

Differing Designs, Differing Rhetorics: Why Two Versions of More's *Richard III*?

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I want to thank Gerry Wegemer and the entire Center for Thomas More Studies for inviting me to speak this evening. I am delighted and honored to be in such distinguished company. I've come lately to the study of More's *Richard*, a work that continues to fascinate and puzzle me. In the last few years, I've written an essay and given two short papers about More's history, and I have become more and more curious about it—and more and more frustrated. I found myself revisiting what I thought were simple questions: in fifteenth and sixteenth century England what was the criterion for kingship, so to speak; who, if anyone, chose a king; and when did someone become one? There are answers to these questions, of course: by right of inheritance, following the death of the previous king, upon coronation. But More's history, like the troubled course of kingship in fifteenth and sixteenth century England, belies such straightforward answers. And questions of this sort are an important subtext for More's work, although I cannot claim any special knowledge of English law. In fact, as I once told my husband, "I need to find some lawyers," so you can see just how providential Gerry's invitation was. I could not hope for a better audience.

In the spirit of transparency and due disclosure, I also must tell you that the title of my talk promises more than I could possibly deliver or you would want to hear. This is what I want to do. First, I'll show what the English and Latin versions of More's *History of Richard III* have in common. I'll use George Logan's reading edition, backed up by Richard Sylvester's edition in the Yale series, for the English version, and the text in volume 15 of the Yale edition of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, edited by Daniel Kinney, for the Latin version. Then I'll point out differences between them, emphasizing their structure and design. Thirdly I'll discuss the three passages that William Rastell, More's nephew and the first editor of More's English Works, translated from Latin and inserted into the English version of the *History*. We don't know why Rastell chose these passages (there are other possibilities), but they do occur at strategic moments in More's work. The first one, near the end of Queen Elizabeth's eloquent speech in sanctuary (45), shows how alert More was to audience and structure and how apparently small changes in rhetoric can affect character and situation. The second, which Rastell inserted after Richard has both the princes in his power (48-51), offers one of two explanations for the alliance between Richard and Buckingham and says something,

by indirection, about significant shifts in focus between the two versions. The third passage, which is about Richard's III's accession (95-96), ends the Latin version. Its importance has gone largely unrecognized, but I think that this passage is especially interesting, because it highlights political questions that involve the author as well as the work.

The king's accession is essentially a legal occasion, while his coronation, which is primarily sacramental, customarily follows it. Generally we hear much more about the latter, with its sacraments and elaborate ceremony. But Richard III separated them and actually dated his reign from his accession day on June 26, when he appeared in Westminster Hall and sat himself on the throne of justice, rather than from July 6, when he was anointed and crowned in Westminster Abbey. Why did he do this? Why does More's Latin version emphasize his accession, while his English version omitted it and chronicles that included a version of More's history added a passage about the coronation, instead? What are the connections between Richard's accession and his repeated claims that he was *elected* (*that is, chosen*) by the people, a patently false claim that invites many legal and political questions? And what does this say about More's idea of the relation between the king and the people: who serves whom? But I anticipate.

The Latin version of *The History of Richard III* was published for the first time in 1565, just eight years after Rastell's English edition of 1557. But we know very little about the history of either one during More's lifetime. We don't know when he began writing them, why he chose to write two versions, and why he left them unfinished and unpublished in print form, although a number of manuscripts circulated in England and on the continent before the 1540s, when Hardyng and Halle included a version in their English chronicles. Rastell assigned the date 1513 to the English version, but most scholars prefer a period between 1514 and 1518, or even later, for the English and the Latin. For one thing, More's history is a humanist work, like his Latin epigrams and his *Utopia*, which date from about the same period. Indeed, I think that we could very well see his history as an exploration of the worst state of the commonwealth, and thus the antithesis of *Utopia*, which asks if there could be a better or best state and if so, what it might be like. There is also circumstantial evidence for a date after 1513. More is deeply indebted to Tacitus's *Annals*, and Daniel Kinney has identified the many verbal echoes between these and other classical works. But a manuscript with the first six books of the *Annals*, with the history of Tiberius, who is a clear predecessor of Richard, was only discovered or recovered in 1509 and first published in 1515 (CW 15, 613). Moreover, some of More's contemporary historical references date from 1515 and later. Earlier scholars, like Lumby, assumed that More wrote the Latin first, and then translated it into English. But today most editors agree that the two are not literal translations of each other but were written more or less concurrently. Note, though, that since Rastell's English version includes three translations from a Latin version (though one that is not extant), it is a composite text.

