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Shaping and Re-shaping the Historical and Fictional Character of Richard III

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To Ada,
following in your footsteps

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INTRODUCTION

In summer 2013 I read a newspaper article about the discovery of some English King's bones in a car park in Leicester. The King was the last of his dynasty, Richard Plantagenet, known as Richard III. This was my first official encounter with Richard and his story. I researched the historical character and I found very conflicting versions about his life: according to one version – the oldest one – Richard has been a tyrant, who usurped the throne of his brother's son and imprisoned the boy and his younger brother in the Tower, then the two boys disappeared, (according to someone Richard killed them). In his way to the throne, he committed a series of crimes. This version of history accuses Richard to be not only a usurper, but also a regicide, sometimes a fratricide and a uxoricide. The other version proposes an opposite vision of the historical character: Richard never committed any of the crimes he had been accused for, actually he was a just man and a just King. He took the throne to protect England, remembering how the country had been torn during the kingdom of a children king.

Almost at the same time, BBC, in collaboration with Starz, proposed a period drama set during the Wars of the Roses, *The White Queen*. In the television show there was a character, a young boy, brother of King Edward IV. It took me a little time to understand that that Richard was the same of the bones in the car park in Leicester, for BBC suggested another interpretation of the same character. In less than a month, I had three different versions for the same character, a man, a king from the past. So, which one was the true Richard?

This dissertation tries to find an answer to this question. To do so, I propose a journey in history and fiction to dig and discover – as the archaeologists did with the bones – the character of Richard.

I will start by providing a historical portrait of the character, focusing on Richard's career as Duke of Gloucester and Lord of the North. It is a habit, indeed, to consider mainly Richard's kingdom (which lasted only two years) and to define the character as a tyrant. Instead, he proved himself a good and a just politician as governor of the North. It is not strange to imagine him to be a good king as well, but a king who had to face many difficulties, which the posterity judged under a negative point of view. One of the greatest accusation moved to Richard was that he murdered his nephews after he imprisoned them in the Tower of London. I will investigate the case

of the Princes to find new culprits of the crime and to try to clear Richard's reputation, if this is possible. When someone decides to analyse the history of the last Plantagenet King, what is truly striking is the strength and the efforts that the Tudor propaganda used to blacken Richard reputation; under some aspects the story of the Princes may seem rather a political construction by the Tudor than real history.

Many rumours about Richard have been discredited after the discovery of the bones in Leicester in 2012. First of all, the study of the DNA of the remains allowed their recognition as Richard's. Then, thanks to the collaboration of experts from different fields of study, it was possible to obtain much information about his life and health. The study on the bones determined precisely how Richard died at Bosworth. The most evident detail was that Richard suffered of scoliosis, but his physical appearance was not influenced by it, as claimed by tradition.

The greatest contribution in darkening the character was given by the chroniclers of Tudor time, and particularly by Polydore Vergil and Thomas More. In my dissertation I will analyse Vergil's chronicle, which was one of the first authorized accounts about Richard III, comparing his work with the more popular one by More. The two authors show some connections, but also discrepancies. They might have influenced each other works; yet, Thomas More should be considered the true creator of the myth of the tyrant Richard III, a monster rather than a man. In his record, Richard is described as a deformed man, with an evil and deviant attitude, completely incapable of compassion, and for this reason not belonging to mankind. During the Middle Ages there was the belief that the physical appearance was the reflection of the soul and the character. Because of this, Richard became a prototype of pure evil. For centuries he has been a great villain – perhaps one of the greatest – and his charm as reputation as villain still survives.

The merit for Richard's great success as dark villain must be ascribed to William Shakespeare and his history play. Still nowadays *Richard III* is often represented on stage. The Shakespearean character derives mostly from More's account. The playwright conferred him a sophisticated psychological profundity, which could be considered one of the keys of his success. In my work, I will analyse the relations between More and Shakespeare and particularly how the former inspired the latter. Then I will consider the relationships between the Shakespearean Richard

and the characters that interact with him on scene. I decided to focus on the characters of Buckingham and the women (Anne, Margaret, Elizabeth and Cecily) to investigate Richard's nature and motives. Only after this analysis, it will be possible to study the relationship between Richard and himself. Richard's awareness of himself is Shakespeare's great invention and one of the reasons why it so simple for the audience to understand, if not even empathise with him. I will also devote some space to the investigation of the his special bond between Richard and the audience, which is essential to understand his charm (and the consequences that he has on us when we attend the play).

Shakespeare's fictional Richard survived until nowadays, often stealing the scene to the historical character: it happens often that people know the theatrical Richard and believe him the real one instead of the historical one. In the 1920s the *Richard III Society* was founded with the purpose to redeem Richard's reputation and to create a honest portrait of the last Plantagenet King. The contribute of the *Society* was fundamental to spread a new image of the King, closer to the historical reality, which attracted some contemporary writers who decided to make Richard a protagonist of their stories.

Since Richard is an historical character, the historical novel is the most suitable genre to write about him. In my research of the different portraits of the fictional character I will take in consideration two authors and their novels: Sharon Penman's *The Sunne in Splendour* and the series of novels *The Cousins' War* by Philippa Gregory. The first novel is a classic example of historical novel; with a third person narrator, Penman describes Richard's life from childhood to death. While Gregory prefers to let the narration to the women of the court: Elizabeth Woodville, Margaret Beaufort and Anne Neville; through their eyes we can know Richard and his life until the defeat at Bosworth. The story of Richard is renown; in my study I will focus the attention not only on the new interpretations of the personality of the character, but also on the style used by the writers and their relationship with history (and particularly with the historical sources), rather than on the facts narrated. An important detail to consider in the analysis of the novels is the role of the women. In fact, both authors are women, and – specifically with Gregory's books – the point of view of the narration is often a female one.

With this work I would like to investigate if there can be any correspondence between the historical and fictional character, since the undeniable relation between history and literature; in fact, quite often history influences literature and vice versa. The case of Richard III can be emblematic.

1. RICHARD III AS HISTORICAL CHARACTER

On 4 February 2013, the University of Leicester and Leicester City Council, in association with the Richard III Society, kept a press conference to make a big announcement: on 12 September 2012, in a car park in Leicester, the bones of a man that was later confirmed to be King Richard III, the last Plantagenet king of England, had been found. The event was broadcast online and followed by millions of people and the news spread immediately all around the world. The myth of Richard III was living again, but of a new life.

1.1. RICHARD III: A PROFILE IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

Before the finding of the bones in a car park in Leicester – which gave a new interpretation of the character of the last Plantagenet king – Richard was studied by the historians that were interested in the complicated period of the civil war. He was a controversial character, but nonetheless a protagonist of his time. To better understand his actions and decisions as a king, it is important to read into his career as a duke.

1.1.1. A biography: Richard, Duke of Gloucester (1461-1483)

Richard III was born on 2 October 1542 at Fotheringhay, Northamptonshire.[1] He was the youngest child of Richard, third duke of York (1411-1460) and Cecily, duchess of York (1415-1495), heiress of the Neville family. When Richard was born, the political situation in England was unstable, the kingdom was fractured into the two parties of York and Lancaster, since the time of the deposition of Richard II by Henry Bolingbroke in 1399, which started the conflicts of the Wars of the Roses. "This [war] was rather a clash between different branches of a royal family and their followers,

[1] All the historical references are taken from the following books: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2013; Carpenter, Christine, *The Wars of The Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England: c.1437-1509*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Goodman, Anthony, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society, 1452-1497*, New York: Routledge, 1991; Hicks, Michael, *Richard III and His Rivals: Magnates and Their Motives in the War of the Roses*, London: Hambledon Press, 1991; Jacob, Ernest Fraser, *The Fifteenth Century: 1399-1485*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; Pollard, Anthony James, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay society, War and Politics: 1450 - 1500*, Oxford: Claredon, 1990; The Greyfriars Reaseach Team with Maev Kennedy and Lin Foxhall, *The Bones of a King: Richard III Rediscovered*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015

with supporters of both sides located in every county, city and town"[2]; it has to be underlined that for most people of England who was wearing the crown was of scarce importance.

Little is known of Richard's early life: as a youngest son he was unlikely to bother history too much. With the victory of York at the Battle of Northampton in July 1460 the political situation changed. The Duke of York asserted his claim to the throne and arranged with the king to be recognized as his heir, disinheriting, in this way, Edward of Lancaster. The agreement did not last. On 30 December at the Battle of Wakefield the Duke of York was killed with his son Edmund, Earl of Rutland. The Duke's oldest son Edward became the leader of the Yorkist cause, while his younger brothers Richard and George were sent to Burgundy for their safety. After the victory at the battle of Towton, Edward was crowned king on 28 June 1461 and on 1 November of the same year Richard was made duke of Gloucester. George and Richard could return to England. Probably the young duke remained in the household of Earl of Warwick - his cousin - until 1468. Next year he was with the king and he started to take a more active role in history.

The emergence on the public scene of Richard went back to the growing opposition of Clarence and Warwick to the king. From this moment the loyalty of Richard to his brother the king is undeniable. When Edward was captured by Warwick and Clarence, in August 1469, he went north to raise forces to rescue his brother. This loyalty was rewarded with the assignation of the role of constable of England in 1469 and lands and proprieties. At the end of September 1469 Richard and Edward had to flee into exile, when Warwick and Clarence rose in rebellion. They were hosted by Charles, duke of Burgundy, their brother-in-law, who supported Edward's invasion of England in spring, 1471. The king's army won at Barnet (on 14 April, where Warwick died) and at Tewkesbury (on 4 May). Richard fought by his brother's side in both the battles: at Barnet, probably, he commanded the right wing, while at Tewksbury he commanded the vanguard and, according to the chronicles of the time, he was a brave and skilled soldier. After these two victories, Edward was beyond challenge king of England and Richard, his loyal brother, was rewarded with estates and titles

[2] The Greyfriars Reaseach Team with Maev Kennedy and Lin Foxhall, *The Bones of a King: Richard III Rediscovered*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015, p. 82.

confiscated from the losers. It was the beginning of the hegemony of Richard in the North, as representative of the royal influence. His power was consolidated with his marriage with Anne Neville, widow of Edward of Lancaster and heiress to the fortune of the Earl of Warwick, in 1472. Clarence, married with Anne's sister, opposed this marriage - he even tried to hide her from his brother - and the dispute, which involved the inheritance of the lands and the titles of Warwick, was resolved only in 1474 with an Act of the Parliament that considered the dowager countess dead and divided the land between the two of them. One thing must not be forgotten: Richard was already familiar with the North and its policy, because he had been raised in the household of Warwick in Middleham. The choice of Edward of putting his brother in the North was deliberate to grant its support to his kingdom and to satisfy Richard's ambition.

The emergence of Richard as pre-eminent nobleman in the north-east and far north-west of England unleashed tensions with Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, the bishop of Durham and Thomas Stanley, Earl of Derby. But by 1475 they accepted completely Gloucester as the chief of the North. The North had always been a difficult area to rule, also because of the border against Scotland that had constantly to be defended, but Richard was the solution to the problem. Gloucester's policy was devoted to winning the loyalty and the confidence of those around him[3]. He has always had a special relationship with the city of York[4], which gave its support to the king even after he was defeated and killed at Bosworth. But with York all the North East of England used to watch at Richard as a benevolent lord, who helped the region to thrive; in fact York's economic plight was a reflection of that of the entire region: supporting it meant to support the north-east in general. Gloucester was interested in helping his region growing as in the economic aspects as in the administration of justice. As a men led by loyalty, (in this contest it is interesting to remember that his motto was "*Loyaulté me lie*", "Loyalty binds me"), "the duke wished to see that the law was administered impartially and that the weak were not overborne by the strong"[5]. To sum up, "good concord, rest, and friendly unity were the hallmarks of his hegemony over the north

[3] Pollard, Anthony James, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay society, War and Politics: 1450 - 1500*, Oxford: Claredon, 1990, p. 328.
[4] Richard's special relationship with the city of York has been an object of analysis in study. See L.C. Atreed, "The King's interest: York's Fee Farm and the Central Government, 1482-92", NH 17 (1981), pp. 24-43; Miller "Medieval York", pp. 60-66; Palliser, "Richard III and York", pp. 51-81.
[5] Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses,* p. 335.

after 1474"[6]. The intervention of Richard's politics in the north helped to bring an end to the internal conflicts which had afflicted the region since 1453, maybe because with his predominance he was able to eliminate the aristocratic feuding, which was the main cause of the disorders. First of all, he was loyal to his brother the king and so he had the capacity to stand above old divisions.

> The question is also raised as to whether the king actively promoted his brother's power in the north as part of the policy of delegating regional authority to him, or whether Gloucester took power for himself leaving the king no choice but to acquiesce. The two are not mutually exclusive[7].

Richard proved again his value also as military leader in the campaign against Scotland in 1482. His brother Edward could not lead the expedition and entrusted the army to him. He took Edinburgh and captured king James III, with the support of the duke of Albany. In that occasion he reconfirmed his power and great ability of political administration. But this success in Scotland can not be compared with the campaign lead by Edward in France in 1475, to reconquer the lands lost under Henry VI. It concluded with the Treaty of Picquigny. Richard did not attend the meeting with king Louis, most probably because he did not agree with his brother's decision to come to peace with France so easily. Once back to England,

> Gloucester deliberately concentrated his landed estate in the north, being prepared to pay for royal grants or to exchange more southerly properties for those in Yorkshire [...]. Gloucester consolidated his power in the north, and concentrated on building up his influence in the region at the expense of that elsewhere[8].

The dispute with Clarence ended definitely in 1477, when he was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London with the accuse of treason. The king himself prosecuted his brother and withdrew all his properties. On 18 February 1478 George, Duke of Clarence was privately executed - according to the legend he was drowned in a barrel of malmsey, but there is no evidence of it. The Tudor tradition has blamed Richard for his brother's death, but there is no prove of his involvement in the accuse,

[6] Ivi, p. 337.
[7] Ivi, p. 339. According to Dr. Horrox Gloucester's power in the north enhanced Edward's authority, in fact, as king's brother and member of the royal house he represented the court in the region.
[8] *Ibidem.*

in the trial and finally in the execution. Once Clarence was dead, Richard took patronage of his nephew and niece.

1.1.2. A biography: King Richard III (1483-1483)

On 9 April 1483 king Edward IV suddenly died, leaving a twelve-year-old child as heir. Both His brother Richard and his son Edward were not in London, but they hurried to the capital, from Middleham and Ludlow respectively. The events that followed the death of the king have been argued over since. Edward IV had made Richard protector of his heir and the realm. According to Dominic Mancini (a contemporary chronicler of Richard) in the council, at the time, there were two views about the government of the realm during the minority of the new king: the first one held to Edward's will and thought the protector should have reigned; the other one suggested a governing council with the duke as chief councillor. This second view was supported by the Woodville, the Queen's family, who were afraid of a usurpation and their consequent fate; there was not a cordial relationship between the Woodville and Richard. Whoever came to power, the other would have not felt safe. "For the new king to be underage was the greatest disaster that could have struck the dynasty, for it opened the way to disunity, and that gave opportunities to alternative contenders both at home and abroad"[9]. Lord William Hastings, chamberlain and dear friend of the king, who had brought the news of his death to Gloucester, suggested to the duke to bring a strong force in London. The position of the protector was a risky and vulnerable one, so on 30 April he took possession of the prince at Stony Stratford and arrested his uncle, the earl Antony Rivers. Richard explained his nephew that his life had been threatened by a conspiracy against the protectorate and that he was forced to arrest Lord Rivers. The queen sought sanctuary at Westminster with the young prince Richard of York, while prince Edward and his uncle, accompanied by the duke of Buckingham, entered London on 4 May. In the first meeting of the council, Richard was confirmed protector and was also nominated defender of the realm. The date for the coronation of the young king was fixed on 22 June. For the first weeks the council seemed to have ruled smoothly: there were no signs of an impending crisis; the

[9] Carpenter, Christine, *The Wars of The Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England: c.1437-1509*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 207.

problems were more of financial nature rather than political. This period of harmony was ignored by the chroniclers of the time, who tended to concentrate their attention on the events that led to the usurpation.

The date in which Richard started considering the idea of usurping the throne can be fixed fairly precisely: on 13 June, during a meeting of the council, Hastings was arrested with the accuse of plotting treason; he was summarily executed the same day at the Tower of London, without a trial. It was claimed that Hastings was involved in a conspiracy with the Woodville against the protectorate; but it could be that he had been sounded on Richard's plans to claim the throne and had refused to support him. Also Lord Stanley, the bishop of Ely and the archbishop of York were accused of plotting, but they were not persecuted any longer. Hastings was a famous man and to quieten any possible popular movement an indictment (already prepared) was read by a royal herald. "Hastings' death was the precondition for a usurpation against the family he had served loyally all his life"[10] and it "set in motion the train of the events by which the protector […] seized the crown"[11]. On 16 June the archbishop of Canterbury was sent to the queen to persuade her to release her second son, the duke of York, so that he could attend his brother's coronation, which it was immediately postponed until November. Soon after even Lord Rivers and the Sir Richard Grey were executed.

At the time, rumours were about the illegitimacy of Edward IV's children. Bishop Stillington reported to Richard that the children of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville were bastard because, before his marriage, Edward had precontracted to another woman, Lady Eleanor Butler. ("It has been argued that it was because Clarence was aware of this that he had to be put out of the way"[12]). This fact was used as justification on 22 June when Gloucester claimed publicly the throne in London. On 26 June, supported by a petition brought by his nobles, he took his seat at Westminster and on 6 July he was crowned. This decision came unexpected and took many by surprise. Still now the question of the real motivation that pushed Richard to take the

[10] Carpenter, *The Wars of The Roses*, p 208.
[11] Jacob, Ernest Fraser, *The Fifteenth Century: 1399-1485*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 619.
[12] *Ibidem.*

crown is open: maybe it was for ambition, maybe he really thought that he was the best option to preserve the kingdom.

> There are two rather more logical ways of looking at the usurpation; either it was the ruthless act of a man who saw his opportunity and took it, or it was an act of panic. In favour of the first explanation is the fact that Richard has spent much of his life as a soldier and seems to have been a straightforward man who […] had certainly shown ruthlessness before. Against this is that his whole behaviour at this juncture seems so out of character, and this is emphasised by the fact that he took completely by surprise experienced politicians. […] If Richard was really ambitious enough to want to seize the throne over his own nephews he would have been super-human to have concealed so powerful an emotion from everyone until 1483.[13]

Soon, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, who had supported Richard in his ascent to the throne, started to feel that he was left out of the tight circles of favourites of the king and decided to join a rebellion against him, in favour of Henry Tudor, in October 1483 in the South of the country. Maybe the duke believed that, winning against Richard, he had a chance to ascend to the throne. The rebellion was quickly suppressed, thanks to the intervention of the North troops and Buckingham was beheaded on 2 November, after his plea for mercy had been rejected. This event, a few months after the coronation, showed the undermined position of Richard as king. He needed to buy support of the nobles from the South, but it was not an easy task, particularly when his attachment with the North was so evident. On 8 September 1483, in York, Richard's son Edward was invested Prince of Wales and heir to the throne; once again was underlined the special relationship with the city of York, and the North in general. The king's policy to place northern nobles in positions of power caused deep resentment.

> In the north there was no immediate problem of loyalty but here also he was overstretched, for Richard's own government of the north under Edward IV had been designed to relieve the king of the need to take personal responsibility for the region. As king himself, he would have to delegate, although he was at first reluctant to do so[14].

He had the support of most of the minor northern nobility, but he could not rely on the major figures of his court, as Lord Stanley. This mistake cost gravely to Richard.

[13] Carpenter, *The Wars of The Roses*, p 209.
[14] Ivi, p 215.

Another matter must be taken into consideration: the two princes, sons of Edward, were seen playing in the Tower gardens for some weeks after their uncle coronation, but then they suddenly disappeared. The chroniclers immediately blamed Richard for their death, but, still in these days, their disappearance is an unresolved mystery, which inspired not only many studies, but also novels and pantomimes. However, if Richard's contemporaries and the Tudors used to accuse the usurper king (in favour of Tudor propaganda), nowadays there are theories that exonerate Richard and suggest others to blame, such as the Duke of Buckingham, or king Henry VII himself. It is interesting to notice that Henry, once on the throne, never made direct charges against Richard for the crime; for some historians this silence can be interpreted as a proof of guilt.

> In this atmosphere of doubt one point seems clear: even if the duke of Buckingham as constable of the Tower had either received, or […] had himself given, the order for the death of the boys, the fact remains that they disappeared from view while Richard III was on the throne, and the king never took effective steps to counteract the rumour, of which he must have been aware, that they had been disposed of[15].

"As king, it cannot be denied that Richard did his best"[16]; his years of kingdom were dedicated to the attempt to secure the country. He tried to continue with the politics started by his brother and he seemed particularly interested in justice and the maintenance of the public order. He travelled the country more than Edward had ever done. "Although Richard was king for only two years, some of his accomplishments lasted well beyond his lifetime"[17]. But, even if Richard behaved as a fair king, the threat of Henry Tudor kept haunting his position throughout 1484. On March 1484 the death of the Prince of Wales shook the unstable balance of Richard; he needed to find another heir and he needed to find an understanding with the Woodvilles to secure his role, particularly after his wife's death (16 March 1485). Again, hideous rumours spread about the queen's death and the search for a second wife: "Richard is said to have wept publicly at her funeral, though by then his reputation was already so blackened that rumours rapidly spread that he had poisoned her, clearing the way to

[15] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, p.625.
[16] Carpenter, *The Wars of The Roses*, p 210.
[17] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 98.

pre-empt Henry Tudor's proposed marriage by marrying his niece Elizabeth himself"[18].

Henry Tudor landed at Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, on 7 August 1485. Defeating the pretender to the throne meant for Richard to confirm his divine sanction to reign, so it was likely that he welcomed the invasion. While crossing the country towards Leicester, Tudor had two secret meeting with his step-father, Lord Stanley, and gathered forces to confront the king. Expecting a betrayal by Stanley, Richard took his son Lord Strange as hostage and threatened to execute him; but this precaution avoided Stanley only to join Tudor's side openly. On the morning of 22 August the two armies confronted on the plain of Bosworth – known to Richard's contemporaries as Redemore – near Leicester. The king's army was numerically superior than Tudor's, but he was not certain about the loyalty of all the men had come with him; John Howard, duke of Norfolk, and Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland fought on Richard's side. As a matter of fact, according to recent studies carried out by Glen Foard and the Battlefields Trust in 2009, "the Battle of Bosworth more likely consisted of a series of skirmishes fought by different groups over a wide area"[19]. It is sure that, at a certain point, Richard decided to engage Henry directly, before Stanley could enter the battle, and led a charge right across the battlefield; it was a risky move, but also he considered this the only option, particularly after the news of Norfolk's death reached him. At this point Stanley joined Henry's side, probably saving him. Richard was unhorsed and killed. "Richard's body was brought naked to Leicester and lay for two days exposed at the Grey Friars near the river"[20]. For a long time, it was believed that the tomb of Richard, in Grey Friars church, was destroyed and his body thrown into the river Soar, but now there is the confirmation that his body rested in Leicester for all these centuries.

1.2. THE CASE OF THE CAR PARK IN LEICESTER

In 2012 the Richard III Society joined the University of Leicester in a project aimed to search for the remains of Richard III. In the research experts from a wide

[18] Ivi, p 97.
[19] Ivi, p 99.
[20] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, p.645.

range of academic disciplines were involved – archaeology, art history, engineering, forensics, genetics, geology, history and medicine.

1.2.1. The archaeological excavation in Greyfriars

In January 2011 the member of the Richard III Society Philippa Langley approached the Co-Director of the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Richard Buckley with a proposal to search for the remains of Richard III[21]. While it is a rule for archaeologists not to search for famous people or named individuals, Langley's proposition offered the chance to try to locate and excavate also for the rests of the mediaeval friary of the Franciscans, known as Greyfriars. Buckley thought improbable to find the remains of the king, but nevertheless he accepted to lead the excavation because he found of interest the identification of such an important mediaeval site. The digging started officially on 25 August 2012.

Greyfriars had been decommissioned in 1538, during the reign of King Henry VIII, as part of the dissolution of monasteries[22]. Then, when the friars left, the site had three different owners, before it was acquired by Robert Herrick in the early seventeenth century. He erected a house and according to Christopher Wren, who visited Herrick in 1612, in the garden there was a "handsome Stone Pillar, three Foot high, with this inscription, 'Here lies the Body of Richard III some Time King of England'"[23]; the archaeological excavation found no proof of the presence of this pillar. Finally Greyfriars was sold in 1711 and demolished in 1871. During the eighteenth and nineteenth century the city of Leicester changed a lot, thanks to the construction of new buildings, also in the area of the old mediaeval town.

The first problem for the Greyfriars team was to find the precise location of the "lost" friary. They succeeded by studying historic maps of the city. This passage was fundamental to identify the area where to dig, in case there were permissions form landowners to obtain before starting with the work. Luckily, much of the groundwork, consisting in studying the historical sources, had already been laid by Charles Billson in the 1920s and the Leicester scholar David Baldwin in the 1980s. "Two historical

[21] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 6.
[22] Ivi, p 7.
[23] *Ibidem.*

texts written close in date to the events surrounding the death and the burial of Richard provide key evidence"[24]: the *Historia Regum Angliae* by John Rous (an Oxford scholar, who was friend with Richard), written in Latin shortly after Richard's death, and *Anglica Historia* by Polydore Virgil (an Italian scholar, who served as official historian in the court of Henry VII), written also in Latin between 1512 and 1555 and published in three editions. Rous stated that Richard "ended his life miserably, and finally he was buried among the Friars Minor [another name for Greyfriars] of Leicester, in the choir"[25]. Polydore Vergil confirmed Rous' report – as court historian he was in the position to know the details of Richard's burial, ordered by King Henry VII – and added that Richard was "buryed two days after [his death] without any pompe or solemne funeral […] in thabby of monks Franciscanes at Leycester"[26].

The study of the maps, the documents and the previous researches of Billson and Baldwin suggested three different spots where to dig: a private car park on New Street, another car park belonging to Leicester City Council Social Services Department and the playground next to the old Alderman Newton School building. "The private car park on Newton Street is the largest and initially it seemed the most promising"[27]; but excavating here was too expensive, so the attention shifted to the car park owned by Leicester City Council and the playground. The car park proved to be the right place where to look for.

On 5 September on the outskirts of the choir of the Church a skeleton was found, with missing feet, which seemed to have disappeared long after death. Another detail caught the attention of the researcher: it seemed that the spine of the skeleton disappeared, as if only parts of the bones had been preserved. After more careful digging the archaeologists found that the spine presented an extraordinary curve. As the work on the grave went on, other elements came up, as the

> unusual position of the head, then the arms and hands, before exposing the torso. At the head end, it seemed initially that the skull might belong to a different skeleton since it was not the same level as the rest of the body. But, it became clear when fully excavated that the fact that the grave was too short at the bottom accounted for its odd position[28].

[24] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p. 9.
[25] Ivi, p 10.
[26] *Ibidem.*
[27] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 12.
[28] Ivi, p 20.

The grave itself was unusual: it was not dug tidily with neatly squared sides, as customary in mediaeval Leicester and in the other graves found in Grayfriars.

> This grave, however, had messy, sloping sides and was smaller at the bottom than at the top, as if it had been dug quickly. It may be that the body was lowered feet first into the grave, followed by his torso and head. The body was lying towards one side of the grave to receive it. The peculiar position of the hands could indicate that they were tied together when the body was placed in the grave, but this is not certain[29].

There was not any evidence of the presence of a coffin, or even a shroud. But is sounds implausible that the body was buried naked; perhaps it may have been wrapped in a friar's robe, as suggested by Deirdre O'Sullivan, a member of the research team. What is certain is that the grave was located in a prestigious spot of the church, most probably with a proper Christian funeral celebrated in a haste, as the grave itself proves. Even if the evidences lead to the idea that the bones were Richard's, it was too soon to affirm it with absolute certainty; the skeleton, in this stage of the research, was identified as Skeleton 1 (Plate 1). The excavation was stopped, to restart in summer 2013 and other three more burials were exhumed.

The reason why Henry VII decided to bury Richard in the Grayfriars church is unknown. A hypothesis can be made: Henry venerated St Francis and acted as a patron to the Franciscan order; his confessor was a Franciscan friar; so his connection with the order was clear and strong, he may have asked someone he trusted for the burial of his enemy.

> The location of the grave in the choir of Grayfriars church meant that there was limited public access to it. This could be interpreted as discouraging veneration of the deceased king or loyalty to him that might breed future dissent or rebellion, and as preventing the development of a cult of 'miracles' surrounding the tomb[30].

The choir was not the most prestigious part of the church, it was a place of high status and respect – there are other examples of disgraced members of aristocracy that were buried in the choir of churches. This could be interpreted as a sign of respect that Henry granted to him, in spite of the grudge resented to him.

It also seems that Henry VII decided to erect a memorial for Richard in Grayfriars, but the excavation could not find any evidence of it. "Almost certainly, this

[29] Ivi, p 21.
[30] Ivi, p 23.

monument was removed when the monastery was closed in 1538"[31] and the materials sold for reuse. A description of the tomb is reported by George Buck in his *The History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third* – which was one of the first attempt to redeem Richard's bad reputation, gained under the Tudor dynasty. He says that the tomb was "in the chief Church of Leicester, called Saint Maries, belonging to the Order and the Society of the Gray Friars"[32] and that

> The King in short time after causing a fair Tomb of mingled colour'd Marble, adorned with his statue, to be erected thereupon, to which some grateful pen had also destined an Epitaph, the copy whereof (never fixt to his stone) I have seen in a recorded Manuscript-Book chained to a Table in a Chamber of the Guild-hall of London[33].

The accuracy of Buck's account can not be judged, since it is impossible to know where he got this information. The reasons for Henry's decision to erect a memorial can be found in a rebellion lead by Perkin Warbeck, an impostor that claimed to be Richard of Shrewsbury, the youngest son of Edward IV, who became the focus of the supporters of the Yorkist cause and Richard III. Even Margaret of Burgundy and her stepdaughter's husband Maximilian of Austria shown interest in Perkin's aim, making Henry's realm shaking. Building a memorial was a sign for the supporters of Richard III and the Plantagenets, which could damp down the sparks of rebellion. Another theory can be that "Henry may also have felt that Richard was owned the honour of a tomb as a tribute to the value and sanctity of the office of king itself"[34].

1.2.2. The study of the bones and their identification

The work of excavation has been followed with animated interest by the media, which focused their attention on Skeleton 1, immediately identified by them as Richard, even if the main aim of the archaeologist was to find new evidence about religious foundations in mediaeval Leicester (Plate 2).

The suspicion that the finding was of great historical relevance had to be confirmed and so it was crucial to find a secure place to keep and study the bones, a

[31] Ivi, p 24.
[32] Ivi, p 25.
[33] *Ibidem.*
[34] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 33.

place where the analysis could be done with discretion. The choice fell on a lab in the Department of Cell Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Leicester, where the skeleton laid out for several months, while the analysis of the DNA (fundamental to establish the identity of the skeleton) was carried out in clean-room lab provided by the Space Research Centre, part of the Department of Physics. Many precautions were taken to avoid the chance of contamination of the samples of the DNA analysis. "The samples for DNA analysis of the skeleton were taken from the teeth and the thigh bones"[35]. But the first intervention on the bones was to scan them to have computed tomograph (CT) images – basically a three-dimensional X-ray – "which also creates three-dimensional images of slices across the bones to reveal their internal structure without cutting them open"[36]. This passage, performed before washing the remains, permitted to create a "permanent digital record of the bones as they came out of the ground"[37].

An expert human osteologist – an archaeologist specialising in bones – was summoned to study and detect some features of the bones, which can reveal about the life, health and death of the subject. Sex, approximate age, physique, build, but also some diseases can be identified just analysing the bones. Immediately the skeleton was confirmed to belong to a male. The osteologist, Jo Appleby, examined it bone by bone to identify the wounds, but, not to be influenced in the research, she decided not to read any report or historical accounts about Richard's death. The preliminary studies confirmed that the bones belonged to a man of approximately the right age of Richard, who died of a violent death (as Richard), with injures that matched historical records of mediaeval battles. Eleven injuries from a variety of weapons were revealed, each of them was distinct and it was impossible to establish the sequence of the blows: "most of the injuries were to the head. Around his face and jaw there were three wounds, none of which would have been fatal"[38]. Other three injuries were visible to the dome of the skull, "all inflicted with a sharp blade which sliced and removed part of the scalp and cut into the bone"[39]. Another critical wound was at the sagittal suture – the point where the bones join at the top of the skull – indicating a strong blow from above, but

[35] Ivi, p 59.
[36] Ivi, p 60.
[37] *Ibidem.*
[38] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 67.
[39] *Ibidem.*

that could not be cause of immediate death. According to some interpretation this blow was a possible attempt of a *coup-de-grâce*. Other two massive injuries to the lower side of the back of the skull could be identified, probably caused by a halberd, (confirming a version reported in some chronicles). These last two injuries could be proved both fatal, but it is difficult to understand which one of the two killed him. Some of the wounds were comparable with those reported in the chronicles.

> The three skull injuries bore out these accounts [the chronicles], suggesting that by this final stage of the battle Richard had lost his horse and then quite likely his footing, and must also have lost his helmet or had it forcibly ripped off him. There were no defensive wounds to the bones of his arms or hands, suggesting that up to the point of his death he was still wearing all his armour[40].

