

IMPROVING ON SALLUST AND TACITUS:  
THOMAS MORE'S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*

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University of Dallas, 2021

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Abstract

In his *Historia Richardi Tertii*, Thomas More shares a common goal with Sallust and Tacitus: to help prevent tyranny by promoting civic virtues in readers. After reviewing the similarities between More's *Historia* and his classical models, I employ close reading and the insights of narratology to show that More surpasses Sallust and Tacitus in the sophistication of his narrative techniques. More uses an encomiastic introduction, mimetic indirect discourse, and divergent focalization to fill the *Historia* with a multiplicity of voices and points of view. The result is a complex narrative that is the perfect arena for teaching the art of character discernment, especially through the "character puzzles" of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth. These character puzzles are carefully constructed to assist the reader in discovering and exercising the principles of character discernment.

A close reading of the text shows that King Edward falls far short of the humanist ideal of kingship, since he is ambitious, imprudent, prone to flattery, and puts his own pleasure ahead of his people's good. The "character puzzle" of Queen Elizabeth is more difficult to solve. Why does she allow her son to leave sanctuary when she knows there is "nothing more hazardous" than to put both her sons in Richard's power (CW15 394/20)? By carefully analyzing the entire *Historia*—including More's references to Lucian's *De Calumnia*, Livy's *History of Rome*, the Book of Lamentations, and Petrarch's "De Obedientia ac Fide uxoria, Mythologia"—I conclude that Elizabeth approaches the decision of whether to give up her son not as a mother, but as the leader of a faction. She is primarily concerned with what will advance her political interests and restore her fortunes, not with what will save her son.

After explaining More's use of narrative techniques and "character puzzles" to help readers discover and exercise the principles of character discernment, I conclude that the sophistication of More's narrative techniques makes his *Historia Richardi Tertii* superior as a work of art to Sallust's *Bella* and Tacitus' *Annales*.

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B.A., UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS, MAY 2011

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS, MAY 2014

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Dallas in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature in the Institute of Philosophic Studies.

December 3, 2021

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Dedicated to my sister,  
Sara Johnson,  
who gave me the time to write.

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With gratitude to  
my family for their love and support,  
my friends for their encouragement,  
and my professors for their wisdom.

## A Note on Texts, Translations, and Abbreviations

In my comparison of More's history of Richard III with the histories of Sallust and Tacitus, I have restricted my attention almost entirely to More's Latin version, the *Historia Richardi Tertii*. Because the *Historia* is written in the same language as Sallust's *Bella* and Tacitus' *Annales*, it is easier to conduct a comparison without having to be concerned that differences in style and literary techniques are due simply to the requirements of the English language. No doubt much of what I argue in the following pages is also applicable to the English *History of Richard III*, but I make no claims in that regard.

Most citations of More's *Historia* in this dissertation are from Daniel Kinney's translation of *Historia Richardi Tertii*, found in the *Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 15*. Occasionally, I have edited Kinney's translation in order to capture a nuance in the Latin text that is relevant to my argument. When the translation has been edited, I include the Latin version of the passage in a footnote. I have followed the same practice with other Latin and Greek works, from Tacitus' *Annales* to Lucian's *De Calumnia* (*Διαβολή*). Unless otherwise noted, all citations of Tacitus' *Annales* are from the translation by A. J. Woodman.

The following abbreviations are used when referring to primary sources:

- CW2 More, Thomas. *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 2, Yale UP, 1963.
- CW3.2 More, Thomas. *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 3, part 2, Yale UP, 1984.
- CW4 More, Thomas. *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 4, Yale UP, 1965.
- CW6.1 More, Thomas. *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 6, part 1, Yale UP, 1981.
- CW15 More, Thomas. *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 15, Yale UP, 1986.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In his introduction to Volume 2 of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, Richard S. Sylvester emphasizes the importance of the works of Sallust and Tacitus as models for Thomas More's history of Richard III: "Sallust and Tacitus gave [More] . . . a form, a set of techniques and analogues, a literary pattern according to which he could develop his own historical vision" (CW2 xcvi). For More to take Sallust and Tacitus as his models meant to write in the genre of classical history, which is a rhetorical and moral genre, not a scientific one. As George M. Logan explains, "[T]he key fact about both classical and humanist historiography is that their practitioners regarded history as, for the most part, a *branch* of rhetoric" (*History* xxxi). The rhetoric displayed in classical and humanist works of history has a moral purpose: to encourage virtue and discourage vice. Victoria Emma Pagán declares:

While it is possible to glean historical facts from ancient historiography, the precise reconstruction of political, social or economic developments was not the primary aim. Instead, the ancient historians set out to provide examples of virtue, honour and excellence to emulate or examples of vice, shame and wickedness to avoid. (51)

In this passage, Pagán is simply repeating Livy's explicit statement about the purpose of history:

What chiefly makes the study of history wholesome and profitable is this, that you behold the lessons of every kind of experience set forth as on a conspicuous monument; from these you may choose for yourself and for your own state what to imitate, from these mark for avoidance what is shameful in the conception and shameful in the result. (1 pr.10)

Commenting on this passage from Livy, Catalina Balmaceda explains:

Thus, a great part of the value of history was perceived in Rome as connected with its educational function, and among the things that one could learn from history, perhaps the central one for Romans was a moral teaching for life. . . . This explicit ethical preoccupation marked Roman historiography so profoundly that it has been regarded—together with rhetoric—as one of its most distinctive characteristics. (6–7)

Centuries after the period of Roman historiography, humanist authors adopted the same educational and moral preoccupations when writing history. In a discussion of Petrarch, one of the first and most important humanists, James Hankins declares that "the moral purpose of history is his guiding star. History is properly a school of prudence; its goal is to make human beings better, and by so doing to reform states and revive the greatness of ancient Rome" (19).

Dan Breen explains that the purpose of “humanist historiography” is “to provide an account of a series of historical (generally political) events that will serve in turn as an instrument of pragmatic and philosophical instruction” (476). Thomas More himself testifies to the educational purpose of history in his “Letter to Oxford” when he groups history with poetry and oratory as branches of learning that teach “prudence in human affairs” (CW15 139/17–21).<sup>1</sup>

Like the Roman historians and like his fellow humanists, More had a rhetorical and moral purpose in mind when he wrote his Latin and English histories of Richard III. This purpose could best be summarized as the promotion of civic virtues in his readers in order to help prevent tyranny. Despite this moral purpose for his history of Richard III, More never directly exhorts the reader to pursue virtue and eschew vice.<sup>2</sup> Instead, More employs indirect literary techniques, many of them adopted from Sallust and Tacitus. These techniques range from the vivid portrayal of characters, to the frequent use of direct discourse in contrasting speeches, to the literary technique of dialysis. More’s most complex and effective literary technique, however, is not taken from Sallust or Tacitus but is an innovation. The unique narrative voice that More employs in the *Historia* has much more in common with the narrators of modern novels than with the narrators of ancient histories. More’s creation and use of this unique narrative voice is so sophisticated that I would argue it makes More’s *Historia* superior as a work of art to the histories of Sallust and Tacitus.

In order to argue that More surpasses Sallust and Tacitus in the sophistication of his literary techniques, especially his narrative voice, it is first necessary to summarize how Sallust and Tacitus employ literary techniques to encourage virtue in their readers. I will focus on those of their works that most influenced More’s *Historia*: Sallust’s *Bella* and Tacitus’ *Annales*.

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<sup>1</sup> See also CW6.1 132/3–16.

<sup>2</sup> More comes closest to direct exhortation in the speeches of Edward IV, Richard III, and Buckingham. As explained in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, the speeches of these characters are sprinkled with humanist principles for just rule. Even though the speakers are usually insincere in their mouthing of humanist principles, it is actually quite effective for the principles to be voiced by men like Buckingham and Richard because it implies that the principles are self-evident propositions that even tyrants cannot deny, though they might not put them into practice.

## 1.1 Sallust's *Bella*

Gaius Sallustius Crispus, known to modern readers as Sallust, lived during the first century B.C. and was a contemporary of the poet Catullus, the tyrannicide Marcus Brutus, and the triumvir Mark Antony (Sallust xvi–xvii). His two most famous works are the historical monographs titled the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, which were probably written between 44 and 39 B.C., soon after the assassination of Julius Caesar (xxxiii). At the beginning of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, Sallust explains that the purpose of recalling the achievements of the ancients is to inspire their descendants to imitate them (4.5–7). In his *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Iugurthinum*, Sallust analyzes the corruption of contemporary Rome and explains Rome's decay from freedom to slavery. Sallust also does what he can to counteract Rome's moral decay by impressing upon readers the consequences of virtue and vice and giving them experience in applying moral and political principles to practical situations.

In his description of the founding of Rome, Sallust contends that freedom—whether of an individual or of a nation—depends on the possession of virtue. Sallust declares that early Rome was just and good as much because of the nature and morals of the people as because of their laws: “Accordingly, good morals were cultivated at home and on campaign; . . . right and decency prevailed among them, thanks not so much to laws as to nature” (*Catiline* 9.1). Freedom was lost (Sallust argues) because of the decline of Roman virtue, when “the nobles began to abuse their standing and the people their liberty, and every man took, pillaged, and plundered for himself” (*Jugurtha* 41.5).

The overall tone of Sallust's narratives is pessimistic, but he did not write the *Bella* simply to complain about contemporary Roman society or to condemn his contemporaries for their corruption and licentiousness. On the contrary, Sallust hoped that his *Bella* would make a positive contribution to society by encouraging virtue and discouraging vice. In his preface to the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, he says that even his critics, if they reflect, must judge that “greater profit will accrue to [their] country from [his] inactivity”—that is, from the time Sallust spends writing history—“than from activities of others” (4.4). Sallust explains this statement by describing how

the great leaders of Rome were inspired to pursue virtue by the memory of the achievements of their ancestors:

I have often heard that Quintus Maximus, Publius Scipio, and other eminent men of our country were accustomed to declare that their hearts were set mightily aflame for the pursuit of virtue whenever they gazed upon the representations of their ancestors. It is evident that not the wax nor the effigy had any such intrinsic power, but rather it was from the memory of accomplishments (*memoria rerum gestarum*) that this flame swelled in the breast of exceptional men and could not be assuaged until their own prowess equaled the fame and glory of those models. (*Jugurtha* 4.5)

In this passage, *memoria rerum gestarum* literally means “the memory of the deeds accomplished.” However, the phrase *res gestae* is regularly used in Latin as a synonym for “history” because the historian gives an account of “deeds accomplished” (“Res”). By using this phrase, Sallust is comparing his history of the Jugurthine War with the wax images that inspired virtue in the great men of the past. Through his account of the *res gestae* of previous eras, Sallust hopes to undo at least in a small way Rome’s slavery to luxury and sloth by inspiring his readers to pursue virtue.

Sallust uses a variety of methods to encourage virtue in his readers. The first and most obvious method is a direct attempt to arouse his readers’ desire for the glory due to virtue. If his readers become inflamed with a desire for glory, the vices he is most concerned about—avarice, lust, and sloth—will soon have no power over them. Sallust begins both the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Jugurthinum* with praise for the capacity of the human intellect to achieve glory through virtue: “For the renown of riches and beauty is fleeting and fragile; virtue is a shining and lasting possession.”<sup>3</sup> Because a human being is composed of soul as well as body, Sallust says, it is possible for mortal men to gain immortal glory through “outstanding achievements of the intellect” (*Jugurtha* 2.2). Sallust declares that man’s nature is so great and excellent that—far from being ruled by fate—human beings are the rulers of fate (1.5). Sallust recognizes that human beings have only limited control over bodily endowments and the gifts of fortune, but he insists that the attainment “to glory by the path of virtue” cannot be given or taken away by fortune (2.3, 1.3).

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<sup>3</sup> *nam divitiarum et formae gloria fluxa atque fragilis est, virtus clara aeternaque habetur* (Sallust, *Catiline* 1.4).

The second way Sallust encourages virtue in his readers is by providing “cautionary tales” intended to warn readers away from the temptation to grasp at tyrannical power. Sallust’s vivid characterizations of Catiline and Jugurtha reveal the devastation that their crimes wreak not only on their countries, but also on themselves. Although Jugurtha and Catiline begin as free agents capable of achieving glory through virtue, they end up enslaved to their passions and to the train of evil events which they themselves have set in motion. For instance, at the beginning of the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, Jugurtha is portrayed as a daring and decisive leader, described as “fierce” and “aggressive” (20.2). By the end of the war, Jugurtha’s repeated reliance on treachery has reduced him to an indecisive<sup>4</sup> and paranoid<sup>5</sup> commander: “He changed his routes and his prefects daily, now went forth to meet the enemy, now took to the desert; often placed hope in flight and shortly afterwards in arms” (74.1). Treachery and bribery, which were his most effective weapons in the early part of the war, become Jugurtha’s greatest fear. When a popular official is discovered to have plotted against his life, Jugurtha is reduced to flattering the official with a gracious reply, not daring to express his displeasure for fear of provoking a rebellion (72.1). His decision to use his freedom to enslave others has reduced him to flattering his own servants.

Like Jugurtha, Catiline is also reduced to slavery by his passions. The desire to control the republic is said to “invade” or “seize” Catiline,<sup>6</sup> and Sallust declares that his fierce spirit is “goaded” by “his lack of wealth and a consciousness of his crimes” (*Catiline* 5.6–7). The description of how Catiline is tortured by his conscience is one of the most vivid in the book:

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<sup>4</sup> At one point, weary of the adversities he faces in the war, Jugurtha is persuaded to surrender to the Romans; after he has already been stripped of his army and resources, he resumes the war due to the shame of being conquered and out of a guilty fear of punishment (Sallust, *Jugurtha* 62).

<sup>5</sup> After the discovery of Bomilcar’s plot against his life, “there was never a quiet day or night for Jugurtha; he did not have sufficient trust in any place or person or time; he feared his citizens and the enemy equally, he was always on the alert and was alarmed at every sound; and rested at night in one place and then another, often in places contrary to the dignity of a king; sometimes, having been roused from sleep, he made an uproar, seizing his arms; he was hounded by such terror it was almost madness” (Sallust, *Jugurtha* 72.1–2).

<sup>6</sup> *lubido maxuma invaserat rei publicae capiundae* (Sallust, *Catiline* 5.6).

“For his guilt-stained soul, at odds with gods and men, could find peace neither in wakefulness nor in sleep; to such a degree did his conscience ravage his overwrought mind. Hence his pallid complexion, his haggard eyes, his gait now fast, now slow; in short, madness was present in the features and expression of his face” (15.4–5). Sallust’s descriptions of Catiline’s and Jugurtha’s psychological and political ruin are vivid lessons in the undesirability of tyrannical power.

The third way that Sallust promotes virtue through his *Bella* is by using literary techniques that help the reader develop political prudence. The *Bella* are texts that prompt their readers to engage in moral reasoning about the political situations portrayed in the histories. Even Sallust’s writing style plays a part in developing readers’ attentiveness. Un-Ciceronian in the extreme, Sallust’s style is characterized by *brevitas*, *variatio*, and *inconcinntitas*—that is, brevity, variety, and dissymmetry. He achieves these effects by a heavy use of archaic terms and spellings, a conscious employment of non-parallel structures (e.g., pairing an adjective with a prepositional phrase), a bold use of grammar and syntax in ways contrary to common usage, and an extensive use of ellipsis and asyndeton. The result is abrupt, rapid prose that keeps the reader on his toes by its unexpected twists and turns.

As was noted even in ancient times, Sallust’s style and literary techniques are modeled after those used by Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*.<sup>7</sup> John T. Ramsey describes Thucydides’ prose as “characterized by rapidity, abruptness, a fondness for poetical words, inconcinntity, and grammatical peculiarities”—a description that could be applied equally well to Sallust’s prose (Sallust xlvi). Sallust imitates Thucydides in other literary techniques as well. Both historians give a prominent place to the speeches which they have composed and placed in the mouths of important characters.<sup>8</sup> There are six orations or letters in the *Bellum*

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<sup>7</sup> John T. Ramsey says that “writers in antiquity were well aware of [Sallust’s] debt and resemblance to Thucydides (e.g., Sen. *Contr.* 9.1.13–14; Vell. 2.36.2; Quint. *Inst. or.* 10.1.101, 10.2.17)” (Sallust xliv).

<sup>8</sup> Ramsey explains the classical historian’s approach to recording the speeches of their characters: “To paraphrase Thucydides (1.22.1), who explicitly comments on his method of composing speeches—a practice followed by [Sallust] and nearly all Greek and Roman historians—speeches in direct address comprise words that the historian regarded as suitable to the circumstances of a given occasion and reflect what the speaker would (in the historian’s view) appropriately say under those circumstances” (Sallust xlv).

*Catilinae*<sup>9</sup> and seven in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*.<sup>10</sup> These speeches are some of Sallust's most effective tools for educating his readers in the important virtue of political prudence. Even though the speeches and letters are highly persuasive in terms of their rhetoric, Sallust hardly ever comments on the speeches, not even to prevent readers from being deceived by sophistical rhetoricians. In fact, after the contradictory speeches of Caesar and Cato in the *Bellum Catilinae* (51, 52), Sallust actually praises both characters at length. The contradiction between the speeches prompts readers to engage in political reasoning to judge between Caesar's and Cato's diametrically opposed arguments regarding how to deal with the conspirators.<sup>11</sup> The two speeches of Catiline and the letter of his co-conspirator Manlius place readers in a similar quandary because their claim to be fighting for liberty introduces readers to the debate over the nature of true freedom (*Catiline* 20, 58, 33). Although the rhetoric which Catiline and Manlius use makes their arguments initially persuasive, what they mean by *libertas* is dramatically opposed to Sallust's understanding of freedom by means of and for the sake of virtue.

Several of the speeches in Sallust's *Bella* serve to teach the reader a further lesson about the need to compare the speaker's words with his actual behavior. This necessity is made clear by King Micipsa's deathbed speech (*Jugurtha* 10). Although Micipsa emphasizes his affection for Jugurtha and the need for friendship between Jugurtha and his own sons, Sallust's readers know that Micipsa is speaking insincerely. In fact, Micipsa sent the young Jugurtha to the Roman war in Numantia in the hope that his valor or the ruthlessness of the foe would lead to his death (7.2). It is only as a last resort, in an attempt to satisfy Jugurtha's ambitious nature, that Micipsa eventually makes Jugurtha co-heir with his two sons.

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<sup>9</sup> See Sallust, *Catiline* 20, 33, 35, 51, 52, 58.

<sup>10</sup> See Sallust, *Jugurtha* 10, 14, 24, 31, 85, 102, 110.

<sup>11</sup> Sallust's treatment of Caesar and Cato in the *Bellum Catilinae* is notably ambiguous, and William Batstone argues that Sallust does not give unqualified praise to either character. D. S. Levene makes a similar argument, declaring that "Caesar and the Younger Cato reflect in their debate the different aspects of [Cato] the Censor: Caesar argues for Catonian mercy at the expense of Catonian rigour, Cato for the reverse" (191).

Marius' speech to the Roman commons cannot be trusted any more than Micipsa's speech (*Jugurtha* 85). For instance, Marius refers to the clumsiness of the nobles in conducting the war with Jugurtha, but Sallust's readers know that Marius was a loyal lieutenant of the nobleman Metellus, the current general in Numidia, until Metellus made fun of Marius' ambition to become consul (85.45–7, 64.1–4). After that, Marius actively set about to undermine Metellus' reputation (64.5–65.5). To gain popularity among the commoners, Marius does not hesitate even to risk the success of the war by relaxing discipline among the soldiers (64.5). Knowing what they do about Marius' character, Sallust's readers will think twice before believing Marius when he declares, “[A]s for me, I have spent my entire life in the best practices, and good conduct has become second nature as a result of habit” (85.9).