From a historical perspective, we can subsume both versions under the umbrella of "rhetorical historiography" (Logan, xxxi), emphasizing the *rhetorical* Hannah Gray usefully distinguishes this kind of humanist history from later historical writing, which aimed at a more "scientific" method: she explains that "The humanist

rhetoric of history did not visualize history as a method, as a system, or as a body of facts which could become tools for theoretical analysis. It visualized history rather as *historiae*, as facts given form and life through eloquence, and as moral types made concrete." (As quoted by Schellhase, 26-27; see n. 40; see also, Ren. Humanism) As a "rhetorical historian," then, More exploited the resources of language and rhetoric, shaping the facts and "facts" to create an indelible and frightening picture of a usurper king. Moreover, speech, description, interpretation, and dramatic narrative action are all filtered through a sophisticated and cagey narrative voice, about which we'll hear more later in this conference.

Nevertheless, Gray's characterization doesn't quite fit either version of More's *History of Richard III*. To begin with, More is concerned with the political as well as the moral, or, to be more precise, "moral" includes the political and goes far beyond any easily detachable exemplars or models, which, in any case, are negative. Moreover, Gray's discussion takes the humanists' generally optimistic or positive valuation of speech and *oratio* for granted. But even as More exploited the humanists' love of eloquence, he interrogated and parodied it, showing, both directly and indirectly, its limits, abuses, and dangers for the polis or kingdom. In a way we can even speak of "two rhetorics," rhetoric and eloquence as we experience these within the individual speech and passage, and the larger or macro rhetoric that emerges in the course of the work as a whole, generates irony and ambiguity, and complicates any interpretation of the text. We can see one way More does this if we juxtapose the narrator's showy eloquence and lavish praise of Edward IV, near the opening of the *History*, with Buckingham's savage, but equally rhetorical indictment of Edward later on. One overpraises; the other radically dispraises, offering an excellent instance of what we now know as "negative" campaigning. To what extent can either of these passages be trusted? Trust is a fundamental concern in both versions, but in reading them we discover that neither language nor action is necessarily trustworthy. Language itself is duplicitous and truth, though not relative in a postmodern sense, hard to discern, albeit essential for the wellbeing of any community. This is exactly the arena in which a rhetorician with a conscience, like More, flourishes.

So More's rhetoric (which I am using here in a broad sense) can raise more questions than it answers. Specifically, it invites troubling questions about the rhetorical as well as the other means that Richard employed as he set out to usurp the crown and insisted that he had been elected, that is chosen, by acclamation, notwithstanding the behavior of the populace, which saw through the various schemes of Richard, Buckingham, and the others. In effect, More's rhetoric operates on two levels throughout his histories, then. There is the obvious eloquence of the debates, sermon, proclamation, exchanges, etc. But this rhetoric fails or is repeatedly undercut by the presence or exercise of power at crucial moments within the story—as with the culmination of the exchanges between the Cardinal and Queen Elizabeth in the sanctuary scene, or the exchange between Edward and his mother over his predetermined notion to marry Elizabeth Gray, or the scene between Hastings and the Protector in the Tower. This makes for sometimes savage black humor and a tragic-comic mix that further complicates any interpretation of an already dense and difficult text. Ultimately, then, More uses rhetoric to reveal the frightening power of "power," which is manifested in what is

done rather than what is *said*, although, ironically, he does so by being a superb rhetorician.

