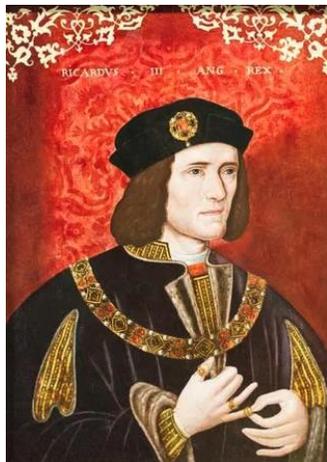


Rich and Will



Presented
to
Cincinnati Literary Club
by
Alfonso P López

October 17, 2022

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Rich Lauf who helped enrich our lives

Richard Maligned

Born of strife from family illustrious,
la crème de la crème.
Always days of danger enveloped your life.
Wars of cousins distant and near
on this island we cherish,
and across a channel on fragrant fields.
Administrator, warrior and king
maligned after death for want of a crown
by cousins, the Tudors,
at the hands of dear Will.

I.	The Disparagement of Richard III	3
II.	Shakespeare’s Portrayal	3
III.	The Origin of the Story	6
IV.	The Facts of Richard III’s life	9
V.	Right to the Throne	11
VI.	The Princes	13
VII.	Conclusion	16

The Disparagement of Richard III

In a simple world for simple people there is often only a choice between black and white, just as they are likely to separate historic figures into heroes & villains. In the history of the British monarchy the moniker of villain has been assigned most vigorously to Richard III, the last of the Plantagenets. If you were to inquire of any Englishman today what they think of Richard III, they would likely respond with a firm: That was the wicked uncle who killed the two darling princes in the tower. Or maybe the response could be, “He is the usurper king who used his guile to steal a throne”.

There is no room for hero in this tale; he is recognized universally today as a villain. Yet there are those who see him as a maligned ruler who lived honorably and died under unfortunate circumstances. Every year, 4000 loyal fans join as the Richard III Society to celebrate his life and achievements in addition to exchange research about his reign. There is no other society existent that celebrates a British royal today other than Princess Diana, but that is another story I dare not touch for the present.

The Shakespearean Portrayal

The first popular portrayal of Richard III is from our ever enduring and admired William Shakespeare. His play, Richard III, was written between 1592 and 1594. It is labelled a history but is sometimes called a tragedy. It depicts the Machiavellian rise to power and the short reign of a flawed monarch Richard III of England.

Shakespeare has neatly created a bitter psychopath for his audience who in later years has been cleverly portrayed by the genius of Laurence Olivier in 1955, Peter Cook in 1983 and Ian McKellen in 1995. This troika of talent has helped define the image of a crafty spider spinning its web as it devours unwanted members of its family. If you are keen to see this character in the hands of new talent, I entreat those with interest to witness the magnificent portrayal by Benedict Cumberbatch in the series of videos entitled “The Hollow Crown.” The first scene

exudes such a powerful recreation of the vile man who is to later become Richard III, it elicits a strong feeling of fear and disgust which is hard to forget. What a delicious performance worthy of the Shakespearean legend.

Shakespeare was able to step up a notch above his contemporaries' in creating the perfectly villainous Richard III, an image to some degree reminiscent of Marlowe's Barabbas from the Jew of Malta. This Richard has great influence over his audience using his charm, alternating with the use of a subtle terror. Allow us to quickly sample some of the more meaningful passages created by the Bard.

Although William Shakespeare painted Richard III in a most unflattering light, as the villainous Richard Duke of Gloucester he opens the scene with a most memorable monologue known to scholars and students everywhere suggesting an alternate outcome.

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

In a later passage he is presented to his public as a bitter man, untimely deformed. Will Shakespeare shows that out of this human disfigurement he is morally affected and not made for love. His only recourse is then to spread hate to those all about him. He yearns to incite King Edward to act against his brother Clarence and thus set hate upon hate among brothers. In the early stages it becomes clear Richard plays a role in the death of his brother George, Duke of Clarence at the hands of his brother King Edward IV.

