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## *Texts and Teaching*

### **Richard III: Beyond the Mystery**

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*He* is not the likeliest theme for an American undergraduate classroom: his reign lasted barely two years; he contributed nothing of lasting significance to history; he is more memorable for his spectacular final defeat than for any victory; he was accused of murdering children; and he was after all an English king, as far removed as possible from the typical experience of an American undergraduate. Even the times he lived in are against him. In the immortal words of Mark Twain, his century was “the brutalest, the wickedest, the rottenest in history since the darkest ages.”<sup>1</sup> Yet he continues to fascinate students, mainly because he was also the victim of one of the most vicious smear campaigns in history, which turned him into a deformed, inhuman monster, the form in which he was immortalized as one of the most memorable characters in Shakespeare’s history plays. Now his defenders are out to set the record straight, with a society and even a journal bearing his name. The planets seem to be smiling upon their enterprise: in 2012 his body was discovered underneath a parking lot, and reinterred to great fanfare in Leicester Cathedral on 26 March 2015.<sup>2</sup>

The life and reputation of Richard III constitute one of the most enduring historical puzzles of English history. The topic thus makes a marvelous case study for historical methodology, how the historian weighs evidence and builds arguments. In this article I share my own approach to teaching Richard III, which I have de-

1 Twain, *Personal Recollections*, vii. Cf. on this point the comments of Ross, *Richard III*, liii.

2 On the reburial ceremony, see “The Reburial of King Richard III,” and Arens, *The Richard III Reinterment*. For the discovery itself, see the summary by Hiltz, “Richard III,” 40-46. For the full report, see Ashdown-Hill et al., *Finding Richard III*.

veloped over the course of the past fifteen years in various courses. Although I have taught an entire undergraduate seminar on the subject, I usually teach Richard III as one theme in a larger course, particularly a course on historical methods. Currently, I teach Richard III in a course that I call “Unsolved Historical Mysteries,” which is essentially a course designed to introduce non-history majors to the discipline. There are three “mysteries”: the trial of the Templars, Joan of Arc, and Richard III.

The notion that these historical problems can pose as “mysteries” raises a simple question. Is history just a puzzle waiting to be solved? If we put all the facts together, will there be a clear solution? Or is history something more complex and more difficult than that? I suppose that every historian would readily grant that some historical problems can indeed be “solved”: the attribution of a text, for example, or maybe the identity of a historical disease. But every historian also realizes that our evidence is partial, and that every historical interpretation is provisional. Indeed, historical revision is the central dynamic to our discipline. The idea that the past has a solution is the first article of faith of the conspiracy theorist.

Each of my mysteries has what we might call a “puzzle” component. The Templars were accused of secret crimes by people who stood to benefit from their downfall. Joan of Arc claimed that her voices were from God, and against long odds helped turn the tide of the Hundred Years War. And of course some contemporaries and later historians accused Richard III of having his nephews murdered. Each case invites discussion of some basic “empirical” problem: were the Templars guilty? How did Joan rally the troops? Did Richard order the murder of his nephews? Yet the point of the course is also to move students beyond these puzzles, to see that while they may be important, they represent only the beginning of the historical discipline, the first step toward producing a narrative of the past. Put more simply: once we know that the Templars were innocent (and they certainly were), what next? Whether or not she was sent by God (something beyond the historian’s capacity to determine),

who was Joan of Arc? Does our entire understanding of Richard III depend on the manner in which he rose to power? What questions does the exclusive focus on the princes leave unasked?

Fundamentally, each episode illustrates how historical narratives are constructed out of primary sources: this is the basic lesson of the course. The fundamental objective is thus to immerse the students into a historical problem through primary sources, and then to take a first step toward constructing a narrative from those sources. For this reason, I handle the vast secondary literature mainly through bibliographies and individual reports on selected readings. This is a course devoted to primary sources.

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The unit on Richard III comes last, and I begin by introducing students to the traditional version of English history, which reached its culmination with Shakespeare's Richard III. In reading this play, they confront the mature Tudor version of Richard as a monstrous villain. To drive the point home, I also have them watch Richard Loncraine's 1995 version with Ian McKellen, which is marvelously entertaining and perfect for the purpose of this course. I also take some time with a lecture here to set up the late fifteenth-century background and to establish the cast of characters.