Sallust prompts readers to develop political and moral judgment through other techniques besides the speeches and letters in his *Bella*. He often uses the rhetorical device of dialysis to describe several possible motives for characters' actions, thus requiring the reader to consider which possibility is most likely.<sup>12</sup> For instance, in Chapter 82 of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, after describing how Metellus weeps when he hears of Marius' election to the consulship, Sallust says:

Some attributed his reaction to arrogance; others felt that a noble temperament had been exasperated by insult; many felt it was because victory which he had already achieved was being snatched from his grasp. Personally, I have come to the conclusion that he was tormented more by the honor done to Marius than by the affront to himself, and that he would not have been so upset if the province had been taken from him and given to someone other than Marius. (82.3)

Similarly, in Chapter 19 of the *Bellum Catilinae*, Sallust offers two explanations for why Gnaeus Piso was slain by the Spanish cavalry under his command:

Some say that the natives could not endure his unjust, insolent, and cruel administration; others, that the horsemen, who were old and devoted retainers of Pompey, attacked Piso at his instigation, pointing out that the Spaniards had never before committed such a crime but had tolerated many cruel administrations in former days. We shall leave this matter open. (19.4–5)

By highlighting the many possible motives for characters' actions, Sallust encourages the reader to gain a deeper understanding of human nature.

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<sup>12</sup> See Sallust, *Catiline* 19.4–5, 22.1–3; *Jugurtha* 37.4, 82.2–3, 86.2–3, 88.5–6, 108.3, 113.1.

## 1.2 Tacitus' *Annales*

Whereas Sallust lived through the last days of the Roman republic, Tacitus was born during the reign of Nero, when the principate (i.e., the Roman empire) had been firmly established for many years (Damon xx). Tacitus' attitude towards the principate is mixed. He clearly regrets the loss of liberty and deplores the deception and atrocities of the principate.<sup>13</sup> Yet he realizes that the republic brought about its own end by its corruption, and he believes that the principate is a "regrettable necessity" (to use Christopher Pelling's phrase) because the Roman senate and people are no longer able to govern themselves (Pelling, "Tacitus and Germanicus" 77).<sup>14</sup>

Like Sallust, Tacitus hopes that his history will make a positive contribution to contemporary morality. At *Annales* 3.65.1, he explains:

Recounting proposals [in the senate] has not been my established practice, except those distinguished by honorableness or of noteworthy discredit, which I deem to be a principal responsibility of annals, to prevent virtues from being silenced and so that crooked words and deeds should be attended by the dread of posterity and infamy.

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<sup>13</sup> Consider the scorn with which Tacitus equates swearing allegiance to Tiberius with servitude: "But at Rome there was a rush into servitude from consuls, fathers, equestrians" (*Annals* 1.7.1). Notice also how Tacitus describes Tiberius' claim that anyone who "felt confidence in their favor or merits" could apply for the consulship: "yet this was mere verbal display, empty of substance (or deceptive) and, the more impressive its covering in the image of freedom, poised to erupt in an all the more ferocious servitude" (1.81.2).

<sup>14</sup> Consider the following four passages from Tacitus:

"Nor did the provinces reject [the rule of Augustus], the command of senate and people having become suspect owing to the contests of the powerful and the greed of magistrates (there being no effective assistance from the laws, which had been disrupted by violence, intrigue, and finally money)" (*Annals* 1.2.2).

"Then Cn. Pompeius . . . lost by arms what he had been protecting by arms. Thereafter there was continuous disharmony for twenty years, no morality, no legality: all acts of the basest nature passed with impunity, and many of honesty led to extermination. Finally, in his sixth consulship, Caesar Augustus, secure in power, abolished the orders which he had issued during the triumvirate, and provided legislation whereby we could avail ourselves of peace and a princeps" (*Annals* 3.28.1-2).

"[N]ow that the situation has changed and there is no salvation for affairs other than if one man is in command . . ." (*Annals* 4.33.2).

"But after the battle of Actium, when the interests of peace required that all power should be concentrated in the hands of one man . . ." (*Histories* 1.1.1).

This general purpose, which could be summarized as the intention to give good and evil deeds their due, is accompanied by another, more ambitious goal: to contribute to his readers' political prudence by helping them understand the inner workings of the principate and the most effective methods for influencing the *princeps* for the best. After apologizing for recounting matters which he fears may seem trivial, Tacitus explains:

It will nevertheless not be without benefit to have gained an insight into what at first sight are trivialities, from which the movements of great affairs often spring. . . . [J]ust as formerly—that is, during the period of the plebs' influence or when the [senators] were a force—it was necessary to know the nature of the public and in what ways their restraint might be maintained, and those who had acquainted themselves thoroughly with the instincts of senate and optimates were believed astute and wise for their times—so now that the situation has changed and there is no salvation for affairs other than if one man is in command, it will be apposite for these matters to have been assembled and transmitted, because few men have the proficiency to distinguish the honorable from the baser, or the useful from the harmful, whereas the majority are taught by what happens to others. (4.32.2–33.2)

Although Tacitus expresses himself with his customary circumlocution, the implication of this excerpt is that by shedding light on the character of the *princeps* and the workings of the principate, his *Annales* will help wise men understand how to restrain the *princeps*, just as wise men in the past undertook to restrain the populace and influence the senate. Only a few pages earlier, Tacitus describes M. Lepidus as a man who attempts to restrain the *princeps* with comparative success. Tacitus writes:

I am discovering for myself that this Lepidus was a weighty and wise man during that period. He frequently steered issues away from the savage sycophancies of others in a better direction, but at the same time he did not lack balance, since he thrived as much by his continuing influence with Tiberius as by the latter's favor toward him. Hence I feel compelled to question whether it is by fate and the chance of birth that, as is the case with all other things, principes incline toward some men and are affronted at others; or whether there is something in our own policies which permits us to proceed between sheer truculence and grotesque compliance along a path cleared of ambition and peril. (4.20.2–4)

This description of Lepidus is, as it were, a portrait of Tacitus' ideal statesman: someone with the political prudence to turn bad situations to the best without either "sheer truculence" or

“grotesque compliance.”<sup>15</sup> To make a positive contribution to society under the principate requires different skills than those that were needed in the republic.<sup>16</sup> Tacitus wants to train readers in the particular political prudence that is needed in the principate. He does this through a variety of methods.

The first method he uses is to help readers understand the characters and dispositions of *principes* so the reader can understand how to moderate his own behavior to suit the times. Tacitus devotes great attention to describing the characters of the *principes* whose reigns he recounts, as seen in his portrayals of Tiberius and Nero. (Unfortunately, the portions of the *Annales* in which Tacitus describes Caligula and Claudius are partially or entirely lost.) Kraus and Woodman explain, “[Tiberius] dominates the narrative which is devoted to him; . . . his presence is so pervasive that verbs without an expressed subject, or otherwise unexplained references to ‘he’ or ‘him’, are taken for granted as alluding to the *princeps*” (103). Similarly, Nero is the dominant character in the portion of the *Annales* devoted to his reign. Tacitus not only describes the characters of the *principes* and recounts their words and deeds; he also devotes an unusual amount of space to analyzing their motives and intentions. For example, Tacitus explains that after Augustus’ death, Tiberius took control of the military and went about with all the trappings of the *princeps*. When he spoke in the senate, however, Tiberius pretended to be reluctant to succeed Augustus in the principate. Tacitus describes three separate motives for Tiberius’ behavior:

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<sup>15</sup> Notice the similarity between Tacitus’ description of Lepidus and More’s description of the ideal citizen-philosopher in Book 1 of *Utopia*:

If you cannot pluck up wrongheaded opinions by the root, if you cannot cure according to your heart’s desire vices of long standing, yet you must not on that account desert the commonwealth. You must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds.

On the other hand, you must not force upon people new and strange ideas which you realize will carry no weight with persons of opposite conviction. On the contrary, by the indirect approach you must seek and strive to the best of your power to handle matters tactfully. What you cannot turn to good you must at least make as little bad as you can. (CW4 98/24–100/2).

<sup>16</sup> See Balmaceda for a detailed analysis of how Tacitus depicts Lepidus as a model of “what it meant to be brave in civil life under the principate” (227–30).

The principal reason was alarm lest Germanicus—who wielded so many legions, untold allied auxiliaries, and remarkable goodwill among the people—should prefer to hold rather than to wait for command. He was also conceding to public opinion that he should be seen to have been summoned and chosen by the state rather than to have crept in through wifely intrigue and an elderly adoption. Afterward it was recognized that his hesitancy had been brought on to gain an insight into the attitudes of the aristocracy too: he stored away their language and looks, twisting them into an accusation. (*Annals* 1.7)

Notice how the motives Tacitus describes not only explain Tiberius' behavior when he succeeds Augustus, but also create a sketch of Tiberius' character: jealous, cautious, suspicious, and vengeful.

Another way Tacitus encourages the virtue of political prudence in his readers is by providing character studies of good men who attempt to moderate the evil behavior of the emperors: specifically, M. Lepidus in the reign of Tiberius and Thrasea, Seneca, and Burrus in the reign of Nero. These men take different approaches to the challenge of making a positive contribution in a corrupt political order. Tacitus goes into particular detail in describing the efforts of Seneca and Burrus to moderate Nero's vices, and he recounts Thrasea's courageous death at length (*Annals* 13.2, 5, 12–3, 14.7, 14; 16.21–35). William Turpin argues that Tacitus intentionally describes the characters and decisions of these men (and others) in order to provide the reader with moral *exempla* (378). He explains, "Tacitus' job as a historian was, as he saw it, to provide a range of *exempla*: his readers could reflect on the *exempla*, good and bad, to help them figure out what they ought to do" (399). Turpin points out that "in Tacitus an *exemplum* is . . . something his readers can use in thinking through their own decisions. The characters in Tacitus are notoriously complex, whether they end up on the right or the wrong side of history. His readers can thus reflect on each case, and extract the appropriate lessons for themselves" (360).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This description of *exempla* in Tacitus' *Annales* refutes Walter M. Gordon's argument that More's *Historia* cannot have "an 'essentially exemplary nature'" because if it did, "it could never have produced the exquisite characterization we find in his Mistress Shore whose complexity resists the easy equation between sinful deeds and bad times" (78). It is true that More's *Historia* is not a "cautionary tale" that "argues that goodness spells worldly success and evil brings on bad luck and business failures," but the *exempla* in Tacitus' *Annales* demonstrate that character portrayals can have a moral purpose without being simplistic (Gordon 77).

A third method Tacitus uses to develop his readers' political prudence is the technique of dialysis. He frequently offers multiple explanations for events, leaving it to the reader to decide which is more likely.<sup>18</sup> He also describes events in ambiguous ways, which again requires the reader to weigh probabilities in order to draw a reasonable conclusion. For example, A. J. Woodman's analysis of *Annales* 1.6, which describes the events surrounding the death of Agrippa Postumus, reveals the subtlety and ambiguity of Tacitus' style as well as the careful reasoning required to interpret his writing ("Death in the First Act").

Like Sallust, Tacitus provides instances of contrasting speeches which can help the reader to develop political prudence.<sup>19</sup> Tacitus uses this technique relatively infrequently, however. As Ronald Syme points out in his comparison of Tacitus to Sallust, Tacitus prefers "a superior procedure that brings out, not the contrast between speech and speech, but the conflict between words and facts" (192). From the very beginning of the *Annales*, Tacitus reveals how language is subverted in the principate, resulting in a gap between words and the facts they pretend to describe.<sup>20</sup> Syme explains that under the principate, "The meanings of words were now changed and perverted" (196). In the first paragraph of the *Annales*, Tacitus describes how Augustus "with

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<sup>18</sup> Examples in *Annales* Books 1 and 2 include 1.3.3, 1.5.3, 1.10.2, 1.11.4, 1.13.6, 1.62.2, 1.76.4, 1.79.4, 1.80.2, 2.17.5, 2.22.1, 2.38.5, and 2.42.3. It should also be noted that Tacitus uses dialysis as a form of innuendo to suggest sinister motives and explanations for events without having to vouch for their accuracy. Usually, the most sinister explanation is placed last in the list of alternatives; as Ronald Martin explains, "Tacitus does not attempt to tell his reader which alternative to believe, but he is well aware that the final suggestion is most likely to linger in the reader's mind; an accumulation of such suggestions may produce a portrait [of Tiberius] that is irresistible" (222).

<sup>19</sup> Examples include the different assessments of Augustus' character (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.9.3ff), the argument between Flavius and Arminius (2.10.1), the contrasting speeches of Germanicus and Arminius before they join battle (2.14–15), and the advice given to Thræsea about whether he should attempt a defense before the senate or not (16.25–6).

<sup>20</sup> In this theme Tacitus imitates Thucydides, who describes the subversion of language during the civil war in Corcyra (the first of many civil wars in Greece): "To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action" (3.82).

the name of princeps took everything, exhausted as it now was by civil dissensions, under his command” (1.1.1). The phrase “the name of princeps” is ironic because the name of *king* would accord better with the actual situation. When the word *princeps* was first applied to Augustus, it had a republican connotation, implying that Augustus was merely the first among the senators or the first among the citizens. Henry Furneaux explains, “[Princeps] has been commonly identified with that of ‘princeps senatus’ . . . an honorary rank, conferring no other privilege than that of being asked first, when the consuls designate were absent” (65).<sup>21</sup> Despite the republican-sounding name of *princeps*, the fact of the matter is that Augustus was in complete control of the state; Tacitus says Augustus “drew to himself the responsibilities of senate, magistrates, and laws” even though he “presented himself as consul and as content with his tribunician prerogative for protecting the plebs” (*Annals* 1.2). Because Augustus insisted on maintaining a display of republican institutions, political life became fraught with conflict between appearances and reality. “The contrast between appearance and reality is one that Tacitus repeatedly makes,” Ronald Martin says (225). “[M]agistrates had the same designations,” Tacitus explains, but “nowhere did any aspect of old-time convention remain untouched: with equality cast aside, all looked to the orders of the princeps” (*Annals* 1.3.7–4.1.1).

Because Tacitus is trying to depict a society in which a wide gap exists between appearances and reality, it is natural for him to employ irony. For example, after recounting how Nero has the young Britannicus poisoned at the dinner table and describing what a shock this gives those who are present, Tacitus comments, “So, after a brief silence, the delightful party resumed” (13.16.4). Tacitus does not really think the party was delightful, but he is ironically using the sort of language that Nero’s guests would be forced to use when thanking Nero for his hospitality. In this way, he is imitating the subversion of language in the principate and the disjunction between reality and appearances.

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<sup>21</sup> Furneaux adds that *princeps* might instead be derived from *princeps civitatis*, a term indicating the foremost citizen of Rome. Regardless of whether it derives from *princeps senatus* or *princeps civitatis*, the term *princeps* was meant to make people believe that Augustus had restored the liberty of the republic (66).

Even Tacitus' writing style contributes to the theme of the subversion of language. Pelling points out how Tacitus' style imitates

the texture of the Principate, where imperial conduct was always something to talk about, where there were different explanations to weigh and to toy with, where later events could clarify earlier or could simply thicken the cloud of bemusement; and where talking about the most sensitive topics, if one were sensible, rarely meant talking straight. ("Tacitus' Personal Voice" 167)

Tacitus' style is like Sallust's in its brevity, variety, dissymmetry, and archaism, but it goes much further than Sallust's in its density and complexity. B. Walker explains:

Brevity in Tacitus means not so much the writing of curt, bare sentences as the condensation of complex ones by the omission of all insignificant repetitions and unimportant words. The omission of verbs of feeling and of motion, as well as of simple auxiliaries, is almost habitual; interrogatives are frequently omitted, even in indirect speech. (53–4)

The density and complexity of Tacitus' prose reflects the complexity of life in Tiberius' Rome. Speaking of Tacitus' writing style, Syme explains, "Verbal disharmonies reflect the complexities of history and all that is ambiguous in the behaviour of men" (347).

Tacitus eschews the balanced sentence structure of Cicero and deliberately uses non-parallel sentence structures. Woodman writes:

Tacitus likes to vary one type of clause by a different type . . . but is especially fond of pairing clauses with nouns, a form of variation which manifests itself in very many different ways. . . . Such deliberate avoidance of balance, mirroring as it does the unbalanced nature of the world which Tacitus describes, is complemented by a regular preference for archaisms, which have the capacity to evoke a more idealized past. . . . (Introduction xxi)

The combination of omitted words, archaic terms, and non-standard sentence structure makes Tacitus' prose dense and challenging to interpret. This is similar to the challenges presented by the regime itself, especially under Tiberius, who was known for his obscure manner of speaking.<sup>22</sup> Tacitus may have hoped that the ambiguous and complicated nature of his prose would imitate the political atmosphere under the principate.

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<sup>22</sup> Tacitus writes, "Tiberius' words, even on matters which he was not for concealing, were—whether by nature or habit—always weighed and dark; but on that occasion, when he was striving to hide his feelings deep down, their extra complication led to uncertainty and ambiguity" (*Annals* 1.11.2).

### 1.3 More's *Historia*

Many of Sallust's and Tacitus' techniques for encouraging virtue are also used by More in his *Historia Richardi Tertii*. For example, the description of how Richard never felt secure after his coronation resembles the descriptions of the restless minds of Catiline, Jugurtha, and Tiberius and serves as a caution against the desirability of tyranny (CW15 484/14–21; Sallust, *Catiline* 15.4–5; Sallust, *Jugurtha* 72.1–2; Tacitus, *Annals* 6.6.2).

More imitates Sallust and Tacitus in his use of dialysis, often describing two or more motives or explanations of events in his history.<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Story Donno observes, “Besides creating an atmosphere of uncertainty about what or why an event occurred, the ascribing of multiple would-be motives to his historical characters evokes a sense of the complexity of their natures and of the political situation in which they participate” (423). This provides the reader with the opportunity to exercise prudential judgment in determining which possibility is more likely. For example, the narrator says that when Richard of York laid claim to the kingship, “[e]ither his case or his popularity carried sufficient weight” that parliament “declared him King Henry's successor” (CW15 320/20–4). Another example of dialysis is when More describes the execution of Clarence: “For whether the queen's faction laid a trap for him . . . or the duke's own insolence made him aspire to the throne, in any case he was indicted for treason, and innocent or guilty, he was condemned by a full parliament to the most grievous punishment” (CW15 322/8–14). There are many other instances of dialysis in More's history of Richard III.<sup>24</sup>

More offers vivid character studies to provide insight into human nature, again imitating Sallust and Tacitus. For example, More's portrait of Jane Shore has frequently been compared to Sallust's portrait of Sempronia (*Catiline* 25). More's depiction of Richard III serves not only as a cautionary tale to warn of the undesirability of tyranny, but also as a study in character that, like Tacitus' studies of Tiberius and Nero, can help readers learn how to conduct themselves

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<sup>23</sup> Livy is also known for his use of dialysis. Consider, for instance, his twofold account of the alliance between Aeneas and Latinus (1.1).

<sup>24</sup> See CW15 322/28–324/2, 326/26–328/1, 328/6–10, 358/24–6, 374/20–4, 392/9–25, 396/21–398/6, 402/2–6, 410/26–412/1, 414/2–7, 428/28–430/2, 446/14–7, 452/21–2, and 468/26–470/2.

around tyrants. For example, the description of Richard as “keenly impatient to seize the same throne in reality which he had already usurped in his thoughts” can help readers understand the tremendous appetite for power which motivates a tyrant (CW15 360/4–7). The depictions of Richard’s treachery and deceitfulness—for instance, when Richard sends a dish of food to Woodville with encouraging words and when he shows Hastings great favor before having him beheaded—are powerful lessons about the danger of trusting the appearance of friendship (CW15 350/4–15, 404/16–412/21).

Although interesting, these techniques are merely ways that More imitates Sallust and Tacitus. Where More surpasses Sallust and Tacitus is by using innovative narrative techniques to imitate a society in which one cannot “tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear.”<sup>25</sup> This is similar in principle to how Tacitus imitates a society in which language is distorted, but More uses different techniques and has a more ambitious goal. More’s aim is to develop his readers’ prudence by teaching<sup>26</sup> them how to discern character. To do this, More first creates a destabilizing narrator and recounts the events in the *Historia* through multiple voices. These techniques are explained in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. More then presents the reader with complex figures whose motives and moral character are challenging to understand. These “character puzzles” are designed to teach the reader how to discern character in real life. The two main character puzzles in the *Historia*—those of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth—are explained in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation. By teaching readers how to discern character, More hopes to prevent the problems of misplaced trust that made Richard III’s usurpation possible.

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<sup>25</sup> *cui confidas quem pavescas statuere certo non possis* (CW15 398/19–20).

