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Temporal Compression in Shakespeare's *Richard III*

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Abstract: Shakespeare's treatment of Richard III has long been the cause of debates about Tudor defamations of the last Yorkist king. Within this context, some attention has been paid to the play's extreme compression of events that in fact took place over a period of seven years, from the death of George, Duke of Clarence in 1478 to the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. This study investigates the momentum of events to gauge the extent to which the representation of Richard does paint him in an entirely negative light. Detailed analysis of the timeline demonstrates that the way the play re-structures historical moments is designed to foreground not only the figure of Richard himself, with all its attendant associations, but also the very methods used to concentrate attention upon him. The self-referential nature of the play's relationship to history points to its own constructions, foregrounding the techniques used to show not only the legend of Richard, but how it is elaborated. The play therefore draws attention to its own manipulation of events, which in turn makes any assumptions about its representation of Richard as villain open to question.

Keywords: history; Richard III; Shakespeare; structure; temporal compression; time

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1. Introduction

This study of Shakespeare's *Richard III* (Richard III n.d.) situates the play firmly in relation to Shakespeare's use of history, further modulated by a critical awareness of the play's self-aware artificiality. On the surface the play purports to be a historical drama as it relates various episodes from the life of Richard of Gloucester as he moves increasingly towards becoming King of England and his later career as monarch. However, it does so by compressing timelines and conflating events—sometimes, indeed, inventing them entirely. The result makes it look as though Richard's rise to the throne is inevitable due to his virtuoso manipulation of everyone around him, including, at the start of the play, his brothers the Duke of Clarence and King Edward IV. Even though it is possible to consider the play as supporting the Tudor version, with Richard painted as the ultimate villain, the play is nevertheless well aware of the way it rearranges the historical material to suit. Shakespeare's audiences were composed from people from all walks of life, some of them very highly educated indeed. Many audience members would therefore be able to recognize the many points where the play departs from historical veracity, thus producing an acknowledgement of the way the drama plays with history. The position taken in this study is that *Richard III* foregrounds its artificial arrangement of history; it is not enough simply to see it as replicating anti-Ricardian propaganda.

Most modern editions of the play provide footnotes that detail at least some of the correspondences with historical events. However, this has the paradoxical result of divorcing the treatment of history in the play from the action, as though it is simply contextual rather than structural. More fully annotated scholarly editions will rectify this situation by commenting on the play's uses of history, often in a section forming part of a long introduction. This is the procedure followed, as might be expected, in the Third Arden edition of *Richard III* (Siemon 2009), although it mostly does so in relation to the machiavellian features of the character of Richard (Siemon 2009, Introduction, pp. 8–18). The

effect of this kind of treatment can often be to relate the play's compression of historical timelines and its divergence from them to an effect of dramatic characterization. This seems reasonable enough given the performative power wielded by the figure of Richard, but it does run the risk of reducing a wide range of possibilities by placing them in relation to his characterization alone. The Folger online version supports its versions of the texts with handy synopses, but again in the case of *Richard III* the effect is one of concentration upon Richard's personality:

> As *Richard III* opens, Richard is Duke of Gloucester and his brother, Edward IV, is king. Richard is eager to clear his way to the crown. He manipulates Edward into imprisoning their brother, Clarence, and then has Clarence murdered in the Tower. Meanwhile, Richard succeeds in marrying Lady Anne, even though he killed her father-in-law, Henry VI, and her husband. (Folger web version, last accessed on 30 September 2022)

One would not necessarily expect a synopsis to draw attention to issues of historical detail; nevertheless, the removal of the play's questionable uses of history from consideration produces the effect of concentrating radically upon Richard as a figure, so ensuring that he becomes the only centre of attention.

One way around this conundrum is to investigate the play's rather complex generic classification. As Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin note, the First Folio's categorisation of the play as a history is contradicted by the title pages of the quartos, which define the play as a tragedy. They then go on to contextualise this particular play in relation to our contemporary tendency to think of the story of Richard as tragic and not just historical, although they do caution that the two are often conflated in the period (Howard and Rackin 1997, pp. 100–1). Their interest is how the play inflects nationalism via gender as well as genre and they note the use of sympathetic women in *Richard III* to generate audience awareness of the extent of Richard's crimes (Howard and Rackin 1997, pp. 103–5). They make the pertinent observation that "The reconstruction of history as tragedy in *Richard III* is accompanied by a remarkable transformation in the representation and placement of female characters" (Howard and Rackin 1997, p. 105). Although their focus is different from that adopted in the present essay, their awareness of the actions wrought upon the historical material as it is modulated by gender representation is a useful one. It reminds us that the play's uses of history are not neutral.

Graham Holderness notes the ways in which Richard is self-consciously constructed by the play to figure forth the action of acting:

> Thus the decision to 'prove a villain' is as much a gesture of self-casting, the choice of a character, as it is a resigned submission to historical determinism; and an indication that Richard, the historical character, represented via the dramatic role, is presented as self-consciously aware of his own actorly status: he is an actor within the medium of a historical narrative, since he is conscious that his 'character' can be enacted only by the presence of such an actor in concrete theatrical realisation. (Holderness 2000, p. 85)

Such a manoeuvre helps to explain the extraordinary power wielded by the figure of Richard in performance, as well as the tendency of textual editors to ascribe the full force of the play's version of history directly to the character. Here, Holderness is drawing attention to a critical element of Renaissance theatrical representation: its self-aware artificiality, particularly in the techniques associated with characterisation. By stating that Richard is also an actor within a historical narrative as well as a historical figure, it is possible to note what a later culture might call the fictionalising of history: this both is and is not a history and a play. Richard is, precisely, a role, not a real person, and the complexities of such multiple gesturation in performance needs to be carefully unravelled. 'Richard', therefore, is not simply a person, but a role saturated with historical reference, to Shakespeare's period as well as to the Wars of the Roses. It reworks multiple contradictory historical sources.