An accurate analysis of the injuries permitted the recognition of the weapons that inflicted them: a sharp dagger caused "the two shallow stab wounds to the face and also the top of the skull"[41]. Probably this trauma was inflicted in face-to-face combat by a right-handed opponent.

> Many of the injuries could only be defined as 'perimortem', that is, inflicted around the time of death, as it was impossible to say with certainty whether they were sustained when the man was still alive, or shortly after death – often thought of as 'insult injuries', intended to humiliate the corpse of a dead enemy[42].

There was one last interesting injury at his pelvis that seemed "to match those accounts which describe Richard's stripped body being humiliatingly treated and slung over the back of a horse"[43]. This kind of wounds were not exception at mediaeval time. Finally, one last consideration about the wounds: it is surprising how "the wounds to the face, none fatal, caused very little damage to the underlying bone structure"[44], a clear sign that the executioners didn't want to make the face unidentifiable, they wanted the body to be recognized.

When the skeleton emerged from his grave, the first revealing particular was the severe scoliosis – abnormal side-to-side bending of the spine – it presented: "an S-shaped bend in the mid and upper back, from the fourth thoracic to the first lumbar

[40] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 69.
[41] Ivi, p 63.
[42] Ivi, p 65.
[43] Ivi, p 70.
[44] Ivi, p 71.

vertebrae"[45]. Studies focused on how the scoliosis might have affected this man's appearance and mobility, what caused it and when it developed. "The shape of the vertebrae suggested he was born with a normal spine […] – making it unlikely that it was a congenital condition"[46], so the researcher stated that the problem developed in the adolescence, probably after the man's tenth birthday, but it was not possible to discover what caused it (there is an hypothesis which involves some genetic elements). Another thing that was impossible to know was if the man suffered physical pain because of it. One thing is almost sure: when he was clothed "little of the truth would have been apparent. The S-shaped curve was well balanced, leaving the upper and lower spine still aligned"[47]; from the skeleton was evident that the leg bones were well formed, so it was not probable he walked with a limp. This physical defect was revealed only by his right shoulder that would have been a little higher than the left one, but, most likely, only his most intimate circle – including his family, his tailor and his armourer – would have been acquainted with the curve of the spine.

It was also important to analyse samples of the bones to determine a secure date and to acknowledge about his diet and lifestyle. "As far as researchers could determine from the skeleton, he was fit and healthy at the time of his death"[48]. For the date, radiocarbon dating test was made; the analysis could not prove that the bones belonged to Richard, but it was possible to determine that they "had come from around the period of his lifetime"[49]. Samples from the teeth, a rib and the femur were taken to learn important particulars about his diet. It was also possible to understand the movements from a region to another during his life, just looking for some specific isotopic signatures. The results of the test matched amazingly with the historical information about Richard. Thanks to the analysis of his teeth it could be possible to know, for example, that "even by the age of three he was eating a diet rich in protein"[50] and that the levels of protein were "still at the top of the range for mediaeval adults and represent someone eating a substantial quantity of marine and freshwater fish"[51];

[45] *Ibidem.*
[46] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 72.
[47] Ivi, pp 72-73.
[48] Ivi, p 76.
[49] Ivi, p 74.
[50] Ivi, p 75.
[51] Ivi, p 76.

fish and meat, in mediaeval time, were available almost only for the noble class and this detail gave us other elements that could lead us to the identification of the skeleton with Richard.

The next step was trying to establish the identity of the skeleton, even if there were many clues of historical and archaeological relevance that made think it was Richard (the finding of the bones in the place handed down by chroniclers, the age of the man, the curved spine, the wounds). To do so, it was necessary to analyse the DNA and trace its lines. Richard had only one legitimate son: Edward, Prince of Wales, who died in 1484 when he was only ten; "there are sketchy accounts on Richard having an illegitimate son and daughter, probably born before his marriage. There are no records of either having children"[52]. Richard's direct line died with his son. "The attempt to trace an unbroken line of descent, from a close relative to somebody living in the twenty-first century who might be prepared to give a DNA sample, would depend upon looking among other branches of his family"[53]. It was necessary to find individuals related to Richard through an unbroken male or an unbroken female line. Historically speaking, it is easy to trace men instead of women, because the details of their lives were considered more significant than women's; however, on the other side, paternity can not be established with certainty – it is always quite clear who the mother is. "So, although tracing through the female lineage is more difficult, it is more likely to be a true record of ancestry"[54]. There is also another advantage in tracing the female line: "mitochondrial DNA, inherited by all of a mother's children from the egg, but only passed on via her daughters through their eggs, is far more plentiful and easier to extract from ancient bones"[55]. That means that the mitochondrial DNA would have been shared by Richard and his sisters, but he could not passed it on: "however, a living male or female, descended through an unbroken chain of daughters from one of Richard's sisters, would share his mitochondrial DNA"[56]. There are many people in the world claiming to be related with Richard – they have even funded a group, called the *Plantagenet Alliance* – but it was important to find the true descendants to fix the identity of the skeleton. The line of Anne of York, Richard's older sister, was

[52] Ivi, p 110.
[53] *Ibidem*.
[54] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 112.
[55] *Ibidem.*
[56] *Ibidem.*

reconstructed thanks to the work of genealogists till this day and it was found a living descendant: Joyce Ibsen, who died in 2008, but she left three children, Jeff, Leslie and Michael; Leslie did not have any children, so Richard's line ended with her. The name of Michael Ibsen was known before the discovery of the bones at Grayfriars, because of the previous genealogical researches, but a new name of another individual came out: Wendy Dulding, whose identity had been kept secret from the Media. The analysis of the DNA were carried meticulously "to reduce or eliminate the possibility of error or sample contamination which would invalidate them"[57] and a perfect match with Ibsen was found. Skeleton 1 was Richard III, according to a probability between 99.99994 and 99.99999 per cent. "Richard III is the oldest individual with whom scientists have been able to find a genetic match with a modern relative for identification purpose"[58]. Thank to these analysis it was also possible to have an indication of his hair and eye's colour: "there is a 96 per cent probability that he had blue eyes and a 77 per cent probability that he had blonde hair, though it may have remained blonde only in childhood"[59].

The work on the bones lasted more than a year, but the press had already spread the news that the skeleton found at Grayfriars was Richard's. The Media described the discovery as "'a momentous discovery' with the 'potential to rewrite history'"[60], even when the people that were involved in the research made clear that "a secure identification of the remains was going to take many months of meticulous research"[61]. Finally, when the results were undeniable, a press conference was arranged; people came from all around the world and anticipation was high. On 4 February 2013 it was announced that the bones belonged to Richard III[62]. A final confirmation arrived on 2 December 2014 when the results of the DNA analysis were announced to the world. Evidently the case of Richard III aroused interest and opened the way to new interpretation about the character and history, but also showed new ways, in which different fields of expertise collaborate for a common purpose, to direct a research.

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[57]The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 117.
[58] Ivi, p 110.
[59] Ivi, p 124.
[60] Ivi, p 145.
[61] Ivi, p 146.
[62] A recording of the press conference in available on YouTube at the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT86ZAgO9Ro, accessed on 11 November 2015. In the YouTube channel of the Leicester City Council there are many other videos concerning the case of Richard III.

The last chapter in the adventure of the case of the "king in the car park" concerned the reburial of the remains. The first and most logical choice, made by the member of the Grayfriars research team, for the place that would have hosted the bones was the Cathedral of Leicester. But the member of the Plantagenet Alliance did not agree: they thought that York was a better choice, considering the special relationship Richard had with the city. The dispute "lasted longer than anyone expected and delayed the plans for reinterment at Leicester Cathedral by a year"[63]. Eventually Leicester was deliberated as the place for the final rest of the king and on 26 March 2015 the reburial was celebrated. One last thing must be underlined:

> The evidence of a grave was clear. Richard certainly did not have the honours he would have received if he had won at Bosworth, reigned for many years and perhaps had a great state funeral at Westminster Abbey. The grave was quickly and roughly dug […] and it was slightly too short even for someone of Richard's height. He went into it, too, without a coffin or apparently even a shroud, but it was in a position of respect within the church, a space close to the high altar reserved for only the burials of the elite and the esteemed. Whether the friars were asked to undertake the burial, or volunteered, they must have wanted to make short working of interring a body which had been lying open for several days in August. […] They would certainly have laid him into the ground with prayers for his soul. Richard had had a Christian funeral […]; the reinterment of his bones did not call for a repeat of the rites[64].

So, when the decision about the reburial had to be taken, all these elements were considered and was chosen as best option a religious service (but not a second funeral) in the closest place to the original position in which he was buried the first time. Michael Ibsen, his descendant, was asked to collaborate in the crafting of a coffin. The religious service was preceded by a procession from Bosworth, where Richard died. The event was of international interest and many people were present at the ceremony; among them there was the actor Benedict Cumberbatch, distantly related to the king, who interprets the king in the adaptation of Shakespeare's history play for the BBC and at the ceremony read a poem by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy:

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.

[63] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 155.
[64] Ivi, p 186.

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.

This is another evidence of the success of the character of Richard III and his history, kept alive during the centuries not only by historians, but also by writers and artists.

1.2.3. The Richard III Society

The character of Richard III has always fascinated, thanks to his representation, and in particular Shakespeare's portrait in the history play *Richard III*. During the centuries, and particularly in recent days, many people have tried to redeem Richard from his reputation of great villain and evil tyrant. The first defenders of the reputation of Richard were Horace Walpole and George Buck. Walpole was an eighteenth century author and collector. He defended Richard in his *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third* (1768)[65], affirming that he was not involved in the murder of the two princes in the Tower. Walpole also questioned the reliability of the sources for Richard's period, being aware of the Tudor propaganda that influenced Richard's contemporary historians[66]. Buck, a seventeenth century antiquarian and historian, examined critically the accusations against Richard in his *The History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third*.[67]

In 1924 the *Richard III Society* was funded with the aim to dispel the bad reputation Richard had acquired under the Tudor dynasty. The Society's manifesto opens with these words:

> In the belief that many features of the traditional accounts of the character and career of Richard III are neither supported by sufficient evidence nor reasonably tenable, the Society aims to promote, in every possible way, research into the life and times of Richard III, and to secure a

[65] Ivi, p 160.
[66] Ivi, p 167.
[67] Ivi, p 24.

> reassessment of the material relating to this period, and of the role of this monarch in English history.[68]

The funder was S. Saxon Barton, a surgeon from Liverpool, and he called the Society "The Fellowship of the White Boar", making a reference to Richard's heraldic symbol. At the beginning the group counted few members, most of them amateur historians; today the Society has several thousand member worldwide. Saxon and his group decided to create the Society because they believed that history had not been just with the character of Richard and they wanted to clean the honour of the king. After an inevitable decline during the Second World War, the interest about the character of Richard III rose again, also thanks to the publication of the novel *The Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey in 1951 and the production of the film of Shakespeare's *Richard III* by Laurence Olivier in 1955. In 1959 the Society, renewed, was renamed the *Richard III Society*. It was involved in the important discovery of the remains of the king in Leicester. It is important to underline that the Society does not reject the value of Shakespeare's play, at the contrary; but it does not consider it as history. According to the Society the negative perception of Richard is based on the following points:[69]

- Richard was a nasty hunchback who plotted and schemed his way to the throne;
- he killed Henry VI's son Edward;
- he killed Henry VI (a sweet, innocent saint);
- he got his brother, the duke of Clarence, executed;
- he killed the Princes in the Tower (sweet, innocent children);
- he killed his wife Anne because he wanted to marry his niece Elizabeth;
- he was a bad king;
- and so it was lucky that Good King Henry Tudor got rid of him for us.

The aim of the Society is to demonstrate that these points are not right, by promoting research about not only the character of Richard, but also the fifteenth century period.

[68] The manifesto is available in the official website of the Richard III Society: http://www.richardiii.net/aboutus.php#origins, accessed on 11 December 2015.
[69] The points are taken from the official website: http://www.richardiii.net/aboutus.php#origins

1.2.4. A portrait of Richard III

Thanks to the study of the bones it was possible to reconstruct the appearance of Richard. "The evidence from his DNA suggests a strong probability that he was blue eyed and fair, like his brother Edward, startlingly unlike the swarthy villain of so many later images"[70]. Unfortunately there are not many eyewitness descriptions of him, even if many "literate people, family and friends, commoners and courtiers, visiting dignitaries and mortal enemies, met Richard"[71]; some very famous descriptions of him survive, but they cannot be taken completely in consideration when trying to make a faithful portrait.

> Sarah Knight and Mary Ann Lund, experts in literature and historical sources who have studied all the earliest portrayals of Richard, have traced how the descriptions in contemporary or slightly later accounts of a slight but in no way grotesque man […] gradually evolve into Shakespeare's monster[72].

One of the first witness was Nicholas von Poppelau, a nobleman from Silesia, who met Richard in 1484 and wrote in his diary that he was impressed by the king's personality; yet, about his physical appearance, he reported none of the physical deformity in the tradition, such as a withered arm, a hunchback or even a raised shoulder. According to his description, Richard was "'a little slimmer and not as bulky as him, also very much more lean; he had very fine-boned arms and legs, also a great heart'"[73]. The first elements of monstrosity came with John Rous: it must not be forgotten that Rous wrote under the early period of the kingdom of Henry VII, and so his account had some propagandist purpose. Rous told that Richard was born after two years of pregnancy, with teeth and hair to his shoulders, and as an adult he was small of stature, with unequal shoulders, the right higher than the left; "Richard's supposedly abnormal gestation period emphasises his freakish nature"[74]. Later, chroniclers and writers as Polydore Vergil and Thomas More stressed physical deformity that were a representation of the moral deformity of the character. The hunchback was an idea of

[70] The Greyfriars Research Team, *The Bones of a King*, p 128.
[71] *Ibidem.*
[72] Ivi, p 129.
[73] *Ibidem*. Von Poppelau wrote his diary when he travelled England in 1484, probably in Latin. The manuscript was translated in the eighteenth century into German. The quotation used here is taken from the edition by G.A. Stenzel (1847).
[74] *Ibidem.*

Shakespeare, as the last proof of a twisted character. Shakespeare's description of Richard has remained in the public imagination until nowadays and it is difficult to split the historical character from the fiction character. What is sure is that by late Tudor times "the slight man with the uneven shoulders had become Richard Crookback, crooked in body and mind"[75].

There are no existing portraits of Richard painted from life; some sketches survived in some manuscripts, but they are not official portraits. Yet there are two portraits of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century through which is possible to have an idea about the appearance of Richard. Both of them were realized after Richard's death. The first portrait (Plate 3) has been painted between 1504 and 1520 and was recorded for the first time in 1542 as a possession of Henry VIII: "the chances are that this portrait is essentially a faithful copy of a lost contemporary original"[76]. The man portrayed is far from the character described by Shakespeare; he is clearly a noble and dignified man.

> He is portrayed as a pale, strong featured, thin-lipped man, looking towards the right of the painting through narrowed eyes […] He is sumptuously dressed in a fur-lined black velvet gown, with a jewel in his cap and a jewelled collar. He has several rings in his right hand, including one which he is ostentatiously placing onto his little finger[77].

The man painted in the second portrait (Plate 4) is very similar to the one in the first. According to Turi King – member of the Grayfriars research team, lecturer of genetics and archaeology – the man portrayed here is very close in appearance to Richard:

> it shows a long, pale, sharp-featured face, the eyes gazing this time towards our left […] The narrow hands twisting a ring on his wedding finger. The eyes are grey-blue, and the hair light brown to which childhood blonde commonly darkens. The perspective is slightly awkward, but the shoulders do not appear uneven or in any way unusual[78].

In both the paintings he is twiddling a ring on his finger and this gesture was a common motif in mediaeval and Tudor art, usually used to suggest a betrothal or marriage – this interpretation opens to the possibility that these portraits were paired off with portraits of Anne. But it could also be an expedient to represent a fidgety and twitchy character.

[75] Ivi, p 130.
[76] Ivi, p 134.
[77] Ivi, p 133.
[78] Ivi, pp 135.

"It is probable therefore that the Royal Collection and the Society of Antiquaries portraits reflect two separate lost originals"[79], which, it is possible, were a commission of Richard, who wanted to be seen in this way.

1.3. CHONICLES AT THE TUDOR TIME

No direct accounts dating back to Richard's kingdom survived; all the chronicles that arrived to us were composed under the Tudors and most of them had a propagandistic purpose: they helped building the myth of Richard as a monster, which has influenced and inspired the writing of his fictional portraits.

1.3.1. Polydore Vergil's Anglica Historia & Thomas More's The History of King Richard III

One of the first official accounts about the kingdom of Richard III is contained in the chronicle *Anglica Historia* by the Italian humanist Polydore Vergil. Polidoro Virgilio of Urbino (1470? - 1555)[80] – anglicized as Polydore Vergil – came from an academic and clerical background. He arrived to England in 1502 as an assistant collector of Peter's Pence, sent by Pope Alexander VI, and immediately entered the royal court where he built his reputation in the English intellectual scene. He was friend with Erasmus and Thomas More, who supported his work as historian. He dedicated many years to the composition of the *Anglica Historia*, which covers the history of England from the earliest pre-Roman times to the end of the kingdom of Henry VIII. King Henry VII had encouraged Vergil in writing this chronicle, which had propaganda intentions. A first edition, printed in 1534, covered the events until 1513 and was probably written between 1505 and 1513. Then a much revised second edition followed in 1546, and finally a third edition of 1555 added the account of the kingdom of Henry VIII[81]. "True to the methods of the humanist historiography […]

[79] *Ibidem*.
[80] William J. Connell, 'Vergil, Polydore (*c.*1470–1555)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28224, accessed 11 Dec 2015]
[81] Polydore Vergil wrote in Latin and nowadays the *Anglica Historia* awaits a complete critical edition and a modern translation. I used the edition, available on the internet (http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/, accessed 11 December 2015), by Dana F. Sutton that offers an English translation.

Vergil adopted a critical approach"[82], which required a comparison with the available sources and at the same time, in imitation with the historian of antiquity, introduced speeches composed by the author of the chronicle and put them into the mouth of the characters. Moreover, the narration is often interrupted by moral evaluations of the facts, according to a "humanistic" habit to suggest a moral lesson to the readers. Vergil's sources were usually anonymous, perhaps eye-witnesses, whom he met at court, for the most recent events that interested Richard.

Almost in the same period, between 1513 and 1518, Thomas More worked on his account about the life of Richard III *The History of King Richard the Third*,[83] that was left unfinished and was published only after More's death. This version of the character of Richard has influenced the following portraits and particularly Shakespeare's. More composed two versions of the same report: an English version and a Latin version, but it is not correct to imagine one version a translation of the other. In fact "the two texts at times follow each other quite closely, but each is constantly rephrasing the other, adding or omitting details, changing or dropping entire paragraphs"[84]. Both of them were left unfinished and they stopped with Buckingham's conspiracy, soon after Richard's coronation. There is some evidence that a manuscript version of the chronicle circulated in 1538[85]. More conceived the Latin version for an international audience, while the English one for a national audience; for this reason the Latin version frequently omits names and dates, and other details that could be of more interest for an English audience[86]. This decision to write the chronicle in two languages has no previous records. In his work More never mentioned any source, but it is possible that he could have relied upon oral information of some eye-witnesses. One of the witnesses could be Archbishop Morton – whom some scholars have considered as the real author of at least the Latin version of the chronicle[87] – since More worked as his household page when he was young. And, if one may grant the hypothesis that a great part of the material was collected by people that were still alive

[82] William J. Connell, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
[83] Sylvester, Richard S., "Introduction" in *The History of King Richard III*, London: Yale University Press, 1963, p. XX.
[84] Ivi, p. XXXII-XXXIII.
[85] Ivi, p. XXVII.
[86] Ivi, p. XXXIII.
[87] Ivi, p. LX.

and were involved in the deposition of Richard, it is not a surprise that it was difficult to find someone who spoke in defence of Richard III. But, at the same time it was not in More's interest to make a less defamatory portrait of the king. Moreover, in depicting the character, More took inspiration from the classical historiography, particularly Tacitus and Suetonius, who offered him the model of the tyrant in the character of the emperor Tiberius. "In 1533, More could associate the despotism of Tiberius with Henry VIII, but in 1514 he found its modern counterpart in Richard III"[88]. The main trait that Tiberius and Richard share is their great cunning dissimulation; "sudden death and magnificent deception reign supreme"[89] in Tacitus as in More.

In 1513, when More started his composition of the *History*, Polydore Vergil had concluded his first edition of the *Anglica Historia*, which included the report about Richard III's kingdom; so it is quite likely that More was aware of Vergil's work, since the two were friends; "Polydore could, however, have had More as one of his oral informants"[90] and they might have shared some information.

> Similar scenes are developed in both narratives, but each writer organizes his material differently and interprets it after his own manner. Although both Polydore and More inherit the Tudor version of Richard's crimes, the *Anglica Historia* is coolly detached and rationalistic where the *Richard* is essentially dramatic, the work of a man passionately involved in the recent history of his own country.[91]

What is interesting is that More's narrative, in time, has been considered more authoritative than other contemporary historical sources, maybe because it reflected in a very accurate way the sentiments of the Tudor court. There is no doubt that More gave a major contribute to the shaping of the legend of Richard, yet nowadays his chronicle can not be considered formal history, but rather literature. His contribute is important for modern historians, who are aware that some episodes are products of fiction; however, More's contemporaries considered his chronicle as a true account of all the events that interested Richard's kingdom.

Vergil dedicates book XXV of the chronicle to Richard III. The book opens with the death of Edward IV: when the king died his brother Richard duke of

[88] Ivi, p. LXXXIX.
[89] Ivi, p. XCVI.
[90] Ivi, p. LXXVI.
[91] Ivi, p. LXXVI.

Gloucester was in Yorkshire, but he was immediately summoned to London by William Hastings because the "dying king had entrusted to him alone his wife, children, wealth, and everything else"[92]. Since the first lines of the book the mischievous and evil character of Richard is described: "when Richard learned this, he immediately began to burn with desire for the crown"[93]. Similar expressions and descriptions recur in the entire book; lust for power and the absence of any moral scruples are the distinctive traits of the personality of Richard in Vergil's chronicle. He is a master of deceit: his first act was writing a letter to the Queen, "a letter full of good will, in which, having consoled her with many words, he promised her the seas and the mountains, as the saying goes"[94], but "he himself was the first to take the oath [of serving the prince], which he was destined to be the first to break a little later"[95].

More decides to open the narration with the death of Edward IV, leaving two under-age sons. By the time of the king's death the realm was divided and one of the main characters involved in this dissention was his brother Richard of Gloucester, that was appointed protector and that was led by "the execrable desire of sovereignty"[96]. From the moment of his first appearance, Richard is described as an enemy, a frightful villain. The great difference between the two brothers is striking: the dead king is described as a good sovereign, much loved by his people, and all his good qualities are reflected in a good-looking appearance ("he was of visage lovely, of body mighty, strong, and clean made"[97]); while Richard is completely the opposite. More leaves us a remarkable description of Richard, which has become the guidelines for the following characterizations of the man:

> Richard, the third son, of whom we now treat, was in wit and courage equal with either of them [his two brothers], in body and prowess far under them both: little of stature, ill featured of limbs, crooked-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favoured in appearance, and such as is in the case of lord called warlike, in other men called otherwise. He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from before his death, ever perverse.[98]

[92] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[93] *Ibidem.*
[94] *Ibidem.*
[95] *Ibidem.*
[96] More, Thomas, *The History of King Richard III*, edited by Gerard B. Wegemer and Travis Curtright, Center of Thomas More Studies ,2013, p. 3.
[97] Ivi, p. 2.
[98] Ivi, p. 5.

From the recent archaeological discoveries, it became quite clear that Richard was not crooked-backed, neither ill featured of limbs. Certainly he was not as tall as his brother Edward, but he did not have such a terrible appearance as described by More. However, it is not possible to understand if this over-elaborated description is a product of More's imagination or a report of the accounts in the Tudor court, but it results clear how there was a perfect match between the ill-shaped physical appearance and his evil nature. To confirm this idea More adds some particulars about Richard's birth: "he came into the world with the feet forward, as men be borne outward, and (as the story runs) also not untoothed"[99]. He had a disposition for war and

> he was close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly friendly where he inwardly hated, not omitting to kiss whom he thought to kill; pitiless and cruel, not for evil will always, but for ambition, and either for surety or increase his estate. Friend and foe was much the same.[100]

The main trait of Richard personality, now it is clear, was his ambition that would lead him to the throne and would not stop him to commit execrable crimes. While More immediately reports the physical description of the king, associating it with a twisted and mischievous nature, Vergil prefers to leave the account of Richard's physical appearance as the last part in his chronicle. His description is as careful and precise as More's:

> He was slight of stature, misshapen of body, with one shoulder higher than the other, and had a pinched and truculent face which seemed to smack of deceit and guile. While he was plunged in thought, he would constantly chew his lower lip, as if the savage nature in that miniature body was raging against itself. Likewise with his right hand he was constantly pulling the dagger he always wore hallway in and out. He had a sharp, clever, wily wit, fit for pretence and dissimulation. His spirit was lively and fierce, and did not fail him even in death.[101]

It is interesting to notice how also the physical description matches the description of the character, and how to a physical deformity corresponds a deviant morality and a nervous and quick-tempered attitude. Vergil, instead of More, explicitly recognizes that Richard was a very intelligent man; he speaks about his "sharp, clever, wily wit"[102]; one may notice a sort of respect for Richard's mind, which More never

[99] *Ibidem.*
[100] *Ibidem.*
[101] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[102] *Ibidem.*

expresses plainly. But at the same time there is the awareness that he used his brilliant mind for the worse purposes. Vergil's choice to leave the description at the end of the book can be seen as a demonstration of a little respect for this king and his reign, as the intention not to influence completely the judgment of the readers depicting, since the very first lines, a great villain in character and appearance. More is very clear from the beginning: his history is about a tyrant, a monster rather than a man.

More's Richard's first crime was killing Henry VI, "and that without commandment or knowledge of the King"[103]. Maybe this information could be an invention of More's or a rumour that spread at the Tudor court. Moreover he seems to imply that Richard could be involved in his brother George's death: "some wise men also think that his plan – covertly conveyed – lacked not in helping his brother Clarence to his death"[104]. Thomas More, in the first pages of the *History* reports the case of George, duke of Clarence, who, guilty of treason, "attained was he by Parliament and judged to the death, and thereupon hastily drowned in a butt of malmsey"[105]. Then this particular is revived and re-interpreted by Shakespeare. But Vergil decides not to mention George and his death in the book dedicated to Richard. The first evil action described by Vergil is the arrest of Anthony Rivers, uncle of the prince, Thomas Vaughn and others at Stony Stratford, when Richard reached is nephew on the way of London. This action had as consequence that the Queen fled with her children in sanctuary at Westminster and that "then Richard assumed the government of all things"[106]. But for the moment Vergil's Richard has not tainted himself with the crime of murder, as in More's version. Also More reports the episode of the arrest of Rivers and Vaughn, under the accusation that they "had planned to rule the King and the realm"[107], and then they were immediately beheaded; "in this way the Duke of Gloucester took upon himself the order and governance of the young king, whom, with much honour and reverence, he conveyed upward toward the city"[108]. More does not wait to account for the execution to stress on the evil and cruel character of Richard.

[103] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 5.
[104] Ivi, p. 6.
[105] Ivi, p. 4.
[106] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[107] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 15.
[108] Ivi, p. 16.

In both versions, on Richard's side there is always the duke of Buckingham. In Vergil's account the first time Buckingham appears is when Richard has a meeting with him, before Stony Strafford, where he declares the plan to take the crown and "the duke supported him with assistance"[109]. Buckingham has already become Richard's accomplice in the first paragraph of the book and his support was indispensable to succeed in the plan of the usurpation. He knew about Richard plan; perhaps he had already understood that the plan would involve committing a crime. He could be considered a pale reflection of Richard's, the flame of his ambition for power did not burn with the same intensity of Richard's. In More's version Buckingham plays a bigger role in the conspiracy that leads to the crown: he is the mediator between Richard and the others, probably because the usurper is aware he needs someone who exposes totally himself; Richard is the puppet-master and Buckingham his puppet, until the duke conspires against him. According to More, only after the Queen was convinced to release her son from sanctuary, did Richard open "himself more boldly"[110]: he started to share his purpose of taking the throne with whom he thought trustworthy, especially the duke of Buckingham; "then it was agreed that the Protector should have the Duke's aid to make him king"[111]. The two nobles decided to pretend to keep going on with the preparation for the coronation of the young king, but they were actually plotting to remove Edward and the people close to him – one of these was Hastings. Buckingham and Richard had collaborated before, when they arrested Rivers; in that occasion the two dukes presented themselves in front of the king "on their knees in very humble fashion"[112]. This was one of the first deceits Richard put on, a demonstration of his ambiguous character and of his collaboration with Buckingham, who was led by the interest to eliminate a common enemy, the Woodville family. The moment that saw Buckingham as main actor, in More's *History*, was after the sermon of doctor Shaw, when, "accompanied with diverse lords and knights"[113], he came into the Guildhall in London to have a speech where he explained why Richard was the right choice as king of the realm. In Buckingham's speech More inserts a brief account about the civil war, which is used as argument in

[109] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[110] More, *The History of King Richard III,* p. 36.
[111] Ivi, p. 37.
[112] Ivi, p. 15.
[113] Ivi, p. 61.

favour of Richard, the only one that can guarantee for a future of peace. Moreover the duke described King Edward as a villain, a man led by his greedy appetite, and repeated again the accusation of bastardy. He proclaimed that "the right and title unto the most excellent Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester, now Protector of this realm, has to the crown and the kingdom of the same"[114] and he evoked the Parliament and the common law to support Richard's right. And because the throne was "no child's office"[115], as reported in Ecclesiastes 10:16 ("Woe is that realm that has a child for their King"), Richard seemed the only and just choice. Buckingham asked the citizens to join him and the other noble in their request to the Protector to take the crown, but the people, once again, "all was hushed and mute"[116], so he repeated his speech to try to persuade them. The silence was "marvellous obstinate"[117] and Buckingham found himself in the position to speak again in favour of Richard, demanding an answer. A biblical comparison could be seen: for three times the answer to Buckingham's request was silence as for three times St. Peter denied Jesus in the Gospels; in this case the citizens of London refused to accept Richard as their king. But finally an "ambush of the Duke's servant […] began suddenly […] to cry as loud as their throats would give: 'King Richard! King Richard!'"[118]. The day after a delegation composed by the Mayor, all the Aldermen and the chief commoners of the city came to Baynard's Castle to offer Richard the crown. At first he showed reluctance in accepting such a role. So Buckingham offered a petition, which once again repeated all the reasons why he would be the right sovereign, but Richard declined the crown, reporting his love for his brother and nephew as excuse. He "thanked them for the love and hearty favour they bore him, praying them, for his sake, to give and bear the same to the Prince, under whom he was and would be content to live"[119]. Obviously this reluctance was a trick, the fruit of a strategy studied with Buckingham to prove a humility and a good attitude that he could but pretend to possess. Buckingham needed to plead Richard

[114] Ivi, p. 65.
[115] Ivi, p. 66.
[116] Ivi, p. 67.
[117] *Ibidem.*
[118] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 68.
[119] Ivi, p. 71.

again, who eventually was persuaded to accept the throne and "the next day the Protector […] declared to the audience that he would take upon him the crown"[120].

More's account ends with Buckingham's conspiracy. After a meeting at Northampton between the Duke and Richard, Buckingham suddenly had a change of mind about his king. More has to admit that "the occasion of their variance is of different men differently reported"[121]: according to some it involved the Duke's request of Hereford's lands that Richard rejected. But More explains that "the very truth it is, the Duke was a high-minded man and could ill bear the glory of another"[122]. Then Buckingham with the advice and the collaboration of Morton started to plot against Richard and to support Henry Richmond. Actually Morton was able to turn the Duke to his plans and convinced him of the necessity to arrange a marriage between Richmond and Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV, to pacify the House of York with the House of Lancaster. More's Buckingham likes to think himself a great manipulator, maybe even a great villain, but he is only a puppet in the hands of Richard first, and then of Morton. He is not even a great speaker, since his speech to convince the people of London to accept Richard as their king is a complete failure. More's *History* finishes with a conversation between Morton and Buckingham about all this matters. Probably it was Thomas More's intention to conclude the composition of this chronicle with Richard's death, but he was not able to do it. What it is possible to know about the conspiracy, which cost his head, was reported by Vergil. Like More, the Italian chronicler explains that the reason of Buckingham's betrayal went back to an old claim on an inheritance denied to him by Richard. Considering his king an ingrate, Buckingham started to plot with the bishop of Ely for the return of Henry, earl of Richmond, heir of the House of Lancaster in England as the right heir to the throne. But this conspiracy was revealed to Richard, who decided to move his army against Buckingham. The duke was caught in Salisbury and "after confessing his guilt he was promptly beheaded"[123]. Vergil does not dedicate much space to Buckingham, who happens to collaborate for a short time with Richard. When his role is fulfilled, he is dismissed.

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[120] Ivi, p. 73.
[121] Ivi, 2013, p. 80.
[122] Ivi, p. 81.
[123] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.

