

The Enduring Appeal of Richard III

Harriet Jordan, 2002

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*It has indeed been confidently asserted that [Richard the 3d] killed his two Nephews & his Wife, but it has also been declared that he did **not** kill his two Nephews.¹*

Richard III has been a presence in the popular imagination for centuries. There are, however, two radically different Richard IIIs appearing in the works of novelists, historians and playwrights/filmmakers. On the one hand, we have the traditional Evil Richard, who may have first appeared in writing in the histories of Polydore Vergil (1534) and Sir Thomas More (1543 and 1557), but who undoubtedly gained his ongoing fame – or infamy – as a result of William Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Richard III*, and the earlier *Henry VI* plays. Opposing him is Defamed Richard, who first saw light of day in 1619 with Sir George Buck’s five-part *The History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third*, but whose main impact on the public consciousness came as recently as 1951 with the publication of Josephine Tey’s *The Daughter of Time*. Unlike virtually any other historical figure, Richard III manages to be both “an enduring symbol of evil and conversely a white knight whose honour has been besmirched by his enemies.”² Thus, his ongoing appeal arises from a number of very different sources.

When Shakespeare wrote his *Richard III*, England was still under the rule of the Tudors, and so it would hardly have been politic to present Richard in a sympathetic light. However, claims that Shakespeare’s play was “Tudor propaganda” are probably unjust. “Shakespeare was much more interested in drama than in historical fact or even propaganda. A balanced, objective portrait of

¹ Austen, Jane. *The History of England from the reign of Henry the 4th to the death of Charles the 1st*. By a partial, prejudiced & ignorant Historian. The Quince Tree Press, 1791.

² Michalove, Sharon D. “The Reinvention of Richard III”. Paper presented at the conference *Reinventing the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Constructions of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*. Arizona, 1995. <<http://www.r3.org/bookcase/mlove1.html>>

Richard, showing his good and bad qualities, would have made a dull play indeed.”³ The essence of Evil Richard was already present in Shakespeare’s sources - Vergil and More – and Shakespeare would have had no real reason to question this perspective. He therefore chose to use the historical material as a starting point in creating an unforgettable villain. Where it suited his dramatic purpose, Shakespeare was consistent with his sources. For example, although there is now very serious question about whether Richard was a hunchback, More and Vergil had no doubts that this was the case, and it gave Shakespeare the double benefit of providing Richard with an outward semblance of, and a stated reason for, his inner evil (“since I cannot prove a lover ... I am determined to prove a villain”⁴).

However, Shakespeare made numerous, significant changes. For example, the duration of *Richard III* appears to be “less than a month, of which 11 days are portrayed on the stage”⁵. However, the events presented occurred historically between 1471 and 1485. Although Shakespeare’s Richard says of Anne “I’ll have her but I will not keep her long”, their marriage actually lasted for many years. To heighten the dramatic contrast with Richard’s villainy, Shakespeare presents other characters in a manner that is clearly at odds with the known facts. For example, the Clarence of the play - “simple, plain Clarence” - is presented as a deceived innocent, and is often portrayed by actors who carry an element of quiet saintliness about them. The real man, by contrast, would appear to be one who, by any standards, was singularly lacking in any sense of integrity or family feeling.

Furthermore, regardless of any questions surrounding who – if anyone - was responsible for the deaths of the Richard’s two nephews, his wife, Prince Edward and Henry VI (and in fact there were no such questions in Shakespeare’s sources),

³ Fields, Bertram. *Royal Blood*. Stroud Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing, 2000, p. 19. (First published 1998 by ReganBooks.)

⁴ Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Richard III*. South Melbourne, Sydney University Press, 1989, I i 28-30. (Edited from the Quarto of 1597 and the Folio of 1623.)