Brian Walsh suggests in a chapter on the play that "[. . .] the theatrical convention turns historical recall into recall of an earlier play as much as of historical events; indeed, the events of the past, I will argue here, become inextricably tied to their theatrical embodiments." (Walsh 2009, pp. 145–46). Here again there is a crucial awareness that the play's presentation of history cannot be divorced from the staging requirements of its own theatrical culture; there is no easily defined purity of historical material in such circumstances.

To return to the issue of historicity by and through characterisation, in his book *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*, Stephen Greenblatt argues that characterisation is key in plays such as *Richard III* (Greenblatt 2019). Kai Wiegandt has more recently updated the debate about the play's uses of history in response to 21st-century concerns (Wiegandt 2020). The Abstract to his article sets the tone of his response to Greenblatt's position:

> Neither Greenblatt nor his critics noted, however, that at the very centre of Richard III—the central play in *Tyrant*—Shakespeare inserted a dialogue on the very questions of whether historical documents give later generations access to the past, and how these documents should be interpreted. In this article I demonstrate that Richard III develops an idea of history that speaks to the question of historicism versus presentism by pointing towards the mediality of historical knowledge. (Wiegandt 2020)

Wiegandt accordingly notes that continuous emphasis on characterisation alone can easily ignore urgent questions about the uses of history.

All these critical and scholarly texts circulate around the terrain of characterisation versus the presentation of historical material in the play, something that many of the more theorised critics suggest is a crucial concern of the play itself. It does not simply represent historical events, or even manipulate them to suit the purposes of theatrical representation. Instead, *Richard III* puts in question the way it refashions historical information with an awareness of the fundamental implications of misrepresentation.

2. Results

The results produced by a detailed examination of the play's engagement with history fall into two broad categories. Firstly, the temporal compression inevitably produces the effect of Richard as almost unstoppable as he rises to power; this effect can be assessed as according with the Tudor attacks on his name. The second, however, pulls against the first set of impressions because of the rather gleeful way *Richard III* plays with history. The situation has required a doubled perspective that pays attention both to the ways in which Shakespeare's history plays manipulate the historical material and also how that playing with history is dramatized within and for his own culture. *Richard III* is not the only Shakespeare play that manages this twofold operation. It is possible to see some of the same techniques of temporal compression and manipulation in *Henry V* (Demoux 2021), and the staging of pseudo-historical material for the purposes of popular dramatic entertainment in *1 Henry IV*, to name but two examples (Innes 2022).

3. Discussion

The historical events represented in Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses plays are most often relegated to the footnotes in critical editions. However, his portrayal of these events for the purposes of the stage needs to be treated with much more care than this, since their representation is central to the dramatic treatment of timelines. It is therefore worth tracing the relationship between historical events on the one hand, and Shakespeare's versions of them on the other, to establish a clear sense of the way the dramatist plays with history. Accordingly, this discussion uses a great deal of secondary historical information to establish a timeline for the Wars of the Roses and the rise of Richard. An overview of Shakespeare's version is provided immediately afterwards. Finally, there is a long section of comparison between the two. This procedure shows the history and Shakespeare's use of it, as well as a providing a thorough discussion of the implications of the relationship

between the two. It is a somewhat schematic approach, but it has the virtue of clarity of exposition.

3.1. Shakespeare's Sources

Put simply, a work written under a Tudor monarch would not describe Richard III in high esteem. However, writers in the period change their own historical perspective as the rulers change—James VI of Scotland takes the throne of England and suddenly works dealing with historical material may allow unfavourable representation of the Tudor line, as we see in Shakespeare's own plays such as *All is True*, also known as *Henry VIII*. Shakespeare often refigures Holinshed in works such as *Macbeth*, refashioning the story of King Duffe into his dramatic version of the death of King Duncan, as well as turning Macbeth's character into that of a tyrant. In relation to *Richard III*, Shakespeare's knowing reworking of historical narrative for the purposes of staged representation indicates an awareness of the anachronism and bias of More, Hall, Holinshed and their contemporaries.

Though there is still some debate, a work arguably favoured by Shakespeare is Edward Hall's Chronicle, which draws a reasonable amount from More (Begg 1935, last accessed 26 October 2022). With More's text having been reworked and re-published after his demise and no clear original text published within his lifetime, Shakespeare need not even draw upon texts other than the various publications of More to gain differing accounts of events. Between the different editions published by Grafton and Rastell there lies the textual equivalent of unsubstantiated rumour, with Richard's wickedness gaining more emphasis with each retelling. Alison Hanham characterises More's work as a metahistory, 'a lunatic, and so irreverent, comment on the whole craft of history' (Hanham 1975, p. 152). This can be seen in More's ironic quotation, 'And so they said that these matters be kings' games, as it were, stage plays, and for the most part played upon scaffolds, in which poor men be but the on-lookers' (More 2013, p. 73, last accessed 26 October 2022).

More's text makes some reference to the dates of important events, albeit sparsely, but his writing muddies timelines by prolific use of vague temporal dimensions, employing loose transitional terms such as "suddenly", "soon", "now" or "immediately". More rushes the actions in his work, creating a false sense of rapidity to history, which Shakespeare could be said to draw upon and mockingly accelerate. Both Hall and Holinshed's Chronicles make more direct and precise reference to dates and times, placing events on a relatively accurate scale similar to that presently derived by modern historians. Perhaps the main recommendation of Holinshed's has been the sensational discovery of Richard's remains in Leicester's own Greyfriar's Church, exactly where Holinshed places them (Holinshed 2014, last accessed 26 October 2022). Though the same characterisation of Richard III as a deformed, evil Machiavelli is present in Holinshed, he nevertheless deviates from More's more dramatically vilified tyrant by keeping Clarence and Richard on the same side. Holinshed has Edward IV as the arbitrator of Clarence's fate, acknowledging this as a factor responsible for his sons' demise as Clarence alone may have been able to have 'staied the crueltie of his brother of Glocester' (Holinshed 2014, last accessed 26 October 2022). Shakespeare's take on the butt of malmsey wine used to drown Clarence, described in more detail later, shows a derisive take on Hall and More's perpetuation of this absurd claim, which is not present in Holinshed. Additionally, it is possible Holinshed is incorrect about the bodies of the young Edward V and Duke of York being moved, as there were in fact two young bodies discovered under some stairs at the Tower of London. Of course, it is possible that Richard may have intended to move them, and it must be remembered that these bodies have not been officially confirmed as the princes of the tower.

3.2. Historical Timeline

Multiple sources have been consulted for this information and the most commonly accepted variations of the facts surrounding Richard III's life have been included here. Where dates have appeared ambiguous or have varied between sources, the specific date has been removed, leaving the month and year. Easily accessible websites have been

included in addition to formally published works in order to make the rather tangled timeline more manageable.

22 May 1455: First battle of the Wars of the Roses takes place at St Albans (Johnson, Historic UK website, last accessed 29 September 2022) (Johnson n.d.).

1460: Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, known as the 'Kingmaker', joins the Yorkists in a play for the throne. Henry VI is captured at Northampton, but the Yorkists agree with parliament that Henry should remain as the crowned king. (Irving, History Hit website, last accessed 29 September 2022) (Irving n.d.).

30 December 1460: Richard Duke of York dies in the battle of Wakefield, leaving his son Edward the heir to the Yorkist claim to the throne. (Johnson, Historic UK website, last accessed 29 September 2022) (Johnson n.d.).

February 1461: the Lancastrians win a victory at the Second Battle of St Albans. In response, Warwick has Edward of York declared by parliament as the rightful king of England, Edward IV. (Irving, History Hit website, last accessed 29 September 2022) (Irving n.d.).

29 March 1461: The Lancastrian Army is crushed at the Battle of Towton as the war turns in favour of the Yorkists. (University of Bradford Towton Mass Grave Project website, last accessed 29 September 2022) (Towton Mass Grave Project n.d.).

1461: Richard is made Duke of Gloucester.

1460–1462: Edward begins a courtship with Eleanor Talbot. Although it seems they married in 1461, there was no public declaration of their ever having been together. Edward ended the relationship shortly afterwards (Ashdown-Hill 2014, pp. 76–78).

1 May 1464: After courting her for some time, Edward IV marries Elizabeth Woodeville publicly announcing her as a bride he has married in secret; this shocks people who knew of his secret marriage to Eleanor Talbot (Ashdown-Hill 2014, pp. 76–78). The marriage angers the Earl of Warwick, who had been spending considerable time attempting to negotiate a marriage between Edward and a French princess (Dockray 2015, p. 96).

1466: By this point Edward has given titles to most of his Woodeville relatives as well as marrying them off to high-ranking members of the nobility. He also manages to alienate Warwick even more by passing over him the office of Treasurer of the Exchequer in favour of Elizabeth Woodeville's father (Dockray 2015, p. 96).

1467–1469: George, Duke of Clarence forms an alliance Warwick, both being very angry at Edward IV for his marriage to Elizabeth Woodeville and ennobling her family. Clarence marries Warwick's daughter Isabel Neville, a union which had been strictly forbidden by Edward IV (Ashdown-Hill 2014, pp. 89–97).

26 July 1469: Warwick and Clarence spearhead a surprise attack on Edward IV at the Battle of Edgecote Moor, winning a victory over Edward's army and capturing him. However, realising that they would need someone to play to the role of king and could not claim the throne themselves, they release him (University of Leicester Richard III website, last accessed 29 September 2022) (Who Was Richard III n.d.).

1470: Warwick and Clarence then turn their forces in favour of the Lancastrian claim to fight on behalf of Margret of Anjou; as a result, Henry VI reclaims the throne for a short amount of time, albeit under Warwick's control. It is during this time that Anne Neville, Warwick's second daughter, is married off to Prince Edward of Lancaster (Dockray 2015, pp. 123–27). Clarence eventually turns his army back in favour of his brother Edward, whether from sensing a loss or because of his hatred for the Lancastrians (English monarchs website, last accessed 29 September 2022).

April 1471: Edward of York returns with his brother Richard from a period of exile abroad to reclaim the throne, slaying Warwick at the Battle of Barnet (University of Leicester Richard III website, last accessed 29 September 2022) (Who Was Richard III n.d.).

1471: After the Lancastrian Edward, Prince of Wales, dies at the Battle of Tewkesbury, Henry VI is executed in the Tower of London. The Yorkists attempt to present him as dying of grief for the loss of his son (English monarchs website, last accessed 29 September 2022).

May–July 1472: Richard, Duke of York and Anne Neville marry with Clarence's permission, on condition that Clarence holds the majority share of the Neville estate (Ashdown-Hill 2014, pp. 128–29).

1473: Anne gives birth to Richard's son, Edward of Middleham (English monarchs website, last accessed 29 September 2022).

December 1476: Isabel Neville dies of tuberculosis, leading to Clarence blaming and sentencing Ankarette Twynho to death (English monarchs website, last accessed 29 September 2022). Some sources suggest this series of events produced another rift between Edward and Clarence, so leading to the attempted coup by Clarence, but this was never expressly stated in the charges levelled at Clarence (Ashdown-Hill 2014, pp. 131–34).

June 1477–February 1478: Clarence is imprisoned in the Tower of London for six months for an attempt to dethrone Edward. After legal proceedings he is sentenced to death by Edward IV, without revocation, and the task of execution is given to Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. However, the manner of his execution comes under some scrutiny as it is reported that he was drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine, although as this is highly unlikely it is probably embellished; it is possible he was drowned (Ashdown-Hill 2014, pp. 149–66).

1482: Margaret of Anjou dies in France after having lived most of the remainder of her life in prison since the fall of the Lancastrian dynasty (English monarchs website, last accessed 29 September 2022).

9 April 1483: Edward IV dies, presumably of pneumonia (Dockray and Hammond 2013, p. 36).

April 1483: young Prince Edward is confirmed as Edward V of England at age 12, with Richard Duke of Gloucester as Lord Protector, by the will of Edward IV. The coronation is originally set for 4 May (Hicks 2007, pp. 167–68) and then postponed until 22 June (Dockray and Hammond 2013, p. 52).

April 1483: Shortly after the death of Edward IV, Richard and Buckingham dine with Earl Rivers and Richard Grey, both of whom are imprisoned by the following morning, along with Thomas Vaughan. Edward V objects but finds himself powerless to stop this, and despite Richard's assurance to the contrary they are later executed. After this Elizabeth Woodeville flees to sanctuary with her younger son Prince Richard, while Gloucester and Edward V return to court. Richard calms the populace by stating that he was just preventing a Woodeville conspiracy aimed at himself and has no intention of usurping Edward's throne (Hanham 1975, pp. 7–8).

1483—Richard claims that Edward IV was in fact illegitimate, based on the belief that Cecily Neville had an affair with an archer called Blaybourne, as previously suggested by Warwick in 1469 and again by Clarence in 1478 (Dockray and Hammond 2013, pp. 76–77). He also claims that Edward V is illegitimate since Edward IV's prior betrothal to Lady Eleanor Talbot made his marriage to Elizabeth Woodeville, and therefore any heirs conceived by Woodeville, illegitimate (Dockray and Hammond 2013, pp. 52–53).

5 June 1483: Anne Neville arrives in London for the coronation of Edward V (Hicks 2007, p. 168).

13/20 June 1483: at a council meeting Gloucester has Hastings arrested for treason and beheaded the same day without trial (Crowther 2016, last accessed 29 September 2022). These dates are questioned by Alison Hanham, who places the timelines a week later (Hanham 1975, pp. 24–26).

25 June/ 3 July 1483: Edward V is declared illegitimate as Parliament accepts Richard as king (Hicks 2007, p. 168).

6 July: Richard is formally crowned King Richard III of England (Hicks 2007, p. 168).

Summer 1483: Last sighting of the princes in the Tower of London, playing archery in the fields outside the tower. The exact date or manner of their deaths has never been sustainably confirmed.

October 1483: Many groups of Edwardian loyalist nobles begin to revolt, resulting in what is commonly known as the Buckingham Rebellion. The Duke himself did not play a

major role in the rebellion, although his decision to turn on Richard certainly shook the king. However, this rebellion ultimately failed, with Richard achieving a decisive victory due to his quick response (Dockray and Hammond 2013, pp. 76–84).

23 October 1483: Richard formally declares Thomas, Marquis of Dorset, the Duke of Buckingham, and the Bishops of Ely and Salisbury as traitors. He offers rewards for their capture as well as a full pardon for anyone who would turn against them (Dockray and Hammond 2013, p. 83).

2 November 1483: the Duke of Buckingham is executed at Salisbury (Dockray and Hammond 2013, p. 77).

1 March 1484: –Richard makes a deal with Elizabeth Woodeville that allows her to emerge from sanctuary; he agrees to provide for her daughter Elizabeth of York as well as herself.

9 April 1484: Edward Middleham, Richard's only child, dies of an illness, leaving the throne without an heir (University of Leicester Richard III website, last accessed 29 September 2022). Richard then names his nephew the Earl of Lincolnshire as his heir (Dockray and Hammond 2013, p. 87).

Autumn 1484: Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, narrowly escapes capture in Brittany (Dockray and Hammond 2013, p. 107).

16 March 1485: Queen Anne Neville dies, presumably of an illness. While there were many rumours that Richard poisoned her, it is more likely that she died of the illness she had been reputedly suffering from for several months, as the doctor had even recommended that Richard cease intercourse with her, likely from fear of transmission (Hicks 2007, pp. 194–95).

Spring 1485: Richard III begins courting his niece, Elizabeth of York. Some evidence suggests this began before the death of his wife (Hicks 2007, pp. 195–201).

1485: Elizabeth Woodeville corresponds with Margret Beaufort to arrange a marriage between Henry Earl of Richmond and Elizabeth of York, thus ensuring her daughter being queen regardless of the results of the outcome of the impending struggle between Richard and Richmond at the Battle of Bosworth Field (English monarchs website, last accessed 29 September 2022).

August 1485: Assisted by Thomas, Lord Stanley, and backed by Charles VIII of France, Richmond leads an assault against Richard. Based on Richmond's previous failings Richard had reason to expect success, especially as he had been preparing for the invasion since spring of the same year. At Bosworth Field, however, Richard is defeated and killed and Richmond wins the war (Dockray and Hammond 2013, pp. 106–8). Of course, it is now no longer possible to forget the sensational discovery of Richard's skeleton beneath a car park in Leicester; the wounds, especially to the head, show that he dies surrounded by his enemies and goes down fighting, brutally hacked to death in a classic medieval melee (University of Leicester website on the osteology of Richard's bones, last accessed 3 November 2022) (Osteology—Reading the Bones n.d.).

22 August 1485—Richmond is acclaimed King Henry VII of England with his coronation taking place on October 30 (Westminster Abbey website, last accessed 29 September 2022).

3.3. Overview of Shakespeare's Sequence of Events

The breakdown of events provided here is taken from the Arden edition of Shakespeare's play. As opposed to being separated into dates, they are placed chronologically according to the narrative of the play. There is an entry for every point in the play that corresponds to a historical event. There are also some comments about Shakespeare's use of history, although the majority of these are reserved for the next section.

1.1.1–2: The defeat of Henry VI and Edward Prince of Wales takes place before the start of the play, reported by Richard.

1.1, 25–117: As this is announced George Duke of Clarence is marched past to be imprisoned, (34–35) with Richard having reporting to the audience that he is the one who convinced Edward IV to imprison Clarence. Clarence proclaims his innocence and

protests at his unfair imprisonment (46–47). Richard blames Queen Elizabeth Woodeville for Edward's decision to turn against Clarence (64–65).

1.2, 33–227: Richard convinces Anne Neville to marry him right in front of the dead body of Henry VI. Although initially full of hate for him, she eventually relents (204–205).

1.3, 42–319: King Edward arranges for Queen Elizabeth and Richard to meet in an attempt to resolve their differences, although it does not go particularly well (42–108). During this assembly the previous queen, Margaret of Anjou enters and curses the Yorkists for the murder of her son and husband (109–319).

1.4, 84–272: Richard's assassins kill Clarence. After stabbing him, they dump his body in a butt of malmsey wine (268–272) in keeping with the unproven story about Clarence's execution.

2.1, 74–134: Edward grieves over the announcement of Clarence's death (74–95), stating that he sent a messenger pardoning Clarence. The death of his brother appears to affect him deeply as he retires to his chambers.

2.2, 1–46: The old Duchess of York, the mother of Edward, Clarence and Richard, tells Clarence's son and daughter that it is not the death of Clarence she mourns but the sickness of Edward, though she quickly changes tack and informs them of Clarence's death. Edward's offstage death is reported by Queen Elizabeth (40).

2.4, 43–46: Report of the imprisonment of Lord Rivers, Lord Grey and Sir Thomas Vaughan (43–46).

2.4, 67–74: Elizabeth Woodeville and young Richard Duke of York seek sanctuary; the play does not say where, but the location was Westminster Abbey.

3.1, 1–60: Prince Edward arrives at the palace angry at his Woodeville relatives having been imprisoned (1–17). Upon hearing about the situation of the younger brother, the Duke of York, Richard sends Hastings and the cardinal to remove him from sanctuary (24–60).

3.1, 61–94; Richard discusses placing Prince Edward and his younger brother in the Tower of London.

3.1, 95: Hastings and the Cardinal return after forcing the Duke of York out of sanctuary.

3.1, 140–150: Prince Edward and the Duke of York are placed in the Tower of London (for their protection of course).

3.3, 1–25: Rivers, Grey and Vaughan remember the curse Margaret of Anjou placed on them as they face the executioner at Pomfret.

3.4, 1–57: While consulting with Ratcliff, Lovell, Buckingham, Stanley and Norfolk about the coronation of Prince Edward, Richard enters feigning a lack of interest in the proceedings.

3.4, 58–106: Lord Hastings is sentenced to immediate death for consorting with Jane Shore and Elizabeth Woodeville in an attempt to murder Richard by means of witchcraft.

3.5, 21–35: Hastings' head is carried in by Lovell and Ratcliffe and presented in front of the Lord Mayor of London. The latter agrees to convince the people that Richard and Buckingham acted justly in their execution of Hastings.

3.5, 73–94: Richard commissions Buckingham to sow doubt about the legitimacy of Edward's heirs, claiming that his previous relationship with Eleanor Talbot made his marriage to Elizabeth Woodeville bigamous. As well as questioning Edward's legitimacy, he claims that his father Richard Duke of York was not present during the time in which Edward would have been conceived, since he was away fighting in France during the 100 years' war.

3.6, 1–14: A scrivener points out the scheming behind Hastings' death and the injustice of it. He states that he was given the indictment the previous night and it takes eleven hours to make before he received it and a further eleven hours to copy. Hastings was still alive 5 h ago, therefore forethought and premeditation went into his execution. As well as highlighting the corruption in Hastings' execution, perhaps this is Shakespeare using an emblematic scene to comment on the inaccuracies of his own presentation compared to the historical timeline. This can never be certain, of course, but it would make sense in terms of performing versions of history.

3.7, 1–41: Buckingham reports to Richard about how well his claim to the throne was received by the public—or rather how badly this claim was received. He states that he ended his speech by proclaiming Richard king of England, but that the public stood dumbfound and silent, including the Mayor.

3.7, 140–172: Richard puts on a façade of innocence and religious piety in order to impress and appease the displeased Mayor and citizens. After Buckingham makes a show of offering him the crown he refuses it, claiming that he does not want the responsibility and would be ill-suited to the role. Richard's refusal of the Crown resembles that of Caesar, who was previously mentioned in the play for having built the Tower of London. Richard's refusal in the play is certainly false, whereas Caesar may have been sincere. It is also reminiscent of the practice of 'nolo epsicopari', the act of twice refusing the position of a bishop before eventually relenting, particularly in combination with the religious setting.

3.7, 173–235: Buckingham again entreats Richard to take the throne, claiming prince Edward to be illegitimate and therefore not worthy of being king, and the Mayor and Catesby support Buckingham's plea (173–202). However, once again Richard refuses the crown (203–206). This causes all but Catesby to leave in anger at the denial of their requests, so Richard finally relents by calling them back and agreeing to take the throne. It is then agreed that the coronation will take place the following day (207–245).

4.1, 1–27: The Dowager Duchess of York, Elizabeth Woodeville and Anne Neville attempt to visit the princes in the tower but are denied access by order of Richard (8–16). When Brakenbury expresses this to the women, he lets slip that Richard is to take the throne by calling him king (17) but then corrects himself to say Lord Protector (18).

4.1, 28–33: Lord Stanley, Early of Derby, urges Anne to rush away to Westminster where she will be crowned queen at Richard's side.

4.1, 37–46: Upon hearing this news the Elizabeth Woodeville sends her son the Marquess of Dorset to France to seek the Duke of Richmond.

4.2, 1–26: Richard has been crowned, but he is worried about the threat posed by Prince Edward and asks Buckingham to have the princes murdered. Buckingham, seemingly cold towards him, withholds his answer and leaves.

4.2, 35–81: Richard discusses his plans to hire Tyrell to kill the princes and for Catesby to spread rumours of Anne Neville being sick and likely to die.

4.2, 82–115: Ricard ignores Buckingham's repeated pleas to be granted the title of Earl of Hereford. Having been warned of Dorset's departure to meet Richmond, the new king is more concerned with prophecies of his demise and dismisses Buckingham without answer. This turns Buckingham against Richard.

4.3, 1–35: Report of the murder of the Princes' murders by Tyrell, who claims that they have been buried but he knows not where.

4.3, 36–43: Richard reports the death of Queen Anne Neville. He also states that he arranged the marriage of Margaret, Countess of Salisbury (daughter of Clarence) to Sir Richard Pole, and the arrest of Edward, Earl of Warwick (son of Clarence). He then declares his intention to marry his niece Elizabeth of York.

4.3, 46–57: Ratcliffe brings two pieces of bad news to Richard: the Bishop of Ely has fled to France to join Richmond and Buckingham is on the march with a Welsh army.

4.4, 1–196: Margret of Anjou meets with Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York as they discuss the losses they have suffered, not just at the hands of Richard. They recap not only the events of the play, but also the battles they fought against each other in the Wars of the Roses.

4.4, 200–430: Richard asks Elizabeth Woodeville for her daughter Elizabeth of York's hand in marriage. Although Elizabeth repeatedly expresses her hatred for Richard, she does eventually relent and agrees to talk to her daughter.

4.4, 432–439: Ratcliffe brings news of Richmond leading an invasion from the west, together with plans for Buckingham's army to meet him on the coast.

4.4, 440–456: Richard prepares for war, sending Catesby to the Duke of Norfolk to gather an army and converge at Salisbury.

4.4, 457–497: Paranoia sets in as Stanley gives news of Richmond being on the seas. Richard questions Stanley's loyalty and takes his son as a hostage to ensure his loyalty.

4.4, 498–530: There is a very quick succession of messengers bringing bad tidings as more nobles join Richmond, but then they tell of a storm dispersing his fleet.

4.4, 531–538: Catesby returns with news that Buckingham has been captured, but Richmond has landed at Milford. Richard heads to Salisbury to prepare for battle.

4.5, 6–10: Stanley sends word to Richmond that Queen Elizabeth Woodeville gives her consent to a union between Richmond and Elizabeth of York.

5.1, 1–29: A scene preceding Buckingham's execution as he discusses with the Sheriff that Richard will not face Buckingham in person.

5.3, 288–351: The war breaks into open battle as a messenger declares to Richard that Stanley will side with Richmond, but there is no time to execute Stanley's son, as the enemy armies are already marching.

5.5, 1–41: Richard is slain in battle against Richmond, who is acclaimed as Henry VII. He declares his intention to wed Elizabeth of York (Henry VII and Elizabeth of York n.d.).

3.4. Comparative Discussion

Richard III opens just after the deaths of the Lancastrian King Henry VI and his heir, Prince Edward. Shakespeare has the three Yorkist brothers murdering Prince Edward after the Battle of Tewkesbury (May 1471) at *3 Henry VI* 5.5.38–40, with Richard of Gloucester offering immediately afterwards to do the same to Queen Margaret. King Henry is himself killed by Gloucester in the Tower of London at *3 Henry VI* 5.6.57. These murders finish the Henry VI plays, and Gloucester's famous soliloquy at the beginning of *Richard III* provides some continuity that would be easily recognised by many in Shakespeare's audiences. Accordingly, Richard's initial speech sums up and recapitulates the situation immediately preceding the opening of the last play in the First Tetralogy of Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses cycle even as it underlines and informs the pattern that will take place as *Richard III* unfolds.

Following Richard's pronouncement of victory Shakespeare has George Duke of Clarence marched past to be imprisoned in the Tower of London, seemingly without provocation. In reality Clarence and Edward IV had been on opposing sides more than once; just before he dies in *3 Henry VI*, Prince Edward of Lancaster makes a reference to this fact by calling him "perjur'd George" at 5.5.34. Events had been leading towards the Duke's imprisonment for many years, with Clarence even having led an attack on Edward; but fearing defeat, he turned his army in his brother's favour in 1471. Almost from the outset of *Richard* III, then, this play anachronistically compresses the years separating important moments, since Clarence was imprisoned in 1477. Dramatic economy is seldom so economical. The play shows Richard to be in complete control, manipulating the situation to suit his ends:

> RICHARD
> Brother, farewell. I will unto the King,
> And whatsoe'er you will employ me in,
> Were it to call King Edward's widow "sister,"
> I will perform it to enfranchise you.
> Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood
> Touches me deeper than you can imagine.
> CLARENCE
> I know it pleaseth neither of us well.
> RICHARD
> Well, your imprisonment shall not be long.
> I will deliver you or else lie for you.

Meantime, have patience. (1.1.110–115)

The audience already has been positioned via dramatic irony by Richard's opening monologue, and so will be sensitive to his pun on lying at 114. He will of course "deliver" Clarence from imprisonment, but not by gaining his freedom. After Clarence's jail party leaves the stage, Richard turns to the audience in soliloquy and tells them what he is going to do to his brothers:

He cannot live, I hope, and must not die
Till George be packed with post-horse up to heaven.
I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence
With lies well steeled with weighty arguments,
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. (1.1.149–156)

He openly engages the audience, almost turning them into his accomplices. Everything at this point in the play is going to turn out exactly as he envisages, and the foretelling here adds to the temporal compression effect. The play not only manages events at great speed, it also puts Richard in total control.

The equally famous (or perhaps notorious) second scene shows Richard convincing Anne Neville to marry him, a courtship which in truth took place over many years. Clarence was the main heir to the Neville estate through his marriage to Anne's older sister Isabel; this is crucially important in historical terms because Neville is the family name of the famous Earl of Warwick, the so-called Kingmaker, with whom Clarence joined in alliance against his own brother Edward of York. Clarence denied Richard's courtship of Anne, hiding her from him for many months, eventually agreeing to the union in July 1472 on the condition that Clarence himself remain the main inheritor of the Neville estate. This shows a clear division between Shakespeare's works and the historical timeline; the presence of Henry VI's body in the play implies a very few months at most between the Battle of Tewkesbury and the marriage between Anne Neville and Richard of Gloucester. This kind of temporal compression becomes such an important feature that it cannot simply be explained away as dramatic economy with the truth. Additionally, again, at the end of the scene, Richard turns to the audience in soliloquy to engage them openly with his intentions, almost as though he is talking to a familiar friend:

Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
Was ever woman in this humor won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.
What, I that killed her husband and his father,
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of my hatred by,
Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
And I no friends to back my suit at all
But the plain devil and dissembling looks?
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing! (1.2.247–258)

The play's manipulation of events combines with the temporal compression to make Richard seem unstoppable. In a sense, he is not only seducing Lady Anne, but the audience too—the interest for them lies in how he is going to succeed in his machinations.

The wooing of Lady Anne is immediately followed by a scene in which Margaret of Anjou appears at court during a meeting between the Woodeville faction of the wife of King

Edward IV, and Richard, who is clearly portrayed as their rival. However, this too is not even remotely accurate. Margaret was exiled to France after the battle of Tewkesbury and lived the majority of her remaining life in imprisonment, eventually dying in a nunnery in 1482, before Richard seized the throne. She never returned to England after being banished.

The final scene of the first act shows the death of Clarence at the hands of assassins sent by Richard. In reality Clarence was sentenced to death by Edward IV without revocation, but Shakespeare makes Richard the one behind Clarence's death, even having Edward send a letter to pardon Clarence, which Richard intercepts. More interesting is Shakespeare's choice to have the death shown directly on stage, performing the proceedings as opposed to opting for a reported version of offstage action as he does with the deaths of Duncan and Macbeth, for example. Historically we are unsure of the true nature of Clarence's demise, although popular stories suggest that he was drowned to death in a butt of malmsey wine. While Shakespeare has Clarence murdered by stabbing rather than drowning, he does nod to the malmsey myth by having the assassins dispose of the body in a butt of wine. It is easy to forget just how swiftly these scenes at the beginning of play follow on one from the other when only reading the text; by the end of the first Act, Richard has caused the imprisonment and then death of Clarence and betrothed Lady Anne.

Shakespeare has King Edward fall sick in the first scene of Act 2, upon hearing the news that Clarence's execution was not halted and by the end of Scene 2 Edward's death has been reported by his widow Queen Elizabeth. In truth Edward died in 1483, leaving a gap of at least five years between the deaths of Clarence and Edward (and it was between these two events that Margret of Anjou died in France in 1482). Edward is believed to have died of pneumonia, not of grief over the death of his brother Clarence (though he did express sorrow at having sentenced Clarence to death) and certainly not because of his brother Richard's actions.

These are the main elements of temporal compression in the play, although they are not the only ones where Shakespeare manipulates the historical material. A good example of this occurs when Rivers, Grey and Vaughan are executed after processing across the stage in 3.3, after discussing the anachronistic curse placed on them by Margaret of Anjou. The situation here is historically accurate, although her presence in the play is not. It is also worth noting that in Act 3 Scene 5 Shakespeare correctly has Richard asking Buckingham to sow doubt about the legitimacy of Edward IV and highlight the bigamous nature of his marriage to Elizabeth Woodeville after his association with Eleanor Talbot. These rumours were indeed spread by Richard, but there was nothing new in any of this because both Warwick and Clarence had circulated them before him. However, this is what leads to the declaration of Edward V's illegitimacy and Richard being crowned king, both in the play and historically. Shakespeare has the date for the coronation set for the following day after Richard's agreement to take the throne, which is another example of temporal compression, as in reality it took time to prepare the clothing and decorations necessary for the ceremony.

In 4.3 we see Richard report on the death of his wife, although there is no mention in the play of the death of his son and only heir; this omission implies that there was no real marriage between Anne and Richard, which is of course in keeping with the supposedly villainous conduct of Richard throughout. While Anne did indeed die, she did so much closer to the Battle of Bosworth Field than Shakespeare suggests: she died after Buckingham, not before. Additionally, although the court was very suspicious of the convenient timing of Anne's death, it is unlikely she was actually poisoned by Richard, as she had been ill for some time prior to her death. At the same time Shakespeare's Richard mentions marrying Clarence's daughter off to a poor man, an event which is entirely inaccurate as Margaret of Salisbury was married to the Tudor loyalist Richard Pole in 1487 well after Richard's death. She is the old Countess of Salisbury who would be executed in 1541 by Henry VIII—one of his many judicial murders, especially towards the end of his reign.

There do not appear to be many contemporary accounts of how the fighting at Bosworth actually took place or who was responsible for dealing the killing blow to Richard, although it is clear that Stanley's intervention on Richmond's behalf was critical

to the outcome—and it should be noted that Stanley was married to Richmond's mother, the fabulously wealthy heiress Margaret Beaufort. It does, though, seem certain that there was no direct personal combat between Richmond and King Richard on the field, although he latter's desperate charge directly at Richmond's command unit came close to success. We now know of course from the discovery of Richard's skeleton that the nature of his wounds demonstrates that Richard died surrounded by his enemies. It is worth noting in this connection that Richard's famous line "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse" (5.4.7) may represent an awareness on Shakespeare's part that Richard had several horses killed under him on the day. There is a performance choice here. Does this line show a last part of Richard's supposed essential villainy (and, ultimately, cowardice) by making it seem that he wants to flee the field on horseback, or is it because he wants to remount to continue fighting? In either case, his slaying by Richmond in the play is inaccurate to say the least, although it is in keeping with the emblematic nature of such stage reconstructions. Shakespeare does something similar by showing a direct combat between Prince Henry and Hotspur at *I Henry IV* (5.4.76–85).

4. Materials and Methods

The materials used are textual in nature, such that this study performs a qualitative analysis of Shakespeare's *Richard III*; the historical events with which it plays; and the relationship between the two. The study makes a great deal of use of secondary historical material as a way of defining the play's representations of history; it also references some rather useful websites that will help the reader to visualize the history more easily. The technique is flavored by theoretically informed critical material and provides a solid foundation for further work in this specific area of enquiry, both in relation to this play and more widely to other plays from the period that engage with historical materials, both by Shakespeare and others.

5. Conclusions

The ways in which this play compresses time and draws attention to its own operation produces a bifurcation of effects that is simultaneously a powerful representation of Richard's characterization as the ultimate villain and a manipulation of the timeline that is so brazen that it calls attention to its own artifice. The conclusion to be drawn from this situation is that *Richard III* accords with one of the main cultural premises associated with drama from this period: that it is fully aware of its own artificiality. The compression of the timelines therefore both supports the powerful characterization of Richard and also undoes that power, since it relies on an openly ahistorical sequence of events. The effect is rather similar to the many references in dramas of the period to their own status as tragedies, or the use of the play within a play to draw attention to the means of theatrical representation. The situation in *Richard III* is directly analogous to these positions, albeit modulated by means of this play's uses and deliberate misuses of history. The play manipulates and compresses the historical timeline to produce an especially complex dramatic fiction.

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