<sup>26</sup> Although I argue that More seeks to “teach” the reader certain principles and skills, I do not mean to imply that the *Historia* includes direct instruction such as one would find in a textbook or treatise. Not all teaching methods involve the teacher directly stating the conclusions he wants his students to draw. Often, the teacher’s goal is to assist the students in coming to the conclusions for themselves. For example, in a guided Socratic discussion or a seminar-style class, the teacher might facilitate the process of discovery by providing a selection of readings and asking leading questions. In the *Historia*, More facilitates the process of discovery by providing the reader with vicarious experiences from which to deduce important lessons about how to discern character. More motivates the reader to make these discoveries by constructing “character-puzzles” that engage the reader’s curiosity. Finally, the *Historia* provides opportunities for exercising the principles of character discernment once they have been deduced by the reader.

## Chapter 2: More's Narrative Techniques

One of More's major concerns in both the Latin *Historia Richardi Tertii* and the English *History of King Richard the Third* is the danger of misplaced trust. Most of the key events that allow Richard to take control are due to trusting the wrong people. For example, the queen trusts the advice of those who recommend that the crown prince should be brought to London with only a small force (CW15 342/11–344/5). The council trusts Hastings when he tells it that Richard means no harm to the prince and has only arrested the queen's kindred out of fear for his own safety (CW15 356/3–19). The queen entrusts her son to the cardinal, allowing him to take the prince out of sanctuary (CW15 392/22–396/4). Hastings trusts Richard and trusts Catesby to report to him about the secret council (CW15 404/17–8, 402/23–404/16). And most tragically of all, the nobles entrust the prince to Richard:

But with this magnificent show of honor and with his studied pose of concern for the prince, the Duke of Gloucester, who had quite recently been the object of burning hatred and suspicion, gained so much love and such a reputation for honesty that he was chosen over everyone as the sole protector of the king and his kingdom by the unanimous consent of the nobles. And thus, whether it came about through poor judgment or was fated to happen, what is certain is that the lamb was deliberately entrusted to the wolf. (CW15 359/19–26)

In light of the serious consequences that can arise from trusting the wrong people, More composes his history of Richard III with the goal of training readers in the skills needed to discern character in real life, especially in situations when one cannot “tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear.” This description of English society is significant enough that More includes it twice in the Latin version of his history and once in the English version:

*Historia*: [Richard's intermediaries told Buckingham that] the state of affairs and the disposition of men's minds were such that you could not tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear.<sup>27</sup>

And so when these deeds had been perpetrated . . . and while everyone was dismayed and unnerved by uncertainty as to where all this was leading and whom one could trust, the Protector decided that he ought to seize the occasion. . . . (CW15 432/4–9)

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<sup>27</sup> *eum namque rerum statum / eos animorum habitus esse / vt cui confidas / quem pauescas statuere certo non possis* (CW15 398/18–20).

*History*: [T]hen thought the protectour, yt while men mused what ye mater ment, while ye lordes of the realme wer about him out of their owne strenghtis, while no man wist what to thinke nor whome to trust . . . it wer best hastily to pursue his purpose, & put himself in possession of ye crowne. . . . (CW2 58/4–9)

Although a society in which one cannot “tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear” will always be a dangerous place, proper training can assist a person in judging between people who are trustworthy and those who are not. Of course, there is no infallible way of discerning people’s characters. Yet even when “the state of affairs and the disposition of men’s minds” are thoroughly disturbed, it is possible to make better judgments than those of Hastings, whom More eulogizes as “trusty enough, trusting too much” (CW15 420/7–8). To help readers learn how to discern character in a society in which one cannot “tell for certain whom to trust,” More uses narrative techniques to imitate just such a society within the *Historia*. The result of these techniques is a narrative pervaded with a “miasma of uncertainty and doubt,” to borrow a phrase from Donno (423).<sup>28</sup> More then presents the reader with complex figures—especially King Edward and Queen Elizabeth—whose motives and moral character are challenging to understand. These “character puzzles” are designed to help the reader learn how to discern character in real life.

Before exploring how More uses character puzzles to teach the art of character discernment, it is necessary to explain how he lays the groundwork by writing a history in which one cannot tell for certain whom to trust. More first employs a unique introduction to undermine the narrator as a source of certainty in the history. He then fills the *Historia* with a multiplicity of voices and points of view, many of them untrustworthy. The complex narrative that results is the perfect arena for teaching the art of character discernment through character puzzles.

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<sup>28</sup> Donno ascribes this atmosphere of uncertainty primarily to More’s frequent references to “common report and rumor” and to his use of dialysis, by which he “proffer[s] two or more, sometimes opposing, sometimes equivocal, explanations or possibilities to account for the motivations or actions of his characters” (423). Although these techniques certainly contribute to the atmosphere of uncertainty in the *Historia*, they are relatively minor techniques compared with More’s sophisticated use of narrative voice, especially his decision to introduce his history with an encomium and his regular use of focalization. These techniques will be explained in detail in the rest of this chapter.

## 2.1 The Narrator's Encomium to Richard III

To understand More's introduction to the *Historia Richardi Tertii*, it is helpful to compare it to the introductions employed by classical historians. Pagán explains, "Prefaces are a regular feature of ancient historiography. The traditional themes include a praise of history, the reasons for the choice of subject, and the historian's attitude to his work. In the preface, the reader learns why the author wrote history, how he regarded it and what aims he intended to achieve" (12). Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus waste no time in establishing the stable narrative voices that govern their histories. Sallust is known for his philosophical introductions in which he discusses his reasons for writing, insists on his freedom from bias, and explains his beliefs about fortune, glory, and virtue (*Catiline* 1–4; *Jugurtha* 1–4). Livy also begins with a lengthy introduction and includes a reference to his devotion to the truth (1 pr.5). Tacitus' *Annales* begins with a terse summary of Roman history and an explicit statement of the author's impartiality; his *Historiae* also begins with an assertion of freedom from bias (*Annals* 1.1; *Histories* 1.1).

In contrast to classical historians, who start their histories with promises to be impartial,<sup>29</sup> More begins his history with a misleading portrayal of Edward IV in the rhetorical genre of the encomium, a genre that is particularly liable to bias. The encomium, or panegyric, was a standard rhetorical genre both in the classical world and among humanists.<sup>30</sup> Its purpose was to praise a particular person by describing the virtues of his mind; the virtues of his body, such as health, beauty, and strength; and his extraneous circumstances, such as money, friends, and power.<sup>31</sup> Discussing More's introduction to the *Historia*, Muriel Sheila Harris explains,

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<sup>29</sup> Syme observes that it is so common for Roman annalists to proclaim strict impartiality that Seneca parodies this characteristic in *Apocol. 1.1: nihil nec offensae nec gratiae dabitur* (204). How often classical historians fulfill their promise of impartiality is another question.

<sup>30</sup> Classifying the encomium within the wider genre of declamation, Donno notes that during his early years, "More was interested in the study of Greek literature, and particularly in the art of declamation, which Erasmus reported, he delighted in as a means to sharpen his wits. This form of late classical oratory was a standard exercise in humanistic education. . . . Erasmus endorses it, too . . . attracted by the flexibility it allowed in treating an issue or principle from opposing positions for or against or, frequently, from both positions" (409). Donno argues that More's history of Richard III as a whole is "an example of a *vituperatio*," specifically, a *vituperatio* against Richard (419).

<sup>31</sup> This division of topics is taken from Cicero's *On Invention* 2.59.

“The whole portrait of Edward carefully adheres [sic] to the classical rhetoricians’ requirements for an effective panegyric” (128). Since the purpose of an encomium is to praise, audiences would not expect it to provide an impartial characterization of its subject. Even the most scrupulous encomiast would portray his subject in the most positive light, emphasizing what was praiseworthy and minimizing what was blameworthy. Indeed, Aristotle openly advises orators to bend the truth when composing an encomium:

We must also assume, for the purpose of praise or blame, that qualities which closely resemble the real qualities are identical with them; for instance, that the cautious man is cold and designing, the simpleton good-natured, and the emotionless gentle. And in each case we must adopt a term from qualities closely connected, always in the more favorable sense. (*Rhetoric* 1.9.28–29)

Although Quintilian declares that a good man should not follow this advice of Aristotle “unless perhaps he is led to do so by consideration for the public interest,” audiences would certainly be aware of the possibility—indeed, probability—of bias in an encomium (*Institutio Oratoria* 3.7.25).

Since the encomium as a genre is prone to bias, why would More use it to replace the historian’s traditional assertion of impartiality? His goal is to develop an unstable narrator and imitate a society in which one cannot “tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear.” Readers who recognize the encomium for what it is will understand that not everything the narrator says in the introduction should be taken seriously. Indeed, for those familiar with the genre, the encomium itself contains indications that it does not tell the whole story. At times the encomiast seems to be damning Edward with faint praise. For instance, to mention that Edward was “wholly given over to his appetite and lust” in an encomium implies that these vices must have been extreme indeed or the encomiast would have been able to omit mention of them.<sup>32</sup> They must have been such public knowledge that the encomiast had to bring them up in order to provide excuses: that Edward was acting “like virtually all mankind” and only indulged in these vices “whenever his business did not call him away” (CW15 318/1–2). Similarly, the encomiast’s comment that in the people’s judgment “a small courtesy often outweighs great favors and is

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<sup>32</sup> *genio ac libidini . . . admodum dedebatur* (CW15 316/27–318/2).

reckoned a token of greater affection” undermines his assertion that Edward was beloved by the people because it implies that he did not do very much to deserve their love (CW15 318/30–32). These are just two examples of “faint praise” in the encomium; others will be explored in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Readers who recognize the introduction as an encomium will be less disoriented than readers who interpret the introduction as objective narration. More ensures that most readers will fall into the latter category by beginning the encomium with a paragraph in the style of an English chronicle. In his first paragraph, More lists the basic information about Edward, his heirs, and his funeral in a factual style that directly borrows from the English chronicles. For example, the Great Chronicle version of the London Chronicles, after listing the names of the mayor and sheriffs of London, begins the entry for the year 1483 as follows:

In Thys mayers tyme and ixth day of Aprill dyed the excellent prince kyng Edward the ffowrth at his palays of westmynster when he hadd Reynyd the ffull of xxij yeris and as moch as ffrom the iijth day of march unto the abovesaid ixth day of aprill, whoos Corps was afftyr Conveyed wyth due honour unto the Castell of wyndyssore and there buried In a Tumbe made of Towch Stoon that he toffore had prevydyd ffor, And thus was This noble and victorious prynce Sodenly to speke of, takyn ffrom the Unstabyll Glory of this world whan he had passid not the age of xlvj yeris upon whoos sawle and all crystyn, Jhesus have mercy Amen Thys lafft afftyr hym ij Sonys as Edward the prynce, and Richard duke of york wyth iij maydyns namyd Elyzabeth, Cycyle, and Mary. (Qtd. in Harris 53–54)

When More begins his history in the style of a chronicle, he leads readers to expect a straightforward narration of facts, not a rhetorical encomium. The writers of chronicles do not pretend to be learned in rhetoric; even Robert Fabyan, in his introduction to his chronicles of England and France, disclaims any use of eloquence: “So haue I nowe sette out this rude werke, / As rough as the stone nat comen to the square, / That the lerned and the studyed clerke / May it ouer polysse and clene do it pare; / Flowrysshe it with Eloquence, wherof it is bare . . .” (3). Of course, Fabyan’s work is not actually bare of eloquence; his very disavowal of rhetoric is itself a rhetorical device for establishing an ethos of modesty. Fabyan’s use of this rhetorical device would only strengthen the association of chronicles with a factual, non-rhetorical style, though.

Because More begins in the style of a chronicle, unwary readers will probably mistake the encomium for objective narration and take it as a guide for understanding the rest of the history. Instead of leading to clarity, however, the encomium is a false guide that leads to confusion, since it is contradicted by the portrayal of Edward's character in the rest of the history. Edward's ambition, which throws the country into civil war; his irresponsibility in marrying Elizabeth without regard for the safety of the realm; his gluttony, which contributes to his early death; and his vulnerability to flattery all contradict the positive portrayal of Edward given in the introduction.

Even readers who correctly identify the introduction as an encomium will be left without the touchstone of a stable narrative voice. In Tacitus and Sallust, the introductions serve to establish the narrative voice as a stable guide for the rest of the history. This is especially important in the *Annales*, which is so full of irony and ambiguity. The narrative voice established in *Annales* 1.1–2 introduces the narrator's two main characteristics: that he is not deceived by the veneer of republicanism displayed by Augustus and Tiberius and that he is unbiased enough to understand that the principate was brought about by the corruption of the republic.<sup>33</sup> Narrative statements later in the book that correspond to this narrative voice can be taken as a guide for interpreting the more difficult passages of the *Annales*. This stable interpretive guide is precisely what More deprives his readers of when he begins his history with an encomium instead of a more traditional introduction. After the encomium, More transitions into a vituperation of Richard—the rhetorical form precisely opposite to the encomium and similarly prone to bias—and only then introduces the first person narrator. This introduction is given in passing, as it were, and serves rather to limit the narrator's authority than to support it. Referring to the question of whether Richard sought the death of his brother, the Duke of Clarence, More writes:

But of this matter I can state nothing for certain; I am going on nothing but people's suspicions and conjectures, a route which occasionally leads to the truth, but more often

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<sup>33</sup> These characteristics are communicated as much by the syntax and style of the introduction as by direct statements. As Paul Plass declares, “[T]he very linguistic texture of [Tacitus’] Latin suggests aggressive and ruthless intelligence exposing the hidden reality of events with tight-lipped indignation and disdain” (27).

away from it. And yet I personally learned this much long ago by trustworthy report. Just after Edward's death, a certain Mistlebrook ran to the house of Potter, a servant of Richard's. . . . He announced that the king had died that very hour, to which Potter responded exultantly, "Then there is no doubt that my master the Duke of Gloucester will promptly be king," whether he knew of his plans or some portent alerted him to what was in store; for I doubt that he said it capriciously. I remember that this conversation was reported to my father by a man who had heard them conversing, well before there was any suspicion of this treachery. (CW15 326/15–328/5)

This passage is the closest More comes to a formal introduction of the narrator. The narrator comes across as an intelligent observer of public affairs with access to first-person accounts of the events of the history, but it is significant that the passage is headed by the statement that the narrator "can state nothing for certain" since he has merely followed "people's suspicions and conjectures." To be sure, these kinds of caveats are also found in classical historians,<sup>34</sup> but not when the author is first introducing the narrator. This qualified introduction to the narrator does little to counteract the destabilizing effect of the preceding encomium and vituperation.

Considering the misleading nature of More's introduction to the history, it may be significant that it begins with an egregious error. In the first sentence, the narrator states that Edward died in 1483, when he had lived "fifty-three years, seven months, and six days" (CW15 314/3–4). The year of Edward's death is correct, but his age is not; he actually died when he was 40. This might be an unintentional mistake, but Carle Mock observes that "it seems unlikely that an age that More was in doubt about would be given a false accuracy down to the very day" (13). Also, More put a great deal of care into composing the introductory paragraph. Mock points out that the first sentence of the English version of More's history includes all the numbers from one to nine with no repetitions (14). This evidence of careful composition suggests that the inaccurate calculation of Edward's age may have been intentional. A plausible interpretation is that More wanted readers to consider the difference it would have made if Edward had lived only 13 years longer, instead of destroying his health through self-indulgence (Wegemer 126–27). His eldest son would then have been able to rule in his own right without requiring a protector. Whether this interpretation is correct or not, the immediate effect of the misinformation is to undermine

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<sup>34</sup> For instance, see Sallust's *Catiline* 22.

the authority of the narrator in the very first sentence. More's narrator will tell the story, but readers will have to use their own wits to decide on the accuracy of the narrator's tale.

By refusing to give readers a stable narrator, More imitates an atmosphere of suspicion and uncertainty where one cannot "tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear." His next step is to fill the history with a multiplicity of voices and points of view, many of them untrustworthy. Without the assistance of a stable narrator, readers will have to analyze these voices and points of view on their own.

## **2.2 Direct Discourse**

More uses several different techniques to communicate the voices and points of view of characters. The most obvious techniques are direct and indirect discourse. In direct discourse, the narrator presents the voice of a character as if the reader were hearing the character directly. Multiple direct discourse speeches by Edward IV, Richard, Buckingham, and Elizabeth are recounted at length in the *Historia*, as are shorter conversations and comments throughout the work. Elizabeth McCutcheon notes, "Easily one third of More's Latin version consists in direct discourse," which is often used "to highlight character and psychology" (4). In fact, 38% of the work is direct discourse, an unusually high percentage for a work in the historical genre. In comparison, Book 1 of Tacitus' *Annales* is only 6% direct discourse. Sallust uses much more direct discourse than Tacitus, but still less than More: the *Bellum Iugurthinum* is 20% direct discourse and the *Bellum Catilinae* is 27% direct discourse. More's heavy use of direct discourse goes beyond the precedents set by his primary models, Tacitus and Sallust.

## **2.3 Mimetic Indirect Discourse**

More also utilizes a large amount of indirect discourse. In fact, if one considers direct and indirect discourse together, at least half the history is spoken by characters, instead of by the narrator.<sup>35</sup> More's use of indirect discourse is often highly mimetic and almost as effective as direct discourse at conveying the character's distinctive voice. Consider the example below.

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<sup>35</sup> This calculation depends on what one counts as indirect discourse. I have counted only passages where the identity of the speaker can be determined clearly. If you include rumors ("some men say that . . .") or count speech acts such as "He commanded him to go," then the proportion of direct and indirect discourse to narrative text will be greater than half.

EXAMPLE (1), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 338/11–25

For of those whom he knew to be implacable enemies of the queen's party and friends of his own he warned some openly and others by letter and by messengers of proven loyalty that it was intolerable that, after his father's death, the young prince—their own kinsman—should be left in the custody and control of half-kinsmen, whereas they themselves should be virtually banished although they were no less assuredly loyal to the prince and a far more distinguished branch of the king's family than his mother's kindred, whose blood (though it seemed otherwise to the wantonness of the father) was not at all worthy of being mixed with his blood and their own, whose subordinate role in the king's entourage was dishonorable for him and unsafe for themselves; for it was crucial for them not to allow their rivals to augment their own power by lavishing indulgence and favors on a boy prince who was naturally accommodating, gullible on account of his age, and too susceptible to the slanders of backbiters.

Example (1) imitates Richard's actual turns of phrase and word choice so well that it might just as well be direct discourse. The phrases "in the custody and control of half-kinsmen," "virtually banished," "a far more distinguished branch of the king's family," and "though it seemed otherwise to the wantonness of his father" are worded as Richard or his messengers would have stated them. Mimetic indirect discourse is also used in the *Historia* at 342/11–344/1, 350/16–25, 360/13–24, 364/17–27, 378/5–20, 392/3–8, 398/6–20, and 474/14–480/3, as well as in many shorter passages.

More's use of mimetic indirect discourse is not surprising considering how much he learned from Tacitus. Tacitus uses relatively little direct discourse, but his indirect discourse is often highly mimetic.<sup>36</sup> Consider the speech of the mutineer Percennius in example (2).

EXAMPLE (2), TACITUS' *ANNALES*, 1.17.1–5

At length, when there were others too now ready to promote a mutiny, he asked, as if at a public meeting, why like slaves they were obedient to a few centurions and even fewer tribunes. [He asked] when they would ever dare to demand remedies if they did not approach a new and still tottering princeps with prayers or arms. [He said that] their inactivity through so many years had produced enough harm: old men were enduring thirty or forty years of service, many with maimed and wounded bodies. . . . [He said that] if anyone survived so many hazards with his life, he would still be dragged off to remote countries where they would receive marshy fens or uncultivated mountains

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<sup>36</sup> Martin says that in Tacitus, "reported speech accounts for almost twice as much space as does direct speech," and "it can span the same range of tone and emotion as *oratio recta* [direct speech]" (233).

called “land.” . . . [He said that] by Hercules! the whippings and wounds, the harsh winter, exhausting summers, grim war or barren peace were everlasting.<sup>37</sup>

The excerpts in example (2) are only a portion of Percennius’ speech. The entire speech is worth reading, but the excerpts are noteworthy for the use of verbal irony (“marshy fens or uncultivated mountains called ‘land’”) and exclamation (“by Hercules”), two literary devices that are both highly mimetic. Arminius’ speech to the Cherusci (1.59.2–6) is an equally impressive instance of mimetic indirect discourse, and there are many more such examples.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, it is difficult for someone reading Tacitus in English to detect the many instances of mimetic indirect discourse. This is because it is difficult to translate Latin indirect discourse into English without sounding stilted and unnatural, as in my translation above. To avoid this problem, most translators choose to translate mimetic indirect discourse as free indirect discourse or direct discourse.