⁵ Weinsoft, Judy R. “Strutting and Fretting His Hour Upon the Stage: An Analysis of the Characterisation of Richard in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* and Daviot’s *Dickon*.” Lecture presented at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1993. <<http://www.r3.org/struttxt.html>>

there was simply no suggestion in the source material that Richard arranged the murder of Clarence.

With the exception of Shakespeare, no one writing at the time, or even in the Tudor period, lays this crime at Richard's door. Shakespeare, of course, was looking for drama and seeking to create a dramatic supervillain, rather than to report the facts.⁶

And create a supervillain he did. *The Tragedy of Richard III* has always been one of Shakespeare's most popular plays, with both actors and theatergoers. Over the centuries, virtually every great Shakespearean actor has tried to place his own stamp upon the part. Many, indeed, have "chosen Richard to mark a debut or a particularly important theatrical occasion"⁷. In the last fifty years, the play has reached an even wider audience through Laurence Olivier's and Ian McKellen's successful film versions.

[This] popularity is owed largely to the character of Richard, who, from his opening soliloquy, dominates the play and continually threatens to subvert in the minds of the audience the very political and moral orthodoxy by which he is condemned. There tends to be something dramatically appealing, even perversely admirable, in the villain who stands defiantly alone. ... However repellent in his villainy, Richard is also devilishly appealing in the energy with which he pursues his ambitions, in the confidences he shares with the audience, in his histrionic skills, and in the grim, clear-sighted humour he directs at himself as well as at his victims.⁸

Much of this domination comes from Richard's direct communication with the audience: "twelve soliloquies and four asides (179 lines, 5 percent of those in the entire play)"⁹. Rather than being cases of Richard thinking aloud, these soliloquies give him the opportunity to dazzle his accomplices – the audience. He is speaking directly to us as he tells of all his thoughts and plans, expecting – not requesting – our admiration, and thus making us accessories to his crimes.

⁶ Fields, *op. cit.* p. 263.

⁷ Colley, Scott. *Richard's Himself Again: A Stage History of Richard III*. New York, Greenwood Press, 1992, p. 1.

⁸ Miller, Anthony. "Introduction" in Shakespeare, William *The Tragedy of Richard III*, South Melbourne, Sydney University Press, 1989, p. 11.

⁹ Champion, Larry S. *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories*. Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1980, p. 61.

Richard III is one of the longest of Shakespeare's plays – exceeded only by *Hamlet* – and is dominated by the title character, who appears in ten of the eighteen scenes, and delivers over one thousand of the 3,534 lines. Most productions have been forced to reduce the running time, normally “by sacrificing nearly everything but the Duke of Gloucester's part”¹⁰. The play is also one that suffered from “tampering” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For over one hundred and fifty years, the accepted text was not Shakespeare's original, but Colley Cibber's adaptation, which not only cut lines from the play, but also included many new lines of Cibber's own creation. (Cibber's influence was felt even in the twentieth century, when he received an authorial credit in Olivier's film due to the use of some of his most popular lines, such as “Off with his head; so much for Buckingham”, and “Richard's himself again”.)

For this reason, there have been many subtle – and not so subtle – differences in the Richards performed over the centuries. Richard III can be seen as a proto-Macbeth, driven to disaster by his ambition, or as a psychopath, or as an engaging villain, or even as an almost comic figure. To take just two examples, Laurence Olivier's film Richard is “a charming, complete villain ... there are but few traces extant of the stirrings of conscience that Shakespeare's Richard had to shake off vigorously”¹¹. In fact, Olivier's Richard has been seen as “the culmination and even distillation of the Colley Cibber tradition”¹². Ian McKellen's film is a complete contrast to this. He wanted to

explore Richard's humanity rather than reduce him to an emblem of wickedness ... he is a tyrant, not a psychopath. Indeed, rather late in the day, he reveals a troubled conscience in his final, alarming soliloquy. I attempted to make this guilt more credible in the screenplay, helped by

¹⁰ Colley, *op. cit.* p. 3.