We turn next to the revisionist version that took shape over several centuries in response to the caricature found in Shakespeare. To introduce the revisionist account, I assign Josephine Tey's classic detective novel *The Daughter of Time*, which is short enough to be read in a single evening (unless the students are texting all night). Detective Alan Grant of Scotland Yard has made a study of the human face, and believes that he can deduce a person's character from the face alone. Hospitalized following an accident, a friend brings him a collection of prints of historical figures to whom some mystery is attached. He comes upon what he takes to be a kindly face, only to discover that he is looking at the archvillain of English history, Richard III. His curiosity piqued and his method called

into question, he consults various textbooks and supposedly reliable histories of the period, only to find that their version of Richard produces more questions than answers. He then calls upon a young American named Brent Carradine who is supposed to be researching the Peasants' Revolt at the British Museum but is much happier to help Grant get to the bottom of the mystery surrounding Richard. Over the course of a few weeks, under the direction of Grant's arm-chair detective work, the case against Richard unravels. They realize that history books are filled with "tonypandy," the falsehoods they teach you in school. Chronicles contradict. A key source, Thomas More, is five years old when it all happened. Everything is hearsay. Contemporaries fail to mention the dead princes, and people behave as though nothing is the matter. Elizabeth, the boys' mother, comes out of sanctuary and then to court after they supposedly were murdered. Above all, the traditional account relies on assumptions that are shown to be utterly implausible. Richard had an ironclad claim to the throne and no real motive to kill the princes, since if they were illegitimate, no one would have come to their support and they were no danger to him. For that matter, there were other possible heirs to the throne walking around freely. Grant gathers them all into a list:

He copied it out again for young Carradine's use, wondering how it could ever have occurred to anyone, Richard most of all, that the elimination of Edward's two boys would have kept him safe from rebellion. The place was what young Carradine would call just lousy with heirs. Swarming with focuses (or was it foci?) for disaffection.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Grant produces a psychological profile of the unfortunate king. All of the evidence shows Richard to have been the kind of man who never would have stooped to such an act. Yes, Grant concedes, men of integrity had committed murder before, but not the murder of children, and not for that purpose. A man who possessed the qualities that Richard displays in his acts and letters could not have committed that kind of murder. In this reexamination of the case, historians themselves come in for some rough treatment: credulous, incapable of fathoming the psychological depths of their subjects, reducing history to a peepshow of two-dimensional figures. Only after demolishing the traditional version of Richard and

<sup>3</sup> Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, 137.

having written two chapters of a book on the subject does Carradine discover to his great dismay that George Buck, Horace Walpole, and Clements Markham knew all of this centuries ago.<sup>4</sup> Carradine is inconsolable. Grant reassures him that the book is still worth writing, that the British public still need convincing. Carradine will write his book after all. Grant's advice conveniently provides cover for Tey herself in choosing such a well-known "crime" for Grant to solve.

Tey's novel has served as a point of entry for many readers into the exploration of Richard's life and times, and at this point the students are usually fully engaged with the question of Richard's guilt or innocence. The class dedicated to discussion of Tey runs on its own, and for the most part I try to get out of the students' way as they argue the merits of the case for and against Richard. There is much to consider beyond specific details: the idea that a five-hundred-year-old crime can be solved using the empirical methods of a modern detective; the implicit assumption of Tey (through Grant) that personality profiles are necessary to evaluate and reconcile contradictory material and to bridge gaps in the evidence; and, of course, the claim that historians are full of prejudice and totally deficient in their understanding of human psychology. All of this should provide for lively discussion.

The next step is to channel that energy into the close reading of the primary sources, and I begin with the earliest contemporary account of Richard's seizure of power, Dominic Mancini's *De occupatione regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium libellus*, translated as "The Usurpation of Richard the Third."<sup>5</sup> Mancini was an Italian living in England in 1482 and early 1483. He completed his work in December of the same year, following his departure from the island. He thus provides an account that took shape long before writers had an incentive to slander Richard to please the king. But this is nonetheless a complex and even contradictory account, drawing on a va-

4 On Richard's historical reputation since Shakespeare, see the convenient summary of Ross, *Richard III*, xlviiii-liiii.

