

The Historical Reputation of Edward IV 1461-1725

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King Edward IV by Unknown English artist; oil on panel, circa 1540. NPG 3542

PhD

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ABSTRACT

This thesis comprises a chronological study of different historical accounts of Edward IV's life and reign from his life until the early eighteenth century. It focusses primarily on the way that historical portrayals of the king changed and developed alongside political, cultural and technological factors, something which has never been done before in any great detail.

It begins with an examination of the primary sources from Edward's reign, including the propagandist accounts *The Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV* and *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire*, the *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, *Warkworth's Chronicle*, and the vernacular urban chronicles of London and Bristol. It will contextualise these by briefly examining the English chronicle tradition up to the fifteenth century, as well as the historical treatment of other late medieval kings, especially Henry V and Henry VI

The core of the thesis concerns itself with historical accounts over the period from 1485 to the early seventeenth century, during which Edward IV's historical reputation underwent its greatest period of development. One chapter concerns itself with humanist authors, particularly Polydore Vergil and Thomas More, and the contribution of the French memoirist Philippe de Commines. The next examines the impact of commercial printing during the mid-Tudor period, focussing upon the work of Richard Grafton, John Stow and Raphael Holinshed. Tudor and early Stuart Ballads, poems and plays featuring Edward are studied in order to give some indication of the perception of Edward IV in popular culture, with particular attention played to Heywood's *First and Second Parts of King Edward IV* and Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 3* and *Richard III*. Finally, later Stuart and early eighteenth century histories showing the final consolidation of Edward IV's historical reputation are studied, with particular reference to William Habington's *History of Edward IV* and Rapin de Thoyras's *History of England*.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Ita Whittle, who first inspired my love of history.

Abbreviations

3 Henry VI - J. D. Cox and E. Rasmussen (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare: King Henry VI Part 3* (Arden Third Series, London, Thomson Learning, 2001)

CCRH - J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996)

CRI - J. Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (London, Penguin Books, 1990)

EHR – *English Historical Review*

EIV - C. Ross, *Edward IV* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1997)

GCL - A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (eds.), *The Great Chronicle of London* (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1983)

GHQ - Frank Taylor and J. S. Roskell (ed. and trans.), *Gesta Henrici Quinti* (Oxford, Oxford Medieval Texts, 1975)

Holinshed (1577) - R. Holinshed, *The chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (2 Vols., London, John Hunne, 1577 : STC (2nd ed.) / 13568b)

Holinshed (1587) - R. Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (3 Vols., London, Henry Denham, 1587 : STC (2nd ed.) / 13569)

HWE - A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, Routledge, 1996)

ODNB - H. C. G. Matthew & Brian Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004)

PDC - J. Calmette and G. Durville (eds.), *Philippe De Commynes, Mémoires* (3 Vols., Paris, Classiques de l'Histoire de France au Moyen Age, 1924-5)

PROME - C. Given-Wilson *et al.* (eds.), *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England* (16 Vols., Woodbridge, Boydell, 2005)

PV - H. Ellis (ed.), *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History, Comprising the Reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV, and Richard III* (Camden Society, old series, Vol. 29, London, 1844)

RP – J. Strachey (ed.). *Rotuli Parliamentorum* (6 Vols., London, Record Commission, 1767-7)

SCP - Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003)

TCE - K. Dockray (ed.), *Three Chronicles of the Reign of Edward IV* (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1988)

TM - R. S. Sylvester (ed.), *The Complete Works of Thomas More: History of King Richard III* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1977)

ULY – E. Hall, *The vnion of the two noble and illustrate famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke...* (London, Richard Grafton, 1548: STC (2nd ed.) / 12722)

INTRODUCTION

'A man vicious beyond any king that England had seen since the days of John and more cruel and bloodthirsty than any king she had ever known; he had too a conspicuous talent for extortion ... The death of Clarence was but the summing up and crowning act of an unparalleled list of judicial and extra-judicial cruelties which those of the next reign supplement but do not surpass.'

William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development* (second edition, 3 Vols., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1875-8), Vol. 3, pp. 219-20

'He had an almost perfect instinct in the second reign for the vital kingly balance between justice and mercy. If he had at times been a little casual during the first reign, he had learned to take greater care, and even the casualness was symptomatic of a tendency to trust and forgive that was essential in a medieval monarch, as long as it was allied, as in his case, with shrewdness and force of character. He should be acknowledged as one of the greatest of English kings.'

- Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses, Politics and the constitution of England, c. 1437 – 1509* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 205

When one calls to mind the most famous rulers of England, one is instantly drawn to a select few individuals. Some are remembered positively: Henry V remains a national hero for his victory over the French at Agincourt; Henry VIII has found lasting fame as a dangerous, glamorous figure whose very outline is instantly recognisable, while his daughter Elizabeth lends her name to an entire era of English history. Others are notorious; King John's enduring reputation as a coward and a bully is only matched by Richard III's association with violent tyranny.

Yet even these two controversial figures have been subject to constant re-evaluation and reassessment, even winning new supporters centuries after their deaths.¹ Igor Djordjevic's recent study *King John (Mis)Remembered*, for example, draws attention to the Angevin king's more positive reputation in the early modern period, particularly in the context of popular culture and the London theatre of Shakespeare's age. Medieval monastic chroniclers such as Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris played a 'devastating' role in shaping John's lasting reputation as a king 'at constant loggerheads with his clergy, the Pope, his barons, and Philip Augustus of France',² but by the sixteenth century writers including Ranulph Higden (1280-1364), William Caxton (1422-1491), John Foxe (1516-1587) and, pre-eminently, Raphael Holinshed (1529-1580) had begun to create a more historically nuanced portrait.³ While these changes can be explained in part as a result of the campaign by protestants to re-evaluate the relationship between the English monarchy and the Catholic Church, recasting John's

¹ As vituperative as his attacks on Edward IV were, Bishop William Stubbs' dismissal of King John as the 'worst of all our kings ... polluted of every crime' appears to have initiated the search for 'less biased' sources by twentieth-century authors. Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, Vol. 2, p. 17; M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066-1307* (3rd edn., London, Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 188.

² I. Djordjevic, *King John (Mis)Remembered: The Dunmow Chronicle, the Lord Admiral's Men, and the Formation of Cultural Memory* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2016), p. 13.

³ S. B. Montza and T. S. Freeman, 'Holinshed and Foxe' in F. Heal, I. W. Archer, and P. Kewes (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 192-3.

struggles with the papacy as a noble defence of the common weal and 'true' English religion, in Djordjevic's opinion they owed even more to '[the] period's developing critical approach to historical sources'.⁴ This approach in turn gave Tudor dramatists and poets more licence to recast John's reign in a new light, with beneficial results. Accordingly, Djordjevic believes that, at least until the Civil War, literary and dramatic tastes were just as important in shaping John's historical reputation as any history or chronicle. Alongside the better-known plays of John Bale (1495-1563), William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and George Peele (1556-1596), more unfamiliar works, such as Michael Drayton's (1563 -1631) narrative poem *Matilda* (1594), the *Huntington plays* (1601) of Anthony Munday (c. 1560-1633), and the anonymously authored play *Look About You* (1600), form a 'topical cluster' of inter-related texts.⁵ Taken together, they show that, far from simply reflecting a composite view of King John, each work reflects not only the dramatic requirements of individual authors and acting companies, but also 'a slippery political intent to critique the present'.⁶

A similar process can be observed in the development and conspicuous re-assessment of Richard III's historical reputation. Sir Thomas More's (1478-1535) *History of King Richard the Third* (published posthumously in 1557), for instance, may well have been intended as a critique of Henry VIII's increasingly tyrannical rule, despite its ostensible subject.⁷ As in the case of John, more nuanced evaluations began to appear after sufficient time had passed, and even some spirited attempts to undermine the edifice of Tudor propaganda; Sir George Buck's *History of King Richard the Third* in 1619 began

⁴ Djordjevic, *King John*, pp. 13, 188.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷ *HWE*, pp. 443-4; R. Marius, *Thomas More* (London, J. M. Dent & Sons, 1985), pp. 98-9.

a campaign which continues to this day with the activities of the Richard III Society.⁸ The two passages quoted at the start of this thesis document another attempt at historical re-evaluation; at first sight it might seem that Stubbs and Carpenter are discussing John or Richard. Yet the monarch in question is, in fact, Edward IV, who was until comparatively recently largely neglected by historians in favour of his more notorious younger brother. Why does one's interest so often turn to certain kings and not others, and by what processes do 'modern' ideas about them take shape? This thesis seeks to uncover the reasons for this phenomenon by focussing upon a 'forgotten' king and examining the role of memory and record in passing judgements down from generation to generation. How and why did the historical Edward IV emerge during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as what, in some accounts, seems almost a figure of caricature and in others a minor player in the historical drama unfolding about him. Significantly, none of the more recent studies of the king have addressed these questions in any depth, an omission which this thesis hopes to make good.

Edward IV: a neglected monarch

The discovery and exhumation of the body of King Richard III in 2012 on the site of the former Greyfriars' Church in Leicester prompted an almost unprecedented wave of popular interest in a late medieval English king.⁹ The lavish reburial ceremony in Leicester Cathedral of 'the king in the car park', was televised live on the UK's Channel

⁸ A. N. Kincaid (ed.), *The History of King Richard the Third by Sir George Buck, Master of Revels* (Gloucester, Alan Sutton Publishing, 1979).

⁹ Press Association, 'Richard III could be buried under Leicester car park, archaeologists say', <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/aug/24/richard-3-remains-leicester-dig>, accessed June 2016; J. Plunkett, 'Richard III documentary proves a king-size hit for Channel 4' <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/feb/05/richard-third-channel-4-rv-ratings>, accessed June 2016.

4 and attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury, junior members of the Royal family, famous actors and crowds of ordinary Britons. The decision to bury the king in Leicester rather than Westminster or York was controversial, with one petition to Parliament, to have the king interred in York Minster, attracting more than 30,000 signatures.¹⁰ The affair captured the imagination in ways few archaeological discoveries have ever done, before or since. As Richard Buckley of the University of Leicester Archaeological Service, who had led the excavation in 2012, explained in a BBC interview, '[Richard III is] a controversial figure, people love the idea he was found under a car park, the whole thing unfolded in the most amazing way. You couldn't make it up'.¹¹

Even before his death on Bosworth Field in 1485, Richard III had attracted notoriety. Suspicions about his part in the disappearance of the 'Princes in the Tower', metamorphosed into accusations of murder and tyrannical behaviour, which were embellished by those who rose against him in both 1483 and 1485. The earliest Tudor propaganda, depicting him as a hairy, misshapen, beast motivated by murderous lust and misplaced envy, endured for centuries afterwards.¹² It reached its literary apogee in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, a play which provided the English canon with one of its most popular and witty studies of Machiavellian evil. His masterclass in the effective exercise of kingship, *Henry V*, was likewise according to C. Allmand 'destined to become part of England's cultural heritage', but for entirely different reasons.¹³ Historians have tended to share Shakespeare's opinion of the victor of Agincourt,

¹⁰ 'Petition to have Richard III to be re-interred at York Minster', <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/38772>, accessed June 2016.

¹¹ G. Watson, 'Richard III: Greatest archaeological discovery of all?', BBC Website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-21082999>, accessed June 2016.

¹² M. Hicks, *Richard III* (Stroud, Tempus Publishing, 2003), pp. 255-65.

¹³ C. Allmand, *Henry V* (2nd ed., London, Methuen, 1997), p. 435.

although not all regard him as K. B. McFarlane did as ‘the greatest man that ever ruled England’.¹⁴ As early as 1961, and in the face of a wave of patriotism following Laurence Olivier’s celebrated war-time portrayal of King Henry, E. F. Jacob dismissed him as ‘an adventurer, not a statesman’ for rashly attempting to secure the throne of France.¹⁵ Even so, despite the emergence of a general consensus that Henry left a ‘*damnosa hereditas*’ to his unfortunate son, the ‘myth of Agincourt’ has dominated the historical imagination for centuries.¹⁶

Edward IV, by contrast, languished as one of the least well-known English kings, notably during the years that authors such as Buck embarked upon their campaign for his brother’s rehabilitation. Indeed, one recent biographer of the King, Hannes Kleineke, paraphrasing W. C. Sellar’s and R. J. Yeatman’s *1066 and All That*, accords him ‘pride of place’ among the ‘unmemorable’ monarchs of late medieval England.¹⁷ This is, on the face of it, somewhat odd. Edward was one of the key figures in a bloody civil war whose symbols, the red rose and the white, are still the celebrated emblems of two rival English counties. Richard III occupied the throne for barely two years before his death, while Edward ruled for a total of twenty-one years, divided into two reigns (itself a feat only shared with the man he deposed, Henry VI). Edward defied tradition and political expediency to marry Elizabeth Woodville, who was not only one of his subjects, but also an older woman who already had two sons from a previous marriage to one of his enemies. (Elizabeth herself has been the subject of continuing popular interest, with Philippa Gregory’s 2009 novel *The White Queen*, a fanciful retelling of her life, having recently been adapted as a successful ten-part

¹⁴ K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 133.

¹⁵ E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 202.

¹⁶ G. L. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360-1461* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 587.

¹⁷ H. Kleineke, *Edward IV* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

television drama.¹⁸) Edward invaded France and, although he made no conquests, he returned home wealthy. He achieved many of the things expected of a medieval monarch. He kept a magnificent court, certainly compared to that of his immediate predecessor. He even looked the part, being consistently described as handsome, brave and charismatic. He had two healthy young sons and died peacefully, in the belief that, with his enemies dead or compromised and his family loyalties assured, they would survive to adulthood, securing the future of the House of York. That this proved not to be the case should add a note of pathos to his history which has, in fact, been conspicuously absent.

Despite all these considerations, writers, from Sir Thomas More onwards, have invariably side-lined Edward in order to concentrate upon his brother and key members of his court. As we shall see in the course of this thesis, he is rarely examined critically on his own merits, being generally overshadowed by the two most celebrated kings of the fifteenth century: Henry V at one end of the scale and, even more notably, Richard III at the other. Nor, as a conspicuously self-indulgent monarch, does he even bear comparison with the saintly Henry VI. This, in turn, feeds into a longstanding tendency, noted by V. H. Galbraith in 1945 and still apparent today, for us to classify medieval monarchs as 'good kings and bad kings' according to our own contemporary standards.¹⁹ Edward is forever caught between the heroic Henry V and the villainous Richard III, never being quite able to meet the high standards of one or outdo the notoriety of the other.

¹⁸ DG, 'The White Queen, a new ten-part drama for BBC One', *BBC Website*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2012/white-queen.html>, Accessed June 2016.

¹⁹ V. H. Galbraith, 'Good Kings and Bad Kings in Medieval History', *History*, new series, 30, No. 112 (1945), pp. 119-32.

Occasional attempts, not least by Stubbs and Carpenter, have been made to depict Edward in these terms. The nineteenth-century judgement is almost uniformly negative, and in particular Bishop William Stubbs, editor of the *Rolls Series* and author of *The Constitutional History of England*, failed to discover 'any conspicuous merits' in Edward's reign, regarding him as 'more cruel and bloodthirsty' than any other medieval monarch. But, of course, the bishop's obvious disgust at Edward's excesses must be placed into a wider context. As Michael Hicks notes, many Victorian scholars came from a clerical background, and their high-minded moral stance influenced their outlook on the entire medieval period. Moreover, their concern to 'trace the evolution of the perfections (as they saw them) of the British constitution, its parliamentary democracy, liberty of the subject and rule of law, down to their own day' led them to take a very dim view of the 'bastard feudalism' and unconstrained violence which they held responsible for the Wars of the Roses.²⁰ Those kings who could be seen, however implausibly, to contribute to constitutional progress and the sovereignty of Parliament, such as Henry IV and Henry VII, were lauded, while Edward, who claimed the throne by force and ruled without needing to consult Parliament for long stretches of time, faced harsh rebuke. Again, Stubbs articulates the then common view that Edward was 'the most ardent champion of the divine right of hereditary succession', and 'that the rule of Edward IV and Richard III was unconstitutional, arbitrary and sanguinary'.²¹ Ironically, attempts to rehabilitate Richard III also brought with them attacks on Edward IV; James Gairdner observed that Richard was 'not a monster' but 'the natural outgrowth of monstrous and horrible times'.²²

²⁰ M. Hicks, *Edward IV* (London, Arnold, 2004), pp. 70-1.

²¹ Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, Vol. 3, p. 234.

²² J. Gairdner, *History of the Life and Reign of Richard III* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1898), p. 2.

Stubbs' trenchant views are well known, having often been noted by later generations of medievalists, and it is important to understand how he came by them. Partly, as Hicks pointed out, they can be explained by his background. Stubbs was born in 1829 to a Yorkshire yeoman family which, he later discovered, could be traced back to the fourteenth century.²³ His father, a solicitor, trained him from an early age to read and understand charters and deeds; he was initially educated at Ripon Grammar School, where he began to study Latin, Greek, French, German, and, somewhat unusually, Old English; and he attended Christ Church, Oxford, where, in 1848, he attained a first in classics and a third in mathematics. At that time Oxford made no formal provision for the study of medieval history, but, as a promising scholar, Stubbs was allowed full access to the college library in order to pursue his interests.²⁴ Immediately after graduating, he was elected to a fellowship of Trinity College, which he held until 1850, when he was ordained into the Church of England and acquired a living at Navestock, Essex. For the next sixteen years Stubbs worked diligently there, supplementing his pastoral responsibilities with administrative duties as a poor-law guardian and inspector of diocesan schools, while also producing editions of medieval monastic texts.²⁵ It is easy to see why, in Galbraith's words, he should become 'almost obsessed by the notion of an abstract moral standard divorced from realities as the chroniclers themselves'.²⁶

Stubbs' ambitions were initially frustrated. In 1862 he was passed over for the Chichele chair of modern history of Oxford; in 1863 for the professorship of

²³ J. F. A. Mason, 'Stubbs, William (b.1829, d.1901)', in J. Cannon *et al.* (eds.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Historians* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 395.

²⁴ W. H. Hutton (ed.), *Letters of William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford 1825-1901* (London, Archibald Constable & Co., 1906), pp. 11-17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-8.

²⁶ Galbraith, 'Good Kings', p. 127.

ecclesiastical history; and in 1865 for the principal librarianship of the British Museum. It was not until 1866 that he was appointed to the regius professorship of modern history at Oxford, and even this had more to do with his High Tory politics than experience.²⁷ Nevertheless, he proved to be a conscientious and dedicated teacher who oversaw a marked expansion in the number of undergraduates studying modern (which is to say, post-classical) history, particularly after 1872 with the establishment of an independent degree in that subject. He continued to research, write and teach until his appointment as bishop of Chester (1883-8) and then of Oxford (1888 to his death in 1901), made his academic work all but impossible. His influence to this point on development of medieval history as an academic discipline worthy of study in its own right cannot be denied.

Stubbs' lasting legacy derives primarily from two works: *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History from the Earliest Times to the Reign of Edward the First* (1870) and *The Constitutional History of England in its Origins and Development*, (3 volumes, 1873-78).²⁸ The *Constitutional History* developed the commentary in the *Select Charters* at considerable length and proved to be the most detailed examination of medieval law and government yet published.²⁹ Over the course of three volumes it examined the evolution of England's constitutional settlement from the imagined origin of Parliament in ancient Saxon Germany to King John (Vol. 1), from Henry III to Richard II (Vol. 2), and from Henry IV through to Richard III and the close of the Middle Ages (Vol. 3). It was, in the words of one enthusiastic

²⁷ Hutton, *William Stubbs*, p. 57.

²⁸ Mason, 'Stubbs, William', p. 395.

²⁹ Previously, the standard work on the subject had been a brief chapter in Henry Hallam, *View of the State of Europe in the Middle Ages* (2 Vols., London, John Murray, 1818), but together the three volumes produced by Stubbs were four times longer than Hallam's offering. J. G. Edwards, *William Stubbs* (London, The Historical Association, 1952), p. 5.

biographer, an 'epoch making' feat, 'the keystone of Stubbs's achievement ... not only a tremendous manual, but a major work of interpretation; almost a statement of faith'.³⁰ As the School of History began to emerge as an independent organisation at Oxford, Stubbs' contribution through these pioneering volumes was said by P. R. H. Slee to give 'a strength and dignity to the School which it might otherwise lack'.³¹

For all its great success, however, *The Constitutional History* was heavy going. According to J. R. Tanner, 'to read the first volume... was necessary to salvation,' to read the second was 'greatly to be desired', whereas the third 'was reserved for the ambitious student who sought to accumulate merit by unnatural austerities'.³² Stubbs had little personal interest in the events of the fifteenth century, preferring instead to study the Anglo-Saxon and Norman period, which he believed had witnessed more significant political and legal developments. This fact, along with his marked tendency to judge men of the past by stringent but ahistorical moral standards, led him uncritically to rely upon a long-established historiographical tradition in his account of the Wars of the Roses in general and of the character of Edward IV in particular. This would have had fewer lasting repercussions, were it not for the vice-like grip that his work exerted on academic teaching until long after he had retired from university life. Thomas Frederick Tout, once Stubbs' greatest pupil, cautioned that 'it is a mistake to insist on everybody learning all the details of Stubbs, and much evil has, I am convinced, accrued in Stubbs' own university from the excessive cult of this great

³⁰ J. Campbell, 'Stubbs, William (1825–1901), historian and bishop of Oxford', *ODNB*, Vol. 53, p. 219.

³¹ P. R. H. Slee, *Learning and a Liberal Education: The Study of Modern History in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester 1800-1914* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 91.

³² Quoted by J. Campbell, 'Stubbs, Maitland and Constitutional History', in B. Stuchtey and P. Wende (eds.), *British and German Historiography 1750-1950* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 102.

book'.³³ As history developed as an academic discipline over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Oxford and Cambridge continued to provide most of the historians who staffed other universities, bringing with them a late Victorian style of teaching which held Stubbs in very high regard and which flourished in some places until at least the Second World War.³⁴ The historiographical tradition which Stubbs relied upon for his characterisation of Edward IV, therefore, went largely unchallenged for a long period of time. It was not until well into the twentieth century that dissenting voices began to be heard.

Edward IV in the Twentieth Century

Although Stubbs' shadow looms large over medieval scholarship in general, today's view of Edward IV has been defined by two authors in particular: Cora Scofield and Charles Ross.³⁵ Scofield's lengthy biography of Edward IV, which appeared in 1923, represents the first serious attempt to study the king on his own merits, and, as Hicks notes, it remains 'the foundation for all current and future histories of Edward IV'. Keith Dockray had, indeed, previously hailed it as a 'magisterial narrative', which was 'very unlikely ever to be superseded'.³⁶ An American constitutional scholar, Scofield produced a long and detailed chronology of events, while demonstrating familiarity with a striking range of primary sources, which indeed makes her work foundational today. Setting aside some anachronistic ideas about constitutional developments, her narrative remains more or less unchallenged. Her conclusion was that Edward was a

³³ T. F. Tout, *The Collected Papers of Thomas Frederick Tout, with a Memoir and Bibliography* (3 Vols., Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1932-4), Vol. 1, p. 99.

³⁴ J. Kenyon, *The History Men* (2nd ed., London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993), pp. 207-8.

³⁵ C. L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth* (2 Vols., London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1923; 2nd edn., London, Frank Cass and Company, 1967).

³⁶ Hicks, *Edward IV*, p. 81; K. Dockray, *William Shakespeare, The Wars of the Roses and the Historians* (Stroud, Tempus Publishing, 2002), p. 170.

gifted ruler who nevertheless made perplexing mistakes, in his first reign because of youthful passion and thoughtlessness (as in the case of his marriage) and in the second as a result of his vulnerability to 'self-seeking' and 'unscrupulous' advisers. He was also 'coarsened and brutalised' by years of 'bitter experience'.³⁷ Ross, in his 1974 biography of Edward, which is, along with Scofield's, the most comprehensive yet to appear, stresses that, for all Edward's personal charm and pragmatic approach to government (which he finds personally attractive), he was ultimately a failure. At home he created a 'situation fraught with danger' by empowering ambitious lords such as his brothers, who were in a position to tear the country apart again, while abroad all his diplomatic and military plans were either misguided in the first place or eventually came to nothing.³⁸ As Ross observes in his conclusion, Edward IV 'remains the only king in English history since 1066 in active possession of his throne who failed to secure the safe succession of his son. His lack of political foresight is largely to blame for the unhappy aftermath of his early death.'³⁹

Having been neglected for so long, Edward IV has attracted far more scholarly attention over the last two decades, which have seen the publication of two new biographies by Michael Hicks (2004) and Hannes Kleineke (2009). Neither interprets his life and rule as positively as does Christine Carpenter in *The Wars of the Roses, Politics and the constitution of England*, in which, as we have seen, she calls for Edward to be acknowledged 'one of the greatest of English kings'⁴⁰. Indeed, with this notable exception, since at least the early twentieth century, Edward IV's historical reputation has remained more or less stable. He was a charming, personable and often self-

³⁷ Scofield, *Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth* (2nd ed.), Vol. 2, pp. 2-3.

³⁸ *EIV*, pp. xviii-xix.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

⁴⁰ Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 205.

indulgent man; he was a brave, gifted warrior and a reasonably effective manager, certainly when compared to Henry VI; but he made a number of catastrophic mistakes, particularly in his choice of wife, in his lack of foresight and in the way that he underestimated his rivals, both domestic and foreign.

Each of these authors has carefully studied the sources dating from Edward's reign, sometimes examining what the early Tudor writers Polydore Vergil (1470-1555) and Sir Thomas More had to say about him, but few explore in any detail his changing historical reputation from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. Scofield barely acknowledges the existence of other historians of the early modern period, the most obvious reference to them appearing in the 'Miscellanea' at the end of her second volume, where she bemoans the fact that 'students of English constitutional history' dismiss Edward's reign as being 'of little consequence'.⁴¹ Ross briefly touches upon the historiography in his conclusion, spending more time on Stubbs than any other single writer from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth.⁴² Kleineke adopts a similar approach in his recent biography of Edward IV, dedicating only a few pages in his introduction to More's successors and glossing over the seventeenth century entirely.⁴³ In *William Shakespeare, The Wars of the Roses and the Historians*, Keith Dockray makes good some of this neglect by examining the work of a wide range of historians and chroniclers from the sixteenth century onwards, exploring in some detail the ways in which successive generations of writers built on the contributions made by their predecessors.⁴⁴ Naturally, given his subject matter, he tends to focus on the characters most important to Shakespeare, especially Richard III; Edward, as a very

⁴¹ Scofield, *Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth*, Vol. 2, p. 371.

⁴² *EIV*, pp. 418-23.

⁴³ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, pp. 1-8.

⁴⁴ Dockray, *William Shakespeare, The Wars of the Roses and the Historians*, chs. 7-10.

minor figure in the History Plays, is only mentioned occasionally. Michael Hicks' biography, published as part of a series on the reputations of various historical personages, contains perhaps the most detailed assessment to date of the historiography of Edward IV. He devotes one chapter to the 'degeneration' of his reputation from his death in 1483 until the start of the twentieth-century, and one to his 'rehabilitation' since the Second World War.⁴⁵ Some of the less well-known accounts of Edward's life, such as Thomas Heywood's play *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV* and several of the poems comprising the *Mirror for Magistrates*, are at least touched upon. Even Hicks, however, concentrates more on early Tudor and later Hanoverian and Victorian writers, and, once again, the work of individual playwrights, chroniclers and historians is examined only briefly.

Before going further, it will be useful to return to some of the key events in the life of Edward IV, in order to appreciate what initially captured the imagination of these sixteenth and seventeenth-century authors, some of whom, along with their works, have now faded into obscurity. Not all were drawn by the most obvious aspects of his remarkable two reigns.

Edward IV in Life

Edward was born on 28 April 1442 in Rouen, to Richard, third Duke of York, and his wife Cecily, youngest daughter of Ralph Neville, first Earl of Westmoreland, during a period of intense factional struggle immortalised in Shakespeare's three-part play *Henry VI*⁴⁶. Richard of York, and his closest allies Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury and

⁴⁵ Hicks, *Edward IV*, chs. 4-5.

⁴⁶ *EIV*, pp. 3-7.

Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, sought to control the government of Henry VI, a weak Lancastrian monarch whose mental health declined rapidly during the 1450s, leaving him prey to a succession of favourites.⁴⁷ Over the next two decades the advantage swung back and forth between the two factions until on 30 December 1460 at Wakefield in West Yorkshire, in one of the most decisive battles of the Wars of the Roses, Richard was killed and his army destroyed⁴⁸. This defeat was followed in February 1461 by another, the Second Battle of St Albans, at which Warwick's army was crushed.⁴⁹

At the age of nineteen, Edward was now in control of what remained of the Yorkist faction. While his father had been content to secure recognition (in 1460) as Henry VI's next heir, his own ambitions were greater. Following a remarkable victory at the battle of Mortimer's Cross in February, and a reunion with Warwick and his surviving forces, Edward entered the capital at the end of the month, an event recorded with considerable enthusiasm by all of the surviving London chronicles (see below, pp. 75-7).⁵⁰ On 1 March Warwick's brother, Bishop George Neville, proclaimed Edward's title to the throne at a gathering at St George's Fields, apparently to universal approval.⁵¹ Within days Edward had taken up residence at Westminster and officially begun his reign, although he would not be crowned for several months.⁵²

⁴⁷ B.P. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London, Eyre Methuen, 1981), p. 301; J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 301-2, 312-13, 319-20. For a full biography of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, see M. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1998) and A. J. Pollard, *Warwick the Kingmaker: Politics, Power and Fame* (London, Hambledon, 2007).

⁴⁸ Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, p. 214.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-7; Wolffe, *Henry VI*, pp. 326-8.

⁵⁰ *HWE*, p. 222.

⁵¹ Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, p. 217-8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 218-9; A. Crawford, *The Yorkists: The History of a Dynasty* (London, Hambledon Continuum, 2007), pp. 21-2.

The young king immediately took steps to secure his position, raising more men and money in order to confront the remaining Lancastrian forces.⁵³ This campaign culminated in the extraordinarily bloody battle of Towton on Palm Sunday 1461, where a much smaller Yorkist army decisively defeated the Lancastrians.⁵⁴ Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, who had been at York at the time, fled; Henry was captured a year later and placed in custody in the Tower, but Margaret and their young son eventually escaped beyond Edward's reach to France.⁵⁵ Following a progress through the northern counties, Edward returned to London in triumph on 26 June and was crowned at Westminster two days later as Edward IV.

Further military campaigns were necessary against Lancastrian sympathisers and their Scottish allies in the north of England for most of Edward's first reign, but direct confrontation was not the new king's preferred strategy when it came to strengthening his rule.⁵⁶ From an early point Edward sought to win over his former opponents and to attract Lancastrians into his service if he could be assured of their loyalty.⁵⁷ Given the fact that comparatively few Yorkist lords had survived the previous conflict, there was clearly a strong element of pragmatism behind his desire for reconciliation, but he also wanted to restore normality to English politics after decades of factional strife. In this objective he was helped by an easy, winning charm and a

⁵³ D. Santiuste, *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses* (Barnsley, Pen and Sword Military, 2010), pp. 47-8, 49-50.

⁵⁴ *EIV*, pp. 36-8.

⁵⁵ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, pp. 332-4, 337.

⁵⁶ Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, pp. 156-63.

⁵⁷ See, for example, his treatment of Margaret of Anjou's former favourite, Henry, Duke of Somerset. Scofield, *Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth* (2nd edn.), Vol. 1, p. 273.

physical presence strikingly at odds with that of his unimpressive predecessor.⁵⁸ He could also rely on the able support of his old ally Warwick, at least for a time.

Edward had now to establish his dynasty as a force in the wider context of European politics. Here he was helped by events in France, as Louis XI's attempts to exert more control over the duchies of Burgundy and Brittany had led to a growing rift with his foremost subjects. Both sides could have benefitted from an alliance with England, or, at the very least, from preventing their opponents from securing English support.⁵⁹ Warwick favoured France, but Edward preferred Burgundy, an alliance which was formalised by the marriage of Duke Charles to Edward's youngest sister, Margaret.⁶⁰ It was assumed that Edward and his brothers would make similar marriages, and negotiations to this effect became part of his diplomatic strategy.⁶¹ As a result, in 1464 Warwick was in France, negotiating with Louis XI for Edward to marry either Louis' daughter Anne, or his sister-in-law Bona of Savoy. He was enraged to discover that, during his absence, Edward had secretly married one of his subjects, Elizabeth Woodville.⁶²

Politically, the Woodville marriage has generally been regarded as a serious error of judgement. It might be said to have fostered stronger links with Burgundy through Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Elizabeth's mother, but its destabilising effect on continental

⁵⁸ Hicks, *Edward IV*, pp. 36-7; Crawford, *Yorkists*, pp. 59-60. Edward's striking physical appearance is commented upon by many later authors, as we shall see in the following chapters.

⁵⁹ *EIV*, pp. 104-5.

⁶⁰ Crawford, *Yorkists*, p. 24.

⁶¹ Crawford, *Yorkists*, pp. 90-3, 97-8.

⁶² *EIV*, pp. 85-91. It is worth pointing out, however, that Warwick's biographer, Michael Hicks, believes that the earl was merely 'disappointed, even dismayed' at news of the marriage and was not in fact in France when he received word of it. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, p. 258.

relations cannot be ignored.⁶³ Domestically, it seems to have been an even greater mistake.⁶⁴ Elizabeth was one of Edward's subjects and therefore offered no diplomatic alliances or international prestige. She was, moreover, not only several years older than Edward, but had already been married to a Lancastrian knight, Sir John Grey, by whom she had two sons. She brought with her a voracious extended family that would, over the next few years, seek enrichment and status through royal patronage, notably the advantageous marriages into the established nobility that antagonised many leading subjects.⁶⁵ The fact that Edward's marriage took place in secret, while negotiations in France were still ongoing, and was not revealed until months later, made him appear duplicitous and infuriated both Warwick and Louis. As Rosemary Horrox points out 'with hindsight the Woodville marriage marked a turning point in Edward's first reign'.⁶⁶ Its impact was not immediately apparent, but it contributed to the progressive alienation of one of Edward's most powerful allies and set in motion events which would culminate in the usurpation of Richard III. As one might expect, commentaries on the Woodville marriage appear in one form or another in most accounts of the king's life. As we shall see in Chapter Two, for moralists such as Thomas More, Philippe de Comynes (1447-1511) and Dominic Mancini (c. 1434 – c. 1514) such an impetuous act spoke of an unbridled libido and excessive devotion to pleasure, which in a monarch should be avoided at all costs. Dramatists, however, found the story irresistible. The seduction of Elizabeth Woodville, for example, forms

⁶³ L. Visser-Fuchs, 'The Manuscript of the *Enseignement de vrai noblesse* made for Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, in 1464', in G. Claassens and W. Verbeke (eds.), *Medieval Manuscripts in Transition: Tradition and Creative Recycling* (Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2006), p. 338; M. Hicks, 'The Changing Role of the Wydevilles in Yorkist Politics' in *Richard III and his Rivals* (London, Hambledon Press, 1991), pp. 210-4, 218-9.

⁶⁴ J. Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses: Peace and Conflict in Fifteenth-Century England* (London, Phoenix Press, 2005), p. 157.

⁶⁵ Crawford, *Yorkists*, p. 67.

⁶⁶ R. Horrox, 'Edward IV (1442–1483), king of England and lord of Ireland', *ODNB*, Vol. 17, p. 852.

one of the few scenes featuring Edward IV in a speaking role in Shakespeare's plays.⁶⁷ Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV*, meanwhile, opens with the king's horrified mother discovering what he has done, in a scene which otherwise telescopes the first half of his reign to an absurd degree.⁶⁸ Both of these plays, and Edward's role in them, are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Although initially Warwick appeared to accept Edward's marriage, even escorting Elizabeth on her first formal appearance as Queen and acting as godfather to their first son, resentment clearly grew over time.⁶⁹ Whereas he had once been Edward's foremost subject and most powerful lieutenant, the Woodvilles, particularly Edward's father-in-law, Sir Anthony, were now firmly in the ascendant.⁷⁰ Warwick's proposal that his daughter be married to Edward's younger brother, George, Duke of Clarence, was rejected.⁷¹ In June 1467, while Warwick continued to press for an alliance with France and Edward still sought to court Burgundy, Edward dismissed Warwick's brother George from the chancellorship, an event which some chroniclers marked as the key moment of the breakdown in their relationship.⁷² By 1469 Warwick had moved into active opposition alongside Clarence, supporting a rising in the North of England and circulating a list of grievances against the king.⁷³ Edward, unprepared for the rebellion, was captured following the defeat of his army at the Battle of Edgcote.⁷⁴ Warwick and Clarence initially attempted to rule in his name, but, as they were unable

⁶⁷ *3 Henry VI*, pp. 267-76 (Act 3, Sc. 2).

⁶⁸ R. Rowland (ed.), *The First And Second Parts of King Edward IV* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 84-91 (Act 1, Sc. 1).

⁶⁹ Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, pp. 258-71.

⁷⁰ *EIV*, p. 115.

⁷¹ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, pp. 90-1.

⁷² *TCE*, pp. 3-4.

⁷³ Printed in the notes to J. O. Halliwell (ed.), *A Chronicle of the first thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, by John Warkworth (Camden Society, old series, Vol. 10, London, 1839), pp. 46-9

⁷⁴ *EIV*, pp. 126-32.

to control a dramatic upsurge in civil disorder, soon released him.⁷⁵ Edward returned to London and, perhaps surprisingly, initially sought to reconcile himself to Clarence and Warwick rather than charging them with treason.⁷⁶ This proved to be a fatal, but characteristic, mistake. A few months later, in March 1470, the two exploited a rebellion in Lincolnshire as a pretext for attacking Edward again.⁷⁷ Although their projected *coup* was quickly suppressed, Warwick managed to escape to Louis XI's court, where he forged an implausible alliance with Margaret of Anjou.⁷⁸ In exchange for French support for a military invasion of England, Warwick agreed to depose Edward and restore Henry VI to the throne. The invasion, launched on 9 September 1470, succeeded where previous attempts had failed, and forced Edward and his allies into exile in the Low Countries.⁷⁹ Warwick was able to enter London unopposed and restore Henry VI to the throne on 3 October.⁸⁰

Henry's readeption lasted only months.⁸¹ Rallying Burgundian support, Edward landed at Ravenspur in Holderness on 14 March 1471, an event retold in contemporary Yorkist propaganda as *The History of the Arrivall of Edward IV* (see below pp. 51-61).⁸² He initially claimed that he sought only to recover his ancestral duchy of York, but this was merely the first step in a decisive and ruthless campaign.⁸³ As he marched south, Edward's army was augmented by the retinues of his allies, with the result that the

⁷⁵ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁶ Hannes Kleineke ascribes this unusual display of clemency to a 'fatal flaw in Edward's character', which manifested itself in an overpowering 'need to be liked' and a concomitant desire to be conciliatory. Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 101.

⁷⁷ Santiuste, *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 95-8. A contemporary 'official' account with a distinctly Yorkist voice, *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire*, is discussed below pp. 43-6.

⁷⁸ *EIV*, pp. 142-3, 146-8; Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, pp. 287-96.

⁷⁹ Santiuste, *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 101-3.

⁸⁰ *EIV*, pp. 152-6.

⁸¹ Indeed, 'there is no evidence that Henry did anything at all' in the entire period: Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 342.

⁸² *TCE*, pp. 131-93.

⁸³ Gillingham, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 191.

Lancastrians retreated rather than face him.⁸⁴ His formidable military reputation clearly worked to his advantage. The Yorkist forces were further reinforced on 3 April by those of Clarence, who, anticipating the likely outcome, betrayed his former allies.⁸⁵ On 11 April 1471 Edward entered London unopposed and was re-united with his queen, who had given birth to their first son, the future Edward V, while she was in sanctuary.⁸⁶ Three days later, on Easter Sunday, Edward defeated Warwick's army at the battle of Barnet and, in the retreat, Warwick himself was killed by Yorkist soldiers.⁸⁷ On the same day, Margaret of Anjou and her son, Prince Edward, landed at Weymouth. They managed to rally support in Devon and Cornwall, but their army was intercepted by King Edward before reaching its principal recruiting ground in the Welsh Marches.⁸⁸ On 4 May, at Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire, Lancaster and York clashed for the last time.⁸⁹ Margaret was defeated and Prince Edward was murdered, along with other leading Lancastrians, during the bloody aftermath.⁹⁰ These reprisals, and in particular the grim fate of Prince Edward, furnished an increasingly popular subject for Tudor writers, who took great delight in exaggerating the levels of violence and Edward's personal responsibility for such brutality.⁹¹ A final assault on London by Thomas Neville, the Bastard of Fauconberg, was quickly repulsed by a combination of Yorkist soldiers and the armed citizenry, swiftly becoming part of civic folklore. As one might expect, graphic accounts of Fauconberg's attack can be found in contemporary

⁸⁴ Santiuste, *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 112-13.

⁸⁵ Gillingham, *Wars of the Roses*, pp. 193-4.

⁸⁶ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, pp. 116, 122.

⁸⁷ Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, pp. 309-10; *EIV*, p. 168.

⁸⁸ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 118.

⁸⁹ For a detailed account of the battle see Santiuste, *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 128-37.

⁹⁰ Santiuste, *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 136-8.

⁹¹ See below, pp. 149-50, for the embellishment of the story from the version in the London Chronicles to that of Edward Hall. Shakespeare's interpretation of these events, in Act 5, Scene 5 of *King Henry VI Part Three*, remains one of the best known and bloodiest versions of the story, and is discussed below, pp. 250, 252.

London chronicles.⁹² More intriguingly, it also comprises a significant element of the *First Part* of Thomas Heywood's play *Edward IV*, where it is portrayed as a local rebellion against Edward rather than the final throw of the Lancastrian dice.⁹³

Henry VI was now doomed. On the night of Edward IV's victorious return to London, he died, supposedly of 'pure displeasure and melencoly', a story to which few give any credence.⁹⁴ As there was now no credible alternative to his rule, Edward began his second reign with a far greater sense of security. All but the most committed Lancastrians joined his banner, and he was quick to reward his most loyal and able followers by devolving significant power to them as his agents in the regions; the elevation of his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as vice-regent of the north furnishes the best-known example.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, between his first and second reigns Edward seems to have developed a ruthlessness and capacity for cruelty which shocked many chroniclers and historians, notably Bishop Stubbs.⁹⁶ This change is best illustrated by his treatment of Clarence.⁹⁷ Although they had been reconciled shortly before Edward resumed the throne, relations between the two brothers became increasingly acrimonious during the 1470s.⁹⁸ Whether Clarence truly intended to rebel against Edward, whether the king was deceived by rival factions at court into removing him, or whether Edward himself had finally had enough of his troublesome brother,

⁹² *GCL*, pp. 217-7; C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *Chronicles of London* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 185.

⁹³ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 90-133, 154-8 (Act 1, Scs. 1-11, 15). Fauconberg's rebellion and its use as a dramatic device by Heywood are discussed below, pp. 209-3. 218-9.

⁹⁴ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 347.

⁹⁵ *EIV*, pp. 186-7; Hicks, 'Richard III as Duke of Gloucester: A Study in Character' in *Richard III and his Rivals*, pp. 247-79.

⁹⁶ Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, Vol. 3, pp. 219, 222, 225-6.

⁹⁷ M. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence: George, Duke of Clarence 1449-78* (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1980), chs. 3-4; *EIV*, pp. 239-45.

⁹⁸ Crawford, *Yorkists*, pp. 99-101; Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence*, pp. 110-2, 122-7.

the end result was the same⁹⁹. In 1477 Clarence was accused of conspiring against the crown and attainted of treason in the parliament of January 1478.¹⁰⁰ He was promptly executed in the Tower, supposedly by being drowned in a butt of malmsey wine.¹⁰¹ Perhaps because of this intriguing detail, his fate preoccupied generations of later writers. Shakespeare depicted Clarence as a tragic martyr in contrast to his villainous younger brother in *Richard III*,¹⁰² but many of the historical texts focussed upon Edward's unedifying role in the proceedings. These texts, and in particular the part played by Edward Hall in creating the 'traditional' version of Clarence's death, are examined in more detail in Chapter Three.

From the viewpoint of later historians and dramatists, perhaps the most important event of Edward's second reign was his war with France. A renewal of hostilities had been in the offing since at least 1470, when Louis had supported the Lancastrians, and two years later Edward actually mobilised some troops.¹⁰³ These plans fell through, however, and it was not until 1475 that he raised enough money and secured the necessary alliance with Burgundy to make an invasion possible.¹⁰⁴ Edward's army landed at Calais in July, but it did not fight any significant battles. This was partly because Charles of Burgundy, proved an unreliable ally, forcing the English to campaign alone.¹⁰⁵ Foreseeing the difficulties inherent in his position, Edward agreed to meet with Louis XI to discuss terms. The events of the next few weeks were

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 138-47, 159-69; Hicks, 'Changing Role of the Wydviles', pp. 225-6.

¹⁰⁰ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, pp. 156-7; Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence*, pp. 147-58.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 140-1; J. R. Lander, *Crown and Nobility: 1450-1509* (London, Edward Arnold, 1976), pp. 261-3.

¹⁰² A. Hammond (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: Richard III* (Arden second series, London, Thomson Learning, 2006), pp. 171-86 (Act 1, Sc. 4).

¹⁰³ Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁴ *EIV*, pp. 208, 214-23.

¹⁰⁵ Scofield, *Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth* (2nd edn.), Vol. 2, pp. 132-4.

observed at first hand by Commynes, a diplomat and adviser in Louis' service, whose chronicle is an important source for Edward IV's reign and especially for an assessment of his character (see below, pp. 42-3, 48, 94-7, 238). Indeed, thanks to this vivid account, the peace-negotiations were eventually depicted on the Jacobean stage. Heywood employed them in his play *Edward IV* as the almost farcical climax of a long-running plot thread; the historical accuracy of these scenes, which clearly drew upon Commynes, is examined in Chapter Four (pp. 237-8).

The Treaty of Picquigny allowed Edward to claim that he had mounted a successful invasion, despite never taking to the field. In exchange for an immediate truce, Louis agreed to a marriage between his son, the Dauphin Charles, and Edward's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, or, if she died before reaching marriageable age, her sister Mary. More significantly, Louis also promised to pay Edward a cash sum of 75,000 crowns at once, along with an annual pension of 50,000 crowns.¹⁰⁶ Such a flagrant bribe rankled with some members of the aristocracy, particularly Gloucester, but it boasted significant advantages. Apart from the obvious diplomatic connections that the proposed marriage would bring, the monetary settlement allowed Edward to rule without the need for parliamentary taxation (or, to Stubbs' obvious indignation, regular parliaments).¹⁰⁷ This state of financial independence changed in 1482, when Scottish raids escalated into a war primarily prosecuted by Gloucester. The latter was able to capture Edinburgh and even King James III of Scotland, although, without promised support from disaffected Scots, he was forced to retreat.¹⁰⁸ At the same

¹⁰⁶ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁷ Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 169; Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, Vol. 3, pp. 216, 218-9.

¹⁰⁸ Scofield, *Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth* (2nd edn.), Vol. 2, pp. 345-9.

time, Louis XI reneged on his marriage promises and cancelled Edward's pension.¹⁰⁹ For authors blessed with the benefit of hindsight, this unfortunate combination of events served as an obvious indictment of Edward's capacity to rule. Some, such as Stow, regarded the shock of betrayal as the cause of his sudden death.¹¹⁰ Others, particularly those inspired by the chronicle of Philippe de Commynes, or more frequently by a moral impulse to condemn Edward's reputation for self-indulgence, suggested that Louis exploited his vulnerability.¹¹¹

Edward's problems in the field of foreign policy may well have been a sign that his increasing ill-health had weakened his grip on government. Physically he had begun to show signs that his sybaritic lifestyle was causing problems by the mid-1470s, but nevertheless it seems that his final illness came as a surprise to everyone.¹¹² He died suddenly on 9 April 1483, having contrived only to name his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as Protector after his death.¹¹³ His failure to anticipate trouble from the Woodvilles was to have fatal consequences for his son and heir, Edward V, who would live on in history and legend as one of the Princes in the Tower and just one of Richard III's many presumed victims.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ *EIV*, p. 292.

¹¹⁰ J. Stow, *The annales of England ...* (London, Ralfe Newbery [and Eliot's Court Press], 1592: STC (2nd edn.) / 23334), p. 712.

¹¹¹ *PDC*, Vol. 2, pp. 245-8, 334. For an English translation see P. de Commynes, *Memoirs: The reign of Louis XI, 1461-83*, ed. M. Jones (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 361, 414; *ULY*, f. 216r

¹¹² *EIV*, pp. 287, 414-6.

¹¹³ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 199; C. Ross, *Richard III* (London, Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 40-3 That Richard was not present at Edward's death bed and the royal council immediately decided on an alternative course of action clearly influenced his response. M. Hicks, *Edward V: The Prince in the Tower* (Stroud, Tempus Publishing, 2007), pp. 139-40;

¹¹⁴ Ross, *Richard III*, pp. 35-666-9, 94-104; Crawford, *Yorkists*, pp. 119-33.

Sources and Methodology

If we are to study Edward IV's evolving historical reputation, it is important to begin with the primary sources for his reign so that we can understand how he was perceived during his lifetime, when the foundations were laid for all later accounts. Having done this, we can begin to study successive generations of writers, examining their motives, the way in which they interacted with one another, their intended (and actual) audiences, and the often imaginative uses to which they put these primary sources, as well as the work of their predecessors. Following such a path, this thesis examines, in roughly chronological order, over two centuries of writing about Edward IV's life and reign, from the 1460s until the dawn of the eighteenth century. In this way, we can trace the development of one monarch's historical reputation in an appropriate political, intellectual and social context, assessing the impact of these wider factors upon the way that he and his contemporaries were portrayed.¹¹⁵ Thomas More, examined in Chapter Two, was, for example, close to the centre of Tudor power, could draw upon the reminiscences of those who had known the king and was writing specifically for an elite audience familiar with Classical history. Despite the fact that he shared More's desire to drive home a moral message from the past, William Habington (1605-1654), whose work is studied in Chapter Five, reached significantly different conclusions about Edward IV, partly because of the challenging political circumstances in which he wrote, but also because he was drawing upon almost two centuries of biographical material.

¹¹⁵ Keith Dockray and Alan Sutton take a very similar approach in their recent assessment of Henry VIII's historical character, *Henry VIII: The Evolution of a Reputation*. Dockray and Sutton also make extensive use of many of the same sources as this thesis, albeit in much less detail and with much greater emphasis upon more recent historical accounts. K. Dockray and A. Sutton, *Henry VIII: The Evolution of a Reputation* (Croydon, Fonthill Media, 2016).

Chapter One focusses upon the primary sources produced during and immediately after Edward's reign. Although contemporary chronicles are relatively sparse, at least when compared to survivals documenting the reigns of many other medieval kings, there is, nevertheless, no shortage of material from which we can learn how Edward's subjects viewed their ruler. Some, such as the *Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire* and the *History of the Arrivall of Edward IV*, which describe Warwick's Rebellion and Edward's return from exile in 1471, were very obviously written by Yorkist sympathisers and have more in common with continental propaganda tracts than a traditional English chronicle.¹¹⁶ The explicitly religious symbolism employed in both accounts, particularly the description of the *parhelia* in the *Chronicle of the Rebellion* (see p. 45 below) and of Edward's evocation of St George and of the miraculous display of St Anne's favour in *The Arrivall*, is examined in detail below (pp. 52-7). *The Chronicle of John of Warkworth*, on the other hand, provides a less reverential perspective on Edward's reign, and advances a number of criticisms of the king which would become staples of later historical writing.¹¹⁷ If nothing else, the existence of Warkworth's *Chronicle* proves that serious reservations about him were being voiced by commentators during his lifetime. The three *Continuations* of the *Crowland Chronicle*, particularly the second, rank among the most important sources for this period, being virtually unknown for over a century and thus representing a 'time capsule' of historical opinion.¹¹⁸ The second *Continuation*, composed by a well-educated

¹¹⁶ *TCE*, pp. 103-30, 131-93. The uses to which *Arrivall* was put are examined below, pp. 58-60.

¹¹⁷ *TCE*, pp. 1-101. In particular, criticism of his marriage and grasping financial demands, both key features of assessments of Edward's character and judgement to the present day, are articulated for the first time by Warkworth. See below, pp. 64-5.

¹¹⁸ N. Pronay and J. Cox (eds.), *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations* (London, Alan Sutton for the Richard III Society and Yorkist History Trust, 1986).

individual who appears to have been close to the centre of power in the reigns of both Edward IV and Richard III, provides an especially valuable personal perspective.¹¹⁹

Alongside the more traditional narrative chronicles, the vernacular urban histories produced in London and a select few other leading cities are also considered in Chapter One. The London Chronicles, comprising a body of inter-related annals based on *The Brut*, but individually updated on an annual basis by anonymous scribes for a variety of purposes, were a relatively short-lived phenomenon occurring between the slow death of the monastic Latin Chronicle and the birth of the printed popular history. Together, they cover the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV with a level of detail that is not found elsewhere. Rather than citing a large number of very similar chronicles, this thesis draws chiefly upon the best-known and often fullest, the so-called *Great Chronicle of London*, using A. H. Thomas' and I. D. Thornley's comprehensive edition.¹²⁰ *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar* provides a rare provincial example of the genre, and consequently offers a rather different viewpoint when compared with that of Yorkist-sympathising London.¹²¹ Even so, it does seem to confirm the overwhelming contemporary image of Edward as a popular, attractive monarch. His efforts to associate himself with St George certainly appear to have borne fruit, as shown by a fragmentary account of his spectacular entry into Bristol which survives from the sixteenth century.¹²² It seems reasonable to assume that much of this largely positive material set the tone while Edward's reign remained in living memory.

¹¹⁹ The Second Continuator is discussed below, pp. 65-6.

¹²⁰ For the problem posed by the idea of a 'Great Chronicle' from which all other versions derive, as first proposed by C. L. Kingsford, see below, p. 72-3.

¹²¹ L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar by Robert Ricart Town Clerk of Bristol 18 Edward IV* (Camden Society, new series, Vol. 5, London, 1872).

¹²² Discussed in more detail below, pp. 79-80.

As we shall see in Chapters Two, Three and Four, most of the key changes in the development of Edward's historical reputation occurred during the Tudor period. Chapter Two explores the contribution of Thomas More and Polydore Vergil, authors, respectively, of *The History of King Richard III* and *Anglica Historia*¹²³. More's unfinished *History of King Richard III*, in particular, introduced many details about Edward IV's life into the historical record, including, most notably, the existence of his mistress, Jane Shore.¹²⁴ This chapter also assesses the wider impact of the European humanist movement, and with it the revival of interest in the histories of Tacitus, Suetonius and other Classical writers, which provided a new intellectual framework with which to analyse - and draw moral judgements from - past events.¹²⁵ More's *History* proved especially influential in adopting the practice of Roman historians of categorising rulers as either heroes or villains (an early exemplar of Galbraith's 'good kings and bad kings'), often in alternating sequence.¹²⁶ The Italian Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* and Phillipe de Commynes' *Mémoires* provide other informed and influential assessments of Edward IV, with Vergil's account furnishing the basis of Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Houses of Lancaster and York*, and Commynes' cynical first-hand impressions of the king proving irresistible, as we have seen, to seventeenth and eighteenth-century dramatists as well as historians. Together, Vergil and More began the process of popularising Tudor myths about Edward IV and Richard III, in the process laying the foundations for Shakespeare's even more celebrated and enduring plays.

¹²³ *TM* and *PV*.

¹²⁴ *TM*, p. 56. As one of the leading characters in Heywood's *Edward IV* and the subject of many other plays and poems, Jane Shore features prominently in Chapter Four, below.

¹²⁵ See below, pp. 84-90.

¹²⁶ See below, pp. 97-9.

Chapter Three focuses upon the commercially printed histories which began to proliferate in the mid-to-late Tudor period and which replaced the older vernacular and monastic chronicles surveyed in Chapter One. Although they have been largely ignored by recent biographers of Edward IV, and despite the fact that many were inveterate plagiarists, the later Tudor chroniclers had an essential role to play in the formation of the king's long-term historical reputation. Caxton's printing press had first come to England during Edward's reign, but it took the best part of a century for a flourishing and successful industry to develop.¹²⁷ To feed a growing and increasingly literate audience hungry for new material, mass-produced histories combined the 'moralising' elements of the humanist approach with the more traditional format of the chronicle. Some writers, particularly Edward Hall and John Stow, undertook original research in manuscript sources, while others, such as Richard Grafton, simply recycled old material.¹²⁸ The rivalry between Grafton and Stow (below pp. 118-19) reflects the fierce competition which arose between authors in this period and which, in turn, influenced the writing of history. In order to be economically successful, a history not only had to be perceived as reliable, but also had to attract the widest audience possible and thus reach beyond a highly educated elite. On both scores, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, discussed below in Chapter Three (pp. 161-77), ranks high among the most important works from this period.¹²⁹ Known today as the main source for Shakespeare's history plays, it combined formidable length and immense detail

¹²⁷ L. Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume III 1400-1557* (6 Vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), Vol. 3, pp. 67-8, 145-6.

¹²⁸ For Edward Hall, see below, pp. 130-53; for Stow, pp. 156-65; and for Grafton, pp. 153-6.

¹²⁹ The recent *Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles* provides an excellent analysis from a variety of perspectives, building on the work of D. R. Woolf and others. Archer and Kewes, *Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*; D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 36-57.

with great commercial appeal, going through two new editions in ten years.¹³⁰ The portrayal of Edward IV's life and reign in these popular publications is thus far more significant than might at first appear, not least because they represent the point at which standard chronicle accounts were first recast to incorporate Tudor propaganda and then disseminated to a growing readership that was sufficiently distant from the period to think in terms of history rather than recent events. The last two chapters of this thesis will demonstrate the extent to which Hall, Stow and Holinshed in particular formed the backbone of many later accounts of Edward IV's reign, not just that of William Shakespeare.

While the collective impact of Hall, Stow and Holinshed cannot be underestimated, history books have never been the only effective method of communicating information about the past.¹³¹ In Chapter Four we will discover how often the writers of ballads, poems and plays throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries returned to the events of the Wars of the Roses, explore the creative ways in which they used the primary sources of the period, and ascertain what this can show us about popular Tudor and Jacobean perceptions of Edward IV and his contemporaries. Of particular interest here will be the ballad *King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tamworth*, which situated Edward in a traditional and formulaic narrative about a king encountering one of his subjects while travelling incognito.¹³² Poems about Jane

¹³⁰ R. Holinshed, *The chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (2 Vols., London, John Hunne, 1577: STC (2nd edn.) / 13568b) and *idem, Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelanders* (3 Vols., London, Henry Denham, 1587: STC (2nd edn.) / 13569).

¹³¹ For a valuable introduction to the many history plays produced under Queen Elizabeth and the Stuarts, and the political and social context in which they were written, see I. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), and I. Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (London, Methuen, 1965).

¹³² F. J. Child (ed.), *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (5 vols., New York, Cooper Square, 1962), Vol. 5, pp. 67-87; see also below, pp. 187-91.

Shore, who had in the years following More's *Richard III* become something of a folk heroine, reflect an abiding, if heavily fictionalised, popular interest in Edward's private life. Both strands of the narrative converged in Thomas Heywood's *First and Second Parts of King Edward IV*, a history play in the style of Shakespeare which, as we have already seen, offers a heavily embroidered account of the king's life and death.¹³³ Although relatively unknown today, this play was extremely popular for several years after its first appearance.¹³⁴ It is also clear that, for large parts of the work, Heywood was closely following the historical narrative set out by Hall, Holinshed and others. Where he diverges from it, as in his treatment of Fauconberg's rebellion or Edward's interaction with Jane Shore and Hobs the Tanner, we gain a valuable insight into the way that historical figures might then be used as a vehicle for social criticism. On a related note, Edward's surprisingly brief appearance in Shakespeare's cycle of history plays, particularly *Henry VI Part 3* and *Richard III*, is also significant. Shakespeare's plays rank among the most important works of early modern English literature, and his Histories served for centuries as an introduction to the kings and queens of England¹³⁵. The fact that Edward played such a minor role in these plays goes some way towards explaining his later obscurity.¹³⁶

As the Tudors gave way to the Stuarts, Edward IV's historical reputation consolidated into something approaching the form familiar to Bishop Stubbs, as we shall see in

¹³³ See below, pp. 196-245.

¹³⁴ See below, p. 209.

¹³⁵ The first duke of Marlborough (1650–1722), famously asserted that Shakespeare's plays were 'the only history of England I ever read', while the politician and lawyer John Campbell, first Baron Campbell, maintained that 'in his historical plays, although very careless about dates, [Shakespeare was] scrupulously accurate about facts'. A. Heyward, *Biographical and Critical Essays: Reprinted from Reviews, with Additions and Corrections* (2 Vols., London, Longman, Green and Co., 1873), Vol. 1, p. 53; J. Campbell, *The Lives of the Chief Justices of England* (2 Vols., London, John Murray, 1849), Vol. 1, p. 130.

¹³⁶ See below, pp. 248-56.

Chapter Five. Alongside the many reprints of sixteenth-century works, new summary histories and dramatic adaptations (such as Colley Cibber's Shakespearean plays) ensured that, when Edward was remembered at all, it was mainly for a handful of anecdotes about a one-dimensional philanderer who had blood (including that of his brother) on his hands. The tumultuous political and social upheavals of the English Civil War did, however, prompt a reconsideration of the Wars of the Roses and Edward's place in them. Michael Drayton's narrative poem *Poly-Olbion*, and Walter Raleigh's (1552-1618) unfinished *History of the World* were not only popular well into the seventeenth century, but offered substantial criticisms of Edward's exercise of royal power.¹³⁷ John Trussel's (1575-1648) *Continuation of the Collection of the History of England* and William Habington's *History of Edward the Fourth* were equally trenchant, being influenced by the political and religious beliefs of their authors, who supported Charles I.¹³⁸ Trussel used his account of Edward's reign to attack civil unrest, political disunity, and the perils of mob rule; the Catholic Habington adopted a similar agenda, laced with some predictably harsh moral judgements.¹³⁹

Perhaps the most interesting development at this point in the evolution of Edward's historical reputation is the influence of foreign authors on the writing of English history. Commynes' *Mémoires* was, as noted above, already recognised as an important source for Edward's reign, but, as the discord of the 1630s degenerated into war, continental observers began to examine the English past in order to discover

¹³⁷ M. Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London, H[umphrey] L[ownes] *et al.*, 1613: STC (2nd edn.) / 7227), pp. 263-4; W. Raleigh, *The history of the World* (London, [William Stansby] for Walter Burre, 1614: (2nd edn.) / 20638), preface.

¹³⁸ J. Trussel, *A continuation of The collection of the history of England beginning where Samuel Daniell Esquire ended* (London, M. D[awson] for Ephraim Dawson, 1636: STC (2nd edn.) / 24297), pp. 4, 176, 194; W. Habington, *The Historie of Edward the Fourth, King of England* (London, Tho. Cotes, for William Cooke, 1640: STC (2nd edn.) / 12586), pp. 208, 230.

¹³⁹ See below, pp. 274-5, 278-80, 286-9.

precedents for the present conflict. Francesco Biondi's *L'istoria delle guerre civili d'Inghilterra tra le due case di Lancastro e Iorc*, an account of the Wars of the Roses for Italian readers, has been largely forgotten by recent historians, but is nevertheless worth examining because it presents a different perspective on Edward IV in the Stuart period.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps more importantly, it was also used by another, far more influential continental writer - Paul de Rapin de Thoyras - in his *History of England*.¹⁴¹ On the subject of Edward IV at least, Rapin is among the most influential of the later seventeenth-century writers. His *History* was extremely popular across Europe, directly and indirectly inspiring David Hume (1711-1776) and, through him, many Victorian scholars.¹⁴² His portrait of Edward IV was the summation of many generations of historians' work, and, in contrast to his conclusions about other medieval kings, went largely unchallenged until the twentieth century.

This thesis examines and accounts for the changing historical portrayals of Edward IV from his accession until the beginning of the eighteenth century by analysing the key sources listed above. Wherever possible, each of them will be investigated in the context of the time and place in which it was written, as will the background of the author and the important political and social events which concerned him. In addition, and of particular significance, changes in the way that history was written and published will be explored, from anonymous manuscript chronicles and records of local communities to the mass-produced commercial histories intended for a wide audience attracted by the work of well-known and trusted authors. The relationship

¹⁴⁰ Sir F. Biondi and H. Carey (trans.), *An History of the Civill Wares of England betweene the two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (2 vols., London, T.H. and I.D. for Iohn Benson Wing, 1641; Wing / B2936).

¹⁴¹ P. Rapin and N. Tindal (trans.), *The History of England* (4 Vols., London, James, John and Paul Knapton, 1732).

¹⁴² Kenyon, *History Men*, pp. 41-3, 49n; Woolf, *Reading History*, pp. 279-80.

between various texts will be established and particular attention drawn to those occasions on which novel elements of Edward IV's historical character first appear in the narrative and then spread from one author's work to another. The escalating accounts of the brutality of Prince Edward of Lancaster's death, for example, can be easily traced from *The Great Chronicle of London* to Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 3*.¹⁴³ We will, as a result, be better placed to understand why, despite his two eventful reigns, Edward IV was for so long largely forgotten, remaining one of the most neglected late medieval monarchs, best known for fictional encounters with his subjects.

¹⁴³ See below, pp. 149-50, 250.

CHAPTER ONE

The Earliest Chronicles, 1456-1487

"Sound drums and trumpets! Farewell, sour annoy; For here I hope begins our lasting joy!"

William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI, Part 3, Act 5, Scene 7*

Chronicles boast a venerable pedigree in England¹. Some, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Chronicles of Crowland Abbey* and the *Annales Londonienses* (1194-1330), were regularly updated for centuries after their initial creation. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* first entries, for example, were written for King Alfred in the middle of the ninth century, yet the Peterborough abbey continuation was still going three centuries later. The work of Orderic Vitalis and Matthew Paris was internationally recognised, and many other monastic chroniclers from such diverse parts of the country as Dunstable, Meaux and Ramsey produced their own written histories. Some were still attracting readers after the arrival of the printing press. For example, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (1136), a history of England from its mythical ancient past until the late seventh century proved very influential, and was still being cited in the sixteenth century.² Vernacular versions of the *Historia* formed the basis of the various *Brut* chronicles (so named after Brutus, the mythical founder of Britain) which were among the most popular written histories in the fifteenth century.³ Texts of the *Brut* were regularly updated until the end of the Middle Ages, and were

¹ See A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England I: c.550 - c.1307* (London, Routledge, 1997); C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, Hambledon and London, 2004).