¹¹ Buhler, Stephen M. “Camp *Richard III* and the Burdens of (Stage/Film) History”, in Burnett, Mark Thornton and Wray, Ramona, *Shakespeare, Film, Fin de Siècle*. Hampshire, Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000, p. 53.

¹² *ibid.*

cinematic close up, by hinting a Richard's inner moral turmoil each time a victim dies.¹³

Whatever the actor's interpretation, Richard III is a powerful role, with the ability to move audiences. The part may have little to do with the historical Richard, but, as Laurence Olivier said,

it would be a great pity ... if Shakespeare's play was to be denied existence on the stage or on the screen, because it's a very beautiful bit of work. ... [W]hat a pity all legends should die, merely because they're disproven.

Because of its legendary qualities, Shakespeare's play has always been the most well known presentation of Richard III, and therefore the most powerful driver behind the general public perception of Evil Richard. The first printed rebuttal of this view, that of Sir William Cornwallis, was actually published as early 1616. However, since it formed part of his *Essayes of Certain Paradoxes*, this should not be considered a true "defence" of Richard, but rather "an intellectual exercise in which [Cornwallis] sought to demonstrate that a proposition generally accepted as true was, in fact, false"¹⁴.

It therefore seems that the earliest genuine presentation of Defamed Richard is that of Sir George Buck, whose *The History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third* was written in 1619. Over a century later, in 1768, Horace Walpole published *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard the Third*.

By this time, the subject had captured the imagination of educated Englishmen, and Walpole's book was an immediate best-seller. Every copy sold within one day of its publication. David Hume and other disagreed with Walpole and said so. But at least now there was thoughtful debate on the subject and not merely fanciful, prejudiced cant.¹⁵

This debate, if not continuing, was at least still known in 1791, when the fifteen year old Jane Austen was writing her *History of England*; and by 1813 Dr Samuel Parr was sufficiently pro-Richard to arrange for the erection of a cairn at Bosworth

¹³ McKellen, Ian. *William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Screenplay Written by Ian McKellen & Richard Loncraine*. <<http://www.mckellen.com/cinema/richard/screenplay>>

¹⁴ Fields, *op. cit.* p. 20.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

Field “to mark the well from which the King is said to have drunk during the battle”¹⁶. Similarly, in 1844 Caroline Halsted published a two-volume work that presented Richard as “a splendid human being and an efficient and beneficent monarch”¹⁷.

In 1878, James Gairdner returned to Evil Richard in *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third*, which accepted “tradition” on questions for which there was no proof. However, Sir Clements Markham publicly debated with Gairdner, with his 1891 publication of an article in the *English Historical Review*. In 1906, Markham published his own book, *Richard III: His Life and Character*, in which he “presented a flawless, saint-like Richard and concluded that the princes were murdered by Henry VII”¹⁸.

In 1924, a Liverpool surgeon, Saxon Barton, together with a small group of amateur historian friends, formed The Fellowship of the White Boar. They believed that history “had not dealt justly with [Richard III’s] posthumous reputation and they wanted to encourage and promote a more balanced view”¹⁹. However, the Fellowship “remained a relatively small and informal grouping ... [whose] activities inevitably declined with the onset of the Second World War”²⁰.

In 1944, when Laurence Olivier first played Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, Elizabeth MacKintosh, who wrote plays under the pseudonym of “Gordon Daviot”, sent a copy of her unperformed work *Dickon* to Olivier. She had previously written the play *Richard of Bordeaux*, a sympathetic study of Richard II, and *Dickon* was an equally sympathetic portrayal of Richard III. Olivier’s recollection was that

¹⁶ Sign on a gate at Bosworth field. Erected at some point in time between 1924 and 1959.