5 Mancini, *Usurpation*.

riety of sources including the author's own eyewitness testimony. Its interpretation is hardly straightforward.<sup>6</sup>

I set the stage for the reading of Mancini at the close of our discussion of Tey. This is in fact a text that Tey should have known about but did not: it was discovered in 1934 and first published, with English translation, in 1936, fifteen years before the publication of the novel. This then is new evidence, unknown to Shakespeare or Tey, and the challenge is clear: whose version of events does Mancini's account support? I ask the students to imagine that they are Shakespeare or Tey. Which details would they use or avoid?

My own sense is that Mancini invites a more human understanding of Richard and his motives while at the same time providing evidence that some contemporaries feared that Richard was planning to have the children murdered. (On the specific question of the princes' fate, Mancini admits that he is ignorant of the truth, but he fears the worst.<sup>7</sup>) Specifically, Mancini constructs a plausible scenario in which Richard might well have had the princes murdered, but out of self-preservation and anger over his brother Clarence's death. This interpretation is so favorable to Richard that some historians have suggested that Mancini has swallowed Richard's own propaganda.<sup>8</sup> But we also see a powerful counter-narrative, a foretaste of what was to come under the Tudors. Mancini claims that at the time of Edward IV's marriage to the widow Elizabeth Woodville, the duke of Clarence "vented his wrath" with "bitter and public denunciation of Elizabeth's obscure family."<sup>9</sup> He also proclaimed that Edward "ought to have married a virgin wife." Mancini continues:

6 Cf. Pollard, "Dominic Mancini's Account," 159: "Mancini's narrative is complex and to some extent inconsistent and contradictory partly because of the differences of opinion carried by his sources and partly because he was writing from memory."

7 Speaking of the young Edward V, Mancini states: "Whether, however, he has been done away with, and by what manner of death, so far I have not at all discovered." Mancini, *Usurpation*, 92-93. See further, note 91 on pp. 127-28; and Ross, *Richard III*, 96-104.

8 See further Pollard, "Dominic Mancini's Account," 158, citing Hicks, *Richard III*, 103, 99-100.

9 "Fratres vero Eduardi, qui duo tunc vivebant, etsi graviter uterque eandem rem tulerunt; alter tamen, qui ab Eduardo secundo genitus erat et dux Clarnetorum, manifestius suum stomachum aperuit; dum in obscurum Helisabette genus acriter et palam inveheretur; dumque contra morem [MS: maiorum] viduam a rege ductam predicaret, quem virginem uxorem ducere oportuisset." Mancini, *Usurpation*, 62-63. The translations of Mancini are Armstrong's.

But Richard, the other brother, who is now king but then was duke of Gloucester, being better at concealing his thoughts and besides younger and therefore less influential, neither did nor said anything that could be brought against him.<sup>10</sup>

After the marriage, Elizabeth worried that Clarence would never allow her sons to succeed Edward IV. Clarence then was accused of conspiracy against the king and executed, though Mancini is uncertain if this was a fabricated charge or a real plot. Richard was undone:

At that time Richard duke of Gloucester was so overcome with grief for his brother, that he could not dissimulate so well, but that he was overheard to say that he would one day avenge his brother's death. Thenceforth he came very rarely to court. He kept himself within his own lands and set out to acquire the loyalty of his people through favours and justice.<sup>11</sup>

Already in these early passages written in 1483, Mancini pretends to unlock the secrets of Richard's heart. Richard is "better at concealing his thoughts" (ad dissimulandum aptior erat) than Clarence and only a tragedy such as Clarence's death could shatter the pretense of his poised behavior (nequivit tantum simulare). And yet at the time of the announcement of the marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville, at Michaelmas in 1464, when he was supposedly concealing his true thoughts, Richard was less than twelve years' old!<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, all of these events occurred many years before Mancini moved to England. His account therefore raises the important problem of second-hand knowledge. In fact, Mancini may not even have known any English; it's perhaps a safe assumption

10 "Alter vero frater, Riccardus qui nunc regnat, tunc Closestriorum dux, tum quia ad dissimulandum aptior erat, tum quia minor natu, minus auctoritatis habebat, nihil egit aut dixit quo argui posset." Mancini, *Usurpation*, 62-63.