An interesting aspect in Vergil's account is that Richard is aware of the consequences of his decision to take the throne; in fact he knows that "he could not sin without inflicting a huge loss on the commonwealth, and without the downfall of his house"[124], and even with this awareness he decides to proceed with his plans. More's Richard does not seem to have the same awareness. After the Queen fled to Westminster, Vergil tells that he was worried by the fact that he could not control his brother's second son, since he was in sanctuary with his mother, so "in his hope and mind he fixed his attention on snatching the boy from his mother's bosom, and so he strove to accomplish by artifice what he could not achieve by violence"[125]. Once again are reported Richard's charisma and his cunning mind, which could be considered his greatest strength. At this point, Vergil uses the artifice of composing a speech for Richard, which shows his great ability in the art of rhetoric; the speech begins with these words: "Hang me, if I am not serving my nephews' interest, since I know that their downfall would also bring down both the commonwealth and myself"[126]. His words are very convincing, so it is not surprising that all the other characters in the chronicle are deceived by him. He succeeded in accusing the Queen and her choice to flee with her son and persuading the nobles to bring back first the prince's brother, in fact "when Richard had said these things, they all thought his suggestions to be both just and honourable, since they had no suspicion that it was motivated by deceit"[127]; nobody could foresee his real intentions, except for the Queen, who, at the beginning, refused to give back her son, but she eventually gave in and her children are transferred to the Tower. The same hesitation moves More's Queen. Once he became Protector of the realm, Richard was aware that he could not achieve his plan until the young king's brother was in sanctuary with his mother, "well knowing that if he deposed the one brother, all the realm would fall to the other"[128]. So in front of the Council he gave a speech reproaching the Queen and her behaviour and proposed the Archbishop of Canterbury to visit her to convince her to release her son. At the Archbishop's appeal, at first, the Queen answered in the negative, trying to persuade the Cardinal to leave the boy to her. In a final attempt, she invoked the law affirming that she was her son

[124] *Ibidem.*
[125] *Ibidem.*
[126] *Ibidem.*
[127] *Ibidem.*
[128] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 20.

guardian, not his uncle the Protector; in her words: "since I fear to put him in the Protector's hands that has his brother already; and if both princes failed, the Protector will inherit the crown"[129]. The Queen's words would be proved to be a prophecy of the future of her children and the kingdom, translated by More in a emblematic expression: "so that – were it destiny or were it folly – the lamb was given to the wolf to keep"[130]. But, eventually she was convinced by the Archbishop to give up her son. The child was brought to the Tower, "out of which after that day they never came abroad"[131]. In Vergil's narration, after this event, it is possible to notice that for the first time Richard's conscience intervenes as his mind is "partly afire with lust for gaining the crown, and partly tormented by guilt"[132]. Vergil wants to show that Richard is a very complicated character, moved by a duplicity that is not always easy to understand. But the torment of his conscience lasts little. He kept on with his deceit "by hiding and veiling his greed under the name of public utility, he so misled the nobles' minds that, with the exception of those few from whom he had never concealed his true intent, they could in no wise perceive why he was creating delays, or to what end his counsels were tending"[133]. The character of Queen Elizabeth returns again in both narrations, in the scene where Hasting is accused of treason, and consequently executed without trial. In Vergil's version Richard shows his arm to all the people he reunited as witnesses of Hasting's fate, and he accuses Queen Elizabeth of witchcraft, of having cursed him to have weakened his arm. More gives more details about the episode. Not only did Richard accuse the Queen to be a sorceress, but also to have plotted with Jane Shore – Edward IV's mistress – his destruction; they wasted his body with witchcraft: "he plucked up his doublet sleeve to his elbow upon his left arm, where he showed a shrivelled, withered and small arm"[134]. From the analysis of the bones, now it can be proved that Richard did not have any deformity at his arm; this particular reported by More is very curious because it reflects the idea that Richard was twisted in soul and body; it is not a case that it is the left arm that is cursed, since the left side has always been considered the evil side, the side of the devil. More says

[129] Ivi, p. 33.
[130] Ivi, p. 20.
[131] Ivi, p. 36.
[132] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[133] *Ibidem.*
[134] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 41.

that the people knew that "the Protector's arm was ever such since his birth"[135] and not the result of sorcery, which indicated that he has always been so wicked, with no chance of redemption.

The death of Hastings is, in all the versions, the turning point the proceeding of Richard's plan. He set a trap to eliminate the man he considered the most urging threat in his path to the crown: on 12 June he summoned Hastings with other nobles. In few words Vergil describes perfectly Richard's feeling: he "had nothing but cruel and savage things in mind"[136]. Then he spoke for the second time and again it was clear the talent of Richard with words: "For the last few days I have no peace by day or by night, I have been unable to eat or to drink, and so gradually my blood, my strength, and my spirit has grown feeble, and my limbs are more emaciated than usual"[137]. After accusing Hastings, Richard made him arrested and soon after beheaded him without the chance to defend himself or confess his sins to a priest. This act was immediately blamed by everyone; it did not "escape their attention that Richard would spare no man standing between himself and the throne, and that he was turning his royal authority into tyranny"[138]. More tells other details about this crime of Richard. His account is revealing about the personality and the nature of Richard. The day he convoked the Council to discuss about the coronation of Edward, "the Protector came in among them, first about nine of the clock, saluting them courteously, and excusing himself that he had been from them so long, saying merrily that he had been asleep that day"[139]. In these lines it is possible to read Richard's great talent as deceiver and manipulator: he pretends to be courteous, thanks to his charming nature, but that is only a way to hide his evil, mischievous nature. Short after he departed for a little while

> and soon after one hour, between ten and eleven, he returned into chamber among them, all changed with a wonderful sour, angry countenance, knitting the brows, frowning and frothing and gnawing on his lips, and so sat him down in his place, all the lords much dismayed and sore marvelling of this manner of sudden change, and what thing should him ail[140]

[135] Ivi, p. 42.
[136] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[137] *Ibidem.*
[138] *Ibidem.*
[139] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p.40.
[140] *Ibidem.*

This is Richard's true nature; from this moment would not be necessary to hide anymore. Richard arrested Hastings, who was "brought forth into the green beside the chapel within the Tower, and his head laid down upon a long log of timber, and there stricken off, and afterward his body with the head interred at Windsor beside the body of King Edward"[141]. More reports some anecdotes about Hastings' death that have a narrative function more than historical value, which will be reported by Shakespeare. He tells us about a dream Lord Stanley had the night before Hastings was beheaded: "he had so a fearful dream, in which he thought that a boar with his tusks so slashed them both [Hastings and him] by the heads that the blood ran about both their shoulders"[142]. So he sent a messenger to warn Hastings of danger, but the Chamberlain refused to believe in such an omen. Moreover, while he was riding toward the Tower "his horse twice or thrice stumbled with him almost to the falling"[143], but he decided to ignore this other warning since he was "never merrier nor never so full of good hope in his life"[144]. The news of the death of Hastings spread quickly through the city and Richard made a proclamation that declared that Hastings, with other nobles, conspired to kill the Protector and Buckingham and then to rule the realm and the King.

Once his enemies were removed, Richard could "pursue his purpose and put himself in possession of the crown, before men could have time to devise any ways to resist"[145]. The last act that brought Richard to the throne was once again a demonstration of his absence of scruples; Vergil in few lines presents a terrible portrait of Richard, which is a perfect introduction for the narration of the events that follow: "this man, blinded by greed for power, whom no sense of shame could now hold back, after deciding not to spare the blood of his own household, thought he should not spare his honour either, and so he devised a device like this"[146]: he convinced a priest, Ralph Shaw, to pronounce a sermon in front of the entire city of London and to affirm that his brother Edward was a bastard, so he had no right to the throne and Richard had to be recognized as the true heir of Richard of York and the true sovereign. But Richard seemed not to understand "how much shame, how much disgrace, how much of a blot

[141] Ivi, p. 42.
[142] Ivi, p. 43.
[143] Ivi, p. 44.
[144] *Ibidem.*
[145] Ivi, p. 51.
[146] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.

he was casting on both his family and the entire realm by publicly condemning his mother"[147]. Vergil reports also another version of the story according to which during the sermon it was not Edward who was declared a bastard, but his sons. In More's account, Shaw's sermon gives the chance to write a long digression about King Edward's marriage with Elizabeth Woodville. In this pages More describes both Elizabeth and Edward; he explains the reasons why Duchess Cecily opposed the marriage and tells the rumour – then used by Shaw as justification – that before marrying Elizabeth Edward "was betrothed to Dame Elizabeth Lucy, and her husband before God"[148]. In mediaeval times a betrothal had the same value of a marriage: therefore it was as if Edward had been already married with another woman before getting married with Elizabeth Woodville; this made their marriage null and their children bastards. Claiming that Edward's children were bastards made Richard the "very right heir"[149]. "But this device failed, either by the Protector's negligence, or the preacher's overmuch diligence"[150], in fact the citizens of London found the sermon shameful and, instead of crying in praise of "King Richard", they stayed quiet. This did not stop Richard in his purpose, because after Shaw's sermon, reaching the throne was just a formality. After an assembly of the judges, the city magistrates, the sheriffs and the nobles, where Buckingham had a speech in favour of Richard, he gained the crown. "Therefore he convoked a parliament at Westminster on July 6, at which he was created and crowned together with his wife Anne, with the people not objecting out of fear rather than actually approving, and was called Richard III. This was the year of human salvation 1483"[151]. But according to Vergil his rise to the throne was received in various ways:

> for those who had been partisans of Edward and the House of York hated Richard's audacity like the plague, thinking it would consume their family by mutual slaughter. On the other hand, those who had been loyal to Henry VI adjudged this all would be useful to themselves, because it would soon come about that Richard's rule would be tolerable to no man, and for the sake of his complete overthrow the nobility would readily transfer their loyalty to Earl Henry of Richmond[152]

[147] *Ibidem.*
[148] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 56.
[149] Ivi, p. 59.
[150] Ivi, p. 60.
[151] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[152] *Ibidem.*

Richard was well aware that he did not have the approval of his people and he lived in constant fear, which led him to commit what could be considered his most despicable act: he decided to kill his nephews, whom he considered to be a threat. Since the moment of the coronation a sense of fear started to haunt Richard who "now feared everything and surrounded himself with a bodyguard of armed men"[153], and tried to buy the favour of the nobles by giving liberality and promises. Vergil dedicates few lines to the murder of the two princes, because he has to admit that the manner of death of the children was unknown. He only tells that the task was assigned to James Tyrell and he offers Richard's point of view, who "set free by this deed from his care and fear, did not long conceal the murder, and a few days later allowed the rumour of the boy's death to go abroad […] because, after the people had learned that Edward's male issue was extinct, they would be more tolerant of his own government"[154]. Once again, it is More who offers a more complete account of the event. He describes the murder of the princes as "the most piteous and wicked"[155] act of Richard. The author says that Richard thought that only "the killing of his kinsmen could amend his cause and make him a kindly king"[156], so he instructed Sir Robert Brakenbery, Constable of the Tower to take care of the children. But he refused to commit the assassination and so Sir James Tyrell was hired. When the children were lying in their beds, they were smothered with a pillow, and "they gave up to God their innocent souls into the joys of heaven, leaving to the tormentors their bodies dead in the bed"[157]. More, unlike Vergil, gives many details about the murder of the Princes; he describes the scene emphasizing the piteous aspects of the crime, so that the two children result to be innocent scapegoats and Richard a tyrant, a villain with no chance of redemption. The two bodies were buried, according to More, "under a great heap of stones"[158]. Then Tyrell rode to Richard to report the murder, but the king – in his only act of pity – did not allow the burying "in so vile corner, saying that he would have them buried in a better place because they were a king's sons"[159]. The place for the reburying was

[153] *Ibidem.*
[154] *Ibidem.*
[155] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 74.
[156] Ivi, p. 75.
[157] Ivi, p. 77.
[158] *Ibidem.*
[159] Ivi, p. 78.

unknown, but what is interesting is that for the first time, in More's account, it is possible to notice the intervention of Richard's conscience. But Richard's mischief would be repaid on the battlefield at Bosworth, where he would be slayed by Henry VII, and "after this abominable deed done, he never had quiet in his mind – he never thought himself safe"[160]. Thomas More portrays Richard as a tyrant, a usurper and a despot. He is a criminal involved in multiple dreadful actions among which the most hideous is, no doubt, the murder of the princes. But at More's time there were no proofs that he was actually involved in the disappearance of the two children. The great ability of the author is to turn "the weakly evidenced supposition into fact"[161]; for centuries More's version has been considered true. To emphasize Richard's evil nature More exaggerates his physical deformity. But despite his demonization, he "might have resisted developing a specifically pro-Tudor polemic"[162], in fact, by the time he was busy composing the *History*, he might have had doubts about Henry VIII. In this perspective Richard can not be considered anymore the antitype of the Tudor sovereign, but instead he may become his parallel.

In Vergil's account it is possible to notice the great role played by God and his will. After the people of London learnt about the murder of the princes they reputed Richard the monster that committed a terrible crime that casted God's wrath on the people of England "and therefore they reproached him, hated him, and prayed for his final punishment"[163]. Aware of the feelings of his people and starting fearing God's avenge, Richard "lapsed from such great happiness back into fear and melancholy, and, since he could not make amends for what he passed, he decided to erase this blot of infamy on his name by performing all duties"[164]. He focused his attention in political acts that assured his kingdom, like creating his only son Edward Prince of Wales and choosing nobles from Yorkshire – the region that was more loyal to him – for his Privy Council. "He began to live a new life and display himself in the guise of a good man, so that he would be deemed more just, more mild, more a friend of the people, and

[160] Ivi, p. 79.
[161] Shakespeare, William, *The Tragedy of King Richard III: The Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by Jonh Jowett, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 18.
[162] Ivi, p. 15.
[163] Polydore, "Anglica Historia", translated by Sutton, Dana F.
[164] *Ibidem.*

more liberal, especially towards the poor"[165] and "he began many works, both public and private, which he did not bring to completion, being cut off by an early death"[166]. In Vergil's narration it is not completely clear if this change of attitude is simply a consequence of the fear to lose the throne and face God's avenge or it is Richard's conscience, which leads him to pursue forgiveness for all his crimes. In the last case Richard could not be considered solely a monster and a villain. Anyway, Vergil's opinion about Richard's public acts is not entirely negative; in his two-year reign he actually tried to achieve many things and to improve his kingdom. According to Vergil he was a good king, but not a good person. And this positive judgement about Richard returns when he started taking in consideration the idea to marry his niece Elizabeth, daughter of his brother Edward, while his wife Anne was still alive. Richard showed doubts in committing such a crime as killing his wife to get rid of her, "for he had already played the part of a good man, […] and therefore was afraid that by his wife's premature death he might offend against the good public opinion he imagined himself to possess. And yet the evil counsel prevailed in a character already averse from righteousness"[167]. Vergil's Richard could not but commit evil acts and crimes and his hideous nature brought his wife to die, ("whether by sorrow or by poison, the queen died"[168]). So Richard was free to "cast his eyes on his niece Elizabeth and desire her hand in marriage. But since all men abhorred that crime, and the girl herself refused, he decided he had to proceed slowly"[169].

More's account finishes with the conspiracy of Buckingham, while Vergil reports his story until the death of Richard. In the last pages of the chronicle Vergil follows both Richard and Richmond in the attempt to give a complete account of the events that led to the battle of Bosworth. For this reason he focuses on the military moves of the two armies on the English soil. In the narration it can be noticed the intrusion of a third character, who More quickly mentions when he reports about Hasting: Thomas Stanley, who was one of the causes of Richard's defeat, because of his neutrality. The character of Richard at the end of the chronicle is very different from the deceiving man that has been presented at the beginning. He is described as a

[165] *Ibidem.*
[166] *Ibidem.*
[167] *Ibidem.*
[168] *Ibidem.*
[169] *Ibidem.*

tormented man, “burnt with chagrin”[170], who trusts no one and decides to “confront his adversaries as soon as possible”[171]. The two armies opposed in Bosworth and the night before the battle Richard was said to have had a terrible dream: “he dreamt he was surrounded by evil demons, who did not let him rest”[172]; and, when he reported his dream to his men, some said that “he was displaying this melancholy because he feared the enemy”[173], yet Vergil believes “this to have been no dream, but rather his conscience, burdened by his many crimes; his conscience, I say, which was all the heavier because his sin was the greater”[174]. According to Vergil, Richard’s army was larger than Richmond’s, but the king, overwhelmed by his feeling, committed a great mistake: “enraged, he spurred forward his horse and attacked him from the flank, riding outside the battle-line”[175]. Richard, then, was unhorsed and Stanley took the chance to enter the battle on Richmond’s side. “Richard was killed, fighting in the thick of the fray”[176]. In his report of the battle, Vergil affirms that “about thousand men were killed”[177], “the number of the captive was great, since as soon as Richard was killed everybody cast away their weapons and voluntarily submitted to Henry’s power”[178] and that “the battle was fought on August 22 of the year of human salvation 1485, and lasted a little more than two hours”[179]. Eventually Vergil reports that “Richard’s naked body was slung over a horse, its head, arms and legs dangling, and was brought to the Franciscan monastery at Leicester, a sorry spectacle but a sight worthy of the man’s life, and there it was given burial two days later, without any funeral ceremony”[180]. What is interesting is that Vergil believes that “Richard could have rescued himself by flight”, but he decided to fight because “he knew for sure that on that day he would either pacify his realm or lose it forever”[181]. It is not possible to know how Thomas More intended to investigate Richard’s psychology in his last

[170] *Ibidem.*
[171] *Ibidem.*
[172] *Ibidem.*
[173] *Ibidem.*
[174] *Ibidem.*
[175] *Ibidem.*
[176] *Ibidem.*
[177] *Ibidem.*
[178] *Ibidem.*
[179] *Ibidem.*
[180] *Ibidem.*
[181] *Ibidem.*

moments. Contemporaries readers can rely only on Vergil's account and then on Edward Hall's report.

Historically speaking, Polydore Vergil's chronicle is extremely interesting and useful. As said before, there are great chances that Vergil met some eye-witnesses of the events and interviewed them to collect some material for his chronicle. Vergil's report confirms the fact that Richard suffered from scoliosis and so he had a shoulder higher than the other, but he did not have a hunchback; he was buried at Grayfriars in Leicester and his body was not thrown in the river Severn, as the legend claimed. Moreover, this account can be considered as the source for other chronicles' writers. But it was Thomas More who crafted and created that mythical character that has influenced and inspired Shakespeare for his history play, which made Richard famous. More's chronicle, even if unfinished, is longer than Vergil's and has had a greater impact on the audience thank to the fact that he dedicated great attention in listing details that have become popular or reporting anecdotes, which are not even mentioned by Vergil. In More's version Richard is not simply a usurper, but he becomes a great villain, a strong literary character.

> One obvious effect of More's method was to heighten immeasurably the details of Richard's life and character which had already assumed a semi-legendary status in the minds of his informants. As the portrait became more dramatic, more consistent, and more unified, it took on a new urgency; Richard thus became a greater menace after his death than he had been, perhaps, when alive.[182]

1.3.2. The rewriting of Thomas More by Edward Hall, The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke

Edward Hall (1497-1547) was a lawyer and an historian at the Tudor court[183]. He was famous for his chronicle *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke*, which covered the period from the usurpation of Henry IV to the death of Henry VIII. The chronicle was written in English and printed by Grafton in 1548. Hall's work is particularly important as it was one of Shakespeare's sources for

[182] More, Thomas, 1963, p. XCVIII.
[183] Peter C. Herman, 'Hall, Edward (1497–1547)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2012 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11954, accessed 21 Dec 2015]

the composition of his history plays. He did not produce an original work; rather, he absorbed the lessons of humanist historiography. For the part that involved the character of Richard III the evident inspiration was Thomas More with his *History of King Richard III*.

Basically, Hall took More's report and followed it to the letter in method and contents; he wrote "this kynges tyme wyth some parte of kyng Richard the. iij. as shall apere by a note made at that place, was written by syr Thomas More"[184]. Hall opens with a description of Richard, which is a copy of More's:

> Richard duke of Gloucester the third sonne (of whiche I must moste entreate) was in witte and courage egall with the other Edward and Geroge, but in beautee and liniamentes of nature far underneth bothe, for he was litle of stature, eivill featured of limnes, croke backed, the left shulder muche higher than the righte, hard favoured of visage, such as in estates is called a warlike visage, and emonge commen persones a crabbed face. He was malicious, wrothfull and envious.[185]

Then he follows More's account. He tells the assassination of King Henry VI, the death of Clarence, and all the events after the death of Edward IV, which has been reported in detail in the previous paragraph. But Hall's credit is that he completed the narration of the events until Richard's death at Bosworth. The account of this part is not exhaustive and detailed as the retelling of More's chronicle, but it is important since it concludes the story.

Once the conversation between Morton and Buckingham is concluded, Hall reports that "all hys [Buckingham's] imaginacion tended to this effect to have kyng Richard subdued, & to have the lynes of king Edward, & kyng Henry the. vi. again raysed and avaunsed"[186]. Then Morton sailed to the Flanders to meet Richmond and report the plan. Meanwhile, Margaret Beaufort – Richmond's mother – sent Dr Lewis in sanctuary to the Queen to make her agree to the plan of marrying her son to Princess Elizabeth. After failing to get Buckingham to come to him by flattery, Richard assembled an army, of men of Yorkshire, to face the duke at Salisbury. Caught, Buckingham confessed the conspiracy and "without arreignemente or judgemente he

[184] Hall, Edward, "The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke", in *Earlier English History Plays: Henry VI, Richard III, Richard II*, edited by Geoffrey Bullough, London: Routledge and Paul, 1960, p. 252.
[185] Ivi, p. 253.
[186] Ivi, p. 282.

was at Salsburye in the open market place on a newe skaffolde behedded and put to death"[187].

Hall, then, reports Richmond's story and his attempt to sail to England, but he was stopped by a great storm. When Richard knew about the marriage arrangements between Richmond and Elizabeth, he tried to reconcile with the Queen to prevent it, thinking that "yf it shoulde happen quene Anne his wife to departe oute of this presente worlde, then he him selfe woulde rather take to wife his cousyn and nece the lady Elizabeth"[188]. The Queen surrendered to Richard's praises, "blynded by avaricious affeccion and seduced by flatterynge wordes"[189]. Hall follows Vergil's version about Queen Anne's death: she died "either by inward thought and pensyvenes of hearte, or by intoxicacion of poyson (which is affirmed to be most likely)"[190].

Hall thus jumps to the arrival of Richmond in Wales in August 1485 and Richard's reaction. Richard gathered his army, larger than Richmond's, and took Lord Stanley's son as hostage. Both the commanders had an oration to spur their men before battle. In his speech Richard claimed: "And as for me, I assure you, this day I will triumphe by glorious victorie, or suffer death for immortal fame"[191]; while Richmond summarised the king's sins:

> He hath not only murdered his nephewe beying his kyng and sovereign lord, bastarded his noble brethren and defamed the wombe of hi verteous and womanly mother, but also compased all the meanes and waies that he coulde invent how to stuprate and carnally know his awne nece under the pretence of a cloked matrimony.[192]

The two armies, on the field of Bosworth, clashed and Richard, in the heat of the battle, "inflamed with ire and vexed with outrageous malice"[193] rode in the centre of the fray to kill Richmond and "he him selfe manfully fyghtynge in the mydell of his enemies was slayne and brought to his death as he worthely deserved"[194]. Hall reports that the battle was fought on 22 August, 1485, and that the fighting lasted a couple of hours.

[187] Ivi, p. 283.
[188] Ivi, p. 286.
[189] Ivi, p. 287.
[190] Ivi, p. 288.
[191] Ivi, p. 294.
[192] Ivi, p. 295.
[193] Ivi, p. 296.
[194] Ivi, p. 297.

Richmond took the crown of Richard and was "elected king by the voyce of the people as in auncient tymes past"[195].

Hall also gives information about Richard's burial place, affirming that he was carried, naked, to Leicester, where he was exhibited, then he "was brought to the grey fryers church within the toune, and there laie lyke a miserable spectacle […] and in the sayde church he was with no lesse funeral pompe, and solempnitie enterred"[196].

The chronicle ends with another description of Richard that is very similar to the one of Vergil's. In this description, once again, it is underlined how a physical deformity has a correspondence in the inner nature.

To conclude, after proposing an historical profile of the character of Richard III, I presented the case of the discovery of the bones in Leicester. I ended this chapter reporting the main chronicles written immediately after Richard's death, under the Tudors. Obviously, the Tudor dynasty had to justify the usurpation of the throne and so they commissioned authors to compose pro-Tudor propagandistic chronicles, which had to depict Richard as a tyrant and Henry VII as the saviour of the realm. These chronicles, and specifically Thomas More's *History*, are important because they were the base to build the myth of Richard, which has been living until nowadays. Only recently, thanks to the efforts of the *Richard III Society*, there started a process to redeem the character. Archaeological evidence and other historical proofs suggest that what we thought to know about Richard was not completely true. But this does not change the charm that Richard has always had and that he keeps wielding.

[195] Ivi, p. 299.
[196] Ivi, p. 300.

Plate 1. Grayfriars excavation, Skeleton 1 in the grave

Plate 2. Skeleton of Richard III

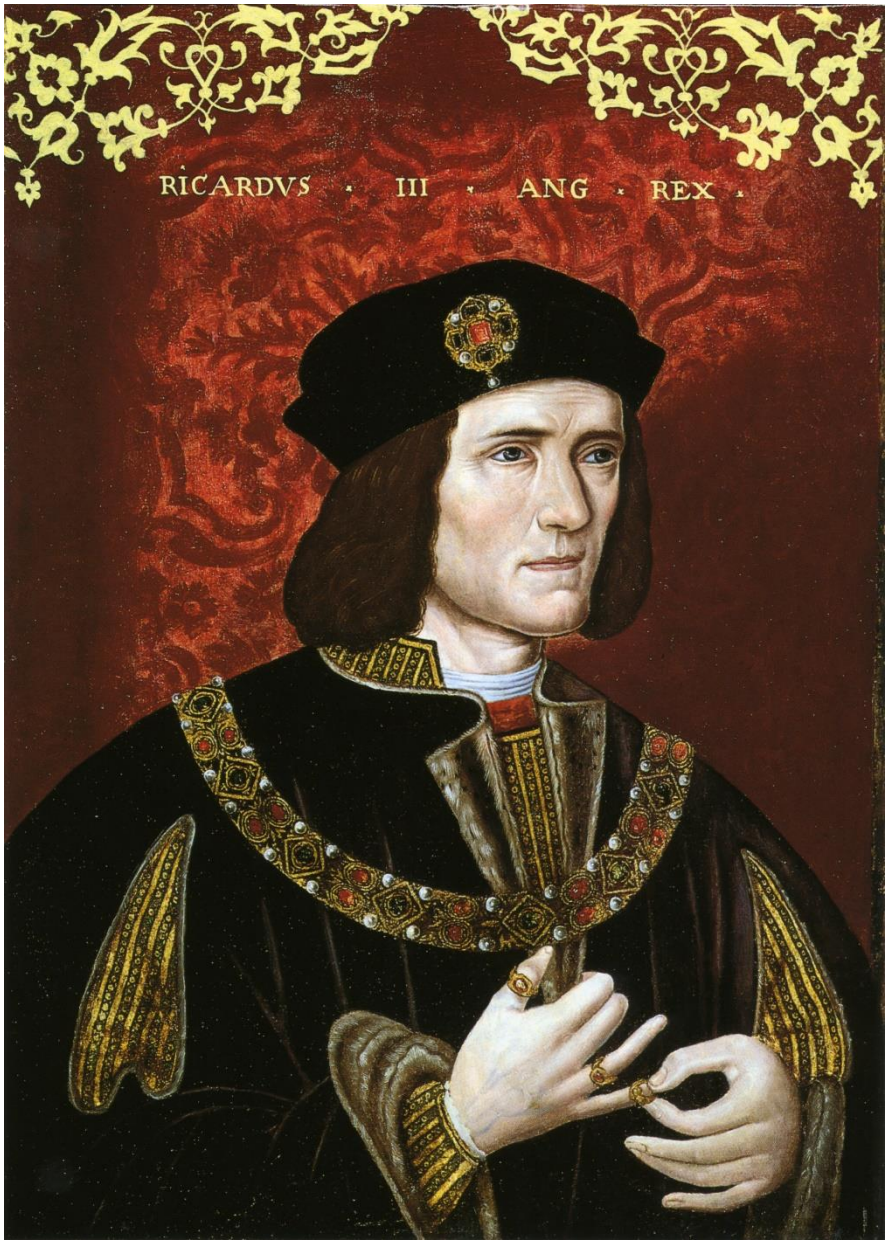

Plate 3. Richard III, oil on panel, English School, 1520. Royal Collection Trust

Plate 4. Richard III, oil on panel, English School, sixteenth century, Society of Antiquaries of London

2. SHAKESPEARE'S *RICHARD III*

When we think about Richard, we think about the Tudor myth that is indestructible: the villain with the hunchback and the limp, who killed his brother, his nephews, his wife, usurped the throne of England and was killed by the just King Henry VII at Bosworth. The responsible of this myth is Shakespeare, who is also the responsible "for whatever notion most of us possess about the period and its political leaders"[197]. When we analyse *Richard III* we must take into consideration this idea, its relationships with the sources – particularly Thomas More's chronicle – and also the fact that, among the Shakespearean history plays, *Richard III* is the most performed[198] and one of those that has teased our imagination the most.

2.1. DATE OF COMPOSITION AND SOURCES

Scholars agree that Shakespeare composed *Richard III* after 1587[199]. Many different dates of composition have been suggested, in a range from 1590 to 1594. It is quite likely that the play was written between 1592-93[200]. In order to date the composition scholars considered the period when *3 Henry VI*, the play that precedes *Richard III*, had been written and staged, most probably before 23 June 1592, when the theatres in London were closed because of the plague. *Richard III* seems the perfect continuation of the events told in *3 Henry VI*; moreover, the two plays seem closely related under the stylistic and rhetorical point of view: they clearly possess some traits of Shakespeare's early writings. "It is possible to argue that *Richard III* shows itself to be a transitional work taking Shakespeare from chronicle-style history plays towards Senecan tragedy"[201]. What is clear is that the play was subject to ongoing modifications, as it was the norm. There are different versions for this play, one published in the First Quarto of 1597, another in the First Folio of 1623, which reflect the alterations for the stage made by Shakespeare and the other members of the theatre

[197] Saccio, Peter, *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle and Drama*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 4.
[198] Siemon, Jamer R., "Introduction" in *Richard III*, London: Arden Shakespeare, 2009, p. 1.
[199] Ivi, p. 44.
[200] Ivi, p. 45.
[201] Jowett, John, "Introduction", in *Richard III*, Oxford: Oxfrod University Press, 2000, p. 4.

company. The first time it was represented was, presumably, in 1594, according to some references that associated Richard's part with Richard Burbage[202].

The character of Richard was not a new one; he had appeared before in *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI*, where some elements of his personality start to emerge, as his deformity. A glimpse of the villain and his evil purposes show in act 3 of *3 Henry VI*, when Richard establish himself as a violent and determined warrior, in Shakespeare's longest soliloquy. "This speech initiates Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard from a psychological stand-point, a man rejected by women on account of the 'chaos' of his body"[203]. At the end of the play, Richard has helped in killing Edward, son of King Henry, at Tewkesbury and has murdered Henry in the Tower of London. The ground is laid for *Richard III*, with a "violent, ambitious, cunning and demonically isolated"[204] man, who seeks for self-denomination.

Scholars are never completely sure about the sources used by Shakespeare in composing his plays, yet for *Richard III* there is a great possibility that he worked with two synthetic compilations: *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and York* by Edward Hall (1548 and 1550) and *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* by Raphael Holinshed (1578), who is considered the expander successor of Hall[205]. The material for these accounts came from the *History of King Richard III* by Thomas More. I have already discussed how Polydore Vergil might have influenced More's composition, but there is no proof of the fact that Shakespeare used the chronicle by the Italian humanist as a source for his *Richard*. The great source for Shakespeare was Thomas More, not directly used, but echoed in Hall and Holinshed, since they can be considered as a sort of transcription of More. Moreover, by the early 1590s two dramatic works had staged the character of Richard: *Richardus Tertius*, a Latin drama by Thomas Legge, and the anonymous *True Tragedy of Richard III*[206]. The Latin drama was known to the audience. Scholars disagree about his influence on Shakespeare's play, even though there are some similarities between the two works, like the emphasis on the female roles or the presence of two major wooing

[202] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 49.
[203] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 9.
[204] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 44.
[205] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 13.
[206] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 68.

scenes[207]. Another influence may be found in Seneca, since it is possible to identify some elements typical of the Senecan tragedy, particularly some references to the *Hercules Furens* and the *Troades*. One last immediate source is *The Mirror for Magistrates*, "a homiletic work that sets material from the chronicles and elsewhere in rhyming stanzas"[208], published in 1559 for the first time and then expanded in three other editions. Moreover, by the early sixteenth-century the character of Richard was protagonist also in "sermons, ballads, rhetorical exercises, satires, state propaganda and invective"[209].

