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"MY FEAREFULL SHADOW THAT STILL FOLLOWES ME": LITERARY AND ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF RICHARD III BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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Chtěla bych poděkovat svému vedoucímu, prof. PhDr. Martinu Hilskému, CSc., za podporu, povzbuzení, kritické poznámky a cenné rady, jež mi poskytoval v době psaní této práce i v průběhu celého mého studia. Byly to právě jeho semináře, stejně jako četné rozhovory o Shakespearovi, které mě přivedly na cestu zkoumání renesanční literatury.

Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This MA thesis examines the portrayal of King Richard III (1452-1485) in texts preceding William Shakespeare's canonical play on this subject. By analyzing a wide range of sources written between the 1480s and the 1590s, it traces how the reputation of Richard III as an epitome of a tyrant, a usurper and a royal murderer was created and consolidated. At the same time, special attention is paid to innovations and deviations from this interpretation that contributed to the diversification of the King's image. The first chapter covers some of the most significant historiographic works of the Tudor era: *The Second Continuation* of *The Crowland Chronicle*, chronicles by Polydore Vergil, Edward Hall, and Raphael Holinshed, Thomas More's historical narrative, as well as a less-known manuscript by Dominic Mancini who described the early months of the reign of Richard III. The second chapter examines the transformation of the historical topic into poetry. The image of Richard III is analyzed in as diverse sources as, on the one hand, a popular ballad and, on the other hand, a prominent poetically-didactic work *A Mirror for Magistrates*. The representation of Richard III on the English stage is discussed in the third chapter in connection with Thomas Legge's university drama *Richardus Tertius* and the anonymous play *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*. It is not only their facticity, but also their literary quality, and a specificity of their representation of Richard III that is examined in these texts. Furthermore, the texts are discussed in terms of their treatment of particularly controversial points, such as the King's alleged deformity or the description of the Battle of Bosworth and its aftermath.

key words: Richard III, William Shakespeare, Crowland Chronicle, Polydore Vergil, Thomas More, Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed, A Mirror for Magistrates, Thomas Legge, The True Tragedy of Richard the Third, chronicles, histories, drama, ballads

ABSTRAKT

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá zobrazení krále Richarda III (1452-1485) v textech předcházejících kanonické hře Williama Shakespeara na toto téma. Prostřednictvím analýzy široké škály zdrojů napsaných mezi 80. lety 15. století a 90. lety 16. století tato práce sleduje, jak se utvářela a konsolidovala pověst Richarda III. jako ztělesněného tyrana, uzurpátora a královského vraha. Zvláštní pozornost je zároveň věnována inovacím a odchylkám od této interpretace, které přispěly k diverzifikaci králova obrazu. První kapitola se zabývá některými z nejvýznamnějších historiografických děl tudorovské éry: tzv. *Druhým pokračováním crowlandské kroniky* (*The Second Continuation* of *The Crowland Chronicle*), kronikami Polydora Vergila, Edwarda Halla a Raphaela Holinsheda, historickým vyprávěním Thomase Mora, stejně jako méně známým rukopisem Dominica Manciniho, jenž popsal první měsíce vlády Richarda III. Druhá kapitola zkoumá přenesení tohoto historického tématu do poezie. Obraz Richarda III. je analyzován v tak rozličných zdrojích, jako je na jedné straně lidová balada a na straně druhá významné poeticko-didaktické dílo *Zrcadlo pro vladaře* (*A Mirror for Magistrates*). Zobrazení Richarda III. na anglickém renesančním jevišti je probíráno ve třetí kapitole v souvislosti s univerzitním dramatem Thomase Legga *Richardus Tertius* a anonymní hrou *Skutečná tragédie o Richardu Třetím*. U těchto děl není zkoumána pouze jejich fakticita, ale také literární kvalita a specifičnost ztvárnění Richarda III. Dále jsou texty rozebírány z hlediska jejich zobrazení některých obzvláště sporných bodů, například královy domnělé znetvořenosti nebo popisu bitvy na bosworthském poli a jejích důsledků.

klíčová slova: Richard III, William Shakespeare, crowlandská kronika, Polydore Vergil, Thomas More, Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed, Zrcadlo pro vladaře, Thomas Legge, Skutečná tragédie o Richardu Třetím, historické hry, drama, balady

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1. INTRODUCTION

In February 2013, British scientists announced that the body of the last Yorkist king Richard III (1452-1485, ruling between 1483 and 1485) was found under a car park in Leicester. This information led to a sudden surge in interest in this historical figure which has, as a dramatic character, dominated the English stage for four centuries as the protagonist of William Shakespeare's most popular history play. Nonetheless, the genealogy of the character of Richard III goes beyond Shakespeare's portrayal. This thesis covers the period between the 1480s and the 1590s, i.e. the pre-Shakespearean representation of Richard III.

Three forms of texts are discussed in the following chapters: prose, poetry, and drama. It is beyond the limits of this thesis to give a full account of all the sources about Richard III written in this period. Selection needed to be made especially in the first chapter where only the most interesting historiographic works are discussed: *The Crowland Chronicle*, Dominic Mancini's manuscript *De Occupatione Regni Anglie*, Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia*, Thomas More's *The History of King Richard III*, Edward Hall's *The Union of the Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and York* and Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. Among the works that could also be included into this section are, for instance, John Rous's *Historia Regnum Angliae*, Robert Fabyan's chronice, Bernard André's *History of Henry VII* or John Stow's *The Annals of England*. While the first chapter is inevitably selective in its coverage of sources, the second and third chapters give accounts of all the extant poetic and dramatic works about Richard III, namely the ballad "The Song of Lady Bessy", several editions of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, Thomas Legge's trilogy *Richardus Tertius* and the anonymous play *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*. The only other work that could be added to the second chapter is Giles Fletcher's poem "Rising to the Crovvne of Richard the third". However, it was probably written at the same time as Shakespeare's *Richard III* and, hence, does not strictly fit the pre-Shakespearean framework of this thesis.

The title of this thesis refers to Richard III's monologue in *The True Tragedy* in which the King declares: "My fearefull shadow that still followes me / Hath sommond me before the seuere iudge." This particular line was selected as the emblem of

Richard's reputation that metaphorically accompanies him in all the analyzed works. Hence, one of the aims of this thesis is to examine in what manner various texts contribute to the general image of Richard III created between the late 15th and late 16th centuries. In this way, the thesis seeks to elaborate some of the claims made by George Bosworth Churchill in his book *Richard III up to Shakespeare* which, despite being published at the beginning of the 20th century, remains the only comprehensive study of all the Ricardian sources, fiction as well as non-fiction, known at that time. This thesis extends the scope of Churchill's examination by discussing Dominic Mancini's manuscript, discovered only in the 1930s, and by comparing and contrasting Churchill's views with recent scholarship, particularly with Alison Hanham's research on early chronicles. In terms of the method, however, this thesis takes a different course than Churchill's study by focusing primarily not on the factual aspect of the texts – such as in what particular pieces of information they differ from their predecessors – but on their specific literary qualities. Attention is therefore paid to such issues as, for instance, the way chronicles gradually discovered the dramatic potential of Richard III, the role of conscience in developing his psychological profile, and the construction of King's individuality in comparison to his allies and enemies. In the most general terms, by being a close study of a particular historical figure, this thesis aims not only to examine some of the developments in the portrayal of Richard III, but also to show the intellectual transaction between early modern chroniclers, historians, poets and playwrights.

2. RICHARD III IN CHRONICLES

2.1 *The Crowland Chronicle*

The earliest extant source that covers the events of Richard III's life and death is *The Crowland Chronicle*. It was written in the Benedictine abbey in Lincolnshire probably between 655 and 1486 and it mixes accounts of the national history with issues and dealings of the Benedictine community. The reign of Richard III is depicted in the so called *The Second Continuation* of the chronicle, finished one year after the battle of Bosworth by an anonymous author who was apparently familiar with the royal court. It is usually assumed that it might have been written by John Russell, the Chancellor under Richard III, who is known to have stayed at the Crowland Abbey at the time *The Second Continuation* was written. Another possible candidate is Henry Sharp, the former Protonotary of Chancery who is known to have accompanied Russell.[1]

Whoever the author of *The Second Continuation* is, his authorial voice is quite distinct as it is possible to notice certain linguistic devices which the he uses to proclaim his opinion and convey the events in quite a dramatic way. Among such features belongs occasional insertions of interjections ("O God!") as commentaries on the depicted events, the use of irony, and staging dramatic events.[2] The second of these features is especially remarkable, since the author consciously exploits the discrepancy between the form of his message and the true meaning of his words. Using the trope called paralipsis, he amplifies the suspicious death of King Henry VI by making a seemingly passing comment:

> I would pass over in silence the fact that at this period king Henry was found dead in the Tower of London; may God spare and grant time for repentance to the person, whoerer he was, who thus dared to lay sacrilegious hands upon the Lord's

[1] For a further discussion, see *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations: 1459-1486*, ed. Nicholas Pronay and John Cox (London: Sutton for Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, c1986) 78-98.

[2] It is not inappropriate to use theatrical vocabulary. Alison Hanham notes that certain lines in the chronicle function as stage directions which help to organise the whole text. Alison Hanham, *Richard III and His Early Historians, 1483-1535* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 78.

> anointed! Hence it is that he who perpetrated this has justly earned the title of tyrant, while he who thus suffered has gained that of a glorious Martyr.[3]

It is probably not accidental that, later on, he uses the term "present tyranny of these people"[4] to refer to the system of allies Richard III later established all over the kingdom.

In addition to this, attention is constantly paid to the gap between history as it was and the version that is narrated. For example, when the chronicler mentions Richard III's economic policy, which he criticises as ineffective, he remarks:

> Oh God I why should we any longer dwell on this subject, multiplying our recital of things so distasteful, so numerous that they can hardly be reckoned, and so pernicious in their example, that we ought not so much as suggest them to the minds of the perfidious. So too, with many other things which are not written in this book, and of which I grieve to speak.[5]

This commentary recalls the bleak confession of the Scrivener in Shakespeare's *Richard III* who witnesses how history is adjusted so that it may fit the current regime: "Bad is the world, and all will come to nought / When such ill dealings must be seen in thought."[6] Both statements suggest that there is a gap between reality and the way it is captured in historiography, and both invite the readers and audience to read between the lines.

The author's tendency to depict events rather dramatically, instead of merely listing them, may be demonstrated in the way Richard of Gloucester is introduced in the midst of a quarrel with his brother Clarence about his intention to marry Lady Anne. The argument between both brothers becomes a synecdoche of the tension in the whole kingdom which was not resolved by Henry VI's death and the accession of the Yorkist king Edward IV. The first appearance of Richard, Duke of Gloucester also offers the first comment on his character when he is called "crafty" by the author.[7]

Generally speaking, *The Crowland Chronicle* (together with Dominic Mancini's work, discussed later) proves that the negative view of Richard III is not merely the

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[3] *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland*, trans. Henry T. Riley (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908) 468.
[4] *Ingulph's Chronicle 496.*
[5] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 498.
[6] William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. James R. Siemon (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2009) 290, 3.6.13-14.
[7] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 469.

product of the Tudor propaganda but that it dates back to Richard III's times. The chronicler's attitude to the King is, in Keith Dockray's words, "generally hostile" and frequently resorting to "scathing comments"[8], such as in the case of the above mentioned economic policy. More interesting, however, are the subtle remarks which attempt to portray the King's personal qualities. They can be seen as embryonic forms of a dramatic portrayal which was later developed by playwrights including Shakespeare. As it has already been mentioned, Richard III is portrayed as a cunning man, though indisputably gifted as a statesperson, and as a dissembler who conceals his true feelings. This Machiavellian observation is obvious from Richard III's alleged reaction to the landing of Richmond at Milford: "On hearing of their arrival, the king rejoiced, or at least seemed to rejoice."[9] Nonetheless, such conclusions cannot help being speculative to some extent, of which the chronicler seems to be peculiarly aware: he occasionally detaches from particular pieces of information and presents them as rumours. Thus, Richard III is reported to have been troubled by a nightmare before the Battle of Bosworth, and appeared even "more livid and ghastly than usual"[10]. Moreover, it is remarked that the priests were not able to celebrate Mass that morning and no breakfast was served to "flagging spirits of the king"[11]. Such intimate details give a teleological tinge to the whole narration by making an impression that the morning before the battle was unholy and ominous for Richard III and foreshadowed the unfavourable outcome of the battle.

It is a peculiar discrepancy that while the chronicler does not hesitate to outline Richard's psychological profile, he does not make any references to his allegedly notoriously misshaped body. The only passage where the King's body is described is the description of the battle: "while fighting, and not in the act of flight, the said king Richard was pierced with numerous deadly wounds, and fell in the field like a brave and most valiant prince."[12] What follows is the account of a march of two kings, the fallen one and the victorious one: "Many other insults were heaped upon it [Richard III's corpse], and, not exactly in accordance with the laws of humanity, a halter being thrown round the neck, it was carried to Leicester."[13] The description of the procession ties in with the general

[8] Keith Dockray, *Richard III: A Source Book* (Stroud: The The History Press, 2000) xix.
[9] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 501.
[10] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 503.
[11] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 503.
[12] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 504.
[13] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 504.

interpretation of the outcome of the battle: a new monarch, Henry VII, was sent by God to liberate the English people from the tyranny they suffered under.[14]

2.2 Dominic Mancini: *De Occupatione Regni Anglie*

The portrayal of Richard III in *The Crowland Chronicle* only partly coincides with another contemporary account of the reign of Richard III which has survived to our times. The manuscript, called *De Occupatione Regni Anglie Per Ricardum Tercium Libellus*, was written by the Italian monk Dominic Mancini who stayed in England in 1483 and possibly arrived a year earlier.[15] Thus, despite spending only a few months in England, he was lucky to witness – or was given first-hand accounts of – the events ranging from Edward IV's death to Richard III's coronation. He described his stay in a manuscript written for Angelo Cato, the Archbishop of Vienna, which was discovered in Bibliothèque Municipale at Lille in 1934. However, although the document remains a unique and truly contemporary source of the first months of the rule of Richard III, the value of its immediacy is somehow diminished by the fact that Mancini probably did not speak English[16] and had to rely on informants. Moreover, he produced his manuscript as late as five months after he left England which blurred his memories and, as a consequence, he offers only a vague time framework that lacks exact dates.[17] Moreover, Mancini himself apologises for not including many names of particular places and people and makes it clear that his writing does not strive to be a full account of events, but rather "the effigy of a man, which lacks some of the limbs, and yet a beholder delineates for himself a man's form"[18].