11 "Eo tempore Riccardus dux Closestrius ex dolore fratris percitus, nequivit tantum simulare, quin auditus sit cum diceret, se aliquando fratris mortem esse vindicaturum. Ex eo perraro in regiam veniebat. In provincia sua se continebat. Suos officiis et iusticia sibi devincire studebat." Mancini, *Usurpation*, 62-63.

12 Mancini, *Usurpation*, 110, n14.

that he did not.<sup>13</sup> In any case, Mancini clearly received much of his information from friends, some of them situated very close to the throne, and sympathetic to the party of the princes.<sup>14</sup> He mentions one individual, John Argentine, physician to young King Edward V and later to Arthur, the eldest son of Henry VII.<sup>15</sup> According to Mancini, Argentine was one of the last to see Edward alive. He told Mancini, “the young king,” he told Mancini, “like a victim prepared for sacrifice, sought remission of his sins by daily confession and penance, because he believed that death was facing him.”<sup>16</sup> A close reading of Mancini’s text reveals many passages relying on information that must have been gathered from informants. Here, at least, this is hardly eyewitness testimony.

In sum, Mancini’s text allows students to see the Tudor version of Richard III in utero, at a point when Richard is still recognizably human, with plausible and even defensible motives for his actions, with no trace of physical deformity. At the same time, this is not a sympathetic treatment. Mancini very nearly accuses him of having the princes murdered, and attributes to him an “insane lust for power” (*vesana regnandi libido*) – another foretaste of the language of Tudor writers.<sup>17</sup> Mancini also refers to his “ambition” and “deceit” (*ambitio, ars*), clearly referring to his ambition for the Crown.<sup>18</sup> A. J. Pollard concludes that although Mancini knew nothing of Tudor propaganda, he “saw the events from exactly the same standpoint.”<sup>19</sup>

13 Pollard, “Dominic Mancini’s Account,” 152.

14 Pollard describes the party as that of Edward V (“Dominic Mancini’s Account,” 163).

15 Mancini, *Usurpation*, 92-93, 127 n89.

16 “Referebat Argentinus medicus, quo ultimo ex suis regulus usus fuit, regulum tanquam victimam sacrificio paratam singulis diebus confessione et penitentia suas noxas diluere, quod mortem sibi instare putaret.” Mancini, *Usurpation*, 92-93.

17 Mancini, *Usurpation*, 90-91. For more on Richard’s designs on the crown, see pp. 94-97.

18 Mancini, *Usurpation*, 82-83.

19 Pollard, “Dominic Mancini’s Account,” 163.

To illustrate the early growth of the Tudor version of Richard, I assign a selection from John Rous's *History of the Kings of England*.<sup>20</sup> Rous was a Warwickshire priest who had praised Richard in his English version of his *History of the Earls of Warwick*, written sometime between 1483 and 1485. But he soon had a change of heart, and in his *History of the Kings of England*, which he wrote sometime during Richard's reign but then revised early in the reign of Henry VII (he died in 1492), he provided some of the cruder details of the Tudor legend.<sup>21</sup> Richard is now Antichrist, born after two years in his mother's womb with teeth and long hair, and misshapen. He murders his nephews and Henry VI (possibly with his own hands), poisons his wife, and imprisons his mother. The rest is a bare recital of the events of his reign, ending with his defeat at Bosworth Field. Rous seems to have had little impact, and his primary value is to illustrate the early development of the Tudor legend.