² T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London, Methuen, 1950), chs. 1, 5 and 6.

³ More than 120 English language copies of the *Brut* remain extant, suggesting that a significant number must have been available at any one point.

themselves incorporated into many later chronicles. Alongside the *Brut*, a tradition of historical writing in London gave rise to the so-called London Chronicles, a substantial collection of manuscript annals produced by different authors in the capital throughout the fifteenth century.

Traditionally, the majority of chronicles focussed, at least in part, on the history of monastic communities, but rising standards of literacy among the laity and a growing interest in chivalric tales from the past prompted the creation of an increasing number of secular works. *Vitae*, in the form of biographies of kings and other important figures, as well as more conventional lives of saints, grew commonplace and followed similar narrative forms to established chronicles. Indeed, both ecclesiastical and secular chroniclers adopted the same approach when writing history. They recounted the events of each passing year chronologically, often giving equal weight to matters of purely local significance and issues of national or international importance. With a few notable exceptions, they rarely adopted an accredited authorial voice, as later writers of history would do, instead remaining anonymous, while attempting to give the impression of objectivity. In part, this was a matter of tradition, as the monastic scribes who compiled the earliest English chronicles had done so as a collective rather than an individual enterprise. Another trait that later medieval chronicles inherited from their monastic predecessors was a tendency to attribute specific events to divine intervention, sometimes in accordance with a grand design.⁴

Appreciating the circumstances in which fifteenth-century English chronicles were written, and how this process might affect the presentation and interpretation of

⁴ Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. 2-3,21-56.

evidence, is essential if we are to understand the way in which Edward IV and other late medieval kings were treated by successive generations of writers. Late medieval chronicles constitute the primary source material used by most historians, from seventeenth-century antiquaries to today's scholars. Their reaction to current or recent events, and to the leading protagonists in them, could therefore prove to be extremely influential, as we can see from contemporary and near-contemporary assessments of Henry V, which offer an interesting contrast to those made a few decades later of Edward of York.

This chapter will examine various accounts of Edward IV's reign produced before 1487 in order to ascertain how the king was perceived at, or just after, the time of his death and to furnish examples of the earliest sources from which so many later histories drew their information. We will draw upon material from monastic chronicles, vernacular urban chronicles, and the more innovative propaganda tracts that derived from continental models. In order to provide a sense of context for the material compiled during Edward's lifetime, and also to highlight popular assumptions regarding the exercise of effective kingship, we will begin by examining the *Vitae* of his celebrated predecessor, Henry V.

Henry V's *Vitae* as Historical Models

The *vitae* of Henry V and the chronicles of his reign represent a precocious synthesis of political and historical reportage, panegyric, propaganda and hagiography. Several early biographies were written of the king, with three Latin examples, the anonymously authored *Gesta Henrici Quinti* (probably 1416-1417), Thomas Elmham's *Liber metricus de Henrico Quinto* and Titus Livius Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*,

surviving to the present.⁵ The sixteenth century produced many more histories of the victor of Agincourt, together with English translations from Latin works, some of which were almost certainly based upon earlier *vitae* which are now lost to us.⁶ The most striking among them were written in a eulogistic style by individuals close to the royal court, but they also furnish a remarkable amount of historical detail. To take just one example, the author of the *Gesta Henrici Quinti* was clearly a royal chaplain who accompanied the king at the siege of Harfleur and on the march to Calais, and was even present at the Battle of Agincourt. He describes Henry's official policy in France in terms that had already been adopted by other spokesmen for the government, suggesting that his work was part of a wider campaign to legitimise the invasion.⁷ As far as the author of the *Gesta*, and by extension Henry himself, was concerned, the king wanted a 'just peace' with France, but had been reluctantly forced to fight when the French refused to acknowledge his sovereignty over English lands on the continent. Henry was thus cast as the heroic defender of his people, rather than an unprovoked aggressor. This approach was carefully calculated, as, like so many contemporary works of propaganda, the *Gesta* was intended for a foreign audience as well as a domestic one: specifically at the court of Henry's ally, Sigismund, the Holy Roman Emperor. The author was attempting to balance the heroic and populist image of an English king triumphing over foreigners with the more sober demands of

⁵ For early misconceptions over the authorship of the *Gesta*, see C. L. Kingsford, 'The Early Biographies of Henry V', *EHR*, 25 (1910), pp. 61-2; T. Hearne (ed.), *Thomae de Elmham Vita et gesta Henrici Quinti* (Oxford, Sheldonian Theatre, 1727).

⁶ *HWE*, pp. 196, 206, 212. See also J. S. Roskell and F. Taylor, 'The Authorship and Purpose of the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*: I', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 53 (1970-1), pp. 428-64.

⁷ 'Henry V: November 1415', in *PROME, British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/november-1415>, accessed June 2017; 'Henry V: October 1416', in *PROME, British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/october-1416>, accessed June 2017; 'Henry V: November 1417', in *PROME, British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/november-1417>, accessed June 2017; 'Henry V: October 1419', in *PROME, British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/october-1419>, accessed June 2017; *RP*, Vol. 4, pp. 62, 94, 106, 116.

international diplomacy and the necessity of providing a truthful account of the events as he witnessed them. opprobrium

The *Gesta* provides a full and compelling account of Henry's early reign and the French campaign in particular, but its role as royal propaganda cannot be overstated. Its primary purpose was to present his controversial foreign policy in the most favourable light possible. Like other contemporary biographies of Henry V, it does not offer a rounded portrait, being designed to depict him in the most flattering terms possible without resort to outright falsehood. A careful selection of anecdotes about his many personal qualities formed the core of a legend which was already taking shape during his lifetime and would later be immortalised by Shakespeare. This is not to say that Henry V's formidable reputation lacked real foundations; as we saw in Chapter One, it survived unscathed until the 1960s and still flourishes today. Patriotic Englishmen praised his convincing victories against the French, while the clergy approved of his systematic suppression of the Lollard heresy, his foundation of three monasteries, and the punishment that he inflicted upon soldiers who looted ecclesiastical property while on campaign.⁸ However, it should always be remembered that such an unremittingly positive image was deliberately and very skilfully fostered. Henry knew how to cultivate popularity and to ensure that his reign would go down in history as both triumphant and inspirational. Not even the humiliating loss of France and the virtual bankruptcy that followed served to diminish his stature as a man touched by God. Many kings made a similar attempt at self-promotion, but few were as successful.

⁸ Allmand, *Henry V*, pp. 272-9, 280-305, 368, 406-13; A. Curry (ed.), *The Battle of Agincourt: Sources and Interpretations* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2000), p. 57.

Edward IV in Contemporary Accounts

In contrast to the profusion of narrative sources about Henry V, there has always been a dearth of material on Edward IV. As Charles Ross pointed out in 1974, we have less contemporary writing of this kind about Edward of York than practically any other medieval king.⁹ In part this can be explained by changing literary traditions. His reign falls awkwardly between the decline of the monastic chronicle as a historical form in England and the rise of the political histories written by the humanist authors of the sixteenth century. Moreover, notwithstanding the appearance of works such as the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, there were no truly official or semi-official histories of the kings of England comparable to those produced in France. England lacked political 'memorialists' such as Philippe de Commynes or Thomas Basin (1412–1489), although, as we have already seen, Commynes and other continental authors can provide a useful alternative viewpoint on fifteenth-century England. Commynes' focus was naturally upon French politics, but his occasional references to Edward depict the latter in a far less flattering light than he would have wished. Despite the fact that Commynes described the king as '*ung tres gentil chevalier*,¹⁰ he was quite prepared to lambast him for his faults, asserting that he lost his throne in 1470 solely because of an excessive devotion to pleasure.¹¹ Edward also seems petulant and naive. Following his exile, for example, he evidently nurtured a grudge against many of his subjects 'for the great favour which he saw the people bore towards the earl of Warwick, and also for other reasons'.¹² Commynes describes a young man who is, moreover, absurdly overconfident in his own abilities, while displaying a fatal lack of judgement where his opponents are concerned. When warned of the coming invasion mounted by Warwick

⁹ *EIV*, p. 429.

¹⁰ *PDC*, Vol. 2, p. 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹² *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 213-15.

and Clarence, Edward took no notice, 'which seems to me a fine example of folly, not to fear one's enemy and to refuse to believe anything, considering the preparations against him ... But he was never concerned at anything, but still followed his hunting, and nobody was so trusted by him as the Archbishop of York and the marquis of Montagu, brothers of the said earl of Warwick'.¹³

Of the extant English evidence dealing directly with the reign of Edward IV, *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire*, the *Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV* and *The Chronicle of John of Warkworth* are particularly useful.¹⁴ Both *The Chronicle of the Rebellion* and the *Historie of the Arrivall* furnish overtly Yorkist accounts of the uprising in Lincolnshire in March 1470, masterminded by Clarence and Warwick, and the return of Edward IV to England in 1471 after his exile on the continent. They represent virtually the only surviving examples from fifteenth-century England of a genre of historical narrative comparable with that written by Commynes and other continental writers.¹⁵ Not coincidentally, it appeared at the same time as Warwick's own

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 197, 200.

¹⁴ *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire*, edited by J.G. Nichols for the Camden Society in 1847, was composed not long after Edward's successful campaign. It survives only in one manuscript. The original manuscript of *The Historie of the Arrivall and the Finall Recoverie of his Kingdomes from Henry VI A.D. MCCCLXXI* has long been lost, although there is some evidence that copies were widely circulated by the early 1470s. *The Chronicle of John of Warkworth* was written after the death of Clarence in February 1478 but before 1483, when Warkworth presented a handwritten copy of the *Brut* to Peterhouse, Cambridge, with the *Chronicle* forming a continuation. This copy is the only surviving manuscript, a generally accurate transcription of which was published by the Camden Society in 1839. See R. F. Green, 'The Short Version of The Arrival of Edward IV', *Speculum*, 56, no. 2 (1981), pp. 324-336; L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Edward IV's "memoir on paper" to Charles, duke of Burgundy: the so-called Short Version of the Arrivall', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 36 (1992), pp. 167-227; J. A. F. Thomson, 'Warkworth's Chronicle' Reconsidered', *EHR*, 116, (2001), pp. 657-64; *HWE*, pp. 264-5, 270, 457-259.

¹⁵ *TCE*, p. xiv. The only other near-contemporary English author to adopt a similar approach and style was Thomas Favent in his *History ... of the Wonderful Parliament*. This tract presents a more sophisticated but equally subjective work designed to support opponents of Richard II through a study of the parliament of February 1388, during which many unpopular favourites of the king had been convicted and executed for treason. A. Galloway (ed. and trans.), 'History or Narration Concerning the Manner and Form of the Miraculous Parliament at Westminster in the year 1386', in E. Steiner and C. Barrinton (eds.), *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002) pp. 231-252. See also *HWE*, p. 160, 185-6, 261; D. R. Carlson,

propaganda tract, rather unimaginatively entitled *The Manner and Guiding of the Earl of Warwick at Angers from the fifteenth day of July to the fourth of August, 1470, which day he departed from Angers*, which described the earl's activities in France, stressing his reconciliation with Queen Margaret and Prince Edward.¹⁶ It was clearly intended to justify his apparent treachery and win over the English people to his cause. Letters and tracts designed for public consumption, as well as newsletters presenting consciously biased versions of events, confirm that both sides of the conflict sought to use historical precedent as ammunition in a battle for popular approval.¹⁷

The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire

The Historie of the Arrivall and *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire* are responses to the confrontational politics of a particularly fraught phase of the Wars of the Roses. There is some evidence to suggest that both works were, in fact, written by the same author, an unknown royal servant, most likely connected to the office of the privy seal in the Chancery. This evidence is strongest in *The Chronicle of the Rebellion*, with its detailed description of the king's private correspondence, which not only notes the contents of certain letters but also the names of the messengers who carried them to their destination. It records, for example, that the king himself sent a messenger named John Down with letters to Warwick and Clarence on 13 March 1470 announcing the 'victoreye that God hadde sent hym' over the rebels. Edward, 'yit no thing

John Gower, Poetry and Propaganda in Fourteenth-century England (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2012), pp. 32-8.

¹⁶ H. Ellis (ed.), 'The Manner and Guiding of the Earl of Warwick at Angers', *Original Letters illustrative of English History, 2nd Series* (4 Vols., London, Harding & Lepard, 1827), Vol. 1, pp. 132-5.

¹⁷ Examples of material from both sides of the conflict can be found in Ellis (ed.), *Original Letters*, Vol. 1, pp. 135-7 and J. Gairdner (ed.), *The Paston Letters 1422-1509 A.D.* (Introduction and 3 Vols., Edinburgh, John Grant, 1910), Vol. 1, pp. 327-31. For instances of recourse to history, see P. E. Gill, 'Politics and propaganda in fifteenth-century England: the polemical writings of Sir John Fortescue', *Speculum*, 46 (1971), pp. 339, 342-6.

mystrustrusting the saide duc and erle', requested that they 'com towarde hym with convenient nowmbre of thaire astates, commaunding theym to departe the people of the shire[s] that were arraysed by thayme by virtue of his commyssion'.¹⁸ Justifying Commynes' remarks about his credulity, Edward apparently believed the claims of the two conspirators that they had simply been delayed at Leicester on their way to join him, when they had instead joined forces at Coventry following his victory.¹⁹

Far from presenting an impartial account of events, *The Chronicle of the Rebellion* sought to discredit the earl of Warwick and the duke of Clarence from the outset by asserting with an imaginative recourse to hindsight that these 'grete rebelles', by 'subtile and fals conspiracie', were personally responsible for instigating the uprising in Lincolnshire.²⁰ This point is explicitly made by the author in his account of Edward's first successful engagement with the insurgents:

Where it is soo to be remembered that, at suche the bataile[s] were towardses joynyng, the king with [his] oost setting upon [the rebels], and they were avaunsyng theymselvf, their crye was, *A Clarence! a Clarence! a Warrewicke!* that tyme beyng in the feelde divers persons in the duc of Clarence livery, and especially sir Robert Welle[s] hymself, and a man of the duke[s] own, that aftre was slayne in the chase, and his casket taken, whereinne were founden many marvellous bille[s], conteyning matter of the grete seduccion, and the verrey subversion of the king and the commonwele of alle this lande, with the most abhominable treason that ever were seen or attempted withinne the same, as thay be redy to be

¹⁸ *TCE*, pp. 112-3.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 113.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 107.

shewed ... This victorie thus hadde, the king returned to Stanforde late in the nyght, yeving laude and praising to almighty God²¹.

The depiction of Edward as a force for good, blessed with divine approval, echoes the panegyrics addressed to Henry V, who is consistently portrayed as a monarch on a divinely appointed mission. The author of the *Gesta Henrici Quinti* frequently refers to the prayers that he and the English soldiers offered to St George and the Virgin Mary. He repeatedly emphasises the formidable nature of the enemy, beseeching God that that the English might be '[delivered] from the swords of the French'.²² To him, the fact that Henry's greatly inferior forces not only survived, but triumphed at Agincourt, was solely thanks to God: 'But far be it from our people to ascribe the triumph to their own glory or strength; rather let it be ascribed to God alone'.²³ According to the *Gesta*, Henry regarded himself as an instrument for the chastisement of others. When dismissing Sir Walter Hungerford's wish that the English might have ten thousand more archers, he wrote:

'That is a foolish way to talk', the king said to him, 'because, by the God in Heaven upon whose grace have relied and in Whom is my firm hope of victory, I would not, even if I could, have a single man more than I do. For these I have here with me are God's people, whom He deigns to let me have at this time. Do you not believe', he asked, 'that the Almighty, with these His humble few, is able to overcome the opposing arrogance of the French who boast of their great power and their own strength?'²⁴

²¹ Ibid., p. 112.

²² *GHQ*, p. 67.

²³ Ibid., p. 99.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

Henry V was, of course, successful, and the chronicler is careful to note his humble piety on his triumphal return to London, when he continued to credit God rather than his own military skill.²⁵ This template was subsequently adopted in contemporary accounts of Edward's victories against his various enemies, particularly at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross in 1461 and Barnet in 1471. In the case of Mortimer's Cross, propagandists who sought to emphasise the legitimacy of the Yorkist cause were greatly helped by the appearance of three suns 'in the firmament shynnyng fulle clere' in the morning before battle was joined. This optical illusion, known as a *parhelia*, initially frightened Edward's troops, but he shrewdly took advantage of the situation, urging them to be 'of good comfort, and dredethe not; thys ys a good sygne, for these iij sonnys betokene the Fader, the Sone, and the Holy Gost, and therefore lete us haue a good harte, and in the name of Almyghtye God go we agayns oure enemyes'.²⁶ Edward would go on decisively to win the battle, seize the throne and adopt the sun in splendour as his personal badge.²⁷

Clemency and ruthlessness

Even so, for all the emphasis upon divine intervention in the events described in *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire* and elsewhere, Edward's personal authority, bravery and skill consistently feature in these partisan sources. In striking contrast to the opinions expressed by Commynes about his weak character, Edward is praised as a

²⁵ For other accounts of Henry V's French campaign see Curry, *Battle of Agincourt*, *passim*.

²⁶ J. S. Davies (ed.), *An English chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI written before the year 1471* (Camden Society, new series, Vol. 47, London, 1856), p. 111; J. Gairdner (ed.), *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles* (Camden Society, new series, Vol. 28, London, 1880); J. Gairdner (ed.), 'Gregory's Chronicle', *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the fifteenth century* (Camden Society, new series, Vol. 17, London, 1876), pp. 211-2. The *parhelia* was also noted by Abbot Whethamsted, H. T. Riley (ed.), *Registrum abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede* (2 Vols., London, Rolls Series, 1872-3) Vol. 1, p. 386.

²⁷ The episode would also later be dramatised by William Shakespeare in *King Henry VI, Part 3, Act 2, Scene 1*.

model ruler, 'enclined to shew mercy and pitie to his subjects'²⁸. His dynamic response to enemies who 'falsly compassed, conspired, and ymagened the final destruccion of his most roiall persone'²⁹ underscores his ability and foresight as a commander. According to the author of *The Chronicle*, Edward was full of 'most noble and rightwise courage',³⁰ his own loyalty and trustworthiness being so great that he was genuinely surprised when others betrayed him. As we have seen, however, his credulity on this score had actually led him to command Warwick and Clarence to muster soldiers to suppress the very rebellion which they had apparently instigated.³¹ Despite the best efforts of his apologists, Edward's propensity to trust the most unreliable of his subjects and his generous efforts to win over his opponents struck both his contemporaries and later historians as, at best, mistaken. With hindsight, such naive behaviour sometimes proved disastrous, especially when it involved dealing with the northern lords and the Scots. It is, for example, apparent that he needlessly prolonged the civil war in the North through his misplaced confidence in potential traitors.³² Even in the otherwise laudatory *Chronicle of the Rebellion* Edward appears 'credulous and unduly trusting', while foreign observers such as Commynes were much harsher on this score.³³ The latter observed that the king 'had no fear, which to me seems a very great kind of folly: not to fear one's enemy is not to wish to understand anything'.³⁴ Scholars who followed Commynes' line of argument, especially those writing in the nineteenth century, tended to agree that Edward was foolhardy to the point of recklessness rather than merciful and generous. More recently, however, his actions

²⁸ *TCE*, p. 107.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³² Hicks, 'Edward IV, the Duke of Somerset and Lancastrian Loyalism' in *Richard III and his Rivals*, pp. 149-63; Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 53.

³³ Hicks, *Edward IV*, pp. 36, 43-5.

³⁴ *PDC*, Vol. 1, p. 92.

have been cast in a much more positive light. Although Hannes Kleineke has commented upon the king's 'almost pathological need to be loved and admired', his failed attempts at conciliation are now more commonly regarded as a pragmatic, if in this instance unsuccessful, attempt 'to broaden the base of his support among the nobility and gentry'.³⁵ Following his recovery of the throne and the death of Henry VI and his son, Edward had less need to reach out to men who might betray him again in the future. The far harsher treatment of Clarence and others who had been shown mercy during the first reign is a testament to this change in policy. Following the arrest and execution of one of his servants, Clarence was charged with high treason in January 1478. At the trial, Edward reminded parliament of the clemency which he had repeatedly shown towards his former enemies, even the 'movers and stirrers of such treasons'³⁶. Clarence had betrayed him once too often, however, attempting by 'subtle contrived ways' to incite loyal subjects to rebellion. No one spoke in the duke's defence, and he was executed in the Tower on 18 February. The proceedings against him were unusual because of Edward's personal involvement, to the point that the official record of the process bears the royal sign-manual at the top and bottom.³⁷

Notwithstanding his reputation for clemency, there is some evidence to suggest that Edward personally oversaw the trial and execution of rebels lower down the social scale. Nicholas Faunt, the mayor of Canterbury, had supported the Bastard of Fauconberg, Thomas Neville, when he rose against the king with the earl of Warwick in 1471. Faunt was captured and, shortly after the king entered Canterbury on 26 May

³⁵ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, pp. 53, 194-5.

³⁶ *RP*, Vol. 6, p. 193.

³⁷ *EIV*, pp. 239-245 and *RP*, Vol. 6, pp. 193-5.

‘with a great multitude of armed men’, was executed as a traitor.³⁸ The message sent out by this grim spectacle (during which Faunt was drawn and quartered before the royal party), was clearly understood by the inhabitants of Canterbury. The chamberlain’s accounts reveal that the civic authorities commissioned a number of liveries bearing white roses, the symbol of the Yorkist dynasty, made from kersey cloth to demonstrate their loyalty.³⁹ Perhaps not surprisingly, at least one local account of Faunt’s trial and execution appears to have been ‘doctored’. Although we know from other records that the mayor was executed in public on Edward’s orders, the relevant section of a chronicle by John Stone, a Benedictine monk at Christchurch, Canterbury, has been removed from the manuscript.⁴⁰ Quite coincidentally, the excision of the folio or folios in question allowed Edward to appear more merciful than, in this instance, was demonstrably the case.

The image that Edward wanted to present to his subjects was that of a morally upright ruler beset by duplicitous enemies, of a strong monarch whose divinely-sanctioned rule could not be overthrown, even by those who had him at a temporary disadvantage. This message appears to have been intended not only for potential adversaries in England but for others on the continent as well. A French language version of *The Chronicle of the Rebellion* was produced and disseminated very shortly

³⁸ M. Connor (ed.), *John Stone's Chronicle: Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, 1417-1472* (Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), p. 130. For more on the revolt in Canterbury, see Sheila Sweetinburgh, ‘A revolt too far: paying the price in late medieval Canterbury’, in P. Dalton and C. Inskey (eds.), *Kent, the South-East and War 1000–1450*, (forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr Sweetinburgh for sending me a copy of her article.

³⁹ Archives of the City and County of Canterbury, CC/FA/5, f. 113. I am grateful to Dr Sweetinburgh for this reference.

⁴⁰ ‘On the following Tuesday [28 May], Thomas Burchier came to Canterbury after nones. The next day Nicholas Faunt, mayor of the city [FOLIO BREAK] called William Petham to the place and appointed him as prior, and there the cantor began the *Te Deum laudamus*’. The folio break gives the impression that Faunt had a hand in the appointment of the prior of Canterbury, rather than being a traitor to the crown. Petham was in fact appointed prior on 13 August 1471, two months after Faunt’s execution. Connor, *John Stone's Chronicle*, p. 130, n. 133.

after its English appearance, and elements of the narrative were integrated into the work of Jean de Waurin, a Burgundian chronicler, in the 1470s.⁴¹ The author was clearly a propagandist, keen to ensure that the account most favourable to the Yorkist cause gained currency, and, in a strikingly 'modern' way, he made his work more convincing and useful to historians by seeking to establish the credibility of his testimony. As well as providing information from the king's correspondence, he took pains to convince his audience that the claims made within his work were accurate. To this end, he embellishes the text with circumstantial detail. He informs us, for example, that chief supporters of the revolt led by Clarence and Warwick 'serverally examyned of their own free wille[s] un compelled, not for fere of dethe ne otherwise stirred, knowledged and confessed the saide duc and erle to be partinaires and chef provocars of all their treasons'.⁴² In short, they claimed (entirely without the threat of coercion) to have been 'specially laboured, provoked, and stirred'⁴³ into rebellion. The testimony of these highly-placed insurgents delivered before the king and his court, as well as the author's references to unimpeachable documentary evidence of the conspirators' guilt, is skilfully used.

The Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV

The *Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV* is another partisan source for this turbulent period, and some historians have speculated that it was the original account upon

⁴¹ Waurin made particular use of the *Chronicle* in his *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne*. He almost certainly met Edward in his official capacity as an ambassador and counsellor for Duke Philip of Burgundy, especially in 1467 when he visited London in the retinue of the Bastard of Burgundy. E. L. C. P. Hardy and W. Hardy (eds.), *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne, a present nomme Engleterre* (5 Vols., London, Rolls Series, 1864-91), Vol. 5, 587-602; *TCE*, p. xvi.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

which many other versions were built.⁴⁴ Almost all the texts of the *Arrivall* currently available in print derive from John Bruce's edition, which was first published by the Camden Society in 1838. Extracts frequently appear in readers and source books on fifteenth-century history, but the work has rarely been accorded much independent authority in its own right, at least until recently. As Bruce noted, for many years 'it either remained unknown to the English writers of the period, or was considered to be too entirely Yorkist in its tone and spirit to be used during the ascendancy of the House of Lancaster'.⁴⁵ Only once elements of the narrative had been purged of their Yorkist bias was the *Arrivall* employed in the creation of later historical accounts. The recorder of London, William Fleetwood (c.1525–1594), compiled a narrative of Edward's restoration based upon a copy of the manuscript in his possession, which in turn was incorporated into the *Chronicle* of Raphael Holinshed (1529–1580).⁴⁶ Further changes were made by subsequent editors of the *Arrivall*, including the interpolation of more pro-Lancastrian passages from the work of other authors, such as the antiquary John Stow (1524/5–1605). As Bruce put it, 'in these various ways the red rose was blanched, the colour of the narrative was changed in all its more important passages, and the servant of Edward IV was transformed into a Lancastrian Chronicler'.⁴⁷ Hereafter, the *Arrivall* was almost unknown until the publication of Bruce's own edition, his interest in it being

⁴⁴ See Visser-Fuchs, 'Short Version of the Arrivall', pp. 167-227; J. A. F. Thomson, "'The Arrival of Edward IV' - The Development of the Text', *Speculum*, 46, No. 1 (1971), p. 84.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴⁶ This account would be attributed to Fleetwood in *Holinshed's Chronicle*, where no reference is made to the true origins of the work. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

sparked by a fellow historian, Sharon Turner, and his search for original manuscript material for a *History of England in the Middle Ages*.⁴⁸

Since its first appearance, John Bruce's edition of the *Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV* has been used mainly to illustrate aspects of fifteenth-century historical writing. Recent research has focussed upon its value both as one of the few surviving 'political' accounts of medieval English monarchy at work and as an example of the propaganda produced during the Wars of the Roses. Some historians have examined the origins of the text: it has been suggested by J. A. F. Thomson and others that the *Arrivall* is an enlarged English version of a now lost and much shorter French newsletter.⁴⁹ Such a provenance does not necessarily challenge current assumptions about the value of the *Arrivall*, and might even add to its importance. As Richard Firth Green notes, 'there can be no doubt that the "Short Arrival" was composed by an Englishman, or at least by a Yorkist sympathizer, but this is hardly an *a priori* reason for assuming that it was originally written in English [as] comparable accounts of English events written in French ... are not far to seek'.⁵⁰ If this was indeed the case, then it is clear that Edward's propaganda must have been even more successful than first appears, since his cause had already found its champions in continental Europe.

Like *The Chronicle of the Rebellion*, the *Arrivall* circulated in English and French language versions very soon after the events it describes, with at least one additional

⁴⁸ S. Turner, *History of England during the Middle Ages* (5 Vols., London, Longman, 1830). Volume three of Turner's history deals particularly with the Wars of the Roses.

⁴⁹ Thomson, 'Arrival of Edward IV', pp. 84-93.

⁵⁰ Green, 'The Short Version of The Arrival of Edward IV', p. 324.

shorter, probably abridged, narrative being also produced in French.⁵¹ Along with the *Chronicle*, Waurin seems to have used it extensively in his own retelling of these events.⁵² In a similar manner to that already described above, the author of the *Arrivall* repeatedly draws attention to Edward's bravery and decisiveness. He describes how

by his force and valliannes, [he] of newe redewced and reconqueryd the sayde realme, upon agaynst th'Erle of Warwick, his traytor and rebell, calling himselfe lievtenaunte of England, by pretended auctoritie of the usurpowre Henry, and his complices; and, also, upon and agains Edward, callynge hymselfe prince of Wales, sonne to the saide Henry than wrongfully occupienge the Royme and Crowne of England; and, upon many othur greate and myghty Lords, noble men, and othar, beinge mightily accompaigned.⁵³

The *Arrivall* dismisses Henry VI as a usurper, emphasising Edward's superior right to rule England over that of the Lancastrians, whose title was based on cunning and brute force.⁵⁴ It stresses that Henry's grandfather, 'the Usurpowr Henry of Derby', returned from exile 'to the dissobeyance of his soveraigne lord, Kynge Richard the II, whome, after that, he wrongfully distressed, and put from his reigne and regalie, and usurped it

⁵¹ C. L. Kingsford considered this abridged narrative to be of very little importance, but it does at least show that multiple versions of the same text were made available for consumption across Europe by Edward's propagandists. C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 176. For more on the textual similarities between the French and English language versions of the *Arrivall*, see Green, 'The Short Version of The Arrival of Edward IV', pp. 324-6, 332-6.

⁵² The only extant English example of the *Historie* comes from a copy made by John Stow from The Book of Master Fleetwood, the Recorder of London, now British Library, MS Harley 543. Four short versions of the *Historie* survive in French manuscripts, although a definitive French edition has not yet been published. *HWE*, pp. 481-9.

⁵³ *TCE*, p. 147.

⁵⁴ *HWE*, p. 262.

falsely to himself and to his issue'.⁵⁵ Throughout the *Arrivall* inconvenient facts, not least that Edward was himself as much (if not more) of an usurper as Henry IV, were glossed over, or reinterpreted in a far more positive light. After Edward's disappointing campaign in France, the *Arrivall* sought to give his military credentials a much needed polish. Even though the costly 'invasion' of 1475 had ended in a bloodless retreat from conflict, as the English were bought off without securing any territorial gains, Edward is still described as a formidable commander capable of turning any situation to his advantage. An initial lack of support from the English baronage on his return from exile in 1471 is likewise used to emphasise the depth of loyalty of his remaining followers and to stress his divinely ordained triumph against overwhelming odds. Although few supporters initially came to Edward's aid, to the point that he was obliged to gain entry to the city of York under false pretences, the author puts the best possible spin on events.⁵⁶ To a far greater extent than in any other contemporary chronicle, God and his saints are said to have been especially protective of the king and the Yorkist cause. Any misfortune or temporary setback during his attempt to recover the throne only serves to confirm their solicitude. St George and St Anne particularly stand out as divine patrons and intercessors, as we can see from the following anecdote, in which Edward's piety (a characteristic not usually associated with him) is brought to the fore:

On the Satarday (6 April 1471), the kynge with all his hooste, cam to a towne called Daventre, where the kynge with greate devocion, hard all divine service upon the morne, Palme-Sunday, in the parishe church, wher God and Seint Anne shewyd a fayre miracle; a goode pronostique of

⁵⁵ *TCE*, pp. 148-9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.152-3.

good adventure that aftar shuld befall unto the kynge by the hand of God, and mediation of that holy Seynt Anne. For, so it was, that, afore that tyme, the Kynge beinge out of his realme, in great trowble, thowght, and hevines, for the infortwne and adversitie that was fallen hym, full often, and, specially upon the sea, he prayed to God owr Lady, and Seint George, and amonges othar saynts, he specially prayed to Seint Anne to helpe hym, where that he promysed, that, at the next time that it shuld hape hym to se any ymage of Seint Anne, he shuld thereto make his prayers, and gyve his offeringe, in the honor and worshipe of that blessed Saynte.⁵⁷

St George had been an important figure in the English Church for centuries before the reign of Edward IV, but the context of his inclusion here is significant. His status as a military saint was also longstanding, and he became more closely associated with English soldiers and English kings as time went on.⁵⁸ Soldiers in the armies of Edward I wore red crosses on their armour, and the banner of St George was displayed at the siege of Caelaverock in 1300. Three similar banners were made for Edward's son, the future Edward II, in 1322, while the latter's cousin Thomas, earl of Lancaster, not only owned at least one relic of St George but was represented alongside him in the Douce Hours (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 231). It was, however, Edward III who firmly established St George as England's patron saint by founding the Order of the

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 159. The miracle in question, when the doors of the Rood flew open of their own accord, is described below, pp. 55-56.

⁵⁸ Both William of Malmesbury and Orderic Vitalis tell how St George was among the 'ancient martyrs who had been knights in their own day' and who were observed fighting on behalf of the crusading army at the siege of Antioch in 1098. R. A. B. Mynors (ed. and trans.), *William of Malmesbury: Gesta regum Anglorum* (2 Vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1999) Vol. 1, p. 639. Jonathan Good notes that St George came to be specifically associated with England 'through the initiative of the crown'; J. Good, *The Cult of St. George* (Woodbrige, Boydell Press, 2009), ch. 3. See also S. Riches, *St George: Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, Sutton, 2000).

Garter, an elite fraternity of magnates and knights under the patronage of St George, at Windsor castle.⁵⁹ A royal chapel there, formerly dedicated to St Edward the Confessor, was partially rebuilt and rededicated to St George as the headquarters of the Order. It was filled with imagery of the saint, including an imposing statue in full armour, which stood behind the high altar.⁶⁰

When he became king, Edward IV looked back to the example of his namesakes. In 1473, work began on rebuilding the chapel at Windsor in a new and far more glorious form to serve as both a monumental mausoleum for the house of York and as a magnificent place of worship⁶¹. Following the depletion of its ranks caused by the civil war, the Order of the Garter was similarly revitalised, increasingly becoming a means of cultivating foreign dignitaries and leading nobles in a similar fashion to the way that the order of the Golden Fleece had been employed by the dukes of Burgundy.⁶² As new members were provided with the insignia of the Order, the mantle, collar and garter, in addition to receiving an annual gift of robes on the feast of St George (23 April), this act of patronage represented a striking display of the king's wealth, power and generosity. Whenever possible, Edward kept the feast of St George with great splendour at Windsor, and, after being girded with a sword and cap of maintenance

⁵⁹ Good, *Cult of St George*, pp. 63-68.

⁶⁰ Riches, *Saint George*, pp. 106-7; T. Tatton-Brown, 'The Building of the New Chapel: The First Phase', in N. Saul and T. Tatton-Brown (eds.), *St George's Chapel Windsor: History and Heritage* (Wimborne Minster, Dovecote Press, 2010), pp. 69-80; Good, *Cult of St. George*, p. 69-70.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8. Among the members elected to the Order of the Garter during Edward's reign were Ferdinand I, king of Naples, Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan, Duke Charles of Burgundy, King Ferdinand of Castille and Aragon, John II, king of Portugal and Federigo da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, commander of the papal troops. It seems likely that Edward aimed to encircle France with a ring of allies in preparation for an attack. *EIV*, p. 274; Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 75. For the Order of the Golden Fleece, see R. Vaughan, *Philip the Good: the Apogee of Burgundy* (London, Longman, 1970), pp. 160-2.

sent to him by Pope Sixtus IV, would usher in seven days of feasting in the saint's honour.⁶³

Edward's focus on St George had two important consequences. First, it strengthened his association with his famous royal namesakes and provided him with a claim to greater legitimacy – in a military context, at least, he seemed a natural successor to Edward I and Edward III. The desire to emulate the triumphs of one's predecessors and establish a sense of continuity between those who shared the same name can be observed in other medieval and early modern monarchs, particularly the early Tudors. Henry VII's first son, Arthur, was clearly named after the legendary British hero, while Henry VIII's son, Edward, was linked by name with the deeds of previous Edwards, and in particular, his great-grandfather Edward IV⁶⁴. Second, the fact that Edward of York was successful in his attempt to recover the throne after invoking the support of England's patron saint advertised to the world that he was clearly favoured by heaven as the rightful claimant.

When describing Edward IV's Palm Sunday devotions in Daventry, the *Arrivall* goes on to recount that later, during a procession to the parish church, he returned to honour an alabaster statue of Saint Anne set into the Rood. Although the case containing the image was closed and locked, it miraculously sprang open:

And even sodaynly, at that season of the service, the bords compassynge
the ymage about gave a great crak, and a little openyd, whiche the Kyng

⁶³ G. F. Beltz and G. Frederick, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter, from its foundation to the present time* (London, W. Pickering, 1841), pp. lxx-lxxi, lxxiii, clxii-clxvi.

⁶⁴ For an example of Edward fostering links to his predecessors and St George see his entry into Bristol, below, pp. 79-80.

well perceyved and all the people about hym. And anon, aftar, the bords drewe and closed togethars agayne, withowt ayn mans hand, or touchinge, and, as thowghe it had bene a thinge done with a violence, with a gretar might it openyd all abrod, and so the ymage stode, open and discovert, in syght of all the people there beyng. The Kynge, this seinge, thanked and honoryd God, and Seint Anne, takynge it for a good signe, and token of good and prosperous aventure that God wold send hym in that he had to do, and, remembringe his promyse, he honoryd God, and Seinte Anne, in that same place, and gave his offrings. All thos, also that were present and sawe this worshyppyd and thanked God and Seint Anne, there, and many offeryd; takyng of this signe, shewed by the power of God, good hope of theyr good spede to come.¹⁶⁵

Although the 'miracle' may prompt scepticism today, Edward's contemporaries (and especially those who favoured his cause) would have viewed it in a very different light. St Anne was the grandmother of Christ, an important focus of late medieval veneration and Edward's patron saint. Her personal intervention was clearly a sign of divine approval. More than that, though, it also emphasised Edward's own exalted lineage. Edward claimed his succession to the throne through his maternal grandmother, Anne Mortimer, who had by the middle of the fifteenth century become something of a cult figure, in part because of her early death in 1412.⁶⁶ By conflating St Anne and Anne Mortimer, Edward could draw parallels with the genealogy of Christ, who was descended from the kings of Israel through the maternal line. The cult of St Anne

⁶⁵ *TCE*, p. 160.

⁶⁶ J. Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy: The Kingship of Edward IV* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 2002), p. 122.

reached 'unprecedented' levels of popularity between 1470 and 1530 across northern Europe, with enormous numbers of votive images, sculptures and prints being produced in Germany, Flanders and Holland.⁶⁷ England was another early centre for devotion to St Anne, which flourished until the Reformation, in part because she represented 'the rootedness of the Incarnate Christ within a real human family'.⁶⁸ When describing the miracle of the sentient 'ymage', the author of the *Arrivall* therefore emphasises Edward's status as God's representative on earth, with a divine mandate to rule. The recovery of his crown was not only desirable but preordained by heaven – just as Henry V's triumphs had been half a century earlier.

Following a description of the Londoners' surrender to Edward in order to prevent his 'greate and mighty frinds, lovars, and servitors, with the sayd citie' from seizing it by force,⁶⁹ the *Arrivall* turns to the final battles of the conflict, the death of Warwick and the capture of Henry VI. Henry's sudden death in the Tower of London is explained by a scarcely credible story, which we may regard as the 'official' version of events. According to the author of the *Arrivall*, Henry, 'late called kyng', expired naturally 'of pure displeasure and melencoly' at Edward's return.⁷⁰ The short text then concludes with an optimistic prediction of future peace and prosperity now that God's will has been performed:

⁶⁷ V. Nixon, *Mary's Mother: Saint Anne in late medieval Europe* (University Park, PA, Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), p. 1. A particularly fine example of a votive image of this type can be seen in The Bedford Hours, a French book of hours dating from the early fifteenth century, belonging to John, Duke of Bedford (1389-1435) and his wife Anne of Burgundy (1404-1432). The book features portraits of Anne of Burgundy before St Anne (f. 257v) as well as duke John before St George (f. 256v); London, British Library, Add. MS. 18850, ff.256v, 257v; J. Backhouse, 'A Reappraisal of the Bedford Hours', *British Library Journal*, 7 (1981), pp. 47-69.

⁶⁸ E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 – c. 1540* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 181-3, 385, 296.

⁶⁹ *TCE*, p. 162.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

And thus, with the helpe of Almighty God, the moaste glorious Virgin Mary his mothar, and of Seint George, and of [all] the Saynts of heven, was begon, finished, and terminated, the reentrie and perfecte recover of the iuste title and right owr sayd soveraygne Lord Kynge Edward the Fowrth, to his realme and crown of england, within the space of xj wekes ... Whereby it apperithe, and faythfully is belevyd, that with the helpe of Almyghty God, whiche from his begynning hitharto hathe not fayled hym, in short tyme he shall appeas his subgetes thwrghe all his royalme; that peace and tranquillitie shall grow and multiplie in the same, from day to day, to the honour and lovyng of Almighty God, the encrease of his singuler and famows renoume, and to the great ioye and consolation of his frinds, alies, and well-willers, and to all his people, and to the great confusion of all his enemys, and evyll wyllars.⁷¹

The Chronicle of John of Warkworth

Following Edward's sudden death in April 1483, the disappearance of his two sons and the usurpation of the throne by his brother Richard, the popular perception of his character and reign began to diverge from the carefully constructed official version of his later years. Whereas most historians recognise the propaganda element in the two chronicles described above, there is less agreement over *The Chronicle of John of Warkworth*. It has, for example, been described by Antonia Gransden as a 'well informed, contemporary and generally moderate account of the period'.⁷² J. R. Lander, on the other hand, believed that it was the truncated and

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁷² *HWE*, pp. 257-8.

largely inaccurate 'work of a man writing without notes, whose memory had become compressed and confused' and whose grasp of chronology was unreliable.⁷³

The Chronicle of John of Warkworth derives its name from the clergyman and scholar, John Warkworth, who graduated from Merton College, Oxford, in about 1446 and became the personal chaplain of William Grey, bishop of Ely (1454–1478), at some point after 1454. Under Grey's patronage, Warkworth was appointed master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1478, remaining in office until his death two years later. Among the books that he bequeathed in his will was a manuscript written in English, the *Liber cronicorum in Anglicis* (Peterhouse MS 190), which contains one of the two known versions of the chronicle.⁷⁴ The other, although mentioned in the Peterhouse manuscript, remained undiscovered for many years until it was found by Lister Matheson in the University of Glasgow Library (Hunterian MS 83, ff. 141-8v). The two manuscripts are very closely related and display minimal variations. Matheson suggests that the Hunterian manuscript was the original from which the Peterhouse text was copied, and that another fellow of Peterhouse, either Roger of Lancaster or Thomas Metcalf, actually wrote the

⁷³ Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 260. J. A. F. Thomson takes a balanced view that the work is a 'well known as a valuable and distinctive source for the events of the middle years of of Edward IV's reign' despite the fact that 'its chronology is markedly confused in the portion covering the early 1460s'. Thomson, 'Warkworth's Chronicle Reconsidered', p. 657.

⁷⁴ The first part of *Liber cronicorum* comprises a copy of the *Brut* with continuations from 1419 to 1461 based upon one of Caxton's two editions of *The Chronicles of England* and his 1482 edition of Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon*. Warkworth's chronicle, covering the years 1461–74, was added to this continuation in the Peterhouse manuscript. This means that the chronicle must have been written after 1482, but before Warkworth presented the manuscript to his college in 1483. HWE, p. 258; J. O. Halliwell (ed.), *A Chronicle of the first thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth, by John Warkworth* (Camden Society, old series, Vol. 10, London, 1839), p. xxv.

chronicle traditionally attributed to Warkworth.⁷⁵ The following discussion, however, adopts the conventional attribution of authorship.

The discovery of the second text of the *Chronicle* made it possible to produce a composite version by comparing and collating the two manuscripts.⁷⁶ This version has greatly improved the work's reputation. Few would dispute that *Warkworth's Chronicle* provides useful material about Edward's reign, in part because of its apparent pro-Lancastrian bias, but also because it remains one of the few contemporary sources to consider the impact of Edwardian policies on the North of England. In the tradition established by previous generations of medieval annalists, Warkworth places considerable emphasis upon astronomical signs and portents that are intended to attract the reader's attention, while underscoring the significance of the events that he describes. For example, in 1468 'a blasynge sterre' appeared 'in the weste'; in 1471 the murdered corpse of Henry VI 'bledde on the pament' of St Paul's and later at 'the Black Fryres' as proof that he had met a violent end; the following January another comet, a 'moste mervelous blasynge sterre' is described in remarkable detail travelling westwards over England.⁷⁷ Yet the work is not without value as a source of more mundane historical information. For a chronicle produced after 1478, it offers an unusually 'Lancastrian' reading of events, not least during the crucial year of 1470, when Henry VI resumed the

⁷⁵ L. M. Matheson (ed.), *Death and Dissent: Two Fifteenth-Century Chronicles* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1999), pp. 80-7, L. M. Matheson, 'Historical Prose' in S.G. Edwards (ed.), *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 224-5.

⁷⁶ Thomson, 'Warkworth's Chronicle' Reconsidered', pp. 657-64.

⁷⁷ *TCE*, pp. 27-, 43-4. As well as astronomical events, meteorological phenomena are also often described in a similar fashion; see, for example, the dangerously hot summer of 1473 and the outbreak of bloody flux which accompanied it, *Ibid.*, p. 45.

throne.⁷⁸ Indeed, a number of criticisms of the Yorkist regime are voiced from the outset. During the first years of Edward's reign, for instance, we are informed that:

... the peple looked after alle the forseide prosperytes and peece, but it came not; but one batayle aftere another, and moche troble and grett losse of goodes amonge the comone peple; as fyrste, the xv [fifteenth] of alle there goodes, and thanne ane hole xv at yett at every batell to come ferre oute there countreis at ther awne coste; and these and suche othere brought Englonde ryght lowe, and many menne seyde that kynge Edward had myche blame for hurynge marchandyse, for in his dayes thei were not in other londes, nore withein Englonde, take in suche reputacyone and credence as they were afore.⁷⁹

The secret marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 is described as an early and chronic source of tension within the realm (and especially, as reiterated by all later chroniclers, with the earl of Warwick). Nonetheless, as we can see from the quotation above, Warkworth's main criticism of Edwardian government relates to the financial demands that it made on the English people. On the subject of parliamentary taxation he observed that they 'grocchede sore'; and, following another levy in 1469, he reported that they were again 'noyed ... for thei had payed

⁷⁸ 'The Bisshoppe of Wynchestere ... went to the toure of Londone, where Kynge Henry was in presone by Kynge Edwardes commawndement, and there toke hym from his keepers, whiche was not worschipfully arrayed as a prince, and not so clenely kepte as schuld seme suche a Prynce; thei had hym oute, and newe araryed hym, and dyde hym grete reverens, and brought hym to the palys of Westmynster, and so he was restorede to the crowne agayne ... Whereof alle his goode lovers were fulle gladde, and the more parte of peple.' *Ibid.*, p 33.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12. A fifteenth was a tax voted by Parliament, usually in response to an appeal by the crown for assistance with a specific problem, such as the defence of the realm or to fund a military campaign. People living in rural areas were taxed at one fifteenth of the value of their goods, whereas town dwellers customarily paid a tenth.

a lyttle before a gret taske'.⁸⁰ Even worse, the debasement of the currency in 1464 worked 'to the grete harme of the comene peple'.⁸¹

These and other complaints about Edward IV and his rule are highly significant because they reveal that contemporary responses to the king were far from universally favourable. The criticisms that would so often be levelled against him in future, from observations concerning his ill-matched marriage to attacks on his grasping financial policy, seem to have been articulated first in the pages of *Warkworth's Chronicle*. It is clear that adverse assessments of Edward IV did not begin posthumously, but reflect a mood of underlying dissatisfaction felt by many of his subjects. After all, given that few authors in this period wrote for purely disinterested reasons, Warkworth almost certainly had a patron and must have known that it would have been acceptable to write as he did. There was clearly a market for such potentially dangerous material.

The Crowland Chronicle Continuations

The *Crowland or Croyland Chronicle Continuations* offer perhaps the most important portrayal of Edward IV to be found in any of the earlier chronicles, as they became the primary source upon which many later historians, such as Sir George Buck, drew.⁸² Starting out as an early medieval chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland, allegedly composed by Abbot Ingulf (but now ascribed to the Pseudo-Ingulf), the first part of the work takes the history of the monastery from its first foundation in c.714 to its destruction by the Danes in 870, and then from its re-foundation in about 966 up to

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸² *EIV*, App. I, p. 430; M. Hicks, 'Crowland's World: A Westminster View of the Yorkist Age', *History*, 90 (2005), pp. 172-90.

the Norman Conquest.⁸³ Three separate, in places overlapping, *Continuations* carry the rest of the narrative up to 1486. The first, written by the prior shortly after the death of Abbot John Littlington in January 1470, continues the official chronicle from 1149 up to this date. The anonymous author of *The Second Continuation* allegedly produced his contribution 'in the space of ten days, the last of which was the last day of April in [1486]'.⁸⁴ He begins with the battle of Ludlow, shortly before the accession of Edward IV, and ends with that of Henry VII. In its extant form *The Third Continuation* covers only the years 1485 and 1486 before breaking off incomplete. Its anonymous author claims not to have known the identity of his immediate predecessor, and appears to have been writing some time later. The surviving copy of the *Third Continuation* ends abruptly and is largely concerned with the loss of the church of Brynkhurst, or Eston, to the abbey of Peterborough. Only the first and second continuations are relevant to this thesis.

The First Continuation focuses mainly upon the history of Croyland abbey, rarely referring to national affairs until about 1461. The Wars of the Roses figure increasingly in the narrative after this point, almost certainly because the abbey could no longer remain isolated from them. Although the first continuator adds very little new information to our understanding of the conflicts of the mid-fifteenth century, his views on the participants do provide an interesting supplement to the opinions of other contemporary authors. He is glowing in his praise for the young Edward, in marked contrast to John of Warkworth's critical assessment of his first ten years. He observes that in the early 1460s the new king seemed every inch the godly warrior,

⁸³ E. King, 'Ingulf (c. 1045-1109), abbot of Crowland', *ODNB*, Vol. 29, pp. 294-5.

⁸⁴ N. Pronay and J. Cox (eds.), *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations* (London, Alan Sutton for the Richard III Society and Yorkist History Trust, 1986), p. 193.

'now in the flower of his age, tall of stature, elegant in person, of unblemished character, valiant in arms, and a lineal descendant of the illustrious line of King Edward the Third'.⁸⁵ He also stresses how beloved Edward was of the people, especially in London, a claim largely supported by other sources.⁸⁶ Despite his Yorkist tendencies, however, the continuator does sympathise with Henry VI. He suggests that the king's 'simplicity' allowed him to be manipulated by evil advisors who did not have his best interests at heart.⁸⁷ He even goes so far as to assert that Henry had 'for many years suffered from an infirmity of the mind on account of an illness which had overtaken him; this mental weakness lasted for a long time, and he was ruler of the kingdom only in name'.⁸⁸ Edward's accession was therefore a necessary and welcome step towards the restoration of stability and good government.⁸⁹

The Second Continuation is even more valuable for the study of Edward IV. Its anonymous author was clearly well-educated with connections at court, displaying not only a thorough knowledge of Chancery and its officials, but also adopting a distinctly humanist style and approach to historical writing.⁹⁰ Since he knew so much about Yorkist politics, some historians have suggested that he may have been John Russell, bishop of Lincoln, who served Edward IV in a diplomatic capacity and was later (briefly)

⁸⁵ H. T. Riley (ed. and trans.), *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the continuations of Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers* (London, Henry G. Bohn, 1854), p. 424.

⁸⁶ *Gregory's Chronicle*, for instance, notes that Edward was loved and admired by the commons of London from a very early point: at the beginning of March 1461, when news came 'of the coming of the Earl of March to London then all the city was glad, and thanked God, [and said], "let us walk in a new vineyard and let us make a gay garden in the month of March with this fair white rose and herb, the Earl of March.' Gairdner, 'Gregory's Chronicle', p. 215.

⁸⁷ Anonymous, 'The Chronicle of Crowland abbey, A.D. 616-1486', in W. Fulman (ed.), *Rerum Anglicarum scriptorum veterum Tom. I* (Oxford, Sheldonian Theatre, 1684), p. 521.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

⁸⁹ The Continuator stresses that Edward not only possessed a strong hereditary claim to the throne, but was also better suited to governing than Henry and better able to defend his title. *HWE*, pp. 411-2, Anonymous, 'Chronicle of Crowland Abbey', pp. 532-3.

⁹⁰ The editors of the *Crowland Chronicle Continuations: 1459-1486* actually describe it as '[England's] first native piece of humanistic history, antedating Thomas More's by nearly thirty years'. Pronay and Cox, *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, p. 99; Hicks, 'Crowland's World', pp. 175-80.

chancellor to Richard III.⁹¹ The author of the *Continuation* is overtly hostile to Richard, despite his protestations of impartiality and his avowed intention to write 'without any conscious introduction of falsehood, hatred or favour in so far as the true course of events is known to us'.⁹² One could argue that his real purpose was to prove that the conflict between the Houses of Lancaster and York was a tragedy leading inexorably to the downfall of the evil King Richard and the triumph of Henry Tudor. Richard is in many respects the focus of *The Second Continuation*, emerging as deceitful, tyrannical and avaricious. Edward, however, is cast in a better light. Although the author is not uncritical of him and seems to have reserved his particular respect for government ministers rather than the king, he adopts an even-handed approach. He admired Edward's successes as a warrior and a monarch, but also found fault with his personal behaviour, albeit in more measured terms than those of Philip de Commynes.

As we can see, the second continuator is more muted in his praise of Edward than the first, stressing that he was far from perfect. His chief failings involved his dedication to 'convivial company, vanity, debauchery, extravagance and sensual enjoyment', but they were balanced by the ease with which he made and maintained friendships, his physical attractiveness, his excellent memory and the breathtaking magnificence of his court.⁹³ This level of opulence was maintained by the remarkable wealth that he generated as king, with the result that 'not one of his predecessors could equal his remarkable achievements' in matters of display. But as he grew older his financial

⁹¹ J. A. F. Thomson, 'John Russell (c.1430–1494), administrator and bishop of Lincoln', *ODNB*, Vol. 48, pp. 276–278. Michael Hicks, however, remains unconvinced about any of the possible identities; Hicks, 'Crowland's World', p. 174 n. 7.

⁹² Pronay and Cox, *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, p. 183.

⁹³ In doing so, Edward was fulfilling one of the aspects of good kingship that Sir John Fortescue (c. 1394 – 1479), set out in his influential treatise on English law *The Governance of England*. See M. Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 29.

acumen turned to avarice, his charming manner became high-handed arrogance, especially in the treatment of his brother Clarence, and the love that his people once had for him ceased: 'he appeared to be feared by all his subjects while he himself stood in fear of no-one.'⁹⁴

The *Crowland Continuations* remain an invaluable source for Edward's reign because they view it from an independent perspective, untouched by the demands of propaganda. *The Second Continuation*, in particular, is written from the viewpoint of a first-hand observer who evidently had little to gain from misrepresenting the actual course of events as he understood them. A great many Tudor chronicles and histories are inter-related, from the humanist works of Thomas More and Polydore Vergil all the way through to Shakespeare. Their authors often knew their predecessors personally and borrowed freely from them, inevitably adopting similar opinions of the characters they described. The *Crowland Continuations*, however, remained hidden for over a century, and their discovery prompted seventeenth-century scholars to re-examine the 'official' record of the Tudor regime with a more critical eye. The availability of an apparently unbiased contemporary account of the Yorkist period helped to sow 'historic doubts' and to inspire a long-continuing debate about the relationship between history and propaganda, and the role of the historian as a reporter of political events. But before addressing these questions, we must first examine what the London Chroniclers had to say about King Edward and his notorious brother.

⁹⁴ Pronay and Cox, *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, pp. 150-3.

Urban Chronicles and the Influence of London

In addition to the more traditional 'monastic' chronicles and their continuations, the fifteenth century saw the rise of a new form of historical writing. From the 1390s, vernacular chronicles intended for a growing audience of literate merchants and artisans began to proliferate, particularly in London. Not since the Anglo-Saxon period had vernacular historical writing been so important or popular. To our knowledge, the only chronicle composed in Middle English before the fifteenth century was that of Robert of Gloucester.⁹⁵ Nor were Latin histories of England commonly translated. In 1338 Robert Mannyng of Bourne translated parts of Peter of Langford's chronicle, supplementing it with extracts from the *Roman de Brut*, the Norman poet Wace's version of Monmouth's *Historia regnum Britanniae*, to make a single cohesive narrative.⁹⁶ Half a century later, John Trevisa, another Oxford graduate, produced an immensely popular English version of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, with a continuation up to 1360, at the behest of his patron, Thomas, Lord Berkeley⁹⁷. Men like Trevisa and Mannyng played a major role in fostering the spread of English as the written language of secular clergy and educated laymen. Indeed, Trevisa maintained that it was essential for important works to be made available to those who had no Latin, although he was by this point knocking at an open door.

Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon* remained in circulation throughout the fifteenth century, and contributed to the avid market for universal histories in the

⁹⁵ W. A. Wright (ed.), *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester* (2 Vols., London, Rolls Series, 1887).

⁹⁶ F. J. Furnivall (ed.) *The Story of England by Robert Manning of Brunne* (2 Vols., London, Rolls Series, 1887). See also O. Preussner, *Robert Mannyng of Brunnes Uebersetzung von Pierre de Langtoft's Chronicle* (Breslau, Anton Schreiber, 1891).

⁹⁷ J. Taylor (ed.), *The "Universal Chronicle" of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966).

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹⁸ In 1482, a continuation was printed by William Caxton that took the work up to the accession of Edward IV.⁹⁹ However, whereas Higden's original Latin text survives in at least 118 complete manuscripts and partially in others (many of which were owned by monasteries), only fourteen manuscripts of Trevisa's translation have stood the test of time.¹⁰⁰ It seems that readers had moved on to other types of historical literature. Indeed, continuations to the *Polychronicon*, like Caxton's, tended to be very slight and derived most of their content from other well-known contemporary vernacular sources, particularly *The Brut* and the London Chronicles. They, by contrast, were proving increasingly popular, and appealed to different, though overlapping, audiences. *The Brut*, with its foundations in myth and legend, presented a lively version of history closer to a chivalric romance than a sober chronicle. While this tendency is most obvious in its stories of Arthur, Merlin and, of course, Brutus, the deeds of later rulers, such as Edward III and Henry V, are presented with the same emphasis upon heroism and nobility. Warfare is described in graphic and bloody detail, rendering the work especially attractive to the noble and knightly classes. Even so, the later parts of *The Brut*, dealing with more contemporary concerns, derive their material almost entirely from urban, especially London, chronicles. These chronicles developed from the notes that were traditionally added to the lists of mayors and sheriffs kept in the civic archive. They appealed less to the nobility and more to affluent Londoners, such as merchants, tradesmen, scribes and master craftsmen, who according to M. Rose McLaren 'may or may not have been involved in the governance of the city'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ HWE, p. 221.

⁹⁹ Taylor, "Universal Chronicle" of Ranulf Higden, pp. 140-2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 152-59.

¹⁰¹ M. Rose-McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century: A Revolution in Historical Writing* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2002), p. 4.

The fifteenth-century London Chronicles form a discrete group of civic records, each adopting a similar layout and demonstrating a generally consistent approach to the history of the city. They drew their inspiration from a well-established tradition of chronicle writing in Latin (and later French) that had flourished there from at least the thirteenth century.¹⁰² Traces of their ancestry can be seen in the formal Latin headings with which some of them begin each new reign, in the way that the names of mayors and sheriffs are so often Latinised and the occasional insertion of Latin and French passages and marginal glosses.¹⁰³ All of the forty-four surviving manuscripts of the fifteenth-century London chronicles are anonymous, and we have very little direct evidence of their authorship or, indeed, of their actual readership. Almost all demonstrate some relationship with each other.¹⁰⁴ Their very existence, alongside that of pamphlets such as the *Arrivall*, does, however, indicate a growing population of readers with enough money to spend on luxury items like books and a keen interest in metropolitan politics. The scribbled handwriting used to update several of the chronicles suggests that they were probably not written by professional scribes or intended for sale, but that their owners were responsible for adding new material.¹⁰⁵

Given the frequent borrowings and replications in terms of content, it is perhaps best to focus on one specific example. MS Guildhall 3313, the so-called *Great Chronicle of London*, was so named by Kingsford in his 1913 study of *English Historical Literature in*

¹⁰² T. Stapleton (ed.), *De Antiquis legibus liber: Cronica maiorum et vicecomitum Londoniarum et quedam* (Camden Society, old series, Vol. 34, London, 1846); W. Stubbs (ed.), *Chronicles of the Reign of Edward I and Edward II* (2 Vols., London, Longman & Co., 1882), Vol. 1; D. C. Cox, 'The French Chronicle of London', *Medium Aevum*, 45 (1976), p. 207; *HWE*, pp. 509-12.

¹⁰³ C. L. Kingsford, *Chronicles of London* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1905), p. vii.

¹⁰⁴ Rose-McLaren, *London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 98-138.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25,33.

the Fifteenth Century. He explained that, ‘most important of all, the work quoted by John Stow as “Fabian’s MS.” has recently come to light and proved to be the fullest and most valuable copy of the London Chronicles we possess ... [it should] fitly be described as *The Great Chronicle*.’¹⁰⁶ He believed that this *Great Chronicle* was one of three complete surviving versions of a ‘Main City Chronicle’ compiled between 1440 and 1485, but subsequently lost.¹⁰⁷ This hypothetical Chronicle was apparently a redaction of many older chronicles and was the template upon which most subsequent histories were based. Although he was mistaken in assuming that these three texts derived from a single prototype, Kingsford was, nonetheless, the first historian to submit them to sustained analysis. The editors of the 1938 edition of *The Great Chronicle*, A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley, acknowledged his contribution, observing that, whereas ‘his analysis seems to suffer from over-simplification’ by relying on common passages in otherwise very different chronicles, it nevertheless represents ‘at least a courageous attempt to grapple with a difficult subject’.¹⁰⁸

In its current form, the manuscript of *The Great Chronicle* consists of two discrete sections preserved together in a late seventeenth or early eighteenth-century calfskin binding. The first part, written in a mid-fifteenth century hand, deals with events up to 1439, while the second, written on coarser, lower quality paper, is in a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century hand. Although this part was composed after Edward’s death and is predictably supportive of the Tudors in its later entries, comments about

¹⁰⁶ Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*, pp. 70-1, 77. For more on Stow and his sources, see below pp. 158-9.

¹⁰⁷ The other two were British Library, Cottonian MS Vitellius A. XVI, and *The Newe Cronycles*, which he called *Fabyan’s Chronicle*. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-107.

¹⁰⁸ *GCL*, p. xxvii.

him are sufficiently close to other, immediately contemporary sources as to suggest that they reflect the opinions voiced by prominent Londoners while he was alive.

London was the strategic and financial capital of fifteenth century England. The city was a dynamic centre for trade and industry that flourished in close proximity to such important centres of royal power as the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey. Here the kings of England had been crowned since the time of Edward the Confessor. Corporate loans from the city and from individual citizens became an essential feature of royal finance throughout the later medieval period, the money provided by members of the mercantile elite for the king's 'necessity' increasing steadily throughout the Lancastrian period.¹⁰⁹ No king could effectively rule over England without enjoying the support of these affluent and influential Londoners, as Richard II learned to his cost in 1399.¹¹⁰ The prior of St Botolph's in Cambridge, Philip Fitz-Eustace, noted derisively that Henry IV had become king not by election by the magnates and the State of England, 'but by the London rabble'.¹¹¹

London had supported the Yorkist faction from an early stage in the Wars of the Roses, so it is no surprise that Edward initially emerges as a popular figure in The Great Chronicle.¹¹² When, as earl of March and a potential claimant to the throne, he

¹⁰⁹ G. L. Harriss, 'Aids, Loans and Benevolences', *Historical Journal*, 4 (1963), pp. 1-19.

¹¹⁰ C. M. Barron, *London in the Middle Ages: Government and People 1200-1500* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 26-29.

¹¹¹ J. H. Wylie, *History of England under Henry the Fourth*, (4 Vols., New York, AMS Press, 1969), Vol. 1, pp. 420-1.

¹¹² In its entry for 1460, the chronicle records in detail the parliamentary settlement of the throne on Richard of York (Edward's Father) and his heirs after Henry's death. Duke Richard, who then became regent of England, was killed in battle shortly thereafter, fighting against Henry VI's wife, Margaret of Anjou. *GCL*, p. 193.

marched into London with Warwick and his supporters in 1461 he was greeted with adulation.