In contrast to Tacitus, Sallust uses mimetic indirect discourse only occasionally. Examples do exist (*Catiline* 31.7, for instance), but in most cases Sallust uses direct discourse when he wishes to imitate the diction and expressive language of a character. Thus, it seems fair to associate Tacitus with mimetic indirect discourse and Sallust with direct discourse. How significant then that More uses at least as much mimetic indirect discourse as Tacitus and more direct discourse than Sallust. To say that More goes to great lengths—and well beyond the norms of the historical genre—to include a multitude of voices in the *Historia* is no exaggeration.

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<sup>37</sup> *postremo promptis iam et aliis seditionis ministris uelut contionabundus interrogabat cur paucis centurionibus paucioribus tribunis in modum seruorum oboedirent. quando ausuros exposcere remedia, nisi nouum et nutantem adhuc principem precibus uel armis adirent? satis per tot annos ignauia peccatum, quod tricena aut quadragena stipendia senes et plerique truncato ex uulneribus corpore tolerent. . . . ac si quis tot casus uita superauerit, trahi adhuc diuersas in terras ubi per nomen agrorum uligines paludum uel inculta montium accipiant. . . . at hercule uerbera et uulnera, duram hiemem, exercitas aestates, bellum atrox aut sterilem pacem sempiterna.* (*Annals* [Goodyear] 1.17.1–5)

<sup>38</sup> Prominent examples in *Annales* Book 1 include 8.6, 11.1, 19.2–3, 26.2–3, 40.1–3, 41.1, 46.1–3, 47.1–2, 69.3–4, and 73.3–4.

## 2.4 Focalization

As mentioned above, direct discourse and indirect discourse together make up at least half of the *Historia*. The rest of the history is narrative text. Even this narrative text is “infiltrated” by the point of view of characters through a technique called focalization, in which the content or style of the narration changes to reflect the point of view of one of the characters. The voice (“who speaks”) continues to belong to the narrator, but the point of view (“who sees or perceives”) belongs to a character. Consider an example in English from Austen’s *Mansfield Park* in which the narrator describes the arrival of Sir Thomas’ letter and the effect it has on his daughters.

EXAMPLE (3), AUSTEN’S *MANSFIELD PARK*, 76

The day at Sotherton, with all its imperfections, afforded the Miss Bertrams much more agreeable feelings than were derived from the letters from Antigua, which soon afterwards reached Mansfield. It was much pleasanter to think of Henry Crawford than of their father; and to think of their father in England again within a certain period, which these letters obliged them to do, was a most unwelcome exercise.

November was the black month fixed for his return. Sir Thomas wrote of it with as much decision as experience and anxiety could authorize. His business was so nearly concluded as to justify him in proposing to take his passage in the September packet, and he consequently looked forward with the hope of being with his beloved family again early in November.

Although example (3) is entirely narrated text, the first sentence of the second paragraph communicates the point of view of the Miss Bertrams instead of the narrator: “November was the black month fixed for his return.” November is not “black” to the narrator; rather, this adjective reflects the opinion of the Miss Bertrams. If the Miss Bertrams’ point of view were eliminated from the sentence, it would read simply: “November was the month fixed for his return.”

The last sentence of example (3), which begins “His business was so nearly concluded,” is also colored by a character’s point of view. This time the thoughts, the emotions, and even the diction belong to Sir Thomas. The phrasing of the sentence could have been taken straight out of his letter,<sup>39</sup> which we are told was written “with as much decision as experience and anxiety

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<sup>39</sup> Because the sentence might be taken directly from Sir Thomas’ letter, it could reasonably be interpreted as free indirect discourse. There are different opinions about the relationship

could authorize.” The phrase “his beloved family” definitely reflects the point of view of Sir Thomas, but notice also the many anxious qualifications in the sentence: “His business was so *nearly* concluded as *to justify* him in *proposing* to take his passage in the September packet, and he consequently *looked forward* with *the hope* of being with his beloved family again early in November” (emphasis added). A more objective version of this sentence, from which Sir Thomas’ caution and anxiety has been banished, might read: “Since his business was nearly finished, he planned to sail in the September packet and could be expected at Mansfield early in November.”

In the sentences beginning “November was the black month” and “His business was so nearly concluded,” the speaker is the narrator. The point of view, however, belongs to the Miss Bertrams or Sir Thomas. To put it in narratological terms, they are the focalizers. In *Narrative Discourse*, his classic work on narratology, Gerard Genette famously distinguished between “who speaks” (speaker) and “who sees or perceives” (focalizer). Chrysanthe Tsitsiou-Chelidoni, co-editor of the Oxford Bibliography of “Narratology and the Classics,” explains:

Genette introduced ((1972) 1980) the term ‘focalization’, in order to replace the older, and, in his view, ambiguous terms ‘point of view’ or ‘perspective’. As a result of their confused usage these terms do not allow one to distinguish adequately between the narrator, the person who narrates in a text, and the person whose vision or perception is narrated in the same text. (529)

Genette’s ideas were reformulated by Mieke Bal in *Narratology* (1985), and narratology and the term “focalization” were introduced into the field of classics primarily by the work of Irene J. F. de Jong (*Narrators and Focalizers*). Although I am not convinced that the term “focalization” is clearer than the term “point of view,”<sup>40</sup> I have chosen to adopt the term partly to acknowledge

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between free indirect discourse and focalization, but I consider it to be a subset and particularly intense form of focalization. I will not be distinguishing between free indirect discourse and other forms of focalization in this study, since there are no clear examples of free indirect discourse in the *Historia*.

<sup>40</sup> Despite (or because of) the widespread acceptance of the term “focalization” and the frequent repetition of the distinction between “who speaks” and “who sees,” every scholar seems to define and use the term differently. What Austen scholar Laura White calls simply “focalization,” others insist should be called “implicit embedded focalization” to distinguish it from other types of focalization, while Don Fowler suggests the term “deviant focalization”

my dependence on the insights of narratologists and partly because it is more convenient to say “focalizer” than “the person whose point of view is presented” and to say that a sentence is “focalized by a certain character” instead of “presented from the point of view of a certain character.”

More himself, obviously, would not use the term “focalizer.” However, a passage from his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* shows that he is aware of the narratological distinction between the speaker and the focalizer. In the following passage, More explains that although he believes an English translation of the Bible would be beneficial, unlearned people should avoid wrestling with certain parts of Scripture because they are not trained to understand the complex narrative techniques that are used.

Nowe than the thynges on the other syde that vnlearned people can neuer by theym selfe attayne / as in the psalmes and the prophetes and dyuers partes of the gospel / where the wordes be some tyme spoken as in the person of the prophete hym selfe / some tyme as in the person of God / some tyme of some other as aungels / devils / or men / and some tyme of our sauour Cryste / not alwaye of one fassyon / but some tyme as god / some tyme as man / sometyme as hed of this mystycall body his chyrche mylytant here in erthe / sometyme as hed of his chyrche tryumphaunt in heuyn / sometyme as in the person of his sensuall partyes of his owne body / otherwhyle in the persone of some partyculare parte of his body mystycall / and these thynges with many other often tymes interchaunged / and sodeynly sundry thynges of dyuerse matters dyuersly mengled togyther / all these thynges whyche is not possyble for vnlearned men to attayne vnto / yt were more than madnes for theym to medle withall / but leue all these thynges to theym whose hole study is byset thervpon / and to the prechours appoynted thervnto / whiche may shewe theym suche thynges in tyme and place conuenient with reuerence and authoryte / the sermon so tempered / as may be mete and conuenient alwaye for the present audyence. (CW6.1 336/14–337/1)

Chapters 10 and 14 of the Gospel of John are key examples of how Christ’s words in Scripture are spoken “not alwaye of one fassyon / but some tyme as god / some tyme as man.” In John 10, Christ declares, “I and the Father are one,” and in John 14, he says, “He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in

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(White; De Jong, *Narratology and Classics* 51–52; Fowler 42–43). In *Narratology and Classics*, De Jong notes that “the word ‘focalization’ is often used incorrectly in the sense of ‘the giving of emphasis’” (47n1). Critics point out that even Genette and Bal define “focalization” differently (Bronzwaer). In fact, “focalization” seems to have become as ambiguous a term as “point of view” or “perspective.”

the Father and the Father is in me?” (*Holy Bible*, John 10:30, 14:9–10). Just a few verses later in the same chapter, Christ states, “[T]he Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). On the surface, these statements of Christ seem contradictory. How can Christ be less than the Father and at the same time be one with him to such an extent that to see Christ is to see the Father? Thomas More follows authorities such as Augustine and Aquinas<sup>41</sup> by explaining that Christ speaks “not alwaye of one fassyon” in the Gospels. When he asserts equality with the Father, Christ is speaking “as [G]od”; when he says the Father is greater than he, he is speaking “as man.” Similarly, Jesus’ expression of thirst from the cross is spoken “in the person of his sensuall partyes of his owne body,” and when he asks, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” he is speaking “as hed of this mystycall body his chyrche mylytant here in erthe” (John 19:28; Acts 9:4).

If one were to rephrase this theological explanation from a narratological perspective, one could say that the speaker remains constant in all of Jesus’ discourse, but the focalization changes. When Jesus says, “[T]he Father is greater than I,” his words are focalized by his human nature. The question “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” is focalized by the “hed of this mystycall body his chyrche mylytant here in erthe.” When Christ says, “I thirst” on the cross, the focalization is that of “his sensuall partyes of his owne body.” This narratological analysis has only limited value in understanding Scripture because Jesus and the narrator of a story are more unlike than they are alike. For Jesus, to speak “as [G]od,” “as man,” “as in the person of his sensuall partyes of his owne body,” and so on, is also and always to speak as himself, whereas a narrator can never do more than imitate the points of view of his characters. Despite this and other differences, enough of a parallel remains to show that More understands the distinction between the speaker and the focalizer and that he is aware of the wide range of rhetorical effects for which this distinction can be employed. As we will see, it is also significant that More associates the distinction between speaker and focalizer with an increase of difficulty, even to the point of making a text so open to misinterpretation that it would be dangerous for an unlearned person to read.

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<sup>41</sup> See Augustine’s Tractate 78 on John 14:27–28 and Aquinas’ *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, par. 1970.

If the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* shows that More understands the distinction between speaker and focalizer, the *Historia Richardi Tertii* shows More putting the distinction to use in his own writing.<sup>42</sup> Consider example (4) below.

EXAMPLE (4), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 470/18–21

But the duke, quite offended to see them receiving his speech with such closed ears and minds, turned aside to the mayor and said "Let them find someone else to put up with their insolent silence," and then turning at once to the mob (*turbam*) he said, "Citizens of London . . ." <sup>43</sup>

Notice the narrator's use of the word *turbam*. Although this word can mean either "mob" or "crowd," it is primarily associated with "turmoil, hubbub, uproar, disorder, tumult, commotion, disturbance" ("Turba"). Nowhere else in the *Historia* is *turbam* used in a context where disruption is not at least a possibility to be feared. Yet the London citizenry is the opposite of a mob: they are silent, law-abiding, and not disruptive in the least. The phrase "turning at once to the mob" is spoken by the narrator, but it is focalized by Buckingham, who sees the Londoners not as a body of citizens to be treated with respect, but as a mob to be controlled. The narrator uses the term not because it is an accurate description, but to communicate how Buckingham perceives the crowd.

More uses focalization in the *Historia* for several different rhetorical purposes. In some cases, the main purpose is simply to make the story more vivid. For instance, the focalization in the following passage helps to communicate the queen's fear when she learns that Richard has kidnapped the crown prince.

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<sup>42</sup> More's *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* was published at least ten years after the writing of the *Historia Richardi Tertii*, but it is unlikely that More's understanding of narrative techniques in Scripture was of recent development. An important topic in the *Dialogue* is the value of secular learning—including orators, laws, historical writings, and poetry—in helping one understand and interpret Scripture (CW6.1 132). This is also the main theme of More's polemical letters in defense of Erasmus' translation of the Bible, around the same time as the writing of the *Historia* (*Letter to Dorp* [1515], *Letter to Oxford* [1518], *Letter to Lee* [1519], *Letter to a Monk* [1519]). See *Letter to Dorp*, CW15 58/6–60/23.

<sup>43</sup> *At Dux / nonnihl offensus quod eius orationem tam aduersis auribus animisque excepissent / auersus in prefectum "Querant" inquit "isti qui ferat silentium istud tam contumax" statimque versus ad turbam / "Viri Londinenses" inquit. . . .*

EXAMPLE (5), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 350/25–351/2

Devastated by this message, groaning over the calamity—so extraordinary, so great, so unexpected—of her children, friends, and herself, and condemning and execrating her own judgment—she who had urged that the prince's guard should be dismissed!—she rushed trembling and quaking from the palace to the Abbey, since that sanctuary was adjacent to the palace.

*Hoc nuncio exanimata Regina calamitatem tam insignem / tantam / tam insperatam filiorum / amicorum / ac suam ipsius ingemiscens / ad hec damnans ac detestans consilium suum quae Principis dimittendum presidium suaserat / pauida ac trepida e palatio se in coenobium proripit: erat enim asyllum illud edibus palatinis contiguum.*

We can tell that example (5) is focalized through the queen because the tropes and strong expressions imitate the state of her mind upon learning that her son is in Richard's hands. The repetition of the plosive "t" in the first part of the sentence mimics the breathlessness that is implied by the word *exanimata*, which literally means "deprived of air or life." Each repetition of "t" is like a blow knocking the wind out of the queen: *Hoc nuncio exanimata Regina calamitatem tam insignem / tantam / tam insperatam*. The plosives in *damnans ac detestans* similarly convey the violence with which the queen blames herself. A closer consideration of the alliterative and rhyming phrase *tam insignem / tantam / tam insperatam* reveals that the pattern of repetition resembles epistrophe, anaphora, and chiasmus but is not a perfect example of any of them. Instead, while the repetition of *tam* conveys the force of the queen's emotions, the imperfect parallelism<sup>44</sup> imitates her agitation and confusion. If the phrase had been perfectly parallel, it would have been more obviously the work of a rhetorician instead of coming across as a spontaneous expression of the queen's agitation. Finally, the clause *quae Principis dimittendum presidium suaserat* imitates the queen's own self-execrating thoughts with great vividness. The clause is a relative clause dependent on the subject of the sentence (the queen herself), but in CW15, Daniel Kinney translates it as an explanatory clause dependent on *consilium*: "she cursed and deplored her poor judgment in urging that the prince's bodyguard be dismissed." The more

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<sup>44</sup> The parallelism is imperfect because the three parts of the phrase are not of equal length and have different syntactical forms, because *tan* is substituted for *tam*, and because one *tam* is a word ending instead of an independent word.

literal translation which I have given (“she who had urged that the prince’s guard should be dismissed!”) makes the irony more obvious and also reveals a high degree of focalization. The clause imitates what must be going through the queen’s mind so closely that it could be interpreted as free indirect discourse.

Example (6) is another instance of focalization being used to make the story more vivid. This passage is focalized through the archbishop of York, who goes to the queen in sanctuary as soon as he learns of the prince’s abduction. A lengthy sentence describes the scene he finds when he arrives at the Abbey.

EXAMPLE (6), MORE’S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 352/19–28

There he found a scene full of distress, sorrow, fear, and confusion, full of panic and haste; boxes, saddlebags, and bundles were being conveyed from the palace to the sanctuary; no one was idle, some loading, some unloading parcels, some going to get more after putting down what they had brought, others breaking down the wall which was all that divided the palace from the sanctuary and thus making a shortcut, and still others (as some generally do in this sort of confusion) carting off some things where they did not belong. He saw the queen sitting on the ground by herself, sad and dazed, wringing her hands and lamenting her own and her family’s misfortune.

Example (6) is written in such a way that we see the scene through the eyes of the archbishop of York. The repetitive and disorganized syntax imitates how the scene presents itself to the archbishop: a scene of confusion that is crowded with bundles and burdens and frightened people hurrying to and fro. The scene is even described in the order the archbishop experiences it: first the overall perception of confusion, commotion, and terror; then the many burdens and the people carrying them; and finally the queen, the object of his errand.

Besides making scenes more vivid, focalization can also be a useful way to reveal character traits. Consider example (7), which describes King Edward’s relationship with Elizabeth Lucy.

EXAMPLE (7), MORE’S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 446/9–10

As it happened, the king had “unvirgined” that virgin.

*Eam forte virginem Rex deuirginauerat.*

Although example (7) is narrative text, it is focalized by Edward and reveals his character. The

adverb *forte* gives the statement a casual tone, and the flippancy of *virginem . . . deuirginauerat* is of a piece with the jests Edward makes in his speech to his mother and his jests about his three harlots (CW15 442/9–12, 444/19–26, 428/11–6).

Whereas example (7) confirms and deepens the view of Edward's character that the reader gains from other parts of the text, the focalization in example (8) provides insight into a character's motives that cannot be found elsewhere in the text. Example (8) describes the archbishop of York's view of the Thames as he returns from meeting with the queen.

EXAMPLE (8), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 354/11–16

[A]nd with these words he handed the seal to the queen and went home before daybreak. By that time, as he surveyed the scene from a window overlooking the Thames, he saw that the whole river was teeming with boats, and in them the Duke of Gloucester's men were blockading the sanctuary so that no one could get there over the water or pass by unsearched.

More could easily have described Richard's henchmen besieging the sanctuary from an objective standpoint. After all, he uses an objective standpoint in the very next sentences to describe how the affair is scattered abroad, how armed bands go about the city, and so on (CW15 354/17–22). Instead, More emphasizes that this view of the Thames is from the archbishop's perspective, even going so far as to describe the location from which the archbishop surveyed the scene: "from a window overlooking the Thames." The fact that the last thing readers observe from the archbishop's perspective is a view of Richard's henchmen helps to explain the cowardice that prompts him to take back the seal from the queen—an action that More describes only a few sentences later (CW15 354/25–28).

## 2.5 Divergent Focalization

In examples (5) to (8) above, the viewpoints of the narrator and the focalizing character have not differed greatly except in style. Some of the most significant focalization, however, is that in which the character's opinion diverges from that of the narrator. For convenience's sake, I will refer to this type of focalization as "divergent focalization."<sup>45</sup> The sentence "November was

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<sup>45</sup> Not to be confused with "deviant focalization," a term used, as far as I can tell, only by Don Fowler. What Fowler calls deviant focalization, I refer to simply as focalization.

the black month fixed for his return” in example (3) is an instance of divergent focalization in English because the narrator would not agree with the Miss Bertrams in considering the month of Sir Thomas’ return to be “black.” A similar example of divergent focalization in the *Historia* is example (4), when the narrator uses the word *turbam* to describe the citizens of London. As we have seen, this word reflects the opinion of Buckingham, not that of the narrator.

Additional instances of divergent focalization in the *Historia* are not hard to find. Example (9) below is focalized by the cardinal, whom Richard sends to persuade the queen to send her younger son out of sanctuary. Just before the sentence cited in example (9), one of the nobles who accompanies the cardinal asks the queen if she knows of any reason why her relatives should be in danger. The queen replies with a sarcastic remark that accuses Richard (though without mentioning his name) of imprisoning her relatives unjustly and seeking to destroy the princes (CW15 384/1–6). The narrative text that follows is focalized by the cardinal.

EXAMPLE (9), MORE’S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 384/7–9

Then the cardinal, first nodding a warning to that loose-tongued fellow that he should be quiet and stop harping on that jangling chord, promptly comforted the queen about her friends’ misfortune. . . .

The adjective “loose-tongued” and the metaphor “harping on that jangling chord” reflect the cardinal’s point of view, not the narrator’s. The narrator would not consider a person loose-tongued for inquiring into the queen’s concern for her relatives, and he would not characterize such an inquiry as harping on a jangling chord. The fact that the cardinal *does* characterize the noble’s inquiry that way and warns him to keep quiet is significant for understanding the cardinal’s character. The implication is that the cardinal is not interested in understanding the queen’s concerns or determining the truth of her relatives’ guilt. Rather, his concern is completely practical—to remove the prince from sanctuary—and anything that makes the queen more upset makes his purpose harder to achieve.