Depending on how much time one has, one might also assign a selection from the Croyland Chronicle continuation, which students should know since Grant and Carradine cite it frequently in the novel. The continuation covering Richard's rule (known as the "Second Continuation"), composed in 1486, has been called "the most important single source" for Richard's reign.<sup>22</sup> The author (whose identity is uncertain<sup>23</sup>) was highly capable and well-informed about contemporary events. His account might be thought of in some ways as a supplement to Mancini. There are obvious differences, principally among them the much more central situation of the Croyland author, which made him an eyewitness to many of

20 A convenient selection in English translation can be found in Hanham, *Richard III and His Early Historians*, 118-24.

21 For further details on Rous, see Ross, *Richard III*, xxi-xxii.

22 Ross, *Richard III*, xliii. For the text, see *Crowland chronicle*. The portion covering the rise to power and reign of Richard III is pp. 150-77 (Latin with facing-page English translation).

23 Ross and other scholars believed (*Richard III*, xliii) that the author was Richard's own chancellor, John Russell, bishop of Lincoln, but recent research has apparently cast doubt on this attribution. See Thomson, "Russell, John," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24318>, accessed 15 June 2016].

the events that he describes.<sup>24</sup> But like Mancini, he displays clear hostility to Richard. He refuses to accuse him outright of murdering the princes, but he nonetheless implies that he did so. In this account Richard proceeds to remove every obstacle to his claim of the throne for himself, at first in secret but then openly. In the end, it is hard to disagree with the conclusion of Charles Ross, who, following his survey of the primary sources, insisted that Tudor writers did not simply invent the “wickedness” of Richard III, but “were building upon a foundation of antagonism to Richard III which antedated his death at Bosworth.”<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, it would be naïve to ignore the growth of the Tudor legend as we find it in writers such as Bernard André, Thomas More, and Polydore Vergil. André is the easiest to overlook.<sup>26</sup> Poet laureate and official historiographer under Henry VII, he was also tutor to Prince Arthur from 1496 to 1500, and certainly in a position to gather good information. Unfortunately, André also suffered from some form of very poor eyesight, possibly what he and contemporaries called blindness. Besides that, he seems to have been a poor choice simply by constitution for the work of a historian. By inclination he was first of all a poet. His *Life of Henry VII* suffers from some confusion, but mostly from a missed opportunity to fill in gaps in our knowledge. Its great value lies not so much in its details but in its evidence of the development of the Tudor legend, wherein the monster Richard plays the foil to the divinely favored Henry VII, who ushers in the new dynasty. Here Richard moves off of center stage, and the work naturally turns to the early reign and accomplishments of Henry Tudor. For André, the rise of the Tudors becomes drama on a heroic scale. In this account, the ancient war between Saxons and Britons finally reaches its happy conclusion with the triumph of Henry VII (the Tudors were Welsh), his mar-

24 On this point, see Ross, *Richard III*, xlv.

25 Ross, *Richard III*, xlviii. See also p. 100 for a summary of the sources that support the conclusion that the princes were already dead in 1483.

26 For what follows, see my Introduction to André, *The Life of Henry VII*.

riage to Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV, and the birth of their son Arthur. The two Roses are now united following a period of war and bloodshed that reached its climax in the tyranny of Richard III – and indeed, André seems to have been the first to cast Richard as a tyrant.<sup>27</sup>

The most authoritative treatment of Richard by a writer in Tudor England is that of Polydore Vergil, who sets Richard in a longer historical development going all the way back to Richard II – that is to say, as Charles Ross observed, Polydore essentially provides the basic architecture of Shakespeare’s fifteenth-century history plays.<sup>28</sup> Vergil’s *Anglica historia* has been regarded as having some claim to “serious and sober history” (or at least far more than Thomas More), as an “important and independent source of fact,” and even as “coolly detached and rationalistic” in comparison to the “dramatic” version of More.<sup>29</sup> Much of its value depends on its comprehensiveness: of all the sources under review, Vergil gives the most thorough treatment of Richard’s reign. For the purposes of this class, the salient feature of his treatment of Richard is his suggestion that from the moment when Edward IV had passed away, he was consumed by lust for power, “kyndlyd with an ardent desyre of soveraigntie.”<sup>30</sup> Likewise, Richard’s seizure of his nephew Richard out of sanctuary was only the first step in his careful plan to do away with the princes. Vergil’s Richard is nonetheless torn between ambition and guilt, “enflamyd with desire of usurping the kyngdom” while still “trubblyd by gyltynes of intent to commyt so haynous

27 For frequent references to Richard’s tyranny, see André, *Life of Henry VII*, 20-29.

28 Ross, *Richard III*, xxiv, citing Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, 141-45. On the much greater impact of Vergil than of More on later historians, see Sylvester, ed., *The History of King Richard III*, lxxvii.