Theerlys of march & of warwyck wt a grete power of men, but ffewe of name entrid Into the Cyte of london, The which was of the Cytzens Joyously Resayvyd, and upon the Soneday ffolowyng [the iij of marche] The said Erle causyd to be mustyrd hys people in Seynt Johnis ffyeld, where unto that ost were proclaymyd & shewyd certayn artyculys & poyntys that kyng henry hadd offendyd In, whereuppon It was demaundyd of the sayd people whethyr the sayd Henry were worthy to Regn as kyng any lenger or noo Whereunto the people cryed hugely & sayd Nay Nay, and afftyr It was axid of thaym whethyr they wold have Therle of march for theyr kyng and they Cryed wyth oon voys ye ye...¹¹³

The *Chronicle* goes on to describe how Edward, 'lyke a wyse prynce', initially resisted the demand that he be crowned king with a show of humility, but then submitted to the exhortations of the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of Exeter, along with 'othyr noble men then present'.¹¹⁴ This was clearly a theatrical performance, as having marched on London with his army Edward could not have wanted anything other than the throne. By presenting himself as a servant of the people, who was persuaded to take the crown by others, rather than as an usurper acting on his own initiative, Edward may well have sought to contrast his behaviour with that of Henry IV, the founder of the troubled Lancastrian dynasty.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

After being acclaimed king at a lavish ceremony at Westminster, Edward travelled by boat to St Paul's Cathedral where at dinner he was approached by the mayor and other leading citizens, who begged him 'to be good and gracious to the Citee; and that they myght haue their olde liberties and ffranchises graunted and confermed as they had been by his noble progenitours days; which was graunted unto theym'.¹¹⁵ This passage furnishes the first of many examples of Edward's skilful management of the people of London, largely achieved by granting the merchant classes additional rights and encouraging trade. In 1462 he awarded the city a charter that not only augmented the privileges it had gained in 1444, but also added the right to impose extra taxes on foreign merchants – a profitable concession that also pandered to his subjects' xenophobia.¹¹⁶ Between 1461 and 1471 Edward knighted eighteen London citizens; in 1465 no fewer than five aldermen were made knights of the Bath at Queen Elizabeth's coronation.¹¹⁷ This was a significant honour, since few Londoners had ever previously been knighted. As Gregory's Chronicle noted approvingly, the king had bestowed 'a grete worschyppe unto alle the cytte'.¹¹⁸ Even towards the end of his reign, Edward was still courting the civic elite. In 1482 he invited the mayor, 'certayn of his brythern, thaldermen, and certeyn comoners' to accompany him on a hunting expedition in the forest of Waltham before having them 'browgth unto a lusty & plausaunt lodge made of Grene bowhhys & other thyngys of pleasure'.¹¹⁹ The chronicles report glowingly on the episode, and refer particularly to the 'ffavourable &

¹¹⁵ There are clear similarities here to the way in which Richard III was later 'persuaded' to seize the throne in 1483 by his followers and in which the Duke of Buckingham pressed his claim upon the 'Mayr and his brithern and to a greate multitude of the Citezeins'. Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*, pp. 174-5, 190-1; R. Horrox, *Richard III: A Study in Service* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 120

¹¹⁶ One of Edward's main legislative priorities was commerce and industry. The parliament of 1463-5 in particular enacted a great deal of protectionist legislation. While initially Edward avoided confronting the powerful Hanseatic League, by the late 1460s he was prepared to do so at the behest of native London merchants. *EIV*, p. 359-70.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

¹¹⁸ Gairdner, 'Gregory's Chronicle', p. 228.

¹¹⁹ *GCL*, pp. 228-9; Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*, p. 189.

chereful countenauncys' of those who enjoyed the royal hospitality. The generous gift of a ton of Gascoigne wine 'a short seson afftyr' to the 'mayeresse & unto the aldyrmennys wyfs' underscored the king's generosity. As we shall see below, this memorably outgoing aspect of Edward's personality was to be transformed into something rather more sinister at the end of the Tudor period (see below pp. 227-9, 230-3).

Edward's conspicuous love of display also played well with ordinary Londoners and marked him as a man apart from Henry VI. Extravagant celebrations, public spectacles and tournaments that could be enjoyed by people at all levels of society are frequently described in the city chronicles. Where Henry VI's cause was damaged at the Readeption by his threadbare appearance and insignificant retinue ('the which was more lyker a play then the shewyng of a prynce to wynne mennys hertys, ffor by this mean he lost many & wan noon or Rygth ffewe¹²⁰), Edward spared no expense when presenting himself in his finery.¹²¹ His investment clearly paid off: at his coronation the 'greate multitude of people' at St Paul's was larger than 'euer was seen in eny dayes', the crowds being so dense 'that many were in grete Jupardy, and gat owth of that prees not wythowth grete dangyer'.¹²²

For these reasons, Edward was far better placed to draw upon the financial resources of London than his predecessor. Unlike Henry VI, during whose reign according to Ross

¹²⁰ *GCL*, p. 215.

¹²¹ An early visitor to Edward's court commented that Edward kept 'the most splendid court that could be found in all of Christendom'. M. Letts (ed. and trans.), *The Travels of Leo of Rozmital Through Germany, Flanders, England, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy 1465-1467* (Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, Vol. 108, Cambridge, 1957) pp. 46-7; *EIV*, pp. 257-259.

¹²² Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*, p. 176; *GCL*, pp. 195-6.

'the revenues of the English Crown had fallen to an unprecedentedly low level',¹²³ he was able to raise much more money from his subjects. Between 1462 and 1475 London merchants, either individually or in syndicates, loaned the crown £35,852. This sum represented more than three times the amount that Henry VI had levied in the last ten years of his reign. Benevolences from the mayor and aldermen helped to fund Edward's French campaign in 1475, while in 1481 alone he raised a thousand marks [£666] from the city.¹²⁴ This money allowed Edward a degree of financial independence that few English monarchs had previously enjoyed.

The London chronicles do not praise all of Edward's actions, however. His marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, the woman with whom he was 'soo ffervently enamorwid', is portrayed in the *Great Chronicle* in a generally negative light. Although the author is circumspect in his discussion of its consequences, he does observe that the marriage took place secretly, without the knowledge of Edward's councillors. Warwick, wrongly said to have been negotiating a royal marriage in Spain rather than France, was particularly incensed, as a result of which 'mwch unkeyndnes' soon arose 'atwene the kyng & the said Erle ... and much hert brennyng was evyr aftyr atwene the sayd Erle & the Quenys blood soo long as he lyvid.'¹²⁵

Although the marriage itself is identified as the principal cause of Warwick's mounting irritation, the appointment of the queen's grasping relatives to high offices, such as the treasurership of England and other 'sundry grete promocions', was what eventually 'kyndelid the sparkyll of envy, whych by contynuance grewe soo grete a blase &

¹²³ *EIV*, p. 371.

¹²⁴ *GCL*, pp. 223, 228.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

ffawme of ffyre, that aloonly it flaumyd not thorwth alle of Engeland, But alsoo ... Flaundyr & Fraunce'.¹²⁶ Besides their rapid and evidently undeserved ascent to positions of wealth and power, other factors made the Woodvilles unpopular among the citizenry. The *Chronicle* recounts how servants of Edward's father-in-law, Lord Rivers, created havoc in London, drinking and revelling so much that eight tons of Gascoigne wine disappeared from one cellar and a similar quantity of household goods was 'brybid & lost'.¹²⁷ Warwick, meanwhile, assiduously gathered support among the commons against the queen and her family. The *Chronicle* notes that 'murmurous talys Ran In the Cite atwene therle of warwyk & the Quenys blood'.¹²⁸ Whereas the Woodvilles and their followers left a trail of debt and destruction, Warwick is said to have been extremely generous, to the extent that whenever he was at his residence in London the meat of six oxen was distributed at breakfast and mead was freely available to any 'that had any acqueytaunce In that hows'.¹²⁹ Edward was warned in the summer of 1469 that the high-handed behaviour of the Woodville family, especially Lord Rivers, was causing unrest in the city, but did little to address the problem.¹³⁰ Worse, he was apparently misled by Warwick into allowing him to confront the earl of Pembroke, who had actually raised an army in support of the king against his enemies. As in other early chronicles, Edward appears too trusting of the wrong people, a flaw that would ultimately spell disaster for his dynasty.

Although there is far less evidence for the survival of vernacular chronicles outside the capital, at least one example may be found in the manuscript known as *The Maire of*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Bristowe Is Kalendar. Compiled by a town clerk named Robert Ricart at the behest of Mayor William Spencer, the *Kalendar* consists of a three-part history of England and especially of the city of Bristol, along with a list of civic officers and an account of local customs and ceremonies. Ricart was elected to his post in 1479, but very little else is known about him. It seem likely that he was a member of the guild of Kalendars, which was attached to the church of All Saints in Bristol; that he acted in some official capacity for the church (probably as a vestry clerk), where he kept the Parish Book for twelve years; and that he went on to serve as town clerk for at least twenty-seven years.¹³¹ The date of his death is unknown, but he continued to update the mayor's Kalendar until 1506.¹³²

The first three parts of the *Kalendar* are devoted to history, the last three to local customs and laws. Part one consists of a short and fairly generic version of the *Brut* history based in part on Geoffrey of Monmouth. Part two is an abridgement of the chronicle of Matthew of Westminster from the Norman Conquest until the death of King John in 1216. The third begins with the coronation of Henry III and follows the example of the London chronicles in the way that it divides into years, each beginning with the name of the current mayor and a list of civic officers. It gains more local content as it enters the fifteenth century, when information about grain prices, local rebellions, climatic conditions and lost cargoes appears alongside references to events during the Wars of the Roses. There can be little doubt that in Bristol, as in the capital, Edward and his supporters were well-liked. In his entry for 1461, following a large

¹³¹ L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar by Robert Ricart Town Clerk of Bristol 18 Edward IV* (Camden New Series, Vol. 5, London, 1872), p. i.

¹³² Ricart's hand can also be seen in entries in the "Little Red Book", a collection of material relating to the government of Bristol, indicating that he was still alive after his notes in the *Kalendar* cease. F. B. Bickley (ed.), *The Little Red Book of Bristol* (2 Vols., Bristol, Council of the City and County of Bristol, 1900), Vol. 1, p. 199.

space set aside for an illuminated image of the king (that was unfortunately never added) Ricart writes:

This noble prince kyng Edwarde the fourthe in the furst yere of his reigne came furst to Bristowe, where he was ful honourably receyvid in as worshipfull wise as evir he was in eny towne or cite. And ther was the same tyme hangid, drawen, and behedid Sire Bawdon Fulforde knyght [an enemy of the earl of Warwick, then Edward's most powerful supporter] and John Heysaunt esquire.¹³³

Edward's spectacular entry into Bristol is also described in a fragmentary account in Lambeth Palace Library MS 306, f. 132r, which provides a vivid description of the pageant devised by the citizenry, during which he was first welcomed by his 'forefader, Wylliam of Normandy, to see thy weelfare here through Goddys sond'. There is an interesting early reference to Edward's association with St George, an image of whom was displayed prominently at Temple Cross 'on horsbakke, uppon a tent, fyghtyng with a dragon; and the Kyng and the Quene on hygh in a castell, and his doughter benethe with a lambe; and atte the sleying of the dragon ther was a greet melody of aungellys.'¹³⁴ Although this account was apparently written at some point during the sixteenth century, it clearly conveys the lasting impression made by the ceremony and how long it was remembered. Significantly, the *Kalendar's* two short entries concerning Henry VI's visits to the Bristol in 1447 and 1448, barely register his presence

¹³³ Toulmin Smith, *Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar*, p. 43.

¹³⁴ Gairdner, *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, p. 86; Good, *Cult of St. George*, p. 87.

in the city.¹³⁵ The reports of Henry VII's marriage in 1486 and his visit to Bristol in 1496 are no less perfunctory.¹³⁶

Edward's exile and return to England in 1471 are covered in greater detail in the *Kalendar*, at least compared to the minimal attention paid there to other important national events in the later fifteenth century. This could be because Bristol was directly involved in the struggle for the throne: as *Ricart* notes, Margaret of Anjou stopped there to muster men and supplies before confronting Edward at the battle of Tewkesbury. The *Kalendar* is nonetheless careful to stress that she was merely passing through the city and had already 'geder[ed] grete people' in Devon before her arrival. *Ricart* was clearly anxious to underplay local support for the Lancastrian cause, however reluctant.¹³⁷ Interestingly, the blame for Edward's expulsion from England in 1470 falls squarely upon his tracherous brother, George, duke of Clarence, and the earl of Warwick. King Henry is only mentioned once in a single sentence, which notes that he died in the Tower, evidently of natural causes, within fifteen days of Edward's return to London.

Since there are so few surviving accounts of the reign of Edward IV that do not derive from official or semi-official sources, it is hard to determine how the king was perceived by the common people of England. Even so, from what little remains, a picture can be painted of a popular, if flawed, monarch whose commanding presence and love of spectacle lived on in the memories of his subjects long after his death. Elements of this portrait would be integrated into many later histories, especially those

¹³⁵ Toulmin Smith, *Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar*, pp. 39, 40, 44-5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

by antiquaries such as John Stow, Raphael Holinshed and other London-based authors, but the generally positive interpretation of Edward's rule did not endure unscathed as we shall see.

CHAPTER TWO

Thomas More, Polydore Vergil and Humanism: Edward IV in the Early Tudor period

Humanism, the philosophical and literary movement that spread across Western Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, brought the study of classical Greek and re-edited Latin works to new audiences. It was in many ways the literary counterpart to the artistic renaissance in Italy. Just as the patrons of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci celebrated the work of their hired artists, so too did the patrons of scholars and writers, employing them as *littérateurs* in their courts. Such was their international fame that many Italian and French humanists found work in foreign courts. Indeed, some, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536), became internationally famous in their own right. One of the reasons why the movement took off when it did was the development of printing and bookmaking, along with a commensurate growth in the book trade. As a result, the works of ancient authors could be disseminated and analysed, often in more reliable editions, with several hitherto unknown or partially translated texts being presented to a mass audience for the first time. The study of Classical Greek especially benefited from this process, as until then interest in the language had been something of a novelty.

Humanism, as the name implies, focused upon the activities of human beings, and in particular the best means of pursuing a better, more morally uplifting life. The term itself came from the Latin word *humanitas*, used by Cicero and other Roman authors to describe the ideals and values to be derived from a liberal education. The *studia humanitatis*, constituting an understanding of literature, language, moral philosophy and history, was by the fifteenth century enshrined as the basis of university teaching.

The Italian term *umanista*, and later the English analogue *humanist*, came to be applied in the sixteenth century to the scholars who disseminated these ideas. It should be noted, however, that the term 'humanism' was not given to the intellectual movement as a whole until the nineteenth century.¹

The influence of the cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), author of *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, first published in 1860, can still be felt in recent scholarship on the subject of humanism.² Although Burckhardt's conclusions were not particularly innovative, he drew together many strands of thought in a logical, simple and intelligible way. He argued that, while an interest in the Greek and Roman past was important to the development of the Renaissance, 'the essence of the phenomena might still have been the same without the classical revival'.³ From his standpoint, the 'characteristic stamp' of the Renaissance was the growth of the individual personality, and he felt that the role of humanists as 'mediators between their own age and a venerated antiquity' had been exaggerated. Burckhardt described them in anthropological terms rather than attempting an objective assessment of their scholarly achievements:

Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, part, family or corporation - only through some general category. In Italy, this veil first melted into the air; an objective treatment and consideration of the state and of all the things in this world became possible. The subjective

¹ *CCRH*, p. 1.

² R. Black, 'Humanism', in C. Allmand (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (7 Vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), Vol. 7, p. 243.

³ *CRI*, p. 120.

side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual individual and recognised himself as such.⁴

Burckhardt did not view this development in a wholeheartedly positive manner. It seemed to him that the solipsistic and personal nature of the enterprise led its practitioners into 'malicious self-conceit', 'abominable profligacy', 'irreligion' and 'licentious excess'.⁵ However, the idea that the humanist movement constituted a significant break with the past was established in his *Civilisation*, becoming a point of orthodoxy for almost a century.

Historians working during the early to mid-twentieth century further emphasised the importance of the humanist movement and its place in the creation of an emergent discipline of history. Edward Fueter (1876-1928), in his *Geschichte der neuen Historiographie*,⁶ probably started the trend, arguing in starkly Darwinian terms that 'Humanism [was] the leading factor in dragging history up the next notch in the evolutionary ladder'.⁷ The Americans J.T. Shotwell (1874-1965),⁸ J.W. Thompson (1847-1928),⁹ and H.E. Barnes (1889-1968)¹⁰ followed this line; and the fundamental importance of the movement to the student of European historiography was reiterated in the work of Arnaldo Momigliano (1908-1987).¹¹ The idea of humanism as a 'necessary and sufficient condition for the emergence of modern historical

⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 177-9.

⁶ E. Fueter, *Geschichte der neuen Historiographie* (Munich and Berlin, R. Oldenbourg, 1936)

⁷ *SCP*, p.4.

⁸ J. T. Shotwell, *An Introduction to the History of History* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1922).

⁹ J.W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, (2 Vols., New York, Macmillan Co., 1942).

¹⁰ H. E., *A History of Historical Writing* (2nd edn., New York, Dover Publications, 1963).

¹¹ A. Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (New York, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966); *idem*, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1977); *idem*, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990).

consciousness'¹² was soon adopted by scholars of early modern English historical writing. Assessments by authors such as F. S. Fussner, F. J. Levy, Arthur B. Ferguson, and D.R Woolf followed this general line, with Woolf himself observing that 'humanism provided the necessary potion for restoring medieval annalistic dross into neo-classical-hence-modern historical gold, even if it was gold that still needed a century or two of scholarly refinement'.¹³ These arguments reflect a strikingly 'Whiggish' and predictably condescending attitude to the Middle Ages, as reflected in the conviction that a newer, better form of historical writing would replace the uncritical output of a less sophisticated age.

More recently, historians approaching humanism without such ideological baggage have suggested that the rediscovery of classical Latin and Greek literature did not lead to the same comprehensive break with past traditions in the writing of history as was apparent in the sphere of art. Instead, these developments accelerated existing trends, prompting a noticeable change in focus rather than format. The medieval tradition of writing had, after all, flourished under the influence of classical authors, despite the relative dearth of original material in circulation.¹⁴ For example, it appears that William of Malmesbury (c.1090-c.1142) had access to speeches made by Cicero in 62 BC, and used Suetonius and Sallust as models for his writing.¹⁵ The deployment of rhetoric, one of the distinguishing features of 'humanist' history, had long been taught

¹² *SCP*, p.5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁴ M. D. Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship', *CCRH*, p. 20.

¹⁵ See, for example, H.T. Ouellette (ed.), *William of Malmesbury, Polyhistor: A critical edition* (Binghampton, Centre for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), p. 49, lines 21-2; R. M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 30-31, 40-75, 162.

in the schools and universities of medieval Europe.¹⁶ The works of Cicero proved especially influential in this respect: his definition of rhetoric in the *De Inventione* (87 BC) as 'eloquence based on the rules of art' and as a fundamental 'branch of political science' went largely unquestioned.¹⁷ Several English chroniclers, including Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia regum Britanniae* (c. 1139) and *Vita Merlini* (c.1135), attempted to write in elegant Latin reminiscent of classical Rome and rhetorical speech became an important component of their work.¹⁸ As we have already seen in *The History of the Arrivall of Edward IV*, even fifteenth-century propagandists were perfectly capable of adhering to a sustained and unitary theme, especially if they wished to honour a distinguished patron.

Histories of the ancient world were among the first works from the Classical past that the humanist scholars unearthed and popularised. Although a great deal of literature was produced in republican and imperial Rome from about 200 BC to the early fifth century AD, not a single original manuscript survives from this period. The first copies came to light in the ninth and tenth centuries in royal and monastic libraries, and were almost exclusively to be found in northern Europe.¹⁹ Over the following centuries, more began to surface; and, although few of these manuscripts still survive, it is apparent that from a comparatively early date scholars had access to the work of ancient historians, albeit often in an unreliable format.²⁰ Thanks to the dedicated efforts of translators and editors, by the early sixteenth century the most important

¹⁶ J. J. Murphy, *Latin Rhetoric and Education in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p.1; P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought II: Papers on Humanism and the Arts* (New York, Harper Torchbook, 1965), p. 4.

¹⁷ Murphy, *Latin Rhetoric and Education*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1; J. C. Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, [Galfridus Arturus] (d. 1154/5), bishop of St Asaph and historian', *ODNB*, Vol. 38, pp. 323-6.

¹⁹ M. D. Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship', *CCRH*, p. 20.

²⁰ N. Mann, 'The origins of humanism', *CCRH*, p. 12.

classical histories had been printed in new, revised editions with fewer corruptions caused by poor transcription, interpolation or the amalgamation of different versions into a composite whole. According to Reeve the desire to find and replace these 'faulty texts ... spurred humanists to explore libraries'.²¹ This rigorous process was applied to the work of Livy (Rome, 1452), Julius Caesar (Rome, 1469), Sallust and Suetonius (Rome, 1470).²² New editions of Tacitus appeared in Venice in about 1470, and his *Agricola* was printed, probably in Milan, in about 1482. A complete edition of his *Annales* was not available until 1515, however, as it was only in the early sixteenth century that the first six books were discovered. Tacitus, like Suetonius, exerted considerable influence upon some humanist historians, especially Polydore Vergil and Thomas More. In particular, their vivid portrayal of successive Roman emperors provided a compelling model for writing about near-contemporary kings and their courts. More's *History of King Richard III*, first published in English and Latin in about 1515, was clearly inspired by Suetonius in its use of anecdote, its interest in characterisation and its dramatic evocation of the febrile atmosphere of Richard's reign.²³

Humanist historians shared with their medieval predecessors a belief in the guiding hand of divine providence. Even so, their emphasis upon cause and effect meant that God tended to feature 'behind the scenes' rather than as the active presence described by so many hagiographers and chroniclers²⁴. The political and personal

²¹ Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship', *CCRH*, p. 27.

²² J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship* (3 Vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1906-8), Vol. 2, pp. 69, 73, 97-8, 103-4.

²³ *TM*, pp. liii, lxiii-lxv; *HWE*, pp. 444-5.

²⁴ As Peter Burke wrote, "In the sixteenth century ... 'Fortune', that favourite medieval and renaissance concept, becomes less and less anthropomorphised ... and more more of a name for the impersonal forces of history, the structures and trends which are bigger than individuals, but which are susceptible

motives of leading protagonists were now explored in far greater depth in order to explain their behaviour. This deeper level of analysis, which became increasingly common as humanism gained influence, had hitherto been largely confined to writing about diplomacy.²⁵ The anonymous author of *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire*, for example, had access to Edward IV's diplomatic correspondence; and his work, as we have seen, is notable for its detailed scrutiny of events.

This chapter focuses upon the two humanist writers whose histories had such a lasting impact upon the reputation of Edward IV: Polydore Vergil and Thomas More. It will compare what they had to say about him and his contemporaries and consider why their opinions proved so influential, while also examining the classical texts from which they drew inspiration. Comparisons will also be drawn between Vergil and Philippe de Commines, another foreign observer of English politics, especially regarding the different way in which they approached their subject.

Polydore Vergil's *Anglica historia* in context

The Italian Polydore Vergil described the diplomatic and personal relations between Edward, the English nobility and the French king and court in far greater detail than any of his predecessors. Vergil was, along with Thomas More, one of the very few writers active in early sixteenth-century England who can be regarded as a truly humanist scholar, rather than as a writer influenced by humanist philosophy. As an author famous for his classical and theological scholarship, according to W. J. Connell

of analysis and calculation all the same.' P. Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London, Edward Arnold, 1969), p. 77.

²⁵ The authors of these histories may well have come into contact with the work of humanist scholars at an earlier date than others. F.J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Huntington Library publications, 1967) p. 40; *HWE*, pp. 427-8. See also Burke, *Renaissance Sense of the Past*, pp. 77-104.

'it seems likely that he was treated as a celebrity in an England that was eager for things Italian'.²⁶ His *Proverbiorum libellus* (Venice, 1498), later re-titled the *Adagiorum liber*, and *De inventoribus rerum* (Venice, 1499) were both extremely successful early works which were republished many times into the seventeenth century. The *De inventoribus*, a treatise on the origins of things, was especially popular, going through more than thirty Latin and over a hundred vernacular editions in Vergil's own lifetime.²⁷ A type of encyclopaedia which eventually extended to eight volumes, the work was especially concerned with religious matters, citing the Bible more than any other source. Nevertheless, despite such an essentially medieval reliance on scripture, Vergil displayed his academic credentials by including an analysis of the classical Greek and Roman authorities available to him. *De inventoribus rerum* was in essence an early humanist reference work, attempting to employ the new information which Renaissance scholars had uncovered alongside more traditional sources²⁸.

Upon coming to England in 1502 as an agent of Adriano Castellesi da Corneto, the official collector of Peter's Pence, Vergil was apparently welcomed by Henry VII in person and 'ever after was entertained by him kindly'.²⁹ So began a profitable career at court. The *Anglica historia*, a comprehensive account of the history of England from its mythical origins until the sixteenth century, was initially commissioned by the king. Although few copies of the original manuscript survive,³⁰ it is clear that it represented

²⁶ W. J. Connell, 'Polydore Vergil, [Polidoro Virgili] (c.1470–1555), historian', *ODNB*, Vol. 38, p. 324.

²⁷ Connell, 'Polydore Vergil', pp. 323-6. New edition of the book continued to be published long after Vergil's death, with a Russian language edition appearing in Moscow in 1782. See D. Hay, *Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian and Man of Letters* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 66, 73-4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁹ D. Hay (ed. and trans.), *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, A.D. 1485-1537* (Camden Society, third series, Vol. 74, London, 1950), p. 4.

³⁰ The single surviving first manuscript edition is in the Vatican archive. The two volumes that make up the Vatican manuscript, *Codices Urbinates Latini* 497 and 498, have never been printed in their entirety,

a monumental undertaking to which the author frequently returned in order to revise and update the text as new material became available. Its editor, Denys Hay, stated in 1939 that 'the work is worth much attention ... as the first modern history of England, the farewell to the chronicle and the herald of the new national, analytic story which has persisted to our own day'.³¹ Few of today's historians would share this opinion, but the *Anglica historia* nevertheless constitutes an invaluable source for a study of near-contemporary attitudes to Edward IV, and represents an important addition to the historical study of late medieval kingship.

The relationship between Edward and Louis XI is especially well documented in Vergil's *Anglica historia*, and reflects very clearly the complex international politics of the age. The invasion of France emerges as a product of several interrelated factors, including Edward's own far from straightforward ambitions. According to Vergil, he sought to wage war against the French partly to revenge himself against Louis XI for arming the earl of Warwick and his supporters, partly to make good Henry VI's losses, and partly to cement his alliance with the duke of Burgundy. By 4 July 1475, an army of 20,000 men had crossed the Channel with the English king. Duke Charles soon joined them, and 'earnestly exhorted him to apply this war with all devoyr, whereby he might and should recover his right from the French.'³²

Upon realising the threat that Edward and Charles presented, Louis hastily gathered an army, while desperately attempting to 'bring the matter to a treaty; for, seing he

but the section covering the years 1485 to 1513 was used by Denys Hay in his edition of the *Anglica Historia*. See Hay, *Anglica Historia*, pp. xlii-xxiii, xl-xli.

³¹ D. Hay, 'The Manuscript of Polydore Vergil's "Anglica Historia"', *EHR*, 54, No. 214 (1939), p. 241. See also Hay, *Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian*, pp. 79-168; Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*, pp. 254-8.

³² *PV*, p. 161.

was forsaken of his subectes, whom himself had rejectyd, he dyd inwardly forsee, that yf bloode wer once drawn the warre wold be longer and more perillus, wherfor he was desyrus of nothing so muche as of peace.¹³³ Vergil explains at some length how a meeting was eventually organised between the two kings on neutral territory on a bridge over the river Somme at Picquigny. After some hard bargaining a lengthy truce was arranged on the condition that Louis would pay £15,000 to cover Edward's expenses, along with an annual pension of £10,000. Then,

... to confirme, strengthen, and tye fast thys new friendship with soome knot of allyance, Elizabeth, king Edwards dowghter, was covenantyd in mariage to Charles, king Lewys his soone ... King Lewys from thendcefurth payed the trybute trewly to the king of England unto the begynning of that yere wherein he died ... But whan the Burgoygnoyon, and he of Lusembrough knew that king Edward had concludyd peace with king Lewys, they chafyd at the matter woonderously; they sent to him byting, threatening, and envyouse letters, laing uppon him the blame why they wer not revengyd uppon king Lewys ...³⁴

It is clearly apparent from this lively narrative that Edward was wrong to trust Louis, since in so doing he damaged diplomatic relations between England, Luxembourg and Burgundy for years to come. The proposed marriage never materialised, while the pension was paid for only a few years.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

French monarchs had often been portrayed unfavourably by English historians, but Vergil's chilling depiction of King Louis evokes shades of Suetonius and Imperial Rome. His father, Charles VII was by any objective standard a successful ruler, although his reign was initially overshadowed by the dramatic events surrounding Joan of Arc and subsequently by the behaviour of his son. Known as 'the Spider King', Louis gained a reputation for cunning and duplicity from an early age. Even before his coronation, Polydore described him as 'a yonge man of monstrous disposition and frowarde condition, seeking soveraintie before his time', anxious 'to rule all thinges, not according to his father's direction, but after his owne fantasie'.³⁵ Building upon the foundations that Charles had laid, he greatly increased the power of the crown at the expense of the nobility. This policy won him few friends, and several contemporary observers seized the opportunity to vilify him while praising his father, in a manner comparable to the contrast drawn between Edward IV and Richard III, or, indeed, the great Augustus and Tiberius. The Burgundian diplomat, Philippe de Commynes, perhaps the most famous of these late medieval commentators, took a rather different view. He was welcomed into Louis' court, and throughout his life served him in many capacities. Their close relationship influenced and informed much of his work.³⁶

Commynes does not conform to the typical 'humanist' stereotype. His approach was not particularly scholarly, and the classical allusions that so define the work of Vergil and More are few and far between.³⁷ He knew little Latin, and his reading was restricted to a surprisingly small reference pool of authorities, notably Livy and St

³⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

³⁶ Although Commynes makes little of it himself, some accounts suggest that Louis owed him his life. *PDC*, Vol. 1, 239-40; De Commynes, *Memoirs*, pp. 13-4, 211-12.

³⁷ W. J. Bouwsma, 'The Politics of Commynes', *Journal of Modern History*, 23, No. 4 (1951), p. 315.

Augustine's *City of God*.³⁸ Nevertheless, Commynes adopted a truly 'modern' outlook when compared to earlier generations of chroniclers and historians. His *Memoirs* (first published in Paris in 1524) combine first-hand reportage of historical events with attempts to explain the motives of his chief protagonists and to provide a useful model for his readers. Commynes himself observed 'that blockheads and idiots will not amuse themselves by reading these memoirs, but princes or courtiers may find useful warnings here'.³⁹ Just like Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), he set out to provide practical advice for rulers, offering examples of successful statecraft for them to follow.

In his *Memoirs*, Commynes adopted a distinctly pragmatic approach to politics. Whereas other writers dwelt upon the duplicity of 'the Spider King', contrasting his manipulative behaviour with the ideal of nobility and honour, Commynes seems to celebrate it. In his accounts of Louis's dealings with Edward, the latter appears weak and foolishly naive for accepting at face value the promises made by such a cunning adversary. Commynes reports:

I was also present at the meeting at Picquigny [in 1475] between our King and King Edward of England, which I shall say more about in due course. Few of the promises were kept. They did business hypocritically ... King Edward and his men were not very experienced in the ways of this kingdom and proceeded about their business more clumsily, so that they could not discover so quickly the deceptions used here and elsewhere ... And, without any doubt, as I said elsewhere, the English are not so subtle

³⁸ *PDC*, Vol. 1, pp. xii, l. Michael Jones observes that 'literary references in the memoirs are very restricted – two mentions of Livy and one of Boccaccio in books 7 and 8, those written after his visit to Italy in 1494 to 5.' De Commynes, *Memoirs*, p. 30.

³⁹ *PDC*, Vol. 1, p. 222; De Commynes, *Memoirs*, p. 200.

at negotiating or making agreements as the French are and, whatever people say, they proceed rather clumsily in these matters. But it is necessary to be a little patient and not to haggle too angrily with them.⁴⁰

Commynes notes that some of Edward's advisors, 'wise, far-sighted men, who did not receive pensions like the others', saw through the French deception. He then observes, with impressive insight, that:

Whatever representations his subjects made, the king did not want to listen to them; there were many reasons for this. He was a ponderous man who was much addicted to his pleasures. He had not known how to endure the rigours of war in this country and having seen himself escape from great difficulties he had no wish to return to them. On the other hand his greed had been moderated by the delivery of fifty thousand crowns every year to the Tower of London.⁴¹

Commynes then proceeds to examine the political and diplomatic relations between Louis XI and England, Burgundy and Flanders, reflecting on the ease with which Louis manipulated each to serve his own ends. His uncompromising emphasis upon the business of *realpolitik* was unusual at the time that the Memoirs were written, but over the years became more common.

⁴⁰ PDC, Vol. 2, pp. 36-60; De Commynes, *Memoirs*, pp. 145, 242, 255.

⁴¹ PDC, Vol, 2, pp. 245-6; De Commynes, *Memoirs*, p. 361.

Humanist authors across Europe continued the medieval tradition of using history as a source of moral *exempla*, albeit with greater focus upon political issues. Just as ethical behaviour would ultimately triumph over evil, so good government would be rewarded and oppression eventually punished. Even Commynes dwells at length on the terrible final illness of King Louis, who became a prisoner of his physicians, and thus experienced some of the tyranny that he had inflicted on others.⁴² The incompetence or treachery of one monarch might, moreover, have fatal consequences for future generations, ultimately resulting in dynastic failure. This tendency to moralise is especially apparent in writing on the Wars of the Roses, which invited broad judgements on character and motivation. The usurpation of Henry IV, which involved the deposition of an anointed king, eventually led to vicious fighting between competing noble families under Henry's grandson Henry VI and the triumph of Edward IV.

In order to reinforce their didactic message, humanists sought to interpret the more recent past through the medium of the classical literature which had inspired them. As we have seen, Cicero had long been an author to whom many scholars and political commentators turned.⁴³ Suetonius and Tacitus, too, were popular with humanists, especially once newer, more accurate versions of their work began to circulate.⁴⁴ Some histories inspired by these classical authors adopt a structure whereby 'good' and 'bad' rulers alternate, their conduct often mirroring that of Imperial Roman rulers.

⁴² *PDC*, Vol. 2, pp. 313-25; De Commynes, *Memoirs*, pp. 402-8.

⁴³ Erasmus believed that Thomas More was unusual in that his 'Isocratic rhythm and logical subtlety' distinguished him from the 'outpouring river of Ciceronian eloquence' common at the time. I. Scott (ed. and trans.) 'Ciceronianus', *Controversies Over the Imitation of Cicero* (New York, Columbia University, 1910), p. 104.

⁴⁴ It is likely that More consulted the newly published *Cornelii Taciti libri quinque noviter inventi atque cum reliquis eius operibus editi Annales* (Rome, 1515) when writing his *History of King Richard III*. *TM*, pp. lxxxix-xc.

The parallels are obvious in More's *History of King Richard III* (c.1513–1518), which presents Edward in the main as a noble figure akin to Caesar Augustus, while Richard bears a distinct resemblance to the tyrannical emperor Tiberius. Tacitus describes the end of Augustus's reign as a time of prosperity and peace, stating that there was no war save for 'an outstanding campaign against the Germans, waged more to redeem the prestige lost with Quintilius Varus and his army than from any wish to extend the empire or with any prospect of an adequate recompense'.⁴⁵ The picture of Edwardian England painted by More is likewise one of affluence and peace secured by a competent, if somewhat flawed, leader. Apart from the ongoing conflict with the Scots 'no warre [was] in hande, nor none toward', while most of Henry VI's erstwhile supporters were either dead or had 'in the meane season growen into [Edward's] fauoure, of whiche he was neuer straunge'.⁴⁶ Yet, just as had happened after Augustus's death, a tyrant who lurked close to the throne was able to gain power when Edward died suddenly in 1483.

While these clever acts of homage to Roman historians clearly signalled an author's learning, they could undermine the other key component of humanist ideology: the desire for historical accuracy. Yet, even here, humanists took their cue from the Classics. Tacitus, for example, observed in his *Annals* that previous biographies of the Caesars had been tainted by prejudice or fear of the consequences of displeasing rulers or their descendants. By contrast, he sought to maintain a neutral viewpoint and write 'without anger and without partiality', not least because he was 'sufficiently

⁴⁵ J. Jackson and C. H. Moore (trans.), *The Loeb Classical Library: Tacitus in Five Volumes* (5 Vols., London, William Heinemann, 1969), Vol. 3, pp. 247-9.

⁴⁶ *TM*, p.4.

removed' from any motivation to do so.⁴⁷ Balancing the need to report the unvarnished facts and the desire to play with classical allusions and archetypes could nevertheless prove difficult.

What also set the work of humanist historians apart from most medieval chronicles was the effort made to discover any long-term forces at work behind seemingly random events and to provide rational explanations for them. Just as the Renaissance editors of Greek and Latin texts had attempted to produce definitive versions as close as possible to the original, so humanist historians set out to present a fully researched and 'truthful' account of the past. They did not, of course, succeed, in part due to the intractable problem of accommodating the need for accuracy with the desire to provide moral guidance. In real life good behaviour was not necessarily rewarded, nor sin punished. Yet the temptation to alter facts to make them fit a didactic model could be overwhelming, as we can see in their portraits of fifteenth-century monarchs. Henry VI was widely regarded as an exceptionally pious man, but nevertheless proved incapable of ruling England and lost his throne twice.⁴⁸ Richard III, according to the humanist histories of Polydore Vergil and Thomas More, was by contrast a murderous, hunchbacked monstrosity who masterminded the deaths of Henry VI, his brother the duke of Clarence, and his nephews Edward V and Richard of York, as well as a great many other rivals. In reality Richard's scoliosis was barely apparent, and, while he may

⁴⁷ Jackson, *Tacitus in Five Volumes*, Vol. 3, p. 245.

⁴⁸ Indeed, Henry VI's reputation for saintliness and image of purity may have been deliberately cultivated to excuse tyrannical acts by the king. Benet's *Chronicle*, a vernacular narrative chronicle transcribed into a commonplace book by John Benet at some point before 1471 and which takes a decidedly Yorkist tone, culminates in Henry VI's deposition 'because he had ruled tyrannously' and Edward IV's coronation 'with God's favour.' While this goes to far, not least because it vastly overestimates how capable the king was for most of his reign, Bertram Wolffe is correct that there is 'no evidence dating from Henry's lifetime to support this posthumous early-Tudor hagiographic picture of Henry as a saintly, blameless, ascetic royal pauper.' G. L. Harriss and M. A. Harriss (eds.), *John Benet's Chronicle for the Years 1400 to 1462* (Camden Society, fourth series, Vol. 9, Camden Miscellany, Vol. 24, London, 1991), p. 230; Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 12.

have been ruthless when dealing with adversaries, he could not possibly have been responsible for all the murders and other crimes attributed to him, some of which were clearly ordered by his older brother, King Edward. From the humanist perspective, however, a Machiavellian villain had to be punished and a saintly monarch betrayed by sinful men who would in turn be destroyed by their own hubris. That this effectively exonerated Edward of the murders for which he was responsible was simply an unfortunate side-effect of giving greater 'didactic significance' to the events described.⁴⁹ Additionally, the close relationship of certain writers with royal and aristocratic admirers brought with it the uneasy demands of patronage and patriotism. A commission to write the history of a noble family or a nation usually obliged the author to present the patron and his ancestors in the most flattering light. The effects of this type of pressure can be detected in the works of several authors active in England during the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, including Titus Livius' *Life of Henry V* (c.1438) composed for Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, Bernard André's biography of Henry VII (c.1502), and Polydore Vergil's *Anglica historia*.⁵⁰

The first printed edition of the *Historia*, terminating in 1509, was not published until 1534, long after the death of the original patron. A second, greatly revised edition appeared in 1546. Just before his death nine years later Vergil again returned to his task, extending the narrative to 1538. In all editions of the *Historia* it is clear that he took care to evaluate and judge historical evidence from a variety of sources in order to create a coherent narrative of events. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he was prepared to dismiss the patriotic creation myths which had long been a staple of

⁴⁹ Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p.2.

⁵⁰ *HWE*, pp. 210-11, 429.

historical writing⁵¹. As a foreigner resident in a highly sophisticated royal court, Vergil had no need to pander to crude nationalism, at least while dealing with the distant past. The years leading up to the accession of the Tudors demanded a greater degree of caution⁵².

When Vergil arrived in England in 1502, Henry VII had been king for seventeen years, having seized the throne from Richard III after the battle of Bosworth. The rule of the Yorkist dynasty was still a vivid memory, not least because Henry had sought to strengthen his tenuous hold upon the crown by marrying Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth. Vergil could therefore speak with people who had lived through those times, as well as consulting the written records of the period. As a man close to the centre of power, who enjoyed a cordial relationship with the reigning monarch, it seems likely that he would have had access to far more first-hand sources of information for this period than are available today.

However, this knowledge came at a price. Polydore Vergil, like all sixteenth-century historians who served a patron, had to use what he uncovered in such a way as to flatter his master and serve his needs. Not surprisingly, he considered it prudent to describe the rise of the Tudors as a phenomenon ordained by God. A direct line of succession is even established from Henry VI to Henry VII, bypassing the Yorkist monarchs entirely. As a baby, Henry Tudor was supposedly brought before Henry VI:

⁵¹ It is worth pointing out that these myths were actively exploited by Henry VII at times, for example in the way that he claimed descent from Cadwaladr, an early Welsh king and redeemer figure. See H. A. Kelly, *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories* (Cambridge, Mass., Wipf and Stock, 1970), pp. 87–101; C. S. L. Davies, 'Information and disinformation under Henry VII and early Henry VIII', *Historical Research*, 85, no. 228 (2012), p. 239; Hay, *Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian*, pp. 109–10.

⁵² C. S. L. Davies, following Denys Hay, believed that Vergil's cautious approach explains the long delay in publication as well as some of the later revisions; Davies, 'Information and disinformation', pp. 240, 250–1.

Whan the king saw the chyld, beholding within himself without speache a prety space the haultie disposition thereof, he ys reportyd to have sayd to the noble men ther present, "This trewly, this is he unto whom both we and our adversaryes must yeald and geave over the domynion." Thus the holy man shewyd yt woold coome to passe that Henry showld in time enjoy the kingdom.⁵³

This passage is clearly meant to evoke the meeting between Simeon and the infant Christ (Luke 2:29-32), which, in the form of the *Nunc dimmitis*, featured prominently in the devotional life of Vergil's contemporaries. Simeon had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he met the Messiah, and on encountering Jesus with his parents in the Temple prophesied the power and glory to come. Henry Tudor naturally wished to record this important (if possibly fictional) connection with his saintly predecessor. As Vergil himself notes, Henry had approached Pope Julius II with a view to having Henry VI canonised, and was only prevented from achieving 'that honourable fact' by his death in 1509.⁵⁴ Given that Edward IV had twice deposed Henry and, through his lack of political foresight, made it possible for the 'murderous' Richard III to usurp the throne, he is implicitly cast in a bad light. Moreover, Edward was notoriously self-indulgent and suffered from several other failings. He is portrayed in the *Historia* as being bent on power, to the extent that he was willing to perjure himself before God,⁵⁵ a characteristic apparently inherent in his family.⁵⁶ He was also vengeful in pursuing those who wronged him. It is even implied, although not

⁵³ *PV*, p. 135.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵⁶ 'Of this matter yt shall not yrk me to make mentyon in the lyfe of king Richard the third ... wher perchance yt may well be conceavyd that thissew of king Edward did partycypate also the fault of this perjury': *Ibid.*, p. 139.

explicitly stated, that he was responsible for Henry's death in the Tower, which certainly 'delivered [him] from a great part of his cares and causes of fear',⁵⁷ since, while he lived, Henry remained a potent focus of rebellion. Vergil damns the actual assassin (Richard of Gloucester) for his foul deed, but also refers to the 'procurers' of it, clearly implicating Edward as a party to homicide. Ultimately those responsible 'sufferyd punysshement for ther offences ... wan as afterward they had none enemyes on whom to satisfy and satyate their crueltie, excercysed the same uppon themselves ... and embrewyed ther handes in ther own blood.'⁵⁸ The murder of Henry VI is therefore directly linked to the collapse of the Yorkist dynasty.

Nevertheless, in other respects Vergil's account of king Edward (who was, after all, Henry VII's father-in-law) is consistently positive. He was flawed, certainly, but brought much-needed peace, prosperity and security to the realm. While Henry may have been more devout, he failed dismally to match Edward's personal charisma, acumen and bravery, and above all his military achievements, all of which defined the successful medieval monarch. In the end, even Henry's celebrated piety was not enough to save him. Although celestial forces did not visibly engineer his downfall and the rise of the Yorkist dynasty, as a medieval chronicler might have suggested, Vergil recognises the working of divine providence in more subtle ways. The collapse of the house of Lancaster is ascribed to 'the righteousness of God',⁵⁹ although human error also played a part, especially the failure of the Lancastrian commanders to take and hold London, the seat of commercial and political power in England. Vergil acknowledges the obvious preference shown by the citizens for Edward, noting that he

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 157.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 154.

'was much desired of the Londoners, in favor with the common people, in the mouth of speeche of every man, of higheste and loweste he had the good willes'.⁶⁰ This enthusiastic support extended to the provinces too, where many people 'in the behalfe of cities, promised their good willes, and all that they might doo, and swore to be his true subjectes'.⁶¹

In Vergil's eyes, Edward's captivating charm, personal bravery and tactical skill were ultimately responsible for his victories. He was able to attract adherents easily and then marshal them on the field of battle to score convincing triumphs. His reputation as a great leader was, moreover, assured by the 'brevytie of his lyfe', which saved him from becoming dictatorial or senile in his old age like the once heroic Edward III. Vergil observes that towards the end of his life Edward 'began to slyde by lyttle and lyttle into avarice who before had usyd towards all men hyghe lyberalytie ', but concludes that this did not diminish the genuine affection of his subjects, who mourned him long after his death.⁶² Significantly, avarice was a criticism frequently levelled against Henry VII. Writing about an outbreak of sweating sickness, in the autumn of 1485, as Hay argues, Vergil reports that it 'was claimed to portend the harshness of the monarch to his people, by which almost all were heavily oppressed, and under which they "sweated", that is to say they were forced to undergo many discomforts both at the start and finish of his reign'.⁶³ In another passage Vergil tempers his customarily flattering remarks about Henry's character with similar reservations. After a long paragraph praising Henry's intelligence, piety and charity he concludes that

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.110.

⁶² Ibid., p. 172.

⁶³ Hay, *Anglica Historia*, p. 143.

... all these virtues were obscured latterly only by avarice, from which ... he suffered. This avarice is surely a bad enough vice in a private individual, whom it forever torments; in a monarch indeed it may be considered the worst vice, since it is harmful to everyone, and distorts those qualities of trustfulness, justice and integrity by which the state must be governed.⁶⁴

It seems likely that Vergil made so much of Edward's open-handed generosity as a young man in order to underscore Henry's rapacity, in rather the same way that Thomas More would later make his life of Richard III a veiled attack on the tyranny of Henry VIII. After all, while Edward only grew avaricious and grasping towards the end of his reign, Henry provoked some of his subjects into open rebellion because of harsh taxation as early as 1489.⁶⁵ Since Henry died in 1509, at least three years before the *Historia's* first publication, it would appear that these remarks were intended as a warning to his son, Henry VIII, not to follow in the footsteps of his father.

Vergil made some factual mistakes when writing about Edward, especially in his rather weak and contrived narrative of the early stages of Clarence's and Warwick's rebellion. He seems to have been persuaded by contemporary propaganda which alleged that Edward had never intended to fight. As in the case of many of the earliest chronicle accounts of the Wars of the Roses, such as 'Hearne's Fragment' in the *Chronicles of the White Rose of York*, his account of the battles fought by Edward and his rivals often appears confused and contradictory. Perhaps because he was so anxious to moralise, Vergil's trenchant comments regarding the personalities and conduct of the individuals

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 145-7.

⁶⁵ Protests against royal taxation came to a head in Yorkshire in April 1489, although they were never much of a threat to Tudor rule, and Henry pardoned around 1,500 men. S. Cunningham, *Henry VII* (London, Routledge, 2007), pp. 61-2.

he describes may also distort the facts. Some of his complaints about Edward's avaricious behaviour in later life certainly appear unjustified. While Edward did seek to amass treasure, especially towards the end of his reign, it seems that the revenue was always put to the specific (and essentially political) purpose of maintaining an opulent court without recourse to parliamentary taxation, rather than being hidden away in a miserly fashion. Indeed, according to Kleineke, the royal coffers were so empty at the time of Edward's death that there was barely enough money to pay for his funeral.⁶⁶ In places, Vergil even contradicts himself: after criticising Edward's apparent rapacity, he nevertheless notes that he left England 'a most welthy realme abownding in all thinges'.⁶⁷

On the other hand, Vergil does provide a detailed and largely convincing analysis of events at home and abroad during the latter half of Edward's reign. As we have seen, such a depth of knowledge derives from the fact that he could personally question some of the key figures who had been involved in the courtly politics of the late fifteenth century. The 'professionalization' of history, whereby informed commentators reported on events of which they had personal knowledge or had at least made systematic attempts to research, was, with a few notable exceptions, a humanist development.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 190.

⁶⁷ *PV*, p. 172.

⁶⁸ Some medieval chroniclers also relied upon eyewitnesses to political events. Matthew Paris, for example, cultivated a wide range of friends, acquaintances and distinguished informants. R. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 13-17.

Thomas More, *Richard III* and Edward IV

The portrayal of Edward IV by Vergil's contemporary, Thomas More, is even more favourable. More was not an historian or chronicler by vocation, being a successful lawyer who was drawn into politics at the highest level⁶⁹. He rose to become Henry VIII's chancellor, friend and confidant⁷⁰. He also figured among an international group of humanist scholars, including the celebrated Erasmus of Rotterdam⁷¹. More's greatest contribution to literature, *Utopia* (published 1516), a dialogue between a traveller recently returned from a distant land and a fictionalised version of More himself, was an instant success and is still widely read today.⁷² In it More's ideas about what constituted a model society are most fully described. Common themes, such as his hatred of tyranny, feature in this and many of his other works, including a life of Edward's brother Richard, written c. 1516.

More's *History of King Richard III* is closer to a drama or heavily fictionalised version of real historical events than a true history. It has been described as 'an attack on the non-moral statecraft of the early sixteenth century, exactly as *Utopia* is'.⁷³ His aim was to provide *exempla* of good and bad behaviour based on classical models but drawn from the recent past, a goal which he shared with Polydore Vergil. However, he was a far more elegant and polished writer than Vergil, with a much better grasp of literary style. More was also far more subtle in his use of classical authors, deploying fewer

⁶⁹ For More's early life and career, see Marius, *Thomas More*, pp. 3-66.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-216, 351-85.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-97, 235-63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 152-88; S. B. House, 'Sir Thomas More, [St Thomas More] (1478-1535), lord chancellor, humanist, and martyr', *ODNB*, Vol. 39, pp. 63-64; E. Surtz, S. J. and J. H. Hexter, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Utopia* (London, Yale University Press, 1965).

⁷³ R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 117.

direct quotations and many more of the knowing allusions that a well-educated contemporary reader would immediately recognise⁷⁴.

The influence of the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius upon More is clear from the outset. Richard III is portrayed as a vile tyrant in the mould of the Emperors Tiberius or Domitian in Suetonius' *The Twelve Caesars* or Sejanus in Tacitus' *Annals of Imperial Rome*.⁷⁵ In keeping with the classical tradition described above, the demonization of King Richard serves to place him in a cycle of 'good' and 'bad' rulers. Just as the noble Augustus had been followed by the dastardly Tiberius, and Titus by Domitian (who was said to have murdered him), so More emphasises Edward's virtues in order to underscore Richard's villainy. Thus, for example, Edward was:

a goodly parsonage, and very Princely to behold, of hearte couragious, politique in counsaile, in aduersitie nothyng abashed, in prosperitie, rather ioyfull then prowde, in peace iuste and mercifull, in warre, sharpe and fyerce, in the fielde, bolde and hardye, and nathelesse no farther then wysedom woulde, aduenturouse. Whose warres who so well consyder, hee shall no lesse commende hys wysedome where voyded, than hys mannehoode where he vainquished. He was of visage louelye, of body myghtie, stronge and cleane made ...⁷⁶

This glowing tribute to Edward bears a striking resemblance to the way in which Caesar Augustus is portrayed by Suetonius in *The Twelve Caesars*. Augustus is here said to

⁷⁴ Richard Marius writes of *The History* that it is 'history in the classical mode of Thucydides or Tacitus ... the first true work of Renaissance historiography done by an Englishman.' Marius, *Thomas More*, p. 101.

⁷⁵ G. Carver, *Alms for Oblivion* (Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Company, 1946), p. 35.

⁷⁶ *TM*, p.4.

have been an 'unusually handsome', affable and generous ruler, who at his audiences 'met the requests of those who approached him with great affability', whether they were commoners, knights or senators. His clemency (a characteristic also possessed in abundance by Edward IV) was, moreover, so great that only a fraction of the 'numerous and strong' examples could actually be listed.⁷⁷ Even the Latin that More employs to describe Edward and Richard owes much to Suetonius: in his paean to Edward's affability, the phrase '*tanta comitate*' is used, exactly as it is in the description of Augustus.⁷⁸ Following Suetonius' observation that the sadistic Tiberius was '*asper et immitis*' (cruel and merciless), More adopts an almost identical phrase to denigrate Richard.⁷⁹

More occasionally criticises Edward, especially with regard to the 'fleshly wantonness' which caused his youthful good looks to fade over time until he was 'sommewhat corpulente and boorelye'.⁸⁰ As in *Warkworth's Chronicle*, the unpopularity of his financial exactions is touched upon, for it was 'the onely thyng that withdraweth the heartes of Englyshmenne fro the Prynce'.⁸¹ On the other hand, and in contrast to Vergil, More notes that this burden was lifted once 'hys Trybute oute of Fraunce hee hadd ... obtayned'.⁸² He condemns the judicial murder of George, Duke of Clarence, 'a goodly noble Prince',⁸³ but blames the 'Queen and the Lordes of her bloode whyche highlye maligned the kynges kinred'⁸⁴ and Clarence's overweening ambition rather

⁷⁷ J. C. Rolfe (ed. and trans.), *The Loeb Classical Library: Suetonius With An English Translation by J.C. Rolfe* (2 Vols., London, William Heinemann, 1914), Vol. 1, pp. 205, 209, 232.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 208.

⁷⁹ More uses the phrase '*crudelis atque immitis*', which also means 'cruel and merciless' in the Latin *History of Richard III. TM*, pp. xciii. See also Rolfe, *Suetonius With An English Translation*, Vol. 1, p. 374.

⁸⁰ *TM*, p.4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

than Edward himself. It appears, moreover, that, even though Edward had given orders for his brother to be drowned in the legendary butt of Malmsey wine, he 'piteously bewailed and sorrowfully repented' his decision.⁸⁵ In fact, many of Edward's faults are excused by More, who observes indulgently that few other people suffered as a result of his gluttony and sexual excesses.⁸⁶

Edward's reign is described in glowing terms as a time of peace and security, with 'thys Realm ... in quyet and prosperous estate: no feare of outwarde enemyes, no warre in hande, nor none toward, but such as no manne looked for: the people towarde the Prynce, not in a constrayned feare, but in a wyllynge and louynge obedyence: among them selfe, the commons in good peace.'⁸⁷ It might be argued that More sought in this way to discredit the attacks on Edward's rapacity that had been made immediately after his death by supporters of Richard III. In his *History* these criticisms are voiced by Richard and his lieutenant, Henry, Duke of Buckingham, who are clearly untrustworthy. For instance, in a speech following Richard's usurpation, Buckingham asserts that Edward demanded 'many taxes & tallages, of which there was neuer any end, & often no nede, or if any wer, it grew rather of riote & unreasonable waste rather than any necessarye or honorable charges.'⁸⁸ Indeed, he adds, not even these impositions were enough, since Edward also had resort to 'beneuolence & good will ... as though the name of beneuolence, had signified that euery man shold pay, not what himself of his good wil list to graunt, but what the king of his good will take'.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

⁸⁶ 'Thys faute not greatlye gryeued the people: for neyther could any one mans pleasure, stretch and extende to the verye manye ...': Ibid., p. 4.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 70.

As we have seen, More is at pains to refute these arguments early in *The History*, stressing that such exactions had ceased well before the time that Richard came to power.⁹⁰ This admission, however, indicates that there had, indeed, been a problem for at least some of Edward's reign. It also reveals some persistent ill-feeling towards his policies, for, even if, as seems likely, More composed Buckingham's speech himself, he was clearly referring to historical events that many people would still remember.⁹¹ Dominic Mancini, an Italian cleric who discharged a minor diplomatic role at Edward's court and kept a type of journal during Richard's usurpation, had little direct experience of English politics, but even he noted that 'though not rapacious for other men's goods, [Edward] was yet so eager for money, that in pursuing it he acquired a reputation for avarice'.⁹² One of the acts of Richard's first and only parliament was to abolish benevolences, which not only reflects his need for popular support but also confirms how unpopular they had been.⁹³ Richard was anxious to get court approval, especially given the murky circumstances of his own rise to power, but he seems genuinely to have believed that demands of this kind were inequitable.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹¹ R. S. Sylvester notes that the language used by Buckingham when criticising benevolences is very similar to that found in the *Croyland Chronicle*: *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁹² C.A.J. Armstrong (ed.), *The Usurpation of Richard the Third*, (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1984), p. 67. As an eyewitness to the tense political situation of 1483, Mancini provides a very interesting perspective on the king's life. Unfortunately, his account was not rediscovered until the twentieth-century. As it appears to have had no impact upon the historiographical development of Edward IV until then it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁹³ The statute complains that 'the Co[m]mens ... by newe and unlawfull Inventions and inordinate Covetise, ageynst the lawe of this roialme, have to be put to gret thraldome and importable charges and exacc[i]ons, and in especiall by a newe impacion named a benevolence, wherby dyv[er]se yeres the Subgettes and Comens of this lande agaynst their Willes & fredome have paid greate so[m]mes of Money to their almost utter destruccion': A. Luders *et al.* (eds.), *Statutes of the Realm* (11 Vols., London, Record Commission, 1810-28), Vol. 2, p. 478. See also R. Horrox, 'Richard III: Introduction', in PROME, *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/richard-iii-introduction>, accessed June 2017.

In his attempts to blacken Richard's character More is unusually indulgent towards Edward, excusing conduct that others found questionable. The passages describing Edward's sexual promiscuity certainly confirm that this deeply pious author could be remarkably non-judgemental when it suited his purpose. Richard, however, is said to have made tremendous capital out of his brother's indiscretions and, as a consummate hypocrite, to have denounced the sexual immorality of his many enemies. As Michael Hicks notes, 'evidently much more damning assessments of Edward IV than More's official history were current in the early years of King Henry VIII for More to pick up and transmit to us'.⁹⁴ Yet, however well-founded these adverse opinions may have been, More actually blames Richard for tarnishing his brother's memory in this way. He describes this type of propaganda as 'slippery', and Richard's demand for Edward's sons to be pronounced bastards as 'simple', meaning 'foolish'.⁹⁵ More implies that the malicious tales circulated by Richard and his courtiers were dismissed by the populace at large. Indeed, at every official airing of these rumours, such as a sermon preached at Paul's Cross or a speech made at the Guildhall by Buckingham, the assembled crowds remained 'hushed and mute ... [and] not one word answered thereunto'.⁹⁶ For those who adopted More's viewpoint, these attempts at defamation reflected badly on Richard rather than Edward, marking him as a slanderous opportunist, who was willing to put the pursuit of power above family loyalties. Later generations of historians were, however, prepared to give credence to these stories of debauched behaviour, as we shall see.

⁹⁴ Hicks, *Edward IV*, p. 62.

⁹⁵ *TM*, p. 66.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

More, who was only five years old in 1483, would have retained few personal memories of the rule of Edward IV, but, like Polydore Vergil, could rely on the testimony of many who had lived through those days. His own father clearly admired the king, leaving in his will 'instructions for prayers for the soul of Edward IV'.⁹⁷ Indeed, John More is explicitly cited in the Latin versions of *The History of Richard III* as the source of several anecdotes.⁹⁸ Courtiers of Edward and Elizabeth Woodville still survived, and More is known to have consulted a number of them. He is invariably discreet about these interviews in the *History*, preferring to employ vague language (such as 'men say' or 'some wise men weene'), but this is hardly surprising given the hothouse atmosphere of the Tudor court. Of those who have been identified, almost all are known to have been enemies of Richard III. Such men would have naturally praised Edward, both as a tribute to their former master (who was Henry VIII's grandfather) and to disparage his brother. Perhaps the most important of More's contacts was Archbishop John Morton (d. 1500), who had not only lived through the entire period but had also served Henry VI, Edward IV and Henry VII in person. More had lived in Morton's household for two years as a boy, and clearly thought highly of him as a man who 'hadde gotten by great experience ye verye mother & maistres of wisdom, a depe insighte in politike and worldli driftes'.⁹⁹ It was 'for his wisdom' that Edward supposedly welcomed Morton into his inner circle of advisers, despite the fact that the latter had so recently served in Henry VI's court in exile.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Chambers, *Thomas More*, p. 56. Henry VII and Henry VIII are explicitly not mentioned in this charity. Marius, *Thomas More*, p. 6.

⁹⁸ *TM*, pp. lxvii-lxviii.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. lxvii, 90-91; C. Harper-Bill, 'John Morton (d. 1500), administrator and archbishop of Canterbury', *ODNB*, Vol. 39, pp. 421-5.

Along with the testimonies provided by his anonymous sources, the texts of several speeches and verbal exchanges that More could not have heard himself are reproduced in *The History*, and, while it is very likely that he composed them himself, they are almost certainly based on originals that were actually delivered.¹⁰¹ Of all the early writers on the Yorkist monarchs, he was the only one to make use of the recollections of Edward's favourite mistress, Jane Shore (d. 1526/7). Although she had been reduced to penury in her old age and seemingly forgotten, More was greatly taken with her. In yet another act of homage to a classical writer, he drew on Sallust's description of the noble whore Sempronia to shape his account. Jane emerges as a woman with a 'proper wit', who 'could both rede wel & write' and was 'mery in company, redy & quick of aunswer, neither mute nor ful of bable, sometime taunting w^tout displesure & not w^tout disport'.¹⁰² In her study of *Richard III and his Early Historians* Alison Hanham maintains that the 'Shore' sections of More's work should be dismissed as 'self-indulgence on the part of the writer'.¹⁰³ But as an insight into the ways in which he came to paint such an attractive portrait of Edward IV they are extremely valuable. He was already predisposed to treat the king favourably because of his animus against Richard III; and the research that he conducted among Edward's courtiers seems to have confirmed his prejudices.

In some instances, More attempted to evaluate the eyewitness reports provided by his sources, regarding them not as unimpeachable evidence but as subjective recollections that should be weighed against one another. Gauging the accuracy of this information

¹⁰¹ More places the following words in the mouth of Edward's queen, Elizabeth: 'than went I hence to welcome him home; and from hence [Westminster Abbey] I brought my babe, the prynce vnto hys father, when he fyrste toke hym in hys armes.' The events referred to here are supported by the *Historie of the Arivall of Edward IV* and contemporary celebratory poetry: *TM*, p. 39.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁰³ A. Hanham, *Richard III and his Early Historians* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975), p.153.

does not appear to have been a particularly high priority, however, perhaps because he planned to check specific details at a later date.¹⁰⁴ The *History* remains incomplete; and there are many inaccuracies and factual errors in the text that would presumably have been corrected in a final draft.¹⁰⁵ A. F. Pollard suggests that the *lacunae* apparent in some parts of the *History* would have been filled had More been able to gain access to the appropriate records. Yet more important to him than hard facts was the opinion of 'wise men' such as his father and Archbishop Morton, since their testimony made it easier to determine the causal relationship between events and the role played by specific individuals.¹⁰⁶

Thomas More and Polydore Vergil wrote accounts of the same period of history at the same time, almost certainly consulted the same informants and may even have compared notes, but the work that they produced and the impact that it had were markedly different. Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* offers a careful, rational and, above all, relatively detached interpretation of the events of the mid- to late-fifteenth century. He consulted extant records, soberly evaluated the available evidence and attempted to marshal a convincing argument to prove his case. By contrast, More was a dramatist seeking to tease out and embellish the personal relationships of those he studied, the symbolic importance of their actions and the moral lessons to be drawn from their conduct.¹⁰⁷ In part these differences can be explained by the authors'

¹⁰⁴ A. F. Pollard, 'The Making of Sir Thomas More's Richard III', in J. G. Edwards, V. H. Galbraith and E.F. Jacob (eds.), *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1933), p. 255.

¹⁰⁵ Among other things, the Christian names of Richard's co-conspirators Hastings and Buckingham are given as, 'Richard' and 'Edward' rather than William and Henry. Marius, *Thomas More*, pp. 100, 108,

¹⁰⁶ Richard Marius even suggests that some of the errors in the *History* could be attributed to More being deliberately misled by some of these 'wise men', as in his confusion over who was Constable of the Tower when Edward's two sons were murdered; *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰⁷ While noting that the *History* offers a consistent, detailed and plausible version of events' which '[agrees] substantially with other evidence from the time', Marius goes a step further and proposes that

respective goals. For Vergil, the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III were significant landmarks in the recent history of Britain, but they were not the only important ones. More, on the other hand, was interested specifically in the reign of Richard III and the machinations that allowed him to seize the throne. Even in its unfinished state, those parts of the *History* describing Richard's reign are far longer than corresponding parts of the *Anglica Historia*, while those dealing with his brother Edward are shorter and less detailed.

Both authors were humanists, and both sought to provide lessons about moral behaviour in their work. Both used literary and rhetorical devices, particularly in the form of fictionalised speeches and dramatised scenes.¹⁰⁸ The contrasting approaches adopted by each of the two authors were, however, to exert a lasting influence upon those who followed in their footsteps. Historians and chroniclers, such as Richard Grafton (c.1511–1573), drew from Vergil a model of how to write historical narratives around a single, unified theme while supporting an analytical argument. By contrast, More's legacy lay not in the techniques that he employed but in the vivid personalities and compelling dialogue that he produced through a reworking of the events of the later fifteenth century. This inherent theatricality is most clearly apparent in his portrayal of Richard III (which provided the inspiration for Shakespeare's iconic play), but it can also be detected in his portrayal of King Edward. As we shall see, More's assessment of Edward as a successful monarch who was nonetheless in part responsible for the rise to power of his wicked brother was widely accepted by subsequent generations of historians. But as the latter came increasingly to focus

the primary value of the work lies not in its accuracy but in 'what it can tell us of the state of More's mind', his politics and his personal philosophy. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-22.