As rhetorical history, the two versions necessarily have a lot in common. Their topics, style, and unusual mix of tones significantly overlap, so much so that Rastell felt comfortable translating passages from the Latin to fill what he treated as gaps in the English text. They also share sources that reflect More's immersion in Roman as well as English history and a lively interest in classical forms, although they resist any simple classification as to literary kind: they have been treated as history, biography, monograph, declamation, drama, and dramatic and/or satiric tragicomedy. In fact, it is almost impossible to talk about one of these kinds without involving others. More has isolated a particularly short and controversial reign, and biography is pervasive since he is more interested in Richard, his character, and his motivations than in simply narrating the story or in chronology as such.

Additionally, both versions have an unusual number of speakers and speeches, both direct and reported, which make up a much larger place in his texts than they do in either his classical models or in contemporary or near-contemporary accounts. Easily one third of More's Latin version consists of direct discourse. And Richard Sylvester has pointed out that "A good deal of what is 'original' in More comes in the fictionalized speeches . . ." (CW2, lxxix, n.3). To give you just one example: the Crowland Chronicle, an almost contemporary chronicle of Richard III's reign, has just a few lines, all narrative, on the sanctuary incident, while More invents a particularly powerful and dramatic scene. In fact, even the number of More's speakers is daunting: in addition to the narrator himself, with his various asides, there are something like twenty-four speakers (actually more, since some of these are unnamed groups). And these span the whole of English society, from King and Queen to the people at large, specifically Londoners, who may or may not have joined in the cry of "King Richard" at a crucial moment, but are usually silent or "murmuring" bystanders.

More often uses these speeches to highlight character and psychology—he seems less interested in narrative drive than in the persons as performers, who in some sense are playing a variety of roles. This means that his history is patently dramatic. Tending to think in terms of "scenes" and close-ups, More brings us much closer to the events being narrated, making us interested observers and a second audience, an effect magnified by the active presence of the unnamed narrator who frequently speaks to us and, for the English version, the orality of More's narrative style.

Nevertheless, there are differences, both small and large, between the two versions. Most obvious is the fact that More wrote his history in two languages—Latin and English. There are at least two, possibly more, reasons to explain why he chose to do this. He was fascinated by the nature of language, he was at home in both languages, and he made training in language and rhetoric a centerpiece of the "school" he directed for his children, wards, and others. We know that he had his children do double translation, for example, turning a piece from English to Latin and back again. So More could have begun the work as an experiment of a more sophisticated sort. What could he do in two very different languages—Latin and English—with essentially the same material? But it seems to me that his interest in the topic goes far beyond any notion of an experiment or a challenge, although it may include that. Both versions are too long, too sustained, and too deeply

researched (however much historians take issue with the “facts” the narrator offers) to characterize them as experiments. So I would argue that the existence of versions in two languages substantiates the importance of the story, character, and issues for More.

Secondly, that he wrote versions in two languages means that he had two different but overlapping audiences in mind. One would be a homegrown English readership, including but not limited to lawyers like his nephew, civil servants, clerics, other historians, and men and women from the nobility, the gentry, and the middling classes who had an interest in the history and politics of their own country. By contrast, the audience for the Latin version would be a somewhat more learned group, living both in England and on the continent. This would have been made up of men, for the most part, who knew their Latin well, and in many cases were professionals—hence fellow humanists, jurists and lawyers, clerics, administrators, and other civil servants. At the same time, the many fine adjustments in the Latin version, as in the Latin words for Parliament and law court, together with More’s frequent explanations of English places and customs, give it a more classical air and make it slightly less familiar. It is as if the writer stands a little further from the action at times, or has an anthropological sensibility. Likewise, the many classical allusions and verbal echoes thicken the texture of the Latin text and give it an extra and more “literary” dimension. By contrast, the English version can be more colloquial, if not downright homely, at some points, and what Lumby calls vaguely Euphuistic at others, and it relies more on alliteration and bold metaphors.

There are also striking differences in the design of each version, albeit More left both unfinished. Actually, I want to qualify this—and here I may be going out on a limb. The Latin version is technically unfinished; that is, it lacks certain dates, other details need to be tidied up, and Latinists have objected to its redundancy and awkwardness in phrasing. On the other hand, the action is so concentrated that its formal design seems to me complete. Unlike the extended classical histories of a Sallust or a Tacitus, the annals of English chronicles, or his own English version, the *Historia* covers less than three months (not counting flashbacks and prequels), from the death of Edward IV on April 9, 1483, to the accession of Richard III, on June 26—with his subsequent coronation in July treated (I think deliberately) as an afterthought and satiric put-down.