Example (10) is another example of divergent focalization. It describes how Richard and Buckingham select members of the clergy who are willing to help them persuade the people to accept Richard as king.

EXAMPLE (10), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 432/18–25

From the clergy men were chosen who had gained some authority as popular preachers and whose minds were not pious to the point of superstition, and especially John Shaw, the mayor's brother, and Penker, the provincial of the English Augustinian friars; although both were celebrated for their exposition of sacred scripture and renowned for the brilliance of their sermons, the learning of each of them was far below his reputation as his virtue was below his learning.

In this passage, the phrase “whose minds were not pious to the point of superstition” is focalized by Richard and Buckingham and gives the reader a sense of how the conspirators would phrase it among themselves. The implication is that only someone who is “pious to the point of superstition” would hesitate to cooperate with Richard's plot. Even though this clause is spoken in the narrator's voice, it clearly does not voice the narrator's opinion; in the very same sentence the narrator states, “[T]he learning of each of them was as far below his reputation as his virtue was below his learning.”

The divergent focalization in examples (4), (9), and (10) greatly enrich the text of the *Historia*, but More's real innovation occurs when he uses divergent focalization to create narrative puzzles that help imitate a society in which one cannot “tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear.” Recall that in the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, More associates the scriptural equivalent of focalization with an increase in difficulty in the text. In the *Historia*, More regularly uses divergent focalization in such a way that it is difficult for the reader to figure out the identity of the focalizer. Instead, the reader is likely to misinterpret the focalized text as narrative text backed by the authority of the narrator. This reinforces the confusion caused by the encomium and revives the reader's uncertainty as to what the narrator is doing and whether the narrator can be believed and trusted in his opinions, or even if he can be trusted to be consistent. This furthers More's goal of recreating a society in which one cannot tell whom to trust—and a history in which one must think twice about everything one reads, even if it seems to be spoken by the narrator.

To solve the narrative puzzles created through divergent focalization, one must note when the apparent opinion of the narrator contradicts what we know about the narrator from other parts

of the text and instead corresponds strongly with what one of the characters would say or think.

Let's look at an example.

EXAMPLE (11), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 428/11–21

For the king in a merry mood used to maintain that he had three fine harlots, each one with her own special distinction, one of them the most cheerful, another the most astute, and the third the most saintly of all the world's harlots, since she scarcely ever left church but to come to his bed. I am not sure who the other two were, but the one we are describing was without any doubt the most cheerful, and for that very reason most dear to the king; for while he had other mistresses, he loved only this one, with no harm done apart from their lust. For he cherished his wife with great affection and treated her honorably.<sup>46</sup>

Does the narrator really believe that having three mistresses and making jokes about them in public counts as treating one's wife "honorably" and does "no harm . . . apart from their lust"? There are no indications in the immediate context to indicate that the narrator is not speaking his real opinion. However, two pieces of evidence strongly indicate that this is divergent focalization and the narrator is simply voicing the opinions of Edward. First, the opinions and phrasing—dismissive and lighthearted—are exactly suited to the Edward we meet later on, in CW15 436/7–446/5. This is precisely the kind of rationalization that Edward would use to pacify his own conscience. Second, the narrative itself proves that Edward's lust causes immense harm to his family and the realm because it leads him into an ill-advised marriage that causes civil war, faction, and the opportunity for Richard to take control. We cannot think the narrator is so unintelligent as not to observe the serious consequences of Edward's lust, and therefore we cannot attribute to him such a lighthearted dismissal of Edward's lust. On the basis of this analysis (only possible by comparing multiple aspects of the work), we can say with confidence that these sentences are an example of divergent focalization. Note, however, that we can only

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<sup>46</sup> *Rex siquidem hylarior interdum solebat predicare meretriculas se habere tres diuersis quamque dotibus insignem / vnam letissimam / alteram astutissimam / tertiam porro meretricum quae vsquam essent omnium sanctissimam / vt quae grauatim vnquam e templo quoquam preterquam in eius lectum diuerteret. / Reliquae haud sat compertum habeo quae fuerint: laetissimam hanc esse constat quam dicimus / eo nomine Regi charissimam / qui quum alias haberet / vnam hanc adamauit / nulla super libidinem noxa. Nam et vxorem magno amplectebatur adfectu et honorifice tractauit.*

come to this conclusion once we have read the entire work, studied it carefully, and then gone back to consider these sentences in light of the whole.

Another example of divergent focalization comes later in the history when the narrator is describing Edward's decision to marry Elizabeth.

EXAMPLE (12), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 438/25–440/4

To the king, who was not all used to being rejected so resolutely, this new constancy was marvelous: indeed, placing such remarkable chastity conjoined with extraordinary beauty in the place of the greatest wealth, and taking counsel of his own love, he swiftly decided to marry her. . . .<sup>47</sup>

The narrator has just described how Elizabeth refuses the king's advances but carefully encourages the king's lust until it is sufficient to make him marry her; she essentially seduces him. So the narrator would not describe Elizabeth as possessing "remarkable chastity"—rather, this description of Elizabeth is focalized by Edward. He is the one who believes she possesses "remarkable chastity conjoined with extraordinary beauty."

The narrative puzzle created by the divergent focalization below is more difficult because it appears at the beginning of the history, before readers have become familiar with the narrator or the characters.

EXAMPLE (13), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 322/9–11

[W]omen by nature and not out of malice almost always hate those who are dearest to their husbands. . . .

This parenthetical statement is presented as an explanation for the hatred between the queen and the relatives of the king. After reading the entire history, it seems clear that the statement cannot express the narrator's opinion. The rest of the *Historia* shows that the queen has good reason to hate the king's relatives: they opposed her marriage to the king, and their leaders, Richard, Buckingham, and Hastings, are happy to murder her older sons and brother. This is not to say that the queen is an innocent victim. Her opponents could reasonably argue that she

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<sup>47</sup> *Regi haudquaquam ante sueto tam obstinate repelli / noua illa constantia fuit admirationi: quin tam raram castitatem cum eximia venustate coniunctam maximarum opum loco ponens / et amorem consulens suum / celeriter eam ducere statuit. . . .*

seduced Edward and used all her arts to obtain positions of power for her own relatives. Still, whatever the cause of the queen's hatred, it is overly simplistic to attribute it to a supposedly normal female hatred for "those who are dearest to their husbands." The narrator of the *Historia* is not that simple; rather, the sentence is focalized by another character. This is almost certainly Edward's explanation for the factions and the excuse he makes for neglecting to reconcile them: "It's just female nature; she doesn't have reason to hate them, and they don't have reason to hate her. There's nothing that can or should be done about it."

Just a few pages after example (13), the rivalry between the queen and the relatives of the king is the topic of another narrative puzzle.

EXAMPLE (14), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 328/24–27

Even though these divisions among his supporters caused Edward himself some distress, for as long as he stayed in good health he managed them rather negligently, since he knew (*cognouit*) he could restrain either party whenever he pleased.<sup>48</sup>

At first reading, example (14) seems to be wholly in the narrator's voice, without any focalization through a character. Once we have read the entire history, though, it seems unlikely that the narrator could actually believe that Edward "knew he could restrain either party whenever he pleased." The English word "knew" and the Latin word *cognovit* both imply accurate knowledge, unlike the words "thought" and "believed" in English and the words *putavit* and *censuit* in Latin. Yet evidence later in the history demonstrates that Edward, far from controlling the parties, is controlled by them. The most obvious example comes just a few pages later when the nobles pretend to be reconciled at Edward's deathbed in order to satisfy him (CW15 336/19–28). Another example is the reference to how Queen Elizabeth nearly persuades Edward to execute Hastings even though he is innocent (CW15 418/3–11). The fact that Jane Shore has so much influence over Edward confirms that he is easily led and does not possess the ability to control even his own mistress, let alone powerful parties among the nobility (CW15 428/21–430/8, 460/26–462/4).

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<sup>48</sup> *Hae diuisiones amicorum quanquam nonnihil erant ipsi Eduardo molestae tamen dum erat incolumis eo neglegentius eas habuit quod vtramque partem cognouit frenare se quum vellet pro suo arbitratu posse.*

The narrator is not gullible enough to believe that Edward is capable of restraining the parties; rather, example (14) is an instance of divergent focalization. The statement “he knew he could restrain either party whenever he pleased” is focalized by Edward and reflects his own beliefs about his abilities. That this is what Edward thinks is made explicit in the English version of the history: “Kynge Edwarde in his life, albeit that this discencion beetwene hys frendes sommewhat yrked hym: yet in his good health he sommewhat the lesse regarded it, because hee *thought* whatsoever busines shoulde falle betwene them, hymselfe should alway bee hable to rule bothe the partyes” (CW2 10/10–14; emphasis added). Although the English version uses straightforward narration and the Latin version uses the complex technique of divergent focalization, both communicate the same meaning: that Edward thought he could rule the factions. Considering what More says in *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* about how dangerous certain narrative techniques can be for the unlearned, it is significant that More uses the more complex technique in the Latin version. The Latin version would have been read only by the learned, but the English version would have been accessible to the unlearned as well. This is not to say that the English version does not use complex narrative techniques, but it does seem to use fewer. Of the instances of divergent focalization discussed above, only examples (10), (12), and (13) are included in the English version, and (10) is in a less vivid form.<sup>49</sup> Examples (4), (9), (11), and (14) are absent.

Before moving on, there is one more case of divergent focalization that should be considered. This is the divergent focalization used in recounting the staged election of Richard to the throne. Throughout the scene, the narrator describes the events as if he believes the false display put on by Richard and Buckingham, who try to persuade the onlookers that “the Protector had never before heard a word or dreamed a thing about” being king (CW15 482/4–5). The scene extends from CW15 474/3 to 482/24, but for brevity I have collected the five instances of divergent focalization into example (15).

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<sup>49</sup> Examples (10), (12) and (13) in the Latin version correspond to CW2 58/19–21, 61/25–29, and 7/6–8 respectively. Example (10) uses the phrase “scrupilouse consience” instead of “pious to the point of superstition.”

EXAMPLE (15), MORE'S *HISTORIA RICHARDI TERTII*, CW15 474/6–480/6

But at first [Richard] was hesitant to go out, wondering what that crowd meant by coming to him so unexpectedly. . . . And so he finally came out, but even then he did not altogether entrust himself to them, but instead he received their proposal and responded to it looking down on them from a gallery above. And then when everyone was quiet, the duke, in an equally prominent position, first asked that they might be permitted to speak their minds freely without giving him any offense. . . . To this the Protector consented, being a very indulgent and affable man when it came to such things and feeling very curious to know what they wanted. . . . Then the duke, finally reassured by the Protector's remarks, dared to explain their whole purpose together with its causes. . . . These words alone conquered Richard's great reluctance by making him consider that even if he refused them, his nephew would still lose the throne.

In divergent focalization, the focalized point of view usually belongs to a character in the history. In this case, the focalized point of view is the false point of view that Richard and Buckingham are promoting, but that no one in the history believes. More explicitly states that Richard and Buckingham's acting does not deceive the onlookers, who go home discussing "that shameless pretense in which people acted and talked as if the Protector had never before heard a word or dreamed a thing about what they were doing, when they themselves knew perfectly well that no one was stupid enough not to know that this momentous business was all prearranged" (CW15 482/2–7). Instead of reflecting the point of view of certain characters in the history, the divergent focalization in example (15) adds yet another point of view to the history—the false one that Richard and Buckingham promote.

The divergent focalization in example (15) could be interpreted simply as irony. The overall effect of the scene is ironic, but the technique is used so extensively, over the course of so many paragraphs, that the overall impression is that of a sustained point of view, however false. It is helpful to compare example (15) with a similar moment in Tacitus' *Annales* when Tacitus says that Tiberius, like Richard, puts on a display of being "ambivalent about commanding."

EXAMPLE (16), TACITUS' *ANNALES*, 1.7.3, TRANSLATED BY A. J. WOODMAN

And in fact Tiberius' entire start was through the consuls, as though in the old republic; and, being ambivalent about commanding (*ambiguus imperandi*), even when he posted the edict by which he summoned the fathers to the curia, he headed it only with the tribunician power received under Augustus.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *nam Tiberius cuncta per consules incipiebat tamquam uetere re publica et ambiguus*

In this passage the narrator employs the adjectival phrase *ambiguus imperandi* (“ambivalent about commanding”) as if he believes Tiberius’ display of reluctance. More may well be inspired by this phrase when he describes Richard’s staged election from the point of view of someone who believes the false act put on by Richard and Buckingham. More develops the technique much more extensively, though, expanding a mere two words in the *Annales* into divergent focalization that is sustained across five lengthy paragraphs.

In light of Tacitus’ use of *ambiguus imperandi*, it is important to note that divergent focalization and everything resembling it is quite unusual in classical narratives. In *Speech and Thought in Latin War Narratives*, Suzanne Adema discusses free indirect discourse, an intensified type of focalization, and declares, “[F]ree indirect discourse in Latin narratives always seems to contain views that coincide with those of the narrator. I have not (yet) found counterexamples. Perhaps it is not possible for a user of Latin to use an indicative verb form when he or she does not agree with the statement” (30). Later Adema explains that all the examples of free indirect discourse she has found “represent ideas or opinions with which both the character and the narrator could agree” (110). What Adema says about free indirect discourse can be taken as a starting point when considering the broader category of focalization. Adema’s study focuses on Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum* (Books 1 and 7), Virgil’s *Aeneid* (Books 11 and 12), and Sallust’s *Bellum Jugurthinum*. My study of Tacitus’ *Annales* has revealed at least two instances that might be interpreted as divergent focalization, one of which could also qualify as free indirect discourse: *Annales* 1.7.3 as quoted in example (16) and *Annales* 14.13. These are exceptions, though. Focalization in which the focalized opinion directly contradicts the opinion

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*imperandi ne edictum quidem quo patres in curiam uocabat, nisi tribuniciae potestatis praescriptione posuit sub Augusto acceptae.*

Except for Woodman, most translators treat *ambiguus imperandi* (“ambivalent about commanding”) as part of the previous clause: “as though in the old republic and ambivalent about commanding” (see note 18 on page 5 of Woodman’s translation of the *Annales*). In this case, the phrase would not be ironic, since it would depend on *tamquam*, “as though.” I have followed Woodman’s translation because I believe this is how More, a determined ironist, would have read the sentence. Whether Tacitus intended the phrase to be read this way is another question.

of the narrator is extremely rare in Tacitus and Sallust, and probably in other Latin narrative authors as well if Adema's study is any indication. Divergent focalization, a ubiquitous technique in modern literature, is comparatively non-existent in classical narratives. More's extensive use of divergent focalization moves the *Historia* much closer to modern narratives than to classical ones, at least when it comes to narrative techniques.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter we have explored how More uses complex narrative techniques to imitate a society in which one cannot "tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear." To achieve this effect, More goes well beyond the narrative techniques used by Tacitus and Sallust, his Roman models. He fills the work with many voices by using more direct discourse than Sallust and at least as much mimetic indirect discourse as Tacitus. He makes use of divergent focalization, a rare technique in Latin, to portray more points of view in his history and to create narrative puzzles that undermine the authority of the narrator. By beginning with an encomium, More goes completely against the classical expectations for introductions to historical narratives. In all these literary techniques we see More being extremely creative and taking narrative techniques that he sees in Tacitus, Sallust, and the Bible and pushing them to the limit for his own purposes. These narrative techniques are probably the main characteristic of his work that sets it apart from his Roman models, but to More, they are only the beginning. Writing a narrative that imitates a society in which one cannot "tell for certain whom to trust" is only the background for character puzzles that will teach the reader to discern character in such a society. Without the guidance of a stable narrative voice, readers will have to discern character and judge between the words of different figures using many of the same skills that are required in real life. This topic will be covered in more depth in the next chapters of this dissertation.

### Chapter 3: The Puzzle of King Edward's Character

An important feature of More's history of Richard III is that it focuses as much on the moral choices and characters of the persons involved as on the historical events of Richard's usurpation. "More's *History* . . . functions as an exposition of the nature of the moral life that seeks to instruct its audience by exploring the inner structures of people's choices and actions in the context of a tyrant's rise to power," Samuel Gregg writes (215). More's regular character sketches, including the famous portrayal of Shore's wife, and his careful analyses of characters' motives<sup>51</sup> further ensure that the focus of the history remains on the persons accomplishing the deeds described in the text (CW15 424/23–430/14).

Although it is true that More focuses on the choices and actions of characters in the history, Gregg's use of the word "exposition" should not be taken literally. In no sense does More provide a direct exposition of public morals the way Sallust does in *Bellum Catilinae* 5.9–13.5. Instead, as explained in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, More fills his work with a multiplicity of voices and points of view and refuses to provide a stable narrative voice. In this way, More ensures that readers will have to discern character and judge between the words and actions of different figures by using many of the same skills that are required in real life. More certainly keeps the focus on the characters in his history, but he presents them as complex characters whose motives and moral characters are difficult to understand. Some characters are so challenging to comprehend—and yet so compellingly portrayed that one feels obliged to make the attempt—that they can be called "character puzzles." These character puzzles are carefully constructed to assist the reader in discovering and exercising the principles of character discernment.

The two main character puzzles in *Historia Richardi Tertii* are those of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth. Both of these characters are presented in complex ways that make them challenging to understand. Edward's character is difficult to understand because of the

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<sup>51</sup> See, for example, the lengthy analysis of Buckingham's motives for joining Richard III (CW15 396/21–400/15).

contradictions in how he is portrayed. The narrator presents him in a highly favorable light in the opening encomium—at least on the surface. Events recounted in the history serve to undermine that portrayal, however, and Buckingham provides a completely opposite interpretation in his vituperation of Edward before the citizens of London. The portrayal of Queen Elizabeth is the other main character puzzle in *Historia Richardi Tertii*. In her case, the difficulty is trying to understand why she gives up her son to Richard when she has just argued so well that giving him up is the worst possible choice. The narrator offers several possible reasons for her decision, but none seems sufficient to explain her sudden reversal. Both of these character puzzles will be explored in turn, that of King Edward in this chapter and that of Queen Elizabeth in the following chapter.

### **3.1 How More Constructs a Puzzle out of Edward's Character**

The first step in exploring the character puzzle of King Edward is to examine how More constructs the puzzle. More uses two main methods to turn Edward's character into a puzzle. First is the narrator's encomium, which is contradicted by Buckingham's vituperation and is also internally undermined. Second, classical references to Tacitus' *Annales* pose the question of Edward's character in very stark terms: was Edward a tyrant like Tiberius or was he a leader who put the interests of the people first, like Germanicus? We will explore both of these methods in turn.

#### **3.1.1 *Encomium***

The most direct and obvious way that More makes Edward's character a puzzle is by including Buckingham's vituperation in the *Historia* (CW15 454/22–468/14). Although the encomium and vituperation are not juxtaposed—one is at the beginning and one is closer to the end of the history—they can easily be recognized as “going together” by someone familiar with rhetoric. In his vituperation, Buckingham addresses most of the themes in the encomium as if answering them point by point: taxation, civil war, and lust (CW15 456/3–458/2, 460/6–22, 460/26–462/21). It is clear that Buckingham's vituperation is heavily biased against Edward, but the way he cites concrete examples of Edward's misbehavior (Burdet, Markham, Cook,

and Shore's wife) makes one want to reread the encomium and consider if the truth might lie somewhere in between the two accounts (CW15 458/3–19, 460/26–462/7). The contrast between the encomium and the vituperation makes it more clear that the narrator's description of Edward is an encomium and that it might be just as biased in Edward's favor as Buckingham's vituperation is biased against Edward. So the contrast between the encomium and vituperation leads the reader to reconsider the encomium and decide whether the truth about Edward's character is to be found in the encomium, in the vituperation, or somewhere in between.