2.1.1. Shakespeare and More: building the myth, analogies and differences

Richard's character was born in More's chronicle: a tyrant and a villain endowed with great charm; Shakespeare consolidated his personality, creating the definitive myth, reshaping him into the language of the theatre. Shakespeare's Richard "escapes from historical boundaries, strict fact and chronology, to become a stylised, larger than life demonic figure"[210]. In the dramatization of the life of Richard, Shakespeare has drawn from More, adding or changing some scenes to reach a dramatic effect.

The greatest difference between More's Richard and Shakespeare's is the relationship created with the audience. More behaves as an historian and he reports the events, with care for details, but he does not give the chance to feel intimate with the protagonist of his chronicle: "More invites no sympathy, never presents the world as Richard sees it, gives him no memorable speeches"[211]. Thanks to the use of irony, Shakespeare gives the audience the possibility to laugh with and for Richard, unlike More.

If More decides to open the narration with the death of king Edward, Shakespeare tells about this event only in 2.2; Queen Elizabeth enters bringing the

[207] Ivi, p. 75.
[208] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 22.
[209] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 3.
[210] Besnault, Marie-Hélène and Michel Bitot, "Historical legacy and fiction: the poetical reinvention of King Richard III", in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, edited by Michael Hattaway, Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2002, p. 108.
[211] Siemon, *Richard III*, p.60.

news to Duchess Cecily: "Edward, my lord, thy son, our king, is dead" (2.2.40)[212]. In the previous scene Shakespeare presents a choral scene where a sick King Edward is surrounded by his family: this is an extension of what More reports in his chronicle. More puts a long speech in Edward's mouth about the danger of the division in his realm, referring to the disunion between his wife's family – the Woodvilles – and his brother; the dying king tries to warn his family about what is at stake and makes a final plea, exhorting them to love each other. Instead, Shakespeare's scene starts in *medias res*[213]: Edward's long speech has already been pronounced, when the scene opens, he is trying to make his friends at peace, asking them to swear love each other. At his deathbed there are Queen Elizabeth, Lord Marquess Dorset (his stepson), Hastings (his best friend and Lord Chamberlain) and Buckingham (his cousin); Richard is absent at the king's request of "dissemble not your hatred" (2.1.8). He enters in 2.1.45, after his brother has asked for him, just at the right moment "and in good time" (2.1.45) – an appropriate stage entry for Richard. Even if he was not present at the moment Edward had tried to reconcile his family, Richard expresses his desire to "reconcile me to his friendly peace" (2.1.60) and "desire all good men's love" (2.1.62). Obviously, he is speaking out of hypocrisy – a characteristic trait of his personality. The presence of Richard at his brother's deathbed is a Shakespearean invention: it is necessary since he is the one who reports the death of Clarence. The other characters are unaware about the fate of the king's brother: they all seem really upset. Apparently, the king's grace has not arrived in time, and Clarence has been executed. This episode gives the king an occasion to express his remorse towards his brother, adding a couple of invented episodes about the past, in order to underline the affectionate relationship between the two brothers. Richard is excluded from this relationship; actually, the king's outlet of his emotion is the occasion to stress Richard's duplicity. This scene is absent in More's report.

Richard reveals his plot at Clarence's expense in 1.1, when he informs the audience that he has conspired to put the Duke against the King spreading the rumour of a prophecy according to "'G' of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be" (1.1.40). The

[212] I shall be using the Siemon James R. edition of Shakespeare's *King Richard III*, London: Arden Shakespeare, 2009, throughout.
[213] Mochi, Giovanna, "Richard III", in *Nel Laboratorio di Shakespeare, vol. 2*, Parma: Pratiche, 1988, p. 312.

name of Clarence was indeed George. In fact, the prophecy refers to Gloucester, but Richard is a very good deceiver and with his wit he can convince everyone of his innocence. Shakespeare, in this scene, underlines the superior clearness of mind of Richard: he plays with the superstition and the fear of the king, putting himself above fate[214]. In the first scene Richard and Clarence meet, just immediately after the second has been arrested; this is another Shakespearean invention, who clearly makes Richard guilty for the death of his brother. Richard's mischievous nature emerges when he comforts and promises his brother to help him, while he is escorted in the Tower: "Well, your imprisonment shall not be long; / I will deliver you, or else lie for you / Meantime, have patience" (1.1.114-116). Richard plays with words: the imprisonment will be short since he intends to deliver his brother by death ("I do love thee so / that I will shortly send thy soul to heaven"; 1.1.118-119). Shakespeare makes Clarence protagonist of an invented scene in the first act of the play (1.4); Clarence's death concludes the first act of the play.

More reports the event in a couple of lines, simply mentioning the involvement of Richard in the death of his brother; then, this reference has become traditional. The only material available for Shakespeare was the setting – the Tower of London – and the detail of the butt of malmsey in which Clarence was drowned. These details are used as highly symbolic in the theatrical retelling. Drowning in the wine is a "new christened" (1.1.50), which gives Clarence the chance to change his name and evade the accusation against him[215]. Moreover, Shakespeare uses the device of the dream to provide depth to the character of Clarence, who appears to be haunted by remorse and guilt before dying; he is afraid to die and to be damned. He tells his keeper that he dreamt "Gloucester stumbled, and in falling / struck me (that thought to stay him) overboard / into the tumbling billows of the main" (1.4.18-20). The dream has the taste of a prediction that Clarence fails in interpreting. He can not believe to the assassins that came to kill him were sent by his brother Gloucester.

Another Shakespeare's invention is the presence of the two assassins, sent by Richard, in the scene with Clarence. The purpose of their presence in the scene is to create a feeling of suspense, particularly because they do not seem entirely convinced

[214] Ivi, p. 303.
[215] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 137.

to commit the murder. The remorse and the mercy that they show is a device to stress the attention on the lack of scruples and morality of Richard and on the humanity and repentance of Clarence[216]. "The close conjunction of Clarence's death [1.4] and Edward's [2.1] (given by Holinshed as 1477 and 1483 respectively), is Shakespeare's invention"[217], which emphasizes the dramatic power of the events, giving a darker connotation to Richard.

Other similarities and discrepancies between Shakespeare and More can be noted about the character of Hastings. At the end of 1.1, after having met Clarence, Richard meets Hastings, who has just been released from the Tower. For Richard this is the occasion to show a pretended sympathy towards his brother's closest friend and to despise the Queen and her family. Once again, this short scene is an invention by Shakespeare, useful to introduce the following act, where King Edward is dying. Hastings reappears again in 2.1, at Edward's side, when he reconciles with the Queen, as reported in More's account. Then, he is present on scene in 3.1, but he does not speak; Richard instructs him to reach the Queen, fled to sanctuary, and to intercede with her to have the young prince York. Hastings escorts him to the Tower, where he can reunite with his brother Prince Edward.

In 3.2 Hastings is the target; the scene is a reworking of the source material. Probably Shakespeare decides to introduce the character of Hastings in act I, knowing that he would be central in the development of the plot[218]. In this scene Shakespeare focuses on Hastings' optimism, his candour and his great trust in Richard and himself, all to prepare the audience for the scene of his death. In 3.2 Lord Stanley sends a messenger to Hastings to warn him about a dream he had ("He dreamt the boar had razed off his helm"; 3.2.10) and to invite him to leave ("take horse with him / and with all speed post with him toward the north, / to shun the danger that his soul divines"; 3.2.15-17). But Hasting does not believe in the premonitory dream: "Tell him his fears are shallow, without instance; / and for his dreams, I wonder he's so simple / to trust the mockery of unquiet slumbers" (3.2.24-26). This scene is reported by More, but as a signal that Hastings decides to ignore, after his beheading. Shakespeare chooses to

[216] Mochi, *Nel Laboratorio di Shakespeare, vol. 2*, p. 310.
[217] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 220.
[218] Mochi, *Nel Laboratorio di Shakespeare, vol. 2*, p. 321.

anticipate the anecdote to reorder the chronology of the plot[219]. A few lines later Hastings meets with Stanley, before attending the council, and confirms his security in Richard ("I know our state secure" 3.2.79).

The setting of 3.4 is the Tower, which is the setting of all the violent deaths, the executions of those characters who are an obstacle in Richard's path to the crown. This is a clue about the destiny of Hastings. At the beginning of the scene Richard is not present at the council: all the other nobles are waiting for him to take a decision about the coronation day and Hastings assumes control of the meeting as Lord Chamberlain and speaks as Richard's voice. He does not suspect anything about Richard; on the contrary, he expresses, once again, his trust and affection for the Protector ("I know he loves me well", 3.4.14). Then, finally, Richard arrives, lavishly apologising. This scene is faithfully reported from More, including the episode of the strawberries that Richard asks the Bishop of Ely to fetch from his garden. This is a bizarre episode, which seems to have no motivation; "perhaps More records an anecdote (maybe from Morton himself) with no larger purpose; however, strawberries have emblematic connections to unseen treachery"[220]. It seems a pretext to express Richard's (pretended) indifference to matters of state. Then there begins the great *coup de theatre* of Richard and the situation changes rapidly. After a quick exit of scene, Richard comes back and accuses Elizabeth and Jane Shore of witchcraft; he shows his withered arm to the nobles, exactly as in More's account. This act is just a pretence, a trap for Hastings that is accused of treachery. Richard orders to execute Hastings immediately, "Off with his head! Now by Saint Paul I swear / I will not dine until I see the same" (3.4.75-76) – this line comes directly from More. Lamenting the ruin of England, Hastings regrets that he has ignored the premonitory signs:

> Stanley did dream the boar did raze his helm,
> And I did scorn it and disdain to fly.
> Three times today my foot-cloth horse did stumble,
> And started when he looked upon the Tower,
> As loath to bear me to the slaughterhouse.
> O, now I need the priest that spake to me (3.4.81-86)

These omens were an invention by More, used by Shakespeare to stress on the dramatic effect.

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[219] Ivi, p. 322.
[220] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 274.

In 3.6 (a very brief scene, only 14 lines, often omitted in performances) the protagonist is a Scrivener, who has been charged to write the proclamation about Hastings' death. He affirms that it took eleven hours to write it over and that Catesby sent it the night before, when Hastings was still alive – he died only five hours before. In some ways, the scrivener is Richard's accomplice. In front of such an evident deceit, he can only pretend not to know the truth. But, revealing these details to the audience he uncovers Richard's plot. This scene is a pretext to explore the writing and falsification of history (an interesting topic, considering the history of Richard III, all the bad Tudor propaganda at his expense, and the recent recovery of the historical character, after the archaeological discoveries). The character of the scrivener does not exist in More's account, which mentions a proclamation "to be made through the city in the King's name, containing that Lord Hastings with diverse others of his traitorous purpose had before conspired the same day to have slain the Lord Protector"[221].

Both in Shakespeare and More, the murder of the princes have a central role, it is a turning point in the events. Shakespeare is in More's debt for the narration of the crime, which he reworks adding some elements that underline the dramatic effect. At the beginning of the play, Richard's intentions towards his nephews are not clear. In the opening monologue, he states: "Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous" (1.1.32). Then he exposes his plan about Clarence, without mentioning the princes. Richard and Buckingham find themselves to face the problem of the King's son, particularly the older, Prince Edward, immediately after the death of the King. The initial idea is to escort the prince from Ludlow to London, leaving apart the influence of the Woodvilles ("to part the Queen's proud kindred from the Prince", 2.2.150). Yet, since Buckingham is speaking, leaving Richard in the darkness, it is possible to imagine that Richard has already in mind to murder his nephews; he is simply waiting for the right moment to involve Buckingham in his plot. Prince Edward enters London, escorted by his uncle and Buckingham, in 3.1. Richard's next move is trying to have under his custody Edward's younger brother. Reunited, the two brothers are taken to the Tower. The young York, however, foresees that he will not live for much longer: "I shall not sleep in quiet at the Tower" (3.1.142). Only at this point Richard's intentions are clear,

[221] More, Thomas, *The History of King Richard III*, edited by Gerard B. Wegemer and Travis Curtright, Center of Thomas More Studies ,2013, p. 46.

and the Protector is upset by his nephew's wit and sensitivity, he is a "perilous boy, / bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable" (3.1.154-155). The murder is arranged in 4.2, after Hastings's execution and Richard's coronation. The new king starts to feel threatened by the lives of the Princes in the Tower ("I wish the bastards dead, / and I would have it suddenly performed", 4.2.18-19) and he hires Tyrell to commit the crime. The princes are described as "two deep enemies, / foes to my rest, and my sweet sleep's disturbers" (4.2.71-72). It is in this moment that the downfall of Richard starts. More is the first to report the detail about Tyrell as assassin, but, differently, in his account Richard "only becomes subject to anxious fears, torments of conscience and uncertainty *after* the murder of the princes"[222]. In Shakespeare the murder of the princes is not represented on scene, but it is Tyrell that reports to Richard the crime in 4.3, at the contrary of More.

> The tyrannous and bloody act is done,
> The most arch deed of piteous massacre
> That ever yet this land was guilty of.
> Dighton and Forrest, who I did suborn
> To do this piece of ruthful butchery,
> Albeit they were fleshed villains, bloody dogs,
> Melted with tenderness and mild compassion,
> Wept like two children in their deaths' sad story. (4.3.1-8)

Tyrell confesses to the audience that the two men he hired to kill the princes are now touched by remorse and their conscience is upset. By his words, it is possible to understand that he feels the same, guilt for an act that has offended nature. In fact he defines it "bloody". Shakespeare's mastery consists in the creation of details that enriches the account, like the book of prayers on their pillow. As in More, the princes are smothered and then buried. Tyrell has only seen the bodies, but he does not know where the chaplain of the Tower buried them. In More's account Richard seems very upset about the burial place, since he asks the Constable of the Tower to rebury them "in a place that only he knew"[223]. Historically, it is impossible to prove the involvement of Richard in the murder of the princes; however, it is sure that this fact has been used to demonize his character: "More turns the weakly evidenced

[222] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 319.
[223] More, *The History of King Richard III*, p. 78.

supposition into fact, and draws the necessary conclusion from it"[224], Shakespeare draws from More and turns the scene into myth.

More's account concludes with a meeting between Morton and Buckingham, plotting against Richard. Shakespeare had to recover the information about the last period of the kingdom of Richard from other sources, i.e. Hall and Holinshed, who re-elaborated More's material in the composition of the first part and then, probably, used Polydore Vergil as source material for the end of their chronicle.

2.2. RICHARD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER CHARCATERS IN SHAKESPEARE

An interesting approach in the analysis of the play may be to follow Richard in his relationships with the other characters. His alliance with Buckingham, Richard's mirror and partner in crime; his controversial and unbalanced relations with the women, described in some of the most famous scenes as the one where he woos Lady Anne, or when he is cursed by Queen Margaret. Through the relationships with the other characters Richard reveals himself and let us, the audience, be participant of his schemes.

2.2.1. Richard & Buckingham

Buckingham is Richard's partner; among the male characters he seems to have the most relevant role. They show to have a special relationship, a complicity, which Richard seems to have only with him. They are often together on stage and Buckingham quite often speaks on Richard's behalf. This great complicity, this friendship and alliance is based on the fact that they know that they are playing a part: they are sometimes actors, sometimes directors of the scenes they enact. Shakespeare gives them a meta-theatrical function in his play.

Buckingham's talent as actor is clear from the beginning, when he is present at the King's side, on his deathbed, where he reconciles with the Queen's party and then he seems very upset, like all the others, at the news of Clarence's death (2.1). It is not clear whether he was aware of Richard's plans, since his question is pretty ambiguous:

[224] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 18.

"Look I so pale, Lord Dorset, as the rest?" (2.1.84). It may seem that he wants to know if it possible to read surprise on his face; someone could argue that a question like this can been asked only by guilty people, by someone involved in the plan. Shakespeare plays with ambiguity and the audience, like the other characters, can not understand if Buckingham is only pretending to be surprised or not. This theory can be confirmed by an exchange of lines in 3.5 when Richard and Buckingham are preparing their pretence for the citizens of London. The Protector asks: "Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change thy colour, / murder thy breath in the middle of a word, / and then again begin, and stop again, / as if thou were distraught and mad with terror?" (3.5.1-4); Buckingham's answer is: "Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian" (3.5.5).

In scene 3.5 Richard and Buckingham show the great talent as actors. They enter "in rotten armour, marvellous ill-favoured"[225]. From the very first lines it is clear that they are proving their parts. They have to justify the death of Hastings in front of the citizens of London. This sequence is based on the conceit of pretence, which gives Shakespeare the occasion to create an example of meta-theatre[226]: Richard and Buckingham, as they are actors, prove their part as scared men, with a particular care to the gesture; Richard is the director, while Buckingham is the obedient actor. It is possible to notice their satisfaction for their ability of dissimulation. When the Mayor comes, they pretend to be scared, as if they were in great danger. Their ability is to give Hastings the role of the evil pretender, the "covert'st sheltered traitor / that ever lived" (3.5.33-34). Buckingham plays the leading role and report to the Mayor the betrayal of Hastings. In the second part of the scene, Richard gives instruction to his ally about a speech he must have to convince the people that Richard is the legitimate heir to the throne. He suggests to say that Edward's children are bastards, that Edward himself was a bastard, and to insist on the King's lust. Buckingham is, once again, the actor and Richard the director. In More it is Doctor Shaw that pronounces this speech in front of the citizens of London, while Shakespeare prefers to omit the scene of the speech and substitute it with the long instructions left by Richard. In this way Richard himself is the author of the words that will lead him to the throne. Moreover, Buckingham's speech is implicit, but once again it is possible to notice his persuasive

[225] Ivi., p. 280.
[226] Mochi, *Nel Laboratorio di Shakespeare, vol. 2*, p. 328.

nature and Richard's trust in him. But this trust seems to be misplaced, since the citizens "are mum, say not a word" (3.7.3). Buckingham has exposed Edward's vices and sins and has praised Richard

> Withal, I did infer your lineaments,
> Being the right idea of your father,
> Both in your form and nobleness of mind;
> Laid open all your victories in Scotland,
> Your discipline in war, wisdom in peace,
> Your bounty, virtue, fair humility;
> Indeed, left nothing fitting for your purpose
> Untouched or slightly handled in discourse. (3.7.12-19)

Buckingham seems to have described the perfect ruler, a person that is the opposite of Richard. Obviously, the citizens did not believe him and stayed quiet. So the Duke asked the Mayor "to tell my tale again" (3.7.31). Defining it a tale, Buckingham admits that everything was a farce. After this second attempt, a group of men of Buckingham cried in praise of King Richard.

In 3.7 the roles actor-director are inverted and, as in 3.5, Shakespeare writes another meta-theatrical scene. Buckingham gives Richard some advices to play his part:

> Intend some fear.
> Be not you spoke with but by mighty suit;
> And look you get a prayer book in your hand,
> And stand between two churchmen, good my lord,
> For on that ground I'll make a holy descant.
> And be not easily won to our requests;
> Play the maid's part: still answer nay, and take it. (3.7.44-50)

The most refined detail is that of the prayer book, to make seem Richard a holy man, more similar to Henry VI, than his brother Edward, as Buckingham underlines in 3.7.70 "This prince is not an Edward". When the Mayor comes, Richard is "with two right reverend fathers, / divinely bent in meditation" (3.7.60-61), so he can not receive him. And while Richard is absent from the scene, it is Buckingham's duty to entertain the Mayor and the citizens with his rhetoric ability. His talent with words is exploited again here, when he has a speech to convince Richard to accept the crown:

> We heartily solicit
> Your gracious self to take on you the charge
> And kingly government of this your land,
> Not as protector, steward, substitute,

Or lowly factor for another's gain,
But as successively from blood to blood,
Your right of birth, your empery, your own. (3.7.129-135)

Buckingham and Richard, who are skilful actors, keep the scene with their sophisticated lines in a game of request-refusal. Everybody knows that it is nothing but show, but they can not stay insensitive in front of these two artists of deceitfulness.

Richard considers Buckingham his mirror. When the two are on stage together, only one of them (usually Buckingham) interacts with the other characters. Apparently they share a close relationship of interdependence. Actually, their relationship is unbalanced: Buckingham is manipulated by Richard all the time and finds himself in a lower, unstable position, he is loyal to Richard, but the feeling is not mutual. This is clear from the very first time Buckingham is on scene in 1.3, when Queen Margaret curses all the people that are present, but she spares him; she "appears to single out Buckingham as worthy of intimacy in this, for her, rare non-vituperative speech"[227], maybe because the Duke is a direct descendent of Edward III. She even tries to warn Buckingham to avoid any allegiance with Richard

O Buckingham, take heed of yonder dog.
Look when he fawns, he bites; and when he bites,
His venom tooth will rankle to the death.
Have not to do with him, beware of him;
Sin, death and hell have set their marks on him,
And all their ministers attend on him. (1.3.288-293)

The Duke seems interested only in pleasing Richard; this is the sign of a collaboration between the two for a joint purpose. He rejects Margaret's warning, who prophesies a tragic end for him

What, dost thou scorn me for my gentle counsel,
And soothe the devil that I warn thee from?
O, but remember this another day,
When we shall split thy very heart with sorrow,
And say poor Margaret was a prophetess. (1.3.296-300)

The proof of Buckingham's complicity with Richard is given in 2.2, when the two collaborate to isolate Prince Edward from his family. Buckingham proposes to

[227] Siemon, *Richard III*., p. 188.

escort the Prince from Ludlow with a "little train" (2.2.120); this plan and the explanation to convince the Queen are articulated by Richard in More's account. In Shakespeare's version of the story Richard often delegates to Buckingham, maybe in the attempt to build an alibi that makes him seem innocent; the audience is well aware that Richard is a master of manipulation and that he is using Buckingham. He decides what to reveal and what to take for himself. All the characters around Richard are blinded, short-sighted about his true nature, fooled by his wit. At the end of 2.2 Richard calls Buckingham "My other self, my counsel's consistory, / my oracle, my prophet, my dear cousin" (2.2.151-152), using a hyperbole, probably in the attempt to flatter him, to make him feeling special, to show him that he is the only one he can truly trust, and to convince him to follow his plans. Buckingham is not Richard's only confident, since he shares his schemes with the audience; he starts from the beginning of the play to make us part of his thoughts and decisions. Making Buckingham believe he is the one who is the author of the conspiracy is a very smart psychological stratagem by Richard, who plays ironically with the Duke's vanity.

Buckingham is left to lead the action also in the next act: in 3.1 he welcomes the Prince with Richard and then sends Hastings to Westminster to recover young York from sanctuary. Richard seems to be left aside in the decision. While trying to convince the Cardinal – who has been chosen to persuade the Queen to leave her youngest son – Buckingham appears very persuasive and now it becomes clear the reason why Richard chose him as his accomplice. Later in the scene, Buckingham seems to take charge and he takes arrangements with Catesby about Hastings. The interesting fact is that, while Catesby is on scene, Richard plays the role of the sidekick; he barely speaks, leaving space to Buckingham, but, when the two conspirators are alone, the Duke shows his dependency to Richard, who decides bluntly about Hastings's fate ("Chop off his head", 3.1.193). Immediately after, he binds Buckingham even more tightly to him, promising that "when I am king, claim thou of me / the earldom of Hereford and all the moveables / whereof the King my brother was possessed" (3.1.194-196). With this action, Richard makes clear that Buckingham is subordinated to him. These lines are also very important because it becomes clear that they are working together to usurp the throne. Their complicity is underlined also in 3.4, when they retire to discuss about Hastings, excluding all the other characters on stage, and when they come back

to scene to play their *coup de théatre* and accuse Hastings. In this case, anyway, Richard plays the leading role, while Buckingham can only watch, as the rest of the characters on scene; in fact he does not speak a single line after his return on stage.

Although Buckingham proved himself a good orator and a useful ally, Richard might be disappointed by his failure with the citizens of London and he starts not to trust him anymore. This attitude towards Buckingham becomes evident in 4.2. They do not understand each other anymore in a plain way. Richard must abandon his allusions and start to speak openly about his wish to murder the princes, but then he decides to entrust Tyrell with the task. Buckingham comes back to remember the promise of the earldom of Hereford, but Richard simply ignores it, since he is too worried about the coming of Richmond. This refusal is the spark for the feelings of hatred, mistrust and fear towards Richard; "And this is thus? Repays he my deep service / with such contempt? Made I him king for this?" (4.2.117-118), from this moment the alliance between Buckingham and Richard is broken.

The last time Buckingham is on scene is in 5.1. He has been arrested and he is led to execution. He asks to speak with Richard, but his last wish, as the earldom of Hereford before, is denied. He evokes all Richard's victims and Margaret's curse of 1.3 and then he is led to death. He returns, only in the *Folio* version, as a ghost in 5.3, where he reminds Richard that he was his first supporter and his last victim and he leaves him with a curse similar to that one Margaret casted on him: "O, in the battle think on Buckingham / and die in terror of thy guiltiness" (5.3.169-170).

2.2.2. Richard & the Women

The community of women in *Richard III* is rich and noble: the King's mother, Duchess Cecily, three Queens, Elizabeth, Margaret and Anne, and the King's mistress, Jane Shore. This community might seem composed by victims, but "as the play moves forward it becomes an active force in disabling and defeating Richard"[228]. Mostly, they have a choric function in the play, they are the "voices of those who understand and know"[229]. They speak through curses and laments and denunciations. And, if at the beginning their words seem ineffective, then it is possible to see their strength. They

[228] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 1.
[229] Ivi, p. 61.

do not stay quiet, as the citizens of London, in front of Richard's vexations, but they seek the truth. Richard's relations with women are "constantly hostile, based either on cynical manipulation or on determination to blame them"[230]. An example is the character of Jane Shore, absent onstage, but mentioned, and so present, in three different moments: in 1.1 when she is associated for the first time with Hastings; Richard treats her with minimal respect, since she was Edward's lover, and now she is Hastings'. Then in 3.1 Richard suggests Hastings to take leave from Mistress Shore. Finally in 3.4, the scene of the council in the Tower, where Richard accuses her and Queen Elizabeth to have bewitched him. He seems to consider women the cause of his deformity (Elizabeth and Jane Shore, who hexed him, or Cecily, who create the malformation while he was still in her womb). In her absence, Jane Shore plays a relevant role. Another absent woman, who will play an important role, is Elizabeth York, daughter of King Edward. Once Anne is dead, Richard will try to court her, to marry her, but he will not succeed. As for the other women, they all play intense roles. They are present at the beginning and at the end of the play, following a symmetrical scheme, and they are involved in the longest scenes of the play.

2.2.2.1. Richard & Anne

Anne is the only female victim of Richard. She is used by Shakespeare to show the great power Richard can have on the other characters on stage. Anne is the perfect victim: a young widow, with no family ties, easy to manipulate. Like the other women, she is on stage to curse and mourn, but at the same time, she is a little bit different, since she does not realise completely a choric function. Anne's merit is to reveal Richard's true nature to the audience, and the only way to do so is to fall into his trap. Surrendering to Richard's aggressive courtship, she becomes one of those who contributes in building the myth of the monstrous villain. Through the wooing of Anne, Richard is actually trying to seduce the audience.

Shakespeare introduces Anne in 1.2., the scene known as "the wooing scene", which is not present in any chronicle; it is a Shakespearian invention. Anne and Richard are the only characters on stage. She arrives in scene mourning the corpse of

[230] Ivi, p. 36.

her father-in-law Henry VI, in an act of personal grief and she curses the murderer of her husband Edward and of Henry: Richard; "O, cursed be the hand that made these holes; / cursed the heart that had the heart to do it; / cursed the blood that let this blood from hence" (1.2.14-16). She even associates Richard to wolves, spiders and toads, to underline the poisonous nature of him – this connection goes back to John Rous[231]. Her lament is concluded with a curse towards Richard's wife ("If ever he have a wife, let her be made / more miserable by the death of him"; 1.2.26-27), not knowing that she will surrender to his courtship and marry him. When Richard enters the scene, Anne insults him. During all the scene, she calls him using his true names: "devil" (1.2.45), "dreadful minister of hell" (1.2.46), "foul devil" (1.2.50), "lump of foul deformity" (1.2.57), "villain" (1.2.70),"beast" (1.2.71), "diffused infection of a man" (1.2.78), "devilish slave" (1.2.89), "hedgehog" (1.2.104), "homicide" (1.2.128) and "fouler toad" (1.2.150). All these epithets recall a demoniac character or some savage beast. She never takes back these epithets, even when she surrenders to his courtship. On the other side, Richard calls Anne "sweet saint" (1.2.49), "lady" (1.2.68), "divine perfection of a woman" (1.2.75) and "sweet lady" (1.2.152), recalling an angelic nature or the women sung in sonnets, in total opposition to the epithets she uses for him. The scene is played in a game of opposites: man and woman; devil and angel; savage beast and noble lady; deformity and perfection; love and death. The most evident opposite is between the violent hatred shown by Anne at the beginning and the possibility to know Richard's heart, to love him at the end.

Richard must use all his talent to change Anne's disposition towards him. To do so he appeals to Anne's Christian charity, hypocritically recalling the Gospel and giving her saintly qualities; "Lady, you know no rules of charity, / which renders good for bad, blessings for curses", (1.2.68-70). This sparks off an inner conflict in Anne: as a good Christian she can not be vengeful and unforgiving, she has to give Richard a chance of redemption. This conflict appears clear when he lends her a sword, asking her to kill him to avenge King Henry and Edward; "he knows, of course, that she cannot kill him, but she does not know that he knows this"[232]. Anne falls the sword and opens herself to forgiveness: "though I wish thy death, / I will not be thy

[231] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 149.
[232] Paris, Bernand J., *Character as a Subversive Force in Shakespeare: the History and Roman Plays*, London: Associated University Presses, 1991, p. 42.

executioner" (1.2.187-188). With the sword gesture Richard gives her the idea she has a great power over him, that her love can change an evil man; "it appeals to a fantasy that is frequent in the self-effacing woman – that through his love for her, she will be able to soften and redeem a wildly aggressive man"[233]. She surrenders to Richard's flattery when he admits that he killed both Edward and Henry, but that he did it because of her beauty:

> Your beauty was the cause of that effect:
> Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep
> To undertake the death of all the world,
> So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom. (1.2.124-127)

A puzzling question is why Richard wants to woo Anne in the first place, since he does not love her and the marriage does not seem particularly advantageous. Historically speaking we know that Anne was one of the richest heiress of England, but Shakespeare never mentions it; his Anne is only the widow of Richard's adversary, a victim of his seduction. At the end of the scene, Richard himself, in his soliloquy, tells us in confidence that "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long" (1.2.232). In fact, this marriage will not be important in the development of the plot. So, maybe, his courtship is simply an act to feed his pride, to show us his mastery in deceit. According to Paris "his wooing of Anne is aimed not so much at Anne herself as at Edward, a man with whom he has a particularly strong sense of rivalry"[234]. This theory seems solid, considering how Richard describes Edward in his final soliloquy: "A sweeter and a lovelier gentlemen, / framed in the prodigality of Nature, / young, valiant, wise and, no doubt, right royal" (1.2.245-247). It is possible to notice a feeling of envy, a sense of inferiority in Richard's words. He might have satisfied this feeling by killing Edward at Tewkesbury and then winning his widow.

Richard can turn himself "from aggressor to victim"[235] and doing so, he switches roles, transfiguring Anne into the villain; "Richard leads her from emotion to emotion, takes away her role as grieving daughter and 'wife' and assigns her a role as cruel mistress; he fascinates her, plays with her verbally and histrionically"[236]. He

[233] Ivi, p. 41.
[234] Ivi, p. 40.
[235] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 43.
[236] Watson, Donald G., *Shakespeare's Early History Plays: Politics at Play on the Elizabethan Stage*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 104.

proposes to her and she answers him by spitting at him, a violent act that has to be considered as a transgression of social decorum. "When Anne assumes a more decorous pride over him […] Richard can install her as the Petrarchan cruel lady, making literal the Petrarchan conceit that the cruel object of devotion 'kills' her suitor by her disdain"[237]. Richard flatters Anne using sonneteers' clichés, he "plies her with the Petrarchan lover's rhetoric of killing eyes and cruel beauty"[238]: "Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine" (1.2.152) and "I would they [Anne's eyes] were, that I might die at once; / for now they kill me with a living death" (1.2.154-155). Immediately after she drops the sword, she capitulates to Richard's wooing and accepts the ring he offers her, in a parody of marriage service.

Anne commits the mistake of assuming that she can understand Richard, that she can change his heart: "I would I knew thy heart" (1.2.195), "With all my heart, and much it joys me too / to see you are become so penitent" (1.2.222-223) and "she finds, although I cannot, / myself to be a marvellous proper man" (1.2.256-257). Richard has created the illusion of a possible complicity with Anne[239]. This is the same mistake committed by Buckingham and by Hastings. Both of them die because of Richard, and Anne will suffer the same fate.

Anne has the chance to fulfil her choric function, lamenting with the other women only in one scene in 4.1. With Elizabeth and Duchess Cecily, she is going to the Tower to visit the princes, but they are stopped by Brakenbury, who reports that they can not go any further because of an order of the "King". He immediately corrects his words: "I mean the Lord Protector" (4.1.18), but this "clumsy self-correction makes it clear that Brakenbury's slip is designed to be noticed"[240]. When Stanley arrives on scene and refers to Anne as one of the "two fair queens" (4.1.30) and then he asks her to follow him to Westminster "to be crowned Richard's royal queen" (4.1.32) she reacts badly, she does not want to be a queen:

> O, would to God that the inclusive verge
> Of golden metal that must round my brow
> Were red-hot steel to sear me to the brains.
> Anointed let me be with deadly venom,

[237] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 43.
[238] Watson, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays*, p. 104
[239] Leggatt, Alexander, *Shakespeare's Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays*, New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 34.
[240] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 310.

And die ere men can say 'God save the Queen'. (4.1.58-62)

The other women feel pity for her. Anne's new status create a divergence with the other women. They all can sense that Anne will not live long as Queen. While Anne feels ashamed about her weakness, about how her "woman's heart / grossly grew captive to his honey words" (4.1.78-79). She believed that Richard could be a better man and she surrendered to him. She also recalls the curse she cast upon him, and indirectly upon herself:

This was my wish: 'Be thou', quoth I, 'accursed
For making me, so young, so old a widow;
And when thou wed'st, let sorrow haunt thy bed;
And be thy wife, if any be so mad,
More miserable by the life of thee
Than thou hast made me by my dear lord's death.' (4.1.71-76)

It is clear that Anne's life as Richard's wife is miserable. In fact, a few lines below, she adds that "For never yet one hour in his bed / did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep, / but with his timorous dreams was still awaked" (4.1.82-84). In More's version of the story, Richard starts to have nightmares after the murder of the princes, but Shakespeare seems to suggest here that sleepless nights are typical of him. Anne's last thought is a premonition of her fate, she has understood that he "will, no doubt, shortly be rid of me", (4.1.86). Richard himself informs the audience that Anne is dead, in one of his soliloquies. He devotes only one line to her: "and Anne my wife hath bid this world good night" (4.3.39). Shakespeare implies that Richard has instructed someone to kill her, probably with poison (as More's suggests in his account). The ghost of Anne appears in the last act, in the dreadful, ghostly procession of all Richard's victims, confirming his involvement in her death. She comes to torment Richard's sleep and to curse him "Despair and die" (5.3.163), echoing the hatred she shows the first time she is on stage.

2.2.2.2. Richard & Margaret

The character of Margaret has the role of Richard's opponent. With her curses, she gives Richard a hard time. She overcomes her disdain towards the other women, towards Elizabeth – who stole her title – to join their voices against him. Margaret and

Richard are both masters of language, with their words that influence and deceit all the other characters in scene. They face in a words duel and it is almost impossible to declare the winner. She also impersonates the role of the nemesis: a mythical-symbolical figure, who vouches for the cycle of crime and punishment[241], carried over from *Henry VI*; this cycle will be concluded with the death of Richard at the end of the play.

From an historical point of view, Queen Margaret was imprisoned in the Tower after the defeat at the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, then she was exiled in 1476 to France; she died in 1482, the year before the accession of Richard III. Shakespeare decides to ignore the historical events to use Margaret in his play, giving her a great theatricality. *Richard III* is a very long play, so it is usually severely cut, and "Margaret's role is often the first to go. In a way, this omission seems logical"[242]. The character of Margaret is unrealistic, first of all for historical reasons: the scene where she appears is set in 1483, so Margaret was supposed to be dead; moreover "she appears from nowhere, or France, to darken the dialogue with her mutterings and curses but has no physical business with the happenings of the play"[243]. With her violent language she seems to be the only true rival of Richard: "Shakespeare makes Margaret the counterweight to the mesmerising theatricality of Richard"[244]. She comes on scene in 1.3. Almost all the characters of the play are present on scene to represent the division of the court between the Queen's party and Richard's party. Margaret lingers in the dark of the backstage where she can not be seen and she can comment aside, accusing Richard of the murder of her son and her husband, without being heard. She comes forward to proclaim herself the true Queen of England. Her attention focuses immediately on Richard: "this sorrow that I have, by right is yours, / and all the pleasures you usurp are mine" (1.3.171-172). Surprised by her presence, in a very likely act of defence, Richard remembers the curse his father laid on Margaret. But this reaction triggers Margaret's curses. She does not spare anyone. She prophesies the death of the King and the Princes, she attacks Elizabeth, who usurped her role as

[241] Mochi, *Nel Laboratorio di Shakespeare, vol. 2*, p. 308.
[242] Watson, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays*, p. 120.
[243] Smidt, Kristian, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 53.
[244] Besnault, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 117.

Queen, she predicts the death of Rivers, Dorset and Hastings, she warns Buckingham, but most of all she curses Richard.

> The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul;
> Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou liv'st,
> And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends;
> No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine,
> Unless it be while some tormenting dream
> Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils. (1.3.221-226)

"Margaret's curses are no mere displays of clairvoyance but obviously potent agents in bringing about the vents which she prophesies, and as they come to pass this is recognised in turn by the victims – all but Richard"[245]. In fact, once again, Richard shows his talent turning Margaret's curses upon herself, with a rapid verbal intervention[246].

Like Anne, Margaret attributes to Richard a beastly nature or a demonic origin calling him using epithets: "devil" (1.3.117), "murderous villain" (1.3.133), "cacodemon" (1.3.143), "gentle villain" (1.3.162), "dog" (1.3.215), "troubler of the poor world's peace" (1.3.220), "elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog" (1.3.227), "the slave of nature and the son of hell" (1.3.229), "rag of honour" (1.3.232) "detested" (1.3.232) and "poisonous bunch-backed toad" (1.3.245). She reprises some of these epithets also in 4.4: "dog" (4.4.49), "excellent grand tyrant of the earth" (4.4.51) and "foul defacer of God's handiwork" (4.4.53). Richard answers her using other awful epithets, which reveals Margaret's true nature: "foul wrinkled witch" (1.3.163) and "hateful withered hag" (1.3.214). "These accusations imply that it is Margaret rather than Richard who is the unnatural and cruel tyrant whose overthrow is anticipated in curses and prophecies. For a moment Margaret and Richard seem similar"[247]. Both of them, thanks to these series of names, belongs to the dominion of myth, more than reality. And "both characters have dominant personalities, are proud egoists, misusers of religion, who think of their murders as glorious deeds"[248], through their words they underline a "truly passionate sorrow and vengeful hatred"[249].

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[245] Smidt, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 56.
[246] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 184.
[247] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 47.
[248] Besnault, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 117.
[249] *Ibidem*.

Margaret is on stage in only another scene, then she disappears, directed to France "hoping the consequence / will prove as bitter, black and tragical" (4.4.6-7). "While most of the play's characters suffer confinement, Margaret moves unimpeded through space and time, lurking *slyly* (4.4.3), commenting and cursing, exiting when she pleases, provoking wonder at her *liberty* (1.3.304)"[250]. At the beginning of 4.4 she is alone on stage, expressing her satisfaction in watching her enemies' fall. Then Queen Elizabeth and Duchess Cecily join her, to mourn their dead. These three Queens together, bind by their grief, recall the past and find analogies in their sorrow.

> QUEEN MARGARET
> I had an Edward, till a Richard killed him;
> I had a husband, till a Richard killed him.
> Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard killed him.
> Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard killed him.
> DUCHESS
> I had a Richard too, and thou didst kill him;
> I had a Rutland too; thou holp'st to kill him.
> QUEEN MARGARET
> Thou hadst a Clarence too, and Richard killed him. (4.4.40-46)

"Lamenting women in this play are always three. As a result, they can in turn signify suffering mankind, the three Furies of Greek and Roman mythology who pursue and punish the doers of unavenged crimes, or the three Fates or *Parcae* who govern human destiny. For a Christian audience, they can also evoke the three Maries at the foot of the Cross"[251]. The great difference between Margaret and the other women is that she is consumed by hatred, "I am hungry for revenge" (4.4.61), against Richard, who "yet lives, hell's black intelligencer" (4.4.71), while all the others are dead. Her hatred, her revenge is contagious, so much that Queen Elizabeth, her antagonist, asks her to teach how to curse: "O thou, well skilled in curses, stay awhile / and teach me how to curse mine enemies" (4.4.116-117).

Margaret stays on a "plane of reality different from that of the other characters"[252]. Her speeches jump from past to future, creating a game of references and forecasts. The emergence of Margaret from a time and a space outside history has the aim to introduce the theme of nemesis. The character of Margaret is also associated

[250] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 333.
[251] Besnault, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 120.
[252] Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 43.

with mourning and cursing, which are important to keep the past alive; "she preserves the past and makes it actively meaningful during the course of the play, she in effect preserves the future"[253]. Only Margaret, "the bearer of memories, of ancient desires and hates, the keeper of accounts, the Norn […] paradoxically perhaps, since she is a Frenchwoman and the plays are about England"[254], the character out of time and space, can fulfil this task.

2.2.2.3. Richard & Elizabeth & Cecily

Elizabeth and Cecily have a proper choric function in the play, that means that they are usually together on stage to mourn or curse. Through their curses and laments, they both fight Richard and his mischief, becoming his true enemies. They are the only ones that understand Richard's nature and because of this, they can oppose him publicly. Unlike the male characters (e.g. Buckingham or Hastings) they are not deceived, which makes them a threat for Richard's credibility as villain. In the play the community of women is composed by mothers: even Anne, who will be dead by 4.3, defined herself a mother, so that when she mentions the princes she says to be "in love their mother" (4.1.23). This underlines the role of the women as chorus, who make a great unique character that opposes Richard, at least verbally

Among the women, Queen Elizabeth is the most present, even if her role is primarily passive. She is on stage in six different scenes, always to oppose Richard. She is simply mentioned for the first time in 1.1, when Richard refers to her as "my Lady Grey" (1.1.64). From this very first occasion, "Richard demeans the Queen by invoking the name of her deceased first husband, Sir John Grey"[255]. He shows immediately some hostility towards her, probably arisen from her lower social rank and because she is the leader of the Woodville faction. Hostility continues during all the play. She knows that once Edward is dead, Richard, "a man that loves not me, nor none of you" (1.3.13), will have freedom of action. In fact, when Richard comes on stage, he has an animated argument with the Queen, who seems the only one that can answer back to the accusation to have risen the social class. Elizabeth recognizes

[253] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 45.
[254] Smidt, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 71.
[255] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 138.

Richard's true nature and intent, she understands that he is trying to turn to her his guilt, "my lord, you do me shameful injury / falsely to draw me in these vile suspects" (1.3.87-88). Margaret then takes the role of verbal duellist against Richard. Moreover, it seems that, like all the women in the play, Elizabeth possesses the power to foresee the future.

Usually Elizabeth is present in choral scenes, accompanied by the members of her family or the other women. It is not a surprise to see her in 2.1, besides her dying husband, promising to reconcile with the opposing party. She comes back in the next scene, this time to join Duchess Cecily, with the news about the king's death. This scene of mourning has a ritualistic nature[256]. Cecily, with Clarence's children, laments for her son's death. She knows that she has to blame Richard, not the King, but her grandchildren do not seem to believe her. Richard, in the eyes of these "incapable and shallow innocents" (2.2.18) is himself innocent. He played the part of the grieving brother so well – "he wept, / and pitied me, and kindly kissed my cheek, / bade me rely on him as on my father, / and he would love me dearly as a child" (2.2.23-26) – that anyone believed him, but Cecily, his mother, is the only one that can know his true nature. She affirms: "He is my son, ay, and therein my shame, / yet from my dugs he drew not his deceit" (2.2.29-30). She seems really afflicted at the news of Edward's death, since now "I, for comfort, have but one false glass / that grieves me when I see my shame on him" (2.2.53-54). And when Richard joins the stage, asking for her blessing – hypocritically – she can not but give it. Cecily's blessing "God bless thee and put meekness in thy breast, / love, charity, obedience and true duty" (2.2.107-108) is actually a self-deceit.

In the same scene, Dorset – Elizabeth's son – and Rivers try to comfort her and they urge her to crown her son Edward. In a complete opposite behaviour, also Richard comes to comfort her, but this is only one of tricks. From this moment on, Elizabeth and Cecily will always be on scene together, as in 2.4, immediately after the arrest of Rivers, Grey and Vaughn, followers of the Queen's party. Elizabeth's reaction at the news is violent, proving she is aware of Richard's true purpose:

> Ay me! I see the ruin of my house:
> The tiger now hath seized the gentle hind;

[256] Mochi, *Nel Laboratorio di Shakespeare, vol. 2*, p. 314.

> Insulting tyranny begins to jut
> Upon the innocent and aweless throne.
> Welcome destruction, blood and massacre.
> I see, as in a map, the end of all. (2.4.50-55)

This scene is also the occasion to reveal some particulars about Richard's childhood, reported with innocence by the young York. Shakespeare recalls the rumours about Richard's birth, which have some legendary traits: "they say my uncle grew so fast / that he could gnaw a crust at two hours old." (2.4.27-28).

The great choric function is developed in scene 4.4, which opens with the mourning of the three Queens – Margaret, Elizabeth and Cecily – for the two princes. The two former Queens of England, who previously have shown open hostility, now are united in their grief and their hatred for Richard. Elizabeth starts to use the same epithets, already used by Margaret and Anne, to define Richard: "bottled spider" (4.4.81) and "foul bunch-backed toad" (4.4.81); she even asks Margaret to teach her how to curse, even if it will be Cecily the one who will openly curse Richard. This makes Cecily Elizabeth's true ally. These two noble women, together, succeed in scaring Richard. They have lost everything, husbands and children, social position, so they are enabled to speak the truth unconditionally; they can openly accuse Richard for all his crimes, "all the slaughters" (4.4.139) – the princes, Clarence, his son, Rivers, Vaughn, Grey, Hastings. Richard's authority is threatened by the women at the point that he has to order to cover their insults and accusations with drums and trumpets: "let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women" (4.4.150).

The credibility of Richard is challenge by Elizabeth in scene 4.4, which is a mirror of the other important wooing scene of the play (1.2). Anne is dead, probably at Richard's hand, and the new king needs to remarry soon; his choice lays on his niece Elizabeth, absent from scene. Apparently, Richard was interest in such a union to avoid Richmond's attempt to legitimate his right on the crown. To save her daughter from Richard, Elizabeth is ready to "throw over her the veil of infamy" (4.4.209), to affirm that she is not Edward's child. The character of Elizabeth in this scene proves to be Richard's true enemy. When Richard declares "with my soul I love thy daughter / and do intend to make her queen of England" (4.4.263-264), with rhetorical ability Elizabeth turns the argument against him, recalling all his crimes, particularly the slaughter of the princes, and suggesting him to write his niece a letter of confessions,

if he truly loves her. She succeeds in what the other characters had failed, in what Anne has failed. In 1.2, when Anne accuses him of the death of her husband and father-in-law, Richard revisits his verbal strategy: "he offers excuse of doing everything for love, and then rapidly returns to wooing"[257]. With Elizabeth he seems to have lost his talent, and his naïve answer is "this is not the way / to win your daughter" (4.4.283-284). He tries to rehash the excuse of "love" ("say that I did all this for love of her", 4.4.288), yet Elizabeth is not Anne: she has the advantage to have seen Richard's plot developing and finding fulfilment, she has known the cruel tyrant, she guesses that her daughter might suffer from the same fate of Anne. The reasons and the excuses so elegantly argued in 1.2 with Anne have lost their strength and appeal: they do not work anymore, and "as his seduction of Anne is the first demonstration of his power, this is his first really striking failure"[258]. Richard's last attempt is to try to rely upon his intention to repent: "If I did take the kingdom from your sons, / to make amends, I'll give it to your daughter" (4.4.294-295). It is a void attempt. It seems that Richard has lost his shine, after he became king. He is won by Elizabeth on his own battlefield. Finally, she seems to surrender to his wooing, but it is only a deceit; she is actually repaying Richard in his own coin. In fact, she will bestow her daughter on Richmond, as reported in the following scene. At least, even if Elizabeth tries more than once to make Richard confess the murder of the princes, he never gives in to her insistent accusations. From their exchange, it becomes clear that Richard's chief antagonist is Elizabeth[259], who does not give him the chance to fool her. At the contrary, she gives him a hard time: "We often see Elizabeth plaintive and in tears, and well she may complain, but she does stand up to Richard both at first and at the end, and is the last person to succumb to his force or persuasion"[260]. She represents the success of all the other women against Richard's vexations.

To come back to Cecily, when she is on scene, she often refers to Richard's birth, his monstrous pregnancy and his wretched childhood. For example she says: "he was the wretched'st thing when he was young" (2.4.18), defining him a thing, not even a person; she curses her womb, which gave birth to Richard and for this reason it is

[257] Ivi, p. 356.
[258] Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 48.
[259] Smidt, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 64.
[260] *Ibidem*.

"the bed of death" (4.1.53). She does not scruple to use these terms in front of Richard, to repeat once again that he is "my most grievous curse" (4.4.188), or that her womb is "accursed" (4.4.138), or that "I have stayed for thee, / God knows, in torment and agony" (4.4.163-164). She does not use these words when she talks about Clarence, who was a traitor too. Her main function in the play is to reject Richard[261]. In few lines she spits all her venom against this "thing", that is so difficult to call son:

> Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
> A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
> Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy.
> Thy school days frightful, desperate, wild and furious;
> Thy prime of manhood daring, bold and venturous;
> Thy age confirmed proud, subtle, sly and bloody,
> More mild, but yet more harmful, kind in hatred.
> What comfortable hour canst thou name
> That ever graced me with thy company? (4.4.167-175)

According to Paris is psychological analysis of the character of Richard, "one of the chief sources of his negative feelings about himself is his mother"[262]. Cecily is not simply horrified by her son's crimes, committed during the play, but she resents and hates Richard from the beginning, as she says. To her, he is a "source of shame and disappointment"[263]. It is not a surprise, then, to understand Richard's hostility towards her. He also asks Buckingham to spread the story that Cecily conceived Edward while his father was abroad. Maybe, then, Cecily is partly guilty to have participated in the creation of the villain.

2.2.3. Richard & Richard

It is already possible to make the portrait of Richard through the analysis of the characters that interact with him in the play. In order to understand his complex psychology we need to consider his soliloquies, which represent the moment when Richard, alone on stage, feels really free to express his personality. The audience and the other characters discover that Richard is "a man of iron will and unscrupulous performance coupled with exceptional gifts of persuasion and dissimulation. What he

[261] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 63.
[262] Paris, *Character as a Subversive Force in Shakespeare*, p. 33.
[263] *Ibidem*.

resolves to do he does"[264]. This is clear since his first soliloquy, at the beginning of the play. First, we must consider that in Shakespeare "Richard is the only character to open a play with a soliloquy"[265], which is a revealing one. In the opening lines Richard describes the apparent stability of the kingdom.

> Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer by this son of York,
> And all the clouds that loured upon our house
> In the deep bosom of the ocean buried. (1.1.1-4)

It is the time of pleasure, the time of blitheness. Finally, England is at peace (even if there is actually division at court), men can turn their attention to pleasure and activities from which Richard is excluded. In this time of peace he sees the opportunity to scheme undisturbed and without raising any suspicion: "and therefore, since I cannot prove a lover / to entertain these fair well-spoken days, / I am determined to prove a villain" (1.1.28-30). He is deliberately choosing this role, which means he will enact it for all the play. The audience can not and do not have to expect something different, since he also defines himself "subtle, false and treacherous" (1.1.37). "Proving himself a villain shall be his major joy in life, he announces in his opening speech, a soliloquy from which the ambition for the throne is totally absent"[266]: in fact he declares simply that "plots have I laid, inductions dangerous […] / to set my brother Clarence and the King / in deadly hate, the one against the other" (1.1.31-34). At the beginning of the play what Richard wants is to eliminate his brother Clarence and to marry Anne. It is true that he affirms that he has "another secret close intent" (1.1.158), but he never reveals which this intent is the crown. According to history, we might think that he refers to his plans to usurp the throne.

Before pronouncing his evil purpose, Richard offers us a disillusioned portrait of himself:

> But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
> Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
> I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty
> To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
> I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,

[264] Smidt, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 55.
[265] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 133.
[266] Watson, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays*, p. 122.

> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them –
> Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
> Have no delight to pass away the time,
> Unless to see my shadow in the sun
> And descant on my own deformity. (1.1.14-26)

With these words, Richard proclaims his deformity, a sign of unnaturalness. The physical deformity – as already suggested – is associated with a moral one, in the Renaissance time, since man was conceived as a microcosm of the divine system.

> The figure of Richard, the deformed monster, […] did not spring unheralded on the stage of *Richard III*, a fact of which the spectators of previous histories – *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI* – would have been well aware. At the performance of the play they would easily recognise the demonic role that the tyrant had been given both by history and drama. Partly shaped by historiography and dramatic construction, predetermined by the weight of hostile Tudor history[267].

Richard shows to be obsessed with his physical deformity. It is the first thing he wants to share with the audience, even before his plots and schemes. His deformity "fills him with self-loathing, makes him feel unlovable, and gives him a sense of being excluded from the human community"[268]. He has been rejected, first by his mother, because of his appearance: "he has been given the message that he is an anomaly, a monstrosity from whom normal people shrink with horror"[269]. His deformity is the reason of his loneliness. Quite often Richard is on stage alone, proclaiming his soliloquies; his isolation on scene can be interpreted as a symptom of his loneliness, a consequence of rejection. He decides to use his time alone to try to build a relationship with the audience through soliloquies.

According to Paris' psychological analysis of the character, the rejection causes the emergence of self-hated, and a corresponding rage that leads him to seek revenge and self-proclaiming. Since he can not fight this vision that the others have about him, he decides to embrace it; "since people regard him as a monster and expect him to be evil, he has little hope of gaining approval and sees no point in trying"[270]. This attitude of bitter resentment, always according to Paris, is led by a need of love and belonging

[267] Besnault, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 106-107.
[268] Paris, *Character as a Subversive Force in Shakespeare*, p. 33.
[269] *Ibidem*.
[270] Ivi, p. 34.

that has been frustrated. These negative feelings "led him to develop the compensatory strategies that he talks about in his soliloquies […] These strategies are designed to restore his pride, to help him forget his loveless state, and to give some sense of purpose to his life"[271].

According to this point of view, the evil nature of Richard is a consequence, not a cause; he does not seem to be a motiveless villain. This point of view offers an accurate analysis of Richard's psychology and motives and interesting considerations. What he is looking for is compensation, which can not come from fate or nature, that cheated him and turned their back to him, so he can rely only on himself and his talents. Richard has – or at least he believes to have – total control on his destiny. Maybe he developed his talents in deception because he realised it was the only way to reach a sort of compensation. At the end of 1.1, Richard repeats his intents, but does not provide a real motivation for them:

> And if I fail not in my deep intent,
> Clarence hath not another day to live;
> Which done, God take King Edward to His mercy,
> And leave the world for me to bustle in.
> For then, I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.
> What though I killed her husband and her father?
> The readiest way to make the wench amends
> Is to become her husband and her father;
> The which will I, not all so much for love
> As for another secret close intent
> By marrying her which I must reach unto.
> But yet a run before my horse to market:
> Clarence still breathes; Edward still lives and reigns.
> When they are gone, then must I count my gains. (1.1.149-162)

The fact that Richard feels that he is not lovable (history proved him right; he does not marry Anne for love), makes him felt not only rejected by people, but also excluded from the human community, and so not subjected to its laws. He feels to belong to another species, to be unique of his kind, which he uses as a self-permission to follow his desires and ambitions: "He has no sense of kinship even with his brothers and is prepared, in the pursuit of his own interests, to commit fratricide"[272].

During all the play – as already said – Richard is called with the most different and defamatory epithets. Just to report some of them: devil, cacodemon, hell-hound,

[271] Ivi, p. 32.
[272] Ivi, p. 36.

hell's minister, son of hell, hell's factor, hell's black intelligencer, God's enemy, dog, spider, abortive, rooting hog, wolf, toad, villain-slave, lump of foul deformity. These epithets, connected with his deformed body, create the image of Richard as a sort of Antichrist: "This polarized lexicon has antecedents in treatments of Satan in the Bible or medieval drama"[273]. The hog, to which the boar is often associated, is a beast that stands for impurity and lechery, and it is also a reference to the white boar that was the heraldic symbol of Richard. On the other side,

> "the toad and the spider images evoke humidity and darkness, darkness being quite central to the play if one thinks of the prevalence of night scenes and, above all, of the dark deeds perpetrated in cells, prisons, and the Tower. […] Shakespeare created a monstrous king whose lethal powers – almost universally recognisable – are embodied in teeth and venom, a compact of darkness and death"[274].

Richard's mastery in deceit is represented at its apex in 3.7, when with his partner Buckingham stages the show that will put him on the throne of England. He refuses the crown a first time with a speech that is supposed to underline his humility and good will: "yet so much is my poverty of spirit, / so mighty and so many my defects, / that I would rather hide me from my greatness" (3.7.158-160), "I am unfit for the state of majesty" (3.7.204). He is extremely bold in his pretence, so that he enters the scene accompanied with two bishops and a prayer book in his hands. A sign of a refined wit, which knows how to build a convincing pious character. He accepts reluctantly the crown with the same false modesty he has shown all the time: "since you will buckle fortune on my back, / to bear her burden, whe'er I will or no, / I must have patience to endure the load" (3.7.227-229). During all the play Richard's "primary method of manipulating others is to dissemble, and the chief object of his dissimulation is to appear self-effacing himself and to play upon the self-effacing tendencies of others"[275]. He makes no distinctions: he tries to fool everyone, enemies and allies, but only Cecily – his mother – and Margaret – the character outside history – and Elizabeth – the last woman standing – (but only at the end of the play) do not fall into his traps. The character Richard presents in this scene is humble, unambitious, religious, that prefers to pray rather than exercise power, but the true Richard is

[273] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 31.
[274] Besnault, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 112.
[275] Paris, *Character as a Subversive Force in Shakespeare*, p. 43.

completely the opposite; a man with great ambitions, a perjurer, with no scruples or remorse. He wants the audience to believe that he does not even have a conscience. But this is a self-deceit that he is playing.

It is also true that when he finally reaches the throne, "we do not see Richard experiencing any bliss or joy when he becomes king"[276]. He fears too much to lose what he attained with such great effort. Paris suggests that the reasons for this fears come, perhaps, from a deep inner belief in the traditional values and in the retribution that is supposed to follow their violation. Things start to go badly when he ascends the throne, "just when we might expect the spotlight to be more firmly on Richard than ever, it starts to wonder"[277]. His first words as king are: "Stand all apart" (4.2.1), and is first action is to ascertain Buckingham's loyalty. He seems to look for the loneliness of his soliloquies. "Behind the theatrical point there is the political thinking. It is appropriate for an intriguer to be a solitary, but a king […] must be the centre of a whole network of social and political relationships, and Richard simply cannot function in that way. Ironically, the role he has sought to so long is the one role he cannot effectively play"[278]. He shows signs of paranoia, which leads him suddenly to arrange the murder of his nephews. He has never expressed before the intention to kill the children, but now he is under the pressure of a throne he perceives unstable. A sign of Richard's nervousness is gnawing his lips (4.2.27). This is a peculiar gesture that Virgil and More report as, respectively, habitual or feigned. Here it can be interpreted as a sign of his genuine anger, fear and uncertainty[279]. Richard is slowly losing his edge, blurred by anxiety, so much that he does not feel safe to plot openly as he has done until this moment: he whispers his orders in Tyrell's ear about the princes and he commits the amateurish mistake not to please Buckingham's request, turning him into enemy.

In the last act of the play, Richard is completely a different character. With a flash-forward Shakespeare brings us on Bosworth field, jumping two years afterword. In 5.3 we watch to a supernatural procession of ghosts – who comfort Richmond and haunt Richard in their dreams – that can be taken as the summary of Richard's crimes.

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[276] Ivi, p. 47.
[277] Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 36.
[278] *Ibidem*.
[279] Siemon, *Richard III*, p. 319.

His dreams are visited by the ghosts of Prince Edward, King Henry, Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, the two princes, Hastings, Anne and Buckingham, who curse the usurper and murderer, the great villain: "despair and die". When Richard wakes up, in the middle of the night, his reaction is really revealing:

> Have mercy, Jesu. – Soft, I did but dream.
> O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
> The lights burn blue. It now dead midnight.
> Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
> What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
> Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I.
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
> The fly! What, from myself? Great reason why?
> Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
> Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
> That I myself have done unto myself?
> O, no. Alas, I rather hate myself,
> For hateful deeds committed by myself.
> I am a villain. Yet I lie; I am not.
> Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter.
> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain.
> Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;
> Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree,
> Throng to the bar, crying all, 'Guilty, guilty!'
> I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
> And if I die, no soul will pity me.
> And wherefore should they, since that I myself
> Find in myself no pity to myself? (5.3.178-203)

From this long, delirious soliloquy emerges even a more complicated character, than the twisted man who wanted to prove himself a villain in 1.1. The rhythm of the lines is pressing: "language, finally, will not co-operate with Richard, and he begins to lose control over it. In his early scenes he is nimble with words: he can make them dance, juggle and deceive"[280], but not now. Richard can not control his anxiety and fear. He defines himself a villain, as he did at the beginning, but immediately after he takes the definition back. He lives a deep psychological crisis, first a crisis of identity: he is not fit to be a king, he is not even a proper villain. He is struggling against himself – we just have to notice how many times he uses the word "myself" – "to shake off the impression of his nightmare which now has fully invaded his consciousness"[281]. Shakespeare gives us such a real character, tormented, harassed by guilt and

[280] Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 39.
[281] Smidt, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 64.

awareness; his psychological realism is at its best. Richard can try a last attempt to convince himself that he is a villain with no need of a conscience: "Conscience is but a word that cowards use" (5.3.309). His conscience, after been repressed for all the play, now emerges with violence, accompanied with the knowledge that he is not loved, not even by himself. Actually, he despises himself. It has been all a great deceit, a great performance. He is like all the others, with a conscience that awakens at the end and that puts him in front of all his evil acts. Some hints about the dormant presence of his conscience can be found in Anne's words, when she tells that Richard could not sleep, but he decided to ignore the signals and persisted in his crimes. The truth is that because he has a conscience he can enjoy the delights of transgression of the limits of morality[282]. The night before the battle against Richmond, he may perceive the failure at Bosworth. According to Paris "he is no longer convinced of his ability to master his fate through the sheer force of his aggressiveness but is burdened by guilt and fear and is full of inner conflicts"[283]. Then, his final act, to ride into the fray, can maybe be interpreted as an act of self-punishment, as an escape from himself out of self-blame and guilt, after he has eventually understood his nature and his contradictions.

2.2.4. Richard & the Audience

Shakespeare, creating Richard, created such a charismatic and attractive character, that the audience can not but feel a mixture of fascination and horror for him and support him in his evil schemes, driven by the curiosity to see if he will succeed. Richard speaks "a total of 166 lines (i.e. about 4.5 per cent of the play's dialogue) in soliloquy or in direct address to the audience"[284]. Basically, he warns us about what is going to happen for almost all the play, eliminating, in part, surprises. From the first soliloquy Richard presents himself as a friend of the audience, saying "*Now* is the winter of *our* discontent" (1.1.1), including us in the scene, next to him, not only in front of him. He creates a connection with the audience, he takes us into his confidence, revealing what he is plotting and how is going to act, making us, in this way,

[282] Watson, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays*, p. 122.
[283] Paris, *Character as a Subversive Force in Shakespeare*, p. 49.
[284] Smidt, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 53.

accomplices of him. Particularly in the first scenes of the play, he always takes some time to comment and organise the action with the audience, and for this reason we live the experience to be favoured by him (who considers all the others characters dulls or instruments for his purpose), and we enjoy the security of standing beyond the stage-tyrant's reach[285]. We are allowed to be included in his jokes, to hear his thoughts as no one else on stage, not even his partner Buckingham. He decides never to lie to us. Richard seems to belong both to the stage and to the outside world, because of his special relationship with the audience, who can not be made just by detached spectators. He shares with us his great talent with the language: for example, making self-derision of his deformity is a powerful weapon in the creation of a complicity with us. We feel we can empathise with him. According to Smidt, he is a character on the Wheel of Fortune, who "reaches the top and slows down at his coronation and the murder of the princes"[286].

Richard is a great actor, who exhibits "considerable histrionic talent"[287]. He possesses an incredible theatrical control: he plays different roles for the other characters, and one specific role for the audience; he is the main character, the hero, apparently the villain, and sometimes the chorus as well[288]. Perhaps, Richard can be defined as an upturned villain, because he shares with us soliloquies and jokes that turn upside down the lines he exchanges with the other characters, and we know that they are the closest expression of his true feelings and nature. There is not an actual point in trying to deceive the audience, his most trusted ally. Yet as the soliloquies and the asides continue, they become less elegant and more disorganized. Richard slowly loses control of the stage, because his conscience is starting to tire him, it furs his tongue. This provokes a detachment with the audience, to whom Richard asks for some pity at the end of the play. At last, he is a character on stage, like the others. He might have begun the play playing a superior character, with great awareness of his role, but it was part of the great pretence he has enacted all the time. So, the feeling of complicity with the audience fades, because "we realize that the sort of bond Richard had with us, founded as it was on an agreement to mock love and treat humanity with

[285] Jowett, *Richard III*, p. 40.
[286] Smidt, *Unconformities in Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 61.
[287] Watson, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays*, p. 101.
[288] Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 32.

contempt, could never have lasted"[289]. We also must not forget that when the play starts, the audience already knows the ending of the events: Richard defeated at Bosworth by Richmond, who becomes King. Knowing the historical inevitability, the audience can enjoy Richard's scheming, his villainy, his humour, his wit and cleverness in evil[290].

[289] Ivi, p. 40.
[290] Watson, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays*, p. 106.

3. RICHARD III: THE CONTEMPORARY RETELLING

The character of Richard III has proved fascinating since the Tudor period. More and Shakespeare crafted the myth, which survived the centuries. The character of Richard has been depicted many times in literature, often in the role of the villain; for example, the young Richard of Gloucester (known as Richard Crookbacked) is a significant secondary character in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Black Arrow: A Tale of the Two Roses* (1888). In the twentieth century, with the birth of the *Richard III Society* and the first steps in the recovering of the reputation of the character, positive portraits, or at least critical portraits, started to appear in literature. This interest in Richard was reflected in the expedition that brought to the recent archaeological discoveries in Leicester. Maybe it is too soon to produce a new literal portrait of Richard, closer to the historical reality revealed by the study of the bones and the other historical proofs collected in the recent years. Yet, following the aim of the *Society* to restore the original character, there were authors who already tried to give a new interpretation of Richard by reporting new and original points of view. We could say that nowadays two different portraits of Richard live: the Shakespearean hunchbacked villain and the hero who lived a tragic fate, misrepresented by history.

3.1. THE HISTORICAL NOVEL AND POSTMODERNISM

The literal genre that seems more suitable to tell about Richard is that of the historical novel, which is very successful and popular. This literal genre offers great hybridity and flexibility:[291] in fact, the historical writing can be integrated with elements taken from romance, detective, thriller, counterfactual, horror, literary, gothic, postmodern, epic, fantasy, mystery, western and children's books. Many times we learn about some historical events thanks to a novel that is set in that historical period; "we might suggest that the cultural forms of history and memory such as film, television or literature are extremely influential in creating and sustaining a particular type of historical imaginary"[292]. What the historical novel does is to retell filling the gaps of historical events; "the historical novelist similarly explores the dissonance and

[291] De Groot, Jerome, *The Historical Novel*, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 2.
[292] Ivi, p. 49.

displacement between then and now, making the past recognisable but simultaneously authentically unfamiliar"[293]. Then, the purpose of the historical fiction can be considered to be as an intervention in the historical thought, as reported by Pat Baker in an interview: "historical fiction is not history, but it is often better than history […] may easily teach more and carry a deeper impression than whole chapters of description and analysis […] will probably succeed in making a period live in the imagination when textbooks merely give us dry bones"[294]. According to this perspective, the historical novel could be used in school to introduce the different historical periods to the students, giving it an educational and pedagogical function.

Authors of historical novels are always concerned with the concepts of realism, development of the characters and authenticity, since the readers always "bring a set of reading skills and premeditated ideas to the experience"[295]. Often the historical novel has been accused of misinforming or misleading the readers because of its nature of changing the historical facts for narrative purposes. To defend themselves from this accusation, the authors commonly write an author's note at the end or the beginning of the novel, where they explain their engagement with the period in question and their narrative choices, when the events diverge from history. The aim of the notes is to encourage the audience to open their mind to new interpretations of history. There is a sort of collaboration, a complicity between the author and the readers, particularly when they have some historical knowledge, which prevent the shock and the surprise in the narration of fixed moments of history, and they show themselves to be open to the multiplicity of history and the subjectivity of some versions of it[296]. The author's note has a metafictional aim: it "demonstrates that as a genre the historical novel provokes a certain anxiety and disquiet on the part of the writer"[297]. To ease this anxiety and disquiet, in the historical novel footnotes, additions, acknowledgements, bibliographies, author information and maps are usually included. In fact, from this additional material, the reader has the chance to gain a huge amount of information about the historical period and the text itself; they can understand some narrative choices.

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[293] Ivi, p. 3.
[294] Baker, Pat, Interview in "The making of *Regeneration*", DVD extra, Artificial Eye, 2000.
[295] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 4.
[296] Ivi, p. 8.
[297] Ivi, p. 9.

According to Georg Lukács – probably the most influential and thoughtful critic of the historical novel – "what matters therefore in the historical novel is not the retelling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in these events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality"[298]. According to Lukács, "the historical novel has a humanist impulse to teach and educate, and this pedagogical element is crucial"[299]. The historical novel is the perfect instrument to empathise with the protagonists, the characters of history – for example, a character like Richard, who had been ill-treated by the Tudor propaganda.

Recently women have become the protagonists of the historical novel, both as writers and readers. During the twentieth century, "the historical novel increasingly becomes a form written and read by women, suggesting that the decline in interest is due to a patriarchal literary history rather than shift in practice and quality"[300]. In the analysis of the historical novel, it must be taken into consideration that "men tend to read novels about one fictional character in a range of situations, where women tend to concentrate on one historical period or figure"[301]. Women usually write for a female audience, and particularly in the form of the historical romance: "romance is a sub-genre in which sexual or romantic desire figures high, and has often been characterised as empty and conservative, in so far as it seems to sustain the dominant models of social ordering: family, heteronormative relationships and strictly defined gender roles"[302]. This association with the romance is the reason why women's historical writings have been generally ignored or criticised: "massively successful, ideologically conservative, these types of global, mass-market novels have rarely been considered by critics"[303]. Some scholars disagree with this vision; some of them suggest that these novels might try to challenge or question the dominant cultural orderings. For example, Diane Wallace affirms that "by foregrounding historical change, women's historical novels offer the reader a retrospective view of how things

[298] Lukács, Georg, *The Historical Novel*, translated by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, London: Merlin, 1962, p. 42.
[299] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 29.
[300] Ivi, p. 46.
[301] Ivi, p. 51.
[302] Ivi, p. 52.
[303] Ivi, p. 54.

were (particularly in relation to the restrictions imposed upon women) and thus point the way to possible change in the future"[304]. Wallace proposed the gothic novel as the origin of the women's historical novel. The gothic novel, with its hybrid potentiality, might have allowed a greater freedom and licence to female writers, who have used the historical novel as a form of expression of different, multiple and complex identities[305].

Under the influence of postmodernism, the historical novel has lived a renewal in style and form, which made it more popular and appreciated, even by the critique. It is difficult to give a definition of postmodernism; it can be defined as a set of ideas and practises that oppose and reject hierarchy, categorisation and stability; "a mood arising out of a sense of the collapse of all those foundations of modern thought which seemed to guarantee a reasonably stable sense of Truth, Knowledge, Self and Value"[306]. Postmodernism challenges the idea of order, suggesting that the world is unstable and that we do not have the instruments to know it, it is "a crisis of legitimation as well as representation"[307]. We try to give order and meaning to history, to the past, yet they are unknowable and our knowledge will always remain partial: "the genuine nature of history can be understood only when it is viewed not solely and simply as an objectivised empiricist enterprise, but as the creation and eventual imposition by historians of a particular narrative form on the past"[308]. According to this point of view, historical fiction presents a paradox: authors try to represent realistically something that can never be known exactly; "both novelist and historian are using trope, metaphor, prose, narrative style to interpret and render a version of something which is innately other and unknown"[309].

With postmodernism, authors stray from traditional methods: for example they do not follow strictly chronology and abolish the omniscient narrator. Or they draw attention to the artefactual status of the fiction, in order to question about which

[304] Wallace, Diane, *The Women's Historical Novel*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 154.
[305] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 67.
[306] Hutcheon, Linda, *The Poetics of Postmodernism*, London and New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 354.
[307] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 110.
[308] Munslow, Alun, *Deconstructing History*, London: Rutledge, 1997, p. 2.
[309] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 113.

relation exists between fiction and reality[310]. This idea began in the mid-1960s and gave birth to the metafictional writing, which is quite popular in the historical novel.

According to Linda Hutcheon, the historical fiction is the clearest artistic expression of postmodernism, which uses the past not strictly with historical novels, but it influences the meditation upon history through fiction[311]. It is important to notice that, despite postmodernism, "many historical novels have a conservative agenda"[312].

Concerning the character of Richard III, almost all the production of historical novels about him has to be considered traditional. In my study, I report and analyse conservative historical novels, which are not influenced by postmodernism.

3.2. HISTORICAL NOVELS ABOUT RICHARD III AND OTHER MEDIAS

Josephine Tey made a first attempt to propose a new portrait of Richard in her novel *The Daughter of Time* in 1951[313]: using the model of the detective story, she reports the theory according to Richard was not responsible for the murder of the Princes in the Tower. Alan Grant, a Scotland Yard Inspector, while in hospital with a broken leg, decides to devote his time to investigating the case of the Princes in the Tower, who were killed by Richard according to the Tudor chronicles. Grant's interest in Richard starts after he sees a portrait of the last Plantagenet King[314]: he does not seem a villain, rather a kind and gentle man. Using his detective skills, the Inspector concludes that the culprit was Henry VII and that Richard was innocent; the role of murderer was given him by the Tudor propaganda, which created the myth of the monstrous villain. The book proposes a remark about how history is reported and constructed: the victors write history; in this specific case the Tudors, who made their version prevailing. The title itself is taken from the old proverb "Truth is the daughter

[310] Waugh, Patricia, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*, London: Routledge, 1984, p. 7.
[311] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 120.
[312] Ivi, p. 121.
[313] Josephine Tey website, "Trial Richard III", available at http://www.josephinetey.net/, last visited 10th May 2016.
[314] The Portrait used by Tey is the one reported in Plate 3.

of time", to underline the idea about the injustice of history towards Richard. Tey's novel sparked interest in the process of redemption of Richard[315].

Among the Ricardian novels there is an historical novel that is considered important in that it gives a sympathetic portrait of Richard as a loyal brother, a devoted husband and father, a trusting friend and a fair ruler: *The Sunne in Splendour* written by Sharon Penman in 1982[316]. I will treat this novel as a study case, representative of the contemporary retelling of Richard below. Penman was one of the first who offered a modern interpretation of Richard, in line with the character presented by the *Society*. At Penman's side, when we think about modern interpretations of history, there are the historical novels by Philippa Gregory, who wrote a series of novels set in the period of the civil war, known as *The Cousins' War*, where the protagonists are the women of the Plantagenet Court[317]. I will treat Gregory's novel as a case of study, too. Another recent example of historical novel that has Richard as main character is *The Seventh Son* by Reay Tannahill (2001), which offers a sympathetic but unromanticised treatment of the character[318].

Outside the field of the historical novel, the character of Richard has attracted writers because of his villainy. For this reason, he has been reshaped to fit the role of monster in fantasy and alternate novels. This is the example of Kim Newman, who uses Richard as villain in a novella (*Vampire Romance*) of his series *Anno Dracula*[319]. According to Newman's interpretation, Richard is an elder vampire, turned immediately after the defeat at Bosworth. In this version he speaks with a thick Yorkshire accent and he tells that he personally killed his nephews in the Tower.

Richard's, and more generally Shakespeare's charm reached also Japan, where the manga artist Aya Kanno has been drawing a manga series since 2013: *Requiem of the Rose King* that follows Richard's point of view during the period of the Civil

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[315] Polsky, Sara, "The Detective Novel that Convinced a Generation Richard III Was't Evil", The New Yorker, 24th March 2015, available at http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-detective-novel-that-convinced-a-generation-richard-iii-wasnt-evil, last visited 10th May 2016.
[316] Sharon Penman website, "The Sunne in Splendour: A Novel of Richard III", available at http://www.sharonkaypenman.com/book_page.asp?ISBN=003061368X, last visited 10th May 2016.
[317] Philippa Gregory website available at http://www.philippagregory.com/books, last visited 10th May 2016.
[318] Reay Tannahill website, "The Seventh Son", available at https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/767460.The_Seventh_Son, last visited 10th May 2016.
[319] Kim Newman, "Anno Dracula series", available at https://johnnyalucard.com/fiction/by-kim-newman/anno-dracula-series/, last visted 10th May 2016.

War[320]. The story is loosely based on Shakespeare's *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. The peculiarity of Kanno's Richard is that he is portrayed as being intersex instead of hunchbacked.

Richard, and more generally the events of the Wars of the Roses, have inspired some other writers. The most famous example is that of the fantasy series of novels by George R.R. Martin *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Martin draws on historical sources to create his fantasy world[321]. Among the characters, Stannis seems to have similar traits to Richard: he is the third brother, who actually has a dynastic claim on the throne, since his two nephews are illegitimate. Stannis' character presents traits taken both from the Shakespearean villain and from the Ricardian misunderstood hero.

On screen, the character of Richard has been often represented, usually in the adaptations of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Perhaps the best-known is the 1955 version, produced and directed by Sir Laurence Olivier, who played the leading role. Another very famous version is that interpreted by Sir Ian McKellen in 1995. This adaptation is set in a fictional fascist England in the 1930s. In 2016, to celebrate the 400 years of the death of Shakespeare, BBC produced the second part of the series *The Hollow Crown*, which proposes the history plays; Benedict Cumberbatch plays Richard in *Henry VI part* 2 and *part* 3 and in *Richard III*. In 1996 Al Pacino directed the documentary *Looking for Richard*, which contained a selection of passages from the Shakespearean play and which investigated the relevance of the character in the popular culture. Away from the Shakespearean tradition there is the adaptation of Gregory's series of novels *The White Queen* (2013), from a joint production between Starz and BBC. *The White Queen* is based on the first three novels (*The White Queen*, *The Red Queen* and *The Kingmaker's Daughter*) and it follows the events of the Wars of the Roses from 1464 to the battle of Bosworth in 1485. The character of Richard is played by Aneurin Barnard. One particular must be noted: when Richard died he was 32, but he has usually been depicted by older actors – Olivier was 47, McKellen 56, as Pacino, and Cumberbatch 38. Only Barnard was close to the real age of Richard when he filmed, being then 26. Perhaps this preference for older and more experienced

[320] Aya Kanno, "Requiem of the Rose King", available at https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/manga.php?id=16271, last visited 10th May 2016.
[321] Walter, Damien G., "George R.R. Martin's fantasy is not far from reality", The Guardian, 26th July 2011, available at http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jul/26/george-r-r-martin-fantasy-reality, last visited 10th May 2016.

actors to play the role of the last Plantagenet King is due to the fact that Richard is considered to possess a very complicated psychology while young actors are regarded not mature enough. Barnard, indeed, did not play the Shakespearean role, but Gregory's Richard, who does not present the same sophisticated psychological traits.

3.3. TWO CASE STUDIES: SHARON PENMAN'S *THE SUNNE IN SPLENDOUR* AND PHILIPPA GREGORY'S *THE COUSINS' WAR*

Sharon Penman (born 13 August 1945) is an American historical novelist. Her first book *The Sunne in Splendour* is a more than one thousand pages stand-alone novel about Richard III and the most important events of the Wars of the Roses. The book was published for the first time in 1982, then, in 2013 a celebration edition for the thirty years was presented. *The Sunne in Splendour* is a traditional historical novel; the book is presented with a family tree in the endpaper, "The Houses of York, Lancaster, and Neville in England, 1459"; the "dramatis personae" before the beginning of the novel, which explains that in the year 1459, as the book opens, the main characters stood in the relation to each other as shown in the table, dividing them in the families of York, Lancaster, Neville, Tudor and Woodville. At the end of the book the author wrote an afterword and an author's note. All these elements are included to help the reader to follow better the plot and to justify some choices made by the author.

Philippa Gregory (born 9 January 1954) is a very famous and successful English historical novelist with a PhD. This information legitimises Gregory's writings, infusing them a sense of authority and authenticity. Her most famous novel is *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001), set during the kingdom of Henry VIII, where Anne Boleyn is the protagonist. She started to work on a series of novels set during the Wars of the Roses in 2009; the first book of *The Cousins' War* is *The White Queen* (2009), followed by *The Red Queen* (2010), *The Lady of the Rivers* (2011), *The Kingmaker's Daughter* (2012), *The White Princess* (2013) and *The King's Curse* (2014). Gregory always writes about women; in the case of *The Cousins' War* her protagonists are the women of the court during the Wars of the Roses – Elizabeth Woodville, Margaret Beaufort, Jacquetta of Luxemburg, Anne Neville, Elizabeth of York and Margaret Pole. Gregory's novels are quite traditional historical novels too: they strictly follow the chronological order of the events and they are enriched with maps, family trees,

author's notes, bibliographies and interviews to the author. As for Penman, all these added elements are instruments to justify the narrative choices and to help the reader among all those historical characters and events, particularly readers that come from another country and are not accustomed with the English history. In every book, at the end of the author's note, Gregory invites her readers to visit her website to find more information about the research and the writing of her novels; she also proposes seminars on her books in the UK, United States, and worldwide, and on regular webcasts.

According to her author's note, Penman stumbled onto Richard III's story when she was in college, and the more she learned about him, "the more convinced I became that he'd been the victim of a great injustice"[322]. She tried to share with her friends her indignation for the Tudors' treatment towards Richard, but nobody seemed to know anything about the last Plantagenet King. This is the reason why Penman decided to write an historical novel where Richard was the main character: "I decided I needed another outlet for my outrage, and it occurred to me that I ought to write a novel about Richard"[323]. It took her twelve years to write her book, since the manuscript was stolen from her car and she had to re-start with the composition. Today, *The Sunne in Splendour* is considered one of the most complete historical novels about the character of Richard III.

Gregory started her novel series writing about Elizabeth Woodville, whom she defined "my favourite"[324], and then she decided to narrate that historical period from other points of view: the other women, who belonged to different parties, in the royal court. In the author's note of *The White Queen*, she states that: "This new novel, the first of a series about the Plantagenets, came from my discovery of one the most interesting and thought-provoking queens of England: Elizabeth Woodville"[325]. Giving voice to women, Gregory proposes a new and original point of view about the male characters that are so acquainted to meet when we study or read about history. The character of Richard is present in *The White Queen* and *The Red Queen*, but he is quite central in *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, as Anne Neville's love interest. In *The*

[322] Penman, Sharon, *The Sunne in Splendour*, London: Macmillan, 2013, p. 1238.
[323] *Ibidem*.
[324] Gregory, Philippa, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012, p. 524.
[325] Gregory, Philippa, *The White Queen*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009, p. 531.

White Princess (set during the kingdom of Henry VII) Richard returns in flashbacks and memories of the young Elizabeth of York, who reveals that she has become his uncle's lover. About this particular, Gregory decided to follow the rumours spread during the Tudor period that wanted Richard to have seduced his niece, but she turned upside down the scandalous gossip and told about a couple truly in love. According to her, the fact that Elizabeth fell in love with King Richard her uncle is based "on a letter which was seen by an historian but is now missing"[326]. We might note here that there is no actual historical proof of an affair between the two.

3.3.1. The style of the novels: the problem of writing fiction about history

Both Penman and Gregory have in common the decision to title the chapters in their novels with the place and the date of the action. This choice concerns a research of verisimilitude with the historical facts. Both writers want to prove that their stories are close to the reality of the historical period. There is a sincere anxiety about the reliability of their historical novels: of course they are fiction, yet they are telling the story of real people who lived in a recorded past.

About the problem of writing about the past, Penman states that "history does not come down to us from the heights of Mount Sinai. It is open to question, subject to distortion, filtered through our own biases and expectations… and in Richard's case, skewed for all eternity, courtesy of a certain playwright from Stratford upon Avon"[327]. Then she adds:

> In writing my historical novels, clearly I have to rely upon my imagination to a great extent. I think of it as 'filling in the blanks.' […] medieval chroniclers could be utterly indifferent to the needs of future novelists. Sometimes it is necessary to 'invent' essential details […] But there is a great difference between 'filling in the blanks' and distorting known facts.[328]

Penman's policy about writing historical novels is to try to keep her characters true to their historical counterparts, which could become a problem with female characters, since women "too often slipped through the cracks"[329]. She does so because she

[326] Gregory, Philippa, *The Red Queen*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2011, p. 404.
[327] Penman, Sharon, "On Reshaping History", *Ricardian Fiction*, Richard III Society: American branch, 1997, p. 16.
[328] Ivi, p. 17.
[329] *Ibidem*.

considers very important not to mislead her readers, she wants to build a trustworthy relationship with her audience that is aware that there can be mistakes in her books, but never deliberate distortions: "I do my best to build a strong factual foundation for each of my novels, and rely upon my Author's Notes to keep my conscience clear"[330]. Penman is aware of her role of historical novelist, she knows that quite often people prefer to learn about history by reading a novel, instead of studying a handbook. Usually fiction possesses an emotional constituent that makes it more appealing than a textbook, it gives the chance to explore the psychology of the characters. Penman is true to history enough "so that I could still sleep at night!"[331]

Regarding *The Sunne in Splendour*, in the Author's Notes, one of the first things she states is that she tried to be as accurate as possible, and then that "in writing of people five hundred years dead, I had to exercise a certain amount of imagination. But I did not knowingly tamper with basic truths, though I occasionally had to stray from the facts"[332]. She also affirms to have taken the liberty to create only one fictional character of importance, Véronique de Crécy, Anne's French serving maid, then her confidante and Francis Lovell's lover. Véronique is a central character in the second part of the novel, where she helps Anne escaping George's custody in 1471. She is the only exception, since all other major characters actually lived (also the various abbots, sheriffs, mayors and servants named).

As proved by the long bibliographies attached to the end of her books, Gregory is very careful in her historical research before the writing process. In the author's note she often underlines that she reports facts and that her work is a re-writing. Gregory is led by her personal interest in the medieval period, especially in the social and political dynamics that involved women in the Middle Age. In fact, she defines herself first a researcher and then a writer[333]. She states that "I have drawn on the histories and based my novel on the facts where they exist. Of course, sometimes I have had to choose from rival and contradictory versions, and sometimes I have had to fill in the gaps of history with explanations or accounts of my own making"[334]. When interviewed about her interest in history and her decision to be an historical novelist, Gregory answered

[330] *Ibidem*.
[331] *Ibidem*.
[332] Penman, *The Sunne in Splendour*, p. 1235.
[333] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 531.
[334] Ivi, p.532.

that she thinks "people are interested in history during times of uncertainty, such as we are experiencing now"[335], that is why she decided to investigate and write about the civil war. She also admits that there is a tendency of romanticizing history: "these are not chivalrous times. I suspect that no times have been chivalrous times. We glamorize the past, and we romanticize it"[336], but she tries to keep her writing grounded in realism "by reading a great deal before I start writing, by looking at the record with critical eye, and by being sceptical of grandiose claims"[337].

Gregory's vision of the historical novelist is quite close to Penman's one, yet there is a substantial difference between the two writers: Penman is true to one version of history, the one she decided to tell, while, changing point of view, narrator in every novel, Gregory proposes different versions of the same story; "Part of the joy in writing this series based on rivals and enemies is turning the page upside down (as it were) and seeing a totally different picture. As an historian the known facts looked very different when I changed my viewpoint". Gregory is more open to the relativity of history than Penman, in a postmodern attitude towards the past events. This jumping from a character to another, from a version to another is with no doubt really interesting, but it can also be a little misleading for the readers. In the case of *The Cousins' War*, some characters seem to have a schizophrenic personality: among them, for example, Richard himself, described as the loyal and honourable man, a devoted husband who is discovered to be Princess Elizabeth's secret lover. In the television show version, this liaison between the two has been eliminated, because it could have aroused confusion in the audience.

The different attitude of the two novelists is translated in the choice of narrator voice in their books. Penman uses the classic omniscient third person narrator, who scans the characters' minds and reports their thoughts. The narrator knows the facts and speaks using the past tense. Sometimes the narration is interrupted by brief paragraphs that report a summary of some historical events. Instead, Gregory adopts the first person narrator: the women protagonists of her books – Elizabeth, Margaret and Anne – tell what they see, what they think and feel. This element infuses subjectivity in the narration. The account will never be complete, but this is not

[335] Gregory, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, p. 554.
[336] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 549.
[337] *Ibidem*.

Gregory's aim: she wants to give a voice to people that have been mistreated or forgotten by history. (Which is by no means completely true, since these women were members of the royal family and not common people: they played a role in the events of the past, which was partly recorded by the chronicles.) Elizabeth, Margaret and Anne speak at the present tense; they do not know what is going to happen to them, they can only imagine it, and their thoughts are influenced by their personal experience, their disposition and their emotional state. Thanks to this, the reader – mostly, readers of these books are women – tends to empathise with the narrator. To have a complete vision of the events the reader must read all the novels of the series: only in this way, can they truly understand what happened to the Princes in the Tower, for example. Since the narrators are women, and because of this, they were not allowed to participate to the political life, some events are reported as accounts described by other characters; for example, it is Richard who tells his wife Anne about Hastings' death.

At the end of *The Red Queen*, Gregory abandons the first person narrator to pass to the third person narrator. She describes the battle of Bosworth; since no woman was obviously allowed to stay on a battlefield, she must change her narrative technique. In these last chapters, Gregory jumps from Henry Tudor's viewpoint to Richard's: in Henry's eye Richard is a tyrant, while, on the other side, for Richard Tudor is a stranger that claims his throne. Gregory prefers to stand on Henry's side, since the protagonist of the novel is Margaret Beaufort, Tudor's mother, the red queen that names the book. This continuous changing of point of view has been already used by the chroniclers of the Tudor time (Polydore Vergil, Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed) and also by Shakespeare. The original introduction of Gregory is the brief intrusion of Lord Stanley's point of view, who has not taken a part, yet. The narration is enriched by military details, such as a new military technique with the pikes imported from France, which no one has ever seen in England and that will be the reason for the victory of Henry. This kind of details and the precise descriptions of the war strategy make this part of the novel more similar to a war novel than a romance, as the book is presented. What is interesting about this part is that Gregory proposes a new portrait of Richard, the exact opposite of that reported by the tradition and by Shakespeare. The night before the battle, Richard

> goes to his tent to sleep. He doesn't dream, he pulls the blanket over his head and he sleeps well, as he always does before a battle. To allow himself to do anything else would be folly. Richard is no fool and he has been in worse places, on worse battlefields, facing a more redoubtable enemy than this novice with his mongrel army.

Gregory's Richard is not haunted by guilt; nor does he not face ghosts and his fidgety conscience: he is a confident general, certain of victory. Henry Tudor, on the other hand, is tormented and spends a sleepless night. The traditional roles are inverted. Because of the different narrative style and the shift in genre, the last four chapters of *The Red Queen* can be considered as a novella inside the novel and can be read independently from the rest of the book.

The White Queen starts in spring 1464 and concludes in April 1485, following Elizabeth Woodville and taking side with the Yorkist party; *The Red Queen*, revolving around Margaret Beaufort, siding Lancaster, starts in spring 1453 and it concludes on Sunday 21 August 1485; *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, which treats the character of Anne and the changing alliances of York and Lancaster, starts in May 1465 and it ends in March 1485. All three women have a relationship with Richard: Elizabeth as sister-in-law, Anne as wife and Margaret as enemy. Only the book dedicated to Margaret reports Richard's death, since Henry's victory involves the realisation of Margaret's ambition to be the King's Mother. Anne dies before Richard, because of a sickness – Gregory suggests – worsened by a great depression after her only child's death. She is the closest character to Richard in the entire series of novels and she offers an intimate portrait of the man she married for love.

The Sunne in Splendour is a very long historical novel (more than one thousand pages, for 99 chapters), divided into four books: *Book One: Edward*, *Book Two: Anne*, *Book Three: Lord of the North* and *Book Four: Richard, by the Grace of God*. The first book is the longest one; it describes Richard's childhood. The story starts in 1459, in Ludlow, when Richard was seven, and ends with the battle at Tewkesbury in 1471. Particularly for the first chapters in this section of the novel, Penman had to use her imagination to create the personality of the characters and some events, since we know very little about Richard's childhood. The second book is the shortest and is completely dedicated to describing the relationship between Anne Neville and Richard; it covers the events (in this case, mostly invented) in 1471-72 and it provides

the most intimate portrait of Richard. In the third and fourth book the readers deal with the character of Richard as political leader (first as Lord of the North, and then as King). Penman's novel concludes in 1492, seven years after Richard's death, reporting Elizabeth of York's memories about her beloved uncle. In this last chapter, Elizabeth, now Queen of England, wife of Richard's adversary Henry VII, remembers her uncle with affection; she seems very disappointed about the chronicle written by John Rous, who is defined "a chantry priest in Warwickshire and a year or so ago wrote what purported to be a history of our times […] a despicable collection of lies, slanders and preposterous myths"[338].

Another interesting particular in Penman's book is the use of diminutives for the names of the major characters: Richard is Dickon, King Edward is Ned, Queen Elizabeth is Lisbet and Princess Elizabeth is Bess. This decision can be justified by the author's intention to create a close relation between her characters and the readers, to inspire a sense of familiarity to the audience. It is a very contemporary choice that tries to adjust our language to the events and the people of the past, which we could perceive as estranged. Instead, Gregory always calls her characters by their first name or their title.

3.3.2. The relationships with the historical sources and the chronicles of Tudor time

Penman describes with a wealth of details her relationship with the chronicles of Tudor time in her Author's Note at the end of the book, stating at the very beginning that she relied "upon contemporary chroniclers wherever I could"[339]. The first problem she faced was the awareness that the majority of the chronicles were written under the Tudor patronage, so "in attempting to distinguish between Tudor 'tradition' and the truth, I gave greatest weight to those chronicles written during Richard's lifetime or immediately thereafter, relying as little as possible upon purely Tudor sources"[340]. Penman carefully read chroniclers such as Vergil and More to identify those elements worthy of criticism, because she was sure that "those chroniclers writing in the early

[338] Penman, *The Sunne in Splendour*, p. 1227.
[339] Ivi, p. 1233.
[340] *Ibidem*.

years of Henry Tudor's reign must have known when they crossed over into the realm of creative fiction"[341]. Vergil and More – as I already reported – inspired the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed, who became the major sources for Shakespeare, that created the myth of Richard.

Maybe the most important detail of this myth is Richard's deformity, which, according to Penman, "to be fully understood, must be considered in light of medieval ignorance and superstition, their belief in deformity as the outward manifestation of inner evil, a physical proof of moral depravity"[342]. Searching in the chronicles contemporary to Richard, Penman discovered that none make any mention of deformity: not the Croyland Chronicle, or Mancini, nor Philippe de Commynes who knew Richard personally. The first mention dates back to John Rous.

Penman mentions the character of John Rous at the end of her novel, when Queen Elizabeth comments about his chronicle:

> 'Never have I read anything so poisonous […] every page be saturated with venom. He accuses Dickon of the most heinous crimes, not only of murdering our brothers but of poisoning Anne, even of stabbing Harry of Lancaster with his own hand.'
> 'Not to mention claiming that Dickon was a monster, a tyrant, born under an evil star and two full years in his mother's womb' […] Rous was a charlatan, the most contemptible sort of lick-spittle, for when Dickon was alive Rous had described him in glowing terms of praise, as a ruler concerned with justice and fair play. But the true blame must lie with Tudor who encouraged such slanders, Tudor who seemed obsessed with making a monster of the man he'd dethroned but could not defeat.[343]

Through her characters' words and thoughts, Penman takes side against Tudor malignant propaganda. All those elements that constitute the myth and survived until nowadays are discredited and denied in few lines. By a process of metonymy, Rous becomes the tradition about Richard that must be rejected, to support a more fair version of the character. In the final passage of the book, Penman suggests indirectly that her version is faithful to Richard, and not those we have been accustomed to read:

> 'I think the day might come, […] when all men will know of Dickon is what they were told by Tudor historian like Rous.'
> 'Jesú, no! […] You must not think that. Whatever the lies being told about Dickon now, surely the truth will eventually win out. […] I have to believe that, […] Not just for Dickon's sake but for us all. For when all is said and done, the truth is all we have.'[344]

[341] *Ibidem*.
[342] Ivi, p. 1234.
[343] Ivi, pp. 1227-28
[344] Ivi, p. 1229.

When in 2013 *The Sunne in Splendour* was re-published for a thirty-year celebration edition, the Leicester archaeological team had already discovered the remains of Richard: "history is not static and there have been new discoveries in the thirty years, since *Sunne*'s publication"[345]. The proofs collected with the analysis of the bones seems to support Penman's idea of Richard: the wounds in the skull proves that Richard died of a violent death, and the shape of the spine demonstrates that Richard suffered of scoliosis, but not of any deformity; ("I'd always known he did not have the deformities claimed by the Tudor historians, for he'd earned himself a reputation as a superb soldier"[346].) The most amazing thing we discovered about Richard is that now we know how he looked like, thanks to the reconstruction of his face, and what strikes Penman is how young he looks[347].

Another element of deformity reported by the Tudor accounts is the withered arm. According to the tradition, as suggested by More and Shakespeare, Richard blamed Elizabeth Woodville to have bewitched him. Penman rejects the supernatural element, preferring to find a medical explanation: Richard is wounded at his right arm during the battle of Barnet in 1471 and he never fully recovers. Instead, Gregory embraces the supernatural element and, following the tradition, she has Elizabeth hex Richard immediately after her brother River is arrested.

With Gregory it is possible to trace her relationship with the sources through the bibliographies at the end of each book. The bibliographies include mostly contemporary historical textbooks and essays, but also some of the Tudor chronicles, like Mancini and Vergil. More is the great absent in Gregory's bibliographies. The author admits that in this series of novel there is more fiction than in her previous books, because "the record is more patchy"[348]. About Anne and the book dedicated to her, Gregory states that "this is an historical novel based on a character whose own biographer predicted that the life would be impossible to write because of the lack of information"[349]. As I have already claimed, Gregory writes about women, so it sounds obvious that she ran into some difficulties in collecting the source material. In their

[345] Ivi, p. 1239.
[346] Ivi, p. 1240.
[347] *Ibidem*.
[348] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 532.
[349] Gregory, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, p. 523.

chronicles both Vergil and More simply mention Anne a couple of time, like all the other women of the court. They were members of the royal house, but they did not play any active role in the political scene: there was no point in describing them. In his play (that does not truly have an historical purpose) Shakespeare proposes a more in-depth portrait of these women, but Gregory affirms that she does not "subscribe to the Shakespearean parody"[350].