¹⁰⁸ Although it should be noted that Vergil employs these devices significantly less often than More.

upon Edward's relationship with Richard III, his many achievements were forgotten and his stature diminished.

CHAPTER THREE

The later Tudors and the past

'The bourgeois chroniclers, notably Fabyan, Hall, and Grafton, were transitional figures, who drew upon the works of the great medieval chroniclers without understanding their own scissors-and-paste methods.'

F. S. Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 230

'Wrytyng is the keye to enduce vertue, and repress vice. Thus memorie maketh menne ded many a thousande yere still to liue as though thei wer present: Thus Fame triumpheth vpon death, and renoune vpon Obliuion, and all by reason of wrytyng and historie.'

Edward Hall, *The vnion of the two noble and illustrate famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke...* (London, Richard Grafton, 1548), preface

By the time that Thomas More met his death in 1535, humanist ideas were already spreading from the universities into mainstream political and historical writing. Didactic lessons on the wider meaning of historical events, using the example of the past to instill a sense of morality, became far more common. At the same time, an increasingly literate English population was beginning to learn about the past from written sources as well as oral tradition. The Tudor monarchs sought to strengthen their authority by commissioning their own version of recent political history. Dramatic accounts of the past in the form of plays and stories proliferated, with some, such as William Shakespeare's history cycle, becoming a lasting part of the literary

canon. They too could be co-opted to serve political ends, or suppressed for asking unwelcome questions. To take just one example, a 1592 play about the life of Thomas More, thought to have been written by Anthony Munday (d. 1633), Henry Chettle (d. 1603x7), and Shakespeare himself was censored by Queen Elizabeth's master of the revels in order to remove any reference to the Act of Supremacy.¹

Printing and the birth of something resembling a modern publishing industry helped writers, especially those based in London, to disseminate their ideas.² Caxton's first printing press had arrived in England during the reign of Edward IV in 1476, but it was not until at least the mid-sixteenth century that printing became a truly English enterprise. English language books and those designed specifically for an English market, such as manuals of common law or Clement Maydestone's *Directorium sacerdotum*, were early examples of profitable commercial ventures, but the business of production relied heavily on foreign materials, expertise and techniques.³ Protectionist legislation, culminating in the 1534 *Acte for Prynters and Bynders of Bokes*, alongside the growing skill of native printers, finally broke this stranglehold.⁴ Without the threat of foreign competition the London book trade flourished, aided by the fact that the monopoly on printing obtained by the Stationers' Company effectively confined the industry to the capital.⁵

¹ *Sir Thomas More* survives today in a single, incomplete manuscript now British Library, MS Harley 7368. It was first published by the Shakespeare Society in 1844. For subsequent editions see W. W. Greg (ed.), *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (Oxford, The Malone Society, 1911).

² J. Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London c. 1475-1530* (London, British Museum, 2012), ch. 1.

³ L. Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume III 1400-1557* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 67-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 145-6.

⁵ This monopoly had the side effect of curtailing the spread of printing to other parts of England, with exceptions being made for the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, which were given a special dispensation to publish academic books.

Technological developments and changes in the publishing industry had considerable implications for the next generation of historical writers. In addition to the customary challenge of navigating turbulent political waters and pleasing their patrons, as encountered by More and Vergil, they also had to compete for readers. Although they drew heavily upon the work of anonymous medieval chroniclers, individually named writers could advertise themselves as leading authorities. The accuracy, depth of knowledge and expertise to which they laid claim now helped to promote sales. Furthermore, since they had the easiest access to printing presses, publishers were ideally placed to become successful authors in their own right.⁶ While royal or aristocratic patronage was still extremely important, writers began actively to seek the approval of the civic elite rather than those at court, as they were more likely to furnish an enthusiastic readership and keep them in work. Commercial considerations had, indeed, never been more pressing, nor had it hitherto been so necessary to attract an audience from among the mercantile class (as well as those lower down the social hierarchy). Both the publisher turned historian Richard Grafton (see below pp. 153-6) and the London antiquary John Stow (see below pp. 156-66) continuously emphasised their civic credentials and the quintessentially urban aspects of their work.⁷

⁶ Richard Grafton is perhaps the best known of these publishers-turned-historians, but others were just as important. John Stow's publisher, Thomas Marsh, had a financial interest in producing histories to rival those of Grafton, and instigated Stow's conflict with Grafton. I. Gadd and M. G. Ferguson, "'For his paynes"; John Stow and the Stationers', in I. Gadd and A. Gillespie (eds.), *John Stow (1525-1605) and the Making of the English Past* (London, British Library, 2004), pp. 38-9.

⁷ See, for example, the glowing tribute to Richard Grafton's love of London by 'Thomas N.' in the preface to Grafton's *Chronicle at Large*. R. Grafton, *A chronicle at large and meere history of the affayres of Englande and kinges of the same* (London, Henry Denham for Richard Tottle and Humphrey Toye, 1569: STC (2nd edn.) / 12147), preface.

Competition to attract this growing audience of English readers was therefore fierce. At their peak of popularity in the mid-sixteenth century, chronicles were being read by individuals from across the socio-economic spectrum. The Devon yeoman Robert Furse, for example, advised his children from the pages of his family commonplace book to read scripture, obey the law and 'rede the old crownekeles and shuch like awnshyente hystories, rememburyng yt ys a commone saynge yt is a shame for a man to be ignorante of that whyche he ofte to knowe'.⁸

The reputation and status of these authors spread far beyond a narrow elite; whereas the achievements of Polydore Vergil and other humanists had been recognised by their peers, the writers themselves (with the exception of Thomas More) were rarely household names. As we have seen, medieval chronicles and histories tended towards anonymity and the owners of copies were expected to update and amend them as they saw fit. Even histories such as the *Brut* or the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which existed in reasonably standardised forms, were adapted to suit the needs of particular communities; and, through the editing process, became their property. The advent of printing, however, and with it the ability to mass produce identical books, made it possible for writers to claim the sole authorship of a work, even when the text itself was far from original. Much of the material in the history books of this period seems strikingly familiar, as authors routinely 'borrowed' long passages of narrative and analysis from each other. In his *Abridgement of the Chronicles of England* (published in 1562), Richard Grafton attacked this practice, condemning the lack of 'good order and

⁸ H. J. Carpenter (ed.), 'Furse of Moreshead: a Family Record of the Sixteenth Centyre', *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 26 (1894), pp. 168-84, on p. 172.

much matter of truth as well in priuate as publique causes, with the vncerteynty of yeares to the deceauing of all' that resulted from wholesale plagiarism.⁹

Ironically, Grafton himself came under fire on this score. His *Chronicle at Large* was so similar to *Hall's Chronicle* that it prompted John Stow to remark that 'Some bodye (without any ingenious and plaine declaration therof) hath published, but not without ma[n]gling, Master Halles boke for his owne'.¹⁰ Stow was careful not to identify the culprit, but leaves the reader in little doubt by prefacing his comments with a complaint by Grafton that he had already been accused of plagiarism. Stow's criticism was completely justified: to take just one example, Grafton's account of Henry VI's Readeption Parliament seems to have been copied directly from Hall, save for a few different spellings.¹¹

Although the first developments of what would lead to proper copyright law began around this time and provided some recourse for the victims of plagiarism, authors could initially do little more than snipe at the offenders from the pages of their own books. Stow and Grafton, for example, would clash repeatedly until the latter's death in 1573, attacking each other in the introductions to their respective histories over matters of commercial integrity as well as historical accuracy. Grafton produced the *Manuell of Chronicles* in 1565 and dedicated it to 'his loving frendes the Master and Wardens of the companie of the moste excellent Arte and science of Impryntyng', an

⁹ R. Grafton, *An abridgement of the chronicles of England*, (London, Richard Tottel, 1562: STC (2nd edn.) / 12148), sig. B3v. Grafton is likely referring to Robert Crowley's pirated 1559 edition of Thomas Cooper's and Thomas Lanquet's *Epitome of Chronicles*, which was 'widely recognised as being full of errors'. I. W. Archer, 'John Stow: Citizen and Historian', in Gadd and Gillespie, *John Stow and the Making of the English Past*, p. 18.

¹⁰ J. Stow, *The summarye of the chronicles of Englande ... abridged and continued, vnto 1573* (London, T. Marshe, 1573: STC (2nd edn.) / 23325.6), Epistle to the Reader.

¹¹ Compare *ULY*, f. 210v, with Grafton, *A chronicle at large*, p. 691.

overblown reference to the Stationers' Company. He went on to request that, after his death, they would 'take and vse this copie or booke to the commoditie & benefite of [their] whole companie', ensuring in return 'that there be no brief abridgements or *Manuels* of Chronicles hereafter Imprinted: but onely this little boke'.¹²

This was a shrewd move. By granting them the publishing rights to his *Manuell*, and thus any income generated by it, Grafton was implicitly attempting to bribe the Stationers' Company into promoting it at the expense of anything by his rival.¹³ Stow and Thomas Marsh responded in 1566-7 by producing another *Summary*, which was dismissive of Grafton's work. This time, in an act of pure brinkmanship, the book was dedicated to the mayor and aldermen of London, to whom the Stationers' Company was accountable. In it, the two men explained that they had unwisely dedicated their previous work to Lord Dudley, whose 'furnyshyng of a friuolous abridgement' by Grafton 'in the fronture with his noble name' had deceived the public into buying a grossly inferior publication. They also asked the Corporation for protection, lest 'thorough the thu[n]dryng noyse of empty tonnes, & unfruitful graffes of Momus offsprynge' their work came under attack.¹⁴ This jibe apparently did not go unnoticed, as, according to Stow, Grafton 'marvelowsly stormyd & cawsyd the master & wardens of the stacionars to threaten Thomas Marche'.¹⁵ The feud, which actually reached the courts, was only terminated by Grafton's death.

¹² R. Grafton, *A manuell of the Chronicles of Englande* (London, John Kingston, 1565: STC (2nd edn.) / 12167), The Epistle, sig. A1r-v.

¹³ Gadd and Ferguson, "For his paynes", pp. 41-2.

¹⁴ This is a punning reference to Grafton – his printer's device was a 'tun' around a 'grafted' fruit tree. Stow, *Summarie of Englishe chronicles*, preface, sig. aiir.

¹⁵ C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *A Survey of London by John Stow* (2 Vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1908), Vol. 1, p. lii.

This chapter will examine the role played by later Tudor writers and book publishers, including these two bitter rivals, in producing histories of Edward IV and other late medieval kings. Being for the most part residents of London, these writers absorbed the lessons in style and presentation offered by the humanist authors popular at court and combined material from works by Polydore Vergil and Thomas More with that from an earlier generation of anonymous London chroniclers. The developments in printing and authorship discussed above provide an essential context for our understanding of the changes and continuities in the writing of English history apparent at this time. Robert Fabyan's *Newe Cronycles of England and Fraunce*, which was reprinted as *Fabyan's Chronicle* (see below, pp. 126-30), forms a bridge between these 'old style' London chronicles and the more modern type of history now being written. As we shall see, the *Newe Cronycles* is very similar in form to a medieval London chronicle and has been frequently compared to the so-called *Great Chronicle* of London, not least because both works were once assumed to have been written by the same person. It was, however, explicitly credited from the outset to its presumed author and therefore more probably represents a single authorial voice. This fact alone distinguishes it from its predecessors, despite the similarity in content.

Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (see below, pp. 130-52) represents the work of a knowledgeable, well-educated writer who had served in parliament but not at the royal court and who took a keen interest in broad political issues, as well as London gossip. It reflects the continuing need for commentators to moderate their opinions, either in order to avoid censorship or else to remain in favour with the crown. His discussion of Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was, for example, clearly influenced by contemporary issues

regarding Henry VIII's divorce of Catherine of Aragon, not least because it offered an opportunity for him to demonstrate his loyalty to the Tudor regime (see below pp. 136-7). As noted above, for many writers the chance to make money was as, if not more, important than matters of historical accuracy or interpretation. The competition between Richard Grafton and John Stow was motivated as much by commercial rivalry as by scholarly disagreement. Their abridged histories and shorter chronicles provided accessible and affordable popular histories for a growing readership. While they were generally inclined to focus upon more recent events than the Wars of the Roses, reflecting the interests of their audiences, they both drew heavily upon – and helped to disseminate – Hall's ideas about the fifteenth century.

Holinshed's *Chronicle* (see below pp. 166-81), now chiefly remembered as the primary source from which Shakespeare drew the narrative for his history plays, represents the apex of developments in historical writing during this period. A long and unusually expensive history of England, Scotland and Ireland, the *Chronicle* was compiled by a committee of writers, including Stow and Holinshed himself. Although it was long deemed to be of interest solely because of its literary associations, today's scholars, including Annabel Patterson and the team behind the recent *Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, have stressed its value as an early history of parliament and have begun a process of rehabilitation (see below p. 170).¹⁶ This chapter concludes by exploring the discrepancies between the two editions of Holinshed's *Chronicle*, which provide subtly different accounts of the reign of Edward IV.

¹⁶ A. Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (London, University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Fabyan and Hall: Evolving Interpretations

Robert Fabyan (d. 1513) and Edward Hall (1497-1547) form a link between this new age of historical writing, the medieval chroniclers of London and the humanists of the early sixteenth century. Fabyan was a draper, alderman and sheriff of London in the latter part of the fifteenth century. The anonymous chronicle attributed to him, printed posthumously in 1516 as *The Newe Cronycles of England and Fraunce*, and later as *Fabyans Cronycle Newly Prynted*, bears significant similarities to the anonymous London chronicles that were still being written when he was alive.¹⁷ The *Great Chronicle of London* was, in fact, wrongly attributed to him by at least three sixteenth-century scholars, including John Stow, John Foxe (1516/17–1587) and Richard Hakluyt (c.1552–1616).¹⁸ Although it hardly differed from other contemporary London chronicles in style and content, *Fabyan's Chronicle* was the first to cite its sources in order to bolster its credibility. These sources not only included the work of medieval chroniclers and historians, such as Bede, William of Malmesbury and Ranulf Higden, as well as the anonymous *Brut* compilers, but also archival evidence, most notably the records of the City of London. The London chronicles were an another obvious recourse, as can be seen from the fact that, from the accession of Richard II onward, *Fabyan's Chronicle* is actually arranged like a typical London chronicle, with each annual entry being preceded by a list of that year's most prominent officials.

¹⁷ The chronicle was not attributed to Fabyan until the appearance of the 1533 edition published by John Rastell. It survives in two anonymous manuscripts: Holkham Hall, MS 671, covering the period from Brutus to the death of Philip Augustus of France in 1223; and British Library, Cotton MS Nero C. XI, a continuation to 1485. In the interests of clarity I shall continue to attribute it to Fabyan.

¹⁸ *GCL*, pp. xli-xliii. The surviving copies of *The Great Chronicle* and *Fabyan's Chronicle* were copied by the same hand, probably in the same workshop, which, along with the similarities in content, accounts for the mistake. Rose-McLaren, *London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 25-8.

Fabyan also tends increasingly to plunder various city chronicles for accounts of important events.¹⁹ Indeed, in places the language used is identical.²⁰

That Fabyan included a considerable amount of material about France in his narrative was unusual but not surprising, given the political climate of early Tudor England.²¹ At the time of writing, Henry VII was actively promoting friendlier relations with France, and the commercial treaties negotiated by his ministers enjoyed the support of the merchant oligarchy to which Fabyan belonged.²² His references to French history may therefore be seen as an attempt to present himself as a loyal supporter of the new regime.²³ Indeed, his work was further influenced by the politics of the day in that it reveals a strong Lancastrian bias. In contrast to many earlier accounts, Henry VI's wife, Margaret of Anjou, is cast in an unusually positive light. Fabyan observes, for example, that the 'noble and moost bounteous pryncesse quene Margarete, of whom many and vntrewe surmyse was imaged and tolde', suffered desperately at Edward IV's hands when she 'was fayne to flye comfortlesse, and lost all that she had in Englonde foreuer'.²⁴ Even so, Fabyan's principal target was, predictably, Richard III, about whose enormities he wrote in order to 'put in remembraunce [the]

¹⁹ *HWE*, p. 246.

²⁰ Henry VI, for example, is described in the *Great Chronicle* as a 'goostly & vertuous prince' and by Fabyan as 'thys goostly man kyng Henry'. R. Fabyan, *Newe cronycles of Englande and of Fraunce* (London, Richard Pynson, 1516: STC (2nd edn.) / 10659), f. 211v. For more, see *GCL*, pp. xlv-xlvi.

²¹ For his French history Fabyan principally consulted Robert Gaugin's *Compendium super Francorum gestis* (printed in Paris in 1497), as well as Guildhall Library MS 244, 'The Chronicles of France'. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*, p. 105; *GCL*, pp. xxii-iii, xlvi.

²² The damage caused to England and France by the Hundred Years' War, the 'fatall warre that hath dured so longe', and the happy peace that replaced it are explicitly mentioned in Fabyan's prologue. H. Ellis (ed.), *The new chronicles of England and France* (London, F. C. and J. Rivington, 1811), p. 4. On Henry VII's reconciliation with France, see S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London, Eyre Methuen, 1972), pp. 237, 279, 282-3, 288-9.

²³ *HWE*, pp. 246-7.

²⁴ Fabyan, *Newe cronycles of Englande and of Fraunce*, f. 211v.

punysshment of synners, to the ende that other may exchewe to fall in lyke dau[n]ger'.²⁵

Edward does not, however, emerge with clean hands. He is presented as a usurper who resumed power in 1471 once his evil brother had (according to 'comon fame') 'styked' the saintly King Henry with a dagger.²⁶ And more generally Fabyan's approach to King Edward reflects his own Lancastrian sympathies. Where previous chronicles had ascribed his remarkable victories to a combination of military prowess and divine intervention, Fabyan suggests that the 'the mystes and other impedymetes whiche fyll vpon the lordes partye' at the battle of Barnet were brought about by black magic, in the form of 'the Incantacyons wrought by fryer Bungey, as the fame went, me lyst nat to wryte'.²⁷ Fabyan also recasts the rumour that Clarence was secretly drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine as a matter of undisputed fact, with the clear implication that Edward was personally responsible.

When writing about the Treaty of Picquigny (1475) between Edward IV and Louis XI, Fabyan extolls the latter's wealth, magnificence and generosity, despite the fact that he subsequently reneged upon his promises. Yet, rather than seize another opportunity to denigrate Edward for abandoning his planned invasion and succumbing

²⁵ Ibid., f. 228v.

²⁶ Ibid., f. 224r.

²⁷ Ibid., f. 223r. Friar Bungay was a minor character in Robert Greene's play *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c. 1589), a comedy about the attempts made by Edward I to seduce Margaret, the maid of Fressingham, by enlisting the aid of a necromancer named Friar Bacon. In one of the play's subplots, Bacon recruits Bungay to help him create a brass head animated by demonic magic that has the power to surround England with a brass wall. The tale, or some version of it, appears to have been popular when Fabyan was writing, and so the reference to Bungay would have been readily understood by his audience. R. Greene, 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: the commonwealth of the present moment' in K. Cartwright (ed.), *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 222-46; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (4 Vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1923), Vol. 3, pp. 328-9.

to Louis' wiles, Fabyan was instead mindful of Henry VII's diplomatic agenda, which favoured reconciliation with France. Significantly, his only real criticism of 'the spider king' concerns his unfortunate choice of clothing.²⁸ Additional evidence that *Fabyan's Chronicle* (but not in this instance Fabyan himself) adopted a politically expedient approach may be found in the discussion of the respective titles to the throne of Edward IV and Henry VII in the 1533 edition published by William Rastell. Whilst this edition clearly reiterates that Edward was a usurper, the far more tenuous claim advanced by Henry Tudor is conveniently ignored. Instead, the continuator (probably Rastell) eulogises Henry as the 'magnyficient & excellent prynce' whose 'excelle[n]te wysdome & moost sugred eloquence' enabled him to endow the kingdom with 'excedynge treasoure & rychesse innumerabyll.²⁹ This panegyric is hardly suprising, given that the new edition was dedicated to Henry VIII, 'to whom be all honour, reuerence, and ioyfull contynauce of his prosperous reygne, to the pleasure of god and weale of this his realme'.³⁰

It is, nonetheless, important to remember that Fabyan's attempts to collect and cite a range of original sources made a significant contribution to the development of the discipline of history. This careful approach to what might today be described as 'scholarly apparatus' was adopted and developed by the authors of later histories. John Stow, in particular, recognised the significance of Fabyan's work when he observed that his predecessor had 'gathered out of diuers good Authors, aswell Latine

²⁸ 'Of the nyse and wanton disgysyd Apparayll that the kynge Lowys ware vpon hym at ye tyme of this metynge I myght make a longe rehersayl; but for it shulde sownde more to dishonour of suche a noble man, that was apparaylled more lyke a mynstrell than a prynce royal, therfor I passe it ouer.' Fabyan, *Newe cronycles of Englande and of Fraunce*, f. 225r. Apart from those who profited directly from it, the treaty with King Louis was deeply unpopular among the English. See *EIV*, pp. 234-7.

²⁹ R. Fabyan, *Fabyans cronycle newly printed ...* (London, William Rastell, 1533: STC (2nd edn.) / 10660), ff. 233v-234r.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Frontispiece.

as French, a large chronicle of *England* and *France*, which hee published in English to his greate charges, for the honor of this citie, and common vtilitie of the whole Realme'.³¹

Edward Hall's Political History

Edward Hall was a lawyer, parliamentarian and historian of the next generation. Elected to the House of Commons for the first time in about 1526, Hall was sufficiently eminent to be included among 'the nobility, judges and councillors and divers other persons' summoned to Bridewell Castle in 1528 to hear Henry VIII explain his 'scruples of conscience about [his] marriage' to Catherine of Aragon.³² He was returned again in 1529 for the borough of Much Wenlock, thus becoming an active member of the Reformation Parliament. In 1533 he served as autumn reader at Gray's Inn, one of the prestigious Inns of Court in London where English lawyers received their training. He was clearly well-regarded by Henry VIII, for at the king's request he was elected to the post of common serjeant of London and was responsible for administering the oath of succession to the citizenry. Later still, on 1 July 1535, Henry would again write in his support, requesting that 'our well-beloved subject Edward Hall to be now promoted to the office of under sheriff'; his appointment was promptly confirmed the next day.³³ Hall was thus a loyal and trustworthy subject of the Tudor state, although he was

³¹ J. Stow, *A suruay of London Contayning the originall, antiquity, increase, moderne estate, and description of that citie*, (London, Imprinted by John Windet for Iohn Wolfe, 1598: STC (2nd edn.) / 23341), p. 81.

³² A. Harding, 'Hall, Edward I (1496/97-1547), of Gray's Inn, London', in S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509-1558* (3 Vols., London, Secker & Warburg, 1982), Vol. 2, p. 280.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

clearly more than an obedient puppet, as in 1538 he was accused of ignoring a notice of royal protection issued against a plaintiff in a lawsuit.³⁴

Hall was elected to parliament three more times: in 1536 to represent Wenlock, three years later for an unknown constituency, and finally in 1542 for Bridgnorth, Wenlock's neighbouring borough. During the 1539 parliament he responded to a speech attacking the theological basis of the Act of Six Articles by stressing the historical authority of 'chronicles' and the need for subjects to obey their sovereign in such matters.³⁵ His loyalty was not forgotten, for in late March 1547 he was appointed to a royal commission for the enforcement of the Six Articles.³⁶ But being by then terminally ill, he died a couple of weeks later, around 15 April.

Hall's lasting contribution to English history comes from his chronicle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York*, known today as *Hall's Chronicle*. It was still unpublished at his death, when the manuscript was bequeathed to Richard Grafton on the understanding that he would 'set it forward'.³⁷ Although in a preface to the chronicle Grafton declared that he had 'nether altered nor added' anything that was not contained in the original manuscript,³⁸ he must have written, or at least heavily edited, some of it. This is especially likely in the final chapters, since on Grafton's own testimony he had taken up the narrative where Hall left off in 1532,

³⁴ Ibid., p. 280 .

³⁵ S. Reed Cattley (ed.), *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: A New and Complete Edition* (8 Vols., London, R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1843–9), Vol. 5, p. 505.

³⁶ Harding, 'Hall, Edward I', p. 282.

³⁷ A. F. Pollard, 'Edward Hall's will and chronicle', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. 9 (1931–2), p. 177.

³⁸ *ULY*, preface.

‘diligently & truly’ turning the notes that he had made ‘in diuers and many pamphletes and papers’ into a coherent text.³⁹

Hall’s *Chronicle* owes much to both the chronicles of London and the humanist histories of More and Vergil, being notable for its attribution of historical events to political causes rather than divine (or diabolical) intervention. Like the city chronicles, Hall’s work is written in English, with a particular focus on matters that affected the London merchant class, such as Henry VIII’s enforced loans.⁴⁰ Substantial sections, especially the earliest parts, draw heavily on other works, such as Higden’s *Polychronicon*, Fabyan’s *New Chronicles of England and France*, John Hardyng’s (1378-1465) rhyming chronicle of England and the London Chronicles. Long passages from Thomas More’s *History of King Richard III* are also interpolated into the text, with a marginal note towards the start of the chapter on Richard III actually stating that ‘from the begynnyng of King Edward the III: hetherto, is of Sir Thomas Mores peninge’.⁴¹ J. R. Lander maintained that it was through Hall’s ‘extended [and] coloured’ version of the ‘conceptions’ of Vergil and his contemporaries that their ideas about the fifteenth-century became ‘almost hallowed’ as historical orthodoxy.⁴² Yet, despite his reliance on other authors, Hall was entirely capable of original research. His account of the fall of Caen in 1450 may, for example, have come from an ancestor, Davy Hall, who was captain of Caen at the time.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid., preface.

⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 99v.

⁴¹ Ibid., f. 28r.

⁴² Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 57.

⁴³ P. C. Herman, ‘Edward Hall (1497–1547), lawyer and historian’, *ODNB*, Vol. 24, p. 607.

Hall was a scholar, a lawyer, a moderate protestant and a loyal servant of the crown, who respected law, order and the institution of the monarchy. In writing his history he sought to present his personal views in a way that would educate and inform others, which explains his insistence that Grafton should 'set it forward'. Like his humanist predecessors, he believed that object lessons from the past could be used to foster morally acceptable behaviour. When writing about medieval kings, Hall follows More's lead by offering opportunities for readers to recognise and learn from the strengths and flaws of individual monarchs. Additionally, his personal experience as a member of the Henrican political establishment meant that he often had one eye on the present when interpreting the past. It is important to remember, however, that he was not a courtier and that, in the words of Lucy Wooding, he 'reflects the London gossip of the time, the public perception of the young, exuberant, confident king, the splendid propaganda that Henry's behaviour generated'.⁴⁴

Hall's opinions of Edward IV, Henry VI and their contemporaries owe much to his extensive borrowings from earlier source material and to his humanist perspective. He is personally sympathetic to Henry VI, who from infancy was 'of honest conuersacion and pure integritie, no knower of euill, and a keper of all goodnes', and who bore 'no small nombre' of injuries with patience and fortitude'.⁴⁵ His faults, however, made him unfit to rule. In a lengthy and compelling speech that Richard of York, Edward's father, supposedly gave to parliament in furtherance of his own claim to the throne, Henry is described as a 'silly man', whose reliance upon 'vnwise counsaill' is blamed for

⁴⁴ L. Wooding, *Henry VIII* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2009), p.66.

⁴⁵ *ULY*, f. 223r-v.

the shameful loss of his father's conquests in France.⁴⁶ Although these comments reflect the views of Henry's enemies, who believed that his conspicuous piety masked a 'coward stommack' and dismissed him as being 'apt to no purpose, nor mete for any enterprise, were it neuer so small', Hall himself concedes that he was, indeed, 'a man of no great wit, such as men comonly call an Innocent man, neither a foole neither very wyse'.⁴⁷

Edward IV, by contrast is described in generally favourable terms, particularly in the glowing summation of his life that closes the chapter on his reign. It is possible that Hall wished to flatter Henry VIII by highlighting the perceived similarities between him and his grandfather. Jonathan Hughes suggests that Henry turned to Edward as a role model and based certain aspects of his royal persona upon that of his predecessor, which would explain Hall's fulsome tribute.⁴⁸ For Edward not only *looked* like a king, being a handsome man 'of a goodly personage, of stature high, and excedyng all other in countenance', but *behaved* royally, too, since he was generous, kind and brave.⁴⁹ In many ways, Edward is portrayed as a model ruler: 'in greate affaires & weightie causes quicke and diligent, in perelles and aduentures bolde and hardie, against his enemies, fierce and terrible, to his frendes and to straungers bountifull and liberal, hauyng in warres moste prosperous lucke, and happie successe'.⁵⁰ He managed the Church effectively, promoting 'the most famous and excellent Clerkes, and men of the

⁴⁶ Ibid., f. 178v.

⁴⁷ Ibid., f. 210r-v.

⁴⁸ There is some circumstantial evidence to support this idea, given that he named his only son Edward and, like Edward IV, risked censure by marrying an unpopular subject (Anne Boleyn). *Hall's Chronicle* was also properly called *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke*, in keeping with Tudor propaganda on the theme of two warring factions united in one family. Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy*, pp. 2-3, 308. See also T. Penn, *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England* (London, Penguin, 2011), p. 294.

⁴⁹ *ULY*, f. 260r-v. This, too, is in keeping with contemporary descriptions of Henry VIII, who by all accounts was tall, handsome and athletic in his youth.

⁵⁰ Ibid., f. 260r-v.

best liuing' to high office, although he also saw fit to reward 'other of meane qualities, whom he muche favoured' with money, a practice that Hall notes with approval 'many Princes (regarding not their honors) do not consider nor obserue'.⁵¹ Conversely, upon first securing the throne and distributing his new possessions among his foremost supporters, he was careful to appear even handed and to abandon any policies 'preiudiciall to the common wealthe'. He was also an innovator, being anxious to introduce 'thynges, mete and necessary, for the people of his Realme and dominion',⁵² including law reforms and new coinage that was still in use during Hall's lifetime. For 'all whiche notable vertues, he ioyned to hym so surely the hartes of his people, that after his death, his life again was daily wished, and effecteously emong his Subiectes desired, but wishyng serued not, nor yet their desire tooke none effecte'.⁵³

While Henry VI may have been a morally superior and holier man than Edward IV, he was unsuited for kingship in part because of his excessive religiosity. Hall (whose membership of the Reformation Parliament clearly influenced his historical judgement) admired Edward's firm hand with the English Church, once again drawing implicit parallels with his grandson where the promotion of 'excellent Clerkes' was concerned. Yet he was not afraid to be critical, at least when it was politically expedient. Despite Edward's eventual success in ruling a country embroiled 'more in trouble then perfecte quietnes', his personal flaws are identified by Hall as the cause of many problems. In particular, Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and his misguided treatment of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, are singled out as appallingly foolish acts with dire consequences. As we have seen, several other chroniclers had

⁵¹ Ibid., f. 260r-v.

⁵² Ibid., f. 192r.

⁵³ Ibid., f. 260r-v.

already taken a similar view, although Hall's opinions are unusually trenchant. The marriage itself brought no political benefits and provoked an international outcry from kings, princes and nobles. Even commoners 'grudged and murmured at it', saying that 'vnaduised wowyng, hasty louyng, and to spedy mariage, were neither meete for him beyng a kyng, nor consonant to the honor of so high an estate'.⁵⁴

Interestingly, Hall employed similar language when discussing Henry VIII's by then discredited marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Although the marriage had been approved by some of Henry's councillors, it too was apparently 'muche murmured against, in the beginnyng, and euer more and more', and even seemed likely to result in civil unrest.⁵⁵ In a passage headed 'The kynges Oracion concernyng his first mariage', which was delivered in 1528, Hall recounts how Henry VIII actually drew specific parallels between his own predicament and events following the sudden death of his 'noble graundfather kyng Edward the iiiii'.⁵⁶ As was the case in England under Edward IV, the first twenty years of Henry's rule had made the country prosperous. However, Henry feared that, as had happened in 1483, the kingdom could easily be engulfed in internecine 'mischief & manslaughter' and might, as a result, be 'clerely destroyed'. Just as Richard III's claim, that the Woodville marriage was unlawful, had allowed him to usurp the throne from Edward's son, so in Hall's retelling it seems that Henry felt that a similar calamity could befall his own line in the event of his early death. Although Princess Mary was a 'fayre doughter of a noble woman and me begotten to our great comfort & ioy', she was still thought by some (now including

⁵⁴ Ibid., f. 195r.

⁵⁵ Ibid., f. 2r (this version of Hall's *Union* renumbers its folios from the first year of Henry VIII's reign).

⁵⁶ Ibid., f. 180r.

Henry himself) to be illegitimate.⁵⁷ By divorcing Catherine and producing a new heir with a new wife, Henry could conveniently claim, with the benefit of hindsight, that he was safeguarding the future of England. By providing such a detailed historical context, Hall was able to underscore Henry's statesmanlike concern for his people, while ignoring any less creditable motives that may have prompted the divorce.⁵⁸

Implicitly contrasting Henry's sense of responsibility with the behaviour of his more hedonistic grandfather, Hall observes that Henry eventually realised the error of his ways and sought to rectify the mistake that he had made as a young man 'not vnderstandyng the lawe of God'.⁵⁹ When Henry and Catherine finally separated and 'the Commen people dailye murmured and spake their folysh fantasies' in her favour, Hall tartly pointed out that 'the affayres of Princes be not ordered by the commen people, nor it were not conuenient that all thynges were opened to them'.⁶⁰ Such was not his view of popular hostility towards the Woodvilles, which he reports with evident approval. Hall was a loyal subject of the Tudor state, and had been present when Henry explained his 'scruples' about his first marriage; not surprisingly he proved less tolerant of public opinion when it questioned his sovereign's judgement.

Hall regards Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville as the root cause of Warwick's rebellion and the bloodshed following the readeption of Henry VI. Moreover, as Henry

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 180r.

⁵⁸ On Henry VIII's other marriages Hall is far less eloquent, probably because they reflected even less favourably on his political acumen and personal morality. He describes the pageantry surrounding the wedding ceremonies in tremendous detail, suggesting that he was an eyewitness to events, but glosses over the historical details of the marriages themselves. Compare, for example, the long account of the reception and marriage of Anne of Cleves (*Ibid.*, ff. 237v-241r) with the short paragraph on her divorce (*ibid.*, f. 242v).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 2r.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 200r.

VIII had already pointed out, because of the secret nature and legally questionable status of the original ceremony, it paved the way for the eventual downfall of the Yorkist dynasty. As he explains:

what murther, what miserie, & what troble ensued by reason of this mariage: for it can not be denied, but for this mariage kyng Edward was expulsed the Realm, & durst not abide, And for this mariage was therle of Warwycke & his brother miserable slain. By this mariage were kyng Edwardes .ii. sonnes declared bastardes, & in coclusion priued of their lifes. And finally by this mariage, the quenes bloud was confounded, and vtterly in maner destroyed. So yt men did afterward diuynne, that either God was not contented, nor yet pleased with this matrimony, or els that he punished kyng Edward in his posteritie, for the diepe dissimulynge and couert clokyng, with hys faithfull frende the erle of Warwycke.⁶¹

The marriage was for Hall a perfect exemplar of bad kingship; it was an act of selfish weakness that provoked internal strife and turned a powerful ally into an enemy, with no lasting benefit for the country. Like generations of historians still to come, Hall carefully marshalled the evidence in support of his argument, even referring with no apparent sense of irony to the power of popular opinion. He explicitly stated that 'All men for the moste parte agre that this mariage was the only cause why the erle of Warwycke bare grudge, and made warre on kyng Edwarde'.⁶² He does, however, point out that Edward's clandestine behaviour and the earl's subsequent loss of face at the French court, where he had been trying to arrange a marriage between the two

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, f. 195r.

⁶² *Ibid.*, f. 195v.

royal families, were the final straw for Warwick after years of being side-lined. Worse still, Edward's inability to control his sexual appetite inflicted further injuries on Warwick's pride. Edward, who Hall notes 'loued well both to loke and to fele fayre dammosels', allegedly attempted to deflower Warwick's daughter or niece in the earl's own home. When taken together, these events understandably 'moued' and 'inflamed' the earl, setting him irrevocably 'against the kyng'.⁶³

Hall's painstaking account of the circumstances leading to the murder of Clarence, in the now traditional butt of malmsey, was accepted by most of his successors,⁶⁴ namely, that Clarence's relationship with Edward, already on unstable ground following his earlier rebellion, rapidly degenerated after a quarrel over the king's decision to prevent him from remarrying. Because Clarence 'dayly dyd oppugne, and wyth yll woordes murmur at the doying thereof',⁶⁵ Edward eventually ordered his imprisonment and execution for treason. Hall does, however, consider several other explanations, chief among them being the malign influence of the Woodville family. The 'sparcle of priuy malice' that initially caused the king to turn on his brother in 1477, the year before his execution in the Tower, is said to have been 'newly kyndeled and set a fyre by the Queue, or her bloud which were euer mistrusting and priuely

⁶³ *ULY*, f. 195v. Elements of this story had appeared in print previously. Polydore Vergil reported that Edward had allegedly committed an 'unhonest act in the earles howse', having 'deflowred some woman', but furnishes no more detail (*PV*, p. 117). Thomas More's *History* has the Duke of Buckingham attack Edward's 'insaciable' appetite for women 'yong or olde, riche or pore, whom he set his eie vpon', while ignoring this particular incident (*TM*, p. 72). Richard Grafton's continuation of John Hardyng's metrical *Chronicle*, published in 1543, exculpates King Edward by reporting that he 'dyd make serche in [Warwick's] house for a thing that touched much his honestie, wher *the earle* in dede was a man that loued women well, and had great fantesie to their company'. He mentions a suspicious incident there involving a woman, but does not name the culprit (J. Hardyng and R. Grafton, *The chronicle of Ihon Hardyng in metre, fro[m] the first begynnyng of Engla[n]de, vnto ye reigne of Edwarde ye fourth where he made an end of his chronicle* (2 Vols., London, Richard Grafton, 1543: (2nd edn.) / 12766.7), Vol. 2, f. 5r). Hall is the first to directly state that Edward behaved offensively towards the Earl's daughter or niece, having perhaps misconstrued Grafton's more circumspect remarks.

⁶⁴ See, for example, *EIV*, pp. 239-45; Kleineke, *Edward IV*, pp. 153-7; Hicks, *Edward IV*, pp. 96-106, 198-200.

⁶⁵ *ULY*, f. 239r.

barkynge at the kynges lignage, or were he desirous to reigne after his brother'.⁶⁶ Another theory runs that Edward and Elizabeth were troubled by a prophecy that Edward would be succeeded by 'one whose first letter of hys name shoulde be a G', which seemed to implicate George, duke of Clarence. Unfortunately, however, Edward had been deceived by devilish 'wytchcraftes' into suspecting the wrong man, and 'that Prophesie lost not hys effect, when after kyng Edward, Glocester vsurped his kyngdome'.⁶⁷

Hall ultimately dismisses these ideas as ill-informed 'coniectures, which as often deceyue the imaginations of fantastical folke, as declare treuth to them in their conclusion'.⁶⁸ Even so, the fact that he mentioned them at all raises three important points: first, that he was engaged in an attempt at objective historical analysis that weighed all the known evidence before coming to a conclusion; second, that although an undercurrent of magical beliefs still influenced views of the past, even decades after the events in question, educated men were beginning to challenge them; and finally, by seriously considering the suggestion that the Woodvilles were responsible for poisoning the relationship between Edward and Clarence, Hall could once again remind his readers that the marriage was undoubtedly the worst decision of Edward's life.

Hall's discussion of Edward IV's judicial murder of his brother comprises his entire entry for the year 1478, the seventeenth of the king's reign. Earlier in his *Chronicle*, however, he introduced new evidence into the historical narrative that would be used

⁶⁶ Ibid., f. 239v.

⁶⁷ Ibid., f. 239v. This story is one that found its way into Shakespeare's *Richard III* giving Edward IV one of his very limited appearances in the Bard's plays: see below, p. 254.

⁶⁸ Ibid., f. 239v.

more systematically by other historians in order to account for the king's actions. When describing Henry VI's brief return to power in 1470, Hall reports that he called a parliament in November to declare Edward IV a traitorous usurper and to strip him and his supporters of their lands and titles. Several of Edward's 'partakers and fre[n]des' were apprehended and suffered 'extreme punishment', with Edward's lieutenant in Ireland, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, being attainted and beheaded 'for treason to him layed or malice agaynst hym conceyed'.⁶⁹ Edward's brother Clarence, who, along with Warwick, had restored Henry VI to the throne, was, however, rewarded. Indeed, Hall reports that:

The Crounes of the realmes of England & Frau[n]ce, was by authoritie of the same Parliament entayled to kyng Henry the .vi. and the heyres males of hys body lawfully begotten, & for default of suche heyre male of his body begotten, then [the] sayd Crounes & dignities were entayled to George duke of Clarence, & to theyres males of hys bodye lawfully engendred, and farther the sayd Duke was by authoritie aforesayd enabled to be next heyre to hys father, Richard duke of Yorke, & to take by discent from hym all hys landes, dignities & preheminences as though he had ben hys eldest sonne & heyre, at the tyme of his death.⁷⁰

By this act of parliament Clarence was allegedly made the heir presumptive to Henry VI if Henry's own son died without male issue, while his two brothers were disinherited. Its provisions not only revealed how close Clarence had become to the House of

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 210v.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 210v.

Lancaster, but also to occupying the English throne. Curiously, however, after introducing this damning evidence, which was surely known to Edward IV, Hall makes no mention of it later when it could easily have been used to justify Clarence's execution. Even more surprisingly, his *Chronicle* is the first historical source to furnish any information about these arrangements. The rolls of parliament contain no reference to the act or to any other legislation of the Readeption Parliament, either because, as J. C. Wedgwood suggests, they were never enrolled in the first place, or because upon returning to power the triumphant Yorkists deliberately destroyed the official record.⁷¹

The act of attainder against Clarence, passed by parliament and approved by Edward IV, has survived and refers to an exemplification of a Lancastrian act making Clarence an heir to King Henry.⁷² Like the act that it apparently confirmed, this exemplification no longer exists. This is not entirely surprising, since none of Clarence's private muniments found their way into the Public Record Office (now The National Archive) or any other archive.⁷³ In principle, the exemplification should have been copied onto the patent roll, and its omission could be taken as proof that it was never issued. On the other hand, official letters, inspeximuses and exemplifications frequently went unrecorded in this period, and only some of the original documents survive elsewhere. Civic archives, for example, often furnish examples of royal charters for which there are no corresponding enrolments, while others have been lost.⁷⁴

⁷¹ J. Wedgwood *et al.*, *The History of Parliament 1439-1509: Register* (London, HMSO, 1938), pp. 374-5.

⁷² *RP*, Vol. 6, pp. 193-5.

⁷³ Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence*, p. 159.

⁷⁴ See, for example, H. A. Cronne (ed.), *Bristol Charters 1378-1499* (Bristol, Bristol Record Society, Vol. 11, 1946), pp. 138-42.

It is remarkable, however, that not a single English or French chronicler writing at the time of the Readeption Parliament mentioned this act, which did not attract attention until almost seventy years later. As J. R. Lander pointed out in an article on 'The Treason and Death of the Duke of Clarence', which first appeared in 1967, 'it would be strange if tidings of such importance, just the kind of scandalous story about ruling families that was the breath of life to the French and Burgundian chroniclers, never filtered through either at the time or later. It is even more incredible that, with parliament sitting at Westminster, none of the London chroniclers knew of such an act.'⁷⁵ The striking combination of caution and inconsistency with which subsequent writers treated this matter speaks volumes as well.⁷⁶ Hall's testimony was, however, sufficiently convincing for Richard Grafton and Raphael Holinshed to include it in their own chronicles, though they, too, did not directly link the act of 1470 with the attainder of Clarence in 1478.⁷⁷

In contrast to the reticence of Tudor chroniclers, later generations of historians have used Hall's account confidently to identify one of the reasons behind Clarence's death, often in association with a similar story recounted in only one medieval source, *Warkworth's Chronicle* (written between 1478 and 1483, see above pp. 62-5). According to Warkworth's brief narrative, an agreement was reached between Margaret of Anjou and Clarence while they were in France in 1470-71:

... that kynge Herry schuld rejoyse the kyngdome of Englonde ageyne, and regne as welle as he dyd before, and after hym hys heyres of his body

⁷⁵ Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 256. The chroniclers of the period report that Edward IV and his brother were disinherited, but say nothing of the entail. *GCL*, p. 213.

⁷⁶ Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, pp. 251-2.

⁷⁷ Grafton, *Chronicle at large*, pp. 691, 741-2; R. Holinshed, *The chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (2 Vols., London, John Hunne, 1577: STC (2nd edn.) / 13568b), Vol. 2, p. 1325.

lawfully begotyne; and if it appenede that he disceysed witeoute heyres of his body lawfully gotene, thenne schulde the kyngdome of Englonde, with the lordschyppes of Irlonde, remane unto George, the Duke of Clarence, and his heyre[s] for evere more.⁷⁸

As in the case of Hall's account of the act passed by the Readeption Parliament, the arrangement described by Warkworth does not feature in any other contemporary source. Indeed, it was not mentioned in print until a century later in John Stow's *Chronicles of England* (1580).⁷⁹ In this expanded version of his earlier *Summarie of English Chronicles* (1565) he rehearses the story of the 1470 agreement, noting that, after Prince Edward and one of Warwick's daughters were married to cement their alliance, it was decided 'that King *Henry* shoulde raigne againe, and Prince *Edwarde* after him, and for lacke of their heires, *George* Duke of *Clarence*, and his heires'.⁸⁰ Rather like Hall, Stow did not connect the events of 1470-1 with those of 1478 until much later, with the publication in 1592 of *The annales of England*. Here, he roughly paraphrases the indictment of Clarence in the parliament roll of 1478, while noting the existence of earlier letters exemplifying his title as heir presumptive to Henry VI.⁸¹

⁷⁸ TCE, pp. 31-2.

⁷⁹ Although it was paraphrased by John Leland earlier in the century, which suggests that he had access to the original manuscript or some version of it. Stow's first historical work, *A Summarie of English chronicles* (1565), and the abridgements of it that followed in 1566, 1567, and 1573, contain nothing relevant for the year 1470, simply noting that in 1477 Clarence was drowned in a butt of Malmsey in the Tower. Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 261.

⁸⁰ J. Stow, *The chronicles of England from Brute vnto this present yeare of Christ 1580* (London, [Henry Byneman for] Ralphe Newberie, 1580: STC (2nd edn.) / 23333), p. 723. Stow's inclusion of this information is particularly interesting because he was also responsible for a transcript of the *Manner and Guiding of the Earl of Warwick at Angers in July and August 1470*, the most detailed account of the negotiations between Warwick and Margaret of Anjou, when the agreement is supposed to have taken place. Significantly, this document contains no reference to any arrangements involving Clarence.

⁸¹ Stow confirms that he had actually read the act of attainder against Clarence. J. Stow, *The annales of England ...* (London, Ralfe Newbery [and Eliot's Court Press], 1592: STC (2nd edn.) / 23334), pp. 707-9

References to an agreement between Clarence and Henry VI made in France and to the act of parliament confirming Clarence's title as Henry's heir were first brought together in William Habington's *Edward IV*.⁸² By the eighteenth century, in J. R. Lander's words, the two stories were 'mixed according to taste' by the 'rather superficial' historians of the period, before assuming a 'generally accepted' form in the nineteenth.⁸³ This meant accepting at face value the evidence presented by Edward Hall and in *Warkworth's Chronicle*, either separately or in combination. Some authors even conflated the two accounts, so that the act of the Readeption Parliament simply confirmed the agreement made at Angers.⁸⁴ Even so, some doubts remained. In his influential *History of England, 1377-1485*, Charles Oman could find 'no real proof' of the charges against Clarence.⁸⁵

Lander himself attacked the uncritical acceptance of the two stories in mainstream historical narratives, warning that any references to the settlement of the succession by the Readeption Parliament should be dismissed out of hand:

In the complete absence of any previous knowledge of the vital document, and given the fact that no-one ever saw it, together with the lack of any circumstantial evidence of its treasonable contents, and its suspiciously opportune discovery [just in time to condemn Clarence], is it too much to suggest that either the whole story was a fabrication or that if the document did exist it was a forgery?⁸⁶

⁸² Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth*, pp. 59, 71.

⁸³ Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 263.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁸⁵ C. Oman, *The history of England, from the accession of Richard II to the death of Richard III (1377-1485)* (London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), p. 462.

⁸⁶ Lander, *Crown and Nobility*, p. 265.

He speculates that Clarence could have forged the exemplification himself in an ambitious plot that rebounded against him after it was found among his possessions following his arrest. It seems more likely, however, given Edward's 'ample motives' to find 'evidence of overt treason', that he had the document drawn up in 1478 in order to make his other accusations against Clarence appear more plausible. The silence of contemporary chroniclers and the equivocal treatment of the matter by Tudor writers certainly cast doubt upon the veracity of Edward's accusations against his younger brother. To Lander's mind, it seems probable that both Hall and Warkworth used the text of Edward's attainder against Clarence as the basis for their claims, elaborating upon it as seemed most appropriate (in Hall's case with reference to the Readeption Parliament, in Warkworth's to the agreement at Angers). Hall's inclusion of precise information about Clarence's claim to succeed Henry VI suggests that he had seen the act of attainder at first hand, and perhaps even the letters of exemplification to which it refers. By omitting any reference to the events of 1470-1 in his account of Clarence's indictment and stressing the different 'conjectures' about the duke's death, however, he showed his unwillingness fully to believe the evidence that he had uncovered.

Some historians, such as Charles Ross, have been persuaded by Lander's argument.⁸⁷ But not all agree with him. Michael Hicks, for example, notes that, in accepting Lander's reservations about *Warkworth's Chronicle*, we 'would destroy much of our knowledge about 1470-1'.⁸⁸ He argues that, if we dismiss Warkworth's account of the period as flawed because it fabricates what happened at the meeting between Clarence, Warwick and Margaret of Anjou, then it is reasonable to discount other

⁸⁷ *EIV*, p. 242.

⁸⁸ Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence*, p. 160.

aspects of the *Chronicle*, such as the lists of casualties of various battles or the text of the Chancellor's sermon at the Redeption Parliament. In addition, Hicks points out that, while Lander's preferred source for the arrangements made at Angers, the *Manner and Guiding*, does not refer to the agreement, it is itself a heavily biased work of propaganda designed to present Warwick in the most favourable light. It says little about Clarence because he was not the focus of the narrative, with the result that arguing from the evidence of silence is 'hazardous' in the extreme.⁸⁹

Hicks is no less critical of Lander's assessment of *Hall's Chronicle*, questioning his assumption that Hall must have relied upon the act of attainder of 1478 when writing about Clarence's earlier and, from a Yorkist perspective, treasonable elevation as heir presumptive to Henry VI. For, had he done so, 'he could hardly have failed to connect it to the duke's death and would surely have used it in this context'.⁹⁰ From this standpoint, the fact that Hall provides so much specific information about the events of 1470-1 suggests that, far from embellishing unreliable evidence, his *Chronicle* may here be regarded as an 'original authority' based on 'an unknown source that is no longer extant'.⁹¹ Hall was, after all, an MP as well as an historian, and may well have had access to records that no longer survive. It also seems unlikely that he would have invented the passage quoted above (p. 137) but so conspicuously have failed to mention it when describing Clarence's fall. On balance, Hall was almost certainly aware of additional material that supported Edward's accusations against Clarence and drew upon it in an appropriate place in his *Chronicle*. Yet he may (like Lander) have regarded it as suspicious, perhaps even as a forgery, choosing not to include it in his

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

subsequent account of Clarence's trial and execution. Politically expedient forgeries were, after all, not uncommon in Hall's day.⁹²

Whether or not he had a hand in the manufacture of such damning evidence, Edward is said to have greatly regretted his brother's 'death and destruccion'. In a passage that draws heavily on Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* and Thomas More's *Richard III*,⁹³ Hall describes how the king wept openly when subsequently presented with petitions on behalf of 'any malefactor condemned to the punishment of death'. Both Vergil and Hall report that Edward cried out for his 'infortunate brother', for whom 'not one creatoure woulde make intercession', and claimed that his hand had been forced, 'openly spekyng, and apparantly meanyng, that by the meanes of some of the nobilitie, he was circumvented, and brought to hys confusion'.⁹⁴ Hall uses this incident to emphasise that the monarch was bound to obey the rule of law, whatever his personal feelings.

This instance of Edward's frustrated desire to be merciful contrasts sharply with Hall's many references to his ruthlessness earlier in the *Chronicle*. In the aftermath of Warwick's rebellion, for example, Edward is said to have 'diligently required and serched out, all the fragmentes and leuynges, of his enemies parte, intending to repress, and vtterly to extinguishe them'.⁹⁵ The battle of Barnet on 14 April 1471 is described as an 'occasion of ... greate slaughter', since whereas previously Edward had

⁹² See, for example, the *Collectanea satis copiosa*, a collection of historical documents made in support of the authority of English kings over the English Church, with its copy of the Donation of Constantine, proven to be a forgery in 1440. J. Guy, 'Thomas Cromwell and the Intellectual Origins of the Henrician Revolution', in A. Fox (ed.), *Reassessing the Henrician Age: humanism, politics, and reform, 1500-1550* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 160.

⁹³ *PV*, p. 168; *TM*, p. 7.

⁹⁴ *ULY*, ff. 239v - 240r.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 223v.

shown clemency towards the common soldiers 'now he spaired them not, because thei not onely so high faoured therle of Warwicke, but also because thei came with the erle against hym in battaill'.⁹⁶ Even on his return to London, after paying his respects at churches along the way and giving thanks to God for his victory, Edward apparently found time to travel to 'the townes and places, where his enernyes assembled first together (to the payne and punishmente of no small number)'.⁹⁷

As we have seen, the Battle of Tewkesbury and its grim aftermath featured prominently in the London chronicles and humanist histories alike, but by Hall's time the gory embellishments and increasingly vivid language introduced into each successive account had become much more noticeable. The capture and execution of Henry VI's son and heir, Edward of Lancaster, provide the best example of this development. The anonymous author of the *Great Chronicle* reports succinctly that: 'afftyr the kyng hadd questionyd a ffewe wordis of the Cawse of his soo landyng w'yn hys Realm, and he gave unto the kyng an answer contrary to hys pleasure, The kyng smote hym on the fface wyth the bak of his Gauntlet, Afftyr which strook soo by hym Ressayvid, The kyngys servauntys Ridd hym owth of lyffe fforthwyth'.⁹⁸

Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* furnishes some circumstantial details, which enhance the credibility of his account:

Edward the prince and excellent yowth, being browght a lyttle after to the speache of king Edward, and demaundyd how he durst be so bowld as to enter and make warre in his realme, made awnswer, with bold mynde, that

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 218v.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 221v – 222r.

⁹⁸ *GCL*, p. 218.

he came to recover his awncyent inherytance; hereunto king Edward gave no awnswer, onely thrusting the young man from him with his hand, whom furthwith, those that wer present wer George Duke of Clarence, Richard duke of Gloucester, and William lord Hastings, crewelly murderyd.⁹⁹

Hall's version takes elements from both the *Great Chronicle* and the *Anglica Historia*, while contriving to cast Edward IV in a far worse light. In his version, Edward initially treats the young prince courteously until the latter boldly asserts that he came to England to 'recover my fathers kyngdome & enheritage'. As in Vergil, Edward says nothing, but 'thrust hym from hym (or as some say, stroke him with his gauntlet)' and then stands by while his followers 'sodaynly murthered, & pitiously manquelled' the boy.¹⁰⁰ Hall's reliance on Polydore Vergil as a source provides a direct link to the eyewitness statements that Vergil claimed to have used. At the same time, the escalating level of violence described in successive histories marks a trend that continued well into the future, until Shakespeare's King Edward despatches the prince himself.

In common with his humanist predecessors, Edward Hall sought to use history as a source of moral guidance, notably by criticising tyrannical rulers and praising those who governed well. As he observed in the introduction to his chronicle:

If no man had written the goodnesse of noble Augustus, nor the pitie of merciful Traian, how shoulde their successours haue folowed ther steppes in vertue and princely qualities: on the contrarie parte, if the crueltie of

⁹⁹ PV, p. 152.

¹⁰⁰ ULY, f. 221v.

Nero, the vngracious life of Caligula had not beene put in remembrance, young Princes and fraile gouernors might likewise haue fallen in a like pit, but by redyng their Vices and seyng their mischeueous ende, thei bee compelled to leaue their euill waies, and embrace the good qualities of notable princes and prudent gouernours.¹⁰¹

Like More and Vergil, Hall also sought to explain how events unfolded as a consequence of human behaviour, rather than simply attributing them to the hand of God. At the same time, however, he maintained that the fate of kings and aristocrats ultimately followed a divine plan. Thus, while Henry VI did not personally deserve the 'yll chauce & misfortune' that led to his 'accustomed captiuitie [and] vsuall misery',¹⁰² the fall of the House of Lancaster provided a classic example of the inevitability of divine retribution:

Other there be that ascribe his infortunitie, onely to the stroke & punishment of God, afterming that the kyngdome, whiche Henry the. iiiii. hys grandfather wrongfully gat, and vniustly possessed ... could not by very diuynne iustice, longe contynew in that injurious stocke: And that therefore God by his diuine prouidence, punished the offence of the grandfather, in the sonnes sonne.¹⁰³

According to *Hall's Chronicle*, Henry IV had overthrown the natural order when he usurped the throne from Richard II, and so doomed his line to a similar fate. Even though Edward pardoned his brother Clarence for his rebellion, proclaiming him and

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Preface, sig. 2r.

¹⁰² Ibid., f. 210r.

¹⁰³ Ibid., f. 210v.

his followers 'hys trew frendes, without fraude or yll suspicion', God did not forgive him or forget that he had violated his oaths of loyalty and, soon after 'suffered hym like a periured person to dye a cruell & a strange death'.¹⁰⁴ In turn, Edward's self-indulgence and want of political acumen made possible Richard III's rise to power and the eventual destruction of the Yorkist dynasty by Henry VII, as well as providing Henry VIII with an historical precedent that seemed to justify his first divorce. Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville may have been the root cause of his family's downfall, but it was the murder of Edward, prince of Wales, that sealed its fate: 'The bitternesse of which murder, some of the actors, after in their latter dayes tasted and assayed by the very rod of Justice and punishment of God'.¹⁰⁵ God had torn down the houses of York and Lancaster. Now the Tudors would rule in England.

Hall composed a lively narrative history that was easily accessible and drew upon a wide range of sources. Because he wrote in English his work was available to the widest possible audience and can be seen as a precursor to subsequent histories. His treatment of Edward IV was informed by his own political experience as much as humanist concerns, and it was in places tempered by a desire to produce material that would be both acceptable and useful to the Tudor state. Though he never lived to see it, Hall's approach to writing history offered a model that others were keen to adopt, while his *Chronicle* gained steadily in popularity, thanks to the efforts of Richard Grafton.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., f. 216r.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., f. 221v.

Fabyan's and Hall's Imitators and Successors

The chronicles of Fabyan and Hall influenced many sixteenth-century historical writers, from chroniclers such as John Stow and Raphael Holinshed to the various contributors to the *Mirror for Magistrates* (a collection of poetry loosely based upon the biographies of celebrated Englishmen and women, first published in 1559), and William Shakespeare.¹⁰⁶ Some of them were heavily involved in the print trade, particularly Richard Grafton and Edmund Whitchurch, who played a key role in gathering together the 'dyuers learned men' behind the *Mirror for Magistrates*, or were otherwise Londoners of 'middling rank' with an interest in preserving the past¹⁰⁷.

Richard Grafton, Hall's publisher and later an antiquarian in his own right, is one of the key figures among these Tudor writers. A merchant adventurer, printer and evangelical reformer, he played an important role in early attempts to translate the Bible into English. He was originally responsible for publishing the *Great Bible* of 1539 and *Cranmer's Bible*, but in the 1540s turned to more secular material. In January 1544, he produced a new edition of the rhyming chronicle by John Hardyng (1378–1465), with a considerable continuation up to the year of publication and an account of the Duke of Norfolk's recent Scottish campaign.¹⁰⁸ Following Henry VIII's death in January 1547, Grafton secured the post of king's printer to the staunchly protestant Edward VI. This granted him the privilege of printing 'all books of Statutes, acts,

¹⁰⁶ Hall's depiction of Joan of Arc, for example, as a 'monster', who would 'do thynges, that other yong maidens bothe abhorred & wer ashamed to do', can be found in Stow (*ULY*, f. 107r) and Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 1*. E. Burns (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: King Henry VI Part 1* (Arden third series, London, Thomson Learning, 2000), pp.259-62, 271-7 (act 5, sc. 2, ll. 22-65; sc. 3, ll. 1-91).

¹⁰⁷ W. Baldwin, *A myrroure for magistrates* (London, Thomas Marsh, 1559: (STC 2nd edn. / 1247); Archer 'John Stow: Citizen and Historian', pp. 16-17.

¹⁰⁸ Grafton's edition is actually dedicated to the 'right woorthie and auenturous' duke, and describes the campaign in glowing terms. H. Ellis (ed.), *The Chronicle of John Hardyng* (London, Rivington and Company, 1812), pp. 1-5.

proclamations, injunctions, and other volumes issued by the King', as well as any 'concerning divine service or containing any kind of sermons or exhortations that shall be used, suffered or authorized in our churches', namely *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Homilies*.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, Reyner Wolfe (d. 1573), who would later be heavily involved in the publication of *Holinshed's Chronicle*, became king's printer in Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

The year 1548 saw the publication of the first edition of *Hall's Chronicle*, with a second edition, complete with new preface, appearing in 1550. Both versions were dedicated to the young king and emphasised the continuity and peaceful transition of rule from Henry VIII to his son.¹¹⁰ Grafton remained in favour until the death of Edward VI in 1553, when he printed a proclamation in support of the faction attempting to make Lady Jane Grey queen rather than Mary Tudor. Although he would very shortly after print the proclamation in favour of Mary, it was clearly not enough, and he lost his position as royal printer. Though out of favour at court, he went on to sit in parliament for London in 1553–4 and later still was made warden of the Grocers' Company and governor of the city's hospitals.¹¹¹ In 1562, Grafton's son-in-law, a printer-publisher named Richard Tottel, issued the first edition of Grafton's own *Abridgement of the Chronicles of England*, followed in 1565 by the *Manuell of Chronicles*. These two books were joined in 1568 by Grafton's final work, the two-volume *Chronicle at Large and Meere History of the Affayres of England and Kinges of the Same*. Grafton died just five years later, leaving no will, probably because his chronic mismanagement of the

¹⁰⁹ Hellinga and Trapp, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Vol. 3, pp. 597-8.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 598.

¹¹¹ M. G. Ferguson, 'Richard Grafton (c.1511–1573), printer and historian', *ODNB*, Vol. 23, p. 167; W. J. Jones, 'Grafton, Richard I (c. 1507-73), of London', in P. W. Hasler (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1558-1603* (3 Vols., London, H.M.S.O., 1981), Vol. 2, pp. 210-1.

Grocers' Company finances and other misguided endeavours had reduced him to virtual bankruptcy.¹¹²

Grafton was clearly motivated to publish by an uneasy combination of profound religious belief and the need to make money. His histories, of course, make no mention of his straitened circumstances, instead confidently promising an unrivalled source of useful knowledge and an improvement on any previous publications.¹¹³

These works are similar in many respects to Thomas More's and Edward Hall's, although they are less well written than either. Like his predecessors, he claimed to offer moral lessons based on the past, while glorifying 'Godds doinges'.¹¹⁴ But his portrayal of Edward IV (and his coverage of the Wars of the Roses in general) offers little more than a précis of *Hall's Chronicle*, sometimes even employing the same words and phrases. To take just one example, Hall records that one of Edward's first acts as king in 1461 was to summon

his high Court of Parliament, wherewith th'estate of the Realme was wholly set in good ordre, and specially such thynges as appertained to the co[m]mon wealth, whiche wer to muche neglected and decaied. Duryng the tyme of the ciuill and intestine war, he caused all statutes and ordinaunces made by kyng Henry the sixte, (whiche either touched his title or his profite) to bee adnihilate and frustrate.¹¹⁵

¹¹² In 1569 Grafton apparently still owed the Grocers' Company £20, despite the fact that three years earlier it had agreed to buy his house in Greyfriars to cover part of the debt. He eventually asked his 'old and faithful friend', Thomas Wilson, for help. Ferguson, 'Richard Grafton', p. 167; Jones, 'Grafton, Richard I', p. 211.

¹¹³ Gadd and Ferguson, "'For his paynes'", p. 39.

¹¹⁴ Grafton, *Abridgement of the chronicles of England*, Preface, sig. B. 2r.

¹¹⁵ *ULY*, f. 189r.

Grafton's revised edition of *Hardyng's Chronicle* is strikingly similar:

and the self same yere kyng Edward held his parliame[n]t again, in the whiche first the realme was sette in good ordre and all thynges wholly redressed, whiche was very good & expedient for the commen weale, for yt had not been looked to all ye tyme that ciuile bataille did continue. And also thorowe his decree & will, all ye statutes that kyng Henry ye sixt had made, was vtterly abrogated & of no vertue or strength.¹¹⁶

Both passages are, moreover, followed by a list of the titles given to Edward's supporters in the aftermath of his usurpation, couched in virtually identical terms. Histories and chronicles describing the same events will obviously replicate each other, but here the similarities seem more than coincidental, especially in light of the accusations of plagiarism levelled against Grafton (and, indeed, many of his contemporaries).¹¹⁷

Despite his protestations to the contrary, much of the content of John Stow's early work was not significantly different from Grafton's or Hall's. Indeed, he admitted as much in the introduction to his 1566 edition of *A summarie of our Englysh chronicles*:

I acknowledge, that many of the hystories, that thou shalt reade here ... are taken, partely out of Robert Fabian, sometyme Alderman of London, Edward Hall borne in London gentylman of Greyes Inne, and sometyme undersheriffe of London; John Hardyng, a greate traualer bothe in foreyne countreis, and also in all writinges of antiquitie, and manye other

¹¹⁶ Ellis, *Chronicle of John Hardyng*, p. 436.