29 Ross, *Richard III*, xxiii; Hay, *The Anglica Historia*, xix; *History*, ed. Sylvester, lxxvi. On the value of the work for early Tudor history and the reign of Richard III, see Ross, *Richard III*, xxii-xxvi; and Hay, *Anglica Historia*, xviii-xxiii. Hay also includes some discussion of Vergil’s sources.

30 Ellis, *Three Books*, 173.

wickednes.”<sup>31</sup> All the ingredients of classical tragedy are present. As in Shakespeare, Richard conceals his true purpose and “so enveglyd the myndes of the nobilitye.”<sup>32</sup> Slowly, the nobles realize that Richard’s aim is to “convert the regall authoritye into tyranny.”<sup>33</sup> The specter of tyranny returns, but Richard steps off the page as a more three-dimensional figure than in André, driven by a desire to rule and capable of deep plots and stratagems, but also liable to doubt and fear.<sup>34</sup> Vergil likewise turns the screw on the reader by elevating the princes to a more central place in the narrative and by emphasizing their “tender age.”<sup>35</sup> For Vergil they are the “most innocent nephews,” “those babes of thyssew royall,” “these sely children,” “these two innocent impes.”<sup>36</sup> The enormity of the crime galvanizes the public and sets in motion the catastrophe.

Students may find it fruitful to compare Vergil with Thomas More’s *History of King Richard the Third*, written between 1514 and 1518. As the title indicates, Richard is now the sole focus, in what is surely the most entertaining account of the king before Shakespeare.<sup>37</sup> While Vergil’s narrative had greater influence upon subsequent historians, it was More’s version that shaped Shakespeare’s play. Physically, Richard is the same in More and Shakespeare, ill-favored and crook-backed. More’s Richard is not without some virtues: he is intelligent, but he employs his wit in evil directions; he is courageous and liberal, though his generosity worked

31 Ellis, *Three Books*, 178.

32 Ellis, *Three Books*, 179.

33 Ellis, *Three Books*, 182.

34 On Richard’s stratagems, see for example Ellis, *Three Books*, 179, 183; on Richard living in “contynuall feare,” see p. 187.

35 Ellis, *Three Books*, 188.

36 Ellis, *Three Books*, 184, 188, 190. Cf. Mancini, *Usurpation*, 92-3, on Edward V as “a victim prepared for sacrifice” (*tamquam victimam sacrificio paratam*).

37 The standard scholarly edition can be found in *The Complete Works of Thomas More*, vol. 2. For the date, see lxiii-lxv. For the relationship and priority of the English and Latin texts, see liv-lix. For the question of the influence of Vergil upon More, and of More upon Vergil, see *History*, ed. Sylvester, lxxv-lxxix.

against him, bringing him “vnstedfaste frendeshippe, for whiche hee was fain to pil [pillage] and spoyle in other places, and get him stedfast hatred.”<sup>38</sup> But these meager virtues cannot compete against the catalogue of his vices. They are too numerous to mention, but perhaps the unifying thread is dissimulation: “outwardly coumpinable [companionable] where he inwardely hated, not letting to kisse whome hee thoughte to kyll.”<sup>39</sup> Such oppositions abound in More. We are now firmly in the realm of invention: this is something that could hardly have been apparent to an impartial observer. In More’s account, Richard’s dissimulation shades easily into concealed ambition, Richard’s desire for the Crown even during the lifetime of Edward IV.