¹⁷ Fields, *op. cit.* p. 21.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ “The Society - History” in Trump, Neil, *The Richard III Society Website*.
<<http://www.richardiii.net>>

²⁰ *ibid.*

A very good play it was, too – and she wanted me to do it right after having played the Shakespeare play. But actually – I don't know why not, it was a very good play – just time didn't allow me to do it.²¹

It would prove to be more than ten years before this play was performed (and not by Olivier, who was then in the process of immortalizing Shakespeare's *Richard III* on film). However, Elizabeth MacKintosh had another connection with the 20th century presentation of Defamed Richard. As well as being a playwright, she was also a writer of detective stories, under a different pseudonym – Josephine Tey. And it was in this guise that she became perhaps the key figure in bringing Defamed Richard into the eye of the general population.

Tey's novel *The Daughter of Time* was published in 1951. By using the popular genre of detective fiction to present her historical story, Tey provided herself with a wider audience than that available to Walpole. Furthermore, the protagonist of *The Daughter of Time* is Tey's pre-established fictional detective, Alan Grant, who was first seen in the 1929 novel *The Man in the Queue*, and had appeared in three other detective novels - *A Shilling for Candles* (1936), *The Franchise Affair* (1949) and *To Love and Be Wise* (1950) – before *The Daughter of Time*. As an "Alan Grant novel", *The Daughter of Time* came with a built-in audience, many of whom would previously have had little to no knowledge of, or interest in, Richard III.

In *The Daughter of Time*, Alan Grant is confined to a hospital bed. His fascination with a portrait of Richard III leads him to use his detective skills to investigate the question of what the man was actually like, and who *really* murdered the two princes in the tower.

In her novel (which, like her play, is heavily based on the writings of Sir Clements Markham), Tey makes a powerful case for Defamed Richard. Grant begins with the accepted assumption of Evil Richard, as does everyone to whom he

²¹ Olivier, Laurence, Clark, Alexander and Falkenberg, Jinx. Radio interview. New York City, National Broadcasting Corp, December 3, 1955.
<<http://www.r3.org/onstage/friend2.html>>

speaks. In fact, they all appear to be remarkably well informed about Evil Richard²², each person providing Grant with a new snippet of information.

As the novel progresses, and Grant and Carradine find more and more evidence suggesting that Richard III was an admirable man, rather than a villain, the reader gets carried along with them, and is finally convinced that Richard was totally innocent of the crime of murdering his two nephews. The evidence presented to support the claim that the murder was performed by Henry Tudor is more circumstantial, but by this stage the reader is likely to be so caught up in the story that they will not think to question the assumptions made by Grant.

Tey very deliberately manipulates the reader into sharing her point of view. Like Shakespeare, she exercises artistic license with the facts, omitting things that do not support the story she wishes to present. Unlike Shakespeare, however, she does not have the justification of dramatic necessity. Within her fictional context, she nonetheless purports to be presenting an accurate history of the period: this should, therefore, preclude her from censoring the material she presents. The credibility – if not the power – of her work is substantially reduced by the fact that she guides the reader into her way of thinking by means of withholding any facts that contradict it. It is possible that her view is correct. However, her technique prevents the reader from making his/her own, informed decision on the matter.

Another problem with credibility in Tey's work is the actual presentation. Grant treats the study of Richard III as a standard police case, investigating matters such as who benefits and how the people concerned reacted, and looking

²² Even if this were realistic in 1950s England, it is extremely improbable that a similar random collection of people today would have this level of knowledge. Certainly, in Australia, where English history is not commonly taught in schools, many people are not even sure who Richard III is, and for those who are aware of him, the knowledge does not extend much beyond "Shakespeare wrote a play about him". Those who know more tend to be either history enthusiasts, or people who have developed a very specific interest in Richard III – often as a result of reading *The Daughter of Time*.

for “a break in the pattern somewhere”²³. Grant, as an experienced policeman, feels that he is therefore fully qualified to undertake this form of investigation. However, Grant is a fictional construct, and Josephine Tey, his creator, was *not* an experienced policeman. As a writer of detective stories, it is possible that she familiarized herself with police procedures and methods, and may even have studied actual cases. However, being able to write a detective story does not mean that one is capable of solving an actual crime. Alan Grant’s putative qualifications for undertaking a fresh examination of the evidence are really no more than a smokescreen to hide the fact that Josephine Tey, herself, had little relevant life experience to bring to the matter.

