond a reasonable doubt, in their assessment of historical figures, perhaps many of those figures would be located, not in the dock, but on the bench. As to Richard's possible deformity, Balchin makes no judgment, but if Richard were deformed, Balchin does not see it as an impediment, rather merely as fodder for the Shakespearean monster (52).

More modern historians, in general, do not fall as easily into pro and anti-Richard groups as do some of the earlier historians. In agreement with the eminent St. Thomas More, James Gairdner, largely a believer in the tyranny and evil of Richard III, acquits Richard of the murder of George, Duke of Clarence (53). In a rare historical glimpse into the accuracy of Shakespeare's plays, Gairdner supports the argument that Shakespeare owed his representation

of Richard III to St. Thomas More (albeit through Halle and Holinshed), and that although More tended toward exaggeration, Shakespeare embellished even further yet, under the guise of dramatic art (54). Ironically, Gairdner, writing from the safety of the late nineteenth century, long after the Tudor reign, writes of the ruthlessness of the House of York. He suggests that the Yorkists were, if not bent on eliminating all their rivals, at least guilty of having little patience for them (55). Gairdner offers no such comments about the early years of the Tudor dynasty, wherein, by the end of the reign of Henry VIII, no members of the House of York were left to survive. Although Gairdner suggests that other writers have commented on both Richard's birth and later physical appearance, he limits his remarks to Richard's placement in the family order, and his infirmity, if it existed, did not deter him in battle(56).

Sir Charles Oman, a non-partisan (i.e., neither Lancastrian nor Yorkist in sympathy) historian, analyzed Richard in ***The History of England from the Accession of Richard II to the Death of Richard III.*** Because Oman wrote a political history, no mention of Richard's appearance was included. Regarding culpability in the trial and execution of Clarence, however, Oman is straightforward and clear, "In after years it was reported that Edward had been incited both by the queen and her relatives, and by the Duke of Gloucester, to destroy his brother, but there is ample evidence that he required no urging and that the tragedy was of his own contriving" (57).

Perhaps the most well-known and widely accepted of Richard's historians is Paul Murray Kendall. In Kendall's ***Richard the Third,*** Richard becomes a flesh and blood man. Charles Oman may be unbiased, Polydore Vergil may be the paid chronicler of Richard's successor, and Sir George Buck may be ready to grant Richard sainthood, but in all these characterizations Richard lack a well-rounded, fleshed-out persona. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the biographical nature of Kendall's work, rather than merely historical, no mention is made of Richard's supposed deformity. Kendall merely notes that, as a child, Richard was frail and often sickly (58). On the subject of Clarence's execution, Kendall provides actual dates in addition to his objection to Richard's involvement. Parliament convened to try Clarence for treason on 16 January 1478, but the sentence of death was not confirmed until February 18th (59). The protests that most historians allow Richard, at least to some degree, perhaps led to the drawn-out process of sentencing and actual execution.

In an appendix to ***Richard the Third,*** Kendall suggests a framework with which to view early historians of Richard III, "The forceful moral patterns of Vergil, the vividness of More, the fervor of Halle, and the dramatic exuberance of Shakespeare have endowed the Tudor myth with a vitality that is one of the wonders of the world. What a tribute this is to art; what a misfortune this is to history" (60). With all due respect to Kendall, it is quite likely that had the early historians not been so utterly malicious and so uniquely convincing, Richard III and his short reign would have slipped into the long dead Middle Ages. Because of their treatment of Richard III, scholars are constantly trying to frame a portrait of the *real* Richard. Maligned as he has been, he is alive and well in the hearts and minds of many historians. The same cannot be said of many other historical figures from the oft berated Middle Ages. Even Shakespeare, perhaps, had a soft spot for Richard III. The most greivous crime that has been laid at the doorstep of Richard is the murder of the Princes in the Tower (not dealt with here because Mancini, Richard's only true contemporary source, left after Richard's coronation) and Shakespeare deals with their murder, but off stage, not on. Ostensibly, this was because the Elizabethean audience was too sensitive to deal with the murder of two such young boys. This was the same audience that wasn't too sensitive to view the suicides of Romeo and Juliet, who were, in fact, not much older than the princes. Could it be that the Bard who depicted Richard as evil incarnate, in actuality had doubts about the commission of such a horrible crime, even by Richard III?

Richard III has been grist for both the literary and history mills for over five hundred years. Such noted personalities as Jane Austin, Sir Francis Bacon, and Charles Dickens have found Richard to be a worthy topic for their literary efforts. Still, the debate over whether he was a good man or a bad man continues to rage. Unfortunately, as Lamb suggests, the printing press which Richard so heartily supported may prove to be his worst enemy (61). Only time and the zealousness of future historians will tell whether Richard as a good man or no, even his bones lying at the bottom of the River Soar can no longer speak in his defense. Richard III is the only crowned English monarch not to have a sanctified burial place, and that includes King John, who virtually gave the monarchy away by signing the Magna Carta. Like all men, Richard III had his faults, but unlike most men, he was an anointed king, thus making his faults available to all who chose to focus on them. Richard deserved better treatment at the hands of both contemporary chroniclers and modern historians. In the case of Richard III, the saying "time heals all wounds" can only be true if further inquiries are made. Continued research and diligent

efforts by future historians alone can ensure that a more balanced assessment of Richard III will eventually emerge.

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