Yet, even though Mancini refers to his record as a torso, it gives quite a clear idea of its author's attitude to Richard III who is said to have "usurped the kingdom"[19], "destroyed Edward's children and, then claimed for himself the throne"[20]. Mancini's bias

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[14] *Ingulph's Chronicle* 504.
[15] C. A. J. Armstrong, Introduction, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie Per Riccardum Tercium Libellus. English and Latin*, by Dominic Mancini (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 5.
[16] Jeremy Potter, *Good King Richard? An Account of Richard III and His Reputation 1483-1983* (London: Constable, 1983) 82.
[17] Hanham 65.
[18] Mancini 57.
[19] Mancini 59.
[20] Mancini 61.

against Richard III is also clear from the title and subtitles in his work: for instance, the first chapter introduces the reasons "to have prompted Richard to snatch the kingdom from his nephews"[21]. Still, although the manuscript seems to be hostile to the ruler, it includes several facts that challenge the traditional anti-Ricardian interpretation of history. For instance, it accuses Queen Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV's wife, of plotting against Clarence and being responsible for his execution. This opinion is in contrast to some later chronicles, *A Mirror for Magistrates* and Shakespeare's play which suggest that it was Richard himself who conspired against his brother. Surprisingly, Richard is captured at the moment of genuine grief which even his talent of dissembling cannot conceal: "[he] was so overcome with grief of his brother, that he could not dissimulate so well, but that he was overheard to say that he would one day avenge his brother's death."[22] What follows is a remarkably favourable description of Richard's character that is even more unexpected given the fact that it is found in the chapter dealing with his "snatching" the kingdom:

> The good reputation of his private life and public activities powerfully attracted the esteem of strangers. Such was his renown in warfare, that whenever a difficult and dangerous policy had to be undertaken, it would be entrusted to his discretion and his generalship. By these arts Richard acquired the favour of the people. And avoided the jealousy of the queen, from whom he lived far separated.[23]

Mancini's work is particularly attractive because it merges facts with anecdotes and rumours that are sometimes, though not always, announced by a phrase that relativizes the credibility of the information ("whether the charge was fabricated, or a real plot revealed, the duke of Clarence was accused"[24]). However, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie* is not only interesting for what it claims, but also for what it remains silent about. It is especially striking that there is no reference to Richard's physical features. Jeremy Potter suggests that it was because Mancini did not have a chance to spot Richard because he stayed in northern England until 1483.[25] However, Mancini's narrative overflows with catchy gossips (claiming, for example, that Edward IV tested the constancy of Elizabeth Woodville by threatening her with knife when trying to seduce her) which he must have

[21] Mancini 61.
[22] Mancini 63.
[23] Mancini 65.
[24] Mancini 63.
[25] Potter 82.

heard at second hand; therefore, it is unlikely that he would have omitted any reference to Richard's abnormal visage, had it spread among people as a hearsay. The absence of any comments on Richard III's body is especially paradoxical if compared to Mancini's vivid description of Edward IV, who is presented as a truly Falstaffian figure: jovial and outgoing, "in food and drink ... most immoderate: it was his habit, so I have learned, to take an emetic for the delight of gorging his stomach once more"[26]. It is also mentioned that the late King put on considerable weight due to his unhealthy habits, and "pursued with no discrimination the married and the unmarried the noble and lowly"[27].

In spite of these passages, however, Richard III remains the main focus of Mancini's attention. Similarly as in *The Crowland Chronicle*, he is depicted as a skilful and intelligent schemer. Writing letters is pointed out as a means of communication in which Richard proves particularly successful; thanks to it, he manages to persuade people by his eloquence, as well as argumentation. His letters are conveyed in such a dramatizing way that they are vaguely reminiscent of dramatic monologues. When persuading the counsellors to meet his demands related to his nephew's accession to the throne, Mancini's Richard uses a very effective ritualised language and invents an elaborate oath of loyalty in which emphasises that he was always devoted to Edward IV "and would be, if only permitted, equally loyal to his brother's son, and to all his brother's issue, even female, if perchance, which God forbid, the youth should die"[28]. His letters are said to have had a powerful effect on people, although critical voices were raised against them as well. On a different occasion, Mancini notes that "all praised the duke of Gloucester" when his letter was read out loud, but there were also those who "understood his ambition and deceit"[29]. Although the author does not pretend that he, too, considers Richard III to be a man of a particularly ambitious and deceitful nature, he is careful not to make any verdicts about such controversial issues as the disappearance of Edward IV's sons in the Tower of London. He hints at the possibility of their death, but refuses to specify whether and how it actually happened. The manuscript breaks off in 1483 and it gives the account of Richard III as a man whose accession to the throne was unlawful, but who was ruling quite prosperously at the moment Mancini left the country to return to continental Europe.

[26] Mancini 67.
[27] Mancini 67.
[28] Mancini 73.
[29] Mancini 83.

2.3 Polydore Vergil: *Anglica Historia*

If Mancini treats the topic of Richard III's rule rather selectively and covers only a short period in life, the ambition of Polydore Vergil (c. 1470-1555), an Italian humanist who became an English subject in 1510, was considerably different. Vergil was a renowned scholar fostering contacts with Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More. His aim was to apply modern humanistic principles on English history, and he did not hesitate to challenge some of English national myths, for example by claiming that Brutus was a mere mythical character. In his famous *Anglica Historia* (*History of England*), published in 1513, he emphasises the providential nature of history in which Richard III has a clearly delineated role of the antagonist and enemy to the Tudor dynasty. Vergil's concept of history is a complex process governed by the principle of cause and effect, pervaded by God's intention to teach people lessons through their own past. To reach this effect, Vergil often resorts to ruminations and explanatory commentaries. His remark upon the death of William Hastings who is sentenced to death by Richard Gloucester exemplifies this approach:

> So the lord Hastinges learnyd, by his owne losse at the last, that the law of nature wherof the gospel speaketh (what soever you will that men do unto yow, do you so also unto them) can not be broken without punishment. He was one of the smyters of prince Edward, king Henry VI. ... Would God such kind of examples might once be a learnng for them who think yt lawfull to do whatsoever lyketh them.[30]

By comparing particular passages, Hanham concludes that Vergil must have been familiar with *The Crowland Chronicle*, or with an ur-text which both he and the Crowland chronicler incorporated into their works. The Italian scholar exerted considerable influence on Renaissance historiography and "very soon after it appeared in print, English chroniclers paid Vergil the compliment of plagiarizing his book on a large scale"[31]. Translated passages from his work were added by Richard Grafton to John Hardyng's rhymed chronicle, which he first published in 1543, and, similarly, Edward Hall used Vergil as the source for his *Union of the Two Noble Families*, also printed by Grafton in 1548.

[30] Polydore Vergil, *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, A.D. 1485-1537*, ed. and trans. Denys Hay (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1950) 181.
[31] Hanham 144.

Vergil's *History of England* remains the most comprehensive account of Richard III's reign. Stylistically, it develops several dramatic moments and adds further details to the story. For example, what Mancini presents as a letter to the council which decides about the coronation of Edward V is rendered by Vergil into a direct speech which Richard delivers with considerable success. The Duke self-fashions himself as an honest man whose sole interest is the prosperity of commonwealth: "at my hand yow both may and owght to expect all that is good and honorable."[32] Vergil is also the first one to escalate tension between Gloucester and Queen Elizabeth, which is later effectively exploited by Thomas Legge in his drama *Richardus Tertius*. Richard insists that the kingdom should be purged from the "womanishe disease creping into owr commonwealthe"[33] and Edward V's siblings ought to be released from the sanctuary to which they resorted for fear of their uncle Richard, so that their seclusion does not stain the pomp of the coronation. This comment emphasises the notion of Richard as a skilful organiser who understands the art of public image-making and disseminates rumours for his own purpose – for instance, about the murder of his nephews, spread in order to proclaim Richard the only living pretender to the throne.[34]

Furthermore, Vergil portrays great tension between Richard and Queen Elizabeth who is shown as a rather stubborn and foresighted woman. She does not submit to Buckingham, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other noblemen, refuses to leave the sanctuary and, "after many fayre promises"[35], allows only her younger son Richard, Duke of York to be sent from Westminster to the Tower. Adversity between Elizabeth and Richard is escalated by Richard's accusation – again delivered in direct speech, rather than being merely reported – that the Queen practised witchcraft against him due to which he cannot rest, drink and loses appetite and force. In the effort to convey such a dramatic speech, Vergil even inserts into Richard's monologue a comment which is very much reminiscent of a stage direction: "all the partes of my body do above my measure, as you se (and with that he shewyd them his arme), faule away."[36] The conflict between Richard and Elizabeth, depicted in such a detail for the first time ever, climaxes in the scene where the Queen learns of her sons' death. Vergil very persuasively describes her at the moment

[32] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 178.
[33] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 177.
[34] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 189.
[35] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 178.
[36] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 180.

of pain when she faints and, after recovering, begins to weep, strikes her breast and tears her hair, bitterly accusing herself of foolishness and promising revenge to Richard III.

It is clear from these lines that, when reading Vergil's work in the context of future dramatic portrayals of Richard III, one notices that the historian crafts Richard III as a protagonist, a plausible character who, when arranging the murder of his nephews, is split between his "desire of usurping the kingdom" and the grim prospect of committing "so haynous wickedness (for a guiltie conscience causeth thoffendor to have dew punishment alway in imagination before his eyes)"[37]. Moments like this inspire Hanham to make an appreciative comment on Vergil's ability to describe human decisions that shape history, rather than presenting history as "the record of inevitable events"[38]. *History of England* also includes passages that are visually effective, such as the description of Richard III who "had made himself mightie, came in royal manner"[39] into St. Paul's Cathedral, accompanied by men in arms, to hear in person Dr. Raphael Shaw's sermon in which his deceased brother Edward IV was declared illegitimate.

However, Vergil not only focuses on the ruler, his allies and enemies, but he also powerfully renders the atmosphere of creeping horror that overwhelms the kingdom as Gloucester is climbing to the throne. After Hastings is executed, the scream "Treason!" was reportedly resonating through the country, passed on from city to city by citizens who were ignorant of the cause and dully repeated the exclamation like an echo. However, after realizing the true reason of Hastings's execution, "then began every man on his owne behalf to feare the hart of inward enemyes, and to look for nothing els but cruell slawghter or miserable flight"[40]. On the occasion of Richard's coronation, ordinary people are reported to have been petrified by fear.[41]

The description of Richard III's death is no less vivid than the passages about his life. The Battle of Bosworth is preceded by the comment that the King suffered from a nightmare. Vergil, nevertheless, does not miss the opportunity to comment lengthily on the dream being a projection of Richard's troubled mind burdened by sins, and he seems to stop himself only when even he realizes that his lecture is getting too lengthy and digressive:

[37] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 178-9.
[38] Hanham 143.
[39] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 183.
[40] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 181.
[41] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 187.

> But (I believe) yt was no dreame, but a conscience guiltie of haynous offences, a conscience (I say) so much the more grievous as thoffences wer more great, which ... in the last day of owr lyfe ys woont to represent to us the memory of our sinnes commyttyed ... that, being upon good cause penitent at that instant for our evell led lyfe, we may be compellyd to go hence in heaviness of hart. Now I return to my purpose.[42]

The chronicle is generally favourable to the Tudors and presents Richard III as "an unfortunate incident that preceded, and paved the way for, the triumphant establishment of a new dynasty"[43], but it should be emphasised that Vergil's perspective does not make him openly biased. Thus, he credits the King with courage, despite mentioning that he did not go into the battle with his usual mettle as he was distressed by the nightmare.[44] Richard III is reported to have overthrown Richmond's standard and fought successfully against one John Cheney, "a man of much fortitude, far exceeding the common sort"[45]. Vergil further informs that the ruler refused to escape, knowing that he was hated by his subjects, and decided to continue fighting in the battle in which he was killed "fighting manfully in the thickest presse of his enemyes"[46] after Stanley joined Richmond with this army of three thousand men. His body was carried to the abbey in Leicester, "nakyd of all clothing, and layd upon an horse bake with the armes and legges hanging down on both sydes" which Vergil calls "a miserable spectacle in good sooth"[47], but perfectly matching the life and reputation of Richard III. Vergil concludes his *History* by the description of Richard's body (deformed, with one shoulder higher, a short face "which semyd to savor of mischief, and utter evidently craft and deceyt"[48]) and personality (courageous, having "a sharp witte, provident and subtyle, apt both to counterfayt and dissemble"[49], and having a bad habit of bighting his lips).

[42] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 222.
[43] Hanham 127.
[44] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 222.
[45] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 224.
[46] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 224.
[47] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 226.
[48] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 227.
[49] Vergil, *Anglica Historia* 227.