Even if Gregory tries to take distances from Shakespeare and his tradition, some passages of her books recall the history plays. For example, she decides to use the detail of the butt of malmsey, when she tells about George's death. This anecdote is reported first by More, and then by Shakespeare. Gregory tries to find a reason about this curios element, become part of the tradition. George decides to challenge his enemy Queen Elizabeth by choosing an irreverent death:

> 'He has chosen to be drowned in malmsey wine. […] It is his last gesture: to make Edward treat him, to make Edward pay for his drink. To make a mockery of the king's justice, to drink deep of the queen's favourite wine. He shows it is her doing, this is her poison for him […] he makes a mockery of the trial, he makes a mockery of his death sentence. He makes a mockery of his death.' […] It was his last bitter brilliant gesture of defiance to the woman who ruined his house.[351]

On the other side, Penman decides to re-interpret this brilliant device from the Shakespearean tradition: in her version of the story, George is simply drowned, in water, after the King gave the authorization to let his brother choose his death.

Penman recovers from Shakespeare the device of the "Prophecy of G", reversing it: according to her version of the prophecy the name of England's next King would begin with G, while Shakespeare reports that "a prophecy, which says that 'G' / of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be" (1.1.39-40).

It is interesting to analyse the relationship with the sources about what can be considered the greatest mystery about Richard: the Princes in the Tower. The desire to solve it spurred Tey to write *The Daughter of Time*, one of the first examples of Ricardian novel. Penman and Gregory deal with the matter in different ways, which present some common elements. *The Cousins' War* author admits that

> there is no definitive evidence as to how the boys met their deaths, if they did, nor who gave the order; […] I suggest that King Richard would have not murder the boys, as there was little

[350] Ivi, p. 525.
[351] Ivi, pp. 398-399.

> to gain and much to lose for him; and I don't believe that Elizabeth Woodville would have put her daughters in his care if she had thought him the murderer of her sons.[352]

Penman is on the same advice: "no one has ever been able to explain why, if Richard *were* guilty, he would have chosen to commit the murders so as to do himself the greatest possible harm"[353]. As Gregory, she reports as proof of Richard's innocence the fact that Elizabeth entrusted her daughters to him and she adds that Henry Tudor "who did all he could to discredit Richard's memory, refrained from making the most damning accusation, never formally charged Richard with the murder of his nephews"[354]. The author shows all her indignation for those historians who, according to her, rarely bothered to ask the reasons why these things happened and, instead, they have preferred to follow the tradition. Both writers are against the traditional Shakespearean version of the story. Gregory says that "the traditional history – of them being suffocated in their beds in the Tower and buried beneath a stair – is filled with contradictions"[355]; she considers it a "parody that has blackened his [Richard's] reputation for centuries"[356].

Gregory does not absolve Richard of having usurped the throne of England; yet she is completely sure about his innocence in the mystery of the princes. In her version of the facts she hypothesises that Elizabeth Woodville "would have prepared a haven for her second son, Prince Richard […] I genuinely doubt that she would have sent her second son into the hands of the man she suspected of imprisoning the first"[357]. Therefore, she supports the speculation according to which Prince Richard survived. Gregory invented the stratagem that let the young prince to be replaced with a changeling, a page boy, "but I have to warn the reader that there is no hard evidence for this"[358]. She suggests Margaret Beaufort, in collaboration with Buckingham, to be the responsible for the disappearance of the boys in the Tower.

Penman too accuses Buckingham for the murder of the princes, since apparently he had both motive and opportunity – Richard had opportunity, but no

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[352] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 533.
[353] Penman, *The Sunne in Splendour*, p. 1237.
[354] *Ibidem*.
[355] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 551.
[356] Gregory, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, p. 525.
[357] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 533.
[358] *Ibidem*.

motive, while Tudor had motive, but no opportunity: "My case against Buckingham is founded upon fact but there is no evidence that would stand up today in a court of law; we cannot even conclusively prove that the boys *were* murdered"[359]. Penman relies upon common sense to prove her version to be the most persuasive. If Gregory lets the reader decide if the boys died or simply disappeared, Penman is convinced that they were murdered, and "while Buckingham's guilt can never be proven, so many of the puzzle pieces fall into place if we assume the crime to be his"[360].

As proven by these examples, Penman and Gregory deal in different ways with the historical sources, sometimes they follow the tradition, sometimes they re-interpret it and other times they completely deny it, proposing a new version of the facts. Gregory's story, due to the fact that she writes through different points of view, seems more flexible and open to interpretation, occasionally it can even seem ambiguous. On the other hand, Penman stays faithful to her version, which leaves no doubts among the readers about the main characters. This diversification may depend by the aim the writers prearranged: Gregory wants to explore history through different perspectives, she is interested in women's role in history, while Penman is engaged in the mission to restore Richard's reputation.

3.3.3. A glimmer of magical realism in Gregory's novels

Gregory affirms to be interested in the medieval view of magic and to have explored this interest in her novels[361]. The character of Elizabeth gave her the perfect chance to analyse the relationship between magic and prejudice against women, particularly women close to power. In the author's note she clarifies that the supernatural element in her books is fictional; however she can not deny the amusement to imagine it and to write it. Although she goes against Shakespeare, Gregory adopts the magical element in her stories, making it a cardinal point in the narration, as it is in *Richard III*.

Gregory, while researching for her books, found out that Elizabeth, according to the tradition, was descended from the water goddess Melusina; "when I discovered

[359] Penman, *The Sunne in Splendour*, p. 1236.
[360] Ivi, p. 1237.
[361] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 531.

this fact, I realized that in Elizabeth Woodville, a rather disregarded and disliked queen, I would be able to rewrite the story of a queen of England who was also the descendant of a goddess and the daughter of a woman tried and found guilty of witchcraft"[362]. Gregory's Elizabeth seems to possess magical powers, as her mother and then as her elder daughter Elizabeth. In *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, more than once, Anne implies that the marriage between Elizabeth and Edward was the result of an enchantment. In *The White Queen* there are many scenes were Elizabeth performs magic: she casts a death curse upon Warwick and Clarence, who ordered her father and brother to be executed without trial, by writing their names with blood and wearing the piece of parchment in a locket; she whistles up a storm on the Strait of Calais against Warwick's fleet; she calls up mist to favour her husband at Barnet; she hexes Richard's arm and curses the descendants of the people responsible for her children's disappearance (not knowing that she is cursing her descendants, Henry Tudor's children); she seems to foresee the future. Her magic seems to be linked with water, the element of her ancestor Melusina. Obviously, all these episodes are imaginary.

The magical element introduced by Gregory recalls magical realism, a style usually associated with Latin American writers (García Márquez is considered its key exponent) of the 1970s and 1980s. Magical realism adds elements of myth, magic, mysticism and nature at the narration, it integrates facts with fantasy. De Groot describes magical realism in these terms: "Magical realism is therefore a type of metafiction, a self-conscious style which draws attention to itself and, quite consciously, points to the speciousness of realism"[363]. The fantastical and magical elements used by Gregory question the value of the historical novel; they become an instrument to explain and celebrate complexity and hybridity. The aspect of fantasy prevails on that of verisimilitude. In fact, "magical realism, or at least the infusing of narratives with mystical and mythical elements, is often deployed by writers of historical fiction with a view to undermining mainstream models, to create a sense of ephemerality"[364].

Gregory justifies her choice to introduce the magical element stating that

[362] *Ibidem*.
[363] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 129.
[364] Ivi, p. 133.

> in a world where there was little science, there was faith in magic and a deep trust in what we would now call superstitions. […] For educated people as well as the poor, the uncertainty of the world around them could only be explained by the working of invisible forces that might – perhaps – be harassed by prayers or spells or wishing. The legend of Melusina would have regarded as a powerful metaphor that told some sort of truth about the family history.[365]

Moreover, this connection with the supernatural world, let Gregory to develop the theme of the difficulties that women had in living in a man's world.

3.3.4. From a woman's point of view

I have already stated that Gregory writes exclusively from a female point of view: her heroines, her narrators are women. Her novels can be included in the category of the historical romance. More than facts, the historical romance prefers to tell about relationships (usually romantic or sexual). It is "one of most popular, long-running and widely read types of writing in the world"[366]. Gregory's books become an occasion to give a protagonist role, a voice to women, to bring to light situations and people, but also to account for the relationships between women. Friendship between women, motherhood and sisterhood are the instruments that create identity and that sustain happiness through grimness. Women create alliances as much as men, the only difference is that history did not report them. The events in which they are involved are to be considered as vehicles to dramatize "a particular power relationship and an escapist fantasy"[367]. Even if it is impossible not to romanticise the past, Gregory does not write with the purpose to celebrate history and a feeling of nostalgia; she means to give a chance to think and discuss some of the horrors women had to face. Her women challenge the male dominant culture, or at least they question it.

Gregory feels the urgency to write on the side of women since she thinks that "there is a misogyny in history which judges women very harshly, and a laziness which allows careless stereotyping of women which would not be allowed for men"[368]. Her judgment about historians is quite severe: "these are some of the reasons that history neglects or misjudges women and it is responsibility of all historians to correct these

[365] Gregory, *The White Queen*, p. 548.
[366] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 53.
[367] Ivi, p. 56.
[368] Gregory, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, p. 525.

mistakes"[369]. Another reason is that she considers the history of the women of the period to have been neglected since there has always been more interest for the battles, and thus the male protagonist.

Penman too gives her contribute in providing a female point of view. *Book Two* in the *Sunne* is almost completely told and seen by women (Anne and Véronique). Thanks to the use of the third person narrator, she can easily shift from a male to a female point of view. As Gregory Penman describes in detail the everyday life of noble women of that period. From these novels, the contemporary reader can learn about the rituals that had the woman as their centre, for example the ritual of confinement before childbirth.

It is interesting to notice that the contemporary retellings of Richard III are mostly written by women and, obviously, in these versions, female characters play fundamental roles, particularly Anne. Usually, in these historical novels Richard's greatest enemy is not Tudor, but Elizabeth Woodville. Already in Shakespeare women do not have simply a choric function, but they are the only one who can actually fight and oppose Richard. Perhaps the idea that women are the ones who possess the strength to fight Richard survived with the rest of the myth, even if in a more indirect and unconscious way. The traditional Richard is not an actual threat for women; we have just to consider that Anne is his only female victim and she was well aware of her fate, when she married him. Women do not fear him and so, they feel comfortable to speak about him.

The historical romance seems the perfect genre to tell the man behind the monster portrayed by the tradition, since relationships are the focus of the narration. Facts are known, Penman and Gregory explore the psychology, the motives and the feelings behind them, focusing on Richard's relationship with his brothers, but mainly with his women (his mother Cecily, his wife Anne and his enemy Elizabeth). In the next paragraph I will report how Richard is described by these women.

[369] *Ibidem*.

3.3.5. Richard in Penman's *The Sunne in Splendour* and Gregory's *The Cousins' War*

Penman and Gregory share some similarities in their visions about Richard, as they diverge about some particulars. They agree in describing Richard as different from his brothers; he does not seem a son of York (tall, handsome, fair and with a natural charm). Gregory says that Richard has dark eyes, and that he is "so dark-haired and olive-skinned and awkward"[370]. Penman describes him as a boy with "hair a black as ink and dark eyes of a colour midst blue and grey". The descriptions are very similar and they both seem to have been inspired by the official portraits. The DNA analysis proved that this idea of Richard as a man with dark hair and dark eyes is incorrect; after all, he was a son of York, with fair hair and fair eyes. Gregory's and Penman's Richard, despite been dark in his appearance, is not an evil man. They are contemporary writers, no more influenced by the medieval conception that the physical appearance is the mirror of the soul, dark hair and dark eyes do not make a character a villain.

Richard's blind loyalty to Edward is a common trait in the portraits in the *Sunne* and in *The Cousins' War*. It is often reported how loyal he is, as if he embraces wholeheartedly his motto. Since chapter one in the *Sunne* this bond between brothers, based on mutual loyalty, is told. Edward admits that Richard is the sibling he loves the most, his favourite and the one he trusts the most, at the point to choose him as his son's Protector, after his death. He recognises Richard's values and he does not doubt his judgement; sometimes he even asks for his advice. When Richard is very young – Penman tells – he feels that is loyalty is torn between Edward and Warwick, the man who raised him and taught him, but he decides to side with his brother, even if he does not approve his wife and her family. Gregory reports this close relationship between brothers, too: "Richard is heart and soul for his brother the king, he would never do anything against Edward"[371]. Gregory's character despises Elizabeth, but his feelings for his brother are pure and his trust is strong. After Tewkesbury, Richard faces Marguerite of Anjou, who offers him to become her heir, she promises him to make him king, but he answers her: "Your Grace, I am a boy of York. My motto is *Loyauté*

[370] Ivi, p. 33.
[371] Gregory, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, p. 42.

me lie. I am faithful to my brother as to my own self. I love nothing in the world more than honour"[372]. Moreover, in a discussion with his brother George, Richard affirms: "*Loyauté me lie* […] Loyalty binds me. You wouldn't understand such a thing, but I am sworn heart and soul to my brother Edward the king. I believe in the order of chivalry, I believe in God and the king and that they are one and the same thing and my honour is bound to both"[373].

Actually, Penman and Gregory's Richard is a man that values honour as the most important thing in the world, ("there is nothing more important in the world than a knight's honour. I would rather die than be dishonoured"[374]). Both writers describe Richard as a defender from medieval ballads, as a great champion of the values of chivalry. For this reason he is mocked by his brothers. This trait of Richard's personality emerges with strength during the events of the French campaign, in both version. He is disgusted by the king's decision to negotiate peace with the French King, instead of fighting; for this reason he quarrels with his brother, the king. In the *Sunne*, Edward says to Richard: "I talk of realities and you give me back platitudes about honour and chivalry. I did expect better of you than that, […] There is no talking to you on this; I see that now. Not as long as you cling to the quaint belief that we live, not in England, but in Camelot"[375]. Gregory entrusts Richard's belief about honour in a letter he sends from France to his wife: "Anne, only you will know how bitterly I am shamed by this. I wanted to win English lands in France for England […] I swear I will never trust Edward again. This is not kingly, this is not as Arthur of Camelot"[376].

The experience in France plants the seed of a feeling of mistrust towards Edward, then worsened by the imprisonment and the execution of Clarence. Richard disapproves how his brother has managed the situation with France and how he has let Elizabeth to influence his choice about George's fate. From this moment, the detachment with court becomes clear and Richard engages himself mainly in the administration of the North. Gregory jumps from 1478 (George's death) to 1483 (Edward's death) in the narration of the events, omitting four years of facts, which correspond to the years Richard lived far from court. Penman dedicates two shorts

[372] Ivi, p. 167.
[373] Ivi, p. 289.
[374] Ivi, p. 23.
[375] Penman, *The Sunne in Splendour*, p. 718-719.
[376] Gregory, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, p. 315.

chapter to tell something about Richard's campaign in Scotland and the politics arrangements with France and Burgundy, but she skips the most of the period. The choice to pass from Clarence's death to Edward's follows the same pattern used by the chronicles of the time.

Both Gregory and Penman report a hostility between Richard and his brother George. Penman suggests that this hostility has always existed and she describes it since the first chapter when George and Richard are children. Their relationship becomes harsher after Tewkesbury, when Clarence is against Richard's wedding with Anne. But, when George is imprisoned in the Tower, because of the Queen's pressure towards her husband, Richard seems to be the only one who tries to mediate to save his brother from the execution. Gregory and Penman invert the tradition who wanted Richard as instigator of his brother's death. Penman's Richard reacts violently against Edward once the sentence is decided; the two brothers reconcile only two years later. Gregory's Richard thinks that trying to have a friendly relationship with his brother is a duty, an additional sign of loyalty. He also knows that George can be his only true alley against Elizabeth. In a passage, Richard says: "We cannot be divided, […] we are the three sons of York. Edward had a sign, the three suns in the sky. We have come so far, we cannot be divided now"[377].

Another important relationship depicted in the novels is the one with the North of England. Marrying Anne, Richard became Lord of the North. Historically speaking, the connection with the North was very important, since, as King, Richard had relied upon his alliances in the North and had proposed the government system he had used in his lands. The third section of Penman's novel is titled *Lord of the North*; the narration is set in Yorkshire, mainly at Middleham, the residence of Gloucester. A sentence can summarise well this connection between Richard and the North: "Loving these northern moors as he does, it means much to Richard that he has been accepted so wholeheartedly by our Yorkshiremen as their liege lord, that they look to Richard now where once they did look to the Earl of Northumberland"[378]. This special relationship is well explained by Anne in her book *The Kingmaker's Daughter*:

> [Richard] wants to take my father's place in the North and befriend the Neville affinity. They will be predisposed to him because of my name, and the love they had for my father. If he

[377] Ivi, p. 368.
[378] Penman, *The Sunne in Splendour*, p. 730.

> treats the northerners well, openly and honestly as they like to be treated, he will be as grand as king in the North of England and we will make a palace at Sheriff Hutton, and at Middleham Castle, our houses in Yorkshire.[379]

Gregory also says that once Richard is king, "the heart of the country will be here [the North], where the king and queen – northern by birth and inclination – live among the high green hills"[380]. It is not a case that they choose to proclaim their son Prince of Wales in York.

In the contemporary retelling of Richard, Anne has always the role of heroine and supporting character. In Penman, Anne shares with Richard a feeling of affection since they are children. Richard has always thought about her as the woman he would marry and he is described as very upset when the news of Anne's wedding with Eduard of Lancaster reaches him. When Penman tells about the romantic relation between Richard and Anne, she tends to deviate in the subgenre of the romance. She describes a perfect idyllic romance – more plausible if it were set in contemporary times and not during the Middle Age. Richard becomes the romantic hero that saves the woman he has always loved from the tyranny of the evil brother-in-law, that challenges authority to marry her and then that lives as a devoted and faithful husband. When their son dies, Richard comforts his wife; when she gets sick, he nurses her since her death; when she dies, Richard grieves her deeply. He never cheats on her, because he loves her. Perhaps, Penman emphasises their love story, conferring her hero romantic attributes. She is a female writer who rides a romantic fantasy, which usually has a great appeal for a female audience. Someone may consider this choice as a sort of compensation for Richard, as a further attempt to redeem his reputation. Surely, highlighting Richard's fidelity for his wife is a smart move to create a comparison with his brother Edward, who was famous for his extramarital affairs. Richard's loyalty becomes his main attribute, something that will make him a good king.

With Gregory, Anne's role of heroine becomes even more evident since she is the narrator voice in the book. The romance between Richard and Anne plays a central role in Gregory's book, which contains several romantic scenes. Elizabeth defines their marriage as the triumph of true love. As in Penman's novel, Richard is a devoted

[379] Gregory, *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, p. 254.
[380] Ivi, p. 455.

husband: he marries Anne for love, not because of her estate or political value. Sometimes their romance, including the courtship, seems to present stereotypes, which are typical of the genre, as it is possible to notice in Anne's words: "I am bound to him, by my love, by my submission to his will, by my first passion, and since he is the father of my son and he is my lord"[381]. The traditional villain, a man incapable of love, here is turned into a romantic hero, protagonist – sometimes – of mawkish scenes.

In both versions, Anne has to be considered as the responsible of Richard's choice to take the crown. Gregory tells that Anne suggests her husband to take the throne in June. Richard's goal was simply to play the lord Protector, but she convinces him, after she understands that crowing young Prince Edward can be a threat to them, since the prince despises them;

> Do as your brother did […] You're the king's brother, and a man, and ready to rule. Take the throne from him. It's the safest thing for England, it's the best thing for your family, it's the best thing for you […] This is your destiny […] by birth, by inclination, and by education, you are the best king that England could have in these times. Do it, Richard. Take your chance.[382]

Gregory's Anne seems eager to become queen consort, while her counterpart in Penman's novel is miserable, even if she was the one who pushed her husband to the throne. In her version the first one who proposes Richard to become king is Buckingham, who is already plotting against him, but Anne's words are decisive in Richard's final choice. She points out that Prince Edward as king would be a threat for their family, since the Woodvilles educated him to hate and fear Richard. Richard accepts the crown to guarantee safety to his family and because he has understood that a child king will be the ruin of England. Both Penman and Gregory decide not to tell about the coronation; they skip it jumping from the moment when Richard is persuaded to take the crown to some days after the ceremony. Richard's monarchy is not a happy one: he feels the burden of the crown and, if the foreign politics is untroubled, in England he has to face several problems and threats. First of all, the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower. In Penman's book, Richard commits the very naïve mistake to trust Buckingham's proposal to keep the information hidden. This was Buckingham's plan to turn against him the situation. Richard's choice not to intervene

[381] Ivi, p. 324.
[382] Ivi, p. 447.

immediately after the disappearance haunts him, stealing his sleep. He has nightmares about the princes' death and about his own children's death. This portrait of Richard, tormented in his sleep, is close to that of the tradition, even if the motives of the nightmares are different. Richard is haunted by the decision not to act at all.

Gregory's version is particularly interesting because Richard's predicts how he will be seen by the future generations:

> Buckingham is telling everyone that the princes are dead and by my hand. This means the Rivers will fight to put Tudor and Princess Elizabeth on the throne. This means that the country – and history – names me a murderer, a killer of children, a tyrant who turns on his brother's son and takes his own blood. I cannot bear this slur on my name and honour. This is a slander which will stick like pitch.[383]

He seems to be aware that, for history, he has now become a tyrant and a regicide and that this mark will persecute him forever.

After the coronation, Richard can trust no one. Buckingham betrays him. Penman leaves some clues about his hypocrite nature and her Richard never truly trusts him, but he feels to be bonded by a debt of gratitude towards him. After the coronation, for Richard, a process of isolation begins, which burdens him. Because Richard, in these contemporary retellings, is not a lonely man. Quite the opposite. Perhaps this is the most distinctive trait, when we make a comparison with the Richard of More and Shakespeare. Penman's Richard is shy, reserved, discreet and sensitive and he is appreciated by people for his character. His family loves him very much: Edward considers him his favourite sibling, his mother Cecily knows that he is the most sensitive and vulnerable of her children and stays at his side in every occasion. Richard and Cecily share a very tender scene at the end of the book, before Bosworth, where the mother tries to console her son, still in grief for his son and wife, and she gives him her crucifix to protect him in battle. Richard is surrounded by faithful friends, like Francis Lovell, who supports him and fights for him even after his death. His niece Elizabeth loves him deeply and she is very upset by his death; she can not justify her husband Henry Tudor for his cruel propaganda against a kind and just man. Gregory's Richard is not alone, either. He has friends and a supportive family. Often the narrator's voice notes how much he is close to his brothers.

[383] Ivi, p. 459.

There is no trace of the Shakespearean isolated man, resentful, angry, and embittered with everyone. He is not a man who acts without scruples, led by grudge, ambition and a desire of revenge, because here, in these novels, Richard cares for people, particularly for his family, and he can become fierce in the attempt to protect them. The traditional villain of More and Shakespeare is completely turned upside down. In creating these new portraits of Richard, Penman and Gregory reject the hunchbacked monster, guilty of such heinous crimes. They create a fair man, who possess traits of a hero, a character that is the opposite, sometimes to the extreme, of the Shakespearean villain, to the point that the verisimilitude in their narration, in some passages, might be compromised. They confer Richard some very contemporary attributes and traits and they try to absolve him from almost all the accusations. Penman and Gregory states that they take distance from the tradition, particularly from Shakespeare, but they can not avoid to be touched by his charm and in their novels it is possible to find subtle references to Shakespeare, because it is impossible to deny that he was the great creator of Richard's myth. What they tried to do (and we have to give them credit for it) was re-shaping a mythical character, from villain to hero.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this discovery of the historical and fictional character of Richard III, we can notice a couple of things. First, the historical character shares some details with the fictional one; after More and Shakespeare, the process of influence in the creation of the character is overturned: the fictional Richard became the historical Richard, and so he remained for centuries. Serious attempts in fiction to take the historical reality back began only in the twentieth century. That means that Richard has been the hunchbacked villain for more than four-hundred years. And he still is. It is very difficult now to separate him from his dark tradition, but this must not be inevitably interpreted as a negative fact.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I intended to discover which one of the many portraits in history and fiction was the most faithful to Richard. The answer is that they are all real: More's tyrant as Shakespeare's villain, Penman's and Gregory's romantic hero as the historical man buried in Leicester. Yet, some of these portraits are more powerful than the others.

The discovery of the bones revived the interest in Richard and reopened the discussion about him in the academic world, but it is too early to determine any fixed point about the matter with certainty. At the moment, the historical character lives beside the fictional one, in a balance that can be unstable. Without any doubt, Shakespeare's Richard is the most powerful character, who inspired the imagination of generations of people, not only for his appearance. Of course Richard is the hunchbacked villain, but most of all he is a villain. The hump and the limp are additional attributes, a smart invention by Shakespeare to make his character immortal – clearly, he succeeded in creating an immortal character – yet his main attribute is his mind. Shakespeare's Richard is smart, cunning, psychological complex, and for this reason he is charming. The author gave him such a deep personality that he could survive for centuries, without a single fleck of dust. When he is on stage, Richard shines of his own light.

I think that the contemporary versions of the character do not possess the same brilliant success. Penman's and Gregory's novels are not destined to last with the same always renewed vitality of Shakespeare, because they deprive Richard of all the attributes that made his myth. They take away his hunchback, his limp, but most of all

they take away his intelligence. Their Richard is not as smart as Shakespeare's, he does not possess the same twisted charm and charisma; these writers prefer to create a romantic hero, a character that is closer to humanity, thanks to his compassion. I am not suggesting that the contemporary Richard is stupid; quite the contrary, he is intelligent, yet the writers insist on his loyalty, his nobility and his deeply-rooted sense of honour instead of on his brilliant mind, so outside the box, all of this to redeem his reputation. We have to admit that we like Richard's wicked nature, because that is what makes him interesting. The noble attempt to clear his reputation affected the depth and the intensity of the character, which does not pronounce any remarkable speech or line in the contemporary retellings. Perhaps, Penman's Richard impresses us more than Gregory's, because the account about his life is more complete and we read a more comprehensive character. She proposes anecdotes not reported by history, which help shaping his personality; yet, the noble knight is not as intriguing as the mischievous villain.

In the author's note at the end of their books, both Penman and Gregory accuse Shakespeare to have blackened Richard's reputation and to have created a false myth. Gregory even defines Shakespeare's play a "parody"; yet when we read their novels, we clearly perceive the influence of the Shakespearean character. The novelists mainly re-shape Richard through a process of inversion of the tradition, but they also recover some elements from it. For example, Gregory's Elizabeth curses Richard's arm to weaken it, or, in both versions, Richard starts to be confused and depressed after the coronation. Penman and Gregory can try to go against the traditional model, but they can not deny that they drew inspiration from Shakespeare who created the cultural model of reference.

After the analysis of these two contemporary retellings, it becomes clear that the writers are not simply led by the desire of redeeming Richard. From their novels, it emerges a refined gender sensibility: women are the centre of their fiction. Sometimes the historical reality is submitted to the attempt to make women the protagonists of the events and of Richard's journey of redemption. Anne is the heroine, always at Richard's side, who guides him and advises him. Elizabeth is Richard's enemy, a greater threat than Henry Tudor. This is more evident in Gregory's books, but Penman is not untouched by the charm of giving central roles to women. These

novels represent a chance to describe history from a woman's point of view, shifting from the traditional male perspective. The sensibility for gender becomes more important than the historical one.

The Shakespearean character is destined to survive for a very long time, while I think that we have to wait to have a contemporary portrait as powerful as his. Penman and Gregory wrote their books before the extraordinary discovery of the bones, and they both did a great job in trying to absolve him. Maybe we simply have to give some time to the historical character, so he can get back his strength and inspire a new strong portrait.

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APPENDIX: RIASSUNTO IN ITALIANO

Profilo del personaggio storico

Il personaggio di Riccardo ha sempre molto affascinato gli studiosi, che nell'ultimo periodo si sono impegnati nella ricerca di nuove interpretazioni di questo protagonista del periodo della guerra civile inglese. Per carpire l'essenza di Riccardo è necessario soffermarsi sulla sua vita, prima di diventare re. Riccardo nacque il 2 Ottobre 1452 a Fotheringhay. Suo padre era Riccardo Duca di York, uno dei protagonisti della guerra delle due rose. Quando nacque, l'Inghilterra era politicamente divisa tra il partito di York, che sosteneva il Duca di York come legittimo erede alla corona, e il partito di Lancaster. Si sa molto poco dell'infanzia di Riccardo. La figura di Riccardo comincia ad emergere intorno al 1469, quando il fratello Giorgio e il conte di Warwick cominciarono a mostrare aperta ostilità nei confronti del re. Gloucester si dimostrò sempre fedele al fratello Edoardo, tanto che gli furono affidati sempre più titoli e terre. Nel 1469 Edoardo e Riccardo furono costretti a fuggire in Borgogna per organizzarsi contro Warwick e Giorgio. Il duca combatté al fianco del fratello nel 1471 nelle battaglie di Barnet e Tewkesbury, dove si dimostrò un abile generale. Edoardo nel 1471 riconquistò il trono e premiò la fedeltà del fratello, che diede inizio al suo governo del Nord dell'Inghilterra. Il suo potere sul Nord fu rafforzato anche dal matrimonio nel 1472 con Anne Neville, figlia di Warwick e vedova del principe Edoardo di Lancaster. La regione del Nord da sempre era stata difficile da governare, anche a causa del confine con la Scozia che doveva essere continuamente difeso, ma Riccardo si dimostrò degno del ruolo di governatore che gli era stato assegnato. La sua politica consisteva nel cercare di guadagnarsi la lealtà di chi gli era vicino, garantendo la crescita economica della regione e un'equa amministrazione della giustizia.

I rapporti con il fratello Giorgio si deteriorarono completamente nel 1477, quando fu arrestato e portato nella Torre di Londra con l'accusa di tradimento. Il 18 Febbraio 1478 Giorgio, Duca di Clarence, fu giustiziato (secondo la leggenda, venne annegato in una botte di malvasia). Riccardo fu accusato dalla dinastia Tudor di essere stato il mandante della morte del fratello, ma non sussiste nessuna prova storica che possa provarne un vero coinvolgimento.

Re Edoardo morì all'improvviso il 9 Aprile 1483, lasciando due figli minorenni. Edoardo aveva scelto il fratello Riccardo come Lord Protettore del regno e

del figlio dodicenne, ma a corte c'era divisione tra i fedeli del duca e la famiglia della regina, Elisabetta Woodville. Tra i sostenitori di Riccardo c'era William Hastings, Lord ciambellano. Il ruolo di Protettore metteva Riccardo in pericolo e in aperta opposizione con i Woodville, motivo per cui fece arrestare il fratello della regina, Anthony, per poi farlo giustiziare. In un primo periodo Riccardo non sembrava interessato alla corona, ma cambiò idea probabilmente verso metà giugno. Il 13 Giugno, durante una seduta del consiglio, ordinò l'arresto e l'esecuzione di Hastings, sotto l'accusa di tradimento, di aver collaborato con i Woodville per rovesciare il protettorato di Riccardo. Riccardo, dunque, dichiarò i nipoti illegittimi, affermando che il fratello Edoardo aveva sposato, prima di Elisabetta, Lady Eleanor Butler e quindi il suo matrimonio risultava nullo. Il 26 Giugno 1483, supportato da una petizione di nobili, Riccardo preso il trono di Inghilterra, per poi essere incoronato il 6 Luglio. Questa decisione prese molti alla sprovvista che non si aspettavano un tale atto di usurpazione. Ancora oggi non è ben chiara quale motivazione abbia spinto Riccardo a reclamare la corona: probabilmente fu per ambizione, oppure fu un atto compiuto in buona fede con l'intento di salvaguardare il regno. Di lì a poco, il duca di Buckingham, uno dei più leali e forti sostenitori di Riccardo, si ribellò in favore di Enrico Tudor. La ribellione fu velocemente soppressa, grazie anche alle fedeli truppe del nord, e Buckingham giustiziato. Nello stesso periodo i due principi, tenuti al sicuro nella Torre, improvvisamente sparirono. Gli storici dell'epoca immediatamente incolparono Riccardo della loro morte, tuttavia ancora oggi non è ben chiaro cosa realmente successe ai due principi. Le teorie più recenti non ritengono Riccardo colpevole della loro sparizione, piuttosto ritengono come possibili responsabili il duca di Buckingham o re Enrico VII; entrambi possedevano il movente giusto e i mezzi per compiere il crimine. A tal proposito è interessante notare come Enrico VII non abbia mai formalmente accusato Riccardo dell'uccisione dei due principi; secondo alcuni storici questo silenzio può essere interpretato come prova di colpevolezza. Nonostante questi eventi, Riccardo si dimostrò un buon sovrano, o quanto meno cercò di fare del suo meglio. Tuttavia la minaccia di Enrico Tudor non tardò a minare la posizione del re, soprattutto dopo la morte del principe del Galles nel 1484. Enrico arrivò in Inghilterra il 7 Agosto 1485 e Riccardo lo raggiunse a Leicester pochi giorni dopo. Il 22 Agosto 1485 i due eserciti si scontrarono nella piana di Bosworth – conosciuta al tempo di

Riccardo come Redmore. L'esercito del re era numericamente superiore, tuttavia, ad un certo punto Riccardo decise di cavalcare contro Enrico per affrontarlo direttamente; nello scontro fu disarcionato e ucciso. Il corpo nudo di Riccardo fu portato a Leicester per essere esibito e dopo due giorni fu sotterrato presso i Gray Friars. Per lungo tempo si è creduto che il corpo di Riccardo fosse stato gettato nel fiume Soar subito dopo la battaglia.