At the same time, the Latin version makes a perfect hundred and eighty degree turn to tell a doubly tragic-comic story that simultaneously rises and falls. It rises or “rises” as Richard neutralizes or eliminates possible rivals, cows the clergy, gathers allies through intimidation and/or promises of rewards, marshals military support from his Northern base, and manipulates public opinion (or tries to), until he takes possession of the throne of justice on June 26, about two and a half months after the death of Edward IV. Ironically, though, his rise is both a comic and a tragic fall. It is comic insofar as he and others become increasingly less adept at playing their parts or maintaining decorum, as when Richard arrives late for Dr. Shaa’s elaborate sermon praising him, while Dr. Shaa finds himself repeating the passage, thus ruining the planned effect of a “miracle” and rendering himself and the protector’s entrance absurd. There is a second kind of fall, as well, this one moral and political, as Richard abuses every aspect of the kingly ideal of justice and morality, all the

while dissembling his motives and playing the part of a good king—repeatedly claiming that he was following the law and had been elected by the people. This was a tragic fall for all of England. Richard’s abuse of power outdid the behavior of other king-usurpers, including that of his own brother, Edward IV. In this and other ways, More writes a regal tragi-comedy, mixing the two with frightening political implications.

By contrast with the Latin version, More’s English version is looser and closer at times to a traditional chronicle form, since it continues through the summer and early fall of 1483, breaking off with that famous exchange between Buckingham and Morton, which anticipates plots and rebellions to come. In fact, the English version promises to be longer still. At one point, for example, the narrator anticipates the death of King Richard and says he’ll return to this later. His language is gripping, a tour de force of alliteration, as he shows us Richard, “slain in the field, hacked and hewed of his enemies’ hands, harried on horseback dead, his hair in despite torn and tugged like a cur dog,” (101-102). So More seems to have envisioned the history of a complete reign, beginning with Edward IV’s death, and ending, less than three years later, with Richard’s humiliating death in battle and the triumph of Henry VII. He just might have had a circular representation of life, the popular image of Fortune at her Wheel, in the back of his mind. In that figure, Fortune turns her wheel while a figure claws his way up the wheel, is crowned at the very top, and subsequently tumbles off. In fact More had drawn upon a related framework earlier, in his *Pageant Verses*, by blending the circular stages of life from womb to tomb with Petrarch’s triumphs. (Chew, fig.36, 51, 52; my article.) But he had given himself a well-nigh impossible task here, even if he had had the leisure he always longed for. The intended scale is too ambitious for the kind of history that he was writing, with its many close ups and sustained dialogues and debates. He would have had to rely far more on chronology and narration of the sort we find in Polydore Vergil or the *Crowland Chronicle* to cover the entire reign, even a short one, without utterly exhausting himself and his readers. Moreover, although the description of Richard’s death is unforgettable, thanks to its alliterative runs, More was not much interested in martial history or battle scenes, preferring to focus on motivation and psychology. In addition, I think that More risked losing or at least blurring the focus of his English narrative, both formally and because history betrayed him, whether we think of the subsequent beheading of this Buckingham and a later one or the unhappy reign of Richard’s successor, Henry VII, whom More detested. In any case, in his English version, the design or “wheel,” to pick up the image I alluded to, stops abruptly just past the top, with inklings of plots and rebellions ahead.

I want to turn now to the three Latin passages that Rastell translated and inserted into More’s English version. And here I must pause a minute, to play detective. Rastell is very careful to mark where each of these passages begins and ends. But he does not explain why he has inserted them. That is, he does not say that there were actual gaps in the English text, although he is scrupulous in preserving blanks elsewhere. Rather, it seems that he set the English and Latin versions side by side, and noticed that the Latin passages had no English equivalent. Richard Sylvester suggests that Rastell wanted to preserve as much of More’s writing as he could. It is also possible, I think, that Rastell found these passages

particularly telling, since he could have chosen others.

In the first one, Queen Elizabeth recollects her earlier flight to sanctuary in Westminster Abbey and the birth of her older son, Edward V, there. Almost certainly More did not intend to include it in his English version, at least as we have it. George Logan's text and notes say as much: the Queen's speech reads more smoothly if we move from the preceding paragraph, where she determines that she is the younger brother's guardian, and that no one can remove him from sanctuary, to part of the original English text: "*Wherefore here intend I to kepe him*" (45).

I can only guess why More omitted it—and I look forward to hearing your ideas. Though the Queen's Latin is slightly redundant, it makes a strong emotional appeal. Here, where she gave birth to the heir to the throne while her husband was in exile, thirteen years earlier, she struggles to save his younger brother, and she speaks in elegant parallels with haunting rhythms, heightening the pathos of her situation even as she pleads by precedent, lawyer-like. Sylvester surmises that "More may have developed the passage only in his Lt. Version because he thought that the facts which the Queen relates were well enough known to an English audience" (CW2, 206, 39/7-24). This is plausible, but her speech is dramatic, not explanatory. This passage makes a fine emotional and rhetorical climax, and the Queen had every reason to allude to this earlier event, which had endeared her to Londoners. It seems to me, then, that at this point, at least, More's Latin speaking Queen is a more empathic or sympathetic character than his English speaking one, who seems more business-like, even calculating, given the innuendoes in the narrator's later description of her marital bargaining with Edward IV. More's English version seems to intensify a bad press, in other words, while Rastell just may have been responding as an Englishman, proud of the Queen's actions.

Rastell's second addition is more puzzling still, and almost certainly mistaken, since it is at odds with the alternative explanation for the alliance between Richard and Buckingham near the end of the English version, just as Buckingham is about to break it. From my point of view, it also distorts the focus of the English version and highlights, albeit unintentionally, the difference in structure between it and the Latin that I have already described. According to the Latin version, Richard approached Buckingham only after the relatives of the Queen had been arrested and he had seized both of King Edward's sons and placed them in the Tower of London. On the other hand, the English version claims that it was Buckingham who initiated the overtures, and that he did so *very* early on—just after Edward IV's funeral services. Both the initial impetus and the timing are different, then, and the reasons for the alliance between the two men correspondingly different. According to the Latin version, Buckingham, who had already shown impressive rhetorical skills in the debate about sanctuary, is partly intimidated, partly bribed, into working with Richard, who needs a clever partner and henchman for the political theatre that becomes increasingly important. On the other hand, the Buckingham who appears in the English version and precipitates the alliance is more ambitious and far less troubled by conscience. Similarly, it makes sense that Richard, who dominates the action throughout the Latin version, takes the initiative there; in the English version, however, Buckingham is about to emerge as a major threat to Richard as the narrative stops. In fact, I've simplified a more complicated story—More's narrator rather coyly hedges his bets and considers alternative explanations in both

versions. As he remarks elsewhere, "whoso divineth upon conjectures may as well shoot too far as too short" (12). But the dynamics of the plot and the narrator's voice, to the extent that we can trust it, support the case I'm making.

I turn now to Rastell's third addition, which follows an intense public relations campaign that was orchestrated by Richard, Buckingham, and the mayor of London to persuade the people that Edward V's claim to the throne by inheritance was invalid and that they should acclaim Richard as their king. First Dr. Shaa, a well-known preacher, then Buckingham himself, deliver well formulated speeches at St. Paul's Cross and the Guildhall, two important sites, one sacred, one sacred, for Londoners. Both Shaa and Buckingham claim, among other things, that Edward V was a bastard and that Richard is the only legitimate son of the Duke of York, and hence the only legitimate heir to the throne, while Shaa appeals to the Bible and Buckingham portrays Edward IV as the very epitome of a bad king, by contrast with the virtuous Protector. But Dr. Shaa's open-air sermon only renders him a laughing stock. More makes the most of a suitably rhetorical put-down and has the poor man dying soon afterward from humiliation and shame. And Buckingham's finely crafted speech does not fare much better; first he repeats it, then the recorder reads it, but it is greeted by silence each time—a devastating putdown for such an acclaimed orator. Indeed, the people stand "as men amazed" (89). Then Buckingham, perplexed by such "marvelous obstinate silence," (89), asks more directly still, and now some of his servants and those of John Nesfield, along with a few apprentices at the lower end of the hall, recognize their cue and cry out "King Richard! King Richard!" (89). "And when the duke and the mayor saw his manner, they wisely turned it to their purpose and said it was a goodly cry and a joyful to hear, every man with one voice, no man saying nay." (89-90)

After this we have the scene at Baynard's Castle, which again seems to function both literally and symbolically, as a fortress and thus an image of power. Edward IV had earlier accepted the people's acclamation there, and their mother—the woman Richard has been so busily impugning—is living there. Now Buckingham begs the protector to assume the heavy and unwanted burden of kingship, having been nominated by the unanimous consent of the people, and Richard oh-so-reluctantly accedes to his petition. And here, as earlier, More directs our attention to the responses of the people. While the nobles go inside with the king (so called from that hour), almost certainly to engage in behind the scene maneuvers, the people head for home and comment on the show that they have just observed. Some are insulted; "there was no man so dull that heard them but he perceived well enough that all the matter was made between them," (94), that is, prearranged. Others treat it as a ceremonial convention, by analogy with the consecration of a bishop, or compare it to a stage-play, where the sultan is played by a shoemaker (94). Thus More deviously strips the tyrant of his clothes, while pretending the reverse, since the people observe that "these matters be kings' games, as it were stage plays, and for the more part played upon scaffolds. In which poor men be but lookers on." (95) It is the part of a prudent person to pretend not to know what one knows, but what they have seen is a regal tragicomedy, and to take action would disrupt the drama and land themselves in great danger.

I am sorry to summarize some of More's most deliciously comic (and ominous) scenes so briefly. But I need to move on to Rastell's insertion, which begins by

describing Richard's passage through London to Westminster Hall on the next day, June 26. There, "when he had placed himself in the Court of the King's Bench, [he] declared to the audience that he would take upon him the crown in that place there where the king himself sitteth and ministreth the law, because he considered that it was the chiefest duty of a king to minister the laws" (95). Richard follows this up with an oration, designed "to win unto him the nobles, the merchants, the artificers, and in conclusion, all kinds of men, but specially the lawyers of this realm" (95). And he follows this with a theatrical demonstration of his charity, as he takes the hand of one Fogg, "whom he had long deadly hated," having had him brought out of sanctuary, where he had fled for safety. Since Fogg was actually removed from sanctuary on June 28, More is enlarging the accession scene so as to emphasize its absurdity and theatricality.

This third insertion (the actual end of the Latin version) concludes with a very brief description of the coronation. "And that solemnity was furnished for the most part with the selfsame provision that was appointed for the coronation of his nephew (96). In fact, the coronation was spectacular—"unsurpassed by any of his predecessors," according to James Gairdner's treatment of these events. Wardrobe accounts of the time confirm the partial truth of More's claim—some of the gowns designed for the attendants of Edward V were remade for Richard's coronation. But More is also dramatizing how, in every way, Richard appropriated the property and the inheritance of the nephew whom he was charged with protecting, whose crown he usurped, whom he had "disappeared," and whom he is thought to have had murdered.

A lawyer himself, Rastell would have been particularly interested in this scene. Certainly he was correct in thinking that the English edition needed something about the accession and coronation. Otherwise, there is an inexplicable gap between the scene at Baynard's Castle on June 25 and the events narrated in the English version after June 26. And it seems inconceivable that More would omit any description of the culmination of Richard's plots and design to seize the crown. All the same, I think that More must have left a gap in his English version, if not literally, then metaphorically. For it's a big jump—too big a jump—to the beginning of the next section of the English version, which begins, "Now fell there mischiefs thick" (96). It looks to me as if More had not decided how to handle the accession and coronation in his English version or had second thoughts. The accession scene not only highlights troubling questions about the law but was potentially very dangerous, touching so directly on the king's matters. In any case, the Latin version that Rastell translates does not really work once inserted into the English version. To downplay the coronation makes perfect sense as a final derogatory flourish in the Latin, but rhetorically is far too emphatic a closure for the ongoing English narrative.

I need to return to this insertion, however, because it raises so many questions. More must have known when Richard's coronation occurred, which means that he has deliberately exaggerated the delay; in one Latin text he makes it close to a month later, when there were only ten days between the accession and the coronation. I think that this was yet another way for him to call attention to Richard's accession and the claims he made there. In fact the separation of the accession and coronation was not typical in pre-sixteenth century England,

according to A. J. Armstrong, whose fascinating reconstruction of the ceremonies and politics of the Yorkist kings I am following here. Normally the accession of the king in Westminster Hall happened just prior to his procession to the Abbey for his sacramental anointing. But Richard III was following a pattern initiated, ironically, by his brother, Edward IV, who was also a usurper. Armstrong puts it bluntly: "whereas in a regular coronation the enthronement on the King's Bench was, however impressive, a subordinate moment because a prelude to the anointing, for Edward IV and Richard III, who literally made their way to the throne, elevation accompanied by acclamation was of supreme significance, recalling the legendary days when Teutonic chiefs were raised upon the shield." He adds, "The enthronization in the great hall unambiguously announced the taking possession of the realm," for here was "the heir of England seated on the King's Bench, that place from which the law-giving virtues of the Crown could be held to emanate . . ." This illegal seizure, in the very place where law was based, is, of course, what More wants to emphasize.

An important corollary needs reiteration. The accession was primarily a secular enthronement, unlike the sacramental one in the Abbey. And the issues involved are primarily legal and judicial—this was a way for Richard, like Edward before him, to establish a legal (or quasi-legal) case for his possession of the crown, so that it would be seen as both *de jure* and *de facto*. So More both shows and mocks a political act, driven by the exercise of power, as he traces the stratagems and ceremonies formulated by Richard to compensate for his lack of a prescriptive right to the throne.

More was on firm historical ground here; his hyperbolic black comedy ridicules what other chroniclers reported in more measured terms. Richard was unpopular with the populace, and his propaganda campaign was a failure, even though a similar one had succeeded when his brother usurped the throne, or, as Buckingham so delicately puts it, "anticipated the time of his inheritance" and "attained the crown by battle" (83). According to a recent biographer, in fact, "The cardinal issue in Richard III's reign was his urgent need to attract support wherever and by whatever means he could find it. Never before had a king usurped the throne with so slender a base of committed support from the nobility and gentry as a whole, or with so little popular enthusiasm" (Ross 147). Thus Richard had good reason to want to "win unto him the nobles, the merchants, the artificers, and, in conclusion, all kind of men, but specially the lawyers of this realm" (95). Nor is it surprising that Richard looked to Parliament the next year for validation of obviously shaky claims—claims that were in fact softened.

I want to underscore a related issue—namely the question of election and/or acclamation by the people. This is obviously a specious claim in Richard's case. But it is telling that he makes it. Some idea of election and a role for the people seems to have been very much in the air in the late fifteenth and the earlier sixteenth centuries. At least two other contemporary accounts, Polydore Vergil's and Hardyng's, use similar language with respect to the election of Henry VII on the battlefield, following his defeat of Richard III. Hardyng puts it this way: "The multitude in the meane time with one voyce and one minde proclaimed him [Henry, Duke of Richmond] kyng. When Thomas Stanley sawe that, he toke kyng Richearde his croune whiche was founde emongest the spoile, and by and by put it vpon

Henries hed as though he had been then created kyng by the eleccion of the people as it was wont to be in the old tyme, and this was the first token of his felicitie” (126; cf. Vergil, 226).

Even more striking is the way that More repeatedly emphasizes the stubborn, albeit passive, resistance of the people to the claims made by and for Richard. While a few nobles and at least one cleric offer some slight resistance to him, it is the people, with very few exceptions, who deny Richard’s claims or at least refuse to participate, instead remaining silent observers. Their passive resistance, admittedly prudent, nevertheless calls into question the very grounds on which Richard claimed the kingship. And it suggests that the people have some voice, since even Richard and Buckingham try to win their support. So More’s history, like some of his political epigrams, shows both his loathing for the bad king or tyrant and his sympathy for the people. There are rhetorical similarities as well; in both epigrams and history More likes to use a very simple observer to observe that the emperor has no clothes. Similarly, Richard’s repeated attempts to gain the people’s acclamation imply that no king rules absolutely, but has obligations to the people whom he is supposed to serve. Richard himself mouths and perverts these obligations, which More emphasizes in the Latin text that Kinney edits. For after Richard declares his intention to carry out the laws, he adds that he does this because “to act as their [the people’s] servant was the essence of kingship” (CW 15, 485).

It is more than time to respond to the third part of my title: Why two versions of More’s *Richard III*? My answer should be obvious: the story of Richard III allowed More to explore and dramatize some of the most troublesome and critical ethical and political questions facing his or any commonwealth. And he was not alone in his concerns: witness the writings of fellow humanists, like Erasmus. For these reasons, he would have wanted as broad a readership as possible, hence two languages and two versions. Other differences naturally follow. In writing in Latin, More could build a tessellated text that would appeal to a sophisticated and highly literate audience, and construct a classically shaped and disciplined narrative with its many imagined speeches. By contrast, his English version would appeal more to a native audience, familiar with English chronicles and English history, and probably more interested in narrative generally—narrative that in England has a long tradition of mixed genres rather than classical unities.

But this raises other questions. If More thought his history was that important, why didn’t he finish it and see to it that either or both versions were printed? Yale’s editors offer two possible reasons. Many powerful descendants of the nobles who appear in More’s history were very much alive in the second decade of the sixteenth century, and the portrayals of their ancestors are hardly flattering (CW2, lxix). And More’s history was dangerous, insofar as it might be read (I think quite mistakenly) as a handbook for would-be tyrants, or, more specifically, as encouragement to a later Duke of Buckingham (CW2 ciii-civ; cf. Pollard).

I want to turn this question around. While More did not have his work printed, it did circulate in manuscript—presumably to an inner circle or coterie in England and on the continent. In any case, how on earth could he have had it printed for general circulation by 1518 or later, even if he had finished it? For the Tudor kings generally, and for Henry VIII specifically, whose ambitions led to the development

of an imperial kingship, such an emphasis on law and the will of the people surely would have been very suspect indeed, even subversive, especially when More himself was already involved in the king’s business and hoping to be more so. I also think that More’s history was intrinsically dangerous in ways that other contemporary accounts are not. It insists that kings should serve the people, and offers no example of a good king, only examples of more or less bad ones. Finally, it boldly deconstructs the mystery or mystique of kingship and other authority, whether secular or clerical. And More does this in a most interesting way. Other chronicles and accounts say more about the actual troops or show of force that accompanied the Cardinal or Richard. For instance, Polydore Vergil, whose hardly unbiased account was commissioned, so to speak, by Henry VII, writes how “Richard duke of Glocester, as though the terryfyed judges had decreyd of his syde, rode the next day after from the Towr through the myddest of the cytie unto Westmynster, in robes royall, and gardyd with fyrme force of armyd men, syttinge in the royall seat.” (186) More’s narrative does not ignore the presence of force. But More often prefers to use rhetoric to uncover the *modus operandi* of power and to show political theatre for the tragi-comic “game” or performance it is, one which can end on the scaffold, and in More’s case, did. So he also shows us just how seductive, omnipresent, and dangerous it is. No one in his *History of Richard III* seems to be altogether exempt from the lure of power, with the partial exception of Jane Shore, whose many kindnesses go unrewarded; Sir Robert Brackenbury, the constable of the Tower (who refused to put the two princes to death); and most of the populace at large, who are concerned with self-preservation. And that is what makes More’s history such a very powerful and disturbing work, one that is, unfortunately, just as relevant today.