The History is by any reckoning a magnificent literary accomplishment, giving birth to the arch-villain that we know from Shakespeare. In particular, the work packs an emotional punch that is missing from earlier accounts such as André’s. As in Vergil, the princes are not just obstacles to Richard but “innocent tender children.”<sup>40</sup> Their mother, Elizabeth, tries heroically to save her youngest son from being committed to his uncle. Then when Richard has seized the throne, he turns next to the murder of his nephews:

But as he finished his time with y<sup>e</sup> beste death, and y<sup>e</sup> most righteous, y<sup>t</sup> is to wyt his own : so began he with the most piteous and wicked, I meane the lamentable murther of his innoocent nephewes, the young king and his tender brother.<sup>41</sup>

When the henchmen come for them in the Tower, the “sely children” are lying in bed, helpless prey for the murderers, who smother them with pillows:

Thei gaue vp to god their innocent soules into the ioyes of heauen, leauing to the tormentors their bodyes dead in the bed.<sup>42</sup>

38 *History*, ed. Sylvester, 8.

39 *History*, ed. Sylvester, 8.

40 *History*, ed. Sylvester, 86.

41 *History*, ed. Sylvester, 82.

42 *History*, ed. Sylvester, 85.

The murder of the princes is even a turning point for Richard. Ever after, More claims (citing the “credible report of such as wer secrete w<sup>t</sup> his chamberers”), “he neuer hadde quiet in his minde” but when he went abroad, “his eyen whirled about, his body priuily fenced, his hand euer on his dager, his countenance and maner like one alway ready to strike againe.” Restless at night, he “rather slumbred then slept, troubled wyth feareful dreames, sodainly sometyme sterte vp, leape out of his bed & runne about the chamber, so was his restles herte continually tossed & tumbled w<sup>t</sup> the tedious impression & stormy remembrance of his abominable dede.”<sup>43</sup>

Such are the major literary sources for the reign of Richard III. Together, they provide students with sufficient material to begin forming their own narratives. At the conclusion of the unit, I ask the students to commit to a position on Richard in a short “position paper” responding to this statement: “The only reason that Richard III has been vilified is that he lost the Battle of Bosworth Field. His historical reputation is proof of the old adage that history is written by the victors.” In some way, I feel it’s important for them to take the first step toward constructing their own narrative out of primary sources.

I also require a final project in the form of a paper, which may cover any of the three “mysteries.” If the students choose to write about Richard III, I ask them to focus on a narrow theme, something that is manageable in the space of twelve to fifteen pages, using the primary sources. I offer suggestions, but I also encourage them to come up with their own possibilities. One idea is to trace a theme in the sources, such as the treatment of the princes, Richard as tyrant, Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV, the nobility, Henry VI, or the Battle of Bosworth Field. Some of these will require more research into the secondary literature than others, and of course other themes are possible. A second idea is to offer a close reading of one source or to compare two or more sources: Polydore Vergil and Thomas More; Bernard André and Vergil or More; Dominic Mancini and More; the Croyland Chronicler and Polydore Vergil. A third is to examine a source that we did not read in class, such as one of

43 *History*, ed. Sylvester, 87.

the London chronicles or a later source such as Hall, Holinshed, or the so-called “Encomium of Richard III,” billed as “the earliest defense of King Richard III.”<sup>44</sup>

Of course the serious student will wish to consult the sizeable secondary literature on Richard and the late fifteenth-century background to his life and reign.<sup>45</sup> Although the emphasis in this course is on primary sources, I certainly encourage their exploration of the secondary literature, and I provide them with a bibliography that appears below. The most important criterion for the final essay is that I begin to hear the students speak in their own voice. Students are free to make of Richard what they will. Ideally, the mystery of Richard and the princes will not be an end in itself, but the first step to a deeper understanding of the historical enterprise.

#### **Unsolved Historical Mysteries: Selected Bibliography**

I have intentionally kept this bibliography small for the purposes of this course. For further bibliographic guidance, see the extensive website of the American branch of the Richard III Society. The *Ricardian* also publishes an extremely helpful annotated bibliography with every annual issue. Pollard, Richard III though now dated, has a helpful section for “Further Reading,” which is reprinted with permission on the Richard III Society’s website. The best search engines are probably the Bibliography of British and Irish History and the International Medieval Bibliography, both searchable (with subscription) through the Brepolis gateway.

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44 Kincaid, *The Encomium*.

45 For an overview of some other primary sources, see Ross, *Richard III*, xxxiv-xli.

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*Forensic Reconstruction of the Face of Richard III*