2.4 Thomas More: *The History of King Richard III*

> Richard the third ... was in witte and courage egall with either of them [Edward IV and Clarence], in bodye and prowess farre vnder them bother, little of stature, ill fetured of limes, croke backed, his left shoulder much higher then his right, hard fauoured of visage, and such as is in states called warlye, in other menne otherwise. He was malicious, wrathfull, enuious, and from afore his birth, euer frowarde. It is for trouth reported, that the Duchess his mother had so much a doe in her trauaile, that shee could not bee deliuered of hym vncutte: and that he came into the worlde with the feete forwarde, as menne bee borne outward, and (as the fame runneth) also not vntothed ... None euill was hee in the war, as to whiche his disposition was more metely then for peace. ... Hee was close and secrete, a deepe dissimuler, lowlye of counteynaunce, arrogant of heart, outwardly coumpinable where he inwardely hated, not letting to kisse whome he thought to kyll: dispitious and cruell, not for euillwill always, but ofter for ambicion ... Frende and foo was much what indifferent, where his advantage grew, he spared no mans deathe, whole life withstood his purpose.[50]

Vergil's work earned considerable influence in the Renaissance, however, it was only the description of "malicious, wrathfull, evuious" Richard III, created by Thomas More (1478-1535) in his *The History of King Richard III*, that solidified his notorious image. More's text was taken over and magnified by other authors until the monstrous image of a royal usurper reached its climax in Shakespeare's superb rendering. More wrote the work in English and Latin probably between 1514 and 1518, leaving both versions unfinished. At first, the English text was not published separately but was attached to John Hardyng's metrical chronicle by Richard Grafton in 1543. In 1547, the same printer became the literary executor of a lately deceased chronicler Edward Hall, whose work he proceeded to publish in two editions, in 1548 and 1550. Hall made use of More's text, so the 1548 edition of Hall is the first printed work in which Thomas More is credited with having written *The History of King Richard III*. In 1557, More's nephew William Rastell published the English version again, adding several parts translated from the Latin version which had not been published separately until 1566.

[50] Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963) 7-8.

More offers an engaging portrait of Richard III which might have been inspired by Vergil's work. Certainly, More elaborates some of Vergil's observations to create a highly negative portrait of Richard III; in fact, More's Richard is so monstrous that he acquires uncannily grotesque features. What is less clear, and remains a source of dispute among scholars, is the intention of this work. If More was writing a chronicle, why did he make a gross factual mistake in the very first sentence when he made King Edward IV thirteen years older in the time of his death? If he was writing fiction, why did he emphasise his effort to give a true picture of the events and why did he point out his effort to distinguish facts from rumours? Many arguments have been raised in favour of both points, and no universal scholarly agreement has been reached so far. Hanham believes that More wrote a dramatic and actually highly satirical piece in prose, using Richard III as an exaggerated example to denounce tyranny in general. This follows a claim, made earlier by Paul Murray Kendall, that More might have used the topic of Richard III to show indirectly his "intense dislike of Henry VII's dissimulation and dark dealings"[51]. On the other hand, in their recent study of links and differences between Shakespeare and More, Charles and Elaine Hallett insist that a distinction must be preserved between More's goal of a historian and that of Shakespeare as a playwright.[52] Judith H. Anderson attempts to resolve this conflict by seeing More's work as a "life-writing" that is fundamentally influenced by his artistic approach which draws on a combination and interpenetration of history and fiction, subjective and objective, and of "imagined and exterior truth"[53].

Judging the work from the point of view of literary aesthetic, More's *History* is self-consciously dramatic (employing, for example, theatrical imagery of scaffold when discussing politics), though it is perhaps too much to say that it follows the structure of early modern drama because it is divided into five acts, as Hanham suggests.[54] However, she is certainly right in pointing out that while Vergil inquires about history, More interprets it through what Hanham calls "imaginative reconstruction"[55]. More includes very detailed passages of various characters' utterances (such as that of Edward IV on his deathbed, the dialogue between the Archbishop and the Queen, or a secret disputation

[51] Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955) 423.
[52] Charles A. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett, *The Artistic Links between William Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 22.
[53] Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, c1984) 109.
[54] Hanham 174-185.
[55] Hanham 155.

between the Bishop of Ely and Buckingham), which, by definition, cannot be historically fully credible. Nonetheless, they very effectively bring history to life and re-present it to the readers. More skilfully works with the notion of memory and remembering, stressing the fact that what he narrates is not distant history, but the past which is still living because some of the protagonists, such as Jane Shore, are still alive as well. In his valuable article on the transmission of memories across several generations in the 16th century, Philip Schwyzer observes that people used to refer to the era of Richard III to "interpret and potentially intervene in the present moment by aligning it with a specific moment in the past"[56]. Applying this idea to the text, it may be concluded that More did not focus exclusively on conveying historical truth but strived both to comment on the present by depicting the past, and to revive the past to make it sufficiently vivid for this purpose.

Indeed, More created Richard III as an enthralling figure that wins the readers' attention; but despite the impressiveness of his presence in the work, More's Richard is peculiarly hollow as a personality. He is defined by his misdeeds and by the outward description which is so monstrous and exaggerated that it is hardly believable, and More consciously formulates his ideas to balance the tension between fiction and history. In relation to the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, where the description of Richard's disorder escalates into that of his unnatural birth, Anderson poignantly states:

> Baby Richard with fangs is a hard fact to chew, let alone to swallow. Further, More knows it. His phrasing shows that he does not accept these tales uncritically. ... But the careful arrangement of facts from more to less credible – cutting, to breech birth, to teeth – and the cumulative impact of so many striking facts suggest that More would like to believe them or, rather, would like his readers to be inclined to do so.[57]

Nonetheless, More does not make any attempt to elaborate those parts in Vergil which present Richard as a human being trapped in the process of decision-making and considering consequences of his actions. If Hanham praises Vergil for showing history as a story shaped by people's decisions, then More makes one step back by showing history as a story that is firmly set, and characters – most of all, the villainous monarch – simply

[56] Philip Schwyzer, "Lees and Moonshine: Remembering Richard III, 1485–1635," *Renaissance Quarterly* 63.3 (Fall 2010): 880.
[57] Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, c1984) 87.

playing their parts in it. If one does not want to interpret this as a feeble narration of history – and the effectiveness and attractiveness of the whole work is such that it defies such a presumption – one must see it as More's authorial intention. This idea is supported by the fact that More indeed proves capable of creating vivid characters, and not merely walking epitomes of singular magnified qualities as is the case of Richard III. These characters earn more than a passing comment and are often given space to show their specific qualities: for example, the Queen proves her defiance in her dialogue with the Archbishop, and Buckingham shows his eloquence in the scene of persuasion of the London citizens.

Moreover, the author's occasional effort to render history, instead of merely recording it, leads to scenes of an unusual literary quality. This is the case of Ralph Shaw's sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral in which he preaches about the illegitimacy of Edward IV and his children, and promotes Richard III as a new sovereign. More gives a full account of Shaw's arguments and proceeds to mention that, at that point, Richard was meant to turn up among the people to give weight to the priest's words. However, due to "the protectors negligence, or the preachers ouermuche diligence"[58], as More states with a fitting internal rhyme, the right moment was missed: Richard failed to appear and the priest had to start speaking about non-related topics, only to repeat the last part of his sermon once the protector finally entered the cathedral. The author, however, does not merely state that the preacher repeated himself, but he re-writes the preacher's previously elaborated arguments. After he concludes this lengthy passage, he notes that "the people wer so farre fro crying king Richard, that thei stode as thei had bene turned into stones for wonder of this shamefull sermon"[59].

An analogical scene is described only a few pages later when the Duke of Buckingham delivers his speech to London citizens, in which he eloquently and very lengthily fulminates against Edward IV and his illegitimate posterity and urges the citizens to show their favour for Richard III by crying out his name. However, "all was husht and mute, and not one word aunswered thereunto"[60]. So the "meruailously abashed"[61] Buckingham, on the advice of the Mayor, repeats his proclamation in a louder voice, but the only response is silence, "al was as styl as the midnight"[62]. Then the Mayor suggests

[58] More 68.
[59] More 68.
[60] More 75.
[61] More 75.
[62] More 75.

that people are used to listening to the Recorder, so one called Fitzwilliam is called and repeats Buckingham's words, but with the same effect. The Duke addresses the silenced crowd again and pleads for any reactions, in response to which people begin to murmur and whisper indecipherably. The whole scene is terminated by several hired men who begin to cry out King Richard's name, and Buckingham gratefully makes use of this opportunity to finish his proclamation and give a report about it.

Even such a simplified account of these two scenes conveys the feeling of awkwardness, embarrassment, and tension between Shaw's and Buckingham's eloquence and the citizens' silence. What distinguished More from Vergil and his predecessors, and what gives his work an eminent literary quality, is the fact that he does not stick to the proportional temporal framework of chronicles and is willing to dwell on a single scene for several pages, while elsewhere he compresses a much longer time into the same amount of space. In doing so, and by employing repetition as a literary figure, he enables his readers to experience history with immediacy which fact-focused chronicles could never supply.

2.5 Edward Hall: *The Union of the Noble and Illustrate Families of Lancaster and York*

Both Vergil and More served as an inspiration for two chronicles that directly influenced Shakespeare's work: Edward Hall's *The Union of the Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and York* (1548) and Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577). Neither work claims to be an original production, although cases of individual authorial input, or alterations, can be traced. Generally speaking, Edward Hall (1498-1547) draws on Vergil when depicting the history up to Edward IV, resorts to More (using the version added to John Hardyng's chroncile) to cover the first part of the rule of Richard III, and returns to Vergil to depict the events leading to the Battle of Bosworth which are missing in More's *History*.

Despite being heavily influenced by these and other sources, enumerated at the beginning of his book, Hall does not plainly imitate them. Rather, he paraphrases them to shape his image of Richard III as a formidable man whose ambition and inherently bad nature caused his downfall. More overtly than its predecessors, Hall's chronicle aspires to be didactic in the same way as *A Mirror for Magistrates*. The author animates Richard III

and amplifies his wickedness to turn him into a warning example for current monarchs, and to emphasise the contrast between him and good rulers in the history, "for contrary set to contrary is more apparaunt, as whyte ioyned with black, maketh the fayrer shewe".[63]

George Bosworth Churchill carefully traces occasions where Hall diverges from his most immediate sources.[64] These transpositions of meaning are often linguistically very subtle. In direct comparison to the original text, they show how even the slightest change in translation may shift the overall meaning. For instance, Vergil describes the King as "lyttle of stature, deformyd of body"[65]. Hall expands his account: "As he was small and litle of stature so was he of body greately deformed."[66] Hall's only innovation from Vergil which Churchill pins down is the battle scene where Richard rushes into combat with "proud mynde and an arrogat stomache"[67] to decide about his life. He acts like a player who is ready to determine his fate – either to secure the crown, or to secure fame by a heroic death. Churchill notices that the same emphasis on fame is mentioned later on in drama, particularly in the anonymous play *The True Tragedy*.[68]

2.6 Raphael Holinshed: *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*

The account of the English history which arguably most influenced William Shakespeare was Raphael Holinshed's (1529-1580) *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, which Shakespeare read in the second edition, published in 1587. Holinshed draws heavily on Hall, sometimes copying whole passages without any changes, but he alters the verbose style of *The Union*. Apparently having a "severe contempt for Hall's prolixity"[69], he cuts the introduction in which Richard III is presented as the epitome of malicious kingship. At the same time, he preserves Hall's conclusion in which his predecessor states that if Richard had been content with his position of a protector, the country would have

[63] Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle* (London: printed for J. Johnson; F.C. and J. Rivington; T. Payne; Wilkie and Robinson; Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and J. Mawman, 1809) 374.
[64] George Bosworth Churchill, *Richard III up to Shakespeare* (Dursley: Alan Sutton, 1976) 175-200.
[65] Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, ed. Henry Ellis (London: printed for the Camden Society, 1844) 227.
[66] Hall 421.
[67] Hall 421.
[68] Churchill 204.
[69] Churchill 212.

flourished and he would have been as praised as he is now scorned; under these circumstances, however, his death and burial accordingly reflect his unjust rule. Thus, both authors refer to the principle of divine justice when depicting the fate of Richard III's body. Holinshed goes even further when ruminating that no punishment of Richard III may be too cruel, and no-one should be surprised if God punished him "with ten thousand torments".[70]

Although Holinshed does not claim to build up his story on the principle of opposition of good and evil kingship, as Hall declares at the beginning of his chapter on Richard III, he intrinsically follows this paradigm: the rightfulness of a rigid punishment of the tyrant is contrasted with the alleged benevolence of his successor. Although Holinshed follows Hall in giving the account of Richard III's corpse, stripped naked except for "a clout to couer his priuie members"[71] and taken to Leicester, he also adds that Richmond ordered a tomb with an alabaster picture of the killed monarch to be erected over his burial place. This commentary makes the impression that the chronicler praises Henry VII for "dooing that honour to his enimie"[72]. Nonetheless, the ultimate effect of the comment is more complex as Holinshed places this act in analogy to Richard III's decision to move the body of Henry VI – for whose death he was personally responsible, according to some accounts – from Chertsey to Windsor. This is not to deny, however, that Holinshed interprets the outcome of the War of the Roses as the result of crimes committed by both houses, the York dynasty being more brutal in pursuing the crown than the Lancastrian one.[73] The accession of Henry VII is seen as a new promise for a country to recover from the feud and retrieve inner stability.

Holinshed's work acquires importance as a prominent source of inspiration for Shakespeare, rather than being a significant and original contribution to the characterization of Richard III. Holinshed's account of the years 1483-1485 remains an abridged version of Hall's account, and his Richard III is only slightly more blackened by the additions attached to Hall's text. Churchill poignantly summarises: "Thus though Shakespeare may in writing Richard III have based his play almost wholly on the form of the saga which he found in Holinshed, yet in the formation of the saga Holinshed is of very

[70] Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, vol. 3 (London: printed for J. Johnson; F.C. and J. Rivington; T. Payne; Wilkie and Robinson; Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and J. Mawman, 1808) 447.
[71] Holinshed 446.
[72] Holinshed 447.
[73] Holinshed 478.

slight importance."[74] To add one more observation to it, Holinshed becomes more interesting when one compares his work with dramatic portrayals. In other words, it is important to notice how selectively Shakespeare and other playwrights adapted the *Chronicle* into drama. Shakespeare concluded his play by Richmond's oration promising future prosperity to the kingdom. Thus, he avoided mentioning the humiliating journey of Richard III's body to Leicester but also missed the opportunity to glorify Richmond for doing justice to his opponent by building him a tomb.

[74] Churchill 223.

3. RICHARD III IN POETRY

3.1 “The Song of Lady Bessy”

Throughout the 15th and the 16th century, Richard III was captured in as diverse texts as *The Crowland Chronicle*, Dominic Mancini’s *De Occupatione Regni Anglie*, Polydore Vergil’s *Anglica Historia*, Thomas More’s *The History of King Richard III*, and chronicles by Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed. Yet, paradoxically, in spite of the singularity of this character, his first appearance in popular culture is related to a ballad in which he is only a minor character.

The song about “Lady Bessy”, i.e. Elizabeth of York, the daughter of Edward IV and later the wife of Richmond, exists in two versions that differ considerably as the result of a long process of oral transmission of the ballad before it was recorded in a written form.[75] The first version, based on a – now lost – manuscript written during the reign of Charles II, bears the title “The Most Pleasant Song of Lady Bessy, The Eldest Daughter of King Edward the Fourth, and how She Married King Henry the Seventh of the House of Lancaster” and was printed three times: as a separate publication in 1829[76] with notes by Thomas Heywood; in *The Palatine Anthology: A Collection of Ancient Poems and Ballads, Relating to Lancashire and Cheshire* (1850), edited by Esquire James Orchard Halliwell; and in *Ballads and Songs of Derbyshire* by Llewellynn Jewitt (1867). The second version, preserved in a MS. Harl. 367 in the British Library, was printed twice: in Halliwell’s *The Palatine Anthology*, alongside the first version, and in the third volume of *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances*, edited by John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall (1868).[77] Furthermore, this version appears in two subversions, both differing slightly from one another. An older subversion contains references to Elizabeth I, “our comlye queene”, in the third and penultimate lines, and

[75] James Gairdner, *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898) 345.
[76] Churchill gives a wrong date, 1809. Churchill 231.
[77] Chruchill’s account of the publication of this ballad is erroneous. He mentions that it was published by Heywood, Halliwell, and in *Bishop Percy’s Folio Manuscript*. Thus, he not only fails to mention Llewellynn Jewitt’s anthology of folk poetry in Derbyshire, but also conflates a publication history of two quite distinct versions of the ballad. Churchill 231.

must have been transcribed around 1600.[78] A newer subversion comes from the time of James I and the phrase "our comlye queene" is replaced by "our comelye King". It also contains other minor changes in the word sequence, spelling or the choice of particular expressions. Halliwell's anthology includes the older, "Queen" version, while the *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript* opted for the newer version and listed the variations between both texts in footnotes. Overall, the second version of the ballad preserves a more archaic spelling and syntax and, as Halliwell notes, is "of much better authority"[79] than "The Most Pleasant Song of Lady Bessy". However, neither of the two versions was coeval with the depicted events, although Heywood, the first editor, asserts the opposite.[80]

The ballad begins with a tribute to God and a monarch, and follows Princess Elizabeth's effort to persuade Lord Stanley to rebel against Richard III and support Richmond, at that time residing in France. She claims that her father Edward IV prophesised that neither of his male children will live to rule, but she will become the queen. Stanley seemingly hesitates in order to test her earnestness, but then agrees, confessing he was harbouring the thoughts of deposing Richard III for a long time. They compose letters which are sent to several potential allies and are delivered by Humphrey Brereton who is in Stanley's service, and who was possibly the author of this ballad. He meets various noblemen who offer their service, money and soldiers, he is introduced to Richard III himself, and then sails to France to propose Elizabeth to Richmond who – after considering the proposal for three weeks – agrees and lands in Britain to fight against the King. A description of the battle manoeuvres is given, followed by the final scene in Richard III's life when the King is betrayed by his allies, refuses to flee and dies in the battle. As his naked body is taken to Leicester, the procession meets Elizabeth who taunts her dead uncle. The royal wedding of Richmond and Elizabeth is held afterwards.

Diverse opinions have been voiced about the credibility of this ballad. In his introduction, Heywood illuminates the historical background of the described events and gives details about the lives of Elizabeth and Brereton, but he does not comment on

[78] *The Palatine Anthology: A Collection of Ancient Poems and Ballads, Relating to Lancashire and Cheshire*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: C. and J. Adlard, 1850) 2.
[79] Halliwell 3.
[80] Thomas Heywood, Preface, *The Most Pleasant Song of Lady Bessy, The Eldest Daughter of King Edward the Fourth, and how She Married King Henry the Seventh of the House of Lancaster* (London: Richard Taylor, 1829) v.

the issue of authenticity. Halliwell, who claims to be familiar with Heywood's edition, is rather cautious. According to him, the lack of relevant historical sources makes it impossible to verify the events depicted in the ballad, the work which is abundant in an intriguing number of "suppositious particulars, and which may well be considered a very unsafe historical guide"[81]. James Gairdner is sceptical about its credibility because it contains numerous anachronisms and facts he attributes to the writer's imagination; nonetheless, he also, rather diplomatically, acknowledges that there is "a great deal of truth in the poem, which is not altogether easy to separate from the fantastic additions which the author has made to the plain and simple facts".[82] Churchill is generally more dismissive, claiming that the very idea of Elizabeth organising a conspiracy against Richard III is so "palpably impossible as to make any other departure from history entirely natural"[83]. On the contrary, Hales and Furnivall credit the song with "annalistic air" which supports its authenticity; moreover, they find it improbable that all the numerous details would be invented by some author who clearly does not betray signs of "brilliant imagination" and seems to be merely putting down what he witnessed.[84] Nonetheless, even if the idea of a conspiracy has real basis, the version offered in the ballad would be distorted by the purposeful glorification of the Stanley family. In his unpublished dissertation about poetry related to this House, Ian Forbes Baird observes: "The events are therefore carefully selected to reveal the Stanleys in the best light, and where their actions are less than glorious, they have to be either concealed or excused."[85] In spite of the abundance of conflicting scholarly opinions on the historical authenticity of the song, one thing is unarguable: the form of the earliest non-chronicle rendering of Richard III testifies a deeply enrooted general dislike of Richard III among the public. Ballads belonged to the most popular forms of culture and they both reflected feelings of the populace and helped to form them.[86] Serving as a piece of evidence that Richard III's unpopularity has a very long cultural history, "The Song of Lady Bessy" is to some extent analogous to Mancini's *De Occupatione Regni Anglie*.

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[81] Halliwell 1.
[82] Gairdner 345.
[83] Churchill 235.
[84] "Lady Bessy," *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances*, vol. 3, ed. John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1868) 320.
[85] Ian Forbes Baird, "Poems Concerning the Stanley Family (Earls of Derby) 1485-1520", diss. (University of Birmingham, 1989) 60.
[86] C. H. Firth, *The Ballad History of the Reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII* (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1908) 21.

To paraphrase T. S. Eliot, the ballad seems to be “mixing memory and desire”, merging candid recollections of facts and conscious re-shaping of the past to make it fit the contemporary interpretation of history. Facts and fiction are difficult to untwine, as Gairdner is aware, and this process becomes even more complicated as the ballad switches between “factual-ish” and fictional modes in individual sections. For example, the opening part, depicting secret negotiations between Elizabeth and Stanley, seems to be most fictitious one as it contains peculiar narrative details, such as that of Humphrey Brereton who, when getting properly dressed, “cast vpon [himself] a gowne, a paire of slippers on his ffeete”[87] before he opened the door to Elizabeth who came to plead him to deliver letters on her behalf. At the same time, this section is often quoted as a proof that the author must have been intimately familiar with Stanely’s household, which would argue for Brereton’s authorship and enhance the factual credibility of the ballad. In comparison to it, the third part consists of a sequence of stanzas in which noblemen agree to participate in the rebellion and make very concrete promises: Thomas Stanley gives Elizabeth forty pounds straight away and pledges to send 20,000 men into the battle, his younger brother William is willing to send 10,000 men, Thomas Stanley’s son George, Lord Strange offers 1,000 marks, while his brother claims that he cannot afford to donate any money, but promises to participate personally in the battle against Richard III.[88] This passage records a lot of specific information, and possesses what Hales and Furnivall call “annalistic air”.

From a literary perspective, the first part of the ballad is of the greatest interest. The author supplies such an intriguing portrayal of Princess Elizabeth that it prompts the first commentator, Thomas Heywood, to remark: “in person, ‘Lady Bessy’ must have been very attractive; and in looking at the sweet feminine expression of her portrait, we both marvel and regret that such an one was ever the bride of the coldhearted and selfish Henry Tudor.”[89] Heywood’s emphasis on her “sweet femininity” is significant. Elizabeth is described as young[90] and occasionally betrays rather stereotypical signs of female frailty, such as when she collapses after Stanley seemingly dismisses her plan of a rebellion.[91] Yet, she also represents the active element

[87] *Percy's Folio* 332, ll. 273-4.
[88] *Percy's Folio* 344-5, ll. 585-616.
[89] Heywood xvi.
[90] *Percy's Folio* 322, ll. 13-16.
[91] *Percy's Folio* 325, ll. 117-118.

in the story, the instigator of events which lead to the final downfall of her uncle. Her agency is manifested at various levels: for instance, not only is she able to read and write, but she even serves as a scribe for Stanley. Education was becoming increasingly important in the life and shaping of a 16th century woman, as Baldassarre Castiglione's popular "survival handbook" for a life at a court, titled *The Courtyer*, suggests. Castiglione summaries favourable qualities of noblewomen at a court: "To be learned. To be seene in the most necessarie languages. To drawe and peinct. To daunse. To deuise sportes and pastimes."[92] Nonetheless, there was still a great discrepancy in the level of education available to women from upper and lower classes, and knowledge of reading, writing and foreign languages remained a domain of the elites, to which the king's daughter naturally belonged.

Even more importantly, through a literary device of *diegesis*, Elizabeth summarises the past events including the murder of her brothers and Buckingham's execution. However, she does not simply narrate their stories; she narrates them teleologically, trying to persuade Stanley that her future role of the queen of England has already been prophesised in the book her father gave her on his deathbed (47-52), and if Stanely does not support her plan, he shall meet the fate of Richard III's victims, Henry VI and Buckingham. In a speech that sounds more like that of a commander-in-chief's, than that of a twenty-one-year old princess, she gives a sophisticated enumeration of potential allies they could rely on, including the precise account of troops their confederates would supply. She concludes by evoking quite an effective *Dies Irae* image, before she slips into her original role of "litle Bessye"[93] and faints:

> but thinke on the dreadffull day
> when the great doame itt shalbe,
>
> when righteousnesse on the rainbowe shall sitt,
> & deeme he shall both thee and mee,
> & all ffalshood away shall fflitt
> when all truth shall by him bee![94]

[92] Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Courtyer* (London: Wyllyam Seres, 1561) Z3.iiii^{v}.
[93] *Percy's Folio* 322, l. 14.
[94] *Percy's Folio* 325, ll. 107-112.

The version of history which grants prominence to Princess Elizabeth is unique and does not appear in any other ballad or poem. Moreover, it is in sharp contrast to Shakespeare's play where she is objectified and theatrically annulled. She is treated as political capital by both Richard III, who woos his niece by proxy of her mother, and Richmond who emphasises the political utility of their marriage for uniting the country divided by the War of the Roses. Nonetheless, her part is not included in the list of roles, she is never physically present on the stage, and, thus, remains a character that is merely talked about, instead of talking herself. From this perspective, "The Song of Lady Bessy" represents an act of a radical reframing of history in which a marginal character is placed into the very centre of the plot.

With a view to what has just been said, it is not so surprising that, in comparison to Elizabeth, the character of Richard III is of little interest. Apart from a brief appearance in the middle of the ballad when he encounters Brereton, he is mentioned only at the end of the song when he meets his allies and goes into the battle. Similarly as in the earliest non-fiction accounts, *The Crowland Chronicle* and Mancini's work, no physical abnormality is recorded in connection with him. Ironically, the only one who seems to have a blemish in his appearance is Richmond. When Brereton comes to France and inquires about him, he is told by the porter that Richmond is

> with long visage & pale;
> therby the Prince know may yee;
>
> a priuye wart, withouten lett,
> a litle aboue the chin;
> his face h[i]s white, the wart is red,
> therby you may him ken.[95]

Relatively little attention is paid to Richard III in the poem, nonetheless, two features previously mentioned in chronicles are preserved. First, it is his courage and strong persuasion that his power was granted to him by God. This is manifested in his final proclamation in which he turns down his allies' suggestion to flee:

> giue me my battell axe in my hand,

[95] *Percy's Folio* 325, ll. 691-6.

& sett my crowne on my head so hye!
ffor by him that made both sunn & moone,
King of England this day I will dye![96]

Secondly, it is the brutality of his death and the humiliation his corpse was posthumously exposed to. Richmond's soldiers "stroke his Basnett to his head / vntill his braines came out with blood" and "buckeled his haire vnder his chin"[97] to take him to Leicester. It implies that Richard's body was bent over a horse, although the ballad does not go into any details. However, there are other sources to confirm this, cf. Polydore Vergil: "the body of king Rycherd nakyd of all clothing, and layd upon an horse bake with the armes and leggess hanging down on both sides, was browght to thabbay of monks Franciscanes at Leycester."[98] The procession meets Elizabeth who teases dead and naked Richard: "welcome, gentle vnckle, home!"[99] This macabre scene is contrasted with the wedding ceremony of Elizabeth and Richmond, followed by the same tribute to Divinity and the ruling monarch with which it began:

GOD: that is most of might
& borne was of a maiden ffree,
saue & keepe our comelye Kinge
& all the pore cominaltye![100]

The fact that the concluding stanza mirrors the opening one emphasises the cyclic structure of the ballad. Interestingly enough, the general idea of this text, given a specific representation of historical characters, is also cyclic when viewed from a diachronic perspective. The ballad which features the first non-chronicle portrayal of Richard III is called after Princess Elizabeth and, although much of the middle part is devoted to Humphrey Brereton's travels and to the events preceding the Battle of Bosworth, she still remains the main focus of the text as the instigator of the anti-Ricardian plot. In 1667, right after the Renaissance was replaced by the Restoration, the playwright and diplomat John Caryll published a play titled *The English princess, or, The death of Richard the III*, which also prioritised Elizabeth over Richard III. Thus,

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[96] *Percy's Folio* 362, ll. 1047-50.
[97] *Percy's Folio* 362, ll. 1054-5.
[98] Vergil, *Three Books* 226.
[99] *Percy's Folio* 363, l. 1062.
[100] *Percy's Folio* 321, ll. 1-4.

paradoxically, Richard III, who dominated the stage as Shakespeare's titanic creation, both entered and left the early modern popular culture as a somewhat minor character.

3.2 *A Mirror for Magistrates*

The collection of poems *A Mirror for Magistrates*, dedicated to distinguished characters of the English history, was a highly esteemed work at the time of its creation. It was published in four major editions, but only the names of the main authors have been preserved. The first of them was William Baldwin, who was inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio's book on famous figures of the ancient world, *De casibus virorum illustrium*, written between 1356 and 1360, which was loosely translated into English by the monk John Lydgate and published in 1494 as *Fall of Princes* (Lydgate did not directly translate Boccaccio's work, but relied on a French translation by Laurent de Premierfait which he adapted). Baldwin's original idea was to write a sequence of poems about the War of the Roses which would then be published together with Lydgate's work; however, this plan was interrupted for censorship reasons.[101] *A Mirror for Magistrates* was first published in 1559 as a compilation of poems composed by a circle of several, often unknown, poets lead by Baldwin. Even so, some poems – including the one on Richard III – were probably still considered politically sensitive and could be published only in the subsequent edition in 1683. The poems relevant to this thesis, added into the 1563 edition of Baldwin's *A Mirror for Magistrates*, were the ones on Rivers, Hastings, Duke of Buckingham, William Collingbourne, Jane Shore and Richard III. In the following five decades, the book was extended by several authors who added poems stretching both before and after the period of the War of the Roses: in 1574, John Higgins's poems on Roman leaders ranging from Brutus to Caesar was published as *The First Part of the Mirror for Magistrates,* followed by *The Second Part of the Mirror for Magistrates* in 1578, in which Thomas Blennerhasset covered the period from the Roman Conquest to William the Conqueror's triumph. Finally, Richard Niccols's *A Winter Night's Vision* was added to the previous texts and published in 1610. Niccols re-wrote the poem on Richard III and added a new one about the princes

[101] Paul Budra, *A Mirror for Magistrates and the De Casibus Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, c2000) 10.

in the Tower. The main focus of this chapter is the poem on Richard III in the 1563 edition, but Niccols's poem will be briefly discussed as well.

A Mirror for Magistrates employs the poetic form of a dramatic monologue in which noteworthy people arise from their graves to give their own testimony about their rise and fall. Such a form not only relates to the popular tradition of *de casibus* tragedy, but it also gives creates the air of immediacy and opens up possibilities for a more subtle psychological portrayal which, consequently, enhances the didactic potential of the individual stories.[102] Poems in this collection are often preceded by prosaic texts in which individual figures are introduced. The concluding parts of these texts tend to be dramatic and they outline the most suitable scenes in which the readers are to image the depicted person. In case of Richard III, the author recommends the readers that "for the better vnderstanding whereof, imagine that you see him tormented with Dives in the diepe pit of Helle, and thence howling this that foloweth"[103]. This strategy might have directly inspired poets of the next generations who composed verses invoking ghosts of significant historical persons. The introductory stanzas often outlined the setting in which such apparitions are to be visualised, and theatre vocabulary was sometimes used to obliterate boundaries between drama and poetry. For instance, in his poem "The Ghost of Lucrece" (1620), Thomas Middleton gives three signals by his pen for the performance to begin,[104] prompts all humiliated virgins to "be ye the audience, take your tragic places"[105], and describes weeping Lucrece entering his poem as if it was a stage[106]. Subsequently, Lucrece begins her monologue by confessing her amazement at the power which conjured up her ghost[107] .

In the Ricardian poem from 1563, the prosaic texts between poems, metaphorically speaking, also sets the stage for the appearance of the King's ghost, despite this motif being much less developed in comparison to Middleton's poem. Interestingly enough, though, these prosaic texts hold a mirror up to the form of the

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[102] Budra 10.
[103] *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938) 359, ll 28-30.
[104] "Thrice hath the trumpet of my pen's round stage / Sounded a *Surge!* To her bloody age" (35-6). As G. B. Shand remarks, in public theatres the beginning of the prologue was signalled by three sounds of a trumpet. "The Ghost of Lucrece," *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010) 1989, n. 35.
[105] "The Ghost" l. 41.
[106] "The Ghost" l. 51.
[107] "The Ghost" l. 64-5.

poem itself. In the text following the poem, the author considers Richard III to be such an appalling character that his wickedness deprives him of the right to have a poem written on him in a fine-quality verse.

> The cumlynes called by the Rhetoricians *decorum*, is specially to be observed in al things. Seying than that kyng Rychard never kept measure in any of his doings, seing also he speaketh in Hel, whereas is no order: it were against the *decorum* of his personage, to vse eyther good Meter or order.[108]

In this comment, the author peculiarly anticipates Churchill's criticism about the poor quality of the poem. Churchill says that, except for the one dedicated to the Duke of Buckingham, none poem in *A Mirror for Magistrates* cycle can "claim to be called poetry. ... They are nearly all mere biographies in verse"[109]. On the contrary, the author of the prosaic text invents an *apologia* in favour of the author of the poem by saying that while he "both could and would amend in many places" the quality of the verse, he consciously did not do so because of the harshness of the topic and the protagonist.[110] He even suggests that it would be more appropriate if Richard's oration was even "far wurse"[111].

Churchill's observation is true to the extent that Richard III's poem is neither very imaginative nor rich in metaphors, and its story does not offer any unexpected twists. Certain flatness of the style suggests that the poem resorts more often to schemes, i.e. figures dealing with forms of words and phrases, rather than to tropes which juggle with meanings of words. Among the more frequent schemes are polyptoton (e.g. "Tyl they of force were forced yield the ghost"[112]; "Greatly applauded with this happy happe"[113]) and alliteration, employed at least in parts of lines, if not in the whole lines (e.g. "With haling, tugging, tormoyling, torne and tost"[114]).

The poem reflects on Richard's responsibility for the deaths of his nephews, as advertised in the title of the poem ("How Richard Plantagenet duke of Glocester, murdered his brothers children vsurping the crowne,and in the third yeare of his raygne

[108] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 371, ll. 8-11.
[109] Churchill 238.
[110] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 371, ll. 19-21.
[111] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 371, l. 12.
[112] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 364, l. 112.
[113] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 367, l. 205.
[114] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 364, l. 111.

was most worthily deprived of life and kingdome in Bosworth playne by Henry Earle of Richemond after called king Henry the VII") and mentioned as early as in the first paragraph which opens with an erotema: "What hart so hard, but doth abhorre to heare / The ruful raygne of me the third Rychard?"[115] After giving an account of perpetual anxieties about his position which prompted him to commit this crime, the ghost mentions the suppression of Buckingham's rebellion and finishes with the description of the Battle of Bosworth. This event is not only presented as an encounter between Richard and Richmond, but, in more abstract terms, between Richard and the Fortune – the same motif is later embellished by Shakespeare. Her unfavourable stance ultimately leads to the King's decline: "Thus fawning Fortune began on me to frowne, / And cast on me her scorneful lowring looke: / Then gan I feare the fall of my renowne."[116] The depiction of the ruler's demise is one of the few impressive moments in the poem as it offers a vivid and rather vicious account of the humiliation of Richard's corpse:

> My body it was hurried and tugged like a Dogge,
> On horseback all naked and bare as I was borne.
> My head, hands, & feete, downe hanging like a Hogge,
> With dyrt and bloud besprent, my corps al to torne,
> Cursing the day that ever I was borne.[117]

As it has already been said, the 1563 poem on Richard III cannot be praised for an outstanding imagery and quality of metaphors. In fact, it is surprising that a self-derogating poem, taking the form of a linguistic flagellation of its poetic speaker who warns other princes not to follow his example, does not exploit some obvious rhetorical strategies to heighten its didactic effect. With the exception of the above mentioned stanza, the poem does not enhance the bestial nature of the King by employing a simile that would liken him to creatures he became commonly associated with, such as a boar, his personal device. Nor is his monstrous visage mentioned as a materialization of his mental and morale landscape.

The lack of animal imagery is particularly striking with a view to the fact that grounds for blemishing Richard III by means of such metaphors were laid already in the 1559 edition of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, specifically in the poem about the Duke of

[115] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 360, ll. 1-2.
[116] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 368, ll. 232-4.
[117] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 370, ll. 281-285.

Clarence who is portrayed as Richard's victim. Clarence proves to be conscious of the importance and effectiveness of animal metaphors when he contemplates the ominous rumour disseminated to convince Edward IV that he and his family will be threatened by someone whose name begins with the letter G. Clarence, however, dismisses this as "doubtfull riddles", for genuine prophecies do not disclose proper names but use a different means of identification by referring to people as animals:

> She [Truth] noteth not mens names, their shildes nor creastes,
> Though she compare them vnto birdes and beastes.
> But whom she doth forshewe shal rule by force,
> She termeth a Wulfe, a Dragon or a Beare.
> ...
> A bolde, a Lyon.[118]

Subsequently, he attributes beastly nature to Richard III by calling him "the Bore, / Whose tuskes should teare my brothers boyes & me"[119]. Such an inventory of animals associated with Richard III becomes conventionalized in later works: in his poem "Rising to the Crovvne of Richard the third", added to the sonnet cycle *Licia* (1593), the poet and diplomat Giles Fletcher likens the King to a hungry wolf and a lion who devoured a lamb[120]. As it was already mentioned, the poem about Richard III does not explicitly link him with a beast, but it does use animal metaphors to enhance the contrast between brutality and innocence when describing how hired murderers smothered the princes in the Tower: "The Wolves at hand were ready to devoure / The silly lambes in bed whereas they laye."[121]

The 1610 edition of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, more specifically Niccols's *A Winter Night's Vision* brought two more poems relevant for the genealogy of literary portrayals of Richard III: the story of Edward IV's children, and a new piece on Richard III which replaced the one included in the 1563 edition. Due to their importance for the topic of this thesis, these poems will be now briefly covered, although they do not fit the delineated "pre-Shakespearean" framework of this thesis as they came out

[118] *Mirror,* ed. Campbell, 227, ll. 195-200.
[119] *Mirror,* ed. Campbell, 230, ll. 274-5.
[120] Giles Fletcher, *Licia, or Poemes of loue* (1593) M2^{v}.
[121] *Mirror,* ed. Campbell, 363, ll. 99-100.

approximately fifteen years after Shakespeare finished the last part of his second tetralogy.

When comparing poems of 1563 with those published in 1610, the shift in the style of versification cannot pass unnoticed. Poems written in both editions retain the same verse form – rhyme royal – but the later works are considerably richer in imagery and their lines run more smoothly. Prosaic passages introducing individual poems are removed, which heightens the effect of long-dead characters responding directly and immediately to one another. Lexical links are consciously established to entwine new utterances into previously depicted stories.

Before discussing the most recent reincarnation of Richard III in the 1610 edition, it is useful to pay some attention to the poem which precedes it, "The lamentable lives and deaths of the two yong princes, Edward the fifth and his brother Duke of York", because the murder of children is the crux of the earlier poem about Richard III in the 1563 edition. Although almost five decades span both poems, and they were never published in one volume, they are bound by specific metaphors by which the princes' youth and innocence is emphasises. In the 1563 poem, Richard III's crime seems even more abominable when he refers to his victims as "two noble ympes I caused to be slayne"[122], "innocents in pryson"[123], and "silly lambes"[124].

However, the self-representation of both princes in the poem "The lamentable lives and deaths of the two yong princes" surpasses such labels. Generally speaking, they do indeed portray themselves as defenceless victims to Richard's brutality. At the same time, however, their position of narrators of history gives them great power to present the past in a specific manner. In the first part of the poem, they merely retell and versify chronicles. The principle of *diegesis* enables young princes to summon events as early as the reign of Richard II, which they could not have experienced personally. Such a strategy enables the author to condense a great deal of information in few stanzas, but it also adds artificiality to the princes' proclamations. Hence, the princes lack the child-like authenticity and touching ignorance of Shakespeare's Richard of York, who keenly repeats what he heard about his uncle's childhood, supposedly from his nurse who had in fact died before he was born.[125] The imagined omniscience of both princes also

[122] *Mirror,* ed. Campbell, 361, l. 31.
[123] *Mirror,* ed. Campbell, 369, l. 14.
[124] *Mirror,* ed. Campbell, 363, ll. 88, 100.
[125] Shakespeare, 241, II.4.27-30.

contradicts the conventional understanding of childhood in the Renaissance as a period "in which the human animal lacked all the cognitive attributes of its natural kind."[126] Moreover, Edward V makes it clear that this omniscience is not any special quality which was bestowed to him after death, but he had had this ability before. Despite being only a child when his father died, he claims to have been able to foresee the looming danger in his uncle.[127]

Thus, the poem becomes more genuine and emotionally engaging only towards the end when the princes depict their last days in the Tower. Edward gives a poignant image of a secluded world in which both brothers live, "Each helping other for to waile and weepe"[128] and frightened by every single noise at night. The anticipation of their murder escalates in the touching image of a lamb Edward likens his younger brother to. This metaphor also alludes to the poem about Richard III in the 1563 edition.

Euen as sometimes we see a silly lambe,
Which for the slaughter in some fold is pent,
There kept from sight of his deare loued damme,
Her absence with faint bleathing doth lament,
Whose only sight can give it safe content:
So little Yorke in vaine lamenting wept,
That from our mothers presence he was kept.

Oft, wofull child, thus hast though question'd mee,
Where is my mother? and when I for woe,
Haue turn'd my backe and could not answere thee;
With teares againe, thou wouldest aske to know,
Saying, I would vnto my mother go.[129]

Thus, the sons of the sovereign ruling under the white Yorkist rose, whose "roses" were "cropt euen in the bud"[130], give a truly captivating account of history only

[126] Michael Witmore, *Pretty Creatures: Children and Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007) 3.
[127] *Mirror for Magistrates,* ed. Joseph Haslewood, vol. 2, part 2 (London: Allen Lackington, 1815) 772, 15.5-7.
[128] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 782, 55.2.
[129] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 782, 57.1-58.7.
[130] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 779, 46.3.

when they abandon the great narratives of the chronicles in favour of the intimate and sombre account of their little personal stories. The change of narration between these two parts is so noticeable that it reminds one of Sir Philip Sidney's thesis that a poet combines the factual value of a historian's work with a philosopher's preoccupation with ethics and, by mixing both aspects, is more successful in igniting virtue in its readers.[131] This is precisely the chief goal of such didactic works as *A Mirror for Magistrates* and Hall's chronicle. Thus, towards its end the poem explores similar strategies of revoking the past as Shakespeare did in the scene where he captured the impishness of Prince Richard demanding his uncle's dagger. The poem ultimately exposes and denounces Richard III's crime not by describing his child victims by using particular adjectives conveying their vulnerability, but by enabling the readers to peep into the Tower in which the older brother tries to soothe the younger one. Such an effectiveness of detail is something which older chronicles could hardly reach. It stems from poetical liberty to invent scenes and images, while the historian, as Sidney says, "bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberal—without he will be poetical"[132].

The poem following the princes' monologues features Richard III. In the introductory argument, his ghost is invoked by Memory who summarises all the crucial points in his life: his physical handicap, the murder of his nephews motivated by his ambition, his remorse, Buckingham's treason, and the defeat by Richmond at the Bosworth Field. It is clear from this outline that the poem published in the 1610 edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates* follows the account given by earlier chronicles and is careful to list all the crucial historical events. It is not difficult to see an affinity between this poem and Shakespeare's play, written almost twenty years earlier; however, the exact link between both works is difficult to decipher. It is likely that Shakespeare and Niccols drew on similar sources, although certain details show that Niccols was probably emulating More much more directly than Hall. This is proven by the correspondence between More's and Niccols's descriptions of Richard III's physical deformity. More mentions that the King was born "with the feete forwarde" and, due to

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[131] One of Sidney's remarks on the difference between a poet and a historian is: "So, then, the best of the historian is subject to the poet; for whatsoever action or faction, whatsoever counsel, policy, or war-stratagem the historian is bound to recite, that may the poet, if he list, with his imitation make his own, beautifying it both for further teaching and more delighting, as it pleaseth him." Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1890) 20.
[132] Sidney 19.

this complication, his mother had to have her perineum cut while giving birth. More also adds that the newborn was already born with teeth, had crooked back and his left shoulder was higher than the right one.[133] Niccols not only mentions exactly the same facts, but he even mirrors More's expressions:

> Little I was, and of a small compact,
> My left side shoulder higher then the right,
> Both crooked were, and therewithall contract
> Into my backe, so that in all men's sight
> I did appeare a most mishapen wight:[134]

On the other hand, Shakespeare never goes into so many details and makes only a passing comment about some of these facts, such as the difficult pregnancy and laborious birth that Richard's mother experienced. Also, he never specifies which of the two Richard's shoulders was higher, quite in compliance with Hall who – following Vergil – simply states that the King had "the one shoulder higher then the other".[135]

The specificity of information as well as the wide range of events covered in the lines is what makes the 1610 poem about Richard III differ from its antecedent, the 1563 poem which did not elaborate the myth of the King's monstrosity and focused on three key issues: most prominently, the murder of princes, the profession of remorse stemming from it, and, slightly less importantly, the shift in Richard's relationship with Buckingham and his rivalry with Richmond. The different focus on the content results in a different style of both poems. Despite not being regarded as high quality poetry, the earlier poem does occasionally use metaphors which are not included in the 1610 poem. The different metaphorical profile of both poems is natural: the earlier poem covers fewer events and, thus, has more space to dwell on each of them. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that the different context of both poems exerts influence on their content as well. The earlier poem portrays Richard III as contemporary Herodes who did not hesitate to murder innocent children and paid heavily for it now. However, in the 1610 edition, the murder of Richard's nephews is thoroughly described in the poem about the princes in the Tower which immediately precedes the Ricardian one. Since both were, without any doubt, written by the same author, it seems logical that this

[133] More 7.
[134] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 788, 7.5.
[135] Hall 421.

particular theme became less prominent in the poem about Richard III and attention could be shifted to other topics. For instance, unlike the poetic speaker of the 1563 poem, this one states that he is responsible for poisoning his wife Anne and “Through blood to incest I intend to swim”[136] to break the marriage between princess Elizabeth and Richmond by marrying her instead.

Finally, both poems also vary in their ending. The 1563 version returns to the *de casibus* scheme. In a peculiar contrast to the rest of the poem where Richard describes his remorse for killing the “noble ympes”, his final words are solely fixed on his self-pity: “Ah cursed caytive why did I clymbe so hye, / Which was the cause of this my baleful thrall.”[137] Describing his own rise and fall, Richard confesses that he “thyrsted for the regal degnitie”,[138] and urges others to realize the dangers of such behaviour. The concluding lines of the 1610 poem convey the same prompt: “My guiltie ghost her light may not behold, / Adew, remember well what I haue told.”[139] Yet, in the final stanzas of the poem, coming after Richard describes his death in combat, the King is also struggling with the consequences of his crimes. The difference is that he does so without the tinge of self-pity with which the 1563 poem is loaded. His torments derive not from the punishment for excessive ambition, but from remorse: “Th’internall worme his conscience still doth sting, / His soule t’a fearefull iudgement death doth bring.”[140] It is as if, by this line, Niccols’s Richard III intertextually responded to Queen Margaret’s curse in Shakespeare’s play: “The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul!”[141] After this line, the ghost disappears because it feels the morning is looming and “The night on sable wings flies fast away”.[142] The nocturnal existence of Richard III relates not only to his character, but also to the state of the whole kingdom, as the figure of Memory subsequently explains. Thus, it is deeply symbolic that Richard III is the final poem in the 1610 edition of *A Mirror for Magistrates* and is only followed by laudatory verses on Elizabeth I. Therefore, interestingly enough, it is only Richard III, and not Richmond, who is given voice by the author.

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[136] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 801, 60.2.
[137] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 370, ll. 295-6.
[138] *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, 370, l. 297.
[139] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 810, 96.6-7.
[140] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 810, 95.4-5.
[141] Shakespeare, 183, 1.3.221.
[142] *Mirror*, ed. Haslewood, 810, 96.3.

4. RICHARD III IN DRAMA

4.1 Thomas Legge: *Richardus Tertius*

> ...so these are our best for Tragedie, the Lorde Buckhurst, Doctor Leg of Cambridge, Doctor Edes of Oxforde, maister Edward Ferris, the Authour of the Mirrour for Magistrates, Marlow, Peele, Watson, Kid, Shakespeare, Drayton, Chapman, Decker, and Beniamin Iohnson.[143]

The tribute Francis Meres, the author of *Palladis Tamia* (1598), makes to Thomas Legge in these lines may today seem somewhat exaggerated. Meres proves to have a good instinct in putting his finger on several playwrights who secured their place in the canon of the English Renaissance drama and are still read nowadays. However, in this Pantheon comprising Shakespeare, Marlowe and Johnson, the name of Thomas Legge (1535-1607) seems slightly alien. Nonetheless, Meres's comment reveals the esteem Legge, the Cambridge academic and the Master of Caius College earned for his work in the sixteenth century, and it draws attention to the significance of his neo-Latin trilogy *Richardus Tertius* for the development of English drama.

Richardus Tertius (performed at St John's College, Cambridge in 1579) is not only the first extant play about Richard III, but it is sometimes classified as the first English history play as well. Such a claim is made by Churchill who dismisses two other possible candidates: in his view, John Bale's *Kyng Johan* (performed 1561) leans towards the tradition of morality plays, while *Gorboduc* (1561), written by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, depicts mythical, rather than actual history.[144] This view is echoed by Dana F. Sutton, the translator and editor of the most recent edition of *Richardus Tertius*, and Robert J. Lordi, another editor of the play who acknowledges Legge's primacy in discovering the potential of using a historical theme "for its own sake" and "without the religious polemics of Bale or the political didacticism of Sackville and Norton"[145]. Tucker Brooke makes the same point as he interprets this neo-Latin drama as laying foundations for chronicle history plays written later in

[143] Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (London: P. Short, 1598), 283.
[144] Churchill, 270.
[145] Quoted in Michael Ullyot, "Seneca and the Early Elizabethan History Play," *English Historical Drama, 1500-1660: Forms Outside the Canon*, ed. Teresa Grant and Barbara Ravelhofer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 103.

vernacular.[146] On the other hand, such critics as Geoffrey Bullough see *Gorboduc* as the pioneer in the genre of English history plays precisely because it explores the possibilities of applying the Senecan form of drama to a material from the English past.[147]

While these contradictory statements suggest that it is not possible to reach a definite, universally accepted conclusion about Legge's position in the formation of English histories, what is indisputable is the author's dependence on both Greek and Roman models and English chronicles. Churchill anatomises the influence of Seneca on Legge,[148] and Sutton adds Aeschylus as another prominent source of inspiration.[149] At the same time, the adherence to sources also makes it possible to pin down the moment when Legge artistically emancipates from some of the conventions of Classical drama. Most noticeably, he reduces the role of the chorus and does not keep either the unities of time, action, and place, or the distribution of lines among three roles: the protagonist, the deuteragonist and the tritagonist. It is the playwright's conscious selectiveness with which he decides to preserve some conventions and omit others that makes Sutton argue that Legge was not merely replicating Classical sources but investigating a new genre of the English history play.[150]

Despite supposedly inventing a new dramatic genre, however, Legge is sometimes criticised for dwelling in the realm of prose too much. According to Churchill, he cuts down dramatic tension by condensing the problem and its solution into one moment. Hence, he cannot exploit the suspense which arises when the former develops into the latter, and deprives the audience of "the feeling of surprise and pleasure" when a solution is finally reached.[151] Furthermore, the circumscription of dramatic tension leads to a less plausible and captivating portrayal of the protagonist. Legge's Richard III follows the Senecan model in being the embodiment of a single passion: unsatiated ambition. Nonetheless, Churchill claims that this makes him appear rather one-dimensional, which only adds up to other defects that the scholar recognises in him: fearfulness, weakness, dependence on counsellors, and lingering in

[146] Tucker Brooke, "Latin Drama in Renaissance England," *ELH*, 13.4 (Dec., 1946): 235.
[147] Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 3 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) 234.
[148] Churchill 385.
[149] Dana F. Sutton, Introduction, *Richardus Tertius,* trans. Dana F. Sutton (New York: Lang, c1993.) xi.
[150] Sutton xii.
[151] Churchill 377.

proclamations instead of committing himself to action. Churchill's points are valid in many ways, and one cannot help feeling that A. L. Rowse's wish to see *Richardus Tertius* "given a revival in our time, either in the original or in a verse translation"[152] is a father to the thought, rather than a realistic suggestion which would forecast the re-introduction of the play to a modern stage.

Churchill's criticism, however, is sometimes too sweeping to notice subtle movements and a development within the drama. To begin with, the general framework of *Richardus Tertius* is dependent on utterances, rather than action, hence it is not totally justifiable to accuse the protagonist of being insufficiently active. "The fragmentation of the plays into loosely connected rhetorical occasions," says Gordon Braden, is one of the typical features of Senecan drama,[153] and exactly the same applies to Legge's play as well. A typical example is the Battle of Bosworth in Act 3, scene V which virtually comprised only speeches delivered by fighting noblemen, a stage direction in which soldiers run across the stage and Richmond enters the stage with the corpse of Richard III, this being followed by the Messenger's long proclamation beginning with words "The trial is over"[154] which heralds the end of the battle, as well as the whole war.

Nor should the protagonist be utterly dismissed as a coward. Churchill valuably recognises that the backbone of *Richardus Tertius* is Richard's anxiety to secure the crown which then gives way to an even greater anxiety about losing it. However, such a general statement about the protagonist should not ignore, on the one hand, the dramatic development of Richard III within the trilogy and, on the other hand, the pervasive sense of fear which permeates the whole society. In More and later in Shakespeare, these two features are interconnected, the correlation between Richard's individuality and the society resembling that of a balance scale: the greater the Richard's power is, the greater the anxiety it produces in characters around him. Conversely, the more Richard's position is challenged by Richmond who manages to gain followers in all social strata, the more Richard loses security and is tormented by fear. Such a scheme follows an effective dramatic logic and encapsulates the principle of divine retribution which punishes the usurper and praises its successor. Placing the King's personal

[152] A. L. Rowse, *Bosworth Field and the Wars of the Roses* (London: Panther Books Ltd., 1968) 363.
[153] Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1985) 29.
[154] *Richardus* 317.

feelings in opposition to the atmosphere in the kingdom results in the image of England as a country trapped in essential disharmony where the sovereign is alienated from its subjects.

Legge, however, disrupts this scheme as he partly levels the difference between the King's mental state and the state of the kingdom. Richard III is constantly worried throughout the trilogy, and so are his opponents. When the final confrontation with Richmond is looming, Richard cries out: "I am wretchedly tormented by fear, troubled by a seething flood of cares. ... Fear still vexes my unquiet heart." [155] It is a paradox that, a few scenes later, similar terror also overwhelms his political and moral opponent Richmond who appears on the empty stage after landing in England: "What is this place? What region is this? What part of the kingdom? Where am I? Night falls. ... I can scarcely speak for fear. I am trembling all over. Anxiety makes my mind seethe."[156] Thus, both men go through a phase of anxiety, insecurity, and weakness, although the intensity of this experience varies in both cases. While Richard III is commonly attributed these emotions, especially in connection with the nightmare before the battle, Legge's decision to portray Richmond in a momentary state of deep fear is unique among all the texts discussed in this thesis.

Furthermore, placing speeches of Richard III and Richmond side by side makes one aware of certain linguistic repetitiveness of the play. Even if one acknowledges that what is discussed here is a translation into English, and not the original Latin text, it is not possible to overlook that both characters resort to very similar expressions and metaphors and their utterances are virtually interchangeable. This does not apply only to Richard III and Richmond, but also to many other characters who find themselves trapped in fear at some point in the trilogy, cf. the Queen ("Horrible fear has struck my limbs; overwhelmed by terror, my blood freezes"[157]), Stanley ("My heart is dumbfounded, struck by uncertain fear"[158]), Brackenbury ("Woe is me, horror creeps through my limbs"[159]) and the Bishop ("I fear very much for myself"[160]). The apparent uniformity of figures of speech explains why *Richardus Tertius* may seem less dramatically appealing than its successors because it does not singularize individual

[155] *Richardus* 265.
[156] *Richardus* 301-3.
[157] *Richardus* 81.
[158] *Richardus* 105.
[159] *Richardus* 217.
[160] *Richardus* 237.

characters in the same manner as later plays. However, it renders quite powerfully the claustrophobic atmosphere of dull, omnipresent anxiety in the English society that equally traps the oppressor and the oppressed. Paradoxically, it is Richard III who uses the figure of personification to comment upon the country which "worn down by civil wars, is terrified"[161], and who suggests that a child monarch cannot heal the current affairs, but only an adult king that "will earily be just, whose heart is free of fear".[162] This is one of the clues which Legge encodes early in the play to foreshadow that Richard III, sticking to the crown anxiously and fearing that he might be deprived of it, does not fulfil the ideal of a fearless sovereign. It is also true, though, that in the light of these words Richmond's moment of utmost panic and fear becomes even more peculiar.

To sum up the ways in which the protagonist of *Richardus Tertius* differs from the later dramatic creations, Sutton concludes that Richard III is neither a monster (since the play includes only a brief reference to his deformed arm) nor a "genius of evil" and remains dependent on the advice of his allies.[163] While this statement is generally true, especially when comparing Legge's play to *The True Tragedy* and Shakespeare's play, it overlooks that Richard III undergoes a development from the first to the last part of the trilogy. Sutton himself stresses the importance of reading Legge's work not as a single play, but as a sequence of three plays, but he does not examine in detail how the structure of *Richardus Tertius* relates to its protagonist. Similarly to Shakespeare's creation, even Legge's Richard III is the strongest in the first part of the story when he seizes the crown. At this point, he secures political allies but is not solely dependent on their advice yet. On the contrary, he is the one to construct plots and schemes, for instance when instructing the Mayor of London how to win the favour of the citizens by blemishing the legitimacy of Edward IV and his posterity. Indeed, he pragmatically realizes the importance of public opinion: "If the people hate me, I am a dead man. But my popularity must be preserved."[164] Also, he invents the accusation that the Queen and Jane Shore, Edward IV's mistress later close to Hastings, practised witchcraft against him, which he then skilfully uses to charge his potential opponent Hastings of treason and executes him. At this point at least, his scheming bears traces of inventiveness and creativity, and it even earns him a comment which brings him closest to the idea of

[161] *Richardus* 151.
[162] *Richardus* 151.
[163] Sutton xvii.
[164] *Richardus* 255.

crafted and intellectually challenging villainy which captivates Shakespeare's audience; before his execution, Hastings addresses Richard: "You manufacturer of falsehood, you artist of crime."[165]

Moments showing Richard's supremacy appear rarely in the whole trilogy *Richardus Tertius*, and are almost nonexistent towards the end. Needless to say, when they are occasionally elaborated, they hint at the possibilities of conveying Richard III as a dramatically attractive villain. This makes *Richardus Tertius* an important precursor to the titanic and energetic protagonists of the plays that enter the English stage in the late 1580s and early 1590s: Shakespeare's *Richard III* and the anonymous play *The True Tragedy*.

4.2 *The True Tragedy*

In 1594, the London printer Thomas Creede printed a play titled *The true tragedie of Richard the third wherein is showne the death of Edward the fourth, with the smothering of the two yoong princes in the Tower: with a lamentable ende of Shores wife, an example for all wicked women. And lastly, the coniunction and ioyning of the two noble houses, Lancaster and Yorke. As it was playd by the Queenes Maiesties Players.* The year of printing, the theme and textual resonances of particular lines prompt critics to trace the links between this anonymous work and Shakespeare's play, first published in quarto in 1597 but certainly written in the early 1590s, perhaps between 1592 and 1593.[166] Churchill dates the composition of the anonymous play between 1590 and 1591,[167] which would suggest that the affinity of both plays is not caused by both authors using the same chronicles, mainly More and Hall, but that Shakespeare was actually familiar with *The True Tragedy* before embarking upon writing his own drama on the same topic. This idea is supported, for instance, by James R. Siemon, the editor of the third edition of *Richard III* in the Arden Shakespeare series.[168] Paulina Kewes is equally certain to call *The True Tragedy* Shakespeare's

[165] *Richardus* 123.
[166] Siemon, Introduction, 45.
[167] Churchill 528.
[168] Siemon, Introduction, 77.

source.[169] However the play itself does not seem to have won a particular popularity in its own time. It was printed only once and appears to have sunk into oblivion afterwards until it was reprinted by the Malone Society in 1929.

If *Richardus Tertius* explores the potential of combining a historical subject and Senecan drama, *The True Tragedy* seeks to join history with the genre of revenge tragedy, popularized by such plays as Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592). Similarly as in Kyd's play, allegorical figures and ghosts introduce the audience into the story of *The True Tragedy*. However, while at the beginning of *The Spanish Tragedy* the ghost of Don Andrea gives a comprehensive account of his death and calls for revenge, the ghost of Clarence in the anonymous play makes only a short appearance on the stage and cries for revenge without explaining the circumstances of his murder. Afterwards, he disappears from the play completely, in sharp contrast to the ghost in *The Spanish Tragedy* who is allowed to speak at the beginning of each act. Afterwards, allegorical figures of Truth and Poetry turn up and engage in a dialogue.

> *Poetrie*: Truth well met.
> *Truth*: Thankes Poetrie, what makes thou vpon a stage?
> *Poet*. Shadowes.
> *Truth*. Then will I adde bodies to the shadowes,
> Therefore depart and giue Truth leaue
> To shew her pageant.[170]

Such an unusual exposition of the first scene does not merely represent a deviation from the pattern of revenge drama, but it changes the perspective on the very subject of the play, i.e. history. The image of Truth giving substance to insubstantial shadows cast by Poetry has a clear affiliation to the Platonic allegory of a cave in which people may only see mere shadows of ideas, instead of the ideas themselves: "The truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images."[171] Plato develops this thought into his famous criticism of poets as the producers of imitations who are imitating what are already merely the imitations of the ideas.

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[169] "Richard III discovery: the experts' reaction", 4 Feb 2013, 1 May 2013 <www.historyextra.com/news/richard-iii-discovery-experts-reaction>
[170] *The true tragedie of Richard the third* (London: Thomas Creede, 1594) A3^{r}.
[171] Plato, *The Republic*, 1 May 2013 <www.gutenberg.org>

Nonetheless, the dialogue about shadows also hints at the problem of the representation of history in a literary form. As mentioned earlier, Philip Sidney argues for the supreme role of a poet over a historian. However, if Truth may be interpreted as "objective" history and Poetry stands for art, then the author of *The True Tragedy* seems to assert quite the opposite to Sidney: he lets Truth take the stage and become the authority which reveals background information of the situation in England, while Poetry merely seconds Truth by showing her ignorance and asking questions which Truth readily answers. Nonetheless, the vocabulary of this passage undercuts such a seemingly simple distinction between "credible Truth" and "ignorant Poetry". "Why will Truth be a Player?" asks Poetry upon hearing that it should vacate the space on stage, to which Truth responds:

> No, but Tragedia like for to present
> A Tragedie in England done but late,
> That will reuiue the hearts of drooping mindes.[172]

Similarly, after concluding the introduction in which it explains the historical circumstances, Truth opens up the play as if it was directing it: "Thus gentles, excuse the length by the matter, / And here begins Truthes Pageant."[173]

"Show", "pageant", "Tragedia" – theatrical vocabulary testifies that although Truth asserts its independence on Poetry, it cannot escape its means of representation. It is peculiar that such a subtle hint at the impossibility of drawing a clear-cut line between facts and fiction is voiced in a play that seems to place such a great emphasis on truth: this word, or one derived from it, appears in the title, in the opening scene, as well as in the emblem on the title page. In addition to it, the printer Thomas Creede often accompanied title pages of the books he printer with the image of naked Truth, "with a band issuing from the clouds striking on her back with a rod".[174] The text around the emblem reads: *Viressit Vulnere Veritas* [Truth flourishes through injury]. The virtuous nature of truth particularly contrasts with the meaning of the word "pageant" which the figure of Truth promises to stage. In the early modern era, this noun acquired simultaneously several meanings. It referred to a public performance, possibly quite spectacular and pompous, but it also described "something empty or insubstantial; a

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[172] *The true tragedie* A3^r.
[173] *The true tragedie* A4^r.
[174] Charles Henry Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (London: H. Johnson, 1839) 449.

delusion; a specious display or tribute"[175]. Although the author probably used this word in the first, positive sense, its negative connotations cannot be bracketed. Taking the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition literally, Truth is hasting to add substance to the shadows formed by poetry by offering not much more – merely a "show without substance".

The idea of theatricalised truth has important consequences for the way the audience are acquainted with the events that precede the beginning of the play. History up to Edward IV's death is not shown on the stage, but is rendered by the figure of Truth who gives the account of the War of the Roses since Richard, Duke of York's rebellion against Henry VI. Truth assumes the role of a Prologue and, hence, has the authority to make statements about some of the thorny issues which are dealt with more carefully in chronicles: particularly, it charges Richard III with killing Henry VI and Clarence. The play reaches a paradoxical moment when the figure of Truth concludes her description of the dead and proceeds to introduce Richard III who will dominate the stage for the rest of the play as its protagonist.

> *Poe*. What maner of man was this Richard Duke of Gloster?
> *Tru*. A man ill shaped, crooked backed, lame armed, withall,
> Valiantly minded, but tyrannous in authoritie.[176]

As this passage shows, the character of the protagonist is shaped verbally even before he physically appears on the stage. Thanks to the image created by Truth, the audience expect Richard III to march on the stage with all the attributes of his notorious monstrosity. Interestingly enough, though, the theme of his deformity is not elaborated any further. Unlike Shakespeare's Richard III, who makes references to his misshaped body on several occasions, his counterpart in *The True Tragedy* mentions his physicality only once: he exposes his "withered arme"[177] to the council meeting in order to accuse Queen Elizabeth and Hastings's mistress Jane Shore of practising witchcraft against him. This gives Richard the necessary reason to execute his potential opponent Hastings. The question of Richard's monstrosity remains unanswered since there are no accounts of the performances of *The True Tragedy* that could suggest how the protagonist was played. The possibilities are twofold: if the King's deformity was

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[175] "pageant," *OED*, 1 May 2013 < www.oed.com>
[176] *The true tragedie* A3^{v}.
[177] *The true tragedie* D4^{r}.

emphasised by the actor, it became a purely visual emblem which was not analogically reflected in words. If it was not so prominent, than the "ill shaped" Richard III in *The True Tragedy* belongs, to a great extent, only to the realm of words invented by Truth.

To return to the opening dialogue, the image of shadows acquires another significant meaning throughout the tragedy. It is transformed into the metaphor of conscience which begins to haunt the King once he wins the crown after the death of his nephews. In his speech, shadows in his mind coalesce with the shadow cast by his own body and become equally inescapable:

> My fearefull shadow that still followes me,
> Hath sommond me before the seuere iudge,
> My conscience witnesse of the blood I spilt,
> Accuseth me as guiltie of the fact.[178]

Highlighting the importance of conscience at the expense of reducing the role of the ghosts is interpreted by Churchill as a significant step towards artistic emancipation from an enclosed generic category of revenge drama. "The ghosts have ceased to be mere external machinery, used to awaken the spectator's sense of horror; they have become a means of revealing the torments of a guilty soul. And thus the spirits of the murdered do in truth obtain revenge."[179] It is possible to see the focus on remorse as one of the most significant developments of the eponymous character from *Richardus Tertius*, which the anonymous author was familiar with, towards *The True Tragedy.* Obtaining the crown represents the one and unique ambition of Legge's Richard III, and as soon as he fulfils it, he is immersed in fear of losing it by being overpowered by his enemies. The protagonist of *The True Tragedy* is equally fixated on the power, but he struggles more heavily with inner fears than with the external forces which he faces quite fearlessly. This mechanism is proved at various points of the play. For instance, when he learns that Buckingham betrayed him and gathered an army to win the crown for himself, the King replies: "Tush, a shadow without a substance, and a fear / without a cause."[180] There is an interesting linguistic game going on between this utterance and the later one quoted above: "My fearefull shadow that still followes me."[181] The report

[178] *The true tragedie* F2^{v}.
[179] Churchill 403.
[180] *The true tragedie* C1^{v}.
[181] *The true tragedie* F2^{v}.

of a looming rebellion is dismissed as an insubstantial “shadow” and “fear” that cannot threaten him; at the same time, however, he is vexed by a “fearefull shadow” that becomes a substantial burden for him.

However, the author’s exploration of conscience goes even further. Thanks to the rhetorical figure of pathetic fallacy, Richard’s remorse ceases to be an internal and intimate issue and is extended into the outer world as well. In one of his final monologues, he not only evokes the ghosts of Clarence and his nephews, but he also transposes their eagerness for revenge on inanimate objects and animals. Thus, he finds himself in the universe where “The Planets chaunge their coursies for reuenge. / The birds sing not, but sorrow for reueng. … But to conclude, I haue deserued reuenge.“[182] Such images amplify the sense of inescapability expressed earlier in Richard’s words: “My fearefull shadow that still followes me.” In spite of the different circumstances under which both characters reached this state, the idea of someone being trapped in one’s own destiny is memorably encapsulated by John Milton in Satan’s words: “Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell.”[183]

The strategy of extending Richard’s mental state beyond his own psyche is not only expressed by particular tropes, but it also becomes encoded into the structure of the play and in the role of particular characters. This strategy is quite effective, but it contains an elemental paradox. The author of *The True Tragedy* is praised by Churchill for using sources selectively. He shapes Richard as the central and dominant figure by diminishing unimportant details and making everything serve the only purpose – to show the rise and fall of a tyrant.[184] Hence, the author avoids one of the greatest deficiencies of *Richardus Tertius* which follows its sources too closely and, therefore, fails to focus the greatest amount of attention solely on the protagonist. Still, while Richard in *The True Tragedy* acquires vigour and force similar to Shakespeare’s villain, some of the processes in his mind are not conveyed by him in monologues, as in Shakespeare, but they are revealed through a surprising medium – his page. This character without a proper name becomes an important source of insight into the King’s psyche, as well as the overall political situation. The Page proves to have a good instinct when he is worried that his master treats his opponents so harshly that he will stir up a

[182] *The true tragedie* H1^{v}.
[183] John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed. Alastair Fowler (Harlow: Pearson, 2007) 219, IV.75.
[184] Churchill 399.

desire for revenge in them.[185] Later on, he lets the audience peep into Richard's private chambers when he says that "from the priuie sentire of his heart, / There comes such deepe fetcht sighes and fearefull cries" that it moves him to tears as well, so he joins his lord in sighs.[186]

The Page has a surprisingly prominent role in the final scenes. He accompanies his master to the battle and it is even possible to imagine him supporting the monarch when they enter the stage, as the stage direction implies: *The battell enters, Richard wounded, with his Page.* It is at this moment that Richard cries out an exclamation that inspired Shakespeare: "A horse, a horse, a fresh horse."[187] The Page assumes the role often attributed to Catesby in most sources (Catesby, however, also appears in *The True Tragedy* as a figure) when he urges Richard to save his life by flight, and is severely reprimanded when his lord declares that he will "die a King",[188] which is exactly what happens immediately afterwards. Although the scene of Richmond killing Richard is directly shown on the stage and conveyed through a stage direction – again similarly as in Shakespeare – the Page has an important role in creating the legend of Richard III by giving the account of his death to the figure of the Report. In his speech, he creates an impressive figure of a warrior rushing to the battlefield "with as high resolue as fierce Achillis mongst the sturdie Greekes". He carefully balances his speech to show respect for both parties: in his account, "worthie Richmond" fought against "worthie Richard that did neuer flie, but followed honour to the gates of death" and died in combat with Richmond. The concluding part of this passage is particularly interesting. The last remark the Page makes about Richmond is that he managed to bring down Richard on his horse, which caused his rival a wound from which he never recovered. The Page does not include any laudatory remarks on the victor, but sums up instead: "But to be briefe, my maister would not yeeld, but with his losse of life he lost the field. Report farewell."[189]

The Page's speech sharply contrasts with the following scene where Richmond's victory is celebrated. The new monarch orders Richard's body to be taken naked through the streets of Leicester. Afterwards, he asks Princess Elizabeth to marry him, to

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[185] *The true tragedie* D3v.
[186] *The true tragedie* F4r.
[187] *The true tragedie* H3r.
[188] *The true tragedie* H3r.
[189] *The true tragedie* H3v.

which she replies that "if my mother please, I must in dutie yeeld to her command ... therefore as my dutie doth command, I do commit my selfe to her dispose."[190] Princess's reaction is far from enthusiastic and it shows her dutifulness to the country, rather than romantic feelings or even liking for Richmond, which differs her sharply from the eponymous character in "The Song of Lady Bessy"; however, this "coniunction and ioyning of the two noble houses"[191] is the grounds on which the new ruling dynasty is built, and only thanks to it the play can be concluded by a praise of Elizabeth I.

There is a noticeable discrepancy between the celebration of the Tudor dynasty and the Page's words that almost seem to favour cautiously the antagonist to the dynasty. Such a discrepancy makes a valuable point about the possibility of dramatizing a historical subject without succumbing to a portrayal of the past that would unanimously follow the official propaganda of the regime under which the work was written. Separating the overall message of the play from the characters' individual proclamations opens space for dissenting voices to be heard within the system. The Page is by no means an unbiased character, but he shows that the ruler who was perceived as a usurper and a tyrant was also surrounded by people who showed true loyalty to him. It is worth pointing out that the character of the Page has no model in sources and is purely an authorial invention.

Artistically, *The True Tragedy* is inferior to Shakespeare's *Richard III* – it does not show villainy as an attractive histrionic performance, nor does it portray Richard as a double-faced dissembler – yet it represents a significant development in the representation of the King, as well as the form of drama dealing with a historical matter. The examination of the tyrant's conscience transforms the protagonist into a more plastic and human character; remorse may be crushing him personally, but it is not weakening him theatrically. Quite on the contrary, for the first time it truly allows the King to be the subject of not only historical, but also psychological scrutiny. Furthermore, despite casting spotlight on Richard as the protagonist, it does not diminish the role of other characters and uses them to give outer perspective on the King. In the case of the Page, it radically challenges the idea that the important people in dramas based on chronicles are only the ones with titles and proper names. The play

[190] *The true tragedie* H3^{v}.
[191] *The true tragedie* A1^{r}.

also undergoes a great shift from a revenge play to what might be called a history play. The allegorical figures, as well as the ghosts as relicts of the past gradually give way to real and realistic characters. Thus, the Page's final speech represents a very interesting response to the opening of the play. The reputation of the protagonist of *The True Tragedy* is created both before and after his actual appearance on the stage. Richard enters the stage as allegedly a deformed and tyrannous man, and is called "traytrous Richard" by Richmond (rather ironically, given the fact that one of the reasons of his defeat was the betrayal of Stanley and other noblemen). But alternative voices in the play enable the character of Richard III to surpass such plain categories. Shakespeare radically cuts down voices of other figures that could improve Richard's image, and he portrays the battle scene much less ambiguously. The main theatrical departure from *The True Tragedy* consists in Shakespeare's decision to concentrate a great deal of theatrical energy on the protagonist. In contrast to his counterpart in *The True Tragedy*, Shakespeare's Richard III does not win sympathies of the audience by the occasional positive remarks made by other figures, but by being a character who literally transforms villainy into art.

5. CONCLUSION

In the essay titled "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life", the German philosopher Fridrich Nietzsche says that

> as long as the soul of historiography lies in the great stimuli that a man of power derives from it, as long as the past has to be described as worth of imitation, as imitable and possible for a second time, it of course incurs the danger of becoming somewhat distorted.[192]

This thesis examined "the soul of historiography" in texts spanning more than a century of early modern writing to trace how, and whether at all, the image of Richard III became "somewhat distorted" in the intellectual transmission between chroniclers, historians, playwrights and poets. The analysis showed that this process is characterised by two perpetually competing tenets: on the one hand, historical continuity that bounds all the discussed works, and, on the other hand, individual authorial invention and innovation.

These principles are competing, but not incompatible. The idea of continuity stems from the way accounts of the past events were passed on from generation to generation. The earlier historians, Vergil and More, exerted a great influence on the later works like Hall's and Holinshed's chronicles, *A Mirror for Magistrates* and both dramatic texts about Richard III. The only works which did not overly draw on the previous representations of the King are Mancini's manuscript, lost for centuries, and "The Song of Lady Bessy" that offers a very peculiar and disputable view of history which does not have a source in any of the official records. The position of *The Crowland Chronicle* is more problematic as there is no clear evidence that the discussed historiographers were aware of it; however, Vergil might have been familiar with a lost text which the Crowland chronicler was using as well. Overall, the transmission of the version of history which deprecated Richard III and favoured Henry VII was an important unifying element in consolidating the national status of England under the Tudor rule. Hanham specifically credits Vergil with playing an important role in this

[192] Fridrich Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History," *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 61.

process, but all the works analyzed in this thesis contributed, to various degrees, to this notion. From the historical perspective, the view of Richard III from the 1480s to the 1590s is quite hegemonic and overall negative. The time of majors revaluations of this figure, started by George Buck's *The history and life and reigne of Richard the Third* (1647) and climaxing in Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III* (1768), was yet to come.

On the other hand, individual authors naturally tend to appropriate the subject of their writing according to their will and skill. This disposition resulted in a growing diversification of the character of Richard III within the framework of established historiography. The authors' simultaneous emancipation from, and dependence on, the entrenched portrayal of Richard III may be described by a quotation from T. S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent":

> the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that ... the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.[193]

When examining the cultural history of the representation of Richard III, it is particularly useful to keep in mind Eliot's ideas of the pastness and presence of the past and of a "simultaneous order" of literature in which each work of art has a specific place. The idea that the past is tinged with the present moment implies that writing, and especially that about history, never comes "out of the blue" solely from the artist's imagination, but presupposes some acquaintance with previously written sources (the only exception from this principle is Mancini who was relying on his own experience or the information he heard). Secondly, the "simultaneous order" of literature reminds us that while we, as the readers in the 21st century, have the advantage of analyzing texts in a diachronic perspective across several centuries, we should not see the development of the image of Richard III as teleological and simply marching towards its finality, for instance, in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. What exactly does this mean? Without any doubt, judging its aesthetic merits, Shakespeare's play by far surpasses all the texts discussed in this thesis. Also, it was Shakespeare who immortalized the character and

[193] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920) 44.

secured him popularity and public interest even half a millennium after the historical Richard III was defeated by Henry Tudor.

However, while Shakespeare's portrayal of this ruler is the most popular and well-known one, it should not be the only image of Richard III we keep in mind simply because it is, similarly as all other texts, selective in its portrayal of this figure and rendering of history, particularly at the end of the play. Therefore, one should keep in mind that in the "simultaneous order" of literature Richard III does not in fact appear as a single character but as a palimpsest, or a mosaic created by individual artistic representations, some of which were examined in this thesis. Such a mosaic contains numerous contradictions. To summarise but a few, Richard is depicted as deformed and monstrous by More, Vergil, Hall, Holinshed and partly in *The True Tragedy*, while his physicality is not mentioned in *The Crowland Chronicle*, Mancini or "The Song of Lady Bessy" at all. He is treated unfavourably in most texts, but the Page at the end of the *The True Tragedy* creates a persuasive image of "worthie Richard". Whilst Legge shows him as quite a fearful man worried about losing the crown, a majority of other sources emphasise his courage and determination on the battlefield. In the first poem in *A Mirror for Magistrates* printed in 1563, Richard confesses the murder of the princes but ends up regretting himself as well, while the second poem in the 1610 edition and *The True Tragedy* capture him struggling with remorse. Moreover, in this drama the King even openly acknowledges that he deserves punishment. Apart from Mancini and More who do not cover the Battle of Bosworth, all the other chronicles, the ballad and both *A Mirror for Magistrates* poems show the sovereign's body being mutilated after death, however, all the playwrights decided to omit this fact.

The contradictions in the representation of Richard III are so great that they are both thought-provoking and frustrating. Too many shadows seem to have been cast on the stage of the English history to reach the truth. Nietzsche's warning that historiography is prone to "becoming somewhat distorted" deals with exactly the same problem of historical representation as the one found in the development of the cultural image of Richard III. In fact, analysing the portrayal of Richard III, one must become an even greater sceptic than Nietzsche. While the German philosopher postulates that there exists some primordial truth which is garbled in the course of time, this thesis proves that there is nothing like that in the representation of the King. Taking his physical portrayal as the example, while the concurrent sources do not mention anything

extraordinary about Richard's appearance, the recent discovery of his body proved that his backbone was curved as a result of scoliosis, but he did not have a hump or an undeveloped arm. So if one took the earliest sources as the most reliable ones, one would be trapped in the same paradox as when reading the opening of *The True Tragedy* where the version given by Truth is just a simulacrum, or "pageantry". However, once we give up the search for the single truth about King Richard III, we find his peculiarly Protean nature – so contradictory that it defies logical understanding – perfectly matching the logic of one of its artistic portrayals. In Shakespeare, the King says that he was born "unfinished, sent before my time / Into this breathing world scarce half made up"[194], and, at the same time, rumours say he entered the world with fully developed teeth, so he could "gnaw a crust at two hours old".[195] This is just one of many paradoxes to be found in the genealogy of Richard III in English historiography and literature. The spheres of historical facticity and artistic rendering cannot be disentangled easily, and both significantly contribute to the reputation of one of the most controversial monarchs in the English history. To return to the title of this thesis, blemished reputation becomes a metaphorical "fearefull shadow that still followes" King Richard III even after more than five centuries after his death.

[194] Shakespeare, 135, 1.1.20-1.
[195] Shakespeare, 241, 2.4.28.

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