Il caso del parcheggio a Leicester

Nel 2012 l'Università di Leicester, in un progetto congiunto con la Richard III Society, iniziò gli scavi nella città di Leicester con lo scopo di trovare i resti di Riccardo III. Il lavoro ha visto coinvolti specialisti di diverse discipline. La proposta degli scavi venne dall'archeologa Philippa Langley già nel 2011, che con la scusa di ricercare i resti del convento francescano di Grayfriars, in realtà intendeva individuare le spoglie di Riccardo. Lo scavo ebbe ufficialmente inizio il 25 Agosto 2012, in un parcheggio della città. Il convento di Grayfriars era stato dismesso nel 1538, sotto il regno di Enrico VIII, per poi passare nelle mani di tre diversi proprietari fino a essere comprato da Robert Herrick all'inizio del diciassettesimo secolo. Grayfriars fu demolito nel 1871. Il primo problema fu dunque quello di individuare la giusta ubicazione del convento. Ciò fu possibile grazie allo studio delle mappe storiche della città di Leicester. Gli archeologi sapevano con sicurezza di dover cercare Riccardo nel convento grazie alle notizie in merito alla sua sepoltura riportate dagli storici dell'epoca Tudor John Rous e Polidoro Virgili. Il 5 Settembre 2012 fu ritrovato uno scheletro a cui mancavano i piedi in quello che era stato il coro della chiesa. Lo scheletro presentava una particolare curvatura a forma di s della spina dorsale. Fu subito chiaro che il corpo era stato seppellito in tutta fretta, in una buca troppo piccola, senza bara e nemmeno un sudario. Quello che è certo è che il punto di sepoltura, seppur improvvisato, era un posto di prestigio, riservato ai nobili. Nonostante l'insieme delle prove suggerisse che le ossa fossero proprio di Riccardo, bisognava sottoporle ad attente analisi che ne rivelassero l'identità. Non sono chiari i motivi per cui Enrico VII ordinò di seppellire Riccardo nel convento di Grayfriars.

Lo studio delle ossa e la loro identificazione

Le ossa furono portate in un laboratorio dell'Università di Leicester per essere sottoposte a varie analisi, tra cui quella del DNA, che avrebbe permesso

l'identificazione. Le ossa furono anche sottoposte allo studio di un esperto osteologo che potesse rivelare fatti relativi alla vita, la salute e la morte del soggetto. I dati dello studio preliminare confermarono che lo scheletro apparteneva ad un uomo, sulla trentina, morto di morte violenta, esattamente come Riccardo. Furono identificate undici ferite, causate da armi diverse e fu possibile anche capire l'ordine secondo il quale furono inferte. La maggior parte delle ferite si concentrava sulla testa. Il fatto più interessante è che alcune ferite coincidono con quanto riportato dalla cronache del tempo. La maggior parte delle ferite può essere definita "perimortem", poiché è impossibile capire se furono inferte subito prima o subito dopo la morte. Si riscontrò un'ultima significativa ferita a livello del bacino, che sembra coincidere con quanto riportato dalle testimonianze secondo cui, una volta morto, Riccardo fu spogliato e caricato su un cavallo per essere umiliato. L'analisi di alcuni campioni prelevati della ossa ha permesso di capire qualcosa dello stile di vita e della dieta del soggetto; mentre la datazione al carbonio ha reso possibile approssimare una data, che coincideva con il periodo in cui era vissuto Riccardo.

Non appena gli archeologi ritrovarono lo scheletro, a colpirli fu la forma della spina dorsale a "s", che indicava che il soggetto avesse sofferto di scoliosi. Quando l'uomo era vestito, era praticamente impossibile notarla; semplicemente presentava la spalla destra leggermente più alta della sinistra.

Nonostante molti indizi (il ritrovamento delle ossa nel luogo suggerito dalle cronache, l'età del soggetto, la spina dorsale, le ferite) suggerissero che lo scheletro 1 potesse appartenere a Riccardo, è stato necessario analizzare il DNA e rintracciare i suoi eredi. Riccardo ebbe solo un figlio, Edoardo, che morì bambino, eliminando così la possibilità di una discendenza diretta. Bisognava dunque rintracciare la sua discendenza attraverso uno dei suoi parenti più prossimi. Gli studiosi utilizzarono la linea di discendenza di Anna di York, sorella di Riccardo, per rintracciare gli eredi. I genealogisti trovarono gli ultimi due discendenti ancora in vita di Riccardo: Michael Ibsen e Wendy Dulding. Le analisi del DNA confermarono che lo Scheletro 1 era Riccardo, vista la corrispondenza tra il 99,99994 e il 99,99999 tra il suo DNA e quello di Michael Ibsen. Le analisi hanno anche aiutato a identificare il colore degli occhi e dei capelli di Riccardo: occhi blu e capelli biondi.

Nonostante le ricerche fossero ancora in corso, i media affermarono che le ossa ritrovate a Leicester fossero quelle di Riccardo. Con una conferenza stampa, tenuta il 4 Febbraio 2013, fu possibile confermare che erano stati ritrovati i resti dell'ultimo re Plantageneta. Il caso di Riccardo interessò la stampa internazionale che accorse alla conferenza. L'ultimo passo nella storia di Riccardo riguardò il riseppellimento delle ossa: le celebrazioni di sepoltura furono officiate il 26 Marzo 2015 nella cattedrale di Leicester.

La Richard III Society

Nell'ultimo secolo si è rinnovato l'interesse per il personaggio di Riccardo; alcune persone ritengono che la storia lo abbia trattato ingiustamente e pertanto hanno iniziato un percorso per ripulire la sua reputazione di tiranno e villain. Uno dei primi difensori fu Horace Walpole, autore del diciottesimo secolo, che affermò che Riccardo non fu coinvolto nella sparizione dei nipoti. Walpole fu anche il primo a contestare le fonti del periodo Tudor, ben consapevole della propaganda negativa che aveva influenzato il lavoro degli storici.

Il passo decisivo fu compiuto nel 1924 quando venne fondata la Richard III Society, con lo scopo preciso di consegnare un nuovo ritratto di Riccardo III. Il fondatore fu S. Saxon Barton, che inizialmente chiamò la società "The Fellowship of the White Boar", in un chiaro riferimento al simbolo araldico di Riccardo. Dopo un naturale declino della società durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, l'interesse per il personaggio storico si intensificò, grazie anche alla pubblicazione del romanzo di Josephine Tey *The Daughter of Time* nel 1951 e all'adattamento cinematografico di *Riccardo III* di Laurence Olivier nel 1955. Nel 1959 il nome della società venne cambiato in Richard III Society. Recentemente la Società ha organizzato lo scavo in collaborazione con l'Università di Leicester che ha riportato alla luce i resti di Riccardo.

È giusto rimarcare che la Società non si pone in contraddizione con l'opera di Shakespeare; al contrario. Semplicemente non le attribuiscono valore storico. Secondo la Società la percezione negativa di Riccardo è stata costruita sui seguenti punti: Richard, un gobbo ripugnante, complottò per usurpare il trono d'Inghilterra; uccise Edoardo, figlio di re Enrico VI; uccise re Enrico VI (considerato un santo); fece giustiziare suo fratello il duca di Clarence; uccise i principi nella Torre (dei bambini

innocenti); uccise sua moglie Anna perché voleva sposare sua nipote Elisabetta; fu un re malvagio e noi siamo stati molto fortunati che Enrico Tudor lo sconfisse a Bosworth. La società si è posta come scopo il dimostrare che tutto ciò è falso, promuovendo, invece la ricerca riguardo al personaggio di Riccardo, ma anche riguardo al periodo del quindicesimo secolo.

Un ritratto di Riccardo III

Lo studio delle ossa ha reso possibile anche la ricostruzione del volto di Riccardo. Sfortunatamente non ci sono giunte molte descrizioni dell'aspetto fisico su cui fare affidamento. Le descrizioni fornite da fonti quali Tommaso Moro non sono da ritenersi affidabili. John Rous fu il primo a introdurre elementi di mostruosità nell'aspetto fisico di Riccardo; raccontò che Riccardo era nato dopo una gravidanza durata due anni e già da neonato aveva denti e capelli lunghi; da adulto era rimasto piccolo di statura e aveva una spalla più alta dell'altra. Polidoro Virgili e Tommaso Moro ripresero questi elementi e li enfatizzarono. Si credeva, infatti, che una deformazione fisica fosse il riflesso di una deformazione morale, segno di un carattere corrotto. Shakespeare introdusse l'idea della gobba, completando il ritratto di uomo traviato dal male. Il personaggio Shakespeariano è rimasto nell'immaginario fino ai giorni nostri e, ormai, richiede un certo sforzo riuscire a separare la storia dalla finzione letteraria.

Non ci è giunto nessun ritratto ufficiale di Riccardo, dipinto quando lui era ancora in vita; sono sopravvissuti solo alcuni schizzi in dei manoscritti. Possiamo, però, ammirare due ritratti del sedicesimo e del diciassettesimo secolo. Il primo ritratto, di proprietà di Enrico VIII, fu realizzato tra il 1504 e il 1520 e si pensa che sia una copia di un originale. L'uomo ritratto è molto distante dal personaggio Shakespeariano. Il secondo dipinto è molto simile al primo e secondo gli studiosi potrebbe essere un ritratto piuttosto fedele del vero Riccardo.

Polidoro Virgili e Tommaso Moro

Nessun resoconto scritto durante il periodo di regno di Riccardo è sopravvissuto, molto materiale, invece, ci è arrivato dal periodo Tudor. Uno dei primi resoconti fu scritto da Polidoro Virgili, un umanista italiano, cui fu commissionata la scrittura della storia d'Inghilterra da Enrico VII, con fini propagandistici. La prima edizione della *Anglica Historia* fu pubblicata nel 1534, cui seguirono altre due edizioni

integrate con il resoconto di parte del regno di Enrico VIII. Per la stesura della sua cronaca, Virgili si basò in parte su testimonianze di uomini che avevano vissuto alla corte di Riccardo III. Più o meno nello stesso periodo, anche Tommaso Moro si occupò di scrivere una cronaca che si concentrava sulla vita di Riccardo III, *The History of King Richard the Third*. L'opera rimane inconclusa e fu pubblicata solo dopo la morte di Moro. Come Virgili, probabilmente anche Moro si affidò a testimonianze dirette; si pensa che uno degli informatori potesse essere il Vescovo Morton, che aveva servito Riccardo.

Quando nel 1513 Tommaso Moro cominciò a scrivere la storia di Riccardo, Polidoro Virgili aveva appena terminato la prima stesura della sua cronaca. Poiché i due erano amici, è facile pensare che fossero consapevoli l'uno del lavoro dell'altro, e che abbiano potuto scambiarsi informazioni. Il lavoro di Moro, con il tempo, ha acquisito autorità, diventano la fonte principale per l'elaborazione dei successivi ritratti di Riccardo, in particolare della versione sviluppata da Shakespeare. Oggi non possiamo attribuire alla cronaca una valore storico, ma grande merito letterario; siamo ben consapevoli che alcuni degli episodi raccontanti non sono storia, ma frutto della fantasia dell'autore, anche se i contemporanei di Moro consideravano il suo resoconto una valida testimonianza storica.

Sia Virgili che Moro aprono la narrazione con la morte di Edoardo IV. Fin dalle prime righe Riccardo, nella versione dell'autore italiano, viene descritto come un uomo ambizioso e privo di scrupoli, un abilissimo ingannatore. Molto simile è il personaggio tratteggiato da Moro, che offre anche un'accuratissima descrizione fisica, che ha influenzato tutte le descrizioni successive. Riccardo è descritto come un mostro, tanto deforme nell'aspetto, quanto nel carattere; l'ambizione senza limite è il tratto principale della sua personalità. A questa sconfinata ambizione è associata una brillante intelligenza. Moro è il primo a suggerire un possibile coinvolgimento di Riccardo nella morte del fratello Giorgio di Clarence, mentre Virgili non menziona proprio il duca. In comune, invece, le due versioni hanno il ruolo di complice del duca di Buckingham, colui che aiuta Riccardo a usurpare il trono del nipote. Il resoconto di Moro termina con i germi della cospirazione di Buckingham contro Riccardo a favore di Enrico Tudor. Il personaggio di Buckingham creato da Moro si crede un esperto

manipolatore e cospiratore, quando in realtà per tutto il tempo viene manipolato da Riccardo.

Subito dopo la cerimonia di incoronazione, Riccardo comincia a vivere nel timore che qualcuno possa sottrargli il trono. Guidato da questo sentimento il re ordina l'assassinio dei principi nella Torre. Virgili dedica solo poche righe al fatto, mentre Moro racconta nel dettaglio il crimine. Riccardo completa, con questo atto, la sua trasformazione in tiranno, despota e usurpatore, nonché assassino. Per secoli la versione offerta da Tommaso Moro è stata considerata storia, nonostante non esista nessuna prova a favore della colpevolezza di Riccardo. Il ritratto di Virgili, invece, non è completamente negativo: l'autore italiano si riserva di ammettere il talento politico di Riccardo, che, nonostante tutto, si dimostrò un buon re nei suoi due anni di regno.

Il resoconto di Virgili è molto importante dal punto di vista storico dato che, soprattutto nelle ultime pagine gli eventi vengono riportati con puntualità e sono stati usati come indicazione per ritrovare le ossa.

Moro deve essere considerato il creatore il mito di Riccardo. La sua cronaca incompiuta fu ripresa e completata da Edward Hall, uno storico al servizio della corte di Enrico VIII. La cronaca di Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke*, è importante in quanto fu usata da Shakespeare come fonte per il suo *Riccardo III*.

***Riccardo III* di William Shakespeare**

Quando pensiamo al personaggio di Riccardo, viene subito in mente il personaggio tratteggiato da Shakespeare: l'uomo malvagio, zoppo, con la gobba, macchiatosi di molti crimini. Shakespeare compose il dramma tra il 1592 e il 1593, per poi rappresentarlo nel 1594. Il personaggio di Riccardo appare già nei drammi storici precedenti *Enrico VI parte 2* e *Enrico VI parte 3*, in cui cominciano a delinearsi i tratti della sua meschina personalità. Per quanto riguarda le fonti, gli studiosi sono abbastanza concordi nel pensare che Shakespeare si sia ispirato all'opera di Edward Hall e a *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* di Raphael Holinshed, a loro volta continuazioni del lavoro di Tommaso Moro.

Il personaggio di Riccardo, come ci è giunto, è un'invenzione di Tommaso Moro. Shakespeare ha consolidato la personalità da grande villain, creando il mito

definitivo. La grande differenza che c'è tra il personaggio di Shakespeare e quello di Moro è il rapporto che si instaura con il pubblico, praticamente assente nella cronaca, molto forte, invece, nell'opera teatrale.

Shakespeare rimescola e reinventa alcuni avvenimenti nella trama della sua opera. Per esempio, espande la narrazione della morte di Clarence, cogliendo l'opportunità per descrivere l'oscurità intrinseca e il carattere manipolatore del personaggio di Riccardo, che dimostra di non avere nessun legame, nemmeno con i membri della sua famiglia. La forte influenza di Moro si intravede anche nelle scene in cui Hastings interagisce con Riccardo. Centrale, invece, in entrambi è la scena della morte dei principi nella torre, il primo ordine da re di Riccardo. È anche il momento in cui ha inizio la caduta di Riccardo. Nell'opera Shakespeariana l'omicidio avviene dietro le quinte e viene poi riportato un resoconto dall'assassino.

Un modo interessante per approcciarsi all'analisi del dramma di Shakespeare è quello di studiare i rapporti che Riccardo intrattiene con gli altri personaggi sul palco, in particolare con Buckingham e le donne. Buckingham è l'alleato di Riccardo, il suo doppio, e tra i personaggi maschili gioca il ruolo più importante; sembra infatti possedere una complicità speciale con Riccardo: spesso i due si trovano in scena insieme e spesso Buckingham parla al posto di o in favore di Riccardo. La complicità tra i due si basa sulla consapevolezza che entrambi stanno recitando una parte, che sono attori e registi delle scene a cui assistiamo. Possiedono dunque un ruolo e una funzione metateatrale. Buckingham sembra avere una relazione di interdipendenza con Riccardo, ma in realtà il suo personaggio è manipolato per tutta la durata dell'opera. Buckingham è leale a Riccardo, ma la lealtà non è reciproca. Il rapporto s'incrina subito dopo l'incoronazione, quando Riccardo comincia a non fidarsi più di nessuno.

La comunità di donne nel *Riccardo III* è ricca e nobile: Cecilia, la madre del re, e tre regine, Elisabetta, Margherita e Anna. Se a primo impatto queste donne possono sembrare delle vittime, in realtà sono le uniche che possono opporsi veramente al tiranno Riccardo. Essenzialmente rivestono un ruolo corale, come le voci di coloro che conoscono la verità e sono impegnate a divulgarla, e si esprimono attraverso lamenti e maledizioni. Anna risulta essere l'unica reale vittima donna di Riccardo, ma una vittima consapevole del proprio destino, al contrario di tutti gli uomini che finiscono nelle trappole del villain. Shakespeare usa il personaggio di Anna

per dimostrare la forza seduttiva di Riccardo, ma anche per smascherare la sua natura ingannatrice. La famosa scena della seduzione di Anna (un'invenzione Shakespeariana), in realtà è un atto di seduzione del pubblico, il tentativo di costruire una relazione di complicità con chi assiste all'opera. Il talento di Riccardo sta tutto nel riuscire a rovesciare i ruoli: Anna diventa il carnefice e lui la sua vittima; e nel dare l'illusione di creare della complicità con lei.

Il personaggio di Margherita ha lo scopo di contrastare Riccardo con le sue maledizioni; si allea con le altre donne, (che lei comunque ritiene colpevoli delle sue disgrazie), contro Riccardo. Si dimostra una maestra nell'uso del linguaggio, tanto da mandare in crisi anche i personaggi che meglio di tutti sanno avvalersi dell'arte retorica (Riccardo e Buckingham). Sembra quasi che Riccardo e Margherita abbiano in realtà molto in comune. Dal punto di vista storico, Margherita era già morta nel periodo in cui è ambientata l'opera teatrale, motivo per cui appartiene a un diverso piano della realtà: con i suoi discorsi e le sue maledizioni salta tra passato e futuro, creando un gioco di continui riferimenti e previsioni; emerge da una dimensione fuori dal tempo e dallo spazio per interpretare il ruolo della nemesi, la forza vendicatrice, colei che può mantenere vivo il passato.

Elisabetta e Cecilia ricoprono pienamente il ruolo di coro nel dramma e solitamente sono in scena insieme. Con i loro lamenti e maledizioni diventano le nemiche più temibili per Riccardo, anche perché sono le uniche che riescono ad intuire la natura malvagia di Riccardo. Per questo motivo diventano una minaccia per sua la credibilità di tiranno e grande antagonista. Elisabetta è la donna più presente in scena, mentre Cecilia è il personaggio che meglio conosce Riccardo e può rivelare dettagli sull'infanzia del figlio. La funzione corale delle donne trova compimento in 4.4, quando si ritrovano per piangere i principi e per maledire e accusare il tiranno. Possono farlo apertamente poiché hanno perso tutto: posizione sociale, ma soprattutto i legami di sangue – sono tutte vedove rimaste senza figli. Elisabetta si dimostra il vero e temibile nemico di Riccardo quando lui prova a convincerla a darle in moglie la figlia, in una scena speculare a quella della seduzione di Anna. Cecilia, invece, è colei che rifiuta e scredita la natura del figlio, rendendosi però creatrice del mostro.

Per capire la complessa personalità di Riccardo è necessario prendere in esame i suoi soliloqui, quei momenti in cui, da solo sul palco, il personaggio si sente libero

di esprimersi. Il pubblico è il solo che ha accesso alle intime confessioni e alle macchinazioni di Riccardo. Fin dai primi versi è possibile notare come il tempo di pace in cui vive l'Inghilterra sia un terreno fruttuoso per i piani di Riccardo, che vuole dimostrarsi un villain. Lui sceglie deliberatamente questo ruolo, che manterrà per tutta la durata dell'opera. All'inizio non è presente il desiderio del trono, piuttosto la volontà di eliminare tutti i suoi nemici, a partire dal fratello Clarence. Sempre nel primo soliloquio, Riccardo offre uno spietato ritratto di se stesso, concentrandosi sulla sua deformità e tutte le privazioni che gli ha causato. Sembra ossessionato dal suo aspetto fisico, che riflette la sua interiorità, tanto da condividere la descrizione di se stesso prima di tutti i piani che ha intenzione di attuare. La sua deformità è causa di solitudine, isolamento, rifiuto: spesso Riccardo si ritrova da solo in scena a pronunciare soliloqui. Questo gli dà l'opportunità di cercare di costruire un rapporto con il pubblico. La sua deformità e la sua solitudine lo allontanano dal senso di appartenenza al genere umano, sente di essere unico e utilizza questo come pretesto per commettere i crimini che lo portano sul trono. Finge persino di non possedere una coscienza, che emerge con violenza nell'ultimo atto. Riccardo vive una profonda crisi, prima di tutto di identità: non è un villain come aveva predetto nel soliloquio di apertura e non è nemmeno un re; è in lotta con se stesso.

Fin dalle prime battute, Riccardo vuole accattivarsi il pubblico e cerca di coinvolgerlo spesso con i suoi soliloqui. Ci svela tutti i suoi piani, rendendoci suoi complici e eliminando l'effetto sorpresa. Di conseguenza il pubblico si sente lusingato dalla familiarità con cui è trattato, quasi favorito. Nemmeno Buckingham, il complice sul palco, vive i privilegi riservati al pubblico. Riccardo sembra vivere su due dimensioni: quella del palco, ma anche quella della platea, vicino agli spettatori. In quanto grande attore, Riccardo possiede un incredibile talento istrionico e interpreta contemporaneamente molti ruoli differenti. Con il procedere dell'opera, tuttavia, Riccardo perde il controllo sul palco e sull'azione, causando un distacco con il pubblico. Alla fine si dimostra un semplice personaggio su un palco.

Le rielaborazioni contemporanee di Riccardo

Spesso il personaggio di Riccardo è stato utilizzato nella letteratura, quasi sempre nel ruolo di antagonista. I primi tentativi di descrivere un personaggio positivo arrivano dopo la costituzione della *Richard III Society*, nel ventesimo secolo. Al

momento, si può dire che convivono due versioni di Riccardo: il mostro e tiranno Shakespeariano e l'eroe incompreso contemporaneo.

Il genere letterario più adatto per rappresentare il personaggio di Riccardo è il romanzo storico; un genere che offre molta flessibilità. Spesso, infatti, veniamo a conoscenza di avvenimenti e periodo storici grazie alla lettura di un romanzo storico, che pensa a riempire i buchi lasciati dalla storia, approfondendo la psicologia dei personaggi. Negli ultimi tempi le donne si stando ponendo come protagoniste del romanzo storico, sia come autrici che come personaggi.

Non a caso, il primo tentativo di recupero del personaggio letterario di Riccardo fu ad opera di Josephine Tey, che scrisse *The Daughter of Time* nel 1951. Il personaggio di Riccardo ha anche affasciato autori horror e fantasy come Kim Newman e autori di manga come Aya Kanno. Tra gli autori di romanzi storici, vanno ricordate Sharon Penman e Philippa Gregory, i cui romanzi sono analizzati subito di seguito. Nello studio delle rappresentazioni contemporanee del personaggio devono essere incluse anche quelle di film e serie televisive. Spesso Riccardo è apparso sullo schermo in adattamenti dell'opera di Shakespeare. Lontano da Shakespeare, ma sempre adattato da una serie di romanzi, BBC e Starz produssero nel 2013 la serie televisiva *The White Queen*, che porta sullo schermo un giovanissimo Riccardo.

The Sunne in Splendour di Sharon Penman e *La Guerra dei Cugini* di Philippa Gregory

The Sunne in Splendour di Sharon Penman è un romanzo storico di oltre mille pagine che ha come protagonista Riccardo III. Il romanzo fu pubblicato per la prima volta nel 1982. *La Guerra dei Cugini* è una serie di romanzi scritta da Philippa Gregory tra il 2009 e il 2014, ambientati durante la guerra delle due rose, che hanno al centro della narrazione le donne della corte. Entrambe le autrici scrivono romanzi storici tradizionali, arricchiti da mappe, alberi genealogici, note e bibliografie. Questi elementi aggiuntivi vengono usati come supporto alla narrazione.

Penman decise di scrivere un romanzo su Riccardo III quando era al college e si rese conto che il personaggio era poco conosciuto. Il suo romanzo ha un fine palesemente di recupero della reputazione del re. Ad oggi, il suo romanzo è considerato una delle versioni più complete della vita di Riccardo. Gregory, invece ha sempre affermato di essere molto interessata alla vita delle donne nel periodo

medievale. Cominciò a scrivere la sua serie di romanzi dopo aver scoperto la figura di Elisabetta Woodville, decisa a dare un nuovo punto di vista sulla storia, da sempre concentrata sugli uomini. Il personaggio di Riccardo è presente nei romanzi *La regina della rosa bianca* (2009), *La regina della rosa rossa* (2010) e *La futura regina* (2012); viene accennato a Riccardo in *Una principessa per due re* (2013).

Per quanto riguarda lo stile dei romanzi, entrambe le autrici decidono di intitolare i capitoli con il luogo e la data delle vicende che vi sono ambientate; questo per conferire verisimilitudine alla narrazione. È possibile notare un sincero sentimento di ansia da parte delle autrici, che vogliono riportare un resoconto affidabile delle vicende storiche. Penman afferma di affidarsi all'immaginazione quando scrive, ma di seguire con scrupolo ciò che ci è stato tramandato dalle fonti. Il problema si pone con i personaggi femminili, di cui non è rimasta praticamente traccia. Penman dimostra di avere una grande consapevolezza del suo ruolo di autrice di romanzi storici: sa che le persone preferiscono leggere un romanzo piuttosto che studiare un manuale, soprattutto per la componente emozionale che il romanzo offre. Come dimostrano le lunghe bibliografie alla fine dei suoi libri, Gregory è molto attenta alla ricerca storica. Ammette, però, che c'è una tendenza a romanticizzare la storia. La differenza tra Penman e Gregory è che la prima si attiene a una versione della storia, mentre la seconda racconta la stessa storia da un punto di vista diverso per ogni romanzo della serie, dimostrandosi più aperta alla relatività della storia. Il cambio continuo di punti di vista è sicuramente interessante, ma può risultare di tanto in tanto fuorviante. Questo atteggiamento diverso si traduce nella scelta della voce narrante: Penman usa il narratore onnisciente in terza persona, che parla al passato, mentre Gregory usa la narrazione in prima persona al presente, che aiuta il lettore a empatizzare con i personaggi. Tuttavia, per avere una visione completa degli eventi, i lettori devono leggere tutta la serie di romanzi. Gregory abbandona l'uso del narratore in prima persona per passare a quello di terza solo nei capitoli finali de *La regina della rosa rossa*, in cui descrive la battaglia di Bosworth. Si può attribuire, dunque, agli ultimi capitoli del romanzo, il valore di novella.

Le protagoniste della serie di romanzi di Gregory sono Elisabetta Woodville, Margherita Beaufort e Anne Neville, tutte donne legate in un certo modo a Riccardo.

Sicuramente il romanzo dedicato ad Anna, la moglie di Riccardo, è quello che ci offre il ritratto più completo e più intimo del personaggio.

The Sunne in Splendour è diviso in quattro libri, ognuno dedicato a una fase diversa della vita di Riccardo: il primo riguarda l'infanzia, il secondo la relazione con Anna, il terzo il governo del Nord dell'Inghilterra e l'ultimo il regno. Il romanzo termina nel 1492, quasi dieci anni dopo la morte di Riccardo, con una riflessione sulla storia e sulla cronaca di John Rous, definito un ciarlatano e l'iniziatore della tradizione che vuole Riccardo come un tiranno. A proposito di cronache e fonti storiche, Penman, nelle note alla fine del libro, descrive le difficoltà che ha incontrato nel doversi misurare essenzialmente con cronache scritte durante il periodo Tudor, dichiaratamente anti-Riccardiane. Nella stesura del romanzo, ha deciso di ignorare la tradizione Tudor che vuole Riccardo come un mostro deforme, anche perché secondo alcune testimonianze contemporanee a Riccardo, lui non presentava nessuna deformazione; come è poi stato dimostrato in seguito al ritrovamento delle ossa.

Entrambe le autrici affermano di aver cercato di prendere le distanze dalla tradizione e da Shakespeare, tuttavia è possibile rintracciare nei romanzi una serie di dettagli ripresi proprio dalla tradizione (e.g. la botte di malvasia, il braccio maledetto, la profezia del "G"). In merito al grande mistero dei principi nella Torre, sia Penman sia Gregory affermano che Riccardo non è da considerare colpevole del crimine. La prima indica Buckingham come mandante dell'assassino dei principi, la seconda, invece, propone una collaborazione tra Buckingham e Margherita Beaufort.

Un particolare interessante dei libri della Gregory è l'utilizzo dell'elemento soprannaturale. Le donne, in particolare Elisabetta, sembrano possedere poteri magici e altre capacità quali la preveggenza. Ovviamente l'introduzione del soprannaturale fa parte della finzione del romanzo, non ha attinenza storica, ma risulta un buon espediente per analizzare il rapporto che le donne avevano con il potere. Inoltre, per quanto Gregory si dichiari in opposizione a Shakespeare e alla tradizione, l'uso di espedienti magici è tipico della tradizione e si ritrova nell'opera teatrale.

Come già affermato in precedenza, Gregory scrive quasi esclusivamente dal punto di vista delle donne. Le relazioni tra le donne sono centrali nei suoi romanzi. Il motivo per cui le donne sono il centro va ricercato in quella che Gregory definisce la misoginia della storia, che ha trascurato le figure femminili per concentrarsi sugli

uomini, creduti i fautori della storia. Anche Penman dedica molto spazio ai suoi personaggi femminili, rendendo Anna la co-protagonista di Riccardo. A tal proposito, è molto interessante notare come le rappresentazioni contemporanee di Riccardo siano state scritte quasi esclusivamente da donne. Un'ipotesi per cui le donne si sentono vicine al personaggio di Riccardo può essere che non lo avvertono come una minaccia e possono quindi trasformare il mostro e tiranno in eroe romantico. Questo ha permesso la creazione di ritratti nuovi e molto diversi da quello tradizionale.

Nei romanzi storici di Penman e Gregory, Riccardo è un uomo legato al senso dell'onore e dalla lealtà per il fratello Edoardo, un uomo legato ai valori della cavalleria. Sempre nei romanzi si sottolinea il rapporto speciale che Riccardo ha con il Nord dell'Inghilterra.

Anna diventa l'eroina dei romanzi, sempre al fianco del marito, e la loro storia d'amore gioca un ruolo centrale. Viene descritto come un amore idilliaco, moderno (a tratti quasi irreale), in cui Riccardo è il cavaliere che salva la fanciulla, rendendola sua regina. Penman e Gregory tendono a calcare su questo aspetto, con la consapevolezza di scrivere soprattutto per un pubblico femminile, che si sente particolarmente attratto dalle dinamiche romantiche. Così, la lealtà coniugale diventa un altro attributo importante del Riccardo dei romanzi storici contemporanei. Ad Anna viene anche attribuito il ruolo della persona responsabile per la scelta di Riccardo di salire al trono; lei convince il marito del fatto che è meglio per il regno un uomo adulto, che comunque vanta dei diritti sul trono, di un bambino.

Un particolare che colpisce nella versione tradizionale è il grande isolamento del personaggio, mentre Riccardo in queste versioni moderne è un uomo circondato da alleati, amici ed affetti. Riccardo è un uomo timido e riservato, sensibile e per questo apprezzato e amato. Il personaggio della tradizione viene completamente rovesciato: da tiranno e villain per eccellenza, nelle trasposizioni contemporanee Riccardo diviene un eroe romantico.

RINGRAZIAMENTI

Secondo la tradizione, la gravidanza di Riccardo III durò due anni. Che è più o meno il tempo che ho passato in sua compagnia, tra scoperta, ricerca e scrittura della tesi. Un tempo lungo, ma a quanto pare i mostri richiedono tempi prolungati per essere prodotti. Devo quindi ringraziare tutte quelle persone che negli ultimi due anni hanno condiviso il loro tempo con me e che alla domanda "Come va?" si sono immancabilmente sentite rispondere "Sto scrivendo la tesi".

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Una menzione speciale per Benedict Cumberbatch, che viene citato addirittura quattro volte in queste pagine, rischiando di rubare il ruolo di protagonista.

Grazie a tutti voi che avete aspettato con pazienza la gestazione e la nascita di questo mostro. Io e Riccardo ve ne siamo infinitamente grati e promettiamo di non complottare contro nessuno di voi!

Laura