*And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other:
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up,
About a prophecy, which says that 'G'
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.*

*Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here
Clarence comes.*

In the soliloquys created specifically for Richard he eloquently, with sickening charm, explains who he is and the evil innate in his plans for now and the days to come. Will Shakespeare has molded Richard into a cripple, an evil schemer, whose end game is to eliminate the barriers in his way as he ascends inexorably to the throne on high. His deformed malevolent shell of a man uses his finely tuned bitterness over his own misshapen body to counter any hints of criticism of him. His absence of ethics may in part be a product of the social chaos resulting from the War of the Roses, yet he is reminiscent of Shakespeare's Iago in Othello.

Will Shakespeare incites Richard III to soliloquy in the third part of Henry VI and gives us a glimpse into his soul.

Why, love forswore me in my mother's womb:
And, for I should not deal in her soft laws,
She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe,
To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub;
To make an envious mountain on my back,
Where sits deformity to mock my body;
To shape my legs of an unequal size.

Within his play Shakespeare gives Richard carte blanche to enter a homicidal frenzy of activity taking down all that he perceives to stand in his way.

At the onset of the play Richard actively woos the Lady Anne Neville who is still mourning the death of her husband Edward Prince of Wales, son of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou. The coffin has yet to be closed before his slick entreaties of a false love are heard dripping off his tongue. Shakespeare wastes no time as he allows Richard to admit his role in the death of the fallen Prince as he wantonly woos the widow.

In Henry VI, Part III Shakespeare allowed Richard a starring role in allowing him entry into the cell of Henry VI where he was held captive, to act as sole executioner. It is here that Richard begins his long homicidal trail that will help cement his reputation.

Allows us to enumerate Richard's long line of executions within this Shakespearean "Game of Thrones."

In the cell of Henry VI:
Richard Duke of Gloucester very calmly greets King Henry, kills him, and casually admits I have "kill'd thy son for his presumption." Thus, he lays claim to the deaths of his son Edward of Westminster, Prince of Wales, and now Henry VI.

Next, he maligns George Duke of Clarence, to his brother, the king. But while he awaits sentencing, Richard takes matters into his own hands, hiring two murderers to finish the task. Of interest, the ruffians do not return for payment, causing some Shakespearean sleuths to suggest they have also met an untimely end at Richard's hands. He now has added three more deaths to his tally.

Shakespeare created two young princes Edward V and Richard Duke of York who are intelligent and are among the only characters in the play to see through Richard's schemes. They are courageous, standing up fearlessly to the powerful Richard. The wordplay between them and Richard highlights their charisma. While locked away in the tower, Richard sends Tyrol or Tyrrel to kill his two nephews for the sake of completing his ascent to the throne.

At the end of the Shakespearean plays, Richard is credited with 7 deaths to complete his record as a serial killer.

Shakespeare created a physically deformed and morally repugnant human being which in hindsight helped to serve the Tudor propagandist machine that began to work almost immediately after the Battle of Bosworth.

We must be reminded of the influence disability exerted on the reputation of royalty and consequently the health of the nation. Disability was not considered a fluke of nature independent of the potential of man as in our world today. It was often accepted as a curse from God or a sign of moral impairment. This blemish in the person of the king was to suggest the realm had rotted from within. It is not surprising the Tudor historians and painters used this tool freely.

In his two plays Henry VI Part III and Richard III, William Shakespeare has completed an eloquent tarnishing of a reputation as reported by the Richard III society. His plays have an unimagined global reach having been translated into multiple languages and performed throughout the world. Based on these clever portrayals, the identity of Richard is well established for the world to remember for all time.

The question we must ask of ourselves is, do you believe Shakespeare's intention was to vilify Richard III to become what we know of him today? Is there more to this man than the Shakespearean portrayal? Is there a false narrative within which exists this monster and villain?

Origins of the Story

Top of the Document

Is Shakespeare solely responsible for creating this reputation of Richard III as a murderer and a villain? Is there another individual who may also have played a role in setting the stage for a flawed and evil Richard III?

It boils down to the facts vs the propaganda of the Tudor era. An attempt to document this history was not made until 20 yrs. after the death of the protagonists. One must also keep in mind, the creators of this historical interlude are beholden to the Tudor monarchy, who monitored this written history very closely.