The easiest answer to the question about Edward's character is that the encomium presents the truth about it (or at least, the version of his character that the author wishes readers to believe). This is the interpretation that would probably have been adopted by censors (official or unofficial) if More had ever published the *Historia*. The classical references and narrative techniques discussed in the last chapter should make it clear, however, that More was writing for an educated audience, not for those who would read the work at a surface level. To the thoughtful reader, there are sufficient indications in the encomium itself to indicate that it should be taken with a grain of salt. The thoughtful reader is likely to notice several instances in which the encomiast damns Edward with faint praise. Some of these examples were mentioned in the previous chapter. For instance, to mention that Edward was "wholly given over to his appetite and lust" in an encomium implies that these vices must have been extreme indeed or the encomiast would have been able to omit mentioning them.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the encomiast's comment that in the people's judgment "a small courtesy often outweighs great favors and is reckoned a token of greater affection" undermines his assertion that Edward was beloved by the people because it implies that he did not do very much to deserve their love (CW15 318/30–32). These examples are only two among many. Consider the encomiast's reference to Edward's portly figure. If this characteristic were something minor, one would not expect an encomiast to mention it at all, out of obedience to the principle that one should emphasize virtues and minimize faults in an encomium. Thus, when the encomiast declares that Edward

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<sup>52</sup> *genio ac libidini . . . admodum dedebatur* (CW15 316/27–318/2).

became “somewhat too portly; but yet not unseemly,” it is natural to suspect that Edward’s over-indulgence was quite apparent in his appearance and probably not in a seemly way (CW15 316/26–27).

Several of the encomiast’s statements about Edward could be straight statements of fact but are also open to less complimentary interpretations. For example, the encomiast declares, “[W]hoever rightly assesses his conduct in war will have no less admiration for his prudence whenever he retreated than praise for his boldness when he won victories” (CW15 316/21–23). If sincere, this is valuable praise, but the phrasing is such that it could be applied as flattery to any military leader. If he attacks, flatterers will say it was due to boldness; if he retreats, they will say it was due to prudence. What does it mean to assess his conduct in war “rightly”? Does it mean that one must assess it in a flattering frame of mind? At the very least, the phrase implies that some people might disagree with the encomiast’s judgment.

The statement that Edward was “so kindhearted and gentle in peacetime (for in the war it was inevitable that the factions should be bitter enemies)” is also open to an uncomplimentary interpretation (CW15 316/5–6). The statement that “in the war it was inevitable that the factions should be bitter enemies,” though true in itself, could also be used as an excuse for atrocities in war. This would be an especially useful excuse for a king who bore the burden of twice having waged civil war.

A few paragraphs later, the encomiast refers to Edward’s “final days” in a passage that is full of ambiguity:

[I]n his final days . . . his kingdom was perfectly calm and its affairs in a flourishing state. No war was at hand, and none threatened, except for the one war that no one expected: there was no fear from abroad, and at home there was calm among the commons and concord had been made between the nobles by the king. . . . He had long ago totally given up the exacting of money (which is virtually the only thing which alienates the minds of the English from a prince), nor had he made any plans which would give him occasion to exact it. The income of tribute from France he had already obtained at that time. He had become master of Berwick by arms one year before his death.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *postremis diebus . . . in quibus regnum eius quietissimum et rerum statu florentium fuit. Bellum neque aderat vllum neque vllum imminebat nisi quod nemo expectabat / quippe externus metus omnis aberat / domi vulgo quies et inter purpuratos ab Rege conciliata concordia. Regi*

This description of the state of the kingdom is ominous because it is a reference to Sallust's description of Rome immediately prior to Catiline's conspiracy: "In Italy, there was no army; Gnaeus Pompey was waging war in distant lands; . . . the senate was not at all alert; all was secure and quiet, *but these conditions were thoroughly advantageous for Catiline*" (*Catiline* 16.5; emphasis added). Even without the classical reference, the encouraging statement that there was no war at hand and none threatened is undermined by the encomiast's reference to Richard's conspiracy, "the one war that no one expected." Why did no one expect the "one war" that actually threatened? Could it be due to carelessness—because Edward and his nobles were "not at all alert," as Sallust says of the Roman senate?

In the same passage, the assertion that Edward had "long ago totally given up the exacting of money" is questionable in light of what follows: "He had become master of Berwick by arms one year before his death." If Edward was at war with Scotland only a year before his death, it is doubtful that he could have "given up the exacting of money," since nothing requires money like war. The mention of a recent war with Scotland also undermines the encomiast's assurance that "[n]o war was at hand, and none threatened." The encomiast's expression implies a state of established peace, but a peace that has lasted for only one year might be no more than a restless truce before hostilities are renewed. Sure enough, Sylvester notes, "Edward had just levied tenths and fifteenths for a new Scotch campaign from the Parliament which opened on January 20, 1483" (CW2 162). Although the *Historia* does not include any mention of this levy, a knowledge of the general tendencies of kings (and the flattering practices of encomiasts) is enough to make readers reflect that a year-long peace at the time of Edward's death is not very remarkable, that a successful campaign often encourages a further campaign, and that such campaigns are often funded by taxation.

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*ipsi omnes haud vi sed sua sponte obediebant veriusque reuerbantur eum quam metuebant./ A pecunijs exigendis (que res vna fere mentes Anglorum disiungit a principe) iam pridem prorsus destiterat neque decreuerat quidquam secum vnde nasceretur occasio./ Tributorum vectigal e Gallia iam olim obtinuerat./ Baruici anno ante mortem vno armis potitus fuerat. (CW15 318/8–18)*

This same passage, CW15 318/8–18, includes one of the most obviously false statements in the encomium, the statement that “concord had been made between the nobles by the king.” This assertion is directly contradicted only nine pages later by the nobles’ response to Edward’s deathbed attempt to reconcile the opposing factions: “[The nobles] joined hands as if making a truce for the dying king’s sake, though in spirit (as it soon became clear) they were not joined at all” (CW15 336/20–23). If nothing else in the passage awakens suspicion, the blatant falsehood of the encomiast’s claim that Edward reconciled the nobles should do so.

Let us consider another highly ambiguous passage:

For by the time of his death, all the ill will which he had provoked by deposing King Henry VI, which had long smoldered among his supporters, had finally been smothered and snuffed out; for a great many of Henry’s supporters had died in the more than twenty years of Edward’s reign, a large fraction of a mortal existence (*magna mortalis aevi parte*), whereas others had meanwhile been drawn to partake of his favor and friendship, in the fostering of which he was reputed to be open and accommodating. (CW15 316/11–15)

On the surface level this is a compliment to Edward’s clemency, but the passage echoes similar passages by Tacitus in the *Agricola* and the *Annales*. At the beginning of the *Agricola*, Tacitus speaks about how many men died ordinary deaths during the long period of oppression under Domitian—“a great portion of a mortal life” (*grande mortalis aevi spatium*)—and how many others fell victim to the tyrant’s rage:

For the term of fifteen years, a great portion of a mortal existence, chance and change have been cutting off many among us; others, and the most energetic, have perished by the Emperor’s ferocity; while we few who remain have outlived not merely our neighbours but, so to say, ourselves; for out of our prime have been blotted fifteen years, during which young men reached old age and old men the very bounds almost of decrepitude, and all without opening their lips.<sup>54</sup>

Notice the striking similarity between Tacitus’ “a great portion of a mortal existence” (*grande mortalis aevi spatium*) and More’s “a large fraction of a mortal existence” (*magna mortalis aevi*

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<sup>54</sup> *quid, si per quidecim annos, grande mortalis aevi spatium, multi fortuitis casibus, promptissimus quisque saevitia principis interciderunt, pauci et, ut <sic> dixerim, non modo aliorum sed etiam nostri superstites sumus, exemptis e media vita tot annis, quibus iuvenes ad senectutem, senes prope ad ipsos exactae aetatis terminos per silentium venimus?* (Tacitus, *Agricola* 3.2)

*parte*). More uses this classical reference to compare Edward to the tyrant Domitian and imply that the “ill will which [Edward] had provoked by deposing King Henry VI” was “snuffed out” by hastening the deaths of Henry’s supporters (CW15 316/11–13).

The passage from the *Historia* cited above (CW15 316/11–15) is also a reference to *Annales* 1.3, in which Tacitus comments on how the passage of time has made the citizens of Rome accustomed to Augustus’ despotism: “But the younger men had been born after the Actian victory, and the majority even of the elderly in the course of the citizens’ wars: what size was the remaining proportion, who had seen the republic?” This passage is not as obviously negative as the one from the *Agricola*, but it still casts a shadow over Edward’s reputation, since the end of the Roman republic would have been considered tragic by both Tacitus and More.

After explaining that many of Henry’s supporters had died during Edward’s reign, the encomiast goes on to say that “others had meanwhile been drawn to partake of his favor and friendship, in the fostering of which he was reputed to be open and accommodating” (CW15 316/15–16). Winning the friendship of Henry’s supporters is certainly preferable to murdering them, but it is not necessarily a positive thing. There are so many similarities between the *Historia Richardi Tertii* and Book 1 of Tacitus’ *Annales* that a reference to being “drawn to partake of his favor and friendship” must inevitably be associated with bribery. This is the tactic Augustus uses to buttress his power once he has won the civil war:

When after the slaughter of Brutus and Cassius there were no more republican armies . . . when he had enticed the soldiery with gifts, the people with food, and everyone with the sweetness of inactivity, [Augustus] rose up gradually and drew to himself the responsibilities of senate, magistrates, and laws—without a single adversary, since the most defiant had fallen in the battle line or by proscription and the rest of the nobles, each in proportion to his readiness for servitude, were being exalted by wealth and honors. (*Annals* 1.2)

Notice how scornfully Tacitus equates friendship with Augustus with “servitude.” Tacitus clearly considers the use of “gifts,” “food,” “the sweetness of inactivity,” and “wealth and honors” to be a dishonorable way of winning over supporters. Of course, a reference to Tacitus’ description of Augustus is not evidence that Edward’s behavior was also a form of bribery. Still, the classical reference undermines what would otherwise appear to be a compliment, raising questions in the

mind of the reader. This is yet another example of how the encomiast damns Edward with faint praise, or rather, with ambiguous praise.

At the end of the encomium, the narrator describes Edward's courtesy (*comitas*) at length, and once again the surface-level praise is undermined by classical references:

Although throughout his reign this king treated everyone with such courtesy (*tanta comitate*) that no part of his virtues was more esteemed, with the passage of time (when a long-confirmed sovereignty makes many princes turn haughty) his courtesy was enhanced and extended remarkably. In the last summer of his life, while the king was at Windsor, he invited the mayor and several aldermen of London to visit him simply in order to join him in the pleasure of a hunt. There he displayed to them a countenance less stately and lofty than friendly and popular (*amicum ac popularem*), and he sent such an abundance of game from there back to the city that you could scarcely find anything else which secured him such widespread and hearty goodwill with the people, to whom a small thing performed courteously (*comiter*) often outweighs great favors and is reckoned a token of greater affection.<sup>55</sup>

Courtesy, or *comitas*, is a genuine virtue, but a minor one in comparison with virtues such as justice and prudence. Thus, it is not complimentary to say that Edward was more esteemed for courtesy than for any other virtue. Furthermore, courtesy can be simulated for unvirtuous purposes. In *On Duties*, Cicero explains the usefulness of courtesy in winning the hearts of the people:

[I]t is not easy to say how far an affable and courteous (*comitas affabilitasque*) manner in conversation may go toward winning the affections. We have, for instance, the letters of Philip to Alexander, of Antipater to Cassander, and of Antigonus to Philip the Younger. The authors of these letters were, as we are informed, three of the wisest men in history; and in them they instruct their sons to woo the hearts of the populace to affection by words of kindness and to keep their soldiers loyal by a winning address. (2.48)

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<sup>55</sup> *Hic rex quanquam per omne tempus imperij tanta comitate fuit in quoslibet vt nulla pars morum eius magis estimaretur / ea tamen progressu temporis (quo plerosque principes diu confirmata potentia vertit in superbiam) mirum in modum creuit atque inaucta est / nempe ea estate quae illi suprema fuit / Vindesorae versatus / prefectum Londini atque aliquot e senatoribus accersit ad se / haud alia de causa quam vt venatione secum delectarentur. Ibi eis non tam magnificum ac sublimem quam amicum ac popularem vultum exhibuit / ferinamque tam affluenter inde misit in vrbem vt haud temere inuenias aliud / quod ei aut plurium aut maiorem benevolentiam conciliauerit apud populum / cui plerumque res exigua facta comiter magnis beneficijs preponderat / ac pro maioris in se amoris argumento ducitur. (CW15 318/19–32)*

Cicero is not opposed to the virtue of courtesy; in fact, he publicly recommends the virtue to Cato.<sup>56</sup> However, his description of using courtesy to “woo the hearts of the populace” reveals how easily this virtue can be simulated as a tactic for maintaining power. In the *Historia*, the encomiast lends weight to this negative interpretation of courtesy by juxtaposing *tanta comitate* with the word *imperij*, which has an imperial and tyrannical connotation.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the phrase *tanta comitate* is used by Suetonius to describe the courtesy of Augustus, who ended the Roman republic and became the first emperor (*Augustus* 53). Similarly, the use of the word *popularem* in the description of Edward’s countenance is a reminder of how Julius Caesar and Augustus gained power by exploiting their favor with the people in opposition to the nobility. The phrase “displayed to them” suggests that Edward’s friendly and popular countenance might be put on for display instead of reflecting a genuine concern for the people.

### 3.1.2 *Classical References to Tacitus’ Annales*

More also uses classical references to turn Edward’s character into a puzzle. Some of these have already been mentioned in this chapter because they contribute to the double meanings in the encomium. There are many more, however, especially references to Tacitus’ *Annales*. The most important of these references form a pattern that poses the question: was Edward an Augustus or was he a Germanicus?

A little explanation is in order. The first books of Tacitus’ *Annales* are devoted to describing the rule of Tiberius, whom Tacitus portrays as a cruel and crafty tyrant. The character of Richard III is very clearly modeled after Tiberius, but that is only the beginning of the connections between the *Historia Richardi Tertii* and the first books of the *Annales*.<sup>58</sup> The entire

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<sup>56</sup> “If you sprinkle your sternness and severity with [your great-grandfather’s] courtesy (*comitas*) and affability (*facilitatem*), your qualities will not become better—that is impossible—but they will at least be more agreeably seasoned” (Cicero, *Pro Murena* 66).

<sup>57</sup> Edward’s courtesy is presented ambiguously in More’s *Historia*. Here I am emphasizing how the mention of courtesy (*comitas*) in the context of *popularem* and *imperij* has a negative connotation and makes the reader question the accuracy of the encomiast’s praise. Later in this chapter I will discuss the positive side of courtesy.

<sup>58</sup> See CW2 xci–xcvii for a detailed discussion of the influence of Tacitus’ *Annales* on More’s history of Richard III.

first part of More's *Historia* is modeled after the beginning of Book 1 of the *Annales*, as if More wants to show how the same events took place on an English stage. Just as the *Annales* begins with the death and funeral of Augustus and then goes on to describe Tiberius' assumption of power, so More begins his *Historia* with the death and funeral of Edward before proceeding to describe Richard's rise to power (*Annals* 1.5–12). The *Annales* begins with praise of Augustus' character (in the voice of anonymous admirers and followed by an opposing speech by anonymous critics), and More's *Historia* begins with an encomium for Edward (*Annals* 1.9–10; CW15 314/1–318/32).

As the ruler who dies before the tyrant gains power, Edward clearly corresponds to Augustus. More even uses a similar expression to emphasize the similarity. The narrator refers to “[Edward’s] final days, when his kingdom was perfectly calm and its affairs in a flourishing state. No war was at hand . . .” (CW15 318/8–10). This description echoes Tacitus' description of the final days of Augustus: “As for war, none survived at that time except against the Germans. . . . At home things were calm . . .” (*Annals* 1.3). Similarly, both More and Tacitus comment on how the peace is dependent on the waning health of the ruler. Tacitus writes, “All looked to the orders of the princeps, with no alarm for the present, while Augustus had the strength and years to support both himself and his household and peace” (*Annals* 1.4). More writes, “Even though these divisions among his supporters caused Edward himself some distress, for as long as he stayed in good health he managed them rather negligently. . . .”<sup>59</sup> These sentences introduce a similar premonition of evil to come once the ruler is no longer able to maintain the peace.

The resemblance of Edward to Augustus is strengthened by the fact that he gained power through civil war in order to avenge his father, just as Augustus came to power by waging civil war to avenge Julius Caesar, his father by adoption. The encomiast describes Edward as “[a]venging (*vltus*) his father's death,” using the perfect participle of the word *ulciscor* (CW15 322/4). A form of the same word is used in *Annales* 1.9 when the supporters of Augustus

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<sup>59</sup> *Hae diuisiones amicorum quanquam nonnihil erant ipsi Eduardo molestae tamen dum erat incolumis eo negligentius eas habuit . . .* (CW15 328/24–27).

praise him for showing moderation “while avenging (*ulcisceretur*) himself on the killers of his father. . . .” At first glance this reference seems to reflect positively upon Edward since the supporters of Augustus are praising him for using moderation in his revenge. Their praise is strongly contradicted by Augustus’ critics, however, who argue that “devotion to his parent and the times in the state had been taken up as a screen; in reality it was in a desire for domination” that Augustus mustered an army through illegal and deceitful means (1.10). Because Augustus’ critics so thoroughly refute the arguments of Augustus’ supporters in the *Annales*, a reference that might have reflected positively upon Edward is actually negative, implying that he too was motivated by “a desire for domination.”

Another comparison to Augustus that reflects negatively upon Edward is generated by the statement “for in the war it was inevitable that the factions should be bitter enemies” (CW15 316/5–6). This statement is an echo of a similar statement in *Annales* 1.9 by Augustus’ supporters: “[Augustus] had been driven to civil war, which could be neither prepared for nor maintained by good behavior.” We have already noted that the statement “for in the war it was inevitable that the factions should be bitter enemies” could be used to justify atrocities. In the *Annales* it is clear that the expression is indeed being used to justify atrocities because the critics of Augustus respond by listing the crimes which his supporters euphemistically term a lack of “good behavior”:

[V]eterans had been mustered by his lavishness, an army procured by a juvenile in his private capacity, a consul’s legions bribed, and support for the Pompeian party pretended. Subsequently, when by a decree of the fathers he had assailed the fasces and prerogative of a praetor, after the slaughter of Hirtius and Pansa (whether they had been carried off by the enemy, or Pansa by poison poured into a wound and Hirtius by his own soldiers and by Caesar’s engineering of guile), he had taken over the forces of both. The consulship had been extorted from an unwilling senate, and the arms which he had been given to deal with Antonius were turned against the state. The proscription of citizens and distributions of land had not been praised even by those who did them. Of course the ends of Cassius and the Bruti had been a concession to paternal antagonisms (although it was proper to forgo private hatreds for the public good); but Pompeius had been deceived by a phantom peace, Lepidus by a display of friendship; and subsequently Antonius, enticed by the Tarentine and Brundisian treaties and by a wedding to his sister, had paid the penalty of a guileful relationship with his death. (1.10)

This criticism of Augustus is one of two interpretations of his actions, the first presented by his supporters and the second by his critics. Tacitus allows Augustus' critics to speak for twice the space as Augustus' supporters, and he does not permit the supporters to rebut the criticism. Tacitus' readers are more likely to be convinced by the critical, cynical view of Augustus. If Edward is compared to this cynical view of Augustus, the implication is that his conduct in the civil war may have been just as brutal as Augustus' behavior.

Indeed, the narrator of the *Historia* admits as much in the passage about the murder of Henry VI: "even if [Edward] had decided to kill one whom he may have considered it better to keep alive as his prisoner, without doubt he would still have entrusted such a grim execution to someone else besides his own full brother" (CW15 324/23–26). This passage is not part of the encomium, but once again it damns Edward with faint praise. The narrator tries to deny that Edward was involved in the death of Henry VI, but meanwhile he admits that Edward was capable of murder so long as it was in his best interests and was not done by "his own full brother." There is a similar insinuation in Tacitus' discussion of whether Agrippa Postumus' death was ordered by Augustus (as Tiberius claims) or was arranged by Tiberius and/or his mother. Tacitus generously admits that "[Augustus] never hardened himself to execute any of his own relatives, nor was it credible that death had been inflicted on his grandson for the sake of his stepson's security" (*Annals* 1.6). Just as with Edward, the narrator admits Augustus was capable of murder, but argues that he was not guilty on this occasion because he "never hardened himself to execute any of his own relatives."

Another parallel between Augustus and Edward is drawn much later in the *Historia*, this time by Buckingham in his vituperation of Edward before the London citizens. Buckingham claims that under Edward's rule, "an act which was by no means inherently a capital crime was alleged to fall under the horrendous title of lese majeste" (CW15 458/1–2). *Lese majeste* is the same as the Roman *lex maiestas*, often translated as the "law of treason." In Tacitus' *Annales*, *lex maiestas* is the telltale characteristic of a tyrant (1.72). As Tacitus explains, "This [law] had the same name in the time of the ancients, but different matters came to court, such as the

impairment of an army by betrayal or of the plebs by sedition or, in fine, any of the sovereignty of the Roman people by maladministration of the government. Actions were prosecuted, talk had impunity” (1.72). Tacitus goes on to explain how, under Augustus, the law began to be applied to speech and writing, instead of only to actions. When this practice was later upheld by Tiberius, Tacitus claims, the *lex maiestas* became “a form of extermination of the utmost severity” which eventually “flared up and gripped everything” (1.73). Tacitus devotes significant portions of the *Annales* to recounting how the *lex maiestas* was used to bring about the exiles or deaths of prominent men and women on the charge of treason.<sup>60</sup> By associating Edward with the *lese majeste*, Buckingham is essentially calling him a tyrant. This is not surprising given the general tenor of Buckingham’s vituperation, but it is significant as part of a pattern of association between Edward and Augustus throughout the *Historia*.

Another similarity between Edward and Augustus is that both were known for their *comitas*. As mentioned earlier, the phrase *tanta comitate*, used of Edward’s courtesy, is the identical phrase used to speak of Augustus’ courtesy by Suetonius (*Augustus* 53). In the *Annales*, Tiberius’ pride and bad temper is contrasted with Augustus’ courtesy, which is presented as one of Augustus’ most characteristic personality traits (1.76). As a result, for Edward to be associated with courtesy is also to be associated with Augustus.

However, Augustus is not the only character in the *Annales* who is associated with courtesy. Tiberius’ pride and bad temper is contrasted not only with the courtesy of Augustus, but also with the courtesy of Germanicus.<sup>61</sup> Germanicus was the nephew and adopted son of Tiberius, who (according to general suspicion) contrived Germanicus’ premature death by poisoning in order to strengthen his own hold on the empire (Suetonius, *Caligula* 2). Since the character of Richard is modeled after that of Tiberius, there is a clear similarity between

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<sup>60</sup> See Tacitus, *Annals* 1.72–3; 2.27–32, 50; 3.22, 24, 38, 49–51, 66–70; 4.18–21, 28–36, 42, 52, 66, 68–70; 6.4–10, 14, 18–19, 29–30, 38–40, 47–48.

<sup>61</sup> “For [Germanicus] had . . . a remarkable *comitas*” (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.33). Woodman translates *comitas* as “affability”; Lewis and Short define the term as “courteousness, kindness, obligingness, friendliness, affability, gentleness” (“Comitas”). See *Annales* 1.71, 2.13, and 2.72 for more examples of Germanicus’ *comitas*.

Germanicus, the murdered nephew of Tiberius, and the young princes, the murdered nephews of Richard. However, there is also a parallel between Germanicus and King Edward. As Sylvester points out, the explanation in the *Historia* of how the people's affection for Edward is increased by the experience of Richard's cruelty is modeled on Suetonius' description of the popular reaction to the death of Germanicus (CW2 160).

Suetonius: The fame of the deceased and regret for his loss were increased by the horror of the times which followed, since all believed, and with good reason, that the cruelty of Tiberius, which soon burst forth, had been held in check through his respect and awe for Germanicus.<sup>62</sup>

More: But yet even this esteem and regret for his absence were enhanced by the cruelty of the following period, the dire and detestable rule of a parricide.<sup>63</sup>

Sylvester observes, “[More’s] Latin, in these lines, grows directly out of Suetonius’ description” (CW2 xcii). Just as the Romans’ longing for Germanicus is increased by the horror of Tiberius’ reign, so the English people’s longing for Edward is increased by the detestable rule of Richard, who is called a parricide not only because he murders his near relatives, but also because he is a traitor—the murderer of his fatherland.

The parallel between Edward and Germanicus is quite flattering to Edward because Germanicus is presented in an extremely positive light in the *Annales*.<sup>64</sup> Tacitus says that people believed that if Germanicus’ father had come to power, he “would have given them back their freedom”—that is, restored the Roman republic (1.33). “Hence goodwill toward Germanicus, and the same hope,” Tacitus continues. “For the young man had the instinct of an ordinary citizen

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<sup>62</sup> *auxit gloriam desideriumque defuncti et atrocitas insequentium temporum, cunctis nec temere opinantibus reuerentia eius ac metu repressam Tiberi saeuitiam, quae mox eruperit* (Suetonius, *Caligula* 6).

<sup>63</sup> *At eam ipsam tamen charitatem desideriumque eius sequentis tempestatis crudelitas / immanis inuisusque parricidae principatus intendit* (CW15 316/8–11).

<sup>64</sup> Critics debate whether “the generally heroic tone in which [Germanicus] is described” reflects Tacitus’ genuine opinion of Germanicus, or whether this presentation of Germanicus is ironically undermined by the account of Germanicus’ poor handling of the mutinies in Book 1 (Pelling, “Tacitus and Germanicus” 59). Tacitus is known for his complex irony so the latter option is certainly possible. However, when More alludes to Germanicus, he almost certainly wants to call to mind the heroic and courteous figure whom people hoped would restore the republic, because these are the characteristics most closely associated with Germanicus.

and a remarkable affability (*comitas*) . . .” (1.33). Germanicus also seems unusually free from the desire for domination; Tacitus remarks that “the closer Germanicus now was to that highest of all hopes [imperial rule], the more emphatically did he strive on Tiberius’ behalf” (1.34). When Germanicus’ mutinous troops urge him to lead them in a march against Rome in order to wrest the empire from Tiberius, Germanicus dramatically threatens to thrust a sword into his heart rather than cast aside his loyalty (1.31, 35).

Thus we see that Edward is associated with opposite characters in the *Annales*: Augustus, who ended the Roman republic, and Germanicus, whom people believed would have restored the republic. More uses these conflicting classical references, which draw parallels with contradictory characters, to construct a literary puzzle. This puzzle poses a question: was Edward a tyrant like Augustus who simulated courtesy in order to achieve power through civil war, or was he a genuinely courteous leader like Germanicus who put the interests of the people first?

### **3.2 Solving the Character Puzzle**

So far we have analyzed two main methods that More uses to construct the character puzzle of King Edward. We have seen how Buckingham’s vituperation contrasts with the encomium and how the encomium is internally undermined. We have also seen how the classical references to Tacitus’ *Annales* prompt the reader to consider whether Edward was more like Augustus, a tyrant, or like Germanicus, a leader who put the interests of the people first. In order to solve the character puzzle of King Edward, it is necessary to compare words with deeds in the *Historia*. In other words, it is necessary to compare what is said about Edward—by himself, by other characters, and by the narrator—with how he acts. Learning this method of character discernment can go a long way towards alleviating the danger of being in a situation where one does not know whom to trust.

#### **3.2.1 Compare the Person’s Words and Deeds from Past and Present**

The technique of comparing a person’s words and deeds in order to discern character is not original to More, and many of More’s readers—past and present—probably approach the *Historia* with prior knowledge of this technique. Nevertheless, More constructs the history in

such a way that careful readers can deduce the need to compare Edward's words with his deeds without any previous familiarity with this principle of character discernment. As the reader grapples with the text and struggles to understand Edward's character, he inevitably ends up comparing a variety of passages relating to Edward. Some of these passages consist of Edward's own words, others describe his deeds, and others recount what other people say about him. More did not have to include all these types of passages in the *Historia*; for instance, he could have narrated the events of Richard's rise to power without recounting any of Edward's speeches. The fact that More *does* include a variety of passages—Edward's own words, descriptions of his deeds, and what other people say about him—means that readers will necessarily find themselves comparing Edward's words and deeds when they compare the different passages in the *Historia* that relate to Edward. From this experience, thoughtful readers can deduce the importance of comparing words and deeds, even if they were previously unfamiliar with this principle of character discernment. To help readers make this deduction, More repeatedly emphasizes the difference between words and deeds.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the contrast between words and deeds is explicitly mentioned in the description of Woodville's response to the dukes' treachery: "as [Woodville] compared the dukes' present deeds with the expressions and words of the previous night, he was deeply disturbed" (CW15 346/9–11).

Comparing words with deeds can mean comparing a person's words with his own deeds. For example, Edward voices many noble principles in his debate with his mother and in his deathbed speech. To his mother, he declares, "Holy sacrament that it is, marriage ought to be contracted in the interests of virtue, not wealth—when, that is, God inspires mutual love and fidelity in both partners, as I am sure that he has in our own case" (CW15 442/12–15). Later, on his deathbed, Edward solemnly speaks about the respect that ought to be shown the marriage bond: "if we took Christ's precepts as seriously as Christian men ought to (and would that we did), the latter bond, joined by the sacrament of marriage, would certainly be no less effective

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<sup>65</sup> For example, see CW15 324/10–15, 336/17–23, 344/18–19, 350/4–15, 358/19–24, 382/17–21, 404/17–8 420/12–422/2.

in joining men's hearts than an actual blood-tie" (CW15 334/4–8). Unfortunately, Edward's deeds conflict with his words. Far from respecting the marriage bond between himself and Elizabeth, Edward keeps "three fine harlots" and openly jokes about them (CW15 428/11–21). A consideration of Edward's actions reveals that his noble words are just talk and that he has no real respect for marriage.

Studying a person's *past* words and deeds as well as present ones is an important principle when assessing anyone's character. In the case of Edward, there is no alternative. Because Edward dies at the beginning of the *Historia*, most of his actions in the *Historia* are from the past. More retells events out of order with the result that important information about Edward is scattered through the whole history, requiring readers to gather and compare information. It would have been more straightforward to put the account of Edward's marriage at the beginning of the history, right after the tale of Edward's father, Richard of York. Instead, More departs from chronological order and tells about Edward's marriage in the second half of the *Historia*, even though Edward's marriage is first chronologically and could be considered first in importance since it was the origin of the factions. One of the reasons More structures the *Historia* as he does, beginning with Edward's death, might be to assist readers in deducing the principle of character discernment that says that first impressions should be modified by knowledge of past behavior. For example, Edward's deathbed speech is likely to leave readers with a favorable impression of his respect for marriage until they progress further in the *Historia* and learn how he openly kept "three fine harlots." The contradiction between Edward's respect for marriage on his deathbed and his past behavior indicates that Edward is either insincere in his deathbed speech or the approach of death has produced a major revolution in his character. The latter option is by no means impossible; Edward's deathbed speech could also be a deathbed conversion. This is a useful reminder of the limitations inherent in judging a person's character by his past actions. Although it is crucial to consider a person's behavior over time when discerning character, one must also keep in mind that people can change—for the better or for the worse.

### 3.2.2 *Compare What Others Say with How a Person Acts*

The technique of comparing words with deeds can also mean comparing how the person himself speaks or acts with what others say about him. A key example in the *Historia* is the narrator's statement that Edward's "wantonness" did not interfere with his business (CW15 316/27–318/2). This claim is contradicted by the events that are recounted in the history: Edward's "wantonness" leads him into an imprudent marriage that creates the ground for faction. Similarly, the narrator claims that Edward could restrain either faction as he wished (CW15 328/26–27).<sup>66</sup> This view of Edward's abilities is contradicted by the events in the history, which show that Edward is manipulated by the factions. A primary example of this is when Hastings is brought into great danger through the slanderous whisperings of the queen (CW15 418/6–11).

The technique of comparing words and deeds is especially useful in order to verify information that has been received from a biased source. For example, Buckingham states in his vituperation that Edward never restrained himself from any woman "whom he found appealing" (CW15 462/13). This claim cannot be accepted solely on Buckingham's authority because he is obviously biased against Edward, but the claim is thoroughly verified by the events described in the history. Readers learn how Edward marries Elizabeth Grey only because she will not give up her virtue, how he "unvirgins" (*deuirginauerat*) Elizabeth Lucy, and how he boasts of having three harlots and several illegitimate children (CW15 438/7–440/4, 446/9–10, 428/11–21, 444/24–25). Again, Buckingham's complaints about the excessive influence of Shore's wife can be accepted as factual (although expressed with bias) because the narrator provides examples of her influence later in the history (CW15 460/26–462/4, 428/22–430/14). Buckingham also blames Edward for doing great damage to the realm through civil war. This claim cannot be accepted merely on Buckingham's authority, but in his deathbed speech, Edward himself admits that he was wrong to wage civil war (CW15 460/8–21, 334/19–26).

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<sup>66</sup> As explained in Chapter 2, this statement is focalized by Edward and expresses Edward's own opinion of his abilities.

### 3.2.3 *Compare Words and Deeds to History*

Besides comparing the words and deeds of a person with each other and with the statements of other people, it is also helpful to consider how people in similar situations have acted in the past. The theme of learning from the past is explicitly mentioned by the queen: “we have learned by experience how easily the detestable thirst for dominion swallows up any feelings of kinship; when brother slays brother and a child forces his way to the throne over his parent’s dead body, will a nephew be safe from his uncle?” (CW15 394/14–8). The many references to classical histories in the book are reminders of how helpful it can be to consider how people have acted in the past in similar situations. This can help us interpret the characters of those around us and the events in which we find ourselves.

For example, it is easier to interpret Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth when we compare it to Livy’s description of Masinissa’s marriage to Sophonisba (30.12). The verbal parallels between More’s account and Livy’s account make it clear that More wants readers to consider the two marriages together. In Livy’s history, Masinissa, the ally of Scipio in the war against Carthage, has captured the city of Cirta and its king Syphax. The wife of Syphax is Sophonisba, the daughter of the Carthaginian leader. Sophonisba seduces Masinissa while pretending to be a suppliant. Because of Sophonisba’s beauty (the word *forma* is used by both Livy and More), Masinissa starts not only to pity her (Livy: *in misericordiam modo*; More: *misereri modo*) but also to love her (Livy: *amore*; More: *amare*; Livy 30.12.17–8; CW15 438/9). Edward and Masinissa both allow their passions to guide their decisions to marry; Livy explains that “[Masinissa] borrowed from love a plan that was reckless and unbecoming” (*ab amore temerarium atque impudens mutuatur consilium*), and More describes Edward as “taking counsel from his love” (*amorem consulens suum*; Livy 30.12.19; CW15 440/3). Masinissa marries Sophonisba despite the knowledge that his political allies, Laelius and Scipio, will disapprove, just as Edward marries Elizabeth despite the knowledge that Warwick will disapprove (Livy 30.12.20–1; CW15 442/3–8, 448/4–7).

Livy makes it quite clear that Sophonisba is taking advantage of Masinissa. The narrator says that Masinissa becomes “captivated by love of the captive,” Syphax says that Masinissa has neither prudence nor constancy, and Scipio gives Masinissa a scathing lecture on the importance of self-control and on how one vice can ruin a person’s character (30.12.18, 13.14, 14.4–11). In contrast, Thomas More does not express a clear judgment on Edward’s decision to marry Elizabeth—probably because he wants readers to practice the skills of character discernment in order to solve the puzzle of Edward’s character. One of these skills is to compare a person’s actions with those recounted in history, and in the case of Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth, much of the criticism directed at Masinissa can also be applied to Edward.

Another example of how helpful it can be to consider how others have acted in the past is the comparison of the English political situation with the situation in Seneca’s play *Thyestes*. The connection is drawn by a phrase at CW15 402/2–4, “whether they had a foreboding of great troubles through some secret instinct of nature, as the sea with no apparent reason becomes turbulent in the face of an oncoming storm,” which echoes *Thyestes* 959–61: “sailors are threatened by a savage storm when a calm sea heaves without any wind.” *Thyestes* has to do with civil war, rivalry for the kingship between brothers, and an uncle’s murder of his nephews. The play communicates vividly how one act of revenge leads to another, then to another, and so on indefinitely. This can help readers to understand the dynamic of revenge behind the civil wars in England.

More also draws a parallel between Richard York, Edward’s father, and Otho, a Roman emperor who killed himself rather than harm his country by more civil war. The narrator says that York “tried, under the pretext of civil disturbances, to anticipate the legitimate inception of his reign and to claim the scepter for himself while Henry was still alive.”<sup>67</sup> The phrase “to claim the scepter for himself” (*sceptrum sibi asserere*) is an interesting echo of “claiming domination for himself” (*dominationem sibi asserere*) in Suetonius’ biography of Otho, who was emperor

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<sup>67</sup> *dum ciuilium pretextu dissentionum conatur legitimum regnandi tempus anticipare uiuoque adhuc Henrico sceptrum sibi asserere* (CW15 320/26–28).

for only three months in A.D. 69 (*Otho* 9.3). Suetonius explains that Otho decided to kill himself “rather from a feeling of shame . . . and an unwillingness to persist in claiming domination for himself at the expense of such danger to life and property, than from any despair of success or distrust of his troops.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, Otho is willing to give up domination rather than make his country suffer further from civil war. In contrast, York initiates civil war even though he has been promised the throne after Henry VI’s death, and Edward revives civil war when he has been exiled. If Edward had reflected on Otho’s example and accepted exile rather than revive the civil war, how many men’s heads would have been spared (CW15 334/22–27)!

### 3.3 Humanist Principles of Kingship

Before sketching a solution to the character puzzle of Edward, it is important to note that More does not leave readers to discern Edward’s character in a void. He offers readers the puzzle of Edward’s character against the backdrop of humanist principles of kingship. These principles help readers to assess Edward’s character correctly. The simplest way for More to communicate humanist principles of kingship would have been to include a short philosophical introduction to the *Historia*, as Sallust does in his *Bellum Catilinae* (1–4). This type of introduction would require the creation of an authoritative narrator, however, something that More studiously avoids doing, as explained in the previous chapter of this dissertation. Instead, More sprinkles humanist principles throughout the *Historia* in the mouths of characters like Richard, Buckingham, and Edward. Even though the speakers are generally insincere in their mouthing of humanist principles, the fact that the principles are repeated in multiple contexts by multiple characters creates a consistent context throughout the *Historia* by which the behavior of kings (and aspiring kings) can be judged.<sup>69</sup> It is actually more effective for the humanist principles to be voiced by men like Richard and Buckingham because it implies that the principles are self-evident

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<sup>68</sup> *magis pudore, ne tanto rerum hominumque periculo dominationem sibi asserere perseveraret, quam deperatione ulla aut diffidentia copiarum* (Suetonius, *Otho* 9.3).

<sup>69</sup> Leonard F. Dean notes this same point in his 1943 article, “Literary Problems in More’s *Richard III*,” while discussing More’s ironic portrayal of Richard: “Indeed, by translating More’s ironic characterization of Richard, we are able to picture many lineaments of his ideal of royalty. Practically every utterance of Richard’s is hypocritical” (37).

propositions that even tyrants cannot deny, though they might not put them into practice. Readers who would disagree with a direct presentation of humanist principles, such as that in Erasmus' *The Education of the Christian Prince*, might be led to consider the same principles as self-evident simply through the effect of hearing them repeated over and over again by a variety of characters in the *Historia*.

The next sections of this chapter will explain the main principles of kingship that More emphasizes in the *Historia*. To demonstrate that these principles are characteristic of humanist thought, I will discuss each humanist principle in relation to similar statements found in More's *Utopia*, More's *Epigrams*, and Erasmus' *The Education of a Christian Prince*. Although the precise years when More wrote his history of Richard III are not known for certain, he was working on it around the same time as Erasmus wrote *The Education of a Christian Prince*.<sup>70</sup> There is an extraordinary similarity between the principles expressed in Erasmus' *Education* and those in More's *Historia*, but there is no need to determine whether More was referencing the *Education* directly. Since Erasmus and More were close friends, More could have formulated the principles in similar language without intending to reference Erasmus' work directly.

### **3.3.1 *The King Should Be Loved, Not Feared***

The belief that the people and the prince should be united by love instead of fear is one of the first humanist principles expressed in the *Historia*. On the second page of the *Historia*, the encomiast praises Edward as "a prince so kindhearted and gentle in peacetime . . . that no other ruler in England was ever dearer to the nobles and the people" (CW15 316/4–7). A little later, the encomiast declares, "All the people obeyed the king himself not by constraint but of their own free will, and did not so much fear as revere him" (CW15 318/12–14). Earlier in this chapter I discussed the ambiguity of the encomiast's praise and argued that the encomium is not meant to be accepted at face value. When it comes to considering how More fills the *Historia* with humanist principles, the accuracy of the encomiast's description is irrelevant. The crucial

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<sup>70</sup> Erasmus wrote his *Education* in 1516 (*Education* vi). According to Sylvester, More probably wrote his history of Richard III between 1514 and 1518 (CW2 lxiii–lxiv).

point is that the encomiast takes the humanist standards of kingship for granted and constructs his encomium in such a way as to portray Edward as an ideal humanist king. Because of this, the encomium, regardless of whether it is sincere praise or flattery, presents readers with a sketch of the ideal humanist king at the very beginning of the work.

Notice the similarities between the encomiast's portrayal of Edward as a king who was beloved by his people with the following excerpt from Erasmus' *The Education of a Christian Prince*: "It is generally agreed that nothing is so beneficial to everyone as that the prince should warmly love his people and be loved by them in return" (96). This principle is also the theme of More's "Epigram 112: On the Good King and His People":

A kingdom in all its parts is like a man; it is held together by love. The king is the head; the people form the other parts. Every citizen the king has he considers a part of his own body (that is why he grieves at the loss of a single one). The people risk themselves to save the king and everyone thinks of him as the head of his own body. (CW3.2 no. 112/2–7)

The principle explained in this epigram is also expressed in More's "Coronation Ode," which he wrote for Henry VIII:

[W]hile other kings have been feared by their subjects, this king is loved, since now through his action they have no cause for fear. O prince, terror to your proud enemies but not to your own people, it is your enemies who fear you; we revere and love you. Our love for you will prove the reason for their fear. And thus it is that, in the absence of sycophants, your subjects' love and your enemies' fear will hedge you round in peace and safety. (CW3.2 no. 19/126–133)

Interestingly, there is reason to suspect the accuracy of this description of Henry VIII. It is likely that More composed the "Coronation Ode" not with the goal of describing Henry VIII accurately, but rather to offer the young Henry VIII a model of ideal kingship to follow (Garrison 74–5; Wegemer 88–102). This technique is similar to the one More uses in the encomium of his *Historia*, where the encomiast describes Edward IV in a way that is historically inaccurate, but that nevertheless serves the larger purpose of providing a model of ideal kingship.

The encomium is not the only place in the *Historia* that More expresses the importance of the king and his people being united by love. This humanist principle is voiced by Edward himself in his argument with his mother: "For I certainly consider that no people's love matters

more to me than the love of my own, and I hope it will endear me to them not a little when I seem not to be spurning a match with them” (CW15 442/18–21). Edward is employing a humanist principle for his own purposes in this scene, motivated not by love for his people but by his love for Elizabeth. Once again, however, the sincerity of the speaker is beside the point. What is significant is that Edward takes this humanist principle for granted to such an extent that he feels free to usurp the argument for his own ends. This serves More’s purpose of filling the history with humanist principles and implying that they are self-evident even to those who do not follow them.

The humanist principle that the people and the king should be united by love, not fear, is also expressed by Buckingham when he addresses Richard during the mock election. Buckingham assures Richard that “no king had ever reigned over more willing subjects than his in their eagerness to serve under his auspices” (CW15 476/18–20). Buckingham’s statement here is the reverse of the truth, since the citizens of London refuse to cooperate and several of the nobles and knights in Buckingham’s own company weep at the thought of Richard’s usurpation (CW15 454/15–16, 468/15–474/2). However, no one in the *Historia* tries harder than Buckingham and Richard to describe the ideal humanist king and to apply the description to Richard. For example, after the murder of Hastings and the imprisonment of other lords, Buckingham and Richard attempt to portray their actions as merciful, telling the mayor of London that after discovering the plot against themselves, “they had generously chosen to content themselves with the punishment of Hastings alone (since his malice was incorrigible) and to spare all the rest for repentance” (CW15 421/19–21). Compare their portrayal of themselves with Erasmus’ description of the good prince: “a good prince must be an object of fear to none but the evildoers and criminals, but here again, in such a way that even they retain some hope of leniency, if only they are capable of reform” (*Education* 23). Later, at his coronation, Richard puts on a display of mercy in an attempt to unite the people to himself through love instead of fear:

Finally, to keep anyone from turning against him through fear and to curry goodwill with insidious clemency, he first spoke of the evils of dissension and the blessings of concord

and then proclaimed that he would forget all his grudges and publicly forgive anyone who had ever offended him; and to illustrate the point, he ordered one Fogg to be brought to him, a man he had long hated with a deadly passion. When Fogg was brought from the neighboring sanctuary, where he had taken refuge out of fear of Richard, he publicly gave him his hand. (CW15 484/8–15)

The narrator explains that the common people applaud this gesture, but prudent judges recognize it as an empty display meant to curry favor. Nevertheless, the fact that even tyrants attempt to legitimize their rule by portraying themselves according to humanist principles strengthens the impression that humanist principles of kingship are truly the ideal which all kings should strive to embody. By putting these principles in the mouths of the encomiast (who speaks in a flattering vein), of Edward (who speaks jestingly), and of Richard and Buckingham (who speak with outright deception), More communicates humanist principles of rule without establishing a trustworthy narrator. This is a much more sophisticated technique than if More had begun the *Historia* with a philosophical introduction in imitation of Sallust.

### **3.3.2 *The Importance of Prudence and the Danger of Flattery***

The next humanist principle of rule to discuss is the importance of prudence: clear-sighted knowledge and good judgment applied to practical affairs. The encomiast includes the virtue of prudence in his praise of Edward, once again taking his pattern of ideal kingship from humanist principles: “whoever rightly assesses his conduct in war will have no less admiration for his prudence (*prudentiam*) whenever he retreated than praise for his boldness (*audaciam*) when he won victories” (CW15 316/21–23). As with the encomiast’s description of how Edward was loved by his people, the accuracy of this statement is beside the point. What is important is that the encomiast praises Edward in humanist terms, employing the humanist ideal of prudence and boldness to present Edward’s military engagements in the most favorable light. Compare the encomiast’s commendation of Edward for prudence and boldness with this passage by Erasmus:

And yet there are plenty of people who believe that the one thing which obstructs the function of government is having a wise prince. They say that the strength of his character is dissipated and he becomes too cautious. But they are talking about rashness, not courage; to lack fear because you lack judgment is not strength of mind but stupidity. . . . A sense of fear is useful when it points out danger and teaches one to avoid it. . . . (*Education* 48)

In this passage, Erasmus speaks about wisdom (*sapiat*) instead of prudence (*prudencia*), but he is referring to the same character quality as the encomiast: good judgment applied to practical affairs.<sup>71</sup>

Prudence, or practical wisdom, is one of the most important attributes of the ideal humanist king; in fact, Erasmus begins his *Education* with the words, “Wisdom in itself is a wonderful thing . . . and no kind of wisdom is rated more excellent by Aristotle than that which teaches how to be a beneficent prince” (1). Thus, it is not surprising that Buckingham tries to present Richard as the possessor of great wisdom. In his address to the Londoners, Buckingham says:

But he will doubtless be loath [to take over the burden of ruling the kingdom], since in his sagacity (*gnarus*) and wisdom (*sapientia*) he can easily recognize how much more care than advantage dominion brings with it, especially for a man who intends to administer it as I know he will if he accepts it. For I assure you that that office is not child’s play, as that wise man surely perceived who said, “Woe to that kingdom which is ruled by a child”; and so you have all the more reason to rejoice in your fortune and to thank heaven for kindly providing that the man it has destined to rule is not only mature in his age but has also combined admirable prudence (*prudenciam*) with great practical experience (*rerum vsu*) and unsurpassed glory achieved by his virtue at home and abroad. (CW15 466/18–468/2)

Later, during the mock election, Buckingham uses the famous “ship of state” metaphor when he urges Richard “to take the scepter in hand as if it were the helm of a ship which had long been adrift without any skilled steersman” (CW15 476/11–12). The most famous use of this nautical metaphor is in Plato’s *Republic*, when Socrates describes the ideal ruler as a philosopher-king whose wisdom enables him to direct the state, just as a skilled helmsman is able to direct a ship by his knowledge of the sky, winds, and stars (6.488A–489C). Humanists adopted this metaphor as their own, as the following excerpt from Erasmus’ *Education* illustrates:

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<sup>71</sup> The Latin phrase Erasmus uses is *si sapiat princeps* (*Institutio* 170/126). At the beginning of the *Education*, Erasmus is careful to define how he uses the words “wisdom” and “philosophy.” He clarifies that he does not mean the academic philosophy “which argues about elements and primal matter and motion and the infinite” but the practical philosophy “which frees the mind from the false opinions of the multitude and from wrong desires and demonstrates the principles of right government” (*Education* 2).

And so Plato is nowhere more meticulous than in the education of the guardians of his republic, whom he would have surpass all the rest not in riches . . . but in wisdom only, maintaining that no commonwealth can be happy unless either philosophers are put at the helm, or those to whose lot the rule happens to have fallen embrace philosophy. . . . (2)

By using the “ship of state” metaphor, Buckingham may be trying to emphasize Richard’s wisdom and prudence, since Plato indicates that these are the qualities required for directing the state.<sup>72</sup>

The humanist emphasis on wisdom and prudence in a ruler goes hand in hand with a concern for the danger of flattery. In his *Education*, Erasmus roundly condemns the destructive power of false advice, which is usually proffered in the form of flattery. “[S]omeone who implants in a prince’s mind perverted ideas, which will eventually be the ruin of a great many people,” Erasmus writes, “is the most vicious of men” (11). This same concern for the danger of flattery is expressed strongly by Edward IV on his deathbed. He calls the leaders of the factions together and explains that,

when everyone tries to ingratiate his own faction with the prince, the result is that his favor, more than truth and expediency, determines how people advise him; and thus steeped in perverse flattery (*adulationibus*), the impressionable soul of a minor will fall head over heels into vice and drag the kingdom to ruin along with him. . . . (CW15 332/6–13)

Edward’s opinions are entirely in agreement with those of Erasmus, who writes in his *Education*, “The prince must avoid flatterers (*adulatione*). . . . Youthful innocence in itself is particularly exposed to this evil. . . . And in case anyone thinks that this can be ignored as a trivial misfortune, he should realize that the most flourishing empires of the greatest kings have been overthrown by the flatterer’s tongue” (*Education* 54; *Institutio* 175/265). Flattery is so dangerous because it destroys the ruler’s wisdom and prudence. This is why the humanist emphasis on wisdom is accompanied by a warning against flattery. The importance of wisdom for a ruler and

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<sup>72</sup> The “ship of state” metaphor did not originate with Plato, and it was used by other authors without including a reference to wisdom or philosophy. (For example, see Cicero’s *Pro Sestio* 20.) Thus, the fact that Buckingham uses the “ship of state” metaphor does not necessarily mean he wants to portray Richard as a philosopher-king. He does, however, describe him as a “skilled steersman” (*perito gubernatore*), which implies at least a certain degree of prudence and wisdom.

the danger of flattery can be considered two sides of the same coin, and together they constitute one of the essential humanist principles of kingship that More wishes to communicate in the *Historia*.

### 3.3.3 *The Danger of Ambition and the Evil of War*

A third humanist principle of kingship in the *Historia* is that a good ruler should not be driven by ambition, which so often leads to war. It would be difficult to express the evil of ambition more strongly than Edward does in his deathbed speech:

Such an odious monster is pride and the lust for supremacy; and once it has crept into illustrious noblemen's hearts, it never ceases to creep forth in contentiousness until it has drenched all in slaughter and bloodshed, as every man tries first of all to be next to the greatest, then to equal him, and at last to excel and surpass him. Would that God would as readily forget as we personally remember what a great conflagration this wicked ardor for glory has ignited and how much slaughter it has provoked in this kingdom within these last few years; and if I as a private citizen had been able to foresee and anticipate its ill effects as distinctly in thought as I later experienced them in deed, with less pleasure than pain, on my life I would never have sacrificed so many men's heads to see men on their knees doing me honor. (CW15 334/14–26)

The regret Edward expresses in this passage is to his credit, but Erasmus' *Education* contains a devastating response: "The world will have paid too high a price to make princes wise, if they insist on learning by experience how dreadful war is, so that as old men they can say: 'I never thought war could be so pernicious.' But, immortal God! What incalculable suffering has it cost the whole world to teach you that truism!" (104). As this passage from the *Education* suggests, an important humanist goal is the prevention of war and the promotion of peace. Erasmus states explicitly, "[W]ar always brings about the wreck of everything that is good, and the tide of war overflows with everything that is worst" (102). The humanist emphasis on the evil of war is echoed by Buckingham in a dramatic condemnation of Edward for causing England's civil wars:

For though war, like a wellspring, gives rise to a torrent of all sorts of evil, this torrent is never more deadly than when a nation is suffering from internal strife, nor has it ever brought about more destruction in any nation than it did when it once broke out in this Britain of ours, nor in Britain itself was there ever such stubborn factional rivalry nor such bitter conflict nor such protracted warfare nor such numerous and bloody battles nor such near-universal and total destruction as there was in this one man's reign; for in

winning his throne, in defending it, in being deposed, in returning to win it again, and in taking vengeance on those who deposed him, he spilled more English blood than it formerly cost us to conquer France twice. Thus the people were decimated or destroyed; and how little of the nobility has been left alive! (CW15 460/8–21)

This vivid description of civil war is the corollary to Edward's self-condemnation and shows how much evil can be caused by ambition.

Of course, ambition leads not only to civil wars but also to wars of conquest, when one king makes war on another in order to expand his domains. Ironically, More places the humanist response to this kind of ambition in the mouth of Edward. When Edward's mother argues that he should marry into foreign royalty in order to expand his dominion, he replies, "Indeed, I would not even want any new titles in a distant domain to accrue to me in my wife's name, since on those terms so much land and sea is already supposed to belong to me that it would be more than enough for any one ruler to claim and defend it all faithfully" (CW15 444/4–7). Although Edward may be insincere in this speech, the opinion he voices is distinctively humanist. In Epigram 243, "On Lust for Power," More writes:

Among many kings there will be scarcely one, if there is really one, who is satisfied to have one kingdom. And yet among many kings there will be scarcely one, if there is really one, who rules a single kingdom well. (CW3.2 no. 243/2–5)

The same principle is expressed by Raphael in Book 1 of *Utopia*: "Suppose I expressed the opinion that Italy should be left alone. Suppose I argued that we should stay at home because the single kingdom of France by itself was almost too large to be governed well by a single man so that the king should not dream of adding other dominions under his sway" (CW4 88/21–24). Erasmus expresses the same principle in his *Education* when he says, "There was one error, I see, into which a great many of the Ancients fell—and I wish that there were none of our contemporaries doing the same—namely, that they directed all their efforts, not to improving the realm, but to increasing it" (101). Ambition, or the "lust for supremacy" as Edward calls it, can cause both civil wars and wars of conquest. Considering the devastating consequences of war, it is not surprising that humanists insisted that the good king should not be driven by ambition.

### 3.3.4 *Rule Should Be for the Good of the People*

Instead of being driven by ambition, a good king is more likely to be reluctant to rule because he understands the responsibility and burden of using his power for the good of the people instead of for his own benefit. That the authority of a king is meant to be used in service to the people is one of the most important humanist principles of kingship. In his *Education*, Erasmus advises the ruler, “When you assume the office of prince, do not think how much honour is bestowed upon you, but rather how great a burden and how much anxiety you have taken on. . . . According to Plato, only someone who has assumed the office unwillingly and not without persuasion is fit to be a ruler” (24–25). A few paragraphs later, Erasmus explains why rule is such a burden:

[A true prince is] born for the common good, sent indeed by the powers to alleviate the human condition by looking out for and caring for everyone; to whom nothing is more important or more dear than the state; who has more than a fatherly disposition towards everyone; who holds the life of each individual dearer than his own; who works and strives night and day for nothing else than that conditions should be the best possible for everyone. . . . (26)

Later in the *Education*, Erasmus summarizes the principle even more succinctly: “he who looks to the common good is a king; he who looks to his own good is a tyrant” (53).

The principle that kings should rule for the sake of the common good, so strongly expressed by Erasmus in the *Education*, is also emphasized by More in the *Historia*. More puts the principle in the mouths of Richard and Buckingham, who go to great lengths to portray Richard as a selfless ruler who only takes up the kingship for the good of the people. Buckingham tells the citizens of London that Richard “will doubtless be loath [to take on the burden of rule] since in his sagacity and wisdom he can easily recognize how much more care than advantage dominion brings with it, especially for a man who intends to administer it as I know he will if he accepts it” (CW15 466/18–22). Later, when Buckingham addresses Richard during the mock election, he pleads with Richard to “let his worshipful head bear the weight of a diadem, and not to let fear of the tempests of kingship or love of an immoderate modesty make him serve his own ease and abandon the public’s by shunning the crown” (CW15 476/13–16).

In turn, Richard replies that he “could cheerfully waive his own rights to the throne, having seen that it always brought more gall than honey to anyone who intended to rule in such a way that anyone who did not wish to rule so should not be allowed to rule” (CW15 478/3–6). If Erasmus’ *Education* had been written 100 years earlier, one would almost think Richard had been perusing it in order to know how to present himself as the ideal prince.<sup>73</sup>

Richard goes so far in imitating the humanist ideal that he even comes to the same republican conclusions at which Erasmus arrives. Near the end of the *Education*, Erasmus declares, “The good prince uses the public interest as a yardstick in every field, otherwise he is no prince. . . . Government depends to a large extent on the consent of the people, which was what created kings in the first place” (105). When Richard finally accepts Buckingham’s offer of the kingship, he declares that rule is only just if it is according to the will of the people. He says:

I consider it to be neither possible nor proper for anyone to rule unwilling subjects. For my own part, at least, though I know that there is no other to whom the crown rightly belongs by inheritance, I consider your desires more important than any number of laws, which derive all their efficacy from you; . . . I regard only the management of these realms [of England and France] as my own, but the title and the profit and the ownership as totally your own—as a genuine commonwealth. (CW15 480/7–20)

At his coronation, Richard connects his kingship with the rule of law, saying that “he felt that to carry out the laws and to act as their servant was the essence of kingship” (CW15 484/4–5).

By expressing republican principles through Richard’s mouth, More is able to communicate them without establishing an authoritative narrator. At the same time, it was no doubt safer for More, living as he did under a monarchy, to have republican opinions expressed by a character in the *Historia* instead of in his own voice. Such considerations did not stop him from writing epigrams with extraordinarily explicit republican themes, though. Consider his Epigram 121, “The Consent of the People Both Bestows and Withdraws Sovereignty”:

Any one man who has command of many men owes his authority to those whom he commands; he ought to have command not one instant longer than his subjects wish. Why are impotent kings so proud? Because they rule merely on sufferance? (CW3.2 no. 121/3–8)

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<sup>73</sup> In Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, Richard appears on the balcony holding a prayer book (1.7.98). If a director chose to have him come out holding Erasmus’ *The Education of a Christian Prince* instead, it would be equally appropriate, although anachronistic.

This epigram, published in the March 1518 edition of *Utopia*, indicates that More was not afraid of publishing republican opinions in his own voice, at least not in Latin (CW3.2 4). This suggests that More's decision to have Richard voice the republican principles in the *Historia* was not due to concerns about censorship, but was a stylistic decision with the goal of avoiding an authoritative narrator. As mentioned before, putting humanist principles of kingship in Richard's mouth conveys the impression that these principles are self-evident, since not even a tyrant can deny them, however little he may act upon them.

To summarize, the four main humanist principles of kingship are as follows: the importance of the king and the people being united by love, not fear; the need for prudence and the danger of flattery; the danger of ambition and the evil of war; and the need for the king to put the good of the people ahead of his own desires. It has been necessary to discuss these humanist principles systematically in order to understand their role in the *Historia*, but it is not necessary for the reader to recognize the principles explicitly. More's narrative techniques will be equally effective if the constant repetition of humanist maxims in the *Historia* manages to reshape the reader's mental image of the ideal king merely on a subconscