

Concluding Roundtable on *Richard III*

with Drs. Clarence H. Miller, George M. Logan,
Elizabeth McCutcheon *et al.*

Jeffrey S. Lehman: In Tacitus, especially in the *Life of Tiberius*, the question arises: Who is responsible for the birth and then the growth and perpetuation of tyranny? Various people come to mind: there's the senate, there's Tiberius himself, there's Sejanus, and there's the people. Based simply upon what is given to us in More's *King Richard III*, who or what is most responsible for allowing Richard to murder the two young princes?

Louis Karlin (lawyer): The way More presents it, the problem is incremental. Where there are failures, they are usually failures of courage. But obviously the important first step is when the Queen is convinced—persuaded—not to defend Prince Edward with a show of force. But even with that happening, I think what you have to look for are the instances in which people could have stood up to Richard but didn't, either because Richard appealed to their personal gain or because they underestimated Richard or because they were afraid of Richard. I think you can look at almost every set piece and see that, when he should have known better, a given person let Richard have his way. And I don't think that More presents Richard's rise as being at all providential. Although it's his character from birth that sets everything in motion, there is always the opportunity—the agency—for other men or women to stand up to him.

George M. Logan: I would endorse that, but first of all, the point about his rise not being seen as providential: More was a guy who would have believed in Providence. But there's no suggestion, as far as I can make out, anywhere in the *Thomas More Studies* 2 (2007)

book, that Richard is the scourge of God or anything, sent to punish people for their sins. Of course, one of the things that's very striking about the book is how generally secular it is, in the sense that, in general, it's an account of historical causality. It's not about what More thought or believed, that the ultimate cause of everything that happens on the earth is God. But he talks about *proximate* causes. He talks about causes within human character, especially human ambition. So no, there's no suggestion, I think, that this was inevitable in the sense of being providential. So why did it happen? I think that Lou's point is exactly right: that there are multiple failures, and I'm sitting here trying to think of what you lawyers call it—is it “shared liability”? You know: there's plenty of blame to go around here. And then I thought of a horrible, black parody: it takes a whole village, a whole country, to kill a child. (Laughter.) All these people failed sequentially and collectively, and that's what resulted in this, and that's surely More's point, huh? Richard's the great villain and the main instigator and so on, but More makes it extremely clear that he wasn't operating in a vacuum, you know, and he required either the active or passive cooperation of a whole lot of other people in order to realize the opportunity of a lifetime for himself.

David Oakley (lawyer): I want to stake out a position which is going to annoy some people, and I don't want to upset Fr. Koterski because I'm going to sound like a liberal theologian, but how about this argument: that the main cause—and I'm not contradicting Lou or Prof. Logan—the main cause is the social structure, the structure of sin. The problem is dynastic monarchy. I've learned something in an article from Dr. Logan, and I'm going to use it now for my argument. He says that “By one measure of tyranny, which More seems to be employing, most monarchs were tyrants.” What struck me the most when I read *Richard*, although this was my first time through, is something that Dr. McCutcheon brought up, and that's the sheer terror—the sheer terror. And in my own work, we talk to people who get arrested, and they experience the sheer terror. And some of the people I represent—and this is very rare—are innocent—I mean, practically innocent—and they're *really* terrified. And it's the sheer terror of the force of law. Right up to the beginning, when Lord Rivers and his buddies are cleaned out—taken down—that's shocking. It's a force of nature and you're powerless in front of it. And then the strawberry scene, followed up by the king: “I want you dead by dinner, and I'm going to have an early dinner.” (Laughter.) It's scary. And to get to some of Prof. Wegemer's arguments, it's hard to function within a monarchy: how *do* you give “plain, faithful advice” to a guy who has total control over not only your goods but your person? So, in the face of that, I don't think we should really be surprised by these moral failures—I think they should be expected. If anyone seems to be sympathetic to human brokenness and the fact that we have to muddle through and get along in life because it's not perfect, it's More, with his Augustinian pessimism about social structures. So that's one argument: that the real cause here is social structure.

Fr. Joseph Koterski: I don't think you sound like a modern liberal theologian. Because I think there are good cholesterol and bad cholesterol reasons for social sin. (Laughter.) Very much as both *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae*, and especially the second, use the term, they make a distinction between whether it's a structure

that's going to enable people to be sinful, as opposed to a structure which itself is sinful. And in the modern papal documents, there's no willingness to accept the second—that's the modern theologian that they're resisting, and I don't think you sound like that, because I think even in what you've proceeded to explain thereafter, using the term, it's more that the structure—for instance, this all-powerful monarchy—as a structure, makes possible the nefarious use of all that power, and all the examples you cited were examples of ambitious kings who misused it. And hence, to resist that, I think that what you have to do is to be constantly on the alert against appeasement. You have to find political friends who will resist politically as long as the king is relatively behaving, and, if we get to a situation where the person has really become tyrannical, then one has to strike out vigorously against appeasement. So I absolve you of any hint of modern liberalism. (Laughter.)

Clarence Miller: You started out with Tacitus, and Tiberius's rise to power and Richard's rise to power. Richard did it almost all by himself: he created his means. But Tiberius had help. Richard's was done by previous murders—I can't keep all these fellows straight, but he had to murder them before he could get up there. This matter is bloodier, more brutal: the kids, and the three beheaded at Pomfret, sure—but actual candidates, apart from the kids, Richard didn't have to worry that much about. It's a different kind of case, I think. And also the structure: what is the structure? It's the king and the parliament and the people. And this is true in Rome and it's true in England. And for all of them, you've got the people who have a knack for rebellion, and in Sallust and also Tacitus, the kings are corrupt—so you've got a tyrant there and the senate, and the structure is just whatever people make of it, I think.

Elizabeth McCutcheon: I'm fascinated by the question some have been asking: could this have been different, or could it have been changed? And that is a question that More, also struggles with in *Utopia*, and this is another connection between the two works, and—I come to this from having been both a teacher and an administrator—that he touches the two horns of the dilemma. If you're inside the structure, you know that you have to keep it going. If you're outside of the structure, you can see the problem, but how do you effect a change? It gets so complicated in practice, and I think that's part of the issue between Hythlo day and More the character. And in a different way, that's what we're asking in *Richard III*: could it have been different? And again I think More gives us two answers. We've been talking about the structural dilemmas, and in the *Utopia* again, he's asking whether we could change the structure so that people wouldn't be thieves, so that everyone *would* have enough to eat. There's a Russian term for this: we're concerned with freedom of press, freedom of religion, but there is a strain in More that's saying, is there such a thing as freedom to have a house over your head, to have food enough to eat, to have a job, to have medical care? And we're still fighting over this question of, should every person have free medical care, and who should be responsible for that? So he's very keen on the structure. On the other hand, I think he believes in original sin. He does not think that all people are going to be good. We're again going between these kinds of positions: Richard certainly manipulates the structures, but he also has defects of character that are not

structural, but implicit in a person somehow.

Stephen Smith: On the point of what kind of change is possible, or how could things have been otherwise, I teach Shakespeare in addition to More, and I've noticed over the years how thoroughly Shakespeare reveals the problems and then how satisfied he is in the plays with small improvements, and at the end of *The Tempest*, you get there and Prospero says he hopes that the three men of sin's character is a little clearer after the play, and it's strange to see such a small victory. But I doubt he wrote *The History of Richard III* thinking that someone would read it and say, hey, shouldn't this be a constitutional republic? A radical conversion like this only takes place over a lot of time. What would be the hope for, say, a particular reader—for one person reading this book? Maybe some small change is aimed at. I'm wondering about that.

On another point that I wanted to come back to from earlier, the question of resisting to the point of blood in *Richard III*, I was reminded of that scriptural verse listening to the debate: "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood." And I wonder about the hesitancy to resist in that form. If you recall, in *King Lear*, at the blinding of Gloucester, there's the one servant who intervenes in the middle of the scene, and says "I've served you my whole life, and I offer you no better service than to tell you to not blind that old man right now." And he's killed. And one can read this as pointless and fruitless and meaningless in a terrible, dark work, or as a flash of amazing beauty that many readers remember and take comfort from. So I'm wondering if the work doesn't focus on the unwillingness to resist to the point of shedding blood.

Travis Curtright: Just one question on the structures of sin: Does monarchy as a kind of regime lend itself toward what Augustine called "the lust for domination," more so than some other forms of government? Yet, as the aristocrats indicate at Edward's deathbed, it's faction that enables Richard to work his magic. Faction was the firm foundation upon which to lay all his future plans, and of course faction could be a problem in other forms of regime as well, couldn't it?

Koterski: As we continue to think about the structures of sin, one could ask whether it's a problem of monarchy or of Christendom, in this sense: at that time, this question that you've raised, Stephen, about who's willing to resist to the point of blood—even these high clerics are not willing to resist to the point of blood. The higher clergy are too compromised. Certainly More will find this, later in his life, to be the case, when Fisher and very few others are willing to take a strong stand against this. And you see the way in which, when you've got the particular order of Christendom which More would have known, when the clergy are still far too deeply involved in the affairs of the state, as you stretch that out further, into the nineteenth century and the changed experience under Pius IX, when the papacy finally loses its papal states, Pius IX is certainly very upset about that and retreats to the Vatican. But in a way that may have been the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, freeing the papacy from being a temporal power, and instead allowing it again to exert a moral authority, and to work out an entire, tremendous revision of Catholic social teaching, to have a stance that has an independence from the temporal world. There's still a seat on the international scene, but it's not a

temporal power, and that allows it to use the moral force it has, where here, it seems to be cooperating and complicit in any number of these decisions, and perhaps a part of this structure, which isn't sinful, but can be easily used for sinful means.

Gerard Wegemer: Yes, every spiritual leader fails except the archbishop who first gives the seal of office to protect the Queen, but then takes it back out of fear. Then we find out that he immediately loses his political office. So what More does is to show England as it really is, probing why. Why, for example, is there so much faction and so little loyalty and friendship, even in the family? More shows us several failures: the clergy, the family, and then hereditary monarchy. From this history, we see that the English traditionally supported elected monarchy, but the narrator says unequivocally that parliament is the absolute authority in England. But how could a political system work by giving power because of blood rather than education, talent, political consent, concern for the common good, and all the political arts? More's *History* forces us to raise such questions and to wonder how do England might foster friendship rather than faction, healthy families rather than political positioning, or devotion to the common good rather than one's own interest.

But to return to Jeff's opening question, if pressed to say who's most responsible for the murder of the two boy-princes, then it's the Queen. (**Audience:** "The butler did it...") (Laughter.) She's the boy's mother, so she has the most responsibility to protect him. But what produces a Queen Elizabeth? It seems to me that that's the deeper question. I'm wondering what other people think.

Karlin: Well, on that point, I think that the digression about showing the courtship between Elizabeth and Edward is important. I think one way to look at that is in regard to the Queen and her virtue: it's a very pragmatic, materialistic one. The kind of virtue that she's showing is not anywhere near heroic virtue. She fends off the king and doesn't give in because she says, the cost of that is my becoming queen. So she plays her advantages well, and she's certainly not acting immorally, but there's no sense of any deep virtue here. It's very much pragmatic thinking and cost/benefit-type ethics, I think. I don't think there's any sense of deep virtue in the Queen. I'm not condemning her at all—I think she acts pretty well under the circumstances, but when you're talking about the principle of defending children with your life, it takes more than a pragmatic, situational set of ethics, and I don't think More shows anyone in *The History* as having that kind of strength or that kind of development. How do you get that? Well I think that More is saying that you get that, very importantly, by reading books like *King Richard* and *Utopia*, and discussing them, not by making snap judgments. At the beginning of Book 1 of *Utopia*, the question is, what's a good reader? And *King Richard* really forces you to become a good reader, because the layers of irony, the reversals of expectation, the sudden humor, the ability to try to keep all of this going requires a lot of attention, and requires friendly discussion. I don't think you can read *Richard* alone: you have to discuss it with someone. You certainly need Dr. Logan's notes. So I think we can create a community of intelligent, discerning people, but it requires work and it requires education.

Miller: I don't know if education can ever bring a person to give up his life, to shed blood. This comes from grace, as we all know. You can know what you ought to do, you can try to do it, but not be able to do it. In other words, I don't think that More would believe that you educate people to the point where they're willing to give up their lives for anybody. It is too much.

McCutcheon: I'm more sympathetic with the Queen's petitions, I guess. I think she's functioning as a queen would have been expected to function at that time, in the sense that so many of these things were essentially business matters. Marriage was really a business matter, having children was an essential part of the business, so the negotiation notion is a very real one. On the other hand, if we're going to take up the idea that she's a mother, which she is, she has other children to think about. Admittedly, they're not sons, they're daughters, but they're sitting in sanctuary with her, and she remains in sanctuary until, what, the next spring, when she strikes a bargain with Richard. So it would not have been easy for her to take the obvious alternative, which was to go overseas, because she just had too much baggage and not enough help, and the timing is such that everything happens so rapidly. One thinks, for instance, of what's happening in Lebanon: people suddenly packing up their possessions and moving; when you go to sanctuary, I suppose you don't have beds and you don't have a stove. You're not just packing a little suitcase and moving. So she can't really escape overseas, and I think she makes the best of a really bad situation, but it certainly shows the calculatedness of this kind of world, or this kind of structure. And it's even more calculating since heredity is such a very weaselly term in this period.

I just also want to pick up on something else: election and acclamation are somehow blended in this work. Traditionally, that is, back in Anglo-Saxon times, the kings were elected by the chiefs around them and hoisted on that shield. The odd thing is that they refer to that, but it's really boiled down to acclamation. It's interesting that the people do *not* refer to Richard as their king, so that, even on the grounds of acclamation, there's a failure. And the whole issue of kingship, at this point, I think, is a structure under tremendous strain, and very difficult.

Logan: It's exactly what Elizabeth said: it wasn't as if flight from the country was an option for her, nor would she have thought in a million years that she had *any* incentive to flee the country, because up until the day that she went into sanctuary, she was absolutely in the catbird seat. She had both her children—her sons—in her own control (and sons, of course, are the only ones that count dynastically), the younger son with her and the older son surrounded by a military force in the charge of her brother, Lord Rivers, so of course she had no reason to think that she needed to leave England. And when it suddenly became the case that it *would* be a good thing, it was far too late. Though he's small potatoes in terms of the death toll, one of the things that Richard had very much in common with Hitler was a recognition of the value of blitzkrieg: when he moved, he moved like *that* and it was all over before anybody realized what was happening.

Smith: Let me just begin by saying that I disagree with everyone. Just kidding. I actually want to talk a little more about the education point you brought up. Having spent the time working on the ridiculous in the work, I've been thinking about

Aristotle, who said that comedy is about the ridiculous, and, in particular, Philip Sidney after More said that somehow the experience of comedy leads us to see the common errors of our life, to see the ridiculous such that we would never wish to be so ridiculous ourselves. And I wonder about the work—it's interesting that Sidney's trying to focus on our desires—perhaps in the friendship offered by the author to the reader, there is something like a counsel of desire, namely that, if you read *Richard III* carefully, I think it would be fairly impossible to desire to be like the man in this book. And that's not a small victory. If Edward's desire was for vainglory, or concubines or whatnot fleshiness, what about redirecting those desires, say, to truth, or to something like that? I wonder if that wouldn't be a way of looking at this—the kind of education, the kind of friendship that the author offers the reader.

Miller: I didn't mean that education was pointless. No, I didn't mean that. People had been talking about being willing to die, and that's yet another matter. That's all I meant.

Wegemer: Yet didn't the Romans design their rhetoric and their education to do just that?—to get citizens to want to die for their country? Plutarch presents Regulus as an admirable hero, as someone who not only dies, but freely undergoes torture. That is arguably what the greatest poets have done: fashioning images of virtue and justice, in a way that, yes, your best citizens *will* want to die for what is true and good.

What kind of education does *that* take? An education that, in part, convincingly shows that your country is worth dying for, that it works for justice, honors the family and one's eternal soul. Virgil shows that Aeneas's roots go down into the underworld, and that he's like an oak tree that can withstand any winds, but is also willing to die. But wouldn't More also be thinking that Christians can be willing to die according to their belief in the afterlife? But where does the afterlife come into the minds of any of the characters in *Richard III*?

Miller: It's true, as you know, that in the *De tristitia*, there's a comparison of the eager martyr and the reluctant martyr, and More was very, very much aware that we cannot all expect, nor even should expect that we will be martyrs. Now, it's true about dying for your country. It's a beautiful thing to die for your country, but as a soldier, that's another matter: when you're willing to die but your not faced directly with it, but when there's an aggressor saying, you do this now, or you *die*, or you get dreadful, dreadful torture. To train for that, to train for resistance to that, is, I do not think, something that any amount of education can do. One may educate, one may train, one may wish—one may all of these things—but when the final moment comes, I do not think that any amount of education, any amount of training, can assure your willingness to do that. The Romans—I don't know—they did something, yes, and the suicide bombers are doing it now. A soldier is different. A soldier knows that he *may* die; he *doesn't* know that he's going to die right now. But when you are offered the alternative of dying *right now*—even Joan of Arc, you know, failed the first time. That's all I meant.

Karlin: Just on that point, I think that, in *Richard III*, especially focusing on

lawyers and counselors, you don't get any positive images. There are no positive examples, and I think that More does want the reader to fashion his own idea of what a good statesman should be, by taking the negative examples and looking for a positive one. And, as I was writing my draft, in the legal papers and in the regular papers, I saw a positive example of what More is trying to show, and that's going on in China right now: there's a 34-year-old, self-taught, blind lawyer named Chen Guangcheng. In August, according to state media reports, he was sentenced to four years and three months in prison on charges that he had destroyed property and disturbed traffic. The report of the *New York Times*: "The Chinese leadership has been eager to create the impression that it is building an impartial legal system, and the ruling party has encouraged the idea that people have legal rights, as a way of checking petty corruption, improving efficiency, channeling social grievances, etc." Well, Chen took these ideas seriously, and brought lawsuits to organize a class-action suit last year on behalf of residents of the city of Linyi, who had been forced to undergo abortions or sterilizations to meet population control requirements, using the new laws that China had enacted. The result was that Mr. Chen and other human rights lawyers in China were persecuted by the local communist officials, and they retaliated against them by putting them under house arrest and charging them with these property crimes. His supporters point out that these charges were actually concoctions; he was actually under arrest at the time that these things occurred. It reminded me of a lot of the kinds of things that go on in *Richard III*: he had a closed-door trial, his own lawyers were beaten up and kept from attending, and he was convicted. So this seems like another really dark example of what's going on, but a heroic example on the part of a lawyer. The interesting thing is that, when I updated my research just before coming out, on the 31st of October, the intermediate appellate court had reversed his conviction and given him a new trial. And I think that it may be a small victory, because almost certainly this is a public relations decision from on high and not a sea-change in Chinese practices, but here is someone who really is an admirable lawyer, making a stand at personal cost for the rule of law. I think there are inspiring examples, and I do think this is the kind of way one can be inspired by reading *Richard III*.

Koterski: I'd like to agree with Dr. Wegemer, and I'd like to add to it. I've recently been rereading a text from Aquinas on the virtue of courage and its subordinate parts in connection with teaching a course this semester on Aquinas and Shakespeare, on the passions and virtues. We were reading the first part of *Henry IV* this past week, and thinking about whether or not it's just a matter of courage by itself, and that the other virtue of whether or not one would seek great honor or honor for great deeds is just an unrelated virtue. For Aristotle, courage is one virtue and this quest for honor, for great deeds is a second virtue. But for Aquinas, courage is the main virtue, and the readiness to have a great soul, magnanimity and magnificence, are subordinate, constitutive parts of the virtue of courage. What he does argue, and this is going to relate to our question of education in just a minute, what he does argue is that, where Aristotle only has death in battle as the preeminent case of courage, he envisions the martyr as a second great act, and then extends it to what justices must do and physicians must do. He puts it open-endedly that there are any number of cases in which one has to be willing to physically die as on the battlefield or put one's whole reputation at issue, be willing to make

tremendous personal sacrifices, precisely because this is not just courage in an isolated sense, but because there are lots of things that are worthy of our ultimate and complete commitment of ourselves. I think that that insight—not just the text, but that insight—has been the source for generations of Christian martyrs. When one thinks about the earlier history of the Society of Jesus, but many another missionary order as well, willing to give themselves again and again and again in missions that frequently led to martyrdom—there's a willingness to do it. Not that anyone ever *sought* it; one didn't have eager martyrs in that sense. But one had to have a real willingness to do it. And it's not just within Catholic culture, but when you think of the current problem of Islam, somehow people there are being persuaded by a certain kind of education—and admittedly I would disagree with it—but they're being persuaded by a certain kind of education that there's nothing more glorious that they can do than to be willing to give their lives for their causes. Somehow they *are* being educated for that—badly so—but the fact of the matter is, they're accomplishing it.

Wegemer: I wonder if there might be three positive examples of courage in *Richard III*. One would be Chief Justice Markham, who resigns his office rather than submit to royal interference with justice. Then would be those London commoners—some of whom weep—who are so strong and shrewd that they don't say anything; these are Londoners who have been educated for generations in the difficulties of self-rule. And finally you the narrator himself, very witty, speaking the voice of tradition, of proverbs, able to rise above what is occurring and even to bring good-humored perspective to a dismal situation.

Logan: Maybe we should take a question or two from the audience.

Mary Gottschalk: I want to go back to this subject of the Queen, and it possibly being her fault. (Laughter.) Well, an aspect of it—I don't know if I was daydreaming when it came up, but I didn't hear it mentioned—was the possibility that she finagled the death of the other brother, George. Not that that would justify all that Richard did—it wouldn't—but it would be a good reason for him to be her enemy. In the beginning it is not clear exactly what happened with George, whether he actually committed treason. Then the narrator actually says that it may have been that the Queen set him up to get killed, because women are enemies to people that their husbands love.

Logan: That's not said in connection with George. That's said in connection with Hastings. I can't remember whether More raises the possibility that the Queen was involved in George's misfortune. Of course, he really lingers on the possibility that Richard himself may have been involved, so, on the basis of what's said in *the History*, at least, there's no reason to think that Richard's heart would have been further hardened toward the Queen because he thought she was involved in his brother's death. *Au contraire*, he might have said, well, the Queen ain't all bad, since she could help clear this obstacle out.

Koterski: This part's on page nine, and you've got it just the opposite: "George duke of Clarence was a goodly, noble prince and at all points fortunate, if either his

own ambition had not set him against his brother, or the envy of his enemies his brother against him. For were it by the queen and the lords of her blood, which highly maligned the king's kindred (as women commonly, not of malice but of nature, hate them whom their husbands love), or were it a proud appetite of the duke himself, intending to be king..." and the sentence goes on for quite a while, but it's page nine there in the middle.

Gottschalk: So, if she did set him up to be killed, couldn't Richard have thought, well, I might be the next one?

Logan: Whether or not he thought she did that, he certainly thought that he might well be the next one to be killed. More's treatment of the Queen is relatively sympathetic. He makes it clear, I think, that she's a pretty tough broad. He plays her like the other enemies of Richard, basically as foils to Richard. That is to say, just as he makes Hastings, especially at the hour of his death, look a little better than he was in real life so that his whiteness will make Richard's blackness all the more black. And he does the same with Lord Rivers, who comes across in the *History* as a very attractive philosophical guy who faces death bravely, and so on. That was true of Lord Rivers, but only half the truth. Lord Rivers was a rough character—he was tough as hell, you know, and not necessarily attractive. Lord Rivers was, in fact, a sort of amateur humanist: he wrote and published books. And he's one of those disturbing cases where we see that a humanist is not necessarily a nice guy, which is absurd to us because *we're* humanists, and *we're* all nice guys, aren't we? (Laughter.) And the Queen gets some of the same kind of treatment. She comes off a lot better, especially, for everybody except Gerry, in that sanctuary scene, at the end. If there's one passage in the *History* that may bring tears to your eyes, it is that parting of the Queen and her child at the end. So the portrayal of her is really fairly attractive. In truth, she *wasn't* very attractive. Her press has been extremely bad over the centuries from the time of her queenship until the present. There's a biography trying to rehabilitate Elizabeth, but not, I think, with entire success. And in truth, Richard, quite apart from what either he or she might have thought about George's death, the third brother's death, Richard had every reason in the world not to like her, and to fear her. As I said a few minutes ago (sitting down there), when Edward fairly suddenly died, it was absolutely clear that it was going to be a struggle, and probably to the death, between those two people, because they were the two people in positions of greatest power: he was the King's only surviving brother; she was the King's widow. And she seemed to hold both the aces, because she had both male children in her power at that point.

As for George, again, I don't think More tells many deliberate lies in the *History*, contrary to the position of the Ricardians, who think that the whole thing is a malicious pack of lies blackening the record of noble Richard. But he certainly does leave some things out—there are certain sins of omission in *the History*. Lots of sins of omission. And one of them is any real treatment of George—that would have been going fairly far afield—George was a *jerk*. And he was a *scoundrelly* jerk, too. There's absolutely no question that George committed treason on *more* than one occasion against his older brother, and he was let off because of brotherly sentimentality, I guess, on Edward's part. And finally Edward had enough of it, and George was killed basically because he was a jerk.

Audience: I agree because, if you're going to look for positive examples, why not just take the one that More actually gives you? Because he says that she's virtuous, and although, in looking in hindsight, we might second-guess what he says there, you also have to remember that the winners write the history books. And so maybe the virtue that we're talking about is more of a Machiavellian-skill- definition of virtue, or something like that. But I think you should just go ahead and take what More said at face value.

Miller: There was *another* wooed person who wouldn't marry *another* king, or wouldn't let him into bed, until he married her. Who was that, do you know? *Anne Boleyn*. (Laughter.)

Lehman: I've got another question for the panel, and this relates to the end of what we've got for the English version. Is More advocating the Machiavellian tactics used by Morton at the end of that English edition? And how are Morton's deceptive and manipulative practices any different than Richard's?

Miller: We really don't have very much; we have the beginning of Morton's approach to Buckingham. We don't really know quite how to go from there to wherever. Can we say that he's Machiavellian? It did happen, I suppose, but can we say as a matter of fact that he is devious and dishonorable and self-serving—all that from what he did there?

Logan: I don't know if we can say he was *self-serving*, but I guess, by that time, he probably already had a candidate. He probably wasn't thinking that the Duke of Buckingham would be a good replacement for Richard, as he was pretending to the Duke of Buckingham. He already probably thinking that Henry Richmond would be a good candidate. So I don't think we can say he was self-serving; I think he thought he was serving the greater good, serving the just tyrannical end to this usurper's illegitimate reign. Was he being Machiavellian? Yeah, sure he was. Tactically, for good ends, he was. But I think the key phrase is—and I don't want to get this wrong, the way I got the last thing wrong. (Thanks forever to you, Joe, for pointing that out. (Laughter.)) Genuinely, thank you. I want to say in my defense, I figure I've read this book more than most of you—probably more than *all* of you together. But you read it more *recently*.) But here, I think, the key phrase is in that little character sketch of Morton that the passage opens with, at the bottom of page 105...well, here's close enough: he was a man of great natural wit, very well learned and honorable in behavior, lacking no wise ways to win favor. To me, that's a kind of euphemism for the kind of Machiavellian "wise ways", exactly what we're going to see demonstrated in what follows

Curtright: Speaking of those "wise ways to win favor": Morton is not a Machiavellian in the conventional sense of the word, because Morton has a good cause, and Morton didn't view these means as in any way illicit.

Oakley: There might be a place in the text which is illustrative of the point, and that's at Buckingham's speech: when all the commoners are walking away, apparently in offense at this dissimulation, More throws in, maybe it's like when

you consecrate a bishop, and you ask him, do you want this? And he says no. And you ask, do you want it? No. And then the third time again, everyone knows he's going to get it. Now, it's not that this message is a harmless dissimulation, but it probably does advance a genuine good. So he puts it right there in your face—the complexity of dissimulation, or even what you would call rhetoric by one name, but by another dissimulation. That has some genuine, important uses—it's *dangerous*, but it has some important uses.

McCutcheon: Morton is a survivor in a very tough world. He is not a hero. We've been asking if there are heroes, and he is not a hero. One thing that More does say, or the narrator says, is that, "This man, therefore, as I was about to tell you, by the long and often alternate proof as well of prosperity as adverse fortune, had gotten by great experience (the very mother & mistress of wisdom) a deep insight in politic worldly drifts" (106). Now, the politic worldly drifts that Morton is a master of: he has survived a great many changes, and I don't want to say he's the Vicar of Bray, but he has survived a great many changes, and this is how you survive in this world of dissimulation. It leaves me with a great feeling of ambiguity. I'm left with the feeling that this is a very dark world.

Logan: The passage that Elizabeth just read is the one that I was trying to find a few minutes ago, and found while other people were talking. All these passages that have been cited, I think, are very apt here. Yes: "politic worldly drifts," and, of course, what follows in the remainder of the episode is an illustration of what "politic worldly drifts" means—lies, whatever particular species of lie. And one of the speculations that's often been raised about why More broke the *History* off at the point where he did break it off is that maybe he found himself feeling a little bit uncomfortable. Certainly More, at some parts of his life, and maybe throughout his life, regarded Morton as a hero. I don't think there's anybody—any other individual—that More admired more. Maybe various saints, huh, but of people he knew, of people in his line of work, as it were, Morton was certainly the one that he admired most. And one can't help but think that he must have felt a little twinge about showing Morton here as a consummate dissimulator, after stressing that the single worst and most dangerous characteristic in Richard was his constant dissimulation. And we've got to remember that this expert in "politic worldly drifts" is a man of the cloth—a bishop at this point, the Bishop of Ely, who went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury and a cardinal.

The place, of course, to cite the other passage that's relevant here, where More really lays this dilemma out is in that argument between More and Hythloday, at the climax of Book 1 of *Utopia*, where More advocates the "indirect approach" to political problems, which is "politic worldly drifts," which is the same thing that he shows Morton exemplifying here. And Hythloday says, with his cold contempt, you may think it's the business of a philosopher to tell lies, but I don't think that, and on top of that, you are so full of it: you think that will do you some good, but it won't do you any good; you'll end up, in effect, in Colin Powell's position. That's the best you can hope for: they'll see through you immediately, and they'll kick you right out of the council room, or you'll be seduced by them, or if not seduced you'll become a screen, and they'll use you as a front man to retail their various ideas. How important, how fundamental this problem was to More is surely

illustrated by how brilliantly he develops both sides in that argument. Obviously this was a matter of crucial ongoing importance and difficulty for More—as it naturally would be for a devout Catholic who was also very interested in politics and trying to rise in politics, and had as his main role model Cardinal Morton, whom he's known as the Lord Chancellor. And one wonders how much, and in what frame of mind, More reflected on this text later in his life, at the very end of his political career, where Hythloday's predictions proved in More's own case, of course, absolutely true and on the money.

Wegemer: I'd like to quote the conclusion of that passage where we're told about "worldly drifts." The narrator seems to actually come in and give his own opinion. This is on page 106, eight lines from the bottom: "Thus, living many days in as much honor as one man might well wish, ended them so godly that his death, with God's mercy, well changed his life." Now, that implies a judgment against some things that Morton did. It seems quite revealing that Morton decided to eliminate that whole scene from the Latin edition, which I would argue is the most polished or completed version of this story.

Smith: I do want to say, and this is related to your point, Gerry, on the question of heroes in the book, I was fascinated by Shaa's friend. He only appears for one sentence in the book, and that to a man at the point of despair. It's fascinating to me that the narrator says, "His conscience had well showed him the truth of his actions." Then Shaa goes to his friend and says, "Cheer me up: I've really just destroyed my entire professional reputation." His friend: "Yes, you did." The end. He dies. Now, that's either the *wrong* thing to say (Laughter.), or rather noteworthy in the world of *Richard III*. The fact that sticks out to me is that his conscience "*well shows* the truth" to Shaa, and then he seeks counsel or friendship that will perhaps show him a way out of truth. But he's told the truth and dies. That moment seems relevant to the reflection on truth and lies of this sort.

McCutcheon: I want to go beyond the question of lying to what I think is behind this, which is trust. The difficulty with *Richard III* is that almost no one can trust anyone else, and we said earlier that More really believed in community—we're seeing a dysfunctional community, to put it mildly, here—or he hoped for a community. And the basis for community—one basis—has got to be trust. Now, in certain kinds of rhetoric, it's clearly not a lie because you and I are operating on the same set of assumptions. But this is what makes irony so difficult. I taught "The Lottery" once, a Shirley Jackson story, and I had a very young student who said that he didn't see the problem: after all, it was a lottery, so somebody got stoned. And that was OK—they all got an equal chance. So if you don't get irony, then you have a problem, but if you do, then you're on the same wavelength that's at work. But in this case, Buckingham and Morton do not trust each other. Really, there's a little negotiation going on: Each one is probing. And Morton gives that wonderful story, which is very Morean—that wonderful beast-fable, about whether the animal wears horns or not—and that just nails the situation, where rhetoric is protective, because you *can't* trust the other person. Morton gives an answer that Buckingham could *not* go to the king and repeat, so he saves himself. It's this lack of trust.

If we turn it around, it's one of the things that More really hopes for, or dreams

of: a world where you can really trust someone else. And that's what we don't have in *Richard III*, really. And it's really sad, and funny.

Barbara Panza (lawyer): I have more of an observation, and I'd certainly welcome comments on it. Throughout *The History*, we see Richard's rise to power through deception, and at the end of the English version, we're seeing the beginning of Henry VII's rise to power through deception. Could this be an understated comment on Henry VII?

Oakley: I was thinking the same thing along the lines of Professor McCutcheon: Maybe this is a perfect ending, rhetorically, for this story. This discussion reminded me of an article that's on the website, a delightful article by Anne Prescott: "Postmodern More." She talks about this story at the end, about renaming and the fluidity of names and meaning. In a crucial sense, she says, referring to this fable, if the Lion calls a bump a horn, and if the Lion effectively makes the rules, then a bump effectively becomes a horn. So he's telling this *History*, and things are getting really dangerous at this point, and, just as with the conversation between people who really can't quite trust each other, the way it gets recorded can become anything when you have a despotism, when you have a tyranny, when you have the same person make the rules and say what's what. So at that point, anything he writes, he's saying, can be twisted in any direction. So at this point, maybe we are starting out all over again with Morton egging Buckingham on, but at the same time, there's this basic lesson that we've gotten: that to some degree you can figure out what people mean, but at the same time, in the political world, meaning and language can be twisted to support almost any position.