The study of history was highly esteemed by humanist scholars of the era. The need for a specific English history was also recognized by the Tudors who had a dubious claim to the English throne. Early in his reign, Henry VII turned to various historical figures to justify his monarchy. He claimed descent from the Trojan Brutus, the legendary founder of Britain; incorporated the red dragon of the ancient Welsh king Cadwallader in the royal arms; and named his first son after the legendary King Arthur. He sponsored the Italian historian Polydore Vergil whose *Anglica Historia* traced Henry's ancestry to Cadwallader suggesting his ascent to the throne to be divinely ordained. Polydore Vergil was favored by the court of Henry VII and was encouraged to write his history under the watchful eyes of the court.

Where does Shakespeare acquire his information?

Richard III was written in 1591, a full century after the actual events took place and was written for the court of Elizabeth I, the last of the Tudor kings.

In the entire canon of William Shakespeare there are relatively few original plots which he shared with his audience. We have learned from scholars such as Gerald Langbaine early on in 1691 of how much he owed to other writers for his inspiration. He drew from other writers and poets, liberally adapting stories and occasionally lifting words and phrasing.

The source to which Shakespeare often leaned for his material was that of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. From here, originates much of the material he used for history plays as well as *Cymbeline*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*.

Thomas More

Holinshed himself also used sources for his material, the most important of which was that of Thomas More. Thomas More a public servant, who from 1518 served on Henry VIII's Privy Council and later became Lord Chancellor – wrote his *History of King Richard III* between 1513 and 1518.

The *History* is a renaissance biography, noted for its literary skill adherent to classical precepts rather than for historical accuracy. Some historians believe it to be an attack on tyranny rather than of Richard III or the House of York. In addition, it is believed this was a story for personal use and not for publication.

More uses a more dramatic writing style than had been typical in medieval chronicles; Richard III is treated as an outstanding, archetypal tyrant. Of some concern, is that More was only seven years old when Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth.

More, in addition, was likely influenced by his relationship with Cardinal John Morton under whom he had served as a page. Morton had been a determined foe of the Yorkist regime. It is likely he shared his strong opinions regarding Richard III with the young More.

Richard III's Tudor successors, from Henry VII onward, devoted their efforts to the justification of their reign. For this reason, the portrayal of Richard as a bad and unlawful king helped create the legitimacy they required. The accounts presented by More were ideal for the Tudor propaganda as it labelled Richard a usurper, accusing him of all matter of vile schemes in addition to the murder of the princes in the tower.

Thomas More's description of Richard became famous for its excess and helped influence Holinshed and subsequently Shakespeare in the creation of the monster we all came to know and love.

Thomas More wrote of Richard III:

Richard, the third son, of whom we now entreat, was in wit and courage equal with either of them, in body and prowess far under them both; little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favoured of visage, and such as is in states called warlike, in other men otherwise.

He was malicious, wrathful, envious and from afore his birth ever froward ... He was close and secret, a deep dissimuler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly coumpinable [friendly] where he inwardly hated, not letting to kiss whom he thought to kill; despiteous and cruel, not for evil will always, but after for ambition, and either for the surety and increase of his estate.

It is for truth reported that the duchess his mother had so much ado in her travail that she could not be delivered of him uncut; and that he came into the world with the feet forward, as me be borne outward, and (as the same runneth also) not untoothed, whether men of hatred report above the truth, or else that nature changed her course in his beginning, which in the course of his life many things unnatural committed.

And so on, More travels the road of dramatist providing a fully crafted cartoon villain, surfeit with motives to satisfy his ambition. His vivid detail likely aided Shakespeare in his depiction of scene after scene.

Was Shakespeare fully to blame for the character assassination? What were Shakespeare's intentions? Was he another of the many subtle Tudor agents crafting a new image of the monarchy to assert a claim to the loyalty of all England. Or was he just doing his thing?

Shakespeare viewed history not from the political perspectives of Sir Thomas More or Holinshed, let alone from those of modern scholarly historians, old and new, but likely from the stance of Sir John Falstaff. Think of Falstaff as the author of Richard III and you can imagine

what may have been. Falstaff like Shakespeare loves play and plays, and carefully avoids the nonsensical relationships of dynastic loyalties.

Apart from Shakespeare's literature allow us to point out the Tudors even made use of art for their purpose. A review of the portraits created of Richard III from that time onward clearly shows an evolution over the years beginning during the era of Henry VII. It is an unsubtle, clumsy attempt to make him more sinister and deformed than he was in real life. A right shoulder was painted higher than the left. The obvious hump was added after it was painted and continue to enlarge with each copy. The Jaw remains tense and the eyes are hard. The paintings not created by Tudor painters were not surprisingly without a hump and possessed a more reassuring countenance.

The Facts of Richard III's Life

Top of the Document

Richard was born in Fotheringay Castle in 1452 son of the Duke of York and Cecily Neville. His oldest brother, the future Edward IV was born in Rouen while his father fought in the Hundred Years War with France. Edward was to reach the pinnacle as king after the Battle of Towton which he won with the assistance of his benefactor Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick, later to be known as Warwick the Kingmaker. Richard would soon benefit from the largesse of Edward and receive many coveted positions.

By age 17 he was elevated to Knight of the Garter and Knight of the Bath, appointed Commissioner of Array for the Western Counties, and received independent command of forces establishing himself in the role of noble warrior.

In 1469 he was made constable of England and soon after appointed Chief Steward and Chamberlain of Wales. Later he became Lord High Admiral of England followed by the position of High Sheriff of Cumberland, Lieutenant of the North and Commander-in-Chief against the Scots and hereditary Warden of the West March. The titles go on and on, but what is important to note is how he became a very useful and reliable ruler of great parts of England and warrior against their perennial enemy, the Scots. What is most important to acknowledge is how he had become his brother's right-hand man. Shakespeare's Richard III to which we previously referred, would never reach these heights.

Edward's rule was complicated by his choice to marry Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 which infuriated Warwick. Later both Warwick and George, Duke of Clarence, brother of Edward, would rebel against him. This was the first of two acts of treason which would come back to eventually seal George's fate. It was at this time, George married Warwick's daughter, Anne, without royal permission, an obvious faux pas in that era. Richard remained loyal all this time even throughout their forced exile to Burgundy.

Later, with the intervention of Richard, his brother George would defect back to Edward. Warwick the Kingmaker would soon lose his life at the Battle of Barnet.

The inexperienced prince Edward of Westminster, son of Henry VI, and his mother, Margaret of Anjou, led the remnant of their forces to meet Edward IV in the Battle of Tewkesbury. They would be decisively defeated, and Edward of Westminster would die on the battlefield at the hands of Edward with no known involvement of Richard. Shakespeare's story again seems to get the facts all wrong.

King Henry VI was to die in captivity in London under the control of Edward IV, now king of England. Richard was 18 years of age then and was known to be away from London at the time of his death, contrary to the story of the Shakespearean legend.

Upon the death of his wife Isabel after childbirth, Clarence's mental condition became irrational, and he married Mary of Burgundy again without royal permission. He was then committed to the Tower by orders of Edward and while there he was overheard to "imagine or compass" the death of the king using black arts. In this era an act of this nature, to wish or hope for the death of the king, was viewed as treasonous. Clarence was soon brought forth, charged, tried by the king, and executed in quick order in private within the confines of the Tower. Richard again had no role in these proceedings in clear contradiction of the Shakespearean tale.

During the Easter season of 1483 the kingdom's piece shattered as Edward IV became ill and by April the 9th was dead from an unknown illness. Edward V, son of Edward IV was then next in line to be king. Plans were immediately created to take the new king to London for his coronation scheduled to take place on May 4 of 1483.

Edward V was at that time too young to rule, and a Royal Council was established to rule the country until he became of age. The Council urged Richard to assume the role of Protector as per the wishes of the late king.

The princes were then taken to the tower for safe keeping. The Tower at that time was meant as a place of refuge and did not have the dark connotations we now recognize. The dowager queen, Elizabeth Woodville took her 5 daughters and son Richard Duke of York to sanctuary at Westminster Abbey. They were later to remove themselves from the Abbey and sanctuary after assurances were received from the king, an important fact to remember for later.

In 1483, the 22nd day of June, Dr Ralph Shaa gave an earth-shattering sermon at Paul's Cross asserting Richard Duke of Gloucester had the rightful claim to the throne and should be recognized as Richard III. In his sermon he claimed that Edward IV (as whose chaplain he had served) had already been betrothed to Lady Eleanor Butler at the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville. This would have made the marriage to Elizabeth illegitimate. The children suddenly had become bastards. A story had earlier circulated that Stillington, Bishop of Bath, was imprisoned by Edward IV in 1478 because he incautiously spoke of this precontract to George, Duke of Clarence.

A new statute, the Titulus Regius, was passed by parliament giving the title of king to Richard. He now became Richard III. It asserted the marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville was invalid and as a result their children including the two princes and Elizabeth were illegitimate and no longer had status before the crown.

The nephews are last seen playing in the Tower of London in early July. In late July Richard III is on his royal progress and hears of an attempt to rescue the princes from the tower. Some historians believe this may have been a possible cause of the princes' deaths. Late summer of 1483 has been suggested as the time of their deaths as they were never seen alive again.

In the fall of 1485 Henry Tudor invaded England with English and Welsh exiles, mercenaries from France, Germany, and Switzerland and a contingent of Scots with the aid of Charles VIII of France. On the 22 of August of 1485, Richard lost his crown and life at the Battle of Bosworth. Henry VII, the first of the Tudor line assumed the throne by right of conquest. Soon after, the Titulus Regius was reversed and all official copies in parliament were destroyed.

Was he a villain? Today, if you were to ask any Englishman or well-read American you will likely receive an emphatic reply attesting that he obviously was all those things to which Shakespeare alludes. The Richard III society believes the following: he was a good lord, brother, family man and a noble king who lived and died in a difficult era.

Based on the history laid before us from multiple objective sources, he was tremendously loyal to his brother Edward IV through good times and bad. He remained at his side when he was needed the most. He demonstrated his talent for leadership as a statesman and as a warrior defending the kingdom and the Yorkist cause. His brother had such trust in him he asked him to act as regent to his son in the likelihood of his death.

The Right to the Throne

Top of the Document

As we move along in this Game of Thrones, allow us to determine who of all the characters on the stage would be most likely a rightful descendant of Edward III from where all right of kingship originates during this era.

First let us talk about Edward. Our valiant king Edward IV was blonde, six feet tall with remarkably good looks and a still more remarkable way with women. Richard on the other hand was short and dark haired as was their father Richard Duke of York. Edward looked nothing like his father and this physical dissimilarity had befuddled contemporaries. Rumors had been hushed throughout his life over this observation and its implications. There were neutral sources declaring that even his mother had at one time declared Edward a bastard.

Even our dear Will Shakespeare articulates these rumors in his play Richard III in which the protagonist says:

“Tell them, when that my mother went with child
Of that insatiate Edward, noble York
My princely father then had wars in France;
And, by the computation of the time,
Found that the issue was not his begot;

Edward the IV's claim to kingship is placed in jeopardy based on recent discoveries revealing that in the summer of 1441, the Duke of York, presumed father of Edward IV, was on campaign in Pontoise and prayers were offered for his safety and carefully recorded in the cathedral chapter records. Based on these findings the last time Cecily Neville and Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York may have had relations would have been May 1441. Edward was born on April 1442 a full 11 months after the fact. Edward's christening was a hush hush affair in a side chapel. In comparison, when George the future Duke of Clarence was born, the christening required the entire cathedral. It is highly likely Edward IV was a bastard son and not eligible to the throne. This of course would apply to all his offspring.

Let us now address the future king, Henry Tudor. Unfortunately for him, his mother, the Lady Margaret Beaufort, originated from the bastard line of John of Gaunt through Katherine Swynford, his mistress. This branch of the family was later legitimized but with the condition they would not be eligible to inherit the throne. His father, on the other hand, was from minor Welsh nobility. As he invaded England to depose Richard, he did whatever possible to promote the claim that his family, the Angleseys were descendants of Cadwaladr, the legendary last British king, though of course residing in Wales. Despite the latter claim his actual pedigree was vastly inferior to many living members of both York and Lancaster families. His connection to Edward III was very weak if at all evident.

Henry Tudor needed to bolster his claim to the throne which he did by marrying Elizabeth of York a daughter of the now illegitimate Edward IV. In addition, we should recall that the children of Edward's marriage were declared illegitimate by his earlier marital commitment to Lady Butler. It is in the bed of this marriage that Henry VII hoped to exercise his claim to the throne other than by right of conquest. Unfortunately, Henry VII was successful in uniting two bastard lines. Where it not for the right of conquest he had little to support his claim to the throne.

Richard III on the other hand was directly connected by his paternal line to Edward III by way of his second son, Lionel Duke of Clarence and the third son the Edmund Duke of York. On his maternal line he owned a connection to John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III. There was no one alive with such an impeccable family tree. If anyone had a right to the throne of England it was Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

What Happened to the Princes?

Top of the Document

Before reconciling the disappearance or death of the princess we might ask the question, what is the precedent of regicide among the royal families of England? Not that this writer would like to justify infanticide, but the royalty of England had a great knack for this practice among the elite. Take for example the death of King Rufus while hunting with his brother, his body abandoned while his brother rushes off to claim the treasury, Richard II was most likely starved in Pontefract Castle at the hands of the first of the Lancasters, Edward II allegedly was terminated with a red-hot poker at the command of his wife, and finally Henry VI likely died at the hands of Edward IV. So, you must admit, they had developed regicide to a great familial art form. The death of the two princes, if in fact this did occur, would represent just another blip in the regal line of succession.

The Death of Princes

First, let us assume they were executed by a party the world has been attempting to identify for over 400 years. Who are the likely suspects?

Richard III

To begin with, the most likely suspect we will address is the recently crowned Richard III. He had the means unparalleled, with limitless power to accomplish the task. The boys are under his command, and he could order their death at any time, but that is easier said than done. The families whom they represent would not see this kindly. The peace was tenuous, and he could ill stand any disturbance alienating his supporters.

If it occurred in late summer of 1483, he could not have carried out the task himself as he was on progress, away from London, and would not have been personally available. For this to occur there was the need to delegate and that would lead to a series of traceable contacts.

One must also consider, was it necessary to eliminate the princes? The princes are now deemed illegitimate by the Titulus Regius and not a direct threat to him. At the same time, we must remember his nephew Edward, Earl of Warwick son of his brother George, who was ahead of him in the dynastic line of succession. Why not kill him also? The rationale for eliminating the doubly illegitimate offspring of his brother Edward, becomes complicated and could have led to a public relations conundrum.

Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham

Here is a player in this Game of Thrones who is hidden directly in front of those who play the game. He is a descendant of royalty (Edward III) by way of John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster and Thomas Woodstock, 1st Duke of Gloucester on his father's side and John of Beaufort (John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford) on his mother's side.

He is the player who is most likely to have the personal strength to do so without consent. He was the constable of England. He had the power that allowed him access to the tower.

Alvaro Lopez Chaves a Portuguese contemporary states:

"... and after the passing away of king Edward in the year of 83, another one of his brothers, the Duke of Gloucester, had in his power the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, the young sons of the said king his brother, and turned them to the Duke of Buckingham, under whose custody the said Princes were starved to death." [7]

A document dated some decades after the disappearance was found in the College of Arms in London in 1980.

this stated that the murder "be the vise of the Duke of Buckingham". This led Michael Bennett, writer on Tudor history, to suggest that possibly some of Richard's prominent supporters, Buckingham, and Tyrell, murdered the princes on their own initiative without waiting for Richard's orders. Bennett noted in support of this theory: "After the King's departure Buckingham was in effective command in the capital, and it is known that when the two men met a month later there was an unholy row between them." Had Buckingham divulged his deed to Richard? We will never know.

Henry Tudor and Margaret Beaufort

This mother and son team had the greatest motive. All her life, Margaret Beaufort spent in promoting her son as king of England. They had no opportunity prior to Bosworth but having risen to power there would be no one in their way.

On Henry's arrival to the throne in London, the children are still missing, but early on in his reign Henry is certain the boys are dead, though no one has knowledge of their whereabouts. Why is he so convinced of their death?

Henry Tudor's claim to the throne was by right of conquest. It was vital that all competition be eliminated. To further cement his rule, in 1499 he executed Edward, the Earl of Warwick, son of Clarence, who was clearly in line and the last of the Plantagenets.

Sweating Sickness.

Erasmus in 1483, at the time of crisis in England, wrote about the English sweat disease which when it manifested itself did so rapidly leading to a mortal illness. England was hit hardest, but on one occasion it also involved mainland Europe, with mortality rates between 30% and 50%. The onset of the disease was quick and without warning, according to contemporary descriptions usually during the night or early morning.

It is well known the princes were inadvertently left in London where the disease was most likely to be epidemic. It was not unusual for nobility to scurry off to the country when such epidemics

gripped the cities. In the Tower of London, they may have been directly exposed to this rampant disease and an unfortunate demise.

Could it be that after their deaths from the Sweating Sickness, Richard the III was reluctant to announce it so as not be accused of murder?

The Princes Lived

Despite a pair of skeletons being found in the Tower in 1674, 200 years after their supposed death, no evidence of Prince Edward and Richard's murder has ever been discovered. Clues recently brought to light suggest an unexpected ending.

A theory proposed is that Elizabeth Woodville reached an agreement with Richard allowing her to remove them from court life and be sent elsewhere. Upon assuring their safety, Elizabeth Woodville would leave sanctuary at Westminster in 1484. She unexpectedly even encourages her oldest son, Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset, from a previous marriage, to return from Henry Tudor's side in France where he sought protection. A pardon had been offered from Richard III for his actions. In addition, she allows her daughters to return to court and Richard III is assigned the responsibility of finding them husbands. She may have known her children were no longer in harm's way. These actions clearly indicate she had no fear for her offspring.

In the years that follow reports gather that give credence to this unexpected theory. In Coldridge in Devon, an area once belonging to the Greys, the family from which Elizabeth Woodville originated, after a visit by representatives of Richard III, a young John Evans suddenly appears in the village and is given the title, Lord of the Manor. There is no prior record of his existence. In the chantry of the local St Matthew's Church built by John Evans in 1511, a glass depiction of a 'saint-like' boy King Edward V remains not unlike the one at Canterbury Cathedral.

In another tale a young boy is crowned King Edward of England in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, attended by King Richard's friend and former Chamberlain, Francis, Lord Lovell, and the Yorkist heir to the throne, Richard III's nephew, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln. Also present at the coronation in Dublin were the leaders of the Irish church and the Irish nobility. The Irish had been long-term supporters of the House of York.

In 1491, a young man arrived in Ireland declared himself to be Richard, Duke of York, the youngest son of Edward IV of England and one of the missing Princes. The boy claimed that from 1483 to 1490, when he was assumed to be 'missing', he had lived in various places in Europe under the protection of two loyal Yorkists. He garnered a significant following and, most importantly, the backing of Margaret, Dowager Duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV and Richard III. The young man bore a striking resemblance to his alleged father, Edward IV, and had the same three body marks said to have been apparent on the king's youngest son. He also recounted details and conversations from the English court that only King Edward's youngest son would have known.

No conclusive evidence has ever been found that Edward V and Richard of York were murdered, and some revisionist historians believe it may have been invented as part of a plot to smear Richard III. The bones found under a staircase in the tower during the reign of Charles II now lie in an urn in Westminster Abbey, and the Queen is said to have refused to allow scientists to analyze them.

Conclusion

Top of the Document

This is not an attempt to change history but a desire to bring the history of Richard III into a more objective light. Shakespeare must be recognized as one of the most creative minds to have graced the history of literature, yet he was not a historian with the patience to unearth the facts as they were in real life. His was a world of theatre, grand drama, tension, illusion, and a desire to win the hearts of his audience, if not that of his Elizabethan sponsors. He created his history plays to entertain, delight, and yet place the ancestors of his sponsors in a better light. Yes, you may label this as self-serving, yet it may also be an act of survival, which gave him a platform for his creative output.

Given the fact Richard III was a man living in a difficult age where allegiances changed rapidly as the winds on the open sea drive boats hither and thither, you may want to imagine yourself in the Tudor world of power and chaos.

A Side Note: Leicester Football and Richard III

Allow me to share an unusual tale encountered in my readings that may encourage a more amenable view of Richard III.

In a world of spectacular coincidences there is one that stands out connecting the crowning of football royalty and the dethroning and resurrection of the last of the Plantagenets.

Richard III died in battle in Leicestershire, Bosworth Field, on August 22, 1485. Half a millennium later his remains were uncovered under a car park in the City of Leicester. He was later buried in the Leicester Cathedral in 2015 but his influence does not end there if you were to inquire with fans of the Leicester Football Club.

Our tale of coincidences begins on August 25, 2012, when against all odds archeologists uncover two leg bones beneath a parking space in the city of Leicester. The Rovers begin to win against all odds and the archeologists continue to find bones and exhume a full skeleton while expectations increase.

By the end of January 2013, Leicester is now climbing up the Championship table with multiple wins and, archeologists from the University of Leicester are ready to announce to the world the most improbable of news. They have found the last of the Plantagenets, Richard III.

During the 2013-2014 season, after 10 years the Foxes can return to Premier League play as they earned promotion to the top league with six games to spare.

The Blue Army celebrated with parades while at the same time celebrations occurred at the other end of town. After a long tug-of-war between the cities of Leicester and York ending at the High Court, the fate of Richard's remains was finally decided with Leicester the winner. He would be buried in the Leicester Cathedral.

As the heavens opened for Richard, they did so for the Foxes as they were crowned Premier League champions on May 7, 2016, just over 400 days since the last of the Plantagenets was re-buried in the Leicester Cathedral.

And so is the most magical of coincidences joining the royalty of the Plantagenets and the Leicester City Football Club.

To close my tale allow me to share a poem written by Carol Ann Duffy, Poet Laureate, and recited by Benedict Cumberbatch, descendant of Richard III at the burial in Leicester Cathedral.

Richard

My bones, scripted in light, upon cold soil,
a human braille. My skull, scarred by a crown,
emptied of history. Describe my soul
as incense, votive, vanishing; your own
the same. Grant me the carving of my name.
These relics, bless. Imagine you re-tie
a broken string and on it thread a cross,
the symbol severed from me when I died.
The end of time – an unknown, unfelt loss –
unless the Resurrection of the Dead ...
or I once dreamed of this, your future breath
in prayer for me, lost long, forever found;
or sensed you from the backstage of my death,
as kings glimpse shadows on a battleground.

Top of the Document

References:

Bloom, H. (1999). Shakespeare The Invention of the Human. Fourth Estate.

Carson A. (2017). Richard III: The Maligned King. The History Press.

Donkor M. (2016 Mar 15), Richard III and Machiavelli <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/richard-iii-and-machiavelli>

Heyman P., Simons L., Cochez C. (2014 Jan 6), Were the English Sweating Sickness and the Picardy Sweat Caused by Hantaviruses? National Library of Medicine. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3917436/>

Horspool D. (2015). A Ruler and His Reputation. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Kat Dr. (2020 July 3) Henry Tudor's Right to Rule?: John of Gaunt, Katherine Swynford and the Beaufort Line. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GC5ePwOLVao&t=516s>

Kat Dr. (2019, Oct 25) Dr Kat and Framing Richard III? YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB_5TuwHd5U&list=PL64fxEx23swCruwxKlhLHJcYBePEKnp7I&index=1&t=5s

LCFC.com. (2020 Mar 26) The Magical Tale of Richard III & Leicester City. <https://www.lcfc.com/news/1649008/the-magical-tale-of-richard-iii--leicester-city>

Marsh R. Revealing Richard III. <https://www.revealingrichardiii.com/two-pretenders.html>

More, T. (1557). History of King Richard III. British Library.

Pressley, J.M. Shakespeare's Source Material. Shakespeare Resource Center, <https://www.bardweb.net/content/ac/sources.html>

Robinson T. (2019, Dec 6) Are The British Royal Family Illegitimate? | Britain's Real Monarch | Real Royalty. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Euc1JskB7Uo&t=266>

Shakespeare Company. (2016 Sep 21) A Handy Guide to Homicide in Richard III. The Shakespeare Company. <https://www.shakespearecompany.com/about-us/blog/a-handly-guide-to-homicide-in-richard-iii/>

Tey, J. (1995). The Daughter of Time. Scribner.

Thornton, T. (2020 Dec 28), Thomas More's History of King Richard III. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.13100>
<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/thomas-mores-history-of-king-richard-iii>

Tingle R., Morrison R. Mailonline, (2021 Dec 29), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-10352189/Richard-III-INNOCENT-Princes-Tower-murders-study-claims.html>

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation. (2022 April 20). Ralph Shaa.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Shaa

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation. (2022 Aug 28). Lady Eleanor Talbot.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Eleanor_Talbot

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation. (2022 Aug 20). Engagement.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engagement#Betrothal>

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation. (2022 May 7). Edward Plantagenet, 17th Earl of Warwick.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Plantagenet,_17th_Earl_of_Warwick

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation. (2022 Aug 31). John of Gaunt.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_Gaunt

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation. (Aug 31, 2022). Thomas More.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_More

Williams, K. S. (2016 Mar 15), Richard III and the Staging of Disability.
<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/richard-iii-and-the-staging-of-disability>