A modern reader of *The Daughter of Time* may be aware of a third problem of credibility with the work, although it is one for which it is unfair to blame Tey. The starting point of the novel is that Grant does not believe the portrait of Richard III shows the face of a murderer. Unfortunately for Tey, this portrait, which she had assumed to be painted from life, has now been “tree-ring dated to the period 1518-23”²⁴. This means that while it could have been painted at any time *after* 1518, it could not possibly have been painted before this date – a date which is more than 30 years after Richard’s death! Tey places a great deal of emphasis on the fact that Sir Thomas More, thought of as the “contemporary authority”, could not possibly have known the real Richard, as he was only eight years old when Richard died at Bosworth. “Everything in that history was hearsay.”²⁵ Ironically, the new information that we now have about the portrait means that it suffers from the same problem. While probably based on another work, now lost, this nevertheless means that the painting, like More’s history, is “hearsay”. Even if the artist had actually seen Richard, the portrait must still have been painted from a very dim memory. Furthermore, in 1973 an X-ray was taken of the painting, which revealed that it had been altered. Richard’s right shoulder was adjusted, and the eyes were narrowed. Bernard Fields feels that this narrowing was done “presumably to create

²³ Tey, Josephine. *The Daughter of Time*. London, Arrow Books, 2002, p. 179. (First published 1951 by William Heinemann.)

²⁴ Fields, *op. cit.* p. 282.

²⁵ Tey, *op. cit.* p. 83.

an evil countenance”²⁶. However, Tey’s Alan Grant fails to notice the different heights of the shoulders, and finds the narrow eyes quite compelling:

The expression in the eyes – that most arresting and individual expression²⁷

He lay a long time looking at that face; at those extraordinary eyes. They were long eyes, set close under the brows; the brows slightly drawn in that worried, over-conscientious frown. At first glance they appeared to be peering; but as one looked one found that they were in fact withdrawn, almost absent-minded. ²⁸

One cannot blame Tey for failing to see what future technology would reveal. However, it is unfortunate for her that one of her key points – at an emotional, if not a factual level – has proven to be unfounded.

However, in spite of the questions over credibility, Tey’s work has undoubtedly been enormously influential in the swell of popular support for Defamed Richard. As a result of reading the novel, Isolde Wigram became a staunch supporter of Richard.

She discovered the existence of the Fellowship [of the White Boar] and tracked down Saxon Barton. He appointed her secretary and she became the key driving force in re-activating the Fellowship. ... At a meeting in London in 1956 the Fellowship was formally reconstituted on a wider membership basis. ²⁹

In 1959 the Fellowship was renamed the “Richard III Society” (a more meaningful, if less evocative, title), and it now has branches and affiliated groups worldwide.

Since the publication of *The Daughter of Time*, there have been numerous popular histories of Richard III (some supporting Evil Richard, and some Defamed Richard). In addition, Defamed Richard is present in most of the fictionalized biographies of Richard III, as well as a number of novels set in the 15th century. In fact, writers of fiction seem to be far more interested in Defamed Richard than in

²⁶ Fields, *op. cit.* p. 282.

²⁷ Tey, *op. cit.* p. 27.

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 28.

²⁹ “The Society - History” in Trump, Neil, *The Richard III Society Website*.
<<http://www.richardiii.net>>

Evil Richard. Writers of popular histories, by contrast, appear to be engaged in ongoing debate as to which of the two was the “real” Richard.

An interesting subtext of Tey’s work is her loathing of historians:

He began to wonder whether historians were possessed of minds any more commonsensical than those Great Minds he had encountered, who had been so credulous.³⁰

“Do you think historians really *listen* to what they are saying?”³¹

“Historians should be compelled to do a course in psychology before they are allowed to write.”³²

In fact, this may provide a clue as to one of the reasons why Defamed Richard has become so popular. Believing in Defamed Richard, when the traditional histories tell of Evil Richard, allows people to feel “one up” on the experts. It gives them a sense of being more perceptive and knowledgeable than the general population, who blindly accept what they are told by historians.

However, this is probably not the only reason for ongoing interest in, and support for, Defamed Richard. There are a number of other ways in which he touches different aspects of the popular imagination.

For one thing, there is “the famous Anglo-Saxon weakness for the underdog”³³. The sense that there has been a dreadful miscarriage of justice inspires many people with a passion to “right the wrong” – and, of course, others with an equal passion to defend the system.

There is also the “fun of an unsolved puzzle”³⁴. Nobody *really* knows what happened to the two princes – were they actually murdered, and if so, when and by

³⁰ Tey, *op. cit.* p. 148.

³¹ *ibid.* p. 161.

³² *ibid.* p. 217

³³ Peters, Elizabeth. *The Murders of Richard III*. New York, Warner Books Inc, 1986, p. 22. (First published 1974.)

³⁴ *ibid.*

whom - so there is room for endless speculation. In this regard, interest the Princes in the Tower – and hence Richard III - can be placed in the same category as, for example, Anastasia Romanov. And, of course, the disappearance of the princes is only one of the mysteries surrounding the end of the Wars of the Roses.

Was his womanizing brother, Edward IV, already secretly married to another woman when he supposedly married the mother of the two princes? Edward died unexpectedly as forty-one, leaving a twelve-year-old boy as his heir. Had he been poisoned by agents of the French King?

How did Richard's future queen come to be hidden away from him disguised as a kitchen maid? What was the true relationship between Richard and his attractive young niece?

Why did Richard pay an enormous sum to the supposed murderer of the two princes, and why did Henry VII grant that same man two general pardons only one month apart? Why did Henry raise no hue and cry when he took over the Tower in 1485 and found the princes missing? Why did his parliamentary indictment of Richard fail to include the explicit charge of regicide? And why did Henry let a man who assertedly confessed to committing the murders at Richard's behest remain free and unpunished for decades? Was the handsome "pretender" who captivated the crowned heads of Europe really the younger of the two princes supposedly murdered years before? ... And, of course, who were the two young skeletons found buried under a Tower staircase in 1674?³⁵

History is always full of questions. However, in this case the central mystery of the princes is so surrounded by other unexplained events that it makes endless debate possible, and allows for an extraordinarily broad spectrum of opinions as to what "really" happened.

In addition to all this, Richard III was the last of the Plantagenets, and the last English king to die in battle. This gives him a definite Romantic aspect. "If there is such a thing as charisma, maybe some people have an extra-large dose. Enough to carry through five hundred years."³⁶

In works of fiction (including fictionalized biographies) Defamed Richard appears to rule supreme among writers since Josephine Tey. Less than ten years after the publication of *The Daughter of Time*, the children's novelist Antonia Forest,

³⁵ Fields, *op. cit.* p. 2.

³⁶ Peters, *op. cit.* p. 22.

used one of her characters as a mouthpiece for what were very probably her own sentiments:

“He never touched the little beasts. That was the story Henry VII put out to make it look as if it was much the best thing for the Tudors to usurp and kick the Plantagenets out. ... He was a terrific person, Richard, really.”³⁷

In a later book in the same series, we learn that this character has an unspoken desire to “unearth incontrovertible conclusive proof that the two princes were alive and well and living in the Tower when Richard Third was killed at Bosworth”³⁸.

Also writing in a modern setting, Elizabeth George “chose to make one of [the continuing characters for her novels] a Ricardian Apologist, the better to have opportunities to take potshots at ... Henry Tudor”³⁹. In the unrelated short story “I, Richard”, George has a different character find the “incontrovertible conclusive proof” that Forest’s hero yearned for⁴⁰, while in Elizabeth Peters’ *The Murders of Richard III*, the characters are excited by a similar piece of evidence – the lost letter from Elizabeth of York to her uncle - which unfortunately proves to be a forgery.

Elizabeth Peters and Elizabeth George are both, like Jospheine Tey, crime novelists using present day settings to defend Richard III. Another writer of detective stories, Kate Sedley, chose to present her version of the man himself, in her series of Roger the Chapman stories set in the 1470s.

It’s my privilege to have met our late King Richard, even to have been of some use to him, God bless him! ... The Richard people talk about now is a

³⁷ Forest, Antonia. *Falconer’s Lure*. Faber and Faber, London, 1957, p. 72.

³⁸ Forest, Antonia. *The Attic Term*. Harmondsworth Middlesex, Puffin Books, 1982. p151. (First published 1976 by Faber and Faber.)

³⁹ George, Elizabeth. *I, Richard*. London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2001, p. 215.

⁴⁰ The evidence in this case is a letter written by Richard on the eve of Bosworth, instructing that the two Princes be given into the care of John de la Pole. The extremely unsympathetic protagonist of this story develops a theory that the murder of the Princes was arranged by Elizabeth of York, who wished to be Henry’s Queen.

hunchbacked monstrosity, steeped in blood and evil. But that isn't the man that I remember.⁴¹

In the first novel, *Death and the Chapman*, Roger actually becomes involved in one of the real mysteries surrounding Richard III: the temporary disappearance of Anne Neville shortly before her marriage. Although Richard does not appear in all the novels, Roger several times has occasion to perform services for him. As the series progresses, we get a pro-Richard view of the events of history, such as Richard's desire to save his brother from execution in *The Goldsmith's Daughter*. As the most recent novel – *The Lammas Feast* – is set in July 1478, we have not yet seen Sedley's view of the events following the death of Edward. However, it seems reasonable to suppose that Richard's role will be entirely admirable, and he will certainly not be responsible for the deaths of the princes.

Another set of historical novels that present Defamed Richard are Robert Farrington's stories about Henry Morane. Even though he serves Henry VII faithfully after Bosworth, Morane never releases his original allegiance to "Dickon". He works towards the downfall of those who betrayed Richard, and ultimately, when offered a favour by Henry VII, requests "that a tomb be erected for Richard of Gloucester, whose memory, as is well known, I still hold in much respect"⁴². Similarly, many fictionalized biographies of Richard place him in a good light, and typically make him innocent of the deaths of the princes. Reay Tannahill's recent novel, *The Seventh Son*, shows Reginald Bray masterminding their murders, while Sharon Penman's bestseller *The Sunne in Splendour* makes a case against the Duke of Buckingham.

Among popular histories, on the other hand, the question of Richard's guilt or innocence continues to be debated. Alison Weir, in *The Princes in the Tower*, presents a vehemently anti-Richard perspective on the events. However, she has been accused, like Josephine Tey, of manipulating the facts to suit her thesis. Events are omitted, or misrepresented, and conclusions are presented as self evident when they are really based on the flimsiest of material.

⁴¹ Sedley, Kate. *Death and the Chapman*. London, Headline Book Publishing, 1994, p. 5. (First published 1991 by HarperCollins Publishers.)

⁴² Farrington, Robert. *The Traitors of Bosworth*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1978, p. 251.

A recent work taking the opposing view is Bertram Fields' *Royal Blood: King Richard III and the Mystery of the Princes*. This work actually makes a very interesting contrast to *The Daughter of Time*. Just as Alan Grant brought his (fictional) police experience to addressing the problem, so Fields uses his (real) experience as a lawyer to look at the issues.

There is no attorney better known in the entertainment industry than Bert Fields ... Fields's fame is partly due to his celebrity clients ... But his reputation as a legendary litigator is based on stellar performances in the courtroom and at the negotiating table ... He is also famous as the lawyer able to argue any side of the issue, for any industry party, and win.⁴³

Fields' approach to Richard III is nominally impartial – he aims to “explore and evaluate the arguments on each side, to weigh the evidence and, peering through the mist of centuries, to come as close as possible to the elusive truth”⁴⁴. In fact, however, the work is clearly a defence of Richard III – albeit somewhat more subtle than *The Daughter of Time*. While Fields often acknowledges the negative interpretation that can be placed on events, he almost invariably follows this up with a point of view that places Richard in a good light. His repetitive use of certain adjectives when talking about people – eg Henry VI is frequently referred to as “poor Henry” – indicates how we ought to feel about them. In other words, he uses many techniques which must have also served him well when influencing a jury to find in favour of his clients.

Unlike Tey, Fields presents the historical events in chronological order – making their sequence rather more comprehensible. His work is also far more detailed, and does not appear to omit facts that do not support his point of view (although this could also be said of Weir, and if there are any flaws in his presentation, then doubtless the next biography of Richard III will point them out). Unsurprisingly, Fields takes a very legalistic position, not only examining the validity of the evidence, but also legal questions such as whether, in law, the two princes were illegitimate. After examining the events that lead up to Bosworth Field,

⁴³ Collins, Julia. “HLS Names in Lights.” *Harvard Law Bulletin*, Spring 1998. <
<http://www.law.harvard.edu/alumni/bulletin/backissues/spring98/article21.html>>

⁴⁴ Fields, *op. cit.* p. 2.

Fields then considers other courtroom questions, such as the physical evidence (the bones found in the Tower) and whether Richard had a proclivity to kill. He also applies the legal principle of *falsus in unus, falsus in omnibus* to the source material - “if a witness is found to have testified falsely about one matter, it may be inferred that his testimony as to other matters is false as well”⁴⁵ – and finally, considers the other suspects. He concludes by pointing out that if we applied the criminal standards of “reasonable doubt” then “Richard would be acquitted of the crime by virtually any jury that heard the case”⁴⁶. He therefore approaches on the civil standard of “balance of probabilities”, and finds a very precise “twenty-five to forty-nine percent” probability that Richard murdered his nephews.

Fields’ work is just as convincing as Tey’s on an emotional level, and somewhat more satisfying intellectually. However, the reader still needs to recognize that they are being manipulated – in this case, by a very experienced and skilled courtroom lawyer.

Shakespeare’s Richard III claimed that “There is no creature loves me, And if I die no soul will pity me”⁴⁷. History has proven this despairing statement wrong. Even at the time of Richard’s death, the councillors of the city of York recorded that “King Richard ... was piteously slain and murdered, to the great heaviness of this city”⁴⁸ – a brave statement, given the probable reaction of the new Tudor monarch. In the 20th century, the Society of the White Boar described the events of Bosworth as follows:

At the age of 32, King Richard III fell fighting gallantly in defence of his realm
& his crown against the usurper Henry Tudor.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *ibid.* p. 276.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 301.

⁴⁷ Shakespeare, *op. cit.* V, iii, 204-5.

⁴⁸ Cited in numerous references, including Fields, Michalove, Peters and Tey.

⁴⁹ Sign on a gate at Bosworth field. Erected at some point in time between 1924 and 1959.

Shakespeare's genius has made Evil Richard come alive for theatergoers over the centuries, while at least since the 1950s the general public has been devouring historical and fictional works about Defamed Richard.

Henry Tudor may have won at Bosworth. However, he has been largely forgotten by history, eclipsed in the popular memory by his larger-than-life successor, as well as by his fascinating predecessor. Richard, although defeated, continues to seize the popular imagination, and excite passions, even in the present day.

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