¹¹⁷ It is worth mentioning that Richard Grafton published his edition of *Hardyng's Chronicle* several years before Edward Hall's death and the subsequent completion and publication of his *Chronicle*, but it seems likely that he had access to his friend's manuscript draft, and *vice versa*, before that point.

of more antiquitie, who reaped great abundance of knowlege and filled their bookes full therewith, to the great profite and pleasure of all posterity, and to their own great fame and glory. So that of their great plentye, I might well take somewhat to hyde my pouertie.¹¹⁸

Stow is today regarded rather patronisingly as ‘a worthy man of negligible learning who through a lifetime of hard work produced books that were generally accurate but dull’.¹¹⁹ Even C. L. Kingsford, who observed that ‘no writer of the sixteenth century deserves to be better regarded of us than John Stow’, was forced to admit that he did not ‘show himself in any real sense a great historian in his *Annales of England*, which is no more than a chronologically exact narrative’.¹²⁰ The son of a tallow-chandler, Stow was closely associated with London throughout his life. There exists no evidence that he studied at any of the established London schools, or that he attended university or the Inns of Court. His clear, if otherwise unremarkable, writing style, his grasp of Latin and extensive knowledge of English literature and history suggest, however, that he was either diligently self-taught or educated at one of the city’s less celebrated schools. For thirty years Stow earned his living as a member of the Bachelors’ or Yeomen’s Company, a subordinate branch of the Merchant Taylors’ Company. He was, significantly, never admitted to the livery or to any important office.¹²¹

For much of his life Stow seems to have been relatively poor, possibly because he neglected his trade as a tailor, made little money from book sales, and spent what he

¹¹⁸ J. Stow, *A Summarie of our Englysh chronicles* (London, Thomas Marsh, 1566: STC (2nd edn.) / 23319.5), Preface, sig. a3v.

¹¹⁹ B. L. Beer, ‘English History Abridged: John Stow’s Shorter Chronicles and Popular History’, *Albion*, 36, No. 1 (2004), p. 12.

¹²⁰ Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*, p. 266.

¹²¹ B. L. Beer, ‘John Stow [Stowe] (1524/5–1605), historian’, *ODNB*, Vol. 52, p. 983.

did earn on building up his manuscript collection.¹²² Unlike Grafton, who seems to have died in penury, Stow was, however, helped by gifts and donations from various sources: from 1579 he drew an annual pension of £4 from the Merchant Taylors; and royal letters patent of 1604 authorized him to collect voluntary contributions and gratuities. Consequently, during his later years he was able to devote the bulk of his time to collecting source material and to writing. He was certainly one of the most, if not *the* most, prolific English historical writers of the sixteenth century, producing twenty-one editions and revised versions of his chronicles, along with his celebrated *Survey of London*,¹²³ significant contributions to *Holinshed's Chronicles*, and editions of the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1561) and John Skelton (1568).¹²⁴ Although today many of Stow's 'abridgements' are hard to find and are rarely (if ever) reprinted, they were initially in considerable demand. The *Short Title Catalogue* compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave indicates that between 1566 and 1604 no fewer than nine editions appeared in print.¹²⁵

Stow's particular niche lay in producing these inexpensive narrative histories, which were accessible digests of his longer chronicles. These abridgements were not only more portable, but also appealed to the tastes and pockets of a wider variety of people than their larger, costlier competitors. His ventures in this burgeoning market were small in size, printed in sextodecimo and usually sold unbound. While they could never compete with cheap penny books, evidence suggests that they were still

¹²² Kingsford, *Survey of London*, p. xxiv.

¹²³ J. Stow, *A suruay of London ...* (London, John Windet, 1603: STC (2nd edn.) / 23343), Epistle Dedicatory, sig. A3.

¹²⁴ Additionally, Stow's working notes would often be incorporated into newer editions of his books. Beer, 'John Stow', p. 984.

¹²⁵ A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (eds.), *A Short Title Catalogue of Books printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640*, (2nd edn., 3 Vols, London, Bibliographical Society, 1976-77), Vol. 2, pp. 368-9.

relatively affordable. According to data compiled by D. R. Woolf, a copy of Edmund Howes' continuation of Stow's *Abridgement of the English Chronicle* (STC 23332) would have cost 3s. bound and 2s. 4d unbound. This was quite a saving when compared to the price of other, larger contemporary chronicle histories: a bound copy of *Holinshed's Chronicle*, for example, would have cost 26s in 1577, while an unbound one would have commanded a still substantial 20s.¹²⁶ Over time, as Stow developed as a writer and historian, he began to produce longer and correspondingly more expensive works aimed at a more affluent market. They initially drew heavily upon the earlier London Chronicles and their immediate successors in both their content and in their arrangement by mayoral year, but later editions were less derivative. The 1592 edition of his *Annales* was, in the words of one recent historian, 'something more akin to a national history', although it still retained 'the miscellaneous content that had proved an obstacle to analysis'.¹²⁷

While Stow concentrated more on ancient history and the very recent past,¹²⁸ he has still much to offer a study of the changing historical reputation of Edward IV. If nothing else, his dedication to collecting medieval documents has ensured the preservation of important source material. As B. L. Beer observed, 'It is likely that Stow was the most knowledgeable record collector of the sixteenth century'.¹²⁹ The longer English version of *The Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV*, for example, survives only in Stow's

¹²⁶ Woolf, *Reading History*, pp. 43-8; F. R. Johnson, 'Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1550-1640', *The Library*, fifth series, 5 (1950-51), pp. 83-112; H. S. Bennett, 'Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1480-1560', *The Library*, fifth series, 5 (1950-51), pp. 172-8. See also T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 9-12.

¹²⁷ Archer, 'John Stow: Citizen and Historian', p. 24.

¹²⁸ This is especially apparent in his shorter chronicles. See Beer, 'English History Abridged', pp 16-17.

¹²⁹ Beer, 'John Stow', p. 989.

transcription.¹³⁰ And although he mistakenly attributed the *Great Chronicle of London* to Fabyan, he also included a version of it among his own publications.

Even in the shortest abridgements of Stow's work, Edward IV is consistently but not always flatteringly portrayed as 'a man of noble courage & great wyt', who lived during a period of 'muche trouble and vnquietnesse in the Realme'.¹³¹ His narrative differs very little from the by then established version, although in the longer chronicles he offers some additional circumstantial detail, as, for example, in his account of events surrounding Edward's coronation:

And on the morow after the king was crowned againe in Westminster abbey in the worship of God & S. Peter: and on the next morow hee went crowned in Pauls church of London, in the honor of God & S. Paule, and there an angell came downe and censed him, at which time a multitude of people in Pauls, as euer was seene in any daies.¹³²

Stow reports briefly that Edward introduced new laws, while reforming old and corrupt ones. He then led his armies to victory in 1471 against the Lancastrian forces, which are said to have attracted recruits because they had been offered the opportunity to plunder and pillage.¹³³ In keeping with the source material, Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville is said in the *Annales* to have been kept secret for almost six

¹³⁰ For more on the *Arrivall*, see above, pp. 51-61.

¹³¹ Stow, *Summarie of English chronicles*, f. 124v, and *idem*, *Annales of England*, p. 680. It should be noted that Stow's shorter works concentrate more on London history than on high politics during the Wars of the Roses. The 1566 *Summarie of English Chronycles*, for example, gives as much space to the punishment of an alderman for refusing to have a dead dog removed from his gate as it does to the courtship, marriage and coronation of Elizabeth Woodville. Stow, *Summarie of English chronicles*, f. 125v.

¹³² Stow, *Annales of England*, p. 682.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 684.

months while the Earl of Warwick was attempting to arrange a match for the king in France. Although the royal marriage is not overtly criticised as it is by Hall, the diplomatic and political importance of a potential French alliance is emphasised, and it is explicitly noted that Edward's decision 'wan him enemies in France'.¹³⁴ Additionally, the occasion when Elizabeth Woodville appeared as queen at a council meeting is identified as the point after which 'the earle of Warwike and king Edward were neuer friends'.¹³⁵ This is a significant departure from Hall's dramatic account and suggests that Stow took a more dispassionate view of these events. As we have seen, the marriage had very real contemporary relevance for Hall, whereas Stow felt no such sense of personal involvement. Significantly, though, the arrival of Antoine, Bastard of Burgundy, and the celebrated tournament at which he fought in 1467 are described in far greater detail, including a long account of his memorable combat with Queen Elizabeth's brother, Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales.¹³⁶ While Stow was less concerned with national politics than Hall, this sort of spectacle would have appealed to him as a Londoner and a civic historian. The popularity of his *Survey*, with its rich accounts of pageants and ceremonies, confirms that his audience had similar tastes.¹³⁷

The main events of Edward's two reigns, such as Warwick's rebellion, the readeption of Henry VI and Edward's triumphant return, are briefly summarized.¹³⁸ Despite Stow's admiration of Edward's bravery, anecdotes that cast him in a negative light or reflect well upon his enemies tend to be recycled from older sources. Thus, for

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 688.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 686.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 689-90; S. Anglo, 'Anglo-Burgundian Feats of Arms: Smithfield, June 1467', *Guildhall Miscellany*, 2 (1965), pp. 271-83.

¹³⁷ It seems that the Tudor monarchs had a similar taste in spectacle to their subjects, as they modelled their own tournaments on those of Edward IV. Penn, *Winter King*, pp. 55-6.

¹³⁸ Stow, *Annales of England*, pp. 692-6.

example, he repeats the story that Edward was misled by his physicians into believing that his wife would bear him a son and arranged a christening at Westminster Abbey with 'the most solemnitie that might be, and the more', thereby appearing both presumptuous and naive.¹³⁹ Stow's remarks about the Earl of Warwick's popularity among the common people derive from the *Great Chronicle of London*, as does a report that visitors to his house could apparently take away as much food as they could carry 'upon a long dagger'.¹⁴⁰

In his *Annals* Stow reports that after the battle of Tewkesbury Edward 'cruelly' struck Henry VI's son, Prince Edward, about the face with his gauntlet, but significantly neglects to mention what caused this reaction. He also notes that the boy was 'cruelly slain', along with many other Lancastrians.¹⁴¹ Henry VI himself was allegedly 'murdered', but we are not told by whom or on whose orders (though it can hardly be coincidental that Edward had just arrived in London with thirty thousand men).¹⁴² As might be expected, Stow is significantly more positive in his appraisal of King Henry, describing him as 'patient', 'vertuous', 'of seemly stature, of bodie slender, his face beautiful, of his own naturall inclination'.¹⁴³ In striking contrast to Edward, Henry is chaste and 'plaine, upright, farre from fraude, wholie given to prayer, reading of scriptures, and almes-deedes, of such integritie of life, that the bishop which had beene his confessor 10 yeeres avouched that he had not all that time committed any mortall crime'. He is also said to have willingly forgiven his enemies, even including the man who stabbed him in the side with a sword during one of his sojourns as a

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 687.

¹⁴⁰ *GCL*, p. 207.

¹⁴¹ Stow, *Annales of England*, p. 695. Stow likely got this story from either the *Great Chronicle of London* or *Hall's Chronicle*: see above pp. 149-50.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 696.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 698.

prisoner in the Tower.¹⁴⁴ In a dramatic (and deeply improbable) scene before he succumbs to ‘a great blowe by a wicked man’, King Henry soliloquises about his right to rule:

my father was king of England, quietlie enjoyeng the Crowne al his reigne,
and his father my graundsire was also king of Englande, and I even a childe
in my cradle, was proclaimed and crowned king without anie interruption,
and so helde it fortie yeeres well neere, all the states doing homage unto
me, as to my auncestors: inherefore I may say with king David: The Lot is
fallun unto mee in faire grounde, yea, I have a goodly heritage, my helpe if
from the Lorde which fav[our]eth the upright in hart.¹⁴⁵

Then, as he dies, Henry chides his assassin with the words ‘forsooth, forsooth, yee doo fowly to smite a kyng annoynted so’. Stow even reports the miraculous bleeding of his body at his funeral, as well as the fact that he was ‘worshipped by the name of holy King Henry’, and that his ‘red hat of velvet was thought to heale the headach of such as would put it on their heads’.¹⁴⁶

Stow’s account of Edward IV’s death and the accompanying assessment of his reign are considerably less flattering. His final illness was apparently brought on, at least in part, by the ‘melancholie and anger’ he felt towards the king of France, who, by breaking the treaty of Picquigny, had ‘dallied with him’ over the proposed marriage of his daughter Elizabeth.¹⁴⁷ Drawing heavily upon Philippe de Commynes, Stow here focuses mainly on the destruction of the House of Lancaster and the French pension

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 697.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 697.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 696-7. For more on Henry VI’s cult see below p. 165, n. 155.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 712.

that allowed Edward to become 'so rich, that richer he could not be'.¹⁴⁸ He does not even describe Edward IV's physical appearance and character, as so many other chroniclers do, providing only a brief note of his surviving family and an adverse comment to the effect that more than eighty 'persons of the blood royall' died in the civil wars that he had fought.¹⁴⁹

One reason for Stow's overt Lancastrian bias and interest in the cult of Henry VI could have been his Catholic sympathies. Unlike Richard Grafton, who was a zealous protestant and who suffered under Mary Tudor's rule, Stow was at best a moderate conformist. In 1569 he was accused of copying and circulating a manifesto against Queen Elizabeth published by the Spanish ambassador. Stow admitted to having been lent two copies, to making another for himself and reading it to his neighbours, but not to harbouring seditious thoughts. While this confession was enough to satisfy the mayor, who took no further action, it prompted Bishop Edmund Grindal to order that Stow's house be searched for illegal books. No fewer than thirty-three unacceptable titles came to light, ranging from 'divers old phantasticall popish bokes prynted in the olde tyme' to 'bokes as have been lately putt forth in the realme or beyond the seas for defence of papistrye'.¹⁵⁰ This was more than enough for Grindal to condemn Stow, but ultimately the antiquarian avoided further punishment.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, the existence of this significant collection, which not even a layman with historical

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 713.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 713.

¹⁵⁰ Archer, 'John Stow: Citizen and Historian', p. 21.

¹⁵¹ Very soon after the search of Stow's house the government issued a new proclamation against the possession of imported books 'containing sundry matters repugnant to the truth ... and stirring and nourishing sedition in this realm'. Stow's antiquarian credentials may have saved him, but he evidently had a lucky escape in such a harsh political climate. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (3 Vols., New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1964-9), Vol. 2, pp. 312-13.

interests could legitimately acquire, raises suspicions about Stow's religious orthodoxy.¹⁵²

Stow's histories, at least in their earlier editions, provide further hints about his beliefs. The 1565 edition of the *Annals* praised Catherine of Aragon and reported the celebrations following Mary Tudor's accession and the popularity of restored Catholicism. These passages were dropped from later versions.¹⁵³ He was, moreover, accused of ignoring the awkward fact of Mary's phantom pregnancy in his *Summary*, which appeared in the same year.¹⁵⁴ Nor did he choose to describe the Marian burnings in any detail, in contrast to what might be regarded as the 'establishment position' adopted by John Foxe in his *Actes and Monuments* (1563). When viewed in this context, Stow's hagiographical treatment of Henry VI, even in the later editions of his work, makes perfect sense. While Henry was never officially canonised, his cult was at one time extremely popular in London, perhaps briefly exceeding that of St Thomas Becket in its appeal.¹⁵⁵ A popular London saint would certainly win the approval of an antiquarian with Catholic sympathies: far more so than the king who had ordered his death.

¹⁵² P. Collinson, 'John Stow and Nostalgic Antiquarianism', in J. F. Merritt (ed.), *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype 1598-1720* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 42-3; L. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 181-222.

¹⁵³ B. L. Beer, 'John Stow and the English Reformation, 1547-1559', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 16, No. 2, (1985), pp. 257-71; *idem*, *Tudor England Observed: The World of John Stow* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp. 45-7; Collinson, 'John Stow and Nostalgic Antiquarianism', pp. 46-7.

¹⁵⁴ 'Short and summary nootes of some Sermons preached at Poulls crosse and ells whear not vnprofitable to be remembered', Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 50, f. 30v.

¹⁵⁵ B. Spencer, 'King Henry of Windsor and the London Pilgrim', in J. Bird, H. Chapman, and J. Clark (eds.), *Collectanea Londiniensia: Studies in London archaeology and history presented to Ralph Merrifield* (London, London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1978), p. 238; L. A. Craig, 'Royalty, Virtue, and Adversity: The Cult of King Henry VI', *Albion*, 35, No. 2 (2003), pp. 187-209.

Holinshed's Chronicle

Stow's many chronicles and annals represent the life's work of a single man, but those of his contemporary, Raphael Holinshed, present us with something closer to the work of a committee or syndicate. Holinshed himself died in 1580, just two years after the publication of the first edition of the history of England on which he was still engaged. After his death, new editions continued to appear in his name, retaining the same authorial voice despite the fact that they had several contributors. They, too, represent a fusion of old and new approaches to scholarship: the production of a new history attributed to one man that was nevertheless compiled by several individuals who drew upon collections of older material, notably the *Brut*, various anonymous London Chronicles, and the work Hall and Fabyan.

Very little is known about the life of Raphael Holinshed. The son of Ralph Holinshed of Sutton Downes in Cheshire, he may have been educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, or have studied elsewhere to become 'a Minister of God's Word'.¹⁵⁶ The latter theory might explain why, during the reign of Queen Mary, he found employment with Reyne Wolfe, an evangelical protestant who owned a London printing house, rather than becoming a priest. Wolfe sought to compile a *Polychronicon*, or 'universal cosmographie', comprising an historical and geographical survey of the world, complete with maps, but died in 1573, followed a year later by his wife, Joan, his work still unfinished. In her will, Joan ensured that Holinshed should 'have and enjoye all suche benefit proffit and commoditie as was promised vnto him by my saide late husbände ... for or concerning the translating and prynting of a certaine Crownacle

¹⁵⁶ A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses an exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the most ancient and famous University of Oxford* (2 Vols., London, Tho. Bennet, 1691: Wing / W3382), Vol. 1, col. 270.

whiche my saide husbnde before his decease did prepare and intende to have printed'.¹⁵⁷ The successful printing business itself was inherited by Wolfe's son Robert and his son-in-law, the haberdasher John Hun. Hun began to put together a team of publishers and printers to finish the book, including John Harrison, the overseer of his mother-in-law's will, Lucas Harrison and George Bishop, who had worked with Wolfe at his printing house, the protestant historian William Harrison (probably no relation to Lucas) and Holinshed himself.

The first edition of what was now called *Holinshed's Chronicle* appeared in 1578, falling extremely short of Wolfe's original plans. In the dedicatory epistle, Holinshed blamed the executors of Wolfe's will for the limited range of material covered. As he explained, 'when the volume grewe so great, as they that were to defray the charges for the Impression, were not willing to go through with the whole, they resolued first to publishe the Histories of Englande, Scotlande, and Irelande, with their descriptions, whiche ... were not in such readinesse, as those of forreyn countreys'.¹⁵⁸ The speed at which the book was put together caused further problems, not least with regard to William Harrison's 'Historicall Description of the Islande of Britayne', which preceded the *Chronicle* proper.¹⁵⁹ Yet, despite these initial setbacks, the 1577 edition of *Holinshed's Chronicle* proved a financial success. It was a large and expensive book. Robert Devereux, later second earl of Essex, is known to have bought a bound copy for 26s, equivalent to his bill for breakfast at Cambridge University for an entire term.¹⁶⁰ Holinshed himself did not live long enough fully to enjoy the 'proffit and commoditie'

¹⁵⁷ H. R. Plomer, *Abstracts from the wills of English printers and stationers, from 1492 to 1630* (London, Bibliographical Society, 1903), p. 22.

¹⁵⁸ Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, The Epistle Dedicatorie, sig. 2v.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, Dedication to William Brooke.

¹⁶⁰ Clegg, 'Raphael Holinshed', *ODNB*, Vol. 27, p. 645.

that the success of his *Chronicle* brought. Anthony à Wood, an English antiquary writing in the late seventeenth century, reported that he probably died in 1580, after serving for several years as steward to Thomas Burdett, to whom he bequeathed his papers and books in a will proved in 1582.¹⁶¹

A decade later a second edition of *Holinshed's Chronicle* was produced by a consortium of distinguished and wealthy printers. Two of them, John Harrison and George Bishop, owned the Stationers' Company's licence for printing the book, while the others, Ralph Newbury and Henry Denham, exercised the exclusive right to print chronicles and histories under the queen's patent. These four not only collaborated on the new edition, but also contributed financially to its production. They worked carefully to extend and improve upon the first edition, bringing the narrative forward to 1586. The second edition comprised three large volumes: the first, consisting of William Harrison's 'Historical description' and the 'History of England' to 1066; the second, offering a revised and enlarged description and history of Ireland and Scotland, was written by John Hooker and Francis Thynne, respectively; and finally a much longer and heavily revised 'History of England' after the Conquest featured contributions by John Stow, alongside a text by Abraham Fleming, who also acted as general editor for the whole project. These men held history and the lessons that it taught in high regard. Fleming, for example, urged his readers:

Let vs (I say) as manie as will reape fruit by the reading of chronicles,
imagine the matters which were so manie yeeres past to be present, and
applie the profit and commoditie of the same vnto our selues; knowing (as

¹⁶¹ Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. 1, col. 270.

one wisely said) ... that next vnto the holie scripture, chronicles doo carie credit.¹⁶²

He repeated this exhortation later, in one of the post-Holinshed continuations, stressing that 'all storie-writers', namely antiquaries and historians, should acquire wisdom, 'for then should Chronicles approach next in truth to the sacred and inuiolable scripture, and their vse not onelie growe more common, but also of greater account ... For therein is contened the rich and pretious treasure of time, the wisest counsellor vnder the cope of heauen'.¹⁶³ This advice can be read as a lofty criticism of the poverty of current historical scholarship, but it also reflects the trend, exemplified by Stow and Grafton, for writers to denigrate their competitors for selling fabricated or inaccurate histories while promoting their own work. Fleming cleverly implies that *Holinshed's Chronicle* would make the study of history 'next vnto the holie scripture'.

Holinshed's Chronicle represents the last hurrah of the traditional form of English historical writing in the vein of Hardyng, Fabyan, Hall and the anonymous London chroniclers. It is generally remembered now as one of William Shakespeare's primary sources for his history plays. C. L. Kingsford, writing in 1913, was otherwise grudging in his assessment, damning with faint praise what he regarded as a largely derivative compilation:

It is perhaps more due to his service which he rendered to Shakespeare than to any merit of his own that Holinshed has long overshadowed Hall and Stow as an historian of the fifteenth century. He excelled Hall in the

¹⁶² R. Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelanders* (3 Vols., London, Henry Denham, 1587: (2nd edn.) / 13569), Vol. 1, p. 202.

¹⁶³ Holinshed (1587), Vol. 3, p. 1268.

extent of his researches, and Stow in the literary form which he gave to them. But to one or the other of his two great predecessors he was indebted for much of his material. Thus though his *Chronicles* were a meritorious compilation, which in default of printed originals were long of much historical value, their greatest interest now consists in their literary associations. Holinshed copied Hall's prejudices rather than Stow's impartiality, and the colour which he thus gave to his narrative reappears naturally in Shakespeare's plays, and has in consequence been stamped on popular opinion.¹⁶⁴

Over the last two decades historians have been more charitable. Annabel Patterson's *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (1994) was among the first to suggest that the *Chronicle* represents an early example of what would be termed 'Ancient Constitutionalism'. She argues that the *Chronicle* as a whole can be read as an embryonic history of parliament rather than a simple exercise in antiquarianism. For Ancient Constitutionalists, the development of parliamentary authority from imagined beginnings under Saxon monarchs was a natural and desirable phenomenon.¹⁶⁵ According to Patterson, Holinshed clearly believed that the institution of parliament should be the focus of any secular history of England because of its role in strengthening the rights of its people against the exercise of arbitrary royal power. His *Chronicle* can therefore be read as a constitutional history that presented Richard II's reign as an 'evolutionary' step in the emergence of a better and more stable system of

¹⁶⁴ Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*, p. 274.

¹⁶⁵ J. T. Levy, 'Ancient Constitutionalism', in Mark Bevir (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Political Theory* (3 Vols., London, Sage Press, 2010), Vol. 1, p. 44.

government, as it was then that a tyrant was effectively curbed by the Lords and Commons in partnership.¹⁶⁶

The impact of these nascent ideas about the growth of representative institutions is most clearly apparent in the output of Whig historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and has obvious implications for the study of Edward IV, given that he ruled during a time of 'devolutionary' or generally latent parliamentary power. From the perspective of later generations of historians, such as Charles Ross, his reign offers a prime example of forceful personal government by a strong monarch and consequently represents 'one of the least constructive and inspiring phases in the history of the English parliament.'¹⁶⁷ Perhaps for this reason, as Patterson points out, 'it is striking to observe how much less attention [Holinshed] pays to constitutional issues during the fifteenth century'.¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, he does detect some signs of parliament's continuing importance. Edward IV's claim to the throne, for example, was legitimised not only by victory in battle but also by parliamentary assent. Admittedly, Edward's first parliament (initially summoned by writs of 23 May 1461) did not actually meet to ratify his title until 4 November, but he had already taken steps to secure the necessary aristocratic and popular approval.¹⁶⁹ On entering the capital in June, 'the prudent young prince' is said to have immediately summoned a council of lords spiritual and temporal:

... and to them repeated the title and right that hee had to the Crowne,
rehearsing also the articles concluded betwixte King Henrie and his father,
by their writings signed and sealed, and also confermed by act of

¹⁶⁶ Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, p. 99.

¹⁶⁷ *EIV*, p. 341.

¹⁶⁸ Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, p. 116.

¹⁶⁹ Wedgwood *et al.*, *History of parliament 1439-1509*, pp. 289-90.

Parliament, the breaches whereof, he neither forgate, nor left vndeclared ... After the Lordes had considered of this matter, they determined by authoritie of the sayde Counsell, that bycause King Henry hadde done contrarie to the ordinances in the last Parliament concluded, and was insufficient of hymselfe to rule the Realme, hee was therefore deprived of all kingly honor, and regall soueraignetis, & incontinently, was Edward Earle of March, sonne and heire to Richarde Duke of Yorke, by the Lords in the said Counsel assembled, named, elected and admitted for King and gouernoure of the Realme.¹⁷⁰

A passage derived by Holinshed from *The Great Chronicle of London* describes how Thomas Neville, Lord Fauconberg, then proclaimed the various 'offences and breaches of the late agreemente' committed by Henry VI before a 'great number of the substanciall Citizens' who had been mustered in St John's Field:

... and demaunded of the people, whether they would haue the said King Henry, to rule & reigne any longer ouer them, to whome they with whole voice aunswered, nay, nay. Then he asked them, if they would serue, loue, honor, and obey the Earle of Marche, as theyr earthly prince and soueraigne Lorde, to whyche question they aunswered, yea, yea, crying Kyng Edwarde, with manye greate shoutes and clapping of hands.¹⁷¹

Edward initially deemed it both prudent and statesmanlike to demur, despite this overwhelming show of divine favour and popular support:

¹⁷⁰ Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, pp. 1306-7.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1307.

Notwithstanding, like a wise prince, he alleged his insufficiencie for so great a roomth and weightie burthen, as lacke of knowledge, want of experience, and diuers other qualities to a gouernour apperteining, but yet in conclusion, beyng perswaded by the Archbyshop of Canturburie, the Bysshoppe of Exeter, and other Lordes then presente, hee agreed to their petition, and tooke vpon him the charge of the kingdome, as forfeited to him by breache of the couenauntes established in parliamente.¹⁷²

Interestingly, although the wording of the last two quotations closely resembles corresponding passages in *The Great Chronicle*, some details have been changed, particularly regarding the order of events. Edward's actions are thereby cast in a rather different light, since in *The Great Chronicle* he seems – or is made to seem – more reluctant to become king. The anonymous author is at pains to stress that he initially declined the crown and had to be persuaded to accept it by lords and commons alike.¹⁷³ In *Holinshed's Chronicle*, however, the entire exercise has obviously been planned by Edward and his supporters from the start with a careful eye on legal precedent and the importance of parliamentary approval. He mounts the throne not only with the consent of his subjects, in accordance with his own hereditary rights and titles, but also because Henry VI has violated a legally binding settlement of the succession approved by parliament. It is only after Edward has secured the support of the lords in council that Fauconberg urges the commons to endorse him, and even then the most important reason given for doing so hinges upon Henry's 'breaches of

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1307.

¹⁷³ *GCL*, p. 195.

the late agreement¹⁷⁴. Indeed, Edward's acceptance of the crown is predicated on the fact that it was legally his because Henry VI had so conspicuously broken 'the couenants established in parlement'.¹⁷⁵

The importance of parliamentary consent is further underlined later in the *Chronicle* in a passage describing the legality of Edward's claim to the throne. The argument advanced in his favour once again hinges upon the fact that he had inherited the title of his father, Richard duke of York, which had itself been confirmed 'by authoritie of parlement' but disregarded by King Henry.¹⁷⁶ Significantly, at this point the *Chronicle* also refers to Edward's acclaim by the common people, repeating the story that, when initially asked if they would have him as king, they 'all with one voyce cryed, yea, yea'.¹⁷⁷ Although Holinshed wrote less about Edward than other medieval kings, he was nonetheless careful to emphasise the fact that he ruled with parliamentary approval as the rightful king of England. Not only that, but his accession had been as smooth and orderly as possible under the circumstances. In the aftermath of Lady Jane Grey's attempt upon the throne, the religious controversies of Mary Tudor's reign and the fragile peace that obtained under Elizabeth, such a transition would have seemed enviably efficient.

It is important to recognise that Holinshed was an idealist with a political agenda of his own, which he was inclined to impose upon the events that he described. Edward was, of course, already *de facto* king by June 1461, as he had by then occupied London

¹⁷⁴ Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, p. 1307.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1307.

¹⁷⁶ This is consistent with the language used in the Parliament Rolls. 'Edward IV: November 1461', in PROME, *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/november-1461>, June 2017; *RP*, Vol. 5, pp. 463-7.

¹⁷⁷ Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, p. 1310.

and put the Lancastrian forces to flight. Just as the early chronicles probably exaggerated how well-loved he was by the commons and nobility, and how eager they were to crown him, despite his apparent objections, so Holinshed seems to have overstated the extent to which he venerated the rule of law and felt the need for a display of popular consensus before mounting the throne. The editors of the second edition of the *Chronicle* made a significant change to the original text that reflects a degree of scepticism on this score. Whereas the 1577 edition reports that Edward processed solemnly into Westminster Abbey after it had been agreed with the lords and commons that he should become king,¹⁷⁸ the revised text of the 1587 version notes more cynically that he did so '*this part thus plaied*'.¹⁷⁹ Here it is more obvious that the ceremony of acclamation was little more than a formality and that Edward was going through the necessary motions before seizing power.

Holinshed makes very little of Edward's parliaments or their relative infrequency during his second reign.¹⁸⁰ The lack of attention paid to them could be read as a statement in itself, given the extent to which he and his continuators returned to parliamentary business in the reign of Henry VIII, and particularly the Reformation Parliament.¹⁸¹ Perhaps also being well aware of the dangers of criticising one of Queen Elizabeth's ancestors, Holinshed and his fellow editors seem to have taken the safe option and generally avoided the subject. That long sections of the *Chronicle* dealing with the events of the Wars of the Roses were copied from older, established works, such as Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* and *Hall's Chronicle*, further explains

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1310.

¹⁷⁹ Holinshed (1587), Vol. 3, p. 664.

¹⁸⁰ Edward's six parliaments met in 1461-2, 1463-5, 1467-8, 1472-5, 1478 and 1483. One was summoned to assemble in York in September 1469, during Edward's confinement by Warwick, but never met. Kleineke, *Edward IV*, p. 165.

¹⁸¹ Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, pp. 117-20.

the omission. Aside from the universal propensity towards plagiarism during this period, adopting them as a model provided safe, unexceptional coverage of a murky period of history that the editors did not choose to prioritise.

Holinshed clearly used *Hall's Chronicle* as the basis of his account of the marriage of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville. He repeats many of the same details, and copies almost verbatim the statement that Edward's rash decision caused the feud between him and Warwick.¹⁸² Holinshed even follows Hall in alleging that Edward had dishonoured the earl by deflowering his daughter or niece, 'for surely, suche a thing was attempted by King Edwarde, whyche loued well, both to beholde, and to feele faire Damosels'.¹⁸³ Hall furnishes other information, too, notably concerning the Act of Succession passed by the Readeption Parliament and Edward IV's treatment of Prince Edward of Lancaster. The report that King Edward 'stroke him with his gantlette' and that the prince was then murdered by 'George Duke of Clarence, Richarde Duke of Gloucester, Thomas Grey Marques Dorcet, and Wylliam Lorde Hastings' in particular seems to derive from Hall. In a throwback to the medieval and early Tudor view of history as an object lesson in the workings of divine retribution, the murderers are then said to have suffered the same fate and to have drunk 'of the lyke Cuppe, by the ryghtuous lustice and due punishment of God'.¹⁸⁴ This high moral tone is consistent with Holinshed's treatment of other fifteenth-century monarchs. For example, Henry of Bolingbroke's usurpation is described as an act of immoderation, disloyalty and

¹⁸² In *Hall's Chronicle*, the text reads 'All men for the most parte agre, that this mariage was the only cause, why the erle of Warwycke bare grudge, and made warre on kynge Edwarde' (*ULY*, f. 195v). Compare with *Holinshed's Chronicle*: 'All men for the moste parte, agree that this mariage was the onely cause, why the Earle of Warwike conceyued an hatred agaynste Kyng Edwarde, whome hee so muche before fauoured' – Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, pp. 1326-7.

¹⁸³ Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, p. 1317; and see above, p. 139.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1340.

want of familial affection that inevitably led ‘his lineall race’ to be ‘scourged afterwards, as a due punishment unto rebellious subjects’.¹⁸⁵ Patterson argues that such trenchant views represent a calculated attempt by Holinshed to avoid the fate of Sir John Hayward, whose *First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie VIII* had so enraged Elizabeth I that he was investigated for treason and imprisoned in the Tower.¹⁸⁶ Yet, as we have seen, they are to be found in many earlier histories and chronicles.

Surprisingly, the 1587 edition of the *Chronicle* expands upon the murder of Prince Edward, inserting a new commentary that reflects more favourably upon King Edward’s actions. After a passage (already in the first edition) noting that the bodies of those Lancastrians killed at the battle of Tewkesbury were either decently buried in a neighbouring churchyard or given to friends or servants for burial, without first being dismembered for display in public places, the anonymous author extols ‘the patience and clemencie of this good king, who (besides the putting vp of wrongs doone to him by violence of foes without vengeance) fréelie forgau the offenders, and did so honorable temper his affections!’¹⁸⁷

This is not the only addition to the 1587 edition that takes a less negative view of Edward’s behaviour. The unknown continuator is, for example, far kinder than either Holinshed or Hall about the Woodville marriage. A paragraph in the 1587 edition about the supposed pre-contract between the king and Lady Eleanor Talbot (wrongly

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 117.

¹⁸⁶ Patterson, *Reading Holinshed’s Chronicles*, p. 116.

¹⁸⁷ Holinshed (1587), Vol. 3, p. 688.

identified as Elizabeth Lucy, one of his many mistresses) stresses his good intentions towards Elizabeth Woodville. From this perspective, he was

... so farre gone that he was not reuocable, and therefore had fixed his heart upon the last resolution: namely, to apply an wholesome, honest, and honourable remedie to his affections fiered with the flames of love, and not to permit his heart to the thraldome of unlawfull lust: which purpose was both princelie and profitable, as the poet [Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*] saith.¹⁸⁸

These emendations, though relatively minor, reflect a definite softening of the original portrayal of Edward IV. By the standards of the age, Edward's decision not to mutilate the corpses of his enemies as a warning to others would, indeed, have seemed merciful. Although Elizabeth I ordered fewer executions than her predecessors, the Tudors were well known for dealing with their enemies in this way. The addendum praising Edward's 'patience and clemencie' for eschewing a customary practice not only makes him appear more compassionate, but also reveals the editor's own views. References to the 'wholesome, honest and honourable' nature of the Woodville marriage similarly suggest that Edward was attempting to control his passions in a morally acceptable fashion rather succumbing to his baser instincts. Without knowing who made these changes to the original text it is difficult to understand what purpose they were intended to serve. It is possible that the continuators sought to offer the reader a range of historical viewpoints. This desire, while commendable, sometimes came at the price of clarity and coherence. Holinshed and Hall were more skilful than

¹⁸⁸ Holinshed (1587), Vol. 3, p. 668. The paraphrase is of Ovid, 'The Cures for Love', in A. D. Melville (ed. and trans.), *Ovid: The Love Poems* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 152, lines 53-4.

the continuators, who, despite their ability to cite classical authors such as Ovid, could contradict themselves within the same paragraph.¹⁸⁹

In fact, Holinshed does not seem to have been impressed by the way that propagandists ‘faouryng altogyther the house of Yorke’ had initially attempted to whitewash Edward’s reputation. In a passage drawn from Hall about the death of Henry VI in the Tower that indicates his familiarity with *The Arrivall of Edward the Fourth* (probably from the collection of John Stow),¹⁹⁰ he warns his readers:

Moreouer, heere is to bee remembred, that poore Kyng Henrye the sixth, a little before depriued ... of hys Realme and imperiall Crowne, was nowe in the Tower spoyled of hys lyfe, by Rycharde Duke of Gloucester, (as the constante fame ranne) who to the intente that hys brothre Kyng Edwarde myghte raygne in more suretie, murthered the saide King Henry with a dagger, althoughe some writers of that time faouryng altogyther the house of Yorke, haue recorded, that after hee vnderstoode what losses hadde chaunced to hys friendes, and howe not only his son, but also all other hys chief partakers were dead and dispatched, he tooke it so to harte, that of pure displeasure, indignation, and melancolie, hee dyed the three and twentith of May.¹⁹¹

The implication that, in his second reign at least, Edward could countenance unjustifiable acts of violence in order to strengthen his hold on the throne is reinforced by the account of the death of Thomas Neville, Bastard of Fauconberg, just one page

¹⁸⁹ For more examples, see J. Richards, ‘Rhetoric’ in F. Heal, I. W. Archer and P. Kewes (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s Chronicles* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013), ch. 17.

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter One above.

¹⁹¹ Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, p. 1343.

later. We know that he was arrested, tried and executed in September 1471, four months after negotiating the surrender of his force of 'mariners and suche riotous rebelles, robbers, and wicked persons as soughte nothyng but spoile'¹⁹² at Sandwich after they had tried and failed to take London.¹⁹³ Holinshed's *Chronicle*, however, suggests that the execution happened in highly dubious circumstances almost immediately after Fauconberg and his company had first offered terms:

Their offer the K[ing] vppon great considerations, & by good deliberate aduice of counsell, thought best to accept, & there vpon, being at that time in Canterburie, he graunted to theyr petitions, and sent immediately vnto Sandwich hys brother Richard Duke of Gloucester, to receyue them to mercie, together with all the Shippes, which according to their promise, they deliuered into his handes. But notwithstanding that (as some write) the Basterde Fauconbridge, and other of hys companie that were gote to Sandwiche, had thus theyr pardons by composition at the Kyngs hande, we finde neuerthelesse, that the sayde Basterd, beeing afterwards at Sea (a rouing belyke, as hee hadde vsed before) came at length into the open hauen at Southampton, and there, taking lande, was apprehended, and shortly after beheaded.¹⁹⁴

Although these events reflect badly upon Edward, in both cases it is Richard of Gloucester who has blood on his hands. Edward is the principal beneficiary of Henry's death, but Richard wields the knife; he is likewise (implicitly) responsible for Fauconberg's arrest and execution while in possession of a meaningless royal pardon.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1343.

¹⁹³ *EIV*, pp. 173-4.

¹⁹⁴ Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, p. 1344.

Worse was to come; and Holinshed's dramatic account of Richard's seizure of power furnished the model for Shakespeare's celebrated study in villainy. Following Edward Hall, he adopted Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* as the basis for his narrative of the reigns of Edward V and Richard's first months on the throne. Unlike Hall, however, he consulted the 1557 edition published by William Rastell, as well as translations into English of More's original Latin texts.¹⁹⁵ It was from Holinshed rather than More, or at least from More at second hand, that Shakespeare drew his inspiration.

The histories of Hall, Grafton, Stow and their peers are the direct successors to the London chronicles and in many ways represent the final product of this tradition of historical writing. They were the work of educated men who were actively involved in the politics and commerce of London, and reflect the interests of the citizenry rather than the more refined tastes of scholars and aristocrats. Yet at the same time, as Daniel Woolf notes, the chronicle as a genre was declining in popularity.¹⁹⁶ Newer types of histories, such as those by members of the Society of Antiquaries (formed around 1586 and meeting until its dissolution by James I in 1607), would take their cue more directly from humanist writers at home and abroad. John Stow forms the link between the two groups, as he was not only the most prolific author of the old form of chronicle, but a prominent member of the Society, allowing its members access to his impressive manuscript collection. Just as Holinshed would help to fashion the popular image of Edward IV and other medieval kings through the works of Shakespeare, Stow would contribute to more scholarly accounts of the Wars of the Roses.

¹⁹⁵ Heal, Archer and Kewes, *Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, p. 70.

¹⁹⁶ Woolf, *Reading History*, p. 22.

CHAPTER FOUR

Shakespeare and Heywood, Drama and Dramatists

'No wise historian neglects the literature of the age he sets out to study. At the least it will tell him what matters interested the people of that time, what virtues they admired, and what evils they denounced; at the best it will describe for him their towns, countryside, means of travel, houses, furniture, dress, food and drink, education and entertainment, and illustrate and discuss the problems that most vexed their minds'.

J. J. Bagley, *Historical interpretation: Sources of English medieval history, 1066-1540* (London, Penguin Books, 1965), p. 131

While history books of various kinds were becoming increasingly popular among the reading public of sixteenth-century England, they were far from the only method of disseminating knowledge about the past among those living in the present. Oral culture, particularly in the form of poems, ballads, folk stories, legends and romances, theatrical spectacle and plays also played an important role. Studying historical examples of oral transmission presents obvious problems, as most of our evidence now derives from fragmentary written records. The challenge is further exacerbated by assumptions about levels of education and literacy among the population of Tudor England. Changing definitions of what constitutes literacy, for example, from the ability to read but not write or to recognise a few phrases in Latin to current ideas about 'functional' or 'practical' literacy, muddle our understanding of what ordinary men and women were actually capable of reading in the medieval and early modern

period.¹ According to H. J. Graff in the influential *Literacy Myth* (1979), entrenched Victorian assumptions that rising standards of literacy in the nineteenth century went hand in hand with 'progress' and 'civilisation' had an especially malign effect on scholarship, fostering the assumption that 'illiterate' societies or groups of people must have been backward and thus less worthy of study in their own right.² This condescending attitude can, in fact, be traced back to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestantism, with its emphasis on the importance of learning to read and write in order to better serve God.³ Nearly four decades after Graff's pioneering work first appeared, it is now clearly apparent that studying what might be called the 'popular' culture of Tudor England can help us to understand how ideas about the past formed, spread and endured among those who could not necessarily read the histories and chronicles that were produced at the time but were anxious to discover what they had to say.

More than a century after his death, Edward IV remained an important figure in English popular culture, featuring, along with his courtiers, in many ballads, poems and plays that appealed to a wide audience. But in the transition from historical fact to fiction important aspects of his life and reign were forgotten. Edward, it seems, was remembered chiefly as a playboy prince, who was inordinately fond of wealthy widows. The stories about his exploits, and the even broader caricatures that

¹ Most scholarship still acknowledges the value of David Cressy's 1980 study, *Literacy and the Social Order*, which attempted to assess levels of literacy in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980).

² H. J. Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century* (New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1991), pp. 3-10, 22-48; and *idem*, 'The Literacy Myth at Thirty', *Journal of Social History*, 43, Issue 3 (2010), pp. 635-61; Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, pp. 1- 11.

³ See, for example, R. Ascham, *The Scholemaster, or plaine and perfite way of teaching children to understand, write and speake the Latin Tong* (London, John Daye, 1570: (STC 2nd edn.) / 832), ff. 15v-16r.

developed from them, are therefore very different from depictions of the saintly Henry VI, the heroic warrior Henry V, the fatally flawed Richard II and the villainous Richard III. As successive tales inspired imitations and sequels, Edward IV was increasingly stereotyped and the events of his reign became a convenient framework upon which to hang commentaries on contemporary issues. By analysing these works, we can not only discover how late medieval kings such as Edward IV were commonly perceived, but also how the society which produced them imagined the past.

This chapter will examine fictionalised versions of the events of Edward's reign, paying particular attention to his appearance in the history plays of William Shakespeare and of the latter's now less celebrated contemporary, Thomas Heywood (1573-1644). Whenever possible, it will identify the points at which poets and playwrights drew information from historical texts, also noting where they diverged from the then-established facts and why they may have chosen to do so. We begin, however, with a brief introduction to late medieval and early Tudor drama, which draws attention to traditions that Shakespeare and Heywood inherited. Since they are of particular interest in the present context, we then turn to the plays' more immediate antecedents, particularly the ballads revolving around King Edward, his relationships with common people and with his mistress, Jane Shore, the last of which were popular enough to form a subgenre of their own.

Setting the Scene: Drama before Shakespeare

Pre-Reformation England had a vibrant culture of religious plays, ritual theatre and seasonal performances of tales from the Bible. Although we can make some definitive statements about the state of theatrical writing and publishing in the England before

Shakespeare, our knowledge of medieval drama remains frustratingly incomplete. Due in part to the loss of textual sources and to the transient nature of live performance, it is impossible to say with any certainty whether the extant evidence (primarily from religious plays) represents the full range of drama performed. We have no surviving versions of the very earliest English plays, though evidence derived from ecclesiastical prohibitions, condemnations of performances by clergy, household accounts and urban records suggests a long tradition of informal dramatic entertainment of a more secular kind.⁴ Professional entertainers formed groups of travelling players and regularly performed in towns, villages, courts and monasteries alongside bear-baiters, jugglers and mimics. An historical knowledge of Roman theatre survived in monastic schools, where works by Terrence and other classical authors were presented as exercises in grammar and rhetoric.⁵

Religious practice and dramatic performance were closely entwined. Liturgical Latin drama co-existed with vernacular plays well into the sixteenth century, being suppressed during the Reformation.⁶ Mystery plays and miracle plays retold biblical tales from the Creation to the Last Judgement and the lives of saints in vernacular English verse, and were staged regularly in the summer months. Their contribution to the civic and religious life of the participants can be estimated by the sheer number and widespread nature of surviving examples.⁷ Despite their religious nature, these plays were performed by the laity rather than the clergy, usually at considerable

⁴ C. Richardson and J. Johnson, *Medieval Drama* (Houndsmills, Macmillan, 1991), p. 3.

⁵ R. Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages* (London, Hutchinson, 1974), pp. 26-9; and K. M. Wilson, *Medieval Women Writers* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 30-63, 109-30.

⁶ Richardson and Johnson, *Medieval Drama*, pp. 3-4; K. Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (2 Vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933).

⁷ See 'mystery plays: a brief insight and link to prose', http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/medieval/mystery_plays.php, accessed June 2016.

expense by members of craft guilds, and mixed piety with broad humour. They drew predictably vast crowds from across the social spectrum; the Coventry plays are said, for example, to have resulted in a 'confluence of people' of 'extraordinary great' size, which 'yeilded no small advantage to this city'.⁸ Similar spectacles, often featuring costly and sophisticated special effects and props, were mounted to celebrate the entries of important people into towns and cities.⁹ *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar*, analysed in Chapter One of this thesis, records one such 'triumph' from Edward's own reign.¹⁰ Religious plays inevitably fell out of favour following the break from Rome and the suppression of Catholic traditions during the English Reformation, but the impetus to tell stories through drama remained. Indeed, their basic elements survived in various forms, particularly the increasingly popular history plays which kept the didactic, moralising tone of their predecessors.¹¹

Interludes first appeared while mystery cycles were still being performed by craft guilds, taking their name from the fact that most were staged during intervals between other forms of entertainment, such as a banquet, before or after a play, or even between acts. They tackled a wide variety of subjects, and did not necessarily seek to instruct, though they are sometimes called 'morality plays' or 'moral interludes' by literary scholars, who point to the large number of surviving examples with an explicitly didactic purpose.¹² They can certainly be said to form a bridge between medieval morality plays and Elizabethan drama, as they contained elements of both

⁸ W. Dugdale, *The antiquities of Warwickshire illustrated from records, leiger-books, manuscripts, charters, evidences, tombes, and armes* (London, Thomas Warren, 1656: Wing / D2479), p. 116, col. 1.

⁹ G. Wickham, *Early English Stages* (2nd edn., 3 Vols., London, Routledge, 1980), Vol. 1, pp. 179-228.

¹⁰ See above, pp. 80-2.

¹¹ Ribner, *English History Play*, p. 24.

¹² J. W. Harris, *Medieval Theatre in Context* (London, Routledge, 1992), ch. 14; Glynne Wickham describes them as 'the drama of moral instruction': G. Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 162.

forms. Players of Interludes were itinerant professional entertainers, like the jongleur and minstrel troupes of the medieval period. Financial and social considerations necessitated the creation of small groups, with the result that actors 'doubled up' by playing multiple parts, usually from a written text.¹³

Many English noblemen sponsored their own troupes, which took the names of their patrons and wore their livery. 'The Duke of Gloucester's Men' were among the first, but the earls of Essex, Oxford, Derby and Shrewsbury soon followed suit. Even Henry VII, not known for his frivolity, bestowed his patronage upon a royal company in 1493. His son, Henry VIII, not only increased its size, but also appointed the actors for life, ensuring that they had a pension in retirement. Two companies, the Queen's Players and Worcester's Men, performed in Stratford upon Avon in 1568, when the young William Shakespeare would have been four or five. Other groups played in the yards of large inns, such as *The Tabard* in Southwark or *La Bel Savage* in Ludgate, and even the homes of wealthy patrons.¹⁴ The earliest interludes, such as the fifteenth-century *Castle of Perseverance*, were clearly intended to be large-scale civic entertainments like the traditional religious play cycles. Less spectacular interludes, mounted by a few professionals, first appeared in the 1460s and became increasingly common.¹⁵ The construction of public theatres eventually put an end to the genre, but until then playwrights such as John Bale (1495–1563) and John Heywood (c. 1497 – c. 1575) enjoyed great success.¹⁶ Bale himself achieved lasting fame as the author of *King Johan* (c. 1538), an early attempt at a history play combining evidence from chronicle sources with the format of a morality play.

¹³ Harris, *Medieval Theatre in Context*, pp. 170-1.

¹⁴ T. Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 25-6, 47.

¹⁵ Harris, *Medieval Theatre in Context*, p. 169.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Despite the fact that certain companies found royal favour, most actors were regarded with suspicion and considered little better than vagrants. The 1572 Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds listed 'common players' alongside 'Fencers, Bearewards ... Minstrels, Jugglers, Pedlars, Tinkers and Petty Chapmen'.¹⁷ In the same year the rulers of London banned plays and formally expelled all actors from the city, ostensibly as a measure against plague.¹⁸ Their attempt to prevent the assembly of dangerously large crowds prompted the construction of new venues outside civic jurisdiction, particularly in Shoreditch and at Newington Butts, near the already well-established entertainment district around St George's Fields in Surrey.¹⁹ The Shoreditch playhouse, which was simply called *The Theatre*, opened in 1576 and was one of the first permanent theatres built in London since the Roman period.²⁰ A second, *The Curtain*, soon appeared just 200 yards away. Together they functioned as the epicentre of English theatre for decades to come, staging plays by William Shakespeare and his contemporary, Thomas Heywood.

Ballads and political poems

Throughout this period the market for ballads and poems continued to thrive. Alongside traditional folk songs, romances and stories about daring outlaws such as Robin Hood, accounts of historical events and politically-inspired ballads appear to

¹⁷ London, House of Lords, 14 Elizabeth 1, c. 5, HL/PO/PU/1/1572.

¹⁸ T. Fairman, *Early London Theatres: In the Fields*, (London, Elliot Stock, 1899), p. 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁰ G. Wickham, H. Berry and W. Ingram, *English professional theatre, 1530–1660* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 320.

have circulated in increasing numbers.²¹ C. L. Kingsford observed in 1913 that ballads were ‘the most natural form of popular historical narrative’, adding that rhyming verse was ‘not only the commonest vehicle for political satire, but also for political controversy as well’. Half a century later David Daiches reiterated the fact that ‘satirical, topical and political verse’ was of ‘considerable historical interest’. Significantly, both authors also agreed that the content of these poems was generally ‘of little literary merit’.²² More recently, D. R. Woolf has described the ballad as an uncensored and irreverent form of ‘masterless history’, while Richard Helgerson, citing notes to the Roxburghe ballad collection, maintains that they provided a “‘people’s history of England” in two senses: they were the history commoners heard and knew, and they were history from a commoner’s point of view’.²³

The years between 1455 and 1485, encompassing Edward’s entire reign, were believed by V. J. Scattergood to have produced the ‘main body of material’ for politically motivated verse writers, as the civil wars between York and Lancaster provided ample opportunities for propagandists on both sides to ply their trade.²⁴ Celebratory verses, such as *The Battle of Towton* (1461), *Twelve Letters to Save England* (1464) and *A Political Retrospect* (1462), rejoice in Edward’s victories, while implicitly and explicitly denegrating the Lancastrians as usurpers. The carol *Edward, Dei gratia* (probably written after his coronation but before his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville) asserts

²¹ Francis James Child’s comprehensive edition remains the most useful resource for exploring medieval and early modern examples. F. J. Child (ed.), *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (5 Vols., New York, Cooper Square, 1962).

²² Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*, p. 228; D. Daiches, *A Critical History of English Literature* (2 Vols., New York, Ronald Press Co., 1960), Vol. 1, p. 132.

²³ D. R. Woolf, ‘The “Common Voice”: History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present*, 120 (1998), p. 37; R. Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1992), p. 237.

²⁴ V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (New York, Barnes and Noble, 1972), p. 173.

that his claim to the throne was not only divinely sanctioned ('god hath chose þe to be his kniȝt'), but also justified by hereditary right ('Oute of þe stoke that longe lay dede').²⁵ *A Political Retrospect* especially emphasises Edward's genealogical links to the House of Plantagenet. It attempts to rehabilitate Richard II's reputation, recalling his reign as a time of 'habundaunce with plentee / Of welthe & erthely loye without langour', and castigates Henry IV for usurping the kingdom 'by force & might ... undir the colour of fals periury'.²⁶ While Henry V is accorded some grudging praise, the author is anxious to stress that he ruled 'unrightfully' and that, in any case, his successes proved transitory. Indeed, under his son, 'all hath retourned unto huge langoure' during a reign marked by 'ffalshode, myschyef, secret synne upholdyng'. Henry VI's wife, Queen Margaret, is singled out for particular abuse because of her overweening ambition 'to gouerne all England with myght and poure', and for the 'deth & distruccioun' caused by her followers.²⁷ Edward IV, meanwhile, is hailed as 'our comfortoure' for bringing peace, prosperity and security to the previously neglected and overgrown 'gardayne' of England. As Charles Ross pointed out in his classic biography of King Edward, the Yorkist propaganda so skilfully disseminated in these verses 'anticipates the main features of what became (with elaborations) the Tudor view of fifteenth-century history'.²⁸ Certainly, if they proved as popular as their authors hoped, ballads of this kind could easily have formed the basis of an enduring folk memory.

²⁵ R. H. Robbins (ed.), *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 92.

²⁶ Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 189-195. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p. 93.

²⁷ A recurrent theme in the political poetry of this period is the condemnation of Henry VI as weak, incompetent and misguided rather than actively malicious, although his ineffectual rule still led to civil war. Criticism of Margaret had limited success in deflecting attention from these deficiencies, since they were responsible for her assumption of authority. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 195-99.

²⁸ *Elv*, p. 300.

Even so, overtly political verse faced some stiff competition. Relying simply on the number of survivals, the Robin Hood ballads seem to have been in greatest demand,²⁹ but after them come poems revolving around fictitious encounters between a commoner and a king in disguise. Although these poems tend only to survive from the sixteenth century onwards as manuscript copies or as entries in the Stationers' Register, the dramatic trope upon which they were based is ancient. There is considerable evidence to suggest that many far earlier verses on this theme have now been lost.³⁰

In his edition of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, F.J. Child identifies two versions of the disguised-king ballad as being the 'most familiar': *King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tamworth* (or *The King and the Tanner*) and *King Henry II and the Miller of Mansfield*, the former 'reaching back beyond the sixteenth century, the latter not beyond the seventeenth'.³¹ The ballads tell broadly similar stories of a king in informal dress encountering a tradesman while out hunting and, when the latter fails to recognise him, enjoying the simple entertainment he unwittingly provides. Once the disguise falls away, however, the tradesman fears for his life, but is instead richly rewarded by an amused monarch. The essential elements of the story remain the same throughout most retellings of the ballad, with variations deriving mainly from the identity of the king, his exchange with the commoner and the reward on offer. Other versions include: *The Tale of Rauf Coilyear* (1572), featuring the Emperor

²⁹ S. Knight and T. Ohlgren (eds.), *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales* (Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 31-4.

³⁰ Child, for example, refers to a disguised-king story dating 'from the early years of the thirteenth century'. Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol. 5, p. 69.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Charlemagne and a charcoal-burner; *The Shepherd and the King* (1578), which involves an encounter with Alfred the Great; and *The King and the Forester* (c. 1690-4), in which a strikingly contemporary William III takes the lead. *The King and the Cobbler* (c. 1685-89) is a prose account of Henry VIII's meeting with an artisan in an urban setting, but it otherwise conforms to the standard plot.³² None of these ballads contain significant topical references or overtly political commentary. In fact, the various monarchs are interchangeable, as is apparent from *King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth*.

This particular poem is now chiefly remembered because it inspired a significant part of Thomas Heywood's two-part play *King Edward IV*. Appearing in print in 1596 and in the Stationers' Registers four years later under the title *A merye, pleasant and delectable history betwene Kinge Edward the IIIJth and a Tanner of Tamworth*, it tells the story of Edward's encounter with an anonymous tanner on the road to Drayton Bassett.³³ In keeping with the conventions of the genre, it reveals little about the king or the broader context of his reign. It conforms to all the predictable narrative conventions; could easily have featured at least some other English monarchs; and has a long history of direct predecessors and successors. According to the Stationers' record, in 1564 William Grefelth received a licence to print a work entitled *The story of Kyng Henry the IIIJth and the Tanner of Tamworth*; in 1586 Edward White released *A merie song of the Kinge and the Tanner*; in 1615, fifteen years after the entry for *The Delectable History*, John Trundle was allowed to print *The King and the Tanner*; and in 1624 a master pavier named John Wright published yet another ballad entitled *The*

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 67-75.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-3.

King and the Tanner.³⁴ Beyond these obvious instances, *King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner* owed much to a middle English metrical poem known as *The King and the Barker*, about a king encountering a barker while hunting, asking him to ride to Drayton Basset with him and then to exchange horses.³⁵

King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner begins conventionally along these lines. Leaving behind his followers, he engages his subject in conversation without revealing who he is, first asking him to act as a guide to Drayton Basset and then to exchange horses. Throughout, the tanner responds with good grace, but makes it clear that he would prefer to be on his way. He eventually agrees to exchange mounts in return for a noble (a gold coin worth about 80d at the time of publication). In what is presumably intended to be the Chaucerian high point of the poem, as the Tanner is being helped by Edward to mount his new horse he unleashes 'a fart so round' directly into the king's face. The animal is skittish, however, and so frightened by the cow hides placed upon its back (and presumably the eruptions of its new owner) that it throws them and the Tanner off, prompting the king to take his horse back on the condition that he also recovers his noble. With normality restored, the Tanner invites the king to drink wine, but instead Edward blows a horn and summons 'five hundred lords and knights'. The frightened Tanner initially believes Edward and the newcomers to be robbers, and then, once he recognises their true station, is convinced that he will be hanged. His fears are proved baseless, however, as Edward instead decides to reward him with a handsome annuity:

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8; E. Arber (ed.), *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London* (5 Vols., London, Privately Printed, 1875-94), Vol. 1, p. 264; Vol. 2, p. 451; Vol. 3, p. 579.

³⁵ At the end of *The King and the Barker*, however, the king simply rewards his subject with 100s for his service. W. C. Hazlitt (ed.), 'The King and the Barker', *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England* (4 Vols., London, J. R. & Smith, 1864-66), Vol. 1, pp. 1-10. A barker prepared oak bark for use by tanners, and was thus also engaged in the leather trade.

For Plompton Park I will give thee,
With tenements three beside,
Which is worth three hundred pound a year,
To maintain thy good cow hide.³⁶

The poem closes with the grateful Tanner thanking God for his mercy and promising the king a charmingly naive gift of 'clouting-leather' for his shoes should he ever visit Tamworth.

As we have seen, the Edward IV of the ballad is little more than a cipher. Even so, the fact he was specifically chosen instead of a wide range of other, less plausible, candidates does suggest that he was still well-remembered a century after his death (which in turn reflects the surge of interest in his court at the end of the sixteenth century, see below pp. 196-203). The ballad itself also provides us with a baseline from which to judge other popular portrayals of the king, as it represents the most formulaic version of a fictional exchange between monarch and subject.

Writing about peasant humour in this period, Stephen Greenblatt emphasises the distinction between humorous works that set out to generate 'a laughter that levels – that draws lord and clown together in the shared condition of the flesh – and a laughter that attempts to inscribe ineradicable differences'.³⁷ It can be argued that *King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner* falls into the latter category, as at no point are the distinctions between the two men ever really questioned; and even when comic

³⁶ Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol. 5, p. 83, st. 38.

³⁷ S. Greenblatt, 'Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion', in *idem* (ed.), *Representing the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), p. 17.

elements of misrule are introduced Edward's status is never subverted.³⁸ The Tanner is defined by the trappings of his station, particularly his 'good russet coat', his docile mare (which cost 4s), and his proud boast to have more 'groats and nobles' in his purse than Edward has pence in his.³⁹ Yet he fails to appreciate the quality of Edward's horse, and, indeed, cannot even remain seated upon it, let alone ride it. While the ballad's comedic premise relies on the king acting in ways contrary to established social norms, he does so deliberately, always remaining in control of the situation, whereas the Tanner is constantly shown to be ignorant, crude and inept. When Edward allows his disguise to slip, he is immediately accorded the respect and deference to which he is due. The roles of the Tanner and the king are entirely distinct: just as the latter cannot be expected to know the price of hides, the former, and by extension all other commoners, has neither the right nor the knowledge to comment on affairs of state. Nevertheless, in the ballad, at least, the unequal relationship is entirely benign, and, indeed, when viewed from a contemporary perspective, 'right'. Although the gulf between the two men is almost unbridgeable, honesty, loyalty and good service bring with them a rich reward and bind them together. The humble promise of clouting leather made at the end of the poem cannot hope to match the king's own gift of an impressive annuity, but it represents the Tanner's livelihood.

³⁸ This is the argument presented by N. L. Corrigan, 'The Merry Tanner, the Mayor's Feast, and the King's Mistress: Thomas Heywood 1 Edward IV and the Ballad Tradition', in S. P. Cerasano (ed.), *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* (Madison and Teaneck, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), pp. 30-1.

³⁹ Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol. 5, p. 75, st. 3; p. 76, st. 10.

Tudor Gossip: Edward IV and Jane Shore

The late sixteenth century represented a time of hitherto unprecedented popular interest in the Wars of the Roses and the leading members of Edward IV's court. In their introduction to Shakespeare's *Henry VI Parts II and III*, Robert K. Turner Jr. and George Walton Williams suggest that this may have been because these events occurred at a distance ideally suited to the needs of historians and dramatists alike: 'The times were near enough to be influential and well-remembered, yet far enough away to be safely idealized'.⁴⁰ The Tudors had always presented themselves as the bringers of peace and unity after what Edward Hall called the 'vnnaturall deuision', so it was a natural step to re-examine the 'discordes, sectes and faccions' which had caused these upheavals.⁴¹ Just as in Edward's time, England was embroiled in factional politics and international conflict, furnishing ample material for writers who sought to comment on the present through recourse to the (relative) safety of the past. The Wars of the Roses also provided authors with ready-made characters from all levels of society to populate their works, from commoners, including Jane Shore, to nobles such as the Earl of Warwick and the Duke of Clarence, to the monarchs themselves.

The Mirror for Magistrates (1559–1610), a collection of biographical poems by several different authors recounting the tragic lives and untimely deaths of various historical figures, included verses on many of these individuals in its first (1559) and second editions (1563).⁴² Even though the quality of the poems varied tremendously, and the

⁴⁰ R. K. Turner, Jr., and G. W. Walton, 'Introduction to 2 and 3 Henry VI', in A. Harbage (ed.), *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (London, Penguin, 1969), p. 473.

⁴¹ *ULY*, f. 1r.

⁴² The first edition of 1559 included entries for, among others, William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, Jack Cade, Richard, Duke of York, John Lord Clifford, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, Richard, Earl of Warwick, Henry VI, George, Duke of Clarence, and Edward IV, while the second included Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, William, Lord Hastings, Henry, Duke of Buckingham, Richard III, and Jane Shore (as 'Shore's

warning that the terrible fates of the protagonists should serve as an example to others was positively medieval, the collections remained popular. The entries for Edward IV, George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard III furnish short and rather conventional accounts of their lives, drawing upon the elements of Hall and Holinshed that emphasise their subjects' moral failings. Thus, for example, the author of Edward's biography (likely John Skelton, 1463-1529) concentrates on his overweening arrogance and 'vntemperate life', but in so doing paints a picture of a successful monarch who was wealthy, victorious in war, and who sponsored many grand building projects.⁴³ His brief appearances in the other poems offer an opportunity for more substantial criticism. Clarence's incarceration in the Tower is, for example, blamed upon a combination of Edward's gullibility and his 'cruel harted' desire to secure the throne at all costs.⁴⁴ He is also held directly responsible for the death of Prince Edward in 1471, while the account of *Shore's Wife* makes clear that, whatever her personal failings in allowing herself to be seduced, she was aggressively and relentlessly pursued.⁴⁵

Finally, whereas the version of the life of Richard III in the 1563 edition does not mention Edward at all, the significantly different poem that replaced it in 1610 includes several verses that are overtly hostile to him. In a scene almost certainly derived from *Hall's Chronicle* (see above, pp. 149-50), he allows Richard, Clarence, Grey and Hastings to murder Prince Edward simply for giving a 'stout replie' to his

Wife'). W. Baldwin, *A Myrroure for Magistrates* (London, Thomas Marsh, 1559: STC (2nd edn.) / 1247); W. Baldwin, *A Myrroure for Magistrates* (London, Thomas Marsh, 1563: STC (2nd edn.) / 1248).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, ff. 82-5 (the folios are here misnumbered).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 81r-v.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 157r.

questions.⁴⁶ Edward is described as a monarch who ‘swims in streames of court delights’ and compared to a mariner who sails in siren-infested waters. This attack on his libidinous behaviour is far more telling than the less specific comments made in the original poem about his life, as it emphasises the extent to which his self-indulgence allowed Richard’s Machiavellian schemes to pass unchallenged until it was too late.⁴⁷ This fatal flaw is developed further in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (see below, pp. 253-4).

Individual poems from the *Mirror for Magistrates* could also be reworked and published on their own account, as can be seen in the way that Thomas Churchyard’s *Shore’s Wife* eventually took on a life of its own. It reappeared in *Churchyard’s Challenge* (1593) after another writer, Anthony Chute, had plagiarised it for his *Beawtie dishonoured written under the Title of Shores Wife* (1593). While there is little direct evidence that the *Mirror for Magistrates* alone did much to influence contemporary perceptions of Edward IV, the existence of derivative lives of Jane Shore and other prominent figures of his reign, as well as the long-term popularity of the series in general, certainly reflects a surge in interest in his life and court. These verses paint a picture later described in breathless prose by Paul Murray Kendall in his popular biography of Richard III: ‘The court was like a tropical garden not altogether reclaimed from the jungle: overheated, luxuriant in blooms of pageantry and the varicoloured plumage of tilting knights, rustling with endless whispering of faction, dense with suspicions and half-hidden hatreds’.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ J. Higgins et al., *A Mirour for Magistrates* (London, Felix Kyngston, 1610), pp. 752-3.

⁴⁷ Higgins, *Mirour for Magistrates*, pp. 754-5.

⁴⁸ P. M. Kendall, *Richard III* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1955), p. 152.

If they were so inclined, the literate public could easily gain access to the works of More, Hall, Stow, Holinshed and other chronicle writers in order to learn the lessons that they drew from England's recent past. But Edward IV and his contemporaries also featured with increasing regularity in popular ballads and on the stage, while also appearing in collections of poetry. Writers such as Thomas Churchyard (c.1523–1604), Anthony Chute (d. 1594/5), Samuel Daniel (1562/3–1619), Michael Drayton (1563–1631), Thomas Deloney (d. by 1600), Robert Sidney (1563–1626), Thomas Heywood, and Shakespeare all created new stories from the same basic narratives in ways that were often strikingly at odds with the history books. The changes apparent in the verse biographies of Edward IV and Richard III in successive editions of the *Mirror for Magistrates* also reveal the extent to which different authors could influence each other.

Many poets and playwrights approached Edward IV and his court through highly coloured tales about his mistress, Jane Shore.⁴⁹ Following her first appearance in Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* as the 'merriest' of Edward's three concubines,⁵⁰ 'Shore's wife' seems to have captured Tudor imaginations. Samuel Pratt, in his study of the many variations on her story, doubted 'that there was another lady in history so often cited, and therefore so well known, by the Elizabethans as Jane Shore'.⁵¹ Her popularity was such that some writers had their own characters complain about being eclipsed by her. In Samuel Daniel's popular romance *The Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), which is about Henry II's famous mistress, Rosamund

⁴⁹ With the notable exception of William Shakespeare: A. Hammond (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: King Richard III* (Arden, second series, London, Thomson Learning, 2006), pp. 129, 131; below, pp. 248-9.

⁵⁰ See above, p. 114.

⁵¹ S. M. Pratt, 'Jane Shore and the Elizabethans: Some Facts and Speculations', *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*, Vol. 11 (1970), p. 1293.

Clifford, the heroine's ghost protests that 'Shore's wife is grac'd, and passes for a saint'⁵². Drayton's Matilda is similarly incensed that 'the wife of SHORE winnes generall applause, / Finding a pen laborious in her prayse',⁵³ while Henry Willobie's (c. 1575 - c. 1596) Avisia jealously dismisses both Jane and Rosamond as mere concubines:

Shore's wife, a Prince's secret frend

Faire *Rosomond*, a King's delight:

Yet both haue found a gastly end ...

Now we see their lasting shame.⁵⁴

Yet her reputation survived unscathed. The ballad *A Most Sorrowful Song of Banister*, the second half of which is given over to a eulogistic account of Jane Shore's life, has Bannister repent his treacherous betrayal of his master, Henry, Duke of Buckingham, by comparing himself unfavourably to her:

Thy good deeds done doth spread thy fame

My cursed fact claimes endlesse shame.

Cease then from mourning louely Jane,

For thousands thanke thee for thy paine.⁵⁵

Just as the various 'disguised-king' ballads maintain a consistent narrative framework, so the many poems about Shore's Wife follow Thomas More's and Thomas

⁵² Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 1300 n. 61. Pratt himself doubts that Shore was viewed as a saint.

⁵³ M. Drayton, 'The Legend of Matilda', in J. W. Hebel *et al.* (ed.), *The Works of Michael Drayton* (5 Vols., Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1932), Vol. 2, p. 412.

⁵⁴ G. B. Harrison (ed.), *Willobie His Avisia* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1966), p. 34.

⁵⁵ 'A Most Sorrowful Song of Banister', in H. E. Rollins (ed.), *The Pepys Ballads* (8 Vols., Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1929), Vol. 2, p. 137.

Churchyard's texts quite closely.⁵⁶ Jane is portrayed as a desirable, compassionate and intelligent woman who uses her privileged position at court in order to help the less fortunate rather than to enrich herself. When Edward dies, however, she loses everything and suffers at the hands of Richard III. In most texts she is clearly employed as an allegorical figure in order to underscore the transitory nature of wealth, power and beauty, her influential position at Edward IV's court contrasting sharply with her destitution in old age.⁵⁷ She thus performs a role that is in many ways similar to Edward's in the other ballads of the time, in which his identity as an historical person is subordinate to his symbolic function as an authority figure.

Jane is defined by her comparatively low status, by her relationship with Edward IV and by her adultery. She is always 'Shore's Wife', even though recent research has revealed that her name was probably Elizabeth Lambert.⁵⁸ She is in many respects a divisive figure, being portrayed as 'an object of both opprobrium and desire'.⁵⁹ As an unapologetic adulteress she is a sinner who should be shunned, but her proximity to the king allows her to perform good works in an otherwise 'corrupt environment'.⁶⁰ Although the poems and plays focus on her life and character rather than on high politics, they invariably concern Edward and his court, which, in the interests of the drama, must be cast in a negative light. Edward's power is certainly exercised in a more ambivalent fashion than it is in the disguised-king ballads. Although Jane freely accepts his advances, she is clearly in awe of the 'Egle's force' possessed by her royal

⁵⁶ R. D. Brown, "'A Talkatiue Wench (Whose Words a World Hath Delighted in)': Mistress Shore and Elizabethan Complaint', *Review of English Studies*, 49, No. 196 (1998), pp. 397-405.

⁵⁷ Brown, "'Talkatiue Wench'", p. 399.

⁵⁸ A. Hanham, *Richard III and His Early Historians*, p. 179 n.

⁵⁹ Brown, "'Talkatiue Wench'", p. 398.

⁶⁰ M. L. Johnson, 'Images of Women in the Works of Thomas Heywood', *Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Jacobean Drama Studies*, 42 (Salzburg, Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1974), pp. 55-60; Brown, "'Talkatiue Wench'", p. 398.

suitors⁶¹ and, in at least one text, is also the victim of a forced marriage to her first husband⁶². Like Rosamond Clifford in other contemporary texts, she is used by one king only to fall from favour under the next and suffer terribly as a result. But, as Richard Danson Brown points out, these works also condemn Richard III as a tyrannical hypocrite, while implicitly celebrating his brother's innate humanity.⁶³ Edward can be easily persuaded to act in benevolent ways, while his relationship with Jane is as consensual as possible under the circumstances. Richard, on the other hand, bows to neither man nor God, making 'his wyll a lawe'.⁶⁴ Significantly, the fact that Edward and Richard were brothers is never once mentioned in *Shore's Wife*, even when Churchyard adapts a passage from the Book of Job in order to curse Richard's parents. It certainly appears that, in at least some Elizabethan plays and ballads, the two men were portrayed as comparative strangers, thereby neatly sidestepping the problem of maligning the House of York under Tudor rule.

The poems and ballads of the late sixteenth century suggest that, for all his very human faults, Edward was generally well regarded. The disguised-king ballads featuring him would only have made sense if their protagonist was remembered as a 'good' monarch, capable of interacting with his subjects in a way that showed not only inherent dignity but also humour and generosity. The generic template of the ballad could not easily have been applied to Henry VI or Richard III, whose characters by this time exemplified innocence and evil. Nevertheless, it is also clear that reliable evidence about Edward's life and reign was slowly disappearing from popular

⁶¹ J. Kerrigan (ed.), 'Shores Wife', *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and 'Female Complaint': A Critical Anthology* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 114 (ll. 84-5).

⁶² N. L. Jones, *Birth of the Elizabethan Age* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1993), pp. 87-118.

⁶³ Brown, "'Talkatiue Wench'", p. 404.

⁶⁴ Kerrigan, 'Shores Wife', p. 122.

consciousness, leading to the emergence of a rather crude stereotype based primarily upon his most dramatically interesting characteristics: love of women and money. As successive authors focused upon these traits, Edward increasingly became a caricature, just like Henry and Richard. This process reached its apogee in Thomas Heywood's play, *The First and Second Parts of Edward IV*, which employed Edward's largely fictional persona as a vehicle for social commentary, while posing the fundamental question:

'Who can withstand a puissaunt kynges desyre?'⁶⁵

Thomas Heywood and *The First and Second Parts of Edward IV*

When writing his history plays, William Shakespeare adopted a perspective generally in line with that of the national chroniclers, focussing upon the political aspirations of kings, princes and the nobility of England. His contemporary, Thomas Heywood, also looked to these sources for inspiration, but his approach owed more to John Stow and the *London Chronicles*. Heywood drew heavily upon the capital's folklore and history, being fascinated by the interaction of crown and nobility with the commons through the medium of civic institutions. Though he is today far less celebrated than Shakespeare, Heywood was admired by his contemporaries as a successful and prolific writer. His *Edward IV* not only reflected current ideas about the king, but did much to popularise an enduring image of him as an arrogant, foolish predator.

Heywood was probably born in Lincolnshire in 1573, and certainly spent his early life there.⁶⁶ The son of a rector, he matriculated as a pensioner from Emmanuel College,

⁶⁵ Kerrigan, 'Shores Wife', p. 114 (l. 89).

⁶⁶ C. J. Sisson, 'The Red Bull company and the importunate widow', *Shakespeare Survey*, 7 (1954), p. 58.

Cambridge, in 1591, though the poet William Cartwright subsequently claimed that he had been a fellow of Peterhouse.⁶⁷ While at Cambridge he seems to have been exposed to a thriving theatrical scene, writing later in *An Apology for Actors* (1612) that he had attended 'Tragedyes, Comedyes, Historyes, Pastorals and Shewes, publickly acted, in which Graduates of good place and reputation, haue bene specially parted'.⁶⁸ His education seems to have been curtailed by the death of his father in 1593, which prompted him to leave university and seek employment in London where he soon became immersed in a world of authors and playwrights, including Shakespeare. He began his long career as a poet and dramatist with *Oenone and Paris* (1594), which closely imitates Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593). Though it is often difficult to attribute beyond all doubt the individual contributions which Heywood and his contemporaries made to specific plays and poems, it seems likely that around this time he wrote early versions of works that he would later develop, including *The Four Prentices of London* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, based partly on Shakespeare's poem of the same name (1594). The two men probably collaborated with others on *Sir Thomas More*, which now survives in only a single, fragmentary and heavily censored manuscript.⁶⁹

The first tangible proof of Heywood's involvement in the London playwriting scene comes in 1596 in the form of a payment from Philip Henslowe, the theatrical

⁶⁷ T. Heywood, *The actors vindication, containing, three brief treatises* (London, G. E. for [William Cartwright], 1658: Wing (STC 2nd edn.) / H1777), sig. A2v.

⁶⁸ T. Heywood, *An Apology for Actors Containing Three Brieffe Treatises* (London, Nicholas Okes, 1612: (STC 2nd edn.) / 13309), sig. C3v.

⁶⁹ Hands B and D in the surviving manuscript are generally accepted as Heywood's and Shakespeare's, respectively. J. Jowett (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: Sir Thomas More* (Arden third series, London, Methuen Drama, 2011), pp. 351-2.

impresario, for 'hawodes bocke'.⁷⁰ On 28 March 1598, Heywood agreed to work exclusively for Henslowe and his Admiral's Men for the following two years, and in that time produced two plays: 'War without Blows and Love without Suit' and 'Joan is as Good as my Lady' (both of which are now, unfortunately, lost). Francis Meres's *Palladis tamia* (1598), a 'Wit's Treasury' that furnishes critical comments about many English playwrights of the day, including Shakespeare, notes that Heywood was among 'the best for Comedy', along with other writers for the Admiral's Men.⁷¹ Only one of his plays survives intact from this period: the two-part *King Edward IV* (first printed 1599, with five later editions). Its role in forging the king's historical reputation forms the basis of the next section of this chapter, although a brief overview of Heywood's later career may first prove useful.

By autumn 1601 Heywood had risen to become one of the leading members of the earl of Worcester's company of players, who were made Queen Anne's Men in 1603. Despite the loss of many of his later plays, we know that about this time Heywood found success and lasting fame as a writer of domestic dramas. Some were comedies, but others, most notably his masterpiece, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (written 1603, printed 1607), were powerful tragedies. He also experimented with adventure-romances, the best-received of these probably being the earliest, *The Four Prentices of London* (written 1599–1600, published 1615). Encouraged by the popular demand for his work, Heywood returned to histories and plays about royalty after *Edward IV*, often combining historical events with domestic drama. *The Royal King and the Loyal Subject* (written c.1600, printed 1637), for example, explored the relationship between a cruel

⁷⁰ R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (eds.), *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 50.

⁷¹ F. Meres, *Palladis tamia: Wits treasury being the second part of Wits common wealth* (London, P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, 1598: (2nd edn.) / 17834), f. 283v.

king and his faithful steward. Elizabeth I proved to be one of Heywood's favourite subjects, as, after his first two-part dramatisation of her life *If you Know not me, you Know Nobody* (c.1604–5, first printed 1605–6), he returned to her again in *Gunaikeion* (1624), *England's Elizabeth* (1631), and the rhyming *Life and Death of Queen Elizabeth* (1639).

With the success of a reworked and expanded *Rape of Lucrece* (1608), Heywood began to compose more works inspired directly by classical authors, although they lacked originality and may, in some instances, have been plagiarised from other plays written for Henslowe that have since been lost.⁷² Yet they proved just as popular; Heywood boasted that *The Iron Age* (1632) was performed by two acting companies at once and 'at sundry times thronged three severall Theaters'.⁷³ *An Apology for Actors* (written c. 1608, printed 1612) is today among his best known works. A prose defence of theatre and discussion of recent stage history, it contained contributions from the playwright John Webster and various famous actors. Significantly, it was in 1631 that he produced the first of seven lord mayors' pageants, *Londons jus honorarium*, for the Haberdashers' Company.⁷⁴ Heywood had long been interested in the life and history of the capital, as can be seen from the vivid descriptions of London landmarks and the references to its folklore in *Edward IV*.

It is worth noting, too, that his last substantial work was *The exemplary lives and memorable acts of nine of the most worthy women in the world* (1640), a collection of

⁷² A. Holaday, 'Thomas Heywood's *Troia Britannica* and *The ages*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 45 (1946), pp. 430–9.

⁷³ T. Heywood, *The Iron Age* (London, Nicholas Okes, 1632: (2nd edn.) / 13340), Note to the Reader

⁷⁴ The others were *Londini artium & scientarium scaturigo* (1632, for the Haberdashers); *Londini emporia* (1633, Clothworkers); *Londini sinus salutis* (1635, Ironmongers); *Londini speculum* (1637, Haberdashers); *Porta pietatis* (1638, Drapers); and *Londini status pacatus* (1639, Drapers).

biographies about prominent women from the Bible and English history, which concluded with a chapter on Margaret of Anjou.⁷⁵ While her inclusion reflects the esteem in which Heywood held Queen Margaret, the chapter devoted to her is a short, relatively impartial account of the major events of the Wars of the Roses. Edward's role in Margaret and Henry's downfall is touched upon as briefly as possible, as Heywood was reluctant to 'meddle with any impertinences, not genuine with the particular actions, and fortunes of the Queene Margaret, the subject now in hand'. His marriage to Elizabeth Woodville is, however, described as the cause of 'much trouble in the Land'; and the chapter closes with the murder of Margaret's son, after Edward has struck him across the face. While this brief work is not of particular note, it confirms that the 'standard' features of Tudor histories of Edward's reign were being replicated long into the seventeenth century, and that Heywood's own interest in the fifteenth century clearly endured until the end of his life.

Heywood and *Edward IV*

Although Heywood is widely acknowledged as the author of *Edward IV*, none of the earliest surviving quartos of the play bears his name or that of any other collaborator. The first attribution to Heywood comes in Francis Kirkman's *Catalogue* (1661), followed closely by references in various lives of English playwrights.⁷⁶ Since then, with

⁷⁵ T. Heywood, *The exemplary lives and memorable acts of nine the most worthy women in the World* (London, Thomas Cotes, 1640: STC (2nd edn.) / 13316), pp. 174, 178-80.

⁷⁶ F. Kirkman, *A true, perfect, and exact catalogue of all the comedies, tragedies, tragi-comedies, pastorals, masques and interludes* (London, Kirkman et al., 1661: Wing (2nd edn.) / K637). Subsequent editions of the *Catalogue* (1671, 1680) restated the attribution. E. Phillips, *Theatrum Poetarum* (London, Charles Smith, 1675: Wing / P2075), p. 176; W. Winstanley, *The Lives of the most Famous English Poets* (London, H. Clark for Samuel Manship, 1687: Wing / W3065), p. 96; G. Langbaine, *Momus Triumphans* (London, Printed for N.C. and sold by Sam. Holford, 1688: Wing / L377), p. 11; and G. Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (Oxford, L.L. for George West and Henry Clements, 1691: Wing / L373), p. 262.

one or two exceptions, few have doubted the attribution.⁷⁷ In his introduction to the most recent edition of *Edward IV*, Richard Rowland maintains that he can offer no more than ‘a partial and qualified confirmation of Heywood’s involvement in the play’, stating that it could possibly represent the ‘sole surviving work of another dramatist’ who either chose not to write again (‘improbable given the play’s success’) or died before being able to do so.⁷⁸ In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, Heywood is here assumed to have been the author of *Edward IV*.

Shakespeare’s history plays typically concentrate upon the relationship between kings, princes, the aristocracy and other prominent figures, with brief interludes in which the common people provide a commentary on important events or furnish a moment of comic relief. *Edward IV Parts One and Two*, by contrast, gives pride of place to the inhabitants of London and to the crown’s dealings with their elected representatives. In his *Tudor Drama and Politics*, David Bevington observes that the two parts of Heywood’s play ‘magnify the role of the citizen in English history as Shakespeare never does. They focus chiefly on the sentimental trials of ordinary people, arguing that such lives warrant a dignified and even tragic expression.’⁷⁹ For many commentators this shift of emphasis is a far from positive development, which by default reflects the overwhelming impact of Shakespeare’s contribution to literary history. Bevington himself ultimately dismisses Heywood’s ‘bourgeois and superficial loyalties’, while Irving Ribner is even harsher in his assessment, claiming (with some justification) that ‘the amount of history in *Edward IV* is so negligible that it is lost under the weight of

⁷⁷ Notably F. G. Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of The English Drama* (2 Vols., London, Reeves and Turner, 1891), Vol. 2, p. 288; and Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. 4, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁸ R. Rowland (ed.), *The First And Second Parts of King Edward IV* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 9.

⁷⁹ D. Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 242.

the sentimental romance'.⁸⁰ One editor of *Edward IV* even quoted in his introduction the words of a contributor to *The Retrospective Review* to the effect that the play was "a long and tedious business," adding that 'King Edward the Fourth, too, would have made a character worthy of Shakespeare's pen ... though our great poet would doubtless have surpassed Heywood in the tragedy of the Shores'.⁸¹ Heywood's work is rarely judged on its own merits, and even then invariably in the context of his relationship to Shakespeare; Charles Lamb's witticism that Heywood 'is a sort of *prose Shakespeare*' encapsulates this mindset.⁸²

It is, however, important to note that contemporaries thought just as highly of both playwrights. The Jacobean dramatist John Webster (1580-1634), for example, in the preface to his tragedy *The White Devil*, grouped together Shakespeare, Heywood and Thomas Dekker (c. 1572-1632), praising their 'copious industry'.⁸³ And although Shakespeare alone found lasting fame, both his and Heywood's plays remained popular with audiences long after they were first published. In 1609, a decade after both parts of *Edward IV* first appeared, one anonymous pamphleteer commented with amazement at the sheer number of spectators who still gathered to see it performed.⁸⁴ The fact that no fewer than six early editions of the text survive, spanning over 25 years (1599-26) further confirms its popularity.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 242, n. 78; Ribner, *English History Play*, p. 277.

⁸¹ B. Field (ed.) *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV. Histories by Thomas Heywood* (London, F. Shorberl for the Shakespeare Society, 1842), pp. vi-vii.

⁸² J. Coldwell (ed.), *Charles Lamb on Shakespeare* (New York, Barnes and Noble, 1978), p. 71

⁸³ E. W. Brennan (ed.), *The White Devil* (London, Ernest Benn, 1966), p. 42.

⁸⁴ Anonymous, *Pimlyco, or, Runne Red-Cap: Tis a mad world at Hogsdon* (London, Printed [by Thomas Purfoot] for Io: Busbie, and Geo: Loftis, 1609: (2nd edn.) / 19936), sig. C1r.

The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV is loosely based on the work of Vergil, Hall, Holinshed, and Stow, as well as on various ballads and popular tales about London history. As is the case in Shakespeare's history plays, Heywood streamlines and telescopes events quite dramatically, compressing the whole of Edward's two reigns and the start of Richard III's into a short narrative. This is clearly apparent from the opening scenes of the play, in which Edward defends his recent marriage to Elizabeth Woodville (1464) against an onslaught from his mother, Cecily, Duchess of York, immediately before the attack on London by the Bastard of Fauconberg (1471). Although Edward and his men offer no support, the citizens manage to repel the invaders without help. In the aftermath, Edward meets one of the leading combatants, Matthew Shore, and his wife, Jane. In a series of scenes developed from the earlier Jane Shore poems, the king persuades Jane to become his mistress under a veiled threat of royal displeasure should she refuse. Edward leaves the capital shortly after, and, while in disguise, encounters a cynical tanner who entertains him at his home. This part of the play is largely derived from *The Tanner of Tamworth* (see above pp. 191-96), though it ends on a far less positive note. Whereas in the ballad Edward richly rewards the tanner for his industry, in the play he gives him a smaller sum of money (which he has just extracted from another of his subjects), and offers to marry him to a wealthy widow, despite the fact that such a marriage would be financially and socially inappropriate for both parties.

In the second half of the play, Edward rides to war against Louis XI (1475), while Jane uses her influence over the king in an attempt to sponsor good works. The invasion of France and subsequent peace negotiations are turned into a cumbersome farce, with the two monarchs concocting a plan to eavesdrop on their treacherous subjects.

Edward returns home basking in Louis' friendship and laden with treasure, while the chorus announces that Louis will soon surprise his 'subtle enemies' and reward them appropriately with 'traitorous recompense'. Edward does not long survive his return to England, appearing only briefly to grant one of Jane's requests for clemency before his death, off-stage, of a seizure. Jane and Matthew Shore then become the focal point of the play, eventually expiring in a ditch, which (we are told) is now known as Shoreditch in their joint memory.

Heywood consistently depicts King Edward as a charming but arrogant predator, thoughtlessly indulging his desires without much thought or care for those he hurts. He arrives too late to defend his own capital, repays the kindness and entertainment given to him by a poor artisan with deceit, pursues women heedless of their rank or their marital status, fails to get the measure of the French, and dies off-stage in an undignified fashion, allowing a far more outrageous bully to take the throne. Unflattering comparisons are drawn between Edward and his brother, Richard, for while the latter lacks the former's superficial affability, their behaviour towards their subjects remains very similar. Edward and the marauding rapists who intend to ransack London in the first scene also share implicit similarities, as both seek power over women by using the threat of violence.

Heywood's *King Edward IV* is not as well known, or, indeed, as well crafted as Shakespeare's history plays, but it casts a fascinating light upon changing perceptions of the king.⁸⁵ It is the only surviving historical drama of its kind in which he features as

⁸⁵ Rowland was impressed by a 2003 'dramatised reading' of the play, possibly its first performance by professional actors since the Caroline period, testifying that even centuries later its scenes of 'explosive

chief protagonist, and, while it eventually fell out of favour, contemporaries hailed it as a successful example of the genre. Although it seems primarily designed to appeal to a London audience by referencing contemporary events, infamous historical episodes and local folklore⁸⁶, it brought together all the strands of contemporary writing about Edward: the scholarship of Hall's and Holinshed's chronicles, the ballads and political poems which framed the popular idea of how a king should behave towards his subjects, and the Jane Shore poems which explored his ambivalent relationship with women. In contrast to the more expensive printed chronicles, the play catered to a wide range of audiences, from illiterate 'groundlings' to wealthy nobles, and the commercial need to attract a diverse crowd ensured that Heywood's work would exert the broadest possible appeal. Much like Shakespeare's enduringly popular Richard III, Heywood's charming, arrogant and predatory Edward makes a fine antihero, if not an outright villain. It shows just how far the king's reputation had declined by the close of the sixteenth century, at least in terms of the 'common knowledge' upon which Heywood's successors would build.

The Opening Act

From the opening scene of the first part of the play Edward IV is portrayed as a rampant egoist, who is dismissive of the reasonable concerns voiced by others. Although the historical Edward was not entirely innocent of this charge, it is clear that Heywood was less interested in historical accuracy than the need to tell his own story. The scene condenses Edward's entire first reign into 163 lines, taking in his secret

and disturbing political confrontation' and 'moments of considerable pathos' still had a 'surprising' amount of dramatic power. Nevertheless, it is far too long in its intended state, with each of its two parts lasting in excess of three hours, and modern restaging would benefit greatly from significant compression. R. Rowland, 'Two Plays in One: Annotations in the Third Quarto of Edward IV', *Textual Cultures*, 1, No. 1 (2006), p. 46.

⁸⁶ See Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 11-26, for a more in-depth discussion.

marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, the earl of Warwick's abortive mission to France to secure Edward a bride, discontent over the king's reckless behaviour, and Fauconberg's attack on London. As we have seen, Warwick's rebellion, Henry VI's restoration to the throne and Edward's exile are not mentioned. In fact, the only hint concerning these events comes from a reference to Henry VI as being 'late deposed', and a prescient warning from Edward's mother that Warwick will be greatly embarrassed at being made to appear foolish:

Our Noble cousin Warwick, that great Lord ...
When he shall hear his embassy abused,
In this but made an instrument by you,
I know his soul will blush within his bosom,
And shame will sit in scarlet on his brow,
To have his honour touched with this foul blemish.
Son, son! I tell you: that is done by you,
Which yet the child unborn shall rue.⁸⁷

It is, however, Fauconberg rather than Warwick who leads the rebellion against King Edward, drawing 'malcontented commons' to his banner in an attempt to deliver Henry VI from the Tower, not out of affection for the House of Lancaster but in order to gain power and wealth.⁸⁸ This version of events clearly owes a good deal to the playwright's imagination, but it seems likely that a folk memory of Fauconberg's attack upon London Bridge, with which Heywood would have been familiar, may also have

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 85 (sc. 1, line 28, 32-38).

⁸⁸ 'We shall be masters of the Mint ourselves, / And set our stamp on the golden coin. / We'll shoe our neighing coursers with no worse / Than the purest silver that is sold in Cheap[side]. / At Leadenhall we'll sell pearls by the peck, / As now the mealmen use to sell their meal. / In Westminster we'll keep a solemn court, / And build it bigger to receive our men. Ibid., pp. 94-5 (Part 1, sc. 2, ll. 49-56).

proved influential. This dramatic incident had, after all, figured prominently the London Chronicles.⁸⁹

Edward meanwhile, responds to his mother's anger and distress at his marriage with joking banter:⁹⁰

Duchess: Son, I tell ye, you have done – you know not what!

Edward: I have married a woman, else I am deceived, mother.⁹¹

His decision to court Elizabeth Woodville is clearly impulsive. When Cecily asks why he sent Warwick to France in search of a bride if he had already decided to marry a commoner, Edward confesses that Elizabeth 'being nearer hand, and coming the way – I cannot tell you how – we concluded'.⁹² In response to her warning about the manifold problems that he is creating for himself, such as jeopardising his relationship with the French and his most powerful subject (problems which had been considered at length by Hall, Holinshed and many others in their chronicles), Edward plays the card of English nationalism:

Tush, mother. You are deceived. All true subjects shall have cause to thank God, to have their king born of a true Englishwoman. I tell you, it was never well since we matched with strangers ...⁹³

These remarks would certainly have resonated with late sixteenth-century audiences.

They echoed Tudor concerns about national and religious identity, especially given that

⁸⁹ *GCL*, pp. 217-27; Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*, p. 185.

⁹⁰ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 84 (Part 1, sc. 1, ll. 1-54).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84, (Part 1, sc. 1, ll. 1-2).

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 85, (Part 1, sc. 1, ll. 18-9).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 86, (Part 1, sc. 1, ll. 39-42).

Elizabeth I, like Edward IV and Edward VI, was 'born of a true Englishwoman', whereas her Catholic sister Mary was the daughter of a Spaniard. They may also have reflected current anxieties about the childless Elizabeth I and the question of who would succeed her. But, in a dramatic context, they vividly reflect Edward's selfish high-handedness; he truly believes that his people will not only agree with his decision but 'thank God' for it. In this, he may be relying upon what his fawning courtiers, Howard and Sellinger, say to him.⁹⁴ On receiving word of Fauconberg's attack, immediately afterwards, his response is not to hasten to London's defence, but to indulge 'in feast and jollity' with them and his family.⁹⁵ He does not even warn the mayor and people of London to prepare for battle, simply ordering the messenger to wait for further orders and thereby conspicuously failing in his duties as king.⁹⁶ The entire scene takes its cue from Thomas More's *History*, particularly in the language used in the exchange between Edward and his mother, contrasting Cecily's fury with Edward's merriment as well including Edward's assurances of his fertility.⁹⁷ While Heywood does not appear to have shared More's overt didacticism, his decision to present the opening scene in this way reveals a desire to convey the same instructive, moral message as his precursors.

The attack on London is repelled thanks to the brave efforts of the mayor, prominent citizens such as the goldsmith Mathew Shore, and the companies mustered by the

⁹⁴ Howard and Sellinger clearly irritate the duchess, leading her to say 'Ay, ay, you are the spaniels of the court, / and thus you fawn and sooth your wanton king'; and later, addressing Sellinger, 'Thou art a minion and a flatterer'. *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 90 (Part 1, sc.1, ll, 73-4, 125).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91 (Part 1, sc. 1, l. 155).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91 (Part 1, sc. 1, l. 159).

⁹⁷ In More, Edward is reputed to have said that Elizabeth Woodville 'is a widow and hath already children, by God's Blessed Lady I am a bachelor and have some too: and so each of us hath a proof that neither of us is like to be barren', while in Heywood Edward says that 'this wench, mother, is a widow, and hath made proof of her valour, and for anything I know, I am as like to do the deed as John Gray, her husband, was' *TM*, p. 64; Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 86 (Part 1, sc. 1, ll. 47-50).

merchant guilds. The defenders are all portrayed as loyal and resolute in their allegiance to Edward, declaring themselves his 'true and faithful subjects'.⁹⁸ Edward, however, does not arrive until the fighting is over and the rebels have been driven from the city. His glib assurances that 'So soon we gathered us a power / We dallied not, but made all haste we could'⁹⁹ ring hollow in light of the fact that he was previously more agitated about the arrival of supper than the safety of his kingdom.¹⁰⁰

Along with the telescoping of events and omission of crucial incidents leading to the outbreak of civil war, Edward's lack of concern for the security of his capital provides a striking example of Heywood's preference for drama over historical accuracy. The chronicles of Edward Hall, Richard Grafton and Raphael Holinshed, which, from a close reading of the play, provided the basis of the narrative, alike stress Edward's total commitment to the defence of London.¹⁰¹ Beyond overwhelming strategic concerns, he had personal interests at stake, as his wife and children remained in the Tower and, according to Holinshed, were 'not in very good safegard'. The 1577 and 1587 editions of Holinshed's *Chronicle* note that the king dispatched 'fifteene hundred of the choysest soldiers he hadde about him, that they myghte help to resist the enimies' until he had gathered a larger army himself 'to come therewith to the rescue of the Citie'. Holinshed even implies that, had Edward not acted so quickly, some Londoners might have been tempted to support Fauconberg through a combination of regard for the Earl of Warwick, 'euill dispositions' and a desire among some to 'bee partakers of the spoyle'.¹⁰² Instead, Heywood turned to Fabian and the *Great Chronicle*, which

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 102-3, 104 (Part 1, sc. 4, l. 27-8, 30-6, 63).

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 124 (Part 1, sc. 9, l. 206-7).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 91 (Part 1, sc. 1, l. 162).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰² Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, p. 1341.

suggest that the city was defended without royal assistance, and to Stow, who only briefly mentions that a 'fresh companie' belonging to Earl Rivers joined the fighting.¹⁰³ Heywood's play is, ultimately, a narrative about the heroism of ordinary Londoners and the tyranny of the House of York; it would have failed miserably had it depicted the citizens as self-serving opportunists cowed only by the threat of justified retribution.

In the aftermath of the battle Edward impulsively rewards the defenders of London, having apparently only met them for the first time moments before, by knighting them all on the field of battle with little pomp and circumstance.¹⁰⁴ Matthew Shore is the only one who declines the honour, using language similar to that attributed to the celebrated former mayor, William Walworth, in John Stow's account of the Peasants' Revolt (1381).¹⁰⁵ In other works of the Tudor and Stuart period, such as Deloney's *Jack of Newberry*, the refusal of an honour is a chance to satirise the pomposity of the royal court.¹⁰⁶ However, Heywood instead chooses to emphasise the dramatic irony of Edward's response, given that he will shortly after cuckold Shore: 'Well, be it as thou wilt. Some other way / We will devise to quittance thy deserts, / And haste to help you in this needful time'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *GCL*, pp. 218-20; Stow, *A Survey of London*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁴ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 124-5 (Part 1, sc. 9, ll. 189, 216-223).

¹⁰⁵ 'The Maior answered, that hee was neither worthie nor able to take such estate vpon him, for he was but a Marchant, and had to liue by his Marchandise onely'. Stow, *A Survey of London*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁶ F. O. Mann (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Deloney* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1912), pp. 38, 49.

¹⁰⁷ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 126 (Part 1, sc. 9, ll. 240-2).

Jane Shore and her relationship with Edward constitute the main focus of the play¹⁰⁸. As we have seen, this topic had already inspired several other contemporary poems, such as Churchyard's *Shore's Wife* (see above pp. 196-201) and Chute's *Beawtie Dishonoured* (1593). Heywood goes further than most, however, by turning her from a fallen woman trying to use her position to help others into a personification of London, who is forced by circumstances into becoming the victim of two oppressive kings. Edward and Jane first meet at a feast thrown by the mayor, Sir John Crosby, to celebrate the recent triumph over Fauconberg, at which the mayor, a widower, has invited 'Fair Mistress Shore' to act as hostess.¹⁰⁹ The event itself is a complete fabrication on Heywood's part. The mayor of London at the time of Fauconberg's rebellion was not Crosby, as Heywood must have known from his reading of Stow and the London Chronicles. Crosby was in fact sheriff during the mayoralty of Sir John Stockton in 1471.¹¹⁰ He was, however, well-known in sixteenth-century London because of a 'rags to riches' tale about his foundling origin (recounted in scene 16 of *Edward IV*, although John Stow had previously dismissed it as a 'fable').¹¹¹ His magnificent house, said by Stow to be 'verie large and beautifull, and the highest at that time in London', was also a local landmark and, when *Edward IV* was written, notorious as the home of the deeply unpopular money lender and lord mayor, Sir John Spencer.¹¹² Edward IV was still remembered for his feasts and lavish entertainments,

¹⁰⁸ In the first half of the play nine of the twenty-three scenes are given over to the Shore's and their plight, while in the second the total rises to thirteen of twenty-three scenes, meaning that overall a little less than half of the play is given over to their plot. This also does not take into account that the scenes involving the doomed couple are among the longest in the play and the most narratively and dramatically important, such as Fauconberg's invasion of London.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161 (Part 1, sc. 16, lines 43-4, 50-1).

¹¹⁰ *GCL*, p. 213; Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*, p. 183; Stow, *A Survay of London*, pp. 173-4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 174; B. Weinreb *et al.*, *The London Encyclopaedia* (London, Macmillan, 2008), p. 223.

as is apparent not only from the numerous chronicle sources,¹¹³ but even occasional asides in Heywood's own play. Scene 16, however, reverses the traditional relationship between royal host and guest, with the king being invited to celebrate at a subject's house rather than providing entertainment in his palace. Heywood adopts this stratagem partly in order to draw unfavourable comparisons between the munificent Crosby and Spencer's miserly behaviour, implicitly praising the generosity of one while attacking the avarice of the other. By emphasising the domesticity of the scene Heywood is also able to emphasise the depravity of King Edward's behaviour. This is not an official royal function at court, but a private celebration at the mayor's personal residence.

From his first interaction with the other guests, Edward emerges as an inconsiderate, lecherous predator, who masks his desires with ambiguous language.¹¹⁴ With extraordinary tactlessness he inquires after the lady mayoress, not realising that she is dead and so revealing how little he knows about the lives of his most prominent subjects. He openly flirts with Jane in front of her lawful husband and her 'official spouse', the mayor. His behaviour is encouraged by his sycophantic cronies, Sellinger and Howard,¹¹⁵ the former crudely boasting that 'Were Sellinger a king, / He could afford Shore's wife to be a Queen'.¹¹⁶ In this context, 'afford' can mean 'to allow' or 'to grant', but Jane is also being described as a commodity to be bought and sold. This prompts Edward to confess in an aside that his 'proud, saucy, roving eye' and 'traitor

¹¹³ To take just one example, Hall repeats the story of Edward's hunt with the mayor and aldermen of London from the Chronicles. *ULY*, f. 4r.

¹¹⁴ The emphasis upon Edward's licentiousness that Heywood maintains throughout the play can be seen as a development of pre-existing moral criticism of the king, especially by Thomas More. A. Pollard, 'The Sex life of Edward IV' (unpublished paper presented at the University of East Anglia 20th April 2015).

¹¹⁵ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 162-5 (Part 1, sc. 16, ll. 84-177).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163, (Part 1, sc. 16, l. 118).

heart' have become infatuated with her.¹¹⁷ For this scene of men haggling over a woman's value and Edward's lust for what he cannot possess Heywood must have been looking to Edward's courtship of Elizabeth Woodville in Thomas More for inspiration. Woodville's statement that she was not good enough to be Edward's queen, but too good to be his whore, is of particular note; the anecdote had spread through English works quite late after Edward's reign, from More to Hall and others, but had had currency on continent as early as 1468 and was, according to Mancini, well-known in Edward's lifetime.¹¹⁸ It is plausible to assume, therefore, that the story was well-known to the audience for which Heywood was writing and an important facet of Edward's contemporary character. It also begins to link Shore's position in the play to that of Woodville herself; when Shore and Woodville meet the queen angrily cries that 'I may take your place; you have taken mine'.¹¹⁹

Edward refers to Jane as 'but a blowze' (a coarse, ruddy-faced wench) compared to his new wife, but, while 'Bess' is fair and noble, Jane is pretty and, more importantly, readily available.¹²⁰ In a toast he proclaims: 'Lady Mayoress / This full carouse we drink to you; / And you must pledge us, but yet no more / Than you shall please to answer us withal'.¹²¹ As is the case with Sellinger's earlier comments, this seemingly

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 163 (Part 1, sc. 16, li 120-4).

¹¹⁸ TM, pp. 60-1; C. Fahy, 'The Marriage of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville: A New Italian Source' EHR, 76, No. 301 (1961), pp. 660-672; D. Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard the Third*, p. 61

¹¹⁹ The queen goes on to reconcile with Shore, suggesting that if their roles were reversed she too would have found it hard to resist Edward's aggressive advances. See Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 249 (Part Two, sc. 10, ll. 10-22; sc. 10, ll. 90-129).

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 163 (Part 1, sc. 16, li 125-7). As, strikingly, was the case regarding Elizabeth Woodville in scene one, further emphasising the link between Woodville and Shore.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 164 (Part 1, sc. 16, li 139- 42).

innocent request furnishes another example of innuendo, since Edward clearly expects to make a sexual conquest.¹²²

Edward's infatuation with Jane is clearly undignified and inappropriate; and Heywood is careful to point out that even the king himself recognises how badly it dishonours his wife and the husband of the woman he yearns for.¹²³ Self-knowledge does not stop him, however. In fact, just as he ignored news of rebellion in Part 1, scene 1, so the arrival of letters from the Duke of Burgundy and the Constable of France, offering to help him to claim his ancestral rights in France, now fails to distract him. Indeed, he mutters to himself that 'A woman's aid, that hath more power than France / To Crown us, or to kill us with mischaunce'.¹²⁴

Fearing that the others at table can see his 'folly', Edward departs suddenly with hasty excuses but not before informing Jane that she has 'caused our parting at this time'.¹²⁵ To a Tudor audience such behaviour may well have constituted his greatest mistake so far. Absence from a communal feast signalled disrespect for the host and other guests, as well as a more general 'separation from fellowship'. Such conduct was more than a social *faux-pas*: even *The Book of Common Prayer* described this kind of ingratitude as a 'great injury and wrong'.¹²⁶ The end of the scene emphasises how badly Edward has behaved in leaving an uneaten banquet and a bereft host who

¹²² See, for example, *The Captives or the Lost Recovered*, Act 3, sc. 1, ll. 123, 126; and the final speech of Part one of *Edward IV*. P. Merchant (ed.), *Thomas Heywood: Three Marriage Plays* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 221; Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 203 (Part 1, sc. 23, l. 148).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 165 (Part 1, sc. 16, ll. 156-63).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165 (Part 1, sc. 16, ll. 148-55). It is worth noting that in his first reign the historical Edward was known to delay taking action until a crisis erupted, as in his late response to Warwick's rebellion.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165 (Part 1, sc. 16, ll. 174-5).

¹²⁶ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 312, 336; *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* (London, 1910), pp. 382-3.

cannot understand what he has done to insult his sovereign.¹²⁷ Londoners, who were at the time of the play's first performance only just emerging from five years of food shortages, would have been as disgusted by the waste of food as by the implicit insult to their civic pride.¹²⁸

By the very next scene Edward has vanquished any remaining scruples, and comes in disguise to the Shores' workshop to woo Jane. His appearance is itself a serious abuse of power, as it shows in the bluntest possible way royal authority forcing itself into the private space of an ordinary citizen. Edward's aggressive pursuit of his desires is clear from his first, suggestive words in this scene;¹²⁹ and later in the play Jane memorably describes her courting as a 'violent siege ... to break into my plighted faith'.¹³⁰ Although she responds flirtatiously at points to his advances, she is understandably reluctant to commit a mortal sin. Edward, however, has no such qualms and only Matthew Shore's sudden reappearance is able briefly to restrain him.¹³¹ The best that can be said of his behaviour is that he makes no attempt to physically coerce Jane. The fact remains, however, that he pursues her relentlessly and 'no answer will suffice' to dissuade him.¹³² Heywood is keen to emphasise the disparity in power between monarch and subject, and to show how easily an unscrupulous ruler can tyrannise his people. Edward's doggedness forces the Shores into an impossible situation, in which they must either be loyal to their sovereign or to each other, against a latent threat of retribution should they choose the wrong option. As one character says, 'it is likely that his love, / which now admires ye, will convert to hate; / And who knows not, a

¹²⁷ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 165-6 (Part 1, sc. 16, ll. 178-201).

¹²⁸ J. M. Richards, *Elizabeth I* (London, Routledge, 2012), p. 151.

¹²⁹ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 167 (Part 1, sc. 17, l. 19).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167 (Part 1, sc. 19, ll. 10-1).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 179 (Part 1, sc. 17, ll. 132-3).

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 180 (Part 1, sc. 19, l. 9).

prince's hate is death?'¹³³ Significantly, what eventually persuades Jane to become Edward's mistress is not his honeyed words or her friend Mistress Blage's hard-nosed calculation about how much wealth and influence she could gain from the relationship, but a resigned acceptance of her inability to do otherwise.¹³⁴ In keeping with the play's portrayal of the king so far, Edward disregards her obvious lack of enthusiasm and flippantly dismisses her concerns.¹³⁵

Interesting parallels can be drawn between Edward's licentious behaviour and the lack of restraint displayed by Fauconberg's 'base rogues' and 'dirty scum of rascal peasantry'.¹³⁶ During the attack on London one of his lieutenants brags that 'maidenheads [will] be valued at just / nothing! And sack be sold by the sallet!'¹³⁷ Jane's (and therefore the city's) vulnerability is made explicit in Part One, Scene 4, when Fauconberg boasts 'Shore, listen to me. Your wife is mine, that's flat. / This night, in thine own house, she sleeps with me'.¹³⁸ Fears for his wife's safety lead the goldsmith to fight harder, as he subsequently explains:

First, to maintain King Edward's royalty.

Next, to defend the city's liberty.

But chiefly Jane, to keep thee from the foil

Of him that to my face did vow to spoil.

Had he prevailed, where then had been our lives?

Dishonoured our daughters; ravished our fair wives;

Possessed our goods, and set our servants free;

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 180 (Part 1, sc. 19, ll. 25-7).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 184 (Part 1, sc. 19, ll. 108-9).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184 (Part 1, sc. 19, ll. 110-116).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109 (Part 1, sc. 5, ll. 102-3).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107 (Part 1, sc. 5, ll. 66, 70-1).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103 (Part 1, sc. 4, ll. 46-7).

Yet all this nothing to the loss of thee.¹³⁹

Shore's worst fears are realised not by Fauconberg's unruly rabble but by Edward himself, who betrays his trust, coerces his wife into becoming his mistress, and then forces the cuckolded husband into exile, leaving the civic authorities powerless to help him.

Further comparisons underscore the unflattering similarities between Edward and the insurgents. A rebel soldier cries 'Havoc', the signal to give no quarter and plunder freely, which would generally have been ordered by a royal commander.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, Edward's conduct towards the Shores might be described as a type of pillage. Fauconberg jokes with his captain about indiscriminately knighting 'all these rogues and rascals' in his army,¹⁴¹ while Edward's first action upon arriving too late to fight for the city is to knight his subjects *en masse*. This point would resonate with a contemporary audience, which would vividly recall the inglorious events of the Earl of Essex's 1599 campaign in Ireland. Despite the ensuing *débâcle*, Essex used his military prerogative to confer knighthoods upon his officers with a reckless profligacy that enraged Queen Elizabeth.¹⁴² Finally, both Edward and Fauconberg behave familiarly with their subordinates in a way that would have been unthinkable under normal circumstances and which seems especially pronounced when Edward disguises himself as a commoner.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115 (Part 1, sc. 8, ll. 15-20).

¹⁴⁰ This is the context in which Shakespeare uses the phrase in Act 3, sc. 1, l. 273 of *Julius Caesar*. D. Daniell (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: Julius Caesar* (Arden, third series, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1998), p. 251.

¹⁴¹ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 117-8 (Part 1, sc. 9, ll. 25-43).

¹⁴² M. James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 428.

From this perspective, almost every aspect of the scenes considered above appears tailor-made to damage Edward's reputation by subverting the established norms of society, often at the expense of historical fact and traditional, relatively benign portrayals of the king. As we have already seen, his licentiousness, or at least his capacity for self-indulgence, had always been noted, even in the earliest accounts. Heywood, however, makes them his most prominent, defining feature, thereby transforming Edward into a caricature suitable for his morality play. In doing so, he created the image of a lustful, malign figure that would influence other writers.

Edward IV and the Tanner

Throughout the first part of the play, Edward frequently adopts a disguise so that he can walk among his subjects unrecognised. This was not itself unusual, being a common trope of Tudor and Stuart drama and one that even Shakespeare deployed in, for example, *Henry V*.¹⁴³ In Heywood's play, however, Edward changes his appearance and employs highly-charged language in order to engage in disturbing and transgressive behaviour. This is most obvious in the Shore scenes, but his exchange with John Hobs, the Tanner of Tamworth, is also redolent with meaning. Even the pseudonyms that Edward and Sellinger use in their conversation with Hobs raise alarm. While king Edward's choice of 'Ned' and Sir Thomas Sellinger's 'Tom' are obviously shortened versions of their own names, they echo those of the rebellious 'Tom' Fauconberg and his captain 'Ned' Spicing, who disappear from the play just as Hobs enters it. The casual, overfamiliar banter between 'Ned' and 'Tom' echoes that between Fauconberg and Spicing, in tone if not in content, ensuring that yet another

¹⁴³ T. W. Craik (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: Henry V* (Arden, third series, London, Routledge, 1995), pp. 251-78 (Act 4, Sc. 1).

connection is made in the audience's mind between the rebel captain and the monarch.

It is worth pausing briefly to compare the scenes featuring a disguised king in Shakespeare's history plays with those in Heywood's *Edward IV*. Shakespeare's kings always remain dignified figures of authority even while in disguise. In Act Three Scene 1 of *Henry VI part 3*, the king encounters two huntsmen while attempting to escape from battle. Although the latter are initially cautious in their approach, they soon make it very clear that they not only see through Henry's disguise but regard themselves as 'true subjects' to King Edward.¹⁴⁴ Even when threatened in this way, Henry VI maintains a distant, even forensic attitude towards his captors, seeking only to understand why they will not acknowledge him as their rightful ruler.¹⁴⁵ Though he complains about the fickleness of his former subjects, he nevertheless surrenders without a fight, declaring bravely that 'My crown is in my heart, not on my head'.¹⁴⁶

A similar, more celebrated, incident occurs in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Over the course of the second tetralogy of history plays, Henry develops from a drunken playboy into a conquering hero, in the process rejecting his old life and assuming a new, impressive role as a model ruler. In the famous first scene in *Henry V*, Act 4, he borrows a cloak to wander amongst his soldiers unrecognised before the next day's battle. In disguise Henry can interact with his subjects as 'but a man' and allow a level of familiarity that would otherwise be unacceptable. This exchange is played for ironic comedy, particularly when the soldiers talk about the king without realising that he is present,

¹⁴⁴ 3 *Henry VI*, p. 266 (Act 3, sc. 1, l. 93).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.266 (Act 3, sc. 1, ll. 78-9).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.265 (Act 3, sc. 1, l. 62).

but it also allows the characters to interact as equals and share their hopes and fears in ways that would otherwise be improbable¹⁴⁷. If *Henry V* as a whole can be regarded as Shakespeare's attempt to define what makes a great king, then Act 4 scene 4 shows precisely how a monarch in disguise should address his subjects: he may exploit the opportunity to allow unaccustomed familiarity, but must always be mindful of the dignity and responsibility of his office.¹⁴⁸

In sharp contrast, Heywood's 'affable' and 'merry' Edward IV appears to enjoy and even encourage the intimacy that develops when he is interacting with others outside the conventional boundaries. Although his banter comes at the cost of appearing less dignified than his disguised predecessors in Shakespeare's plays, Edward seems remarkably at ease with his subjects, and capable of charming them even without the obvious threat of royal displeasure. Comparisons are drawn in the play between Henry VI and Edward which reflect the popular perceptions of the two monarchs already current in the Elizabethan period: Henry is simply a 'devout man', whereas Edward is described as 'a frank franion' (a recklessly exuberant person), 'a merry companion', and someone who 'loves a wench well'.¹⁴⁹ John Hobs, the character who speaks these lines acts as a type of chorus, presenting a conventional image of Edward which is then subverted by Heywood to appear far more sinister. Edward's affability is clearly another of his many disguises.

The framework for the encounter between Hobs and Edward IV is provided by the ballad *King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth*, which, as we have already

¹⁴⁷ Craik, *Arden Shakespeare: Henry V*, pp. 264-5, 266, 269-70 (Act 4, sc. 1, ll. 141-2, 105-112, 191-226).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 270-5, (Act 4, sc. 1, ll. 219-81).

¹⁴⁹ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 142 (Part 1, sc. 13, ll. 23-4).

seen, would have been familiar to the audience (see above p. 191-93). Indeed, the inclusion of this fictional incident must have been intended as a selling point, as the play's first subtitle refers directly to it.¹⁵⁰ Even so, the ballad tradition usually celebrated the harmony between a generous king and his subject, since, although the social divide between them remained unbridgeable, it was nevertheless possible for them to support each other. Where the ballads had ultimately celebrated a form of common humanity, however, Heywood's play introduces an unexpectedly discordant note. Certainly, Hobs's appearance is more than a simple vehicle for bawdy comedy, as we can see from the virtual omission of the incident involving an exchange of horses.¹⁵¹ Whereas the anonymous tanner of the ballad can boast of his self-sufficiency, Hobs carefully calculates the profits and losses of his business and makes atrocious puns about the cost of 'corn and cow hides'.¹⁵² The anonymous tanner offers Edward a modest but heartfelt gift of 'clouting leather' for his shoes, while Hobs, on the other hand, begins by complaining bitterly about the declining sales of clout leather and ends as the butt of jokes about his ungainly 'clouted shoes'.¹⁵³ Tanning and leatherworking were among the most important industries in Elizabethan England, being subject to some of the most stringent regulatory measures devised by the Tudor state. The 1563 Act 'touching tanners, couriours, shoemakers, and other artyficers occupyeng the cutting of Leather' (5. Eliz. I. c.8) included, among its many provisions, a complete ban on the tanning of certain hides, including the 'bull's hide' that Hobs

¹⁵⁰ The play's full title is *The First and Second Parts of King Edward the Fourth: Containing his merry pastime with the Tanner of Tamworth; as also his love to fair Mistress Shore, her great promotion, fall, misery, and lastly, the lamentable death of both her and her husband.*

¹⁵¹ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 141 (Part 1, sc. 13, ll. 1-12).

¹⁵² Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol. 5, p. 76, st. 10; Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 134-5 (Part 1, sc. 11, ll. 12-19, 25-6).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-4, 203 (Part 1, sc. 11, ll. 7-11 and sc. 23, l. 147).

carries back from market in the first scene.¹⁵⁴ William Harrison's *Description of England*, which opens *Holinshed's Chronicles*, was unequivocal in its support for these 'good lawes',¹⁵⁵ but not everyone agreed,¹⁵⁶ and the regulations had to be redrafted in 1604 because they proved unworkable.¹⁵⁷ Like the Elizabethan playhouses, tanneries were confined to the outskirts of the city, being ubiquitous in the places where *Edward IV* would have been first performed.¹⁵⁸

The portrayal of Hobs the Tanner helps us to understand the economic and social context in which Heywood was writing and the extent to which the historical figure of Edward IV was being submerged under a raft of contentious issues that preoccupied late sixteenth-century Londoners. Sometimes these issues are addressed directly, as when Edward asks the tanner if he would like a patent so that he can exercise a monopoly over the leather trade in his locality. Hobs's refusal, initially reflecting his protestant sensibilities, develops into a more general condemnation of government practice:

By the mass and the matins, I like not those pattens!
Sirrah, they that have them do as the priests in old
Time: buy and sell the sins of the People. So they make
The King believe they mend what's amiss, and, for money,
They make the thing worse than it is.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133 (Part 1, sc. 11, l. 5).

¹⁵⁵ Holinshed (1587), Vol. 1, p. 212.

¹⁵⁶ See G. Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (London, Methuen & Co., 1908), p. 257; I. W. Archer, 'The London lobbies in the sixteenth century', *Historical Journal*, 31, (1988), pp. 17-44.

¹⁵⁷ Cited in L. A. Clarkson, 'English Economic Policy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Case of the Leather Industry', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 38 (1965), p. 150 n. 4.

¹⁵⁸ M. Reddan and A. W. Clapham, *Survey of London: Volume 9, the Parish of St Helen, Bishopsgate, Part I* (London, London County Council, 1924), pp. 19, 24; W. H. Black, *History and Antiquities of the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers of the City of London* (London, Edward J. Francis, 1871), p. 88

¹⁵⁹ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 144 (Part 1., sc. 13, ll. 72-79).

This is exactly the kind of criticism that was being voiced in parliament and the country at large when *Edward IV* was first performed and which would have resonated strongly with the audience.¹⁶⁰ Hobs unknowingly rejects what it is Edward's royal prerogative to give, while expressing the annoyance felt about the abuses committed by royal favourites who exploited the system.

Perhaps because of Hobs's outspokenness, Edward embarks upon a prolonged and rather sinister attempt to ascertain his political affiliations, even baiting him into speaking treason:

Edward: Say'th whether lowest thou better Harry or Edward.

Hobs: Nay, that's counsel; and two may keep it, if one be away.

Edward: Shall I say my conscience? I think Harry is the true king.

Shortly afterwards Hobs actually asserts that 'Edward is but an usurper, and a fool, and a coward',¹⁶¹ clearly hoping that the tanner will condemn himself by agreeing. In some respects Edward's behaviour recalls that of his predecessors in the original ballads. In the '*King and the Barker*', for instance, the king employs a hunting expedition as an opportunity to discover more about the loyalty of one of his magnates.¹⁶² Such tactics are not, however, apparent in the immediate precursor ballads to *Edward IV*, although in the context of the play they are integral to Edward's devious and rather threatening *modus operandi*. As one Londoner in a later scene bitterly observes, everyone is at his

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, MP Francis Moore's 1601 speech complaining about royal monopolies. A. Harding and M. A. Phillips, 'Moore, Francis (1559-1621), of East Ilsey and South Fawley, Berks', in Hasler (ed.), *House of Commons 1558-1603*, Vol. 3, pp. 72-4.

¹⁶¹ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 142-3 (Part 1, scene 13, ll. 38-41, 49-58).

¹⁶² Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. 5, p. 79, st. 28.

mercy when he arrives in disguise: 'to survey the manners of our city, / Or what occasion else may like himself'.¹⁶³

Even without recognising the dangers inherent in his position, Hobs nevertheless avoids the pitfalls of interacting with royalty in a way that the other characters conspicuously fail to do. Like the huntsmen in *Henry VI Part 3*, he confirms that he is loyal to Edward as the reigning monarch, but 'akin to Sutton Windmill' he can 'grind which way so e'er the wind blow. If it be Harry, [he] can say 'well fare Lancaster'; if it be Edward, [he] can sing / "York, York for my money"'.¹⁶⁴ Hobs's pragmatic approach passes muster; and he is even praised by Sellinger for his shrewd sense of self-preservation. Although the dynastic upheavals of the Wars of the Roses by then seemed in the distant past, the religious and political conflicts that had erupted during the reigns of the protestant Edward VI and the Catholic Mary remained in living memory. Like More, Hall, and the more recent authors of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, Heywood sought to use the past to illuminate and instruct the present. It seems that, when writing this part of the play he may have been looking ahead to the aftermath of Elizabeth I's death and the arrival of a new monarch, whoever he might be.

Heywood's Edward and the question of money

Shortly after Edward and the tanner first meet, Heywood includes a brief scene involving two royal huntsmen who complain bitterly that they have not encountered the king in person, as he 'would have rained ... showers of gold' upon them.¹⁶⁵ This

¹⁶³ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 185 (Part 1, sc. 20, ll. 7-9).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143 (Part 1, sc. 13, ll. 45-8). The refrain beginning 'York, York' is from a ballad recorded in the Stationers' Register in November 1582. Arber, *Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers*, Vol. 2, p. 416.

¹⁶⁵ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 140 (Part 1, sc. 12, ll. 7-8).

exchange is obviously intended to recall the ballad tradition, where, as we have seen, the archetypal king is expected to reward loyal service with a conspicuous display of largesse. However, as has also been pointed out in earlier chapters of this thesis, the historical Edward IV left his youthful generosity behind and acquired a reputation for avarice, particularly towards the end of his life.¹⁶⁶ The changes that Heywood makes to the traditional disguised-king narrative reveal that, while he was aware of the ballads, and capable of using them to provide a framework for his play, he was more directly inspired by the historical evidence when it suited his purpose.

At the dénouement of *Part One*, Edward rewards the tanner for his 'sport' with 'princely kindness': a pardon for his son, a gift of £40 to cover his expenses and the offer of an arranged marriage with a wealthy widow who has recently arrived at court to pay a benevolence to the king in person. The son plays no real part in the play, being mentioned only in passing as a 'knave' who Hobs fears will one day be hanged,¹⁶⁷ and whose sole purpose is to demonstrate that even a mercenary king can show mercy. The proposed marriage is, as previously mentioned, completely inappropriate for both parties. The widow wants nothing to do with a humble tanner, while Hobs derides an additional gift of £20 made by her to Edward in exchange for a single kiss, remarking that 'Had she as many / twenty pound bags as I have knobs of bark in my tan-fat, / she might kiss them away in a quarter of a year'.¹⁶⁸ Edward observes the exchange with amusement, having already obtained what he wants from

¹⁶⁶ See above, pp. 68-9, 104-5, 111-2; and *EIV*, pp. 248, 380, 423.

¹⁶⁷ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 152 (Part 1, sc. 14, ll. 99-112).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203 (Part 1, sc. 23, ll. 143-8). The incident is lifted directly from the Great Chronicle of London but presented in a more sinister fashion. *GCL*, p. 223

the old woman, or, as he calls her before she hands over the money, this 'gallant, lusty girl'.¹⁶⁹

The position of wealthy widows like the one in Heywood's play presented problems throughout the medieval period, and even in the late sixteenth century remained a source of tension.¹⁷⁰ The very first lines of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, refer to time passing slowly "Like to a step dame or a dowager / Long withering out a young man's revenue".¹⁷¹ Although there was a substantial body of English law dealing with questions of dower and inheritance, much of it broadly in favour of widows, the historical Edward IV had an appalling record in his dealings with them.¹⁷² His treatment of the Countess of Warwick in 1472 and of the Dowager Countess of Oxford in 1475 has been aptly described by Charles Ross as 'shabby and sordid', as in both cases he overturned centuries of tradition in order to disinherit them and enrich his brothers.¹⁷³ His later appropriation of the Mowbray inheritance for his son, Richard, Duke of York, was facilitated by a discreditable attempt to persuade the dowager duchess of Norfolk to surrender land that was rightfully hers and accept 'a share ... which was less than her due'.¹⁷⁴ In a more general sense, his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville (the widow of Sir John Grey), also allowed the king to defy social conventions. The appearance of the widow in *Edward IV* allowed Heywood to evoke memories of the historical Edward's exploitative treatment of his wealthy

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 202 (Part 1, sc. 23, l. 122).

¹⁷⁰ See R. E. Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies: The Problem of Late Medieval Dowagers' in T. Pollard (ed.), *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History* (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1984), pp. 15-35.

¹⁷¹ T. R. Griffiths, *Shakespeare in Production: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 87.

¹⁷² Pollard, 'The Sex life of Edward IV' (unpublished paper).

¹⁷³ *EIV*, pp. 190-1. Similar arrangements in favour of the Woodville family give further weight to Ross' charge.

¹⁷⁴ Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies', p. 22.

female subjects in order to underscore the fictional king's dubious charms. This scene contributes to the more sustained criticism of Edward's behaviour towards women and, when combined with the ongoing sub-plot involving the tanner, furnishes yet more ammunition for an attack on his avarice.

In the context of the play, the £40 that Hobs receives as his reward from Edward IV is not only rather meagre when compared to the annuity offered in the ballad, but costs him nothing as it derives from the widow's original benevolence, over and above the £20 charmed from her in return for a kiss. Hobs's reward is further diminished by the fact that, earlier in the play, several of Edward's subjects, including the tanner himself, have been obliged to contribute to yet another benevolence. Whereas Hobs is prepared to offer 'twenty old angels [£10], and a score of hides',¹⁷⁵ others are considerably less enthusiastic. Rowland maintains that Heywood adhered 'closely to the tone and vocabulary of Holinshed's account' in his depiction of Edward's money-gathering exercises in preparation for the invasion of France.¹⁷⁶ At the very least, he carefully distinguished between the taxes sanctioned by parliament and the increasingly unpopular benevolences requested by the king. This section stands out, not only in contrast to the rest of the play, with its telescoping and constant conflating of disparate events, but also when it is compared to the less historically accurate work of some of Heywood's contemporaries. The anachronistic appearance of benevolences in Sir John Hayward's (c. 1564–1627) *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie*

¹⁷⁵ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 178 (Part 1, sc. 18, l. 101). An angel was a gold coin first introduced by Edward IV in 1465 as a reissue of the noble. Although its value varied over time, during Edward's reign it was worth 6s 8d and between 1550 and 1612, when the play was written, 10s. Hobs's coins are, however, 'old' and thus probably worth less.

¹⁷⁶ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 174; Holinshed (1577), Vol. 2, p. 1346.

III, for example, was one of the points criticised by Elizabeth I's attorney general, Sir Edward Coke, in his attack on the 'seditious' history.¹⁷⁷

Benevolences and other 'voluntary' financial contributions to royal finances would have been all too familiar to Heywood's audience. From the forced loans of the 1580s and 1590s to meet the rising costs of the Spanish War, to attempts to deal with the shortages of 1595-7 and the costly failure of Essex's Irish campaign in 1599, the crown increasingly tried to raise money without having to seek parliamentary approval for additional taxes.¹⁷⁸ Benevolences would also have taken on a more personal - and in this sense ironic - meaning for some playgoers, as the term was also used to describe alms collected from wealthier citizens for the relief of the poor. They, too, had become more necessary because of bad harvests and outbreaks of plague.¹⁷⁹ Benevolences were so called because they were theoretically supposed to be gifts made freely to the monarch with 'good will' and no expectation of repayment. They had first been requested by Edward IV in 1473, but, as we have seen, were declared illegal by Richard III (see above, pp. 110-1). They were clearly an unpopular development, as Dominic Mancini, in his account of Richard III's usurpation, reported that Edward built up a 'royal treasure, the weight of which was immense', but 'was yet so eager for money, that in pursuing it he acquired a reputation for avarice ... he had gathered great treasures, whose size had not made him more generous or prompt in

¹⁷⁷ J. J. Manning (ed.), *The First and Second Parts of John Hayward's 'The Life and Raigne of King Henrie III'* (Camden Society, fourth series, Vol. 42, London, 1991), pp. 32, 108; A. D. Boyer, *Sir Edward Coke and the Elizabethan Age* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 278-80.

¹⁷⁸ M. J. Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558-1714* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 84-7.

¹⁷⁹ I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 198-203.

disbursement than when he was poor, but rather more stringent and tardy, so that now his avarice was publically proclaimed'.¹⁸⁰

It seems reasonable to assume that memories of Edward's exactions persisted for many years after his death, especially since the practice of demanding benevolences had been revived under the Tudors, who considered all Ricardian statutes invalid. The distinction between them and conventional taxes remained controversial. William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who was Elizabeth I's treasurer, claimed during a heated parliamentary debate in 1593 over the award of a triple subsidy that she would never 'accept any thing' that had been given to her unwillingly' and had even once 'refused a benevolence offered her, because she had no need of it, and would not charge her people'.¹⁸¹ The orders given to revenue collectors at this time suggest, however, that the play's equation of benevolences with thinly-veiled extortion would have resonated more strongly with the audience.¹⁸² When Hobs's neighbour, Grudgen, gives only 40d as a 'benevolence towards his majesty', Edward's collector, Lord Howard, explodes in anger: 'Out grudging peasant! Base, ill-natured groom! / Is this the love thou bearest unto the King? / Gentlemen, take notice of this slave, / And if he fault, let him be sorely plagued.'¹⁸³ A few scenes later, as Howard informs Edward of his success, it appears that reluctant donors have, indeed, been 'stretched further than otherwise', suggesting, in Rowland's words, 'a more physical form of persuasion.'¹⁸⁴ In this way Heywood develops his theme of subjects, rich and poor, who are subject to constant

¹⁸⁰ Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard the Third*, p. 66.

¹⁸¹ R. H. Tawney and E. Power, *Tudor Economic Documents* (3 Vols. London, Longmans, 1924), Vol. 2, p. 242.

¹⁸² See H. W. Saunders, (ed.) *The official papers of Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Norfolk* (Camden Society, third series, Vol. 26, London, 1915), pp. 75-101.

¹⁸³ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 178 (Part 1, sc. 18, ll. 95-9).

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 189 (Part 1, sc. 21, l. 13 and commentary).

surveillance by King Edward and his cohorts, with threat of violence looming over them should they fail to meet his demands.

As is the case elsewhere in Heywood's play, these exchanges offer an unfavourable commentary on current affairs. Just as Thomas More had done before him, Heywood resorted to the fifteenth century for material that enabled him to criticise the abuse of royal authority in a relatively safe way. The care with which he composed this section of the play reveals how anxious he was to avoid punishment or censorship. By striving to appear as accurate as possible in the matter of benevolences (if little else), Heywood could not as easily be reprimanded for distorting the evidence to make a political point as Sir John Hayward had been. And in choosing Edward IV as his subject he could appropriate an historical figure whose foibles were still remembered by a wide audience, even if they were now the stuff of caricature. Heywood was certainly more interested in developing this caricature, and thereby presenting a morality tale about the dangers of tyranny and the ill-treatment of women, than he was in painting a more historically realistic portrait of the king. In so doing he went further than any previous author in maligning a ruler who had hitherto been cast in a far more complimentary light, not least as a brave and successful commander.

Edward in France

The second half of *Edward IV* opens with the king's long-heralded invasion of France. Although the French campaign was undoubtedly one of the principal events of Edward's second reign and still seemed important to Fabian (see above, pp. 126-8), it excited little interest in Heywood's day. As a result, some publishers and actor-managers appear to have dispensed entirely with this part of the play. A surviving

copy of the 1605 edition, for example, shows 'radical' cuts to the structure in ways that according to Rowland are 'very rare in the period'.¹⁸⁵ Significantly, the actors who staged a dramatized reading of *Edward IV* in 2003 found that it was 'difficult to establish relationships and motivations for the characters' at this point, and that 'the plot and historical context' were utterly confusing.¹⁸⁶

Despite the farcical nature of these scenes, it seems clear that Heywood sought to achieve a measure of historical accuracy. He used Holinshed as the basis of his narrative, alongside anecdotes from Comynes, whose *Historie* had been translated into English in 1596, and Jean de Serres's *Inventaire de l'histoire de France* (1597), particularly for the portrayal of Edward's French allies, the Duke of Burgundy and the Constable of France, as cynical opportunists.¹⁸⁷ Heywood's version of the expedition follows Holinshed's quite closely: Edward IV's invasion stalls as the promised support fails to materialise; a messenger carrying his demands to Louis prompts the latter to warn Edward that neither Burgundy nor the Constable should be trusted and to propose a truce; events on campaign convince Edward that Louis is telling the truth about his erstwhile allies, and he arranges a meeting outside Amiens, where the two kings agree the terms of a treaty. Finally, Edward returns home a wealthy man, with the promise of more largesse to come¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁵ Rowland, 'Two Plays in One', pp. 53-4.

¹⁸⁶ Barrie Rutter, director of the Northern Broadsides company which gave the 2003 performance, believed that the French scenes could be cut without the play losing any coherence. Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 75 n. 161.

¹⁸⁷ J. De Serres, *Inventaire General De L'Histoire de France* (2 Vols., Paris, A Saugrain, G. De Rues, 1600), Vol. 2, sigs. hh5v-kk2r.

¹⁸⁸ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 230, 241.

Heywood turns this sequence of events into a vehicle for farce by making a brief anecdote recounted by both Holinshed and de Serres the central focus of this part of the play.¹⁸⁹ After Edward's courtiers have disguised themselves in order to spy on their master's allies and have informed him of their treachery, Edward invites Louis to eavesdrop on a conversation between himself and messengers from Burgundy and the Constable from behind a curtain in his chambers. In the exchange that follows Edward constantly asks the messengers to speak louder, as he is 'somewhat thick of hearing' (a phrase borrowed from Holinshed),¹⁹⁰ but his real intention is for Louis to hear their treasonous remarks.¹⁹¹ Significantly, Heywood changes one crucial element found in his sources: in the play the ruse is Edward's idea, whereas Holinshed and Commynes describe how Louis alone set the trap *after* Edward's return England.¹⁹² In this way Edward's reputation as a cynical trickster, already established in the first part of the play, is further embellished and dramatic consistency maintained.

Indeed, whereas Edward is consistently portrayed as a dissembler, whose court is full of calculating opportunists and who is prepared to enlist the support of traitors, Louis emerges as an entirely honourable man. His warnings to Edward not to trust his allies, Burgundy and the Constable, appear motivated by genuine concern as much as a need to deflect any potential English assault, and he is patently sincere in his dealings with

¹⁸⁹ Holinshed (1587), Vol. 3, p. 698; E. Grimeston (trans.), *A general inuentorie of the history of France from the beginning of that monarchie, vnto the treatie of Veruins, in the year 1598* (London, George Eld, 1607: STC (2nd edn.) / 22244), p. 255.

¹⁹⁰ The story of the wealthy widow trading kisses for money, discussed above, appears in the 1587 edition of *Holinshed's Chronicle* but not the 1577 edition. The prophecy involving a "G" who would take the throne after Edward, as well as the appearance of the ghost of Friar Anselm, forms the basis of scenes 11 and 19 in the play. Holinshed (1587), Vol. 3, p. 694.

¹⁹¹ Rowland, *Edward IV*, pp. 233-7 (Part 2, Sc. 7, ll. 30-157).

¹⁹² Holinshed reports that the French king had the Lord of Contay stand behind a 'seeling or hanging in his chamber' while he goaded a messenger from the Duke of Burgundy into speaking 'shameful & slanderous words against the k. of England' by 'faining that he was thicke of hearing'. Commynes' account is very similar, but adds that he himself was concealed with Contay. Holinshed (1587), Vol. 3, p. 698; Commynes, *Memoirs*, pp. 249-50.

the English king. Indeed, Louis appears throughout to want a close and amicable relationship with Edward, and thus between England and France.¹⁹³ Yet (unlike Edward) he also acts with the best interests of his kingdom at heart, and does not hesitate to bribe the English with gifts of gold and 'rich, crimson velvet'¹⁹⁴ in order to protect it. The historical Louis eventually betrayed Edward's trust, thereby according to some sources causing his final illness and death (see especially Stow, above, p. 159), but there is, of course, no mention of this inconvenient fact in the play. Here, he dies offstage of an unspecified illness, allowing Richard to seize the throne in the way that had become familiar since Thomas More's *History of Richard III*.

Richard Rowland suggests that one reason for this rather odd diversion is that it reflects Heywood's personal interest in France, as well as contemporary initiatives to unite Protestants in both countries in the face of aggression from militantly Catholic powers such as Spain, and, indeed, the French government itself. In 1608, following the publication of *Edward IV*, Heywood would produce a translation of Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline* and *War of Jugurtha* from a French edition, including a translation of the French political philosopher Jean Bodin's *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (*Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*) to assist his readers. He was catering to an enthusiastic market, as it has been estimated that a fifth of the total output of late Elizabethan printing presses comprised translations of French political writers and historians. The printers involved included John Wolfe, who was also responsible for producing the ballads that provided source material for *Edward IV*, along with *Holinshed's Chronicle*, and John Windet, publisher of the first

¹⁹³ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 217 (Part 2, sc. 2, l. 108).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216 (Part 2, sc. 2, l. 80).

edition of *Edward IV*.¹⁹⁵ One of the earliest examples of these translations, *A Politike Discourse most excellent for this time present* (1589), is cited by Rowland as a possible inspiration for Heywood's play.¹⁹⁶ Printed by Wolfe in 1589, it explicitly praises Louis's wisdom and Edward's 'gentleness', citing the treaty of Picquigny as an important precedent for further negotiations between France and England. The *Discourse* argues that attempts by the Burgundian court to undermine French royal authority in 1475 were analogous to those of the southern Catholic powers to destroy the northern Protestant ones, and that 'a greate and strong bulwark against the heady violence' was extremely desirable.¹⁹⁷

The *Politike Discourse* was just one of many works of propaganda that emerged from the French Wars of Religion (1562-98). The Huguenots, the Politiques (a Huguenot-Catholic confederacy) and the Catholic League each produced short tracts and pamphlets to support their cause, and from 1585 significant numbers of them were also translated into English.¹⁹⁸ Continental news had always been of interest to English readers, and pamphlets such as these provided it, alongside lurid accounts of Protestant victories over foreign enemies, particularly Catholic recusants and Presbyterians.¹⁹⁹ Given the content of the French scenes of *Edward IV*, the financial and political concerns of late Elizabethan printers, and the time frame in which the play must have been written,²⁰⁰ it is reasonable to assume that Heywood would have

¹⁹⁵ H. S. Bennet, *English Books and Readers, 1558-1603: Being a Study in the English Book Trade in the reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 102-3, 245-6.

¹⁹⁶ Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. 52.

¹⁹⁷ F. Marquino, *A politike discourse most excellent for this time present* (London, John Wolfe, 1589: (STC 2nd edn.) / 13101), p. 13.

¹⁹⁸ L. F. Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce: French Anti-league Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 1996), p. 31.

¹⁹⁹ Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1558-1603*, p. 234-7.

²⁰⁰ *Edward IV* was entered into the Stationers' Register in 1599, and therefore must have been written at some point before then. Rowland, *Edward IV*, p. xi.

been influenced by these pamphlets. Whether he personally believed that French and English Protestants should join forces in a battle against Catholicism is unclear: as in those parts of the play that deal with monopolies and the tanning industry, it seems likely that he was reiterating a popular viewpoint shared by his audience.

Heywood in Summary

The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV provided Heywood with an opportunity to criticise many aspects of Elizabethan government, particularly its unwelcome interference in the lives of ordinary men and women. Sometimes the criticism is specific and direct, as when Hobs acts as a mouthpiece for workers suffering under burdensome legislation and the commercial monopolies exercised by Elizabeth's favourites. Elsewhere, some reading between the lines is required, as in the implicit mockery of the Earl of Essex's disastrous Irish campaign in the scene following the battle against Fauconberg. Even the name of one of Edward's favourite cronies is a barb directed against the Earl. Sellinger assumes a prominent role throughout the play, but does not appear in any of the chronicle or literary sources. One of Essex's aides, was, however, called Sellinger, and accompanied him to the negotiations at Tyrone which ultimately led to a humiliating truce.²⁰¹ As the audience would have recognised, the association of Edward IV's closest (and most unappealing) companion with a costly debacle constituted a deliberate, if carefully camouflaged, attack on the 'courtnoles' who surrounded Queen Elizabeth.

Despite its farcical overtones, the first half of the second part of *Edward IV* carries the serious message that, as in 1475, France and England (or at least French and English

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73, n. 126.

Protestants) should make common cause against their enemies. The last part, with its familiar story of the rise of Richard III, offers a broad attack on tyranny, and thus draws together the various themes of the play as a whole. Richard achieves with charmless brutality what Edward had gained through charisma and guile, but ultimately the two kings share the same unworthy goal: to secure power and obedience at any cost. Heywood clearly had an important lesson to teach; and this fact in turn reflects his attitude to the purpose of history and drama.

As we have seen, in 1608 he translated part of Jean Bodin's *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, which advocates a far more restrained approach to the past and its uses:

Historie ought to be nothing but a representation of truth, and as it were a Map of mens actions, sette forth in the publicke view of all commers to bee examined; And therefore the predescouting opinion of the writer cannot but bring much discredite to the Action, in that hee presumeth to preposse the minds of Artists with imaginarie assertions ... And to their opinions, that suppose the praises of vertue, & the display of vices to be the fruit of History, I answere, that it may more truely and properly bee handled by Philosophers (to whose element it pertaineth) then by Historiographers.²⁰²

²⁰² T. Heywood (trans.) *The two most worthy and notable histories which remaine vnmained to posterity* (London, William Jaggard for John Jaggard, 1609: STC (2nd edn.) / 21625), sig. 2v-3r.

Bodin's desire for historical writing to be as direct and 'truthful' as possible accorded with some of Heywood's forays into the past, particularly in the *Gynaikeion*, where he 'makes frequent and anxiety-ridden declarations of objectivity'.²⁰³ It was strikingly at odds, however, with his constant departures from the established historical record in *Edward IV*, particularly in those places where he was clearly aware of the chronicle sources and chose either to ignore or to wilfully misinterpret them. His reasons for doing so become significantly clearer when the play is read in conjunction with *An Apology for Actors*, in which he writes enthusiastically about 'domesticke hystories' and their 'bewitching ... power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt'.²⁰⁴ He observed, with obvious approval, the capacity of plays to educate the illiterate, teaching them 'the knowledge of many famous histories' and instructing 'such as cannot reade in the discouery of all our English Chronicles'.²⁰⁵ But he nonetheless maintained that in public theatre the desire to present the 'truth' about events should be subordinate to the need to encourage good behaviour:

Playes are writ with this ayme, and carryed with this methode, to teach the subiects obedience to their King, to shew the people the vntimely ends of such as haue moued tumults, commotions, and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as liue in obedience, exhorting them to allegeance, dehorting them from all trayterous and felonious stratagemes²⁰⁶.

²⁰³ N. Crook and N. Rhodes, 'The Daughters of Memory' in N. Rhodes and J. Sawday (eds.), *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (London, Routledge, 2000), p. 134.

²⁰⁴ T. Heywood, *An apology for actors Containing three briefe treatises*, sig. B4v.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. f3r.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. f3v.

Loyalty was, however, conditional upon the proper exercise of royal authority, which could be abused. Seen in this light, *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV* appears less as an episode of English history and more as a set of lessons in how a successful monarch and an obedient subject ought respectively to conduct themselves. Adopting and then deliberately subverting the ballad tradition provided Heywood with an easy way to blacken Edward IV's character in order to cast him as a charming but ruthless villain, whose weaknesses were already well known to the audience. In short, Heywood's *Edward IV* represents yet another step away from King Edward IV as a real historical person and another towards the pages of folklore.

Edward IV and Shakespeare

It is impossible to consider the impact of work by sixteenth-century writers upon the historical reputations of successive late medieval kings without at least touching on William Shakespeare. Today, he is by far the most celebrated English playwright in history. He was hailed as the 'soule of the age' by Ben Jonson (1573-1637) in the foreword to the *First Folio*, and his work still dominates the English literary canon.²⁰⁷ Jane Austen (1775-1817) maintained in *Mansfield Park* that it was 'part of an Englishman's constitution', and that his 'celebrated passages are quoted by everybody; they are in half the books we open, and we all talk Shakespeare, use his similes, and describe with his descriptions'.²⁰⁸ Robert Graves, in response to centuries of such

²⁰⁷ For the meaning of the phrase the 'soul of the age', see J. Bate, *Soul of the Age: the life, mind and world of William Shakespeare* (London, Viking, 2008), pp. 3-5.

²⁰⁸ J. Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 391-2.

praise, jokingly observed in 1964 that ‘the remarkable thing about Shakespeare is that he is really very good – in spite of all the people who say he is very good’.²⁰⁹

Shakespeare’s life has been the subject of much embellishment and posthumous myth-making based on few established facts.²¹⁰ He was born in Stratford-Upon-Avon in 1564, probably around 23 April, a detail that allowed the eighteenth-century cleric Joseph Greene to claim that he was actually born on St George’s Day²¹¹. He married a woman named Anne Hathaway in 1582, had three children with her, and died in 1616, supposedly on his birthday²¹². He was, along with Thomas Heywood, a leading light of the London theatrical world at the beginning of the seventeenth century; and references to him and his work can be found as early as 1592, when a playwright named Robert Greene alluded scornfully to the ‘upstart Crow’ who believed himself to be the ‘only Shake-scene’ in a country’.²¹³ Significantly in the present context, an entry in the diary of the theatrical impresario, Philip Henslowe, in March that year reports that a single performance of ‘harey the vi’ by Lord Strange’s Men at the Rose Theatre in March 1592 earned £3 16s 8d, an excellent return.²¹⁴ Some of Shakespeare’s plays were published in quarto editions throughout the 1590s and early 1600s, but his lasting fame was secured posthumously by the appearance in 1623 of *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, known today as the *First Folio*.²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ R. Graves, ‘Sayings of the Week’, *The Observer*, 6 Dec. 1964.

²¹⁰ For Shakespeare’s biography, see P. Holland, ‘William Shakespeare (1564–1616), playwright and poet’, *ODNB*, Vol. 49, pp. 939-976; S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975).

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-24.

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 60-9, 76, 241-6, 250-2.

²¹³ D. A. Carroll (ed.), *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit* (Binghampton, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 114, 1994), pp. 80, 84-5.

²¹⁴ Foakes and Rickert, *Henslowe’s Diary*, p. 16.

²¹⁵ E. Smith, *The Making of Shakespeare’s First Folio* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, 2016).

In many respects, the concept of 'History Plays' as a discrete genre originated with the *First Folio*. The Histories, consisting of two tetralogies concerning the Wars of the Roses, along with *King John* and *Henry VIII*, might be better classified as 'plays on English history', as they are not the only Shakespeare plays to be based on historical events. Despite the inclusion of fantastic elements, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, set in the mid-eleventh century, derives from an account in Holinshed's *Chronicle*.²¹⁶ The Roman plays *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, which follow Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans Compared Together*, would have been considered by Shakespeare's contemporaries to be just as relevant to their lives as dramas about more recent times, as we can see from the innumerable references to Ancient history in published chronicles. Even so, it was the so-called 'English' History plays that defined the genre for generations to come and were commonly regarded as factual histories in their own right. As Irving Ribner observes, they drew upon 'national chronicles ... assumed by the dramatist to be true', whether or not this was actually the case, while any changes that he might make to this material for 'doctrinal or dramatic purposes ... did not alter its essential historicity in so far as his Elizabethan or Jacobean audience was concerned.'²¹⁷ As we have just seen in the case of Thomas Heywood, strict adherence to 'the facts' as set out in printed histories and chronicles mattered only if it served the interests of the plot, added depth to a character or underscored a moral or political message. It is in this context that we can best understand Edward IV's role in Shakespeare's history plays.

²¹⁶ Holinshed (1587), Vol. 2, pp. 122-3, 192; R. A. Foakes, 'Shakespeare's Other Historical Plays' in M. Hattaway, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 214-28.

²¹⁷ Ribner, *English History Play*, p. 24.

Of Shakespeare's seven plays set in the fifteenth century, Edward appears in only three: *Henry VI Part 2*, *Henry VI Part 3*, and *Richard III*.²¹⁸ And in two of them he assumes a minor role, being given a mere handful of lines. He is among the least memorable of all the characters in the Histories, a group dominated at one end by the tragic Richard II and the heroic Henry V and at the other by the Machiavellian King Richard III. Even in comparison to his father he is something of a nonentity. Indeed, his most important contributions to the ongoing story (his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, his off-stage condemnation of Clarence and his death) serve as little more than theatrical devices to illuminate the more fully developed characters of his two brothers.

Henry VI Part 2 focuses upon the mounting tension between the houses of Lancaster and York, ending with the first battle of the Wars of the Roses at St Albans in 1455. Edward features briefly in a one-line role as Richard, duke of York's devoted son, supporting his father's claim to the throne.²¹⁹ From the outset, his youngest brother, Richard of Gloucester, has far more to say for himself in a precocious demonstration of his trademark sardonic wit and lust for violence,²²⁰ even though the historical Richard was then only two years old.

Edward has a larger part to play in *Henry VI Part 3*, although, again, Richard assumes an anachronistically prominent role²²¹. As in his other history plays, Shakespeare

²¹⁸ For an in-depth analysis of Shakespeare's first tetralogy, see E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1961), pp. 147-214.

²¹⁹ 'Ay, noble father, if our words will serve' is his single line. R. Knowles (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare: King Henry VI Part 2* (Arden Third Series, London, Thomson Learning, 1999), p. 350 (Act 5, sc. 1, l. 139)

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 341-64 (Act 5, scs. 1-3).

²²¹ Tillyard believes that the plays are written to emphasise the roles of Queen Margaret and Warwick, with the overarching plot of the series consisting of 'the emergence of these two as the truly dominant

dramatically telescopes historical events in order to weld them into a spare, coherent narrative. Although the period in which the play is set coincides almost exactly with Edward's youth and first reign, Shakespeare casts him as, at best, a secondary character in a story centred first on the fall of Richard, Duke of York and then on the travails of Henry VI. This approach makes Edward's first reign seem significantly shorter and even more troubled than was actually the case, while the entirely fictional inclusion of Clarence and Richard as commanders significantly diminishes his remarkable military achievements. Despite Shakespeare's creative retelling of historical events, *Henry VI Part 3* is, however, recognisably drawn from the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed.²²² The Duke of York's attempt to gain recognition as Henry's heir fails and he is later executed. Edward takes up his cause, and, after a series of battles, manages to secure the throne. Henry VI is captured, while Queen Margaret escapes to France to enlist military support (see above, p. 17). Edward promptly dispatches the Earl of Warwick to ask for the hand of French king's sister, but meanwhile falls in love with and marries Elizabeth Woodville, thereby providing the catalyst for the second half of the play. In a single scene that telescopes years of political upheaval into a few lines, the news of Edward's marriage prompts Margaret and Warwick to form an alliance against Edward. Clarence joins their conspiracy shortly afterwards, and together they capture Edward, although he is soon freed by Richard of Gloucester and Lord Hastings. Henry is released from the Tower and names Warwick and Clarence as joint protectors of the realm. In the ensuing conflict Henry is recaptured, while Richard persuades Clarence to return to the Yorkist cause. Warwick

persons in the civil war, their opposition and varying fortunes, their unexpected reconciliation, and their final defeat largely through the expanding genius of Richard Duke of Gloucester.' Edward's role, therefore, exists mostly as a plot device and a nod to the chronicle history. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 191.

²²² Although Tillyard notes that Shakespeare misses 'one of the big things in Hall', the perjured oath that Edward takes in order to gain entrance to York on his return to England; *Ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

dies of his wounds, the victorious King Edward butchers Henry's son, Prince Edward, and imprisons his mother.

The murder of Prince Edward after the final battle in the play is the most violent version of the incident yet to appear in any account of Edward's reign. Although the basic narrative follows Hall, Holinshed and others, with the king questioning the prince's right to rebel and then striking him across the face, in Shakespeare's version Edward takes an active role in the murder and is the first among the three brothers to stab the prince. Shakespeare also obliges Queen Margaret to watch helplessly as her only child is killed in front of her in a dramatic, but completely imaginary, rereading of events.²²³ Richard then rides in secret to the Tower, where he murders Henry VI and declares his intention to do away with his brothers and take the crown himself. The play ends with the enthroned Edward celebrating his victory over his enemies and the birth of his first son. The triumph is a hollow one, however, not only coming at the cost of tremendous bloodshed but already being undermined by Richard's treachery.²²⁴

Because of Edward IV's relatively circumscribed role, the scenes in which he does appear must be read as those deemed crucial by Shakespeare to the narrative structure of the play. He is, like so many other characters in *Henry VI Part 3*, driven at first by loyalty to his family but then by vengeance and lust for power. He is also, more specifically, a hypocrite. In an early scene he urges his father to abandon his oath of

²²³ 3 *Henry VI*, pp. 354-8 (Act 5, sc. 5, ll. 12-82).

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 367, (Act 5, sc. 7, ll. 31-4).

loyalty to King Henry, claiming that 'for a kingdom any oath may be broken',²²⁵ but later accuses Henry of perjury for doing likewise.²²⁶ His womanising is often commented upon, as, for example, in a cutting aside by Richard when the *parhelia* appear at Mortimer's Cross to the effect that the three suns represent the 'three daughters' that he will marry off to eligible husbands.²²⁷

Forming the entirety of Act 3, Scene 3, the courtship of Elizabeth Woodville is the most important scene in the play involving Edward, as it furnishes enough sense of character to distinguish him from the other leading protagonists. His emergence as a lecherous bully would have come as no surprise to Elizabethan audiences. In the style of his seduction of Jane Shore in Heywood's play, Edward's pursuit is depicted first as a game, and then as an unrelenting siege that steadily undermines Elizabeth's resistance as 'rain wears marble'.²²⁸ Whereas Heywood is content to hint at the latent threat behind Edward's advances, Shakespeare casts him as 'the bluntest wooer in Christendom' as he crudely attempts to purchase sexual favours from Elizabeth in exchange for her late husband's lands.²²⁹ Eventually she acquiesces, using language very similar to that found in the versions offered by More, Hall and Holinshed,²³⁰ but

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 204, (Act 1, sc. 2, l. 15).

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 237, (Act 2, sc. 2, ll. 81-92).

²²⁷ Interestingly, Edward does not seem to regard this phenomenon as a sign of divine election, but as something magical. *3 Henry VI*, pp. 222-3 (Act 2, sc. 1, ll. 25-42). This would be consistent with Jonathan Hughes' belief that the historical Edward was strongly influenced by alchemists and magical thinkers, and this is reflected in the imagery he used throughout his reign. Hughes' conclusions are, however, far from universally accepted (to say the least). Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy*, pp. 81-5, 169-70; R. A. Griffiths, 'Review: Arthurian Myths and Alchemy', *EHR*, 120, No. 486 (2005), pp. 450-453.

²²⁸ *3 Henry VI*, p. 271, (Act 3, sc. 2, ll. 14, 50).

²²⁹ Ibid. p. 279, (Act 3, sc. 2, ll. 79-83).

²³⁰ More writes, for example, that 'in conclusion she shewed him plaine, that as she wist herself to simple to be his wife, so thought she her self to good to be his concubine.' *TM*, p. 61.

she is clearly unhappy with the arrangement. Later, when Edward is captured, she shows far more concern for her unborn child than the fate of her new husband.²³¹

According to Ribner's view of the History Plays cited above, Edward's appearance here represents the absolute minimum that Shakespeare needed to say about him in order to maintain a coherent narrative. Since he was a celebrated historical figure, whose career had already been reduced to certain basic components, his unfortunate marriage and compulsive womanising could hardly be ignored, but the finer details of his life were largely irrelevant to the stories that Shakespeare wanted to tell about Henry VI and Richard III. And even in the one scene that focuses on Edward's contribution to the Yorkist triumph, Richard is on hand to provide a sardonic commentary. Indeed, Edward's success with women serves to underscore Richard's deformity and sense of alienation as he first gives voice to his own ambitions.²³²

The technique of using Edward's impulsive behaviour as a counterpoint to Richard's calculating villainy continues into the final scenes of the play. While the murder of Prince Edward is morally inexcusable, Shakespeare makes it plain that it was, for the king at least, a crime of passion ('Hold, Richard, hold, for we have done too much'²³³) and yet another of the innumerable atrocities committed by both sides in the conflict. It is Richard who offers to kill Queen Margaret in cold blood, and who sets off to murder Henry VI, entirely on his own initiative.²³⁴ Edward plays no part in deciding Henry's fate, merely remarking indulgently of his brother that 'He's sudden if a thing

²³¹ 'To tell thee plain, I aim to lie with thee.' 'To tell you plain, I had rather lie in prison. *3 Henry VI*, p. 272, (Act 3, sc. 2, ll. 69-70). See also pp. 273-4, (ll. 82, 110) and pp. 312-4, (Act 4, Sc. 4).

²³² *Ibid.*, pp. 276-280 (Act 2, sc. 2, ll. 124-195).

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 356 (Act 5, sc. 5, l. 43).

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 356 (Act 5, sc. 5, ll. 46-50, sc. 6, l. 34).

comes into his head'.²³⁵ Nor is any mention made of Fauconberg's rebellion, which features so prominently in Heywood's drama and which took place just before Henry's death. Instead, Shakespeare invents a scene in the Tower during which Henry and Richard verbally spar with one another before the latter's inevitable murder. His decision to diverge from the chronicle sources sets the scene for the next play in the sequence, *Richard III*, while further robbing Edward of authority and historical significance.

Edward's role in *Richard III*, the final part of the tetralogy, is predictably brief. As Anthony Hammond notes in his introduction to the Arden edition of the play, 'it is really a very controlled work, in which material not germane to the theme as Shakespeare perceived it was rigorously excluded'.²³⁶ In order to maintain a sharp focus upon the twin themes of unfettered tyranny and providential justice, these omissions include a significant part of Edward's second reign, as well as all but the most basic information about his character. Beginning shortly after the end of *Henry VI Part 3* during the 'glorious summer' of the Yorkist triumph, the play compresses the years between 1471 and 1482 into a single act. Edward is little more than an unwitting obstacle in Richard's way, dying on cue at the beginning of Act Two in order to leave the stage free for his brother's usurpation. He appears on only three occasions: he condemns Clarence on a false charge of treason, fails to stay his execution after a change of heart and then dies unhappily.²³⁷ Even so, Shakespeare still contrives to portray him unsympathetically as weak, foolish and short-sighted, being manipulated

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 356 (Act 5, sc. 5, l. 86).

²³⁶ Hammond, *Richard III*, p. 97.

²³⁷ Edward's lasting regret for ordering Clarence's execution, a feature of the contemporary chronicles, is reduced to a single speech, Edward's last in the play. Shakespeare has Edward die offstage a scene later, but in reality he survived Clarence by five years. Hammond, *Richard III*, p. 192 (Act 2, Sc. 1, ll. 103-135).

by his wife, mistress and brother into acting against his own dynastic interests. This is most apparent when Richard circulates a prophecy that “G” will destroy the house of York (see above p. 140) and then exploits Edward’s credulity as part of his Machiavellian scheme to secure the throne. Certainly, although Edward is said to be ‘true and just’ in comparison to Richard, the compliment is hardly designed to flatter. Shakespeare understood that the historical Edward had sought to reconcile the rival factions at court, but in the play his deathbed attempts to make his ‘friends at peace on earth’ simply underscore his failure as a weak and indulgent ruler, to protect the throne from the machinations of his brother.²³⁸

Richard is not, however, the only person to exploit Edward’s vulnerability. Several characters in the play draw attention to the malign influence that the women in his life have over him. Clarence’s complaint at the start of Act 1 that ‘no man is secure / But the queen’s kindred and night-walking heralds / That trudge betwixt the king and Mistress Shore’²³⁹ is later taken up by the Duke of Buckingham, then one of Richard’s chief supporters, in a public attack upon the late king’s most famous concubine.²⁴⁰ In his eloquent address to the mayor and citizens of London, Buckingham makes much of Edward’s debauchery, contrasting it with Richard’s apparent piety:

[He is] not lolling on a lewd love-bed
But on his knees at meditation;
Not dallying with a brace of courtesans,
Not sleeping, to engross his idle body,

²³⁸ See, for example, *3 Henry VI*, p. 203 (Act 1, Sc. 2, ll. 264-73).

²³⁹ Hammond, *Richard III*, p. 129, (Act 1, sc. 1, ll. 71-3).

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 241, (Act 3, sc. 5, ll. 49-50).

But praying, to enrich his soul.²⁴¹

Interestingly, despite her enormous popularity as a character, and in a marked contrast to other contemporary accounts of Edward and his court, Shakespeare does not introduce "Mistress Shore" or "Shore's wife" as a speaking character. She is instead an offstage presence, who serves as a symptom of the corruption and vice inherent in Edward's court, or else performs her more traditional role as an intercessor (for Lord Hastings).²⁴² By reducing Jane to little more than a theatrical device, Shakespeare removes a sympathetic element from his story, thereby distancing Edward and his circle even further from a contemporary audience. As a result the king seems a remoter and even less attractive figure than his counterpart in Thomas Heywood's play.

Limited as it is, Edward IV's role in Shakespeare's plays clearly reveals the type of information (by now heavily fictionalised) about the historical king that had survived into the late sixteenth century. One could argue that, because of the need to treat him and his reign as briefly as possible, Shakespeare reduced current portrayals in chronicle and verse to their crudest and most essential components. For the purpose of the plays, all that was required of Edward was that he was a womaniser who showed poor judgement, and that he failed to recognise his devious brother as a threat until it was too late. In the context of the tetralogy as a whole, Richard's rise to power explores a broader theme concerning the providential destruction of rebels against the natural order, as personified in the form of the rightful monarch. As Ribner

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 249 (Act 3, sc. 7, ll. 70-6).

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 129 (Act 1, sc. 1, ll. 68-9). After Richard accuses Jane of witchcraft in Act III, Scene 4, Hastings is himself executed because of his association with 'this damned strumpet'.

points out, this kind of message may have been, in part, 'an answer to those Englishmen, particularly Catholics, who throughout her reign pointed to the weakness of Elizabeth's claim to the throne'.²⁴³ In this context it is easy to see why Edward is so completely overshadowed by the hapless Henry and the wicked Richard. The latter's treachery, in particular, was a godsend to dramatists, providing a villain who could rapidly undermine all of the achievements of Edward's reign to optimum theatrical effect. Even Heywood's *Edward IV* follows this pattern, with the greater share of its second part being given over to Richard III's tyranny. Shakespeare's portrayal of historical figures, and his choice of subject matter had, however, a far greater and more lasting effect on the reputation of late medieval kings than did anything produced by his contemporaries. Although in life Shakespeare was just one of many popular London playwrights, the resurgence of interest in his work long after his death and his emergence as a modern cultural icon meant that his interpretation of historical events became widely accepted as orthodoxy. Whereas Heywood played no small part in the creation of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century myths about Edward IV, it was Shakespeare who ensured that he would be relegated to the role of a minor player in the dark shadow of his younger brother.

²⁴³ Ribner, *English History Play*, p. 108.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Stuarts and the Civil War

The literary flowering that saw the creation of Shakespeare's and Heywood's greatest plays occurred against a backdrop of increasing tension. In the period following the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 Elizabeth I lost much of her popularity. The costly wars with Spain and Ireland continued. Poor harvests led to inflation and famine. Economic recovery faltered as a result of heavy taxation and the monopolies about which Heywood and other authors complained. The repression of Catholics intensified.¹ Although Elizabeth attempted to maintain the illusion, through the use of propaganda and internal espionage, that she was ruling a peaceful and prosperous country, in her final years she lost the devotion of her subjects. As Christopher Haigh observes, there was 'at best, an amused tolerance of the old woman's doings, with few signs of affection'.²

The peaceful accession of James I to the throne in 1603 as king of Great Britain and Ireland was initially welcomed with relief by his subjects,³ but his reign was also plagued with problems. Over the course of the sixteenth century the English crown had grown steadily poorer, and Elizabeth had left debts of over £300,000.⁴ Despite the 'Herculean' efforts of advisors such as Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, the deficit only worsened as James spent extravagantly on his favourites, his court and ill-advised

¹ C. Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (Harrow, Longman, 2001), p. 51.

² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

³ P. Croft, *King James* (Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 50.

⁴ Croft, *King James*, p. 71. Croft maintains that Elizabeth 'died more or less solvent', but other historians are much more sceptical about the extent of her debts. See, for example, C. Russell, *King James VI and I and his English Parliaments* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 5-13.

foreign adventures.⁵ Parliament grew increasingly resistant to his financial demands and absolutist style of government, while attacking factionalism within the royal circle.⁶ His son, Charles I, began his reign by attempting to redress some these grievances, but conflict between king and parliament eventually escalated into civil war.

Against this challenging backdrop innovative works of history were being written. Humanist-trained Tudor and Jacobean authors expressed their dissatisfaction with the medieval chronicle as a reliable source of evidence, regarding it, in Philip Hicks' words, as 'a useless jumble of disconnected facts and fictions, written in bad Latin by superstitious monks'.⁷ The antiquarianism which had motivated John Stow to study and collect a wide variety of manuscripts encouraged other scholars to track down and critically re-examine the original sources from which chroniclers had derived their information.⁸ As a result, the reputations of some medieval rulers were reassessed. *The History of King Richard the Third* by Sir George Buck (c. 1560–1622), for example, was the first of many attempts to rehabilitate the last Yorkist king.⁹ By objectively examining and then refuting several of the charges against Richard III in a forensic manner, Buck provided a template for subsequent studies of England's most notorious monarch. More importantly in the present context, Buck's research cast light on two hitherto neglected sources: *Titulus regius*, the document setting out Richard's claim to

⁵ S.J. Houston, *James I* (Harlow, Longman, 1995), pp. 19-21.

⁶ Russel, *King James VI and I*, pp. 94-122.

⁷ P. Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996), p. 24.

⁸ Kenyon, *History Men*, pp. 7-8. The archival discoveries and literary developments occurring in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I have prompted some scholars to call the period a 'Historical Revolution'. See J. H. Preston, 'Was there an Historical Revolution?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 38, No. 2 (1977), pp. 353-64.

⁹ Edward IV plays only a minor part in Buck's history, but is also treated sympathetically as a courageous warrior who loved his youngest brother dearly. Kincaid, *History of King Richard the Third*, pp. 18-19, 21.

the throne that was ratified by parliament in 1484;¹⁰ and *The Second Continuation of the Crowland Chronicle*, examined in the first chapter of this thesis.

Writers of history adopted an increasingly professional approach. The foundation of the Society of Antiquaries in 1596 allowed like-minded gentlemen to communicate their findings, share their collections and assist each other's research much more effectively. Members including John Stow, William Camden (1551–1623) and Sir Robert Cotton (c. 1570–1631) were dedicated to preserving original sources about the English past and publishing new material.¹¹ Camden established a 'solid and uncontroversial' reputation early in his career with *Britannia*, a comprehensive chorographical survey of English antiquities (1586).¹² A headmaster of Westminster School and a correspondent with many prominent European scholars, he would in 1622 use some of his wealth to endow a chair at Oxford University for the study of history. Cotton wrote little himself, although his celebrated collection of manuscripts was not only large, but freely available as an invaluable resource for antiquarians, scholars, politicians and jurists of various persuasions.¹³ Stow's contribution has already been examined (see above, pp. 129-30, 157-8); while his own library was far smaller than Cotton's, it, too, proved extremely useful. Thanks to the print trade's insatiable appetite for new titles, the fruit of all this original research soon became available to the reading public.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. xcv, 247, 248, 258, 300, 302, 305.

¹¹ N. Popper, *Walter Raleigh's History of the World and the Historical Culture of the Late Renaissance* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 248. Even those who may not have been official members were part of the same circle. This is apparent from Michael Drayton's work (see below, p. 264), as well as from Camden's praise for Buck's *History* in his *Brittania*, where he reports that they exchanged working notes: W. Camden, *Britannia siue Florentissimorum regnorum, Angliae, Scotiae, Hiberniae* (London, George Bishop, 1600: STC (2nd edn.) / 4507), p. 726.

¹² Kenyon, *History Men*, p. 10.

¹³ R. Ovendon, 'The libraries of the antiquaries (c. 1580-1640) and the idea of a national collection', in E. Leedham-Green and T. Webber (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (3 Vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), Vol. 1, pp. 550-7.

Despite all these developments, the historical reputation of Edward IV remained surprisingly unchanged. This chapter will examine some of the reasons for the survival of what was, in many respects, a crude caricature rather than a realistic portrait by setting the new histories that examined the Wars of the Roses in the context of seventeenth-century politics. It will focus upon the work of a number of influential authors, including Colley Cibber, John Trussel, William Habington, Sir Francis Biondi and Paul de Rapin; and, wherever possible, will explain the reasons for their editorial decisions and assess the lasting impact of their work.

The early seventeenth century: from Crowe to Daniel

Popular interest in Edward IV, his court, and the Wars of the Roses in general continued long after Queen Elizabeth I's death in 1603. Some of the authors who had explored the events of the fifteenth century saw their work reprinted in new editions, while others produced completely new material for James I. Heywood, as we have already seen, kept on publishing until his death in 1641,¹⁴ while *The first and second parts of King Edward the Fourth* remained in print until at least 1626.¹⁵ The appearance of Shakespeare's *First Folio* in 1623 ensured that his plays could be staged in future, but the Histories fell out of favour following the deaths of the playwright and his lead actor, Richard Burbage. Specific events could occasionally spark a revival, although the plays might be heavily cut and 'edited' to suit a political agenda. In 1680,

¹⁴ The melodrama *Fortune by Land and Sea*, for example, was entered into the Stationers' Register in 1655 and printed a year later, though it was probably written in the first years of the seventeenth century. Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. 3, p. 343.

¹⁵ T. Heywood, *The first and second parts of King Edward the Fourth* (London, Humfrey Lownes, 1626: STC (2nd edn.) / 13346).

in the midst of the Exclusion Crisis¹⁶, for example, John Crowne's *The Miseries of Civil War*, an adaptation of *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, exploited current anti-papist sentiment¹⁷. In Crowne's account, like so many others, Edward's insatiable appetites cause him to betray the trust of those he encounters and to aggressively pursue Elizabeth Woodville 'using many threats'. His introduction of Eleanor Butler in a speaking role not only allowed him to add a sensational and tragic love interest to Shakespeare's story, but also to focus upon the existence of an earlier marriage contract (which Richard III had advanced as evidence of the illegitimacy of Edward's children). In one scene Edward boasts that, although he is an oath-breaker for failing to honour his promises to Eleanor, he 'can have a dispensation from his Holiness' whenever he pleases.¹⁸ Significantly, Sir George Buck had argued that the historical Edward could easily have taken this step.¹⁹

Works of this kind were anomalies, however, as Shakespeare's Henry VI plays were hardly ever performed. Of the others, *Richard II* was only occasionally staged, and then with changes to augment the king's part; *Henry IV Part 1*, with its theatrically meaty Falstaff, more than *Part 2*; and *Henry V* surprisingly rarely, always without the chorus.²⁰ Only *Richard III* was regularly revived into the early nineteenth century, and

¹⁶ The attempts made between 1679 and 1681 to pass the Exclusion Bill, which sought to exclude King Charles II's brother and heir presumptive, James, Duke of York, from the throne because he was Roman Catholic. See J. Scott, 'England's Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot', in T. Harris, P. Seaward and M. Goldie (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 107-32; J. Miller, *The Stuarts* (London, Hambledon and London Books, 2004), pp. 169-71.

¹⁷ B. A. Murray, 'Lady Eleanor Butler and John Crowne's *The Misery of the Civil War*', *The Ricardian*, 14 (2004), pp. 54-61.

¹⁸ Butler responds by calling the Pope the 'Universal Bawd of Christendom' and 'A very excellent Shepherd, that will give / His sheep a dispensation to be rotten!'. J. Crowne, *The Misery of Civil-War, A Tragedy* (London, R. Bentley and M. Magnes, 1680: Wing / C7395), p. 55-6.

¹⁹ Kincaid, *History of King Richard the Third*, p. 185. Barbara Murray argues that this shows that Crowne was at least aware of Buck's revisionist history of Richard III, even if he did not agree with its central argument. Murray, 'Lady Eleanor Butler', pp. 54-61.

²⁰ N. Grene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 31.

even then almost always in a garbled (but phenomenally popular) version cobbled together by the actor-manager Colley Cibber in 1700. Cibber's version entirely omits Clarence, Hastings and Queen Margaret, while interpolating scenes and speeches from *Richard II*, *Henry V* and *Henry VI Parts 2* and *3*.²¹ Edward is mentioned in passing, but plays no active part whatsoever in the proceedings. In Cibber's first act a messenger reports to Henry VI that his son has been murdered after the king struck him in the face; the second begins with news of Edward's final illness and ends with his death, all entirely offstage.²²

Interestingly, some scholars have suggested that Cibber's alterations were partly inspired by a close reading of Stow, Holinshed and Hall.²³ It seems more likely that he used anything he could find to justify the embellishment of his leading role, but his claim to historical accuracy does at least demonstrate the lasting regard in which these Tudor chroniclers were held. On the other hand, we can see that, even when reputable sources were readily available, their contents could be used selectively (or completely ignored) as a writer saw fit. It is worth reiterating that Cibber's play remained one of the most popular and accessible sources of information about the last years of the Wars of the Roses well into the nineteenth century, and that traces of it lingered on in some twentieth-century performances of *Richard III*.²⁴ That it dispensed almost entirely with Edward's role and downplayed his contribution to English history, even more than the original, did little for his long term historical reputation. Indeed, it reflects how completely 'the sun of York' had been eclipsed by his youngest brother.

²¹ G. Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (2 Vols., New York, Benjamin Blom, 1963), Vol. 1, pp. 75-6. See also L. R. N. Ashley, *Colley Cibber*, (New York, Twayne Publishers Inc., 1965), pp. 47-52.

²² C. Cibber, *The Tragical History of Richard III* (London, Cornmarket Press, 1969), pp. 12, 18, 26.

²³ A. E. Kalson, 'The Chronicles in Cibber's *Richard III*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 3, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (1963), pp. 253-67.

²⁴ Ashley, *Colley Cibber*, p. 48.

Even so, as we shall see, increasing tension between crown and parliament prompted a closer analysis of the Wars of the Roses, as anxiety over the looming prospect of civil war prompted a re-examination of the struggles of the past.

Michael Drayton spent much of his career composing historical poems, one of which we have already touched on briefly (see above, pp. 3, 200), and moved in antiquarian circles.²⁵ His early and very successful *Peirs Galveston* (1593), about the life and death of Edward II's unpopular favourite, was extremely well researched by contemporary standards.²⁶ For that, he could thank his close friendship with John Stow, whom he called a 'diligent Chronigrapher of our time', and the access this gave to his library.²⁷ *Peirs Galveston* was followed in 1594 by *Matilda: the Faire and Chaste Daughter of the Lord Robert Fitzwater*; both poems were reissued with revisions in 1596, alongside *The Tragicall Legend of Robert, Duke of Normandy: England's Heroical Epistles* (1597), a selection of fictional letters between famous lovers in history, including Jane Shore and Edward IV.²⁸ Drayton's version of the relationship is intensely generic, focussing on Edward's 'very Chivalrous, and very Amorous' personality, Jane's beauty, and her ambivalent feelings towards the king. The less predictable 'Annotations of the Chronicle History' at the end of the letter from Edward to Jane concentrate mainly on references to his physical appearance and personality, but they do cite Comyns in

²⁵ For Drayton's full biography, see B. H. Newdigate, *Michael Drayton and his Circle* (Oxford, Shakespeare Head Press, 1961).

²⁶ In addition to the standard works by John Stow and Raphael Holinshed, it is very likely that Drayton consulted chronicles written in the reigns of Edward II and Edward III, the fifteenth-century chronicle of Thomas of Walsingham, and Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. Hebel, *Works of Michael Drayton*, Vol. 5, p. 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 208.

²⁸ M. Drayton, *England's Heroical Epistles, written in Imitation of the Stile and Manner of Ovid's Epistles* (London, J. Conyers, 1597), pp. 148-65. For its popularity, see R. F. Hardin, 'Convention and design in Drayton's "Heroicall Epistles"', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 83, No. 1 (1968), p. 35.

order to further illustrate how easily Edward could be distracted by women.²⁹ The 'epistles' are, however, most notable for their debt to Heywood's *Edward IV*.³⁰ This is hardly surprising given Drayton's involvement with Philip Henslowe and the Admiral's Men between 1597 and 1602, when he must often have encountered Heywood (above, p. 201).

Drayton's friendship with Stow allowed him access to the historian's network of associates, particularly William Camden.³¹ By the mid-1590s Camden's *Brittania* had gone through many editions, providing the inspiration and prose model for one of Drayton's longest and best-known works. Like *Brittania*, *Poly-Olbion* (published between 1612 and 1622) is a survey of British history, geography and mythology, comprising almost 15,000 lines of verse. Drayton portrays the fifteenth century in terms of a near-constant and extremely violent state of factional struggle. Henry VI, 'fitter for a Cowle, then for a Crowne by farre', is supplanted by Edward IV, whose life is defined by alternating bouts of 'furious bloody warre' and 'amorous pleasure'. As a result of the slaughter at Barnet and Tewkesbury nobody is 'left to stirre', and the old Lancastrian line is 'utterly suppress'. Edward's son, Edward V, is in turn smothered by Richard III, at once a man 'who nor God, nor humane lives respected', and a 'viper, [the] most vile devowerer of his kinde'.³² Drayton does not explicitly accuse Edward and Richard of murdering Henry VI and his son, as other authors had done, but it is not hard to envisage Edward V's death as an act of retribution for these earlier crimes. Richard's defeat by Henry VII ushers in an era of 'prosperous peace' and success,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³⁰ Compare, for instance Rowland, *Edward IV*, Part 1, sc. 17, (pp. 167-70) to Drayton, *England's Heroical Epistles*, pp. 149-54.

³¹ A touching tribute to Drayton survives in one of Camden's commonplace books, employing the words 'amico veteri et spectatissimo'. Newdigate, *Drayton and his Circle*, p. 93.

³² M. Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London, H[umphrey] L[ownes] *et al.*, 1613: STC (2nd edn.) / 7227), p. 263.

which, barring a violent interlude under the Catholic Mary, continues until the death of Elizabeth I.³³

Drayton worked on *Poly-Olbion* for almost thirty years, the earliest notice of his Herculean efforts appearing in a reference by another poet in 1598.³⁴ Perhaps understandably, it lacked the immediate appeal of his other works, with the first part selling so poorly that the publishers of the second were able to acquire a 'considerable number' of unbound copies to include in their new edition.³⁵ Drayton was a literary conservative, out of step with contemporary trends in poetry, and verse on this scale had fallen out of fashion. It is quite possible, as Parker Duchemin points out, that because of long delays in publication 'the poem may have outlived its audience'; and it seems that, at least on some level, Drayton became increasingly aware of this problem over time.³⁶ He nevertheless clung doggedly to the project, and, more broadly, to writing historical verse. In 1627, just three years before his death, he released a volume of miscellaneous poetry, including *The Battle of Agincourt* and *The Miseries of Queen Margerite*.³⁷ While these two poems are conventional accounts in verse of Henry V's great victory and of the Wars of the Roses from the perspective of Margaret of Anjou, their appearance together at the beginning of the book is significant. J. W. Hebel believes that they reflect Drayton's need to 'preach a final lesson to his beloved England',³⁸ contrasting England's initial success in foreign wars with the dire

³³ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 264.

³⁴ F. Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (London, Cuthbert Burbie, 1598: STC (2nd edn.) / 17834), p. 281r.

³⁵ P. Duchemin, "'Barbarous Ignorance and Base Detraction": The Struggles of Michael Drayton', *Albion*, 14, No. 2 (1982), p. 130.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131; B. von Es, 'Michael Drayton, Literary History and Historians in Verse', *Review of English Studies*, new series, 59, No. 239 (2008), p. 268.

³⁷ M. Drayton, *The battaile of Agincourt Fought by Henry the fift of that name ...* (London, William Lee, 1627: STC (2nd edn.) / 7190), pp. 1-116.

³⁸ Hebel, *Works of Michael Drayton*, Vol. 3, p. vi.

consequences of civil unrest, and they can certainly be understood as an implicit commentary on current events. Like Henry VI, Charles I had married an unpopular Frenchwoman. Moreover, since his accession to the throne in 1625, he had also wrestled with parliament over his policies, his marriage, religion, and, most of all, his desire to engage in costly foreign wars, a conflict which culminated in 1629 with the dissolution of parliament and imprisonment of nine MPs.³⁹

In the *Miseries* Edward appears as a minor figure, his principal contribution being to marry Elizabeth Woodville (and thereby cause Warwick's rebellion) and subsequently to defeat Margaret's armies in battle. Curiously, beyond offering a reward for the capture of Prince Edward, he plays no part in his death, nor is he responsible for Henry VI's murder in the Tower (the honours falling to Hastings and Richard, respectively). Together with *The Moone-Calf*, a grim satire about the bastard son of the world and the devil, and various *Eligies upon Sundry Occasions* lamenting the loss of Elizabethan optimism and glory, *Agincourt* and *Queen Margarite* present a deeply pessimistic view of England in decline socially, culturally and politically. Whereas Elizabeth I had triumphed against the Spanish Armada, Charles could not persuade his subjects to finance a mission against Catholic Spain, even in the defence of other Protestants. Henry V had spectacularly defeated the French, but in 1627, the year in which *Agincourt* and *The Miseries* were published, Charles had failed to protect the French Huguenots at La Rochelle.

Drayton represents an interesting subject for the study of history and historical literature during the early years of the Stuarts. Some of his work was, for a time at

³⁹ M. Kishlansky, *Charles I* (London, Allen Lane, 2014), pp. 17-36.

least, extremely popular. It was carefully researched, despite his tendency (in common with other contemporary literary figures) to change or ignore the evidence in order to draw a moral or heighten the sense of drama.⁴⁰ As a figure who straddled the worlds of literary and historical scholarship, he helps us to understand what both groups must have thought were the most important topics for discussion. His preoccupation with the dangers of civil discord meant that Edward IV's role in the historical drama of the Wars of the Roses was even further diminished.

In his incomplete *Historie of the World* published in 1614, shortly after the first parts of *Poly-Olbion*, the author took a similar line. Sir Walter Raleigh (c. 1554–1618), who had once been Elizabeth's favourite but had fallen out of favour first with her and then with her successor, began writing his history while incarcerated in the Tower of London, having been convicted of treason in 1603.⁴¹ Unlike many of his other works from this period, Raleigh's *Historie* was intended for a popular audience, and was entered in the Stationers' Register in April 1611. Three-and-a-half years later the first edition appeared, comprising a single volume of nearly a million words with an elaborate frontispiece, but without a name on the title page. It was, however, almost immediately suppressed on the king's orders for being 'too sawcie in censuring princes'.⁴² This was a fair assessment, given that Raleigh's principal thesis was the

⁴⁰ In 1626 Drayton criticised Samuel Daniel for being 'too much historian in verse'. Hebel, *Works of Michael Drayton*, Vol. 2, pp. 123-8. See also A. B. Ferguson, 'The Historical Thought of Samuel Daniel: A Study in Renaissance Ambivalence', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 32, No. 2 (1971), p. 185.

⁴¹ M. Nicholls and P. Williams, *Sir Walter Raleigh In Life and Legend* (London, Continuum, 2011), pp. 201-14, 256.

⁴² N. E. McClure (ed.), *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, (2 Vols., Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1939), Vol. 1, p. 568.

wickedness of kings and the inevitability of divine retribution, but, given the circumstances under which he was writing, his cynicism is hardly surprising.⁴³

Raleigh adopts the traditional view that Henry VI's problems can be attributed to a fatal combination of his own poor judgement (his choice of Margaret of Anjou for a wife, for example) and God's displeasure with the usurpation of his grandfather, Henry IV. Although he is, in this context, acting in accordance with a divine plan, Edward IV emerges as a particularly vicious brute, on whose orders 'all the Plant[agenet]s of Lancaster were rooted upp'.⁴⁴ Raleigh does not mention Edward's sexual conquests and chooses 'to omit more than many of his other cruelties', but he does observe that he 'beheld and allowed the slaughter' of his enemies and ordered the execution of his brother Clarence for an entirely imaginary crime⁴⁵. His instructions to Richard of Gloucester that he should kill Henry VI are said to have taught 'the greatest Maister in mischeife of all that forewent him' how to dispose effectively of political rivals, and the murder of his two young sons is seen as just recompense for selling 'the blood of others at a low rate'.⁴⁶

The suppression order against Raleigh's *History* was soon lifted and a new edition appeared in 1617. It remained very popular, with at least eleven editions being printed in the seventeenth century, one in the eighteenth, and one in the nineteenth. Raleigh's opposition to the Stuarts and his providential religious outlook made him

⁴³ For Raleigh's *Historie* as the culmination of a sixteenth-century tradition of historical writing, see D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 44-55.

⁴⁴ W. Raleigh, *The history of the World* (London, [William Stansby] for Walter Burre, 1614: STC (2nd edn.) / 20638), Preface.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Preface.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Preface.

particularly appealing to the Parliamentary and Puritan opponents of Charles I, despite the fact that he had never been a republican and according to W. M. Wallace 'certainly not a puritan'.⁴⁷ Oliver Cromwell himself recommended that his son should read the *History* as 'a body of History' that would add more to his understanding than 'mere fragments of story'.⁴⁸ Elements of Raleigh's history can be found in many contemporary works of a republican cast, including *A Cat May look upon a King* (1652) by Anthony Weldon, which lists the kings of England in chronological order and describes Henry VI and Edward IV as

... two men, born as it were, for ruine, blood and misery to this kingdome; whose lives and actions no man can read with patience: That so much treasure and so many mens lives should be spent and lost, to maintain the ambition, luxury, pride and tyranny of but two men, in so many set-battels fought in the bowels of this kingdom.⁴⁹

The appeal of Raleigh's *History* declined slightly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it was still read and admired by writers including Dr Samuel Johnson, David Hume, Edward Gibbon and Lord Acton, the editor of *The Cambridge Modern History*.⁵⁰ Its factual content differed very little from that of any of the popular histories written from what might be termed a more 'royalist' perspective, but its inclusion of material about the author's eventful and ultimately tragic life attracted readers from a far wider cross-section of the reading public. The fact that the *History*

⁴⁷ W. M. Wallace, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 248.

⁴⁸ T. Carlyle, S. C. Lomas and C. H. Firth (eds.), *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (3 Vols., London, Methuen and Co., 1904), Vol. I, pt. v, p. 54, letter CXXXII.

⁴⁹ A. Weldon, *A cat may look upon a king* (London, William Roybould, 1652: Wing (2nd edn.) / W1271), p. 201.

⁵⁰ Wallace, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, p. 249.

not only survived but was so widely read clearly indicates how influential it was in spreading a largely negative view of late medieval kings and kingship.

The old stories of civil unrest, divided loyalties and the establishment of new royal dynasties were far more resonant in the context of the new Stuart regime's increasingly controversial policies than they had ever been in the reign of Elizabeth I. From an early point in the seventeenth century the anxiety of the gentlemen scholars who were the creators and primary audience of these histories is clearly apparent, as is their desire to curry favour with James I. To take just one example, the 1609 edition of Samuel Daniel's long narrative poem *The History of the Civil Wars between the Houses of York and Lancaster* (first published in 1595), contains a new preface in which the author declares his intention to 'shewe the deformities of Civile Dissension, and the miserable events of Rebellions, Conspiracies, and bloody Revengements, which followed (as in a circle) upon that breach of the due course of Succession' caused by the usurpation of Henry IV. As a result, he explains, 'the blessings of Peace, and the happinesse of an established Government (in a direct Line)' will become clearly apparent – by implication to anyone who might question James' title.⁵¹ Hopes for lasting dynastic stability were eventually to be disappointed as England moved towards civil war. But in the meantime Daniel's work was used and developed by another contemporary writer, John Trussel (c. 1575-1648), whose royalist sympathies were also beyond question.

⁵¹ S. Daniel, *The ciuile wars betweene the howses of Lancaster and Yorke* (London, [Humphrey Lownes for] Simon Watersonne, 1609: (2nd edn.) / 6245), sig. A2v.

John Trussel

Little documentary evidence now survives about the education of the London-born antiquary and historian, John Trussel, although he later described William Camden as ‘my ever revered and remembered schoolmaster’, which suggests he was a pupil at Westminster. His interest in history may thus have been fostered from boyhood.⁵² It seems likely that, like his father, he trained as an attorney. Even so, his literary career appears to have started at an early age, as three works of poetry published in the 1590s have been attributed to him with varying degrees of certainty: *An Ould Facioned Love* (1594), *Raptus I. Helenae: the First Rape of Faire Hellen, done into Poeme by J.T.* (1595), and three dedicatory verses prefixed to *Triumphs over Death*, a poem by the Jesuit, Robert Southwell, which was published after his execution in 1595. Within a few years Trussel followed his elder brother and sister to Winchester, where he married his first wife in 1603 and became a freeman in 1606. He pursued a successful career in law and local government, serving the dean and chapter as bailiff of their liberties in Hampshire between 1613 and 1616, and then becoming the senior of the two city bailiffs. He discharged two terms as mayor of Winchester, in 1624–5 and 1633–4, and was eventually exempted from civic office ‘in respect of his impotency and infirmity’ two years before his death in 1648.⁵³

For most of his busy life Trussel continued to write. In 1636 he published a continuation of Daniel’s *History of England*, extending the narrative from the end of Edward III’s reign to that of Henry VI. The only one of Trussel’s longer works to appear

⁵² *Touchstone of Tradition*, f. 29, cited by A. Rosen, ‘John Trussel, antiquary and historian’, *ODNB*, Vol. 55, p. 472.

⁵³ R. C. Murph, *Rewriting the Wars of the Roses: The 17th Century Royalist Histories of John Trussell, Sir Francis Biondi and William Habington* (London, McFarland & Company, 2006), p. 8; Rosen, ‘John Trussel’, *ODNB*, Vol. 55, pp. 471-3.

in his lifetime which can definitively be attributed to him, his *Continuation of the collection of the History of England*, was re-issued with corrections in 1641. This corrected version was appended to new editions of Daniel's *History* in 1650 and 1685.⁵⁴ A tireless antiquarian notable for his industry rather than his accuracy or perception, around 1636 Trussel also produced *The Origin of Cities*, a treatise on the development of cities in general and Winchester in particular. A decade later it was incorporated into the *Touchstone of Tradition*, a long and unfinished antiquarian history of Winchester tracing its origins back to its legendary foundation by Lud Hudibras. His contribution incurred harsh criticism from later writers, including the lawyer and antiquary, Sir Edward Smirke (1795–1875), who dismissed it as a 'loose, rambling work, of little, if any, value. The incompetency of the author to deal with matters of historical research is patent'.⁵⁵ While praising Trussel's learning and noting that his treatise contained 'many useful points of intelligence', another scholar complained that any such insights were lost 'amongst a chaos of indigested and erroneous matter', and that 'nothing can be more confused and erroneous than his chronology in general'.⁵⁶ It is worth bearing these comments in mind when we turn to Trussel's account of fifteenth-century England.

Trussel boasted in the 'epistle to the reader' of his *Continuation* that he had 'left no Chronicle of this land, that purse, or prayer could purchase or procure, unperused'.⁵⁷

While this is almost certainly an exaggeration, his observations about Edward IV and

⁵⁴ Murph, *Rewriting the Wars of the Roses*, p. 9.

⁵⁵ E. Smirke, 'Original Documents: Inquest Illustrative of the Ancient Condition of Winchester', *Archaeological Journal*, 7 (1850), p. 380.

⁵⁶ J. Milner, *The History Civil and Ecclesiastical, and Survey of the Antiquities of Winchester* (2 vols., James Robbins, Winchester, 1798-1801), Vol. 1 p. 13; Vol. 2 p. 194.

⁵⁷ J. Trussel, *A continuation of the collection of the history of England beginning where Samuel Daniell Esquire ended* (London, M. D[awson] for Ephraim Dawson, 1636: STC (2nd edn.) / 24297), Epistle.

the Wars of the Roses undoubtedly reflect wide reading (if little in the way of analysis or original thought). The chronicles of Hall, Holinshed, and Stow were clearly major influences, but Roxanne C. Murph convincingly argues that the work of Sir John Heyward, Sir Francis Bacon, Robert Fabyan, Polydore Vergil, Sir Thomas More, and of French authors, such as Commynes, were also consulted, albeit perhaps at second hand.⁵⁸ More strikingly, there is evidence to suggest that Trussel was directly influenced by Shakespeare and Heywood, as for example, in his account of Clarence's death. The familiar tales of Edward's fear of a 'G' who would succeed him and of the murder of Clarence by drowning in the butt of Malmsey are rehearsed,⁵⁹ but, as in Shakespeare, Trussel blames Richard for inventing the prophecy in the first place, encouraging Edward to believe it and then dispatching Clarence himself in order to 'comparse the attainment of the crown of England'.⁶⁰ Trussel also seems to have drawn upon Heywood's *Edward IV* in his portrayal of Richard III, implying, as in the play, that the latter's marriage took place only after he seized the throne, when it was actually solemnised more than ten years earlier.⁶¹ His description of Fauconberg's attack on London also owes a debt to Heywood, as well as to more historically accurate sources.⁶²

The other elements of Trussel's venture into fifteenth-century history are equally familiar. Henry VI's 'gentlenesse and tendernesse ... not accompanied with courage and severitie' are, for example, consistently said to have been 'hurtfull to himselfe and

⁵⁸ Murph, *Rewriting the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 10-19.

⁵⁹ Trussel, *Continuation*, pp. 206-7.

⁶⁰ Like Shakespeare, Trussel also places Richard at Edward's deathbed, and stresses the importance of the red rose and the white as badges for the Lancastrian and Yorkist factions. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 97, 173, 206

⁶¹ Heywood, *Edward IV*, pp. 308-11 (Part Two, Sc. 23).

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 100-10 (Part One, Sc. 4-5).

his estate'.⁶³ The details of the events that led to Edward being acclaimed king by the people of London in 1461 are near identical to those in the *Great Chronicle of London* (see above, pp. 74-5), complete with descriptions of the muster at St John's field, of Edward's initial refusal of the crown, of his need to be 'persuaded' by a group of senior prelates, and of the ceremony confirming his acceptance at which the *te Deum* was sung.⁶⁴ Trussel agrees that Edward's hasty marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was the primary reason for Warwick's alienation and ultimately of 'the effusion of so much Christian blood'.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Prince Edward's capture and murder are described far less graphically than in some other accounts, with Edward simply pushing the young man 'disdainfully' away after failing to elicit the 'submissive satisfactory answers as hee required', and turning his back while Gloucester, Clarence, Dorset, and the Lord Hastings stab him with their poignards. This act, nevertheless, eventually 'occasioned the revenge of his blood afterwards in generall upon them all, and in particular upon every one of them'.⁶⁶ Nor is Edward held directly responsible for the death of King Henry. While he is busy rewarding the aldermen of London for their defence of the city, Richard takes it upon himself to murder the old king 'either out of pity of his unbounded injury, or envie at his so settled patience',⁶⁷ in what appears to be an allusion to Act V, Scene 6 of *Henry VI Part 3*. Trussel ends his account of Edward's life by paraphrasing Thomas More's assessment of the king as a man of 'goodly personage and Princely aspect ... in peace for the most part just and mercifull, of comely countenance, of body strong and straight, but in his latter dayes, with ease, and overliberall diet, somewhat enclining to corpulency, but far from

⁶³ Trussel, *Continuation*, p. 173.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 196. Trussel gives only a very short summary of the deed, but it seems reminiscent of the death of Henry VI in Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 3*.

uncomeliness.⁶⁸ Like More, he is far less censorious of Edward's licentiousness and 'untamable affections' than many of his more puritanical contemporaries.⁶⁹ His principal criticism of Edward is in fact directed at the political consequences of his behaviour, rather than the brutality of the acts themselves.

In common with other 'royalist' historians of the period, Trussel expressed a particular revulsion for social discord and was writing with an anxious eye to what might happen in the future. He constantly stresses the bloody violence of the Wars of the Roses, describing battles as 'slaughter'⁷⁰ and ending the *Continuation* with a long list of casualties sustained in various engagements. The list, which extends to nearly 25,000 commoners and 650 nobles and members of the royal family, deliberately omits those killed since Bosworth.⁷¹ Medieval chroniclers were notoriously prone to exaggerate the number of combatants and attendant fatalities in battles, but Trussel clearly has a point to make. He is particularly critical of Edward's decision not to take prisoners at the battle of Towton as 'a Course more savoring of policie then Religion'.⁷² In his opinion, Edward's men behaved more like a mob than a proper army and are, indeed, described as the 'great beast of many heads, the multitude'.⁷³ In words that recall the cynical pragmatism of Heywood's Hobs the Tanner, Trussel dismisses the people of London as 'Weathercocke Citizens', who surrender to the Yorkists and betray their king after only a token show of resistance.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Trussel, *Continuation*, p. 209; after *TM*, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 180; Murph, *Rewriting the Wars of the Roses*, p. 26.

⁷⁰ See, for example Trussel, *Continuation*, pp. 170, 173, 176, 179, 184, 196, 259.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

This attitude is hardly surprising, given that Trussel wrote, lived and worked through a time of profound social and political upheaval. His list of 'Benefactors to Winchester' was composed while the city functioned as a royalist stronghold during the English Civil War⁷⁵. It ends with a vivid description of the dislocation brought about by the current conflict and his fervent wish for King Charles's victory.⁷⁶ Trussel's decision to extend Daniel's history, which he made earlier, at some point before 1636, was no doubt in part motivated by the same royalist sentiments and, perhaps, a sense of foreboding at what might lie ahead. This is especially clear at the end of the *Continuation*, where he compares the way in which Henry VII 'conjoynd the Roses' to James I's union of the crowns of England and Scotland, an achievement accomplished 'to Gods glory, the Churches good, and his Subjects great comfort'.⁷⁷ Trussel's final words summarise his aim in writing the *Continuation* as a plea for unity under the benign rule of the House of Stuart, and a warning of the carnage that had previously ensued when York and Lancaster went to war:

'There appeareth in all to have beene slaine, Fourescore five thousand six hundred twenty and eight Christians, and most of them of this Nation, not to bee repeated without grieffe, nor remembred without deprecation, that the like may never happen more'.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* (London, Allen Lane, 2008), pp. 265, 387. After its capture by Cromwell's army, Winchester was one of the places through which Charles was paraded. G. S. Stevenson (ed.), *Charles I in Captivity* (London, Arrowsmith, 1927), pp. 172, 174.

⁷⁶ Rosen, 'John Trussel', *ODNB*, Vol. 55, p. 473.

⁷⁷ Trussel, *Continuation*, p. 259. Trussel adds a short verse to the effect that God would 'never let hearts quiet follow those, / That shall the holding of this Knot oppose. / But let thy best of blessings wait on them, That zealously shall guard his Diadem', clearly reflecting his Royalist sympathies.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

William Habington

Trussel's contemporary, William Habington, held similarly royalist views, which were shaped by his unusual upbringing. The son of Thomas Habington, a recusant Catholic antiquary and associate of the Gunpowder Plotters, William was educated by the Jesuits at St Omer, near Calais, and then in Paris (probably at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont). As a result he mastered French, Latin and Greek, while becoming firmly entrenched in a suspect religious and social environment that set him firmly apart from most Englishmen. His friends and family were either Catholics or Catholic sympathisers; his father had twice been incarcerated for being 'a dangerous fellow',⁷⁹ had been condemned to death but reprieved, and had, according to some accounts, defiantly hung a portrait of Thomas Percy, chief conspirator of the Gunpowder Plot, in the family manor of Hindlip Hall.⁸⁰ Indeed, Habington barely escaped being recruited into the Jesuit order himself.⁸¹ Given that the least militant of English Catholics encountered constant distrust and were subject to official searches and imprisonment, he must have felt profoundly vulnerable. As Kenneth Allot speculates in his introduction to a volume of Habington's poetry, such pressures seem to have given rise to 'a naturally timid temperament, to a distrust of all extremes of greatness or happiness, to a dislike of bloodshed, to a hortatory primness and circumspection which are distasteful even if understandable'.⁸² Another critic notes that he 'is remembered as a minor poet who avoided involvement in anything, apart from his courtship and

⁷⁹ Quoted in K. Allot (ed.), *The Poems of William Habington* (London, Liverpool University Press, 1948), p. xiv.

⁸⁰ T. R. Nash, *Collections for the History and Antiquities of Worcestershire* (2 Vols., London, John Nichols, 1782), Vol. 1, p. 585.

⁸¹ J. Wadsworth, *The English Spanish Pilgrime* (London, T[homas] C[otes] for Michael Sparke, 1629), pp. 21-2.

⁸² Allot, *Poems of William Habington*, pp. xviii-xix.

marriage to Lucy Herbert'.⁸³ She was the daughter of William Herbert, Baron Powis, and a granddaughter of Henry Percy, eighth earl of Northumberland.

Nevertheless, Habington does appear to have grown bolder between 1629 and 1640, becoming a courtier and friend to other poets and playwrights, a change which Allott attributes to the fact that Charles I largely ignored the laws against Catholics during his years of personal rule in order to please his wife, Henrietta Maria.⁸⁴ Habington's only play, *The Queen of Aragon, a Tragic-Comedie*, was performed twice in front of the king and queen at court in April 1640, before it was presented at Blackfriars and published, apparently against the author's will.⁸⁵ Habington did not value his literary work as highly as his historical scholarship, claiming in the introduction to *Castara* that 'to write this, love stole some houres from busines, and my more serious studie. For though Poetrie may challenge ... the best Sciences, both for antiquity and worth, I never set so high a rate upon her, as to give my selfe entirely up to her devotion.'⁸⁶ His 'more serious study' had already resulted in a biography of Henry V, commissioned by King Charles during the 1630s, but now lost. It was, according to D. R. Woolf, intended to foster 'the cult of Charles I the warrior', but by the end of the decade a more sombre mood had set in, reflected in Habington's *Observations upon Historie* (1640) and *The Historie of Edward the Fourth, King of England* (1641).⁸⁷

⁸³ M. Stapleton, *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 424.

⁸⁴ Allot, *Poems of William Habington*, p. xxix. See also A. Plowden, *Henrietta Maria: Charles I's Indomitable Queen* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 2001), pp. 99-100.

⁸⁵ Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. 1, pp. 224-5.

⁸⁶ W. Habington, *Castara: The first part* (London, Anne Griffin for William Cooke, 1634: (2nd edn.) / 12583), sig. A2r.

⁸⁷ Woolf, *Idea of History*, pp. 163-4.

The Historie of Edward the Fourth had at least some lasting impact, as it was reprinted in the eighteenth century and 'not disdained' by the eminent historian and philosopher David Hume (1711-76). As Allott rather cruelly observed in 1948, however, 'Habington's works are unread and unreadable today',⁸⁸ while his most recent biographer, Robert Wilcher, maintains that his historical publications only 'retain some interest as expressions of royalist disdain'.⁸⁹ Woolf, on the other hand, describes the *Historie* as 'an exercise in political persuasion', noting the extent to which it was influenced by the author's (qualified) admiration for Machiavelli, and stressing its 'didactic purpose'.⁹⁰

Like Trussel, Habington wrote about the events of the fifteenth century in order to reflect upon and even influence those of the seventeenth. His *Observations*, a collection of six essays on various French and English rulers, furnishes some interesting examples of this approach. He alludes, for instance, to the parliamentary revolt against Charles I when describing the English people's 'ungratefull' rejection of Queen Matilda in favour of Stephen, a process he dismisses contemptuously as an 'election'.⁹¹ Habington's support for Matilda plays into another theme of the *Observations*, in turn derived from his reading of Machiavelli, that of disgust at rebellion against legitimate royal authority and at the violence likely to ensue. In the essay on Henry II's reign he explicitly draws attention to the way in which 'innocent people' are inevitably drawn into civil war:

So cruell is the fortune of the vulgar, that they can make no just account of
their owne lives or states, when Princes are pleas'd to follow the disorder

⁸⁸ Allott, *Poems of William Habington*, p. xxii.

⁸⁹ R. Wilcher, 'William Habington (1605–1654), poet', *ODNB*, Vol. 24, p. 387.

⁹⁰ Woolf, *Idea of History*, pp. 163-7.

⁹¹ W. Habington, *Observations vpon historie* (London, Tho. Wykes, 1641: Wing / H166), pp. 1-5.

of their rage. For at the expence of the common blood highest discords are
maintain'd; and at their losse chiefly the ambition of the Mighty is
purchast.⁹²

When writing about Louis XI's rebellious subjects, Habington also had contemporary England in mind, observing drily that 'though no man endeavor'd but his owne interest, the Common weale was pretended ... since rebellion, is so monstrous to the eye of conscience, that it blusheth to appeare it selfe, and therefore weares a vizard which oftentimes betrays the ignorant'.⁹³

Set in this wider context, Habington's decision to make Edward IV's reign the subject of his only other surviving attempt at historical writing seems even more appropriate. He spells out the parallels that he saw between contemporary politics and those of Edward's time in his dedication to Charles I, affirming that:

His life presents your eye with rugged times, yet smooth'd by a prevailing
Fortune, and a just cause. Faction begot many tempests: but Soveraigntie
found a happie calme, in the destruction (since no gentler way had
authoritie) of mighty opposers.⁹⁴

Habington ends his dedication by expressing the hope that Charles's subjects would look back on the turbulent events that he describes in order to 'congratulate the present' for the tranquility they currently enjoyed, while in the grand tradition of Thomas More praying that Charles himself 'should long continue in peace, the comfort

⁹² Habington, *Observations*, pp. 24-6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-2.

⁹⁴ W. Habington, *The historie of Edward the Fourth, King of England* (London, Tho. Cotes, for William Cooke, 1640: STC (2nd edn.) / 12586), sig A2r.

and honour of these times, and the best example for the future'.⁹⁵ He was not, however, blind to the king's faults and sought to advise as well as reassure him.

Like Bacon's *History of the Raigne of King Henry VII*, upon which it is loosely modelled, Habington's *Historie* consists of two parts: the first chronicling the events of Edward's two reigns, the second analysing his life and character.⁹⁶ Throughout, Habington assumes a moralising stance similar to that adopted by More, Hall and Holinshed, while making his royalist views extremely clear. His account of Edward's acclamation as king by the citizens of London in 1461, for example, while following other sources, is worded in such a way as to emphasise the strength of Edward's claim to the throne over that of Henry VI, rather than his reliance upon popular support.⁹⁷ Although the *Historie* was written before the execution of Charles I and the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, Habington nursed deep forebodings about the Parliamentary cause, warning that:

.. whosoever shall alleage that the suffrage of the multitude is necessary to confirme a Prince, destroyes the right of succession, and in that the Monarchie, which so long and triumphantly hath ruled this Nation. And to understand the incertainety and injustice of all popular election, History instructs us that no Tyrant yet in England by what indirect practise soever he attaind, or cruelty maintaind the government.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth*, sig A2v.

⁹⁶ Woolf, *Idea of History*, pp. 145-58.

⁹⁷ Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth*, pp. 8-9. Even so, with almost Machiavellian guile, Edward allows the people to believe that they have elected him: Woolf, *Idea of History*, p. 164.

⁹⁸ Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth*, p. 8.

Habington's political outlook also influenced his remarks about Warwick's and Clarence's rebellion, prompting him to observe that the commons who supported them were not motivated by their love of Henry VI, as they claimed, but were in fact 'a beast as prone to unseasonable pitty, as to inhumane cruelty; and ever desirous to change governement, because naturally it can endure none'.⁹⁹

Some historians, notably Keith Dockray, have read *The Historie of Edward the Fourth* as a flattering portrayal of the king,¹⁰⁰ pointing especially to Habington's conclusion, in which he states that Edward 'was, if we compare his with the lives of Princes in generall, worthy to be numberd among the best'.¹⁰¹ His belief that the periods of factional strife and dynastic upheaval that plagued Edward's reign were 'but short tempests or rather small overcastings, during the glorious calme of his government'¹⁰² also seems extremely favourable, particularly in light of what had gone before. It is certainly true that, when compared to other later fifteenth-century figures, Edward emerges well from Habington's *Historie*. Predictably, Richard III is condemned for his ambition, dishonesty and cruelty, for fuelling Clarence's resentment of Edward, and then for encouraging the king to have him executed; he is, moreover, deemed 'guiltie of much blood'.¹⁰³ Warwick's claim to have acted in the public good is judged to be a cover for his overweening pride and ambition, which overshadow his many virtues.¹⁰⁴ Queen Margaret's view of England as an enemy country following her husband's loss of the throne is harshly criticised, as is her mistreatment of former Lancastrian

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰⁰ Dockray, *William Shakespeare, the Wars of the Roses and the Historians*, p. 145.

¹⁰¹ Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth, King of England*, p. 225.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 206 (*recte* 226).

¹⁰³ Interestingly, Habington, unlike many other chroniclers, does not believe that Edward was directly involved in the murder of Henry VI, since he was too cunning to be incriminated: Ibid., pp. 103-4, 189-90, 222.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 85-6.

supporters.¹⁰⁵ Henry VI is offered some sympathy, but is ultimately judged to have been 'a just man, but an unjust King', who should either have performed the duties of his office effectively or stepped aside.¹⁰⁶ Henry VII's claim to the throne, meanwhile, is analysed in detail and considered to have been extremely weak, 'his title being of so impure and base a mettall, it could no way indure the touch'.¹⁰⁷ Habington did, however, qualify these reservations, by emphasising the significance of Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York.¹⁰⁸

In keeping with his promise to write 'without flattery or detraction; which is rare in history',¹⁰⁹ Habington does, however, take Edward to task for his personal failings. His jealousy, lack of circumspection, many acts of perjury and general indolence are censured in Habington's conclusion, but moral judgements are scattered throughout both halves of the work.¹¹⁰ For example, the execution of Thomas, Earl of Devonshire, and the display of his head above the gates of York are condemned by Habington as an act of revenge 'savouring of the ancient Heathen'.¹¹¹ His account of Prince Edward's murder follows Trussel, Hall and the other Tudor writers, but with the added detail that it was prompted by a calculated need to eliminate any future threat from the house of Lancaster.¹¹² The execution of Clarence is similarly denounced as a shocking act of barbarism which exposed Edward's gullibility; had it not been for 'the secret

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 25-6.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 106-7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 170-1.

¹⁰⁸ On the face of things, this attack on Henry Tudor seems strange, given that the *Historie* was dedicated to Charles I, one of his descendants. Throughout the text, however, Habington stresses two things: that Edward was the lawful king; and that, in certain circumstances, the English crown could descend via the female line. Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 224.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 224-32.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 19. It is at such points, according to Woolf, *Idea of History*, pp. 164-5, that Habington's attitude to Machiavelli becomes more ambivalent.

¹¹² Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth*, p. 97.

working of the Duke of Gloucester, and the passionate urging of the Queenes kindred' the attainder would never have been passed.¹¹³ Edward's philandering is a constant problem for the censorious Habington, who describes it as his 'bosome sinne'¹¹⁴ and maintains that 'this disease of his blood' was ultimately responsible for all of the setbacks and disappointments of his two reigns:

For though some excuse his lust, as a sinne though blacke to the eye of heaven, yet no way generally injurious: In regard the incontineny of one man could not be so diffusive as to wrong a multitude: Neverthelesse who observes the revolutions of Kingdomes, shall finde no one iniquitie in Princes so punished. The dishonour of one Lady abused extending the disgrace of severall families, and mightie factions knitting together for revenge: In the whole stocke of injuries none being so cruell to humane nature, and which with lesse patience can bee dissembled.¹¹⁵

According to Habington's interpretation of events, Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville (which is criticised for the now familiar reasons), came about because he was 'enamor'd on the beauty of her minde' after she became one of the few women to resist his advances.¹¹⁶ He also rejects any claims that Edward seduced Warwick's daughter, as suggested in some earlier accounts (see above, pp. 139, 176), instead suggesting that the story was invented by the Earl himself in order to justify his rebellion and restore his family's honour.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, the fact that such allegations gained traction at all speaks volumes about Edward's notorious

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.192-5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-8, 209-10. Interestingly, Habington reports, but rejects the story of a pre-contract to Lady Lucy Grey, on the basis that, had it been true, Clarence or Warwick would have capitalised on it.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

promiscuity. Indeed, his indolence and love of the 'pleasures of Court' badly compromised his efforts to deal with Warwick's rebellion.¹¹⁸ In Habington's view these flaws continued to plague Edward's rule long into his second reign, allowing the manipulative Gloucester to transform him into a more paranoid, less merciful man.¹¹⁹ Edward's dealings with foreign powers were similarly blighted. Habington makes this point explicitly clear in his account of the 1482 expedition in support of the Duke of Albany's claim to the throne of Scotland, asserting that Edward placed his brother in charge of the army because he 'desired to live to the best advantage of his pleasure'.¹²⁰ Edward's self-indulgence also allowed Louis XI consistently to get the better of him, reducing him to 'a kinde of servile amitie'. In short, it seemed that 'the long ease the King of England had lived in, and the pleasures with which hee appeared altogether fascinated, render'd him to the world nothing formidable'.¹²¹

In many respects Habington was implicitly contrasting and comparing Edward IV with Charles I. His criticism of Gloucester's self-seeking motives for leading the Scottish expedition (which no other chroniclers had previously remarked upon) has been seen by Woolf as a thinly veiled attack upon Charles's 'overmighty' favourite, the earl of Strafford.¹²² On the other hand, Charles had, after a fractious start, developed an affectionate and above all faithful marriage to Queen Henrietta Maria, without, in the words of John Miller, 'the slightest whiff of scandal'.¹²³ Although the marriage was extremely unpopular in some quarters because the queen was both French and

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-52.

¹¹⁹ Habington employs the traditional metaphor of the ship of state, noting that 'The Duke of Gloucester ... at this time held the sterne of the Councill, while the King at pleasure wanton'd in his Cabin.' *Ibid.*, pp. 111-12.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-2.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹²² Woolf, *Idea of History*, p. 160.

¹²³ Miller, *Stuarts*, p. 68.

Catholic, it brought with it a substantial dowry and some diplomatic benefits.¹²⁴ Given Habington's own background it seems logical to assume that he would have regarded Henrietta Maria's religion as a positive asset, although he was less enamoured of her growing influence (exercised from 1639 in partnership with Strafford) and may have regarded her as a latter day Margaret of Anjou. Yet Charles was not only monogamous, but, compared to Edward, also devout, abstemious, fastidious and conscientious; his court was, unlike his father's, decorous and restrained.¹²⁵ Charles's protracted and increasingly acrimonious dealings with parliament contrast less favourably with Edward's effective management of a generally compliant House of Commons. But Edward's resort to benevolences rather than parliamentary taxation to fund his invasion of France in 1475 earned a rebuke from Habington which must have seemed even more relevant when the *Historie* appeared in 1640.¹²⁶

Despite these many failings, Edward IV emerges as a popular monarch who worked hard to win the approval of 'the multitude'. Alongside his natural ability to put people at ease and his 'generall courtship' of women, he sought to correct the worst abuses committed by his officials, as well as attempting to rectify 'any oppression or mistake in government'.¹²⁷ Even so, Habington remains cynical about Edward's ulterior motives, which, given his admiration of Machiavelli, may itself be a thinly veiled compliment. Political rivals, 'who ever measure the power of Princes by that sway and affection they have among their subjects', were less likely to attack such a secure ruler. Edward's attendance for three days at the court of King's Bench in Westminster may have done little 'to advance the uncorrupted execution of the

¹²⁴ Kishlansky, *Charles I*, pp. 15, 17-18.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. ix-xiv.

¹²⁶ Woolf, *Idea of History*, pp. 164-7.

¹²⁷ Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth*, p. 30.

lawes', but it made him *appear* concerned about the effective administration of justice.¹²⁸ The now familiar story of the wealthy widow who trades £20 for a kiss is used by Habington to pass judgement on Edward's character as a man 'without difficulty bending to the lowest curtesie, when it any way concern'd the advancement of his profit'.¹²⁹ According to Habington, as Gloucester's influence grew stronger and Edward's own weaknesses became more pronounced after 1475, the king was at least able to employ the wealth that he had gained from his adventures in France to avoid harsh taxation and shore up his popularity. His willingness to provide lavish entertainments for his subjects also attracted people to his side; the account of the banquet for the mayor and leading citizens of London, originally found in the London Chronicles (see above, pp. 74-7), here reveals the extent to which the outward splendour of Edward's court had come to hide its inner corruption.

As these examples reveal, Habington's *Historie of Edward the Fourth* was designed primarily as a moral and didactic tract and, to a lesser extent, as a polemic in support of royal authority over the 'disorder'd voting of the people'. Although he undoubtedly shared John Trussel's commitment to present 'a perfect register of things formerly done truely',¹³⁰ Habington regarded the past primarily as a source of valuable exemplars that could inform and guide his readers. This objective, which shares many the aims of the humanist scholars discussed in Chapter Two, is most clearly stated in the epistle to his *Observations Vpon Historie*, where he invokes the idea of 'History, that faithfull preserver of things past, that great instructor of the present, and certaine

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-2; above, pp. 226, 233 n. 180.

¹³⁰ Trussel, *Continuation*, Epistle.

Prophet of the future'¹³¹. By discovering 'the print which former ages made', he believed that his contemporaries would learn 'to avoyd the bywayes of errour and misfortune'. Indeed, when 'maturely read by a Sober spirit', studies such as his had 'power in the uncertaine Sea of fraylty, to settle man fixt against all the injuries [that] nature hath depraved us to'.¹³²

For all his criticisms of Edward IV's moral shortcomings, Habington is in no doubt as to his achievements as monarch. Were it not for the 'sence of pleasure' which overwhelmed his better qualities, he might even 'have extended his victories over the world, which are now straitned with the narrow limits of our Island'.¹³³ This tempered judgement is, ultimately, the key to understanding Habington's work; it is an old-fashioned tract in the tradition of More's and Vergil's humanist histories, being intended to highlight contemporary problems through an exploration of the virtues and vices of rulers who were safely dead. Lessons might easily be learned by the perceptive reader. Henry VI was a good man but a flawed king, while Edward was a good king but a flawed man; had they overcome their respective failings, Habington argues, England (and, indeed, Christendom in general) would have been far stronger. Civil war was to be feared: it was not only a crime against the natural order, 'since no injustice in a Sovereigne can authorize the subject to Rebellion',¹³⁴ but could have terrible consequences far beyond the confines of the actual conflict. Habington even blames both men indirectly for the loss of the Eastern Empire to the Turks, as the civil war in England and divisions between the other European monarchs made possible the

¹³¹ Habington, *Observations*, Epistle.

¹³² *Ibid.*, Epistle.

¹³³ Habington, *Historie of Edward the Fourth*, pp. 231-2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

fall of Constantinople and failure to launch a crusade for its recovery.¹³⁵ Given its date of composition, the *Historie* can only be interpreted as a dire warning, which clearly went unheeded; Habington died aged forty-nine in 1654, having lived to see the execution of Charles I in 1649.

Giovanni Francesco Biondi

Trussel and Habington were not the only historians writing about Edward IV immediately before the outbreak of the English Civil War. Giovanni Francesco Biondi (1572–1644) was born in what is now Croatia, on the island of Hvar in the Gulf of Venice, to a noble but relatively impoverished family. After gaining a law degree from the University of Padua and practising in Padua and Venice, he travelled to Paris, where between 1606 and 1608 he served as the private secretary of the Venetian Ambassador, Pietro Piruli. In Paris, Biondi came into contact with new religious ideas and began to collect the protestant literature which he would later use in his work. He made influential contacts, notably with the English ambassador, George Carew, who persuaded him to work as an unpaid agent for King James.¹³⁶ Not surprisingly, Biondi was recalled to Venice, where he wrote several books arguing the need for the Republic to curb ecclesiastical authority. They attracted the attention of resident Protestants, including the influential author and diplomat Sir Henry Wotton, who in 1609 sent him as an emissary to James I's court. Over the next few years his ties to England deepened as he undertook a number of potentially risky assignments for the government: he disseminated 'heretical' literature in the Republic of Venice, acted as James's representative at the Calvinist assembly in Grenoble in 1615, and later served

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-8.

¹³⁶ Murph, *Rewriting the Wars of the Roses*, p. 93.

as an envoy to northern Italy. In return he was awarded a pension of 400 crowns a year, in 1615, and subsequently obtained a lifelong annuity of £200 for himself and his wife Mary Mayerne, sister of Sir Theodore, the king's physician.¹³⁷

Once settled in England, Biondi produced four major works: a trilogy of baroque novels, *L'Eromena* (1624), *La Donzella Desterrada* (1627) and *Il Coralbo* (1632); and a three-volume history of the Wars of the Roses, *L'istoria delle guerre civili d'Inghilterra tra le due case di Lancastro e Iorc* (1637–44). Although it might seem highly unusual for an Italian-Croat to write a history of an English civil war, Biondi represents just one example of a remarkable flowering of Venetian historical writing in the post-Renaissance period. Indeed, it seems almost expected that ambassadors and other Venetian gentlemen abroad would compose histories of their host nations, with others of Biondi's generation writing about the Imperial Court, Constantinople, Switzerland, Republican Florence, Hungary and France.¹³⁸ Of these, Enrico Davila's *Istoria delle guerre civili di Francia* (Venice, 1630) is perhaps most direct inspiration for *L'istoria delle guerre civili d'Inghilterra*. Davila's *Istoria* appeared only seven years before Biondi's book and recounts the religious and civil wars which gripped France from 1560-1597. Perhaps more importantly, the work was enormously successful, with 20,000 copies sold in the first year alone and translations into Latin, Spanish, German and English appearing shortly after.¹³⁹ There was clearly a profitable international market for histories of this type.

¹³⁷ C. M. Bajetta, 'Sir Giovanni Francesco, (1572–1644)', *ODNB*, Vol. 5, pp. 781-3.

¹³⁸ W. J. Bouwsma, 'Three Types of Historiography in Post-Renaissance Italy', *History and Theory*, 4, No. 3 (1965), pp. 311-12

¹³⁹ Z. Gredel-Manuele, 'Why Davila? John Adams and His *Discourses*' in Q. E. Wang et al. (eds.), *The Many Faces of Clío: Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography, Essays in Honor of Georg G. Iggers* (Oxford, Bergahn Books, 2007), p. 314

Biondi's three works of fiction enjoyed great international success, being translated into English, French and German soon after publication (despite the fact that they were, according to the biographer and critic Sidney Lee, 'tedious chivalric romances'.)¹⁴⁰ His history, on the other hand, appears to have had less impact, despite its immediate rendition into English by Henry Cary, Earl of Monmouth. This must have come as something of a surprise, for as successful, internationally recognised author Biondi was well-placed to exploit the interest for such histories. Its relative lack of appeal can be partly explained by the fact that, even in translation, an account of a relatively distant period in English history, initially published in Venice by an Italian royalist during the early years of the Long Parliament, could hardly compete with romantic fiction intended for a mass audience. But the indifferent quality of the research may also have harmed sales. Whereas Bishop William Nicolson (1655-1727) referred to it in his *English Historical Library* as an 'elegant History of our old Civil Wars',¹⁴¹ and the antiquary Francis Drake praised Biondi as 'the polite Italian',¹⁴² the French historian Paul Rapin de Thoyras (1661–1725) complained that the *Istoria* was 'taken almost word for word from Hollingshead and Stow; and extremely full of faults, especially in the names of persons and places.'¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ S. Lee, 'Sir Giovanni Francesco Biondi, (1572-1644)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (63 Vols, London, Macmillan and Co., 1886), Vol. 5, p. 61.

¹⁴¹ W. Nicolson, *The English Historical Library* (2 Vols., London, Abel Swall and T. Child, 1696: Wing N1147), Vol. 1, p. xlili.

¹⁴² F. Drake, *Eboracum: Or, The History and Antiquities of the City of York* (2 Vols., York, T. Wilson and R. Spence, 1788), Vol. 2, p. 113. In this context, 'polite' means that Biondi's work seemed polished, refined, and aesthetically pleasing, while conforming to the highest standards of literary history. E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 3-8.

¹⁴³ P. Rapin de Thoyras and N. Tindal (trans.), *The History of England* (10 Vols., London, T. Osborne et al., 1757), Vol. 5, sig. A4.

Later generations of critics have been even less complimentary about Biondi's history, at least when they consider it worth mentioning. Lee dismissed it as 'laborious but useless',¹⁴⁴ while another, more sympathetic, author notes that, although Biondi consistently cites his sources, he fails to analyse or discuss them in any meaningful way. Indeed, 'his narrative, which all too frequently indulges in psychological characterizations ... is similar, stylistically, to the procedures of novels'. The same writer also contrasts Biondi's 'singular open-mindedness' with his 'frequent admonitions, maxims, and aphorisms, all of which bear the stamp of a generic moralizing, almost to the point of banality'.¹⁴⁵ Even Murph, who treats Biondi more favourably in her recent study of writing about the Wars of the Roses, cannot deny that his *Istoria* is extremely unoriginal.¹⁴⁶ What makes him different from many of his contemporaries and immediate successors, however, is the sheer range of sources, English and continental, which he seems to have consulted. He drew heavily upon Stow, Holinshed and Hall, as well as the humanist historians Vergil and More (from whom he derives the idea of Edward having three mistresses who were respectively 'delightful', 'wilde or phantastical' and 'holy', and who included 'Shore's wife').¹⁴⁷ Less predictably, the French historian and advisor to King Henry IV, Jean de Serres (1540–98), is frequently cited. So too are Bertrand d'Argentré (1519–90), Francois de Belleforest (1530–83), George Buchanan (1506–82), Alain Chartier (c. 1385 – by 1446), Scipion Dupleix (1569–1661), Nicole Gilles (d. 1505), and "Hallian" (who has yet to be identified). Despite his tendency to accept most sources at face value, Biondi

¹⁴⁴ Lee, 'Sir Giovanni Francesco Biondi', p. 62.

¹⁴⁵ G. Benzoni, 'Biondi, Giovanni Francesco', *Dizionario Biografico Delgi Italiani* (85 Vols. to date, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960-), Vol 10, p. 530.

¹⁴⁶ Murph, *Rewriting the Wars of the Roses*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ Sir F. Biondi and H. Carey (trans.), *An History of the Civill Wares of England betweene the two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (2 vols., London, T.H. and I.D. for Iohn Benson, 1641: Wing / B2936), Vol. 2, p. 63, 97–106.

occasionally attempted to assess the quality of his material: Serres, for example, is said to have been 'noted of falshood by his owne country men'.¹⁴⁸ Sometimes he questioned the accounts offered by these authors; and, when they disagreed, usually favoured the version presented by an English rather than a continental historian.

Biondi left England in 1640, alarmed by the growing hostility to Charles I and his court and increasingly short of money as his pensions fell into arrears. He died in Switzerland in 1644. The second book of his history, covering the reigns of Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III, was never published in the original Italian, surviving only in Henry Carey's English translation from the manuscript. In many ways, Biondi acted as a precursor to another, far more successful, continental historian of England, Paul Rapin de Thoyras. Like Rapin, Biondi dedicated his work to an English king while ostensibly writing for a European audience in a foreign language. Both men sought mass audiences, attempting to combine an accessible, novelistic style with accurate scholarship and research (although, as we have seen, Biondi appears to have failed on both counts).¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Biondi's belief that there was a European audience for stories about English history in general, and the Wars of the Roses in particular, was later vindicated by Rapin's spectacular sales. It is, however, important to note that the topic excited far more interest after the Civil War, when the popular demand for stories about violent factionalism in England rocketed. Indeed, although critics scoffed at Biondi's work, and he himself was unable to exploit the market that he had identified,

¹⁴⁸ Biondi, *History of the Civill Wares*, p. 58.

¹⁴⁹ Biondi maintained that Italians knew nothing of this period of English history except what had been said by Polydore Vergil, who 'by writing it in Latine, hath made only for the learned, and by making it so succinct, hath afforded me field room to make it for all men'. Biondi, *History of the Civill Wares*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

the fact that his *Istoria* was remembered at all reflects the fact that it was read well into the eighteenth century.

Biondi's largely derivative account of later fifteenth-century England contains many now familiar elements: whatever their immediate causes, the Wars of the Roses were an act of divine retribution handed down 'in the third & fourth generation' for the crimes committed by successive monarchs up to, and including, Richard III against their predecessors.¹⁵⁰ Henry VI was (predictably) 'a good Man, but no good King', having been 'borne with good intentions, but of himselfe simple', whose poor judgement rendered him unfit to rule.¹⁵¹ Margaret of Anjou's 'manlike spirit' and ambition underscored these failings and exacerbated the situation. And, although Edward IV possessed more 'vertues requisite in a worthy Prince', he also was deeply flawed, being as untrustworthy as his brothers. At the start of his reign he was too accessible and affable towards his subjects, while at the end, as his death approached, so 'austere and avaritious' that they were frightened by his transformation.¹⁵² Edward is described as such a great 'lover of pastimes' that he failed to heed warnings from the Duke of Burgundy about Warwick's rebellion and, later, abandoned his campaign in France partly in order to satisfy his cravings.¹⁵³ Biondi follows the majority of his sources in blaming Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, along with the advancement of her family, for almost all the 'mischiefes' and deaths that followed, although Warwick's belief that Edward had dishonoured either his daughter or niece is also advanced as a significant factor.¹⁵⁴ In conclusion, there can be little doubt that

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 113; Vol. 2, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 2, 40, 68.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 26, 51.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 12-4.

Edward lost his kingdom through a fatal combination of 'carelessness, lust, and bad government', traits which continued to damage the English crown, most notably during the reign of his grandson, Henry VIII 'his mother being of the house of York ... by the influence of her blood'.¹⁵⁵

Perhaps because of his greater exposure to continental authors and familiarity with international diplomacy, Biondi does reach some original conclusions, particularly regarding England's place as a European power. In his opinion, for example, Edward was fortunate that his costly victories at Towton came at a time when both France and Scotland were ruled by young kings, riven by factionalism and (in France's case) weakened by decades of war.¹⁵⁶ He would otherwise have found it very difficult to retain his new crown. Edward's willingness to make peace with Louis XI is praised as a statesmanlike choice, despite the displeasure that it caused his subjects and its contribution to the impression that he cared more for wealth than glory. As Biondi points out, he had few other options, especially as funds were running low, winter was fast approaching, and he had no trustworthy continental allies or French conquests to shelter him. Worse, having only recently regained the throne after tremendous bloodshed, he still faced Lancastrian enemies at home, while Henry Tudor was lurking in Brittany. In its diminished state after the civil war England could not realistically support a foreign conflict. The proposed match between Edward's daughter and the Dauphin was simply an added bonus, as the other terms of the treaty of Picquigny

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 40.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 6.

allowed Edward to 'withdraw himself, shunning thereby such snares as the contingencies of War might make him fall into, as well at home as abroad'.¹⁵⁷

In Biondi's view, however, Edward's wisdom in making peace with Louis offered a sharp contrast to the overweening - and generally fatal - ambition displayed by members of his family. After Richard, Duke of York, laid claim to the throne, all the males, apart from Edward IV and Richard III's young son, died unnaturally. Clarence's death would never have occurred if Henry VI had still been king; and, although Richard III was inherently evil, he could never have 'attained to the height of all cruelty and wickedness, had it not been for the thirst of government'.¹⁵⁸ Had these men tempered their ambition to a point 'such as doth awake in us good actions' they would have 'enjoyed their natural greatness' and died happy, wealthy, and well-respected. Instead, their need to 'possesse by violence' what was not rightfully theirs ensured that they would become 'the subject of Tragedie' and 'be praised but for a few things in future ages'.¹⁵⁹ In this respect, at least, Biondi adopts the moral line favoured by so many of his predecessors.

Into the Eighteenth Century

It has become a tradition among some students of English historical writing to mark 1640, the first year of the Long Parliament and the last year of A. W. Pollard's and G. R. Redgrave's *Short Title Catalogue*, as a dividing line between the more 'primitive' Tudor and early Stuart authors and their increasingly sophisticated successors.¹⁶⁰ This

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 57.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 4.

assumption about a sudden growth in professionalism accords more generally with the 'Whig' concept of steady intellectual political and social progress, culminating in the golden age of Victoria, discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Coined in 1931 by Herbert Butterfield in his book of the same name, in its most essential form 'the Whig interpretation of history' fostered a belief that parliamentary democracy, with all its attendant benefits, represented the end point of centuries of historical development.¹⁶¹ Although these ideas reached their apogee in the nineteenth century, their first stirrings were felt in the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a new generation of historians grappled with the problem of explaining the Civil War and the rapid changes in English society that followed it. As Martine Brownley points out in *Clarendon and the Rhetoric of the Historical Form*, the political volatility of the period forced historians to abandon their antiquarianism and critically re-examine established readings of the past in light of recent events.¹⁶²

There were many disconcerting changes as the authority of the monarch was further circumscribed by parliament. The old aristocracy was either supplanted by an increasingly affluent merchant class or else subsumed into a world increasingly ruled by commerce. Social commentators sought to identify the principal ways in which the past had shaped the present, often passing anachronistic moral judgements on those who either seemed to have adopted a commendably 'progressive' stance or to have hindered the march towards enlightenment.¹⁶³ But there was also continuity. As we have seen, histories and chronicles had been an important component of the

¹⁶¹ J. Derry, 'Whig Interpretation of History', in Cannon (ed.), *Blackwell Dictionary of Historians*, p. 448.

¹⁶² M. W. Brownley, *Clarendon and the Rhetoric of the Historical Form* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 6-7.

¹⁶³ Thus, for example, the Normans were said to have enslaved England; Elizabeth I was a tyrant; and the Stuarts were, to a man, despots. The revolution of 1688 marked a 'heroic and dramatic reversal of all previous trends'. Kenyon, *History Men*, pp. 41-3.

education of the reading classes for centuries, and this trend continued as History developed into a discipline in its own right. Because of technological developments in the long-established print industry and the spread of literacy, the already growing demand exploited by Holinshed and his competitors developed into a market avid for long, multi-volume histories. Surviving catalogues, probate inventories and wills indicate that private libraries had become an achievable status symbol for even the 'middling sort'.¹⁶⁴ While some of the more modest collections consisted primarily of religious texts, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the production of 'popular' histories in a variety of genres continued apace into the Hanoverian period. According to D. R. Woolf, 'the likelihood of finding some historical titles in any library is vastly greater the closer we get to 1700: the gradual increase in historical readership during the later seventeenth century became, if not quite a flood, at least a more rapidly rising, bubbly flow.'¹⁶⁵ Significantly, the moral impulse behind learning and teaching history remained as strong as ever, especially since many leading historians had trained as clerics.

The emphasis on historical accuracy, characteristic of many of these new works, had venerable antecedents, at least so far as the authors' intentions were concerned. Many Tudor and Stuart writers had boasted of their adherence to original sources, even if, in practice, they did little more than recycle Hall and Holinshed. Stow had begun collecting manuscripts when compiling his histories, and, as we have seen, many of the early Stuart writers tried to establish their predecessors' reliability by checking their references and consulting other records. Following a rather different

¹⁶⁴ Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England*, pp. 132-67.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

path, Biondi had set out to offer a new and engaging kind of history which combined a wide range of sources with popular narrative tropes. His attempt failed, in part because the type of history that he was trying to write seemed curiously old fashioned, but it should still be viewed in the context of these ongoing developments.¹⁶⁶ Seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writers were continuing the experiments begun by humanists such as More and Vergil when they sought to improve upon medieval chronicles.

Ironically, under the circumstances, scholarly writing about the Wars of the Roses remained both limited and disappointing until the mid-nineteenth century. Even the best of the histories produced after the Civil War, such as Paul Rapin's *History of England*, Thomas Carte's *General History of England*, David Hume's *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the accession of Henry VII*, and Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III*, drew upon a narrow range of sources, while the worst simply regurgitated earlier narratives. For this reason few recent historians of the later fifteenth century have examined this period of historical writing in any depth; and some, such as Christine Carpenter, have moved straight from Edward Hall in the mid-sixteenth century to William Stubbs in the mid-nineteenth when examining the historical reputation of Edward IV.¹⁶⁷ Yet there is still something to be gained from the authors listed above, for although their accounts of his reign are based very heavily on Hall, Stow and Holinshed, they present the final synthesis of entrenched, often fictionalised, ideas about his character, which thereafter remained unaltered until the pioneering work of Cora Scofield. Whereas the reputation of

¹⁶⁶ Brownley, *Clarendon and the Rhetoric of Historical Form*, pp. 8-13.

¹⁶⁷ Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, pp. 6-7.

Richard III was subject to a gradual process of revision and rehabilitation, building on Buck's *History of King Richard the Third* and the king's enduring literary popularity, Edward was largely forgotten¹⁶⁸. Since fewer and fewer people demonstrated any interest in him as more than a precursor to his brother, it became easier to simply transmit the judgements of Hall and his peers to the widest possible audience. None did more in this respect than Paul Rapin de Thoyras.

Rapin was a lawyer and Huguenot refugee who arrived with his younger brother in London in March 1686 after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had granted substantial rights to French Protestants. Although he was made welcome by his uncle and the French ambassador, his resistance to the idea of converting to Catholicism made advancement unlikely in James II's England. In 1688 he left for the Netherlands and enlisted in a company of French refugees under the command of his cousin, Daniel de Rapin. It formed part of William of Orange's army when he landed at Torbay on 5 November with the intention of overthrowing James II. Rapin's participation in the events of the Glorious Revolution and his later service in Ireland in the 1690s informed his history of England, and he later admitted that the governor of Kinsale, James Waller, had given him the idea of writing it in the first place.¹⁶⁹

From this point onwards Rapin's star rose. On the recommendation of William III he became governor to the eleven-year-old son of Hans Willem Bentinck, first earl of Portland, which obliged him to spend time at The Hague. There he befriended a wide circle of distinguished protestant scholars and intellectuals; and after his term of

¹⁶⁸ Kincaid, *History of King Richard the Third*, pp. xlv, lxiv-ci.

¹⁶⁹ H. Trevor-Roper, 'A Huguenot Historian: Paul Rapin', in I. Scouloudi (ed.), *Huguenots in Britain and their French Background, 1550-1800* (Houndsmills, Macmillan Press, 1987), p. 6.

employment ceased he appears to have dedicated himself to historical research. Between 1704 and 1725 he produced abstracts of Thomas Rymer's *Foedera*, an enormous collection of transcripts of treaties and other records of foreign policy dating from the Norman Conquest, which was published in an English translation by Stephen Whateley as *Acta regia, or, An account of the treaties, letters and instruments between the monarchs of England and foreign powers*, (1726). This seems to have formed the basis for much of Rapin's own work, as, according to Hugh Trevor-Roper, he aimed 'to show the relation which the documents bear to the events which we meet in his History and to illustrate the one by the other'.¹⁷⁰ He also acquired background information for a *Dissertation sur les whigs et les tories* (1717), an immensely popular attempt to explain the perplexing British party system and its history for the benefit of bemused European readers, which Trevor-Roper states soon became 'the standard textbook on the subject', even in England.¹⁷¹ At least the first two volumes of what would become his *Histoire d'Angleterre* swiftly followed, with extracts appearing in Jean Leclerc's *Bibliothèque germanique* and *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*. By 1723 the first eight volumes had been published at The Hague. In 1725, the year of Rapin's death, two final volumes took his narrative to the coronation of William and Mary, while in England a translation by Nicholas Tindal began to be serialised.¹⁷²

The serialisation was probably the most successful in English history to date. Six editions of the French text and five of the English translation were published over the next thirty years, in numbers that even eclipsed sales of the Earl of Clarendon's celebrated account of the Civil War, *The History of the Rebellion* (1702) by some 2000

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13; R. Shackleton, *Montesquieu: A Critical Biography* (London, Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 292.

¹⁷² P. Hicks, *Neo-Classical History and English Culture* (Houndsmills, Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 147.

copies.¹⁷³ It became the standard history of England for a generation across Europe, read by Catholics and Protestants alike, and was praised by Voltaire as the only complete and impartial history '*d'un pays où l'on n'écrivait que par esprit de parti*'.¹⁷⁴ The book reached 'the middling and lower orders' through abridgements in epitomes and duodecimo history 'catechisms' (one of which itself went through twenty-four editions), although in the process it became little more than a list of officeholders, along with brief, present-tense descriptions of historical events, and (in a throwback to the manuscript chronicles examined in chapter one of this thesis) journalistic continuations to the present.¹⁷⁵ The *History* is even mentioned (quite slyly) in Fielding's comic novel *The History of Tom Jones* (1749) as a work that Sophia, the daughter of a rough and ready local squire, reads to enhance her understanding of literature and politics and thus appear more polished than her father.¹⁷⁶

In the words of Hugh Trevor-Roper, Rapin provided the first 'systematic "Whig Interpretation" of history',¹⁷⁷ combining well-researched historical facts and a reasonably accurate chronology of events with a belief in an ancient, unwritten English constitution based on common law and thus, ultimately, on the authority of parliament. Crucially for the study of Edward IV, however, Rapin does not depart from the now-established portrayal of the king and welds the conclusions of Hall, Holinshed and Stow into a single cohesive narrative. Edward may have been the 'handsomest

¹⁷³ Trevor-Roper, 'Huguenot Historian', p. 14; Hicks, *Neo-Classical History and English Culture*, p. 147 n.10.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, Anonymous, *An Abridgement of the of the History of England, Being a Summary of Mr. Rapin's History and Mr. Tindal's Continuation ... to the death of King George I* (3. Vols., London, J. and P. Knapton, 1747), [J. Lockman]; and *A New History of England, By Question and Answer, Extracted from the most celebrated Historians; particularly M. de Rapin* (London, T. Astley, 1735).

¹⁷⁶ H. Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (2 vols., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1974), Vol. 1, p. 273.

¹⁷⁷ Trevor-Roper, 'Huguenot Historian', p. 5.

man in England, and perhaps in Europe',¹⁷⁸ whose affability and easy charm allowed him to win friends and allies, but he was also a cruel, lazy, and avaricious debauchee who reacted to events only once they had reached the point of crisis. Had he not been blessed with 'most surprising' good fortune, he would surely have fallen victim to a disastrous combination of grave mistakes and personality flaws. Rapin divides these mistakes into 'properly political' errors, so called because they revolve around 'events which are not in men's power', and 'crimes' for which Edward alone was responsible, specifically those arising from his 'Cruelty, Perjury, and Incontinence'.¹⁷⁹

Edward's 'incontinence' is the most familiar charge, in his discussion of which Rapin returns to More's account with its iconic three mistresses, the idea of the pre-contract to Elizabeth Lucy, and the allegation that many of Edward's later actions were motivated more by a love of pleasure than the national interest.¹⁸⁰ He considers Edward to have been cruel for condemning prisoners and political opponents to the scaffold, arguing that, in the aftermath of a civil war, when it was virtually impossible for anyone 'to stand neuter', being merciful is the most desirable course of action (an understandable position, given Rapin's personal history). The deaths of Prince Edward, who was 'murdered almost in his presence', Henry VI, and Clarence, while perhaps justifiable politically, would have been morally indefensible to anyone with 'any tincture of religion'.¹⁸¹ Similarly, the way that Edward perjured himself in his 'oath at

¹⁷⁸ P. Rapin and N. Tindal (trans.), *The History of England* (4 Vols., London, James, John and Paul Knapton, 1732), Vol. 1, pp. 601, 627.

¹⁷⁹ Rapin, *History of England*, Vol. 1, pp. 627-8.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 627.

¹⁸¹ Clarence's execution in particular appalled Rapin, being the tragic outcome of plotting by the Woodvilles and Gloucester and of Edward's unquestioning acceptance of false accusations during the trial of his brother, when a less gullible individual would have found it 'very difficult to prove these acts of impeachment'. In common with 'all the historians', he sees Clarence's death as the first stage of Richard's Machiavellian plan to seize the throne. Like the moralists upon whom he draws, Rapin also finds it ironic that Edward's readiness to believe fabricated charges against Clarence created the

York' and in his dealings with Lord Wells and the Bastard of Fauconberg can only be excused 'by reasons of state'.¹⁸²

While distasteful, many of Edward's compromises and moral failings do indicate that he had an astute political mind, which Rapin acknowledges by observing that the king displayed 'a great extent of wit, and a solid judgment'.¹⁸³ He is certainly more forgiving of these 'political' errors than many other historians, and more willing to set them in a wider context. Edward's feud with the Earl of Warwick, for example, is explained as the outcome of years of growing mutual distrust. Although his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was a shocking development, worth remembering because it revealed the extent to which 'Passion is sometimes concerned in the most important Revolutions', it was only one significant factor among many.¹⁸⁴ While maintaining that Edward should have foreseen Warwick's rebellion, Rapin does not judge him too harshly; after all, given how quickly he managed to escape from the Earl's custody and return to power, in practical terms it had little effect on him.

A far more damning criticism of Edward concerns his continuous misjudgement of Louis XI of France, at which point Rapin's knowledge of Comynes and his own involvement in international affairs lend the *History* far greater focus. Throughout his account of Edward's reign, Rapin provides a wider European context for events in England by offering supplementary information about Louis XI and his relations with

circumstances for unfounded allegations to be made later about the legitimacy of his own children, which leads him to praise the 'Justice of God. Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 622-4, 628.

¹⁸² Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 628.

¹⁸³ Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 627.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 601, 604. While advancing the usual reasons given by Hall, Stow and Holinshed, Rapin also suggests that, 'if we believe certain historians', Edward's seduction of Warwick's daughter (and not some other female relative) would also account for their feud. He believes this tale to be credible simply because of Edward's debauched character.

his neighbours. He observes that, from the moment he became king, Louis was ambitious to unite France under one banner, although it would be many years before he could act upon these 'designs'.¹⁸⁵ The marriage between Edward and the French princess, Bona of Savoy, which Warwick was negotiating in 1464, would effectively have prevented the English from supporting Louis's enemies in Burgundy and Brittany and thus seemed especially desirable. Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville not only threw these plans into disarray but was also regarded as a personal insult by Louis, sparking a grudge which festered for years. A costly war with England was not then in Louis's interest, but he was determined to exact revenge as soon as the opportunity offered.¹⁸⁶ Rapin maintains, with some justice, that Edward should have recognised the extent of Louis's enmity and thus have been far less trusting of his motives at Picquigny, especially given that the French king had previously supported the Lancastrians and had a long and well-deserved reputation for duplicity. Moreover, in Rapin's eyes, the fact that the invasion of France occurred at a time when Edward had succumbed to such extravagant self indulgence that he already had to resort to extortion and 'divers illegal means' to support his lifestyle, compounded this basic error.¹⁸⁷ Clearly at this stage Rapin's deep-seated opposition to extra-parliamentary exactions, such as those demanded by Charles I, influenced his judgement, prompting him to adopt a view similar to that of Habington (see above, pp. 284-5).

Had Edward not abandoned his overseas ambitions in favour of comfort and debauchery, but had chosen instead to continue supporting the Duke of Burgundy against King Louis, Rapin is in no doubt that England could have become the 'Umpire of

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 598.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 598, 600-2.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 624, 627.

Europe', acting as a restraining force in continental politics.¹⁸⁸ Even so, he takes a far more pragmatic view of Edward's abandonment of the 1474 'invasion' of France than most of his predecessors, perhaps because his military background gave him greater insights into the practicalities of campaigning. While he is not as sympathetic to the king as Biondi, he does agree that, on balance, he was right to accept a monetary settlement in exchange for peace, if only because his supposed allies had proved so unreliable. In this instance, his caution marked him out as one of a small group of monarchs 'eminent for their abilities', who did not act rashly in a similar predicament. Yet he could still have capitalised on the situation by playing the Burgundians off against the French, were it not for the fact that Louis was 'a more artful prince than himself'.¹⁸⁹

Rapin's principal sources for his account of Edward IV's reign were the histories of Hall, Stow, Holinshed, Comynes, and, perhaps surprisingly given his harsh criticism of the Italian's research, Biondi.¹⁹⁰ Whereas Biondi only parroted these authors, however, Rapin attempted to establish the reliability of the evidence that they had used. He was far more aware of the partisan nature of the medieval and early Tudor writers upon which Hall and his contemporaries drew, and wherever possible sought to provide a corrective from the growing number of fifteenth-century government records then in print.¹⁹¹ In language which reflects his experience of contemporary party politics, he even warned readers with an interest in Edward IV:

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 627.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 627.

¹⁹⁰ Rapin nevertheless takes issue with Biondi's findings more often than any other historian of this period. See, for example, *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 596, 599, 601.

¹⁹¹ See, for example, his remarks about Edward's first parliament and his initial acts of diplomacy with Scotland. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 597.

... that a man must be upon his guard, with respect to the Historians that speak of this Prince, as well as of his Brother Richard III. The greatest part wrote when the Throne was filled with the Princes of the House of Lancaster, who were extremely jealous of their Rights, and would not willingly have suffered them to be blemished, or the Kings of the House of York to be praised. The After-writers, when the Civil Wars were forgot, transcribed what they found in these first Historians, and frequently gave for truth, what was only the effect of the prejudice or policy of the former Historians.¹⁹²

Rapin concluded his portrait of Edward IV in a similar vein, by stressing that he had no interest in 'blackening' the king's reputation, but had scrupulously 'endeavoured to avoid the excess, without concealing either his failings or ill qualities'.¹⁹³ Yet he nevertheless contrived to perpetuate the late Tudor stereotype of the king in a manner that appeared on the surface to be entirely balanced. The writers who came after him nursed far fewer reservations about the objectivity of specific sources; and were, moreover, separated by even longer periods of time from the turmoil of England's two civil wars. Their eyes were fixed on Richard III and, to a lesser extent, some of the other figures at Edward's court, such as Warwick. Edward himself was relegated to the periphery of English history, being remembered largely as a debauched and gullible under-achiever who was surrounded by more interesting personalities.

¹⁹² Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 627.

¹⁹³ Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 627.

CONCLUSION

'There is no part of English History since the Conquest, so obscure, so uncertain, so little authentic or consistent, as that of wars between the two Roses ... All we can distinguish with certainty through the deep cloud, which covers that period, is a scene of horror and bloodshed, savage manners, arbitrary executions, and treacherous, dishonourable conduct in all parties'.

David Hume, *The History of England*¹

Despite his stature among his contemporaries and his influence on the writing of English history, Paul Rapin de Thoyras has largely been forgotten. So too has the work of most of the historians who published during his lifetime. As David C. Douglas observed, thanks to their unusual 'scope and quality', Rapin's various publications furnish some remarkable insights into the Middle Ages, but 'when the bulk of this literature is considered, its positive contribution to historical knowledge appears disappointing'.² This view was hardly novel: the cleric and antiquarian White Kennett (1660-1728) believed that the majority of Rapin's competitors were mere 'pretenders to Antiquity', who were more concerned to recycle poorly understood snippets from the records in order to 'justify the cause for which they wrote' than they were to study and illuminate the past.³ At the time, Kennet was almost certainly thinking of the various polemicists involved in the Convocation Controversy of 1697-1717,⁴ but his charge could have applied to many other authors, even those who were well

¹ D. Hume, *The History of England* (6 Vols., 1st edn. 1757; New York, Liberty Fund, 1983), Vol. 2, p. 469.

² D. C. Douglas, *English Scholars 1660-1730* (2nd edn., London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951), p. 135.

³ W. Somner and W. Kennett, *A Treatise of Gavelkind, both Name and Thing* (2nd edn., London, F. Gyles et al., 1726), p. 114.

⁴ L. Okie, *Augustan Historical Writing: Histories of England in the English Enlightenment* (London, University Press of America, 1991), p. 20; Kenyon, *History Men*, pp. 15, 26.

respected. Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, for example, was overtly sympathetic to Tory views,⁵ while Bishop Gilbert Burnett's *History of My Own Time* (1724-34) and *History of the Reformation in England* (1679-1714) were more Whig propaganda than conventional history.⁶

The English Civil War, the Restoration of Charles II and the Glorious Revolution were momentous events in English history, although as John Kenyon notes (not *entirely* correctly), throughout the entire period 'there was no attempt to relate the Great Rebellion to the civil wars of the thirteenth or fifteenth centuries', despite the fact that these earlier conflicts were certainly well known.⁷ Kenyon believes that this was because the traumas of the seventeenth century were viewed as a 'unique catastrophe' which could only 'be considered in isolation'. One might go further, however, and suggest that there was quite simply a growing sense of alienation from certain periods, even though the study of English history in general thrived. The Anglo-Saxon and Norman past, for example, stimulated research and debate well into the nineteenth century and beyond, with authors from Sir Edward Coke to Bishop Stubbs focussing on the (often imagined) developments that had helped to shape the English constitution. The Wars of the Roses - and Edward IV's two reigns in particular - were of little interest to these scholars. Too much time had passed for them to offer relevant insights into current affairs, while, for all the dynastic conflict and political upheaval that had taken place, very little had apparently been accomplished in constitutional terms. Viewed in this light, the conflict between Lancaster and York appeared as a regrettable (and distressingly brutal) series of calamities which were,

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-6, 38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

nevertheless, of less lasting political consequence than many of the other great events of English history. Edward's successes and failures could be safely ignored or otherwise glossed over as quickly as possible when studying the broad sweep of history.

Nowhere is this tendency clearer than in David Hume's influential *History of England*. Hume is more celebrated today for his works of philosophy, but until the twentieth century it was the *History* which won him lasting fame.⁸ Dismissing previous generations of historians for their lack of 'style, judgement, impartiality [and] care', Hume set out to write a new, readable account of English history 'after the manner of the Ancients'.⁹ Although he was clearly inspired by Rapin, he thought little of the man himself, regarding his politics as 'totally despicable' and his work as 'extremely deficient'.¹⁰ History, in Hume's trenchant opinion, should be more than a mere collection of moral exemplars, or the shallow, thoughtless compilation of catalogues of facts, so eloquently derided by Samuel Johnson.¹¹ He intended his own pioneering study to be closer to a work of science, which would help readers to understand the basic principles of human nature through a close examination of the ways in which people had behaved across the centuries.¹² In practice, however, Hume found certain types of behaviour and certain periods more revealing than others. Perhaps not surprisingly, the fifteenth century had little to recommend it.

⁸ D. T. Siebert, 'Hume's History of England', in P. Russel (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Hume*, <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199742844.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199742844-e-22>, accessed August 2016.

⁹ J. Y. T. Greig (ed.), *The Letters of David Hume* (2 Vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2011), Vol. 1, p. 170

¹⁰ Greig, *Letters of Hume*, Vol. 1, pp. 170, 179.

¹¹ J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (2 Vols., London, Henry Baldwin, 1791), Vol. 1, p. 381

¹² Kenyon, *History Men*, p. 44.

Hume's agenda was influenced by his interest in economics, as well as an Enlightenment sense of intellectual and moral superiority. As A. L. Brundage and R. C. Cosgrove point out in their study of *British Historians and National Identity*, his principal concern was to document how 'the expansion of commerce' during the seventeenth century had 'provided the underpinnings of a rational, well-ordered, modern society'.¹³ Hume's priorities are clearly apparent from the contents and sequence of the six volumes of the *History*. The first two, covering England under the Stuarts, appeared in 1754 and 1757. They were followed by two on the Tudors in 1759. The last two volumes, spanning the entire period from Julius Caesar to the accession of Henry VII, were published in 1761, and have very little to say about the Wars of the Roses. Notwithstanding his attack on Rapin's credentials as a historian, Hume's portrayal of Edward IV differs little from that in Rapin's *History*, and draws on exactly the same sources: Hall, Holinshed and Comyns primarily, with occasional references to Vergil, Grafton, Stow, Fabian, Habington and Biondi.¹⁴ The same familiar stories are told, from the courtship of Elizabeth Woodville, to the murder of Prince Edward at Gloucester's hands and Clarence's death in the butt of Malmsey, in the same reproving tone.¹⁵ As a result, Hume's conclusions about the king are entirely predictable, differing little from what had gone before in their description of 'a prince more splendid and showy, than either prudent or virtuous; brave, though cruel; addicted to pleasure, though capable of activity in great emergencies; and less fitted to

¹³ A. L. Brundage and R. A. Cosgrove, *British Historians and National Identity* (London, Routledge, 2016), p. 23.

¹⁴ See, for example, Hume, *History of England*, Vol. 2, pp. 463, 467, 474, 483.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 464, 476, 491-2. Hume does at least question the validity of some now established assumptions, such as the idea of a prophecy about 'G' hastening the execution of Clarence, but his reservations are not explored in any particular depth.

prevent ills by wise precautions, than to remedy them after they took place, by his vigour and enterprize.¹⁶

As this thesis has shown, by the time that Hume was writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Edward IV's historical reputation had long assumed this familiar form. The later Tudor writers, and especially Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed, had formed a consensus which grew stronger as later generations of historians used and re-used their work. What few changes did occur seem to reveal the corrosive effects of time, as memories of the king's life faded, leaving only a handful of heavily fictionalised anecdotes and a caricature of the royal personality. The rediscovery of original primary sources might possibly have prompted a reassessment of Edward and his reign, as eventually happened in the twentieth century, but, as both David Hume and Charles Ross noted, historians have largely been obliged to rely upon the same material rather than drawing upon new evidence.¹⁷ It was easier to recycle the same ideas and opinions.

As a result, Edward IV remained on the margins of history. Neither of his two reigns gave rise to the constitutional developments that so fascinated the 'Whig' historians. Unlike Henry V, he won no glorious victories in foreign wars which would have allowed him to be recast as a national hero. Nor, despite some of the harsh moral judgements passed against him in the later sixteenth century, did he achieve the notoriety of a dyed-in-the-wool villain, such as King John or Richard III. Historians simply parroted the work of Tudor chroniclers in lieu of new research, while the general public was

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 493.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 469.

entertained by plays and ballads which drew largely on heavily fictionalised elements of Edward's last years. The successful military commander whose spectacular court was the talk of Europe was displaced by a gullible and avaricious debauchee. This image has proved remarkably enduring and still lingers on in the popular imagination. We can today hear echoes of Thomas Heywood (notably regarding Edward's exploits with Jane Shore) in John Farman's *Very Bloody History of Britain without the Boring Bits*, which memorably records:

He had a high old time in London; so much so that he died in 1483 from
sloth and over indulgence.¹⁸



'A Merry, pleasant, and delectable Historie, betweene K. Edward the fourth, and a Tanner'. Originally printed by W. White (London, 1613), courtesy of Corpus Christi College, Oxford

¹⁸ J. Farman, *The Very Bloody History of Britain Without The Boring Bits* (London, Random House Children's Books, 1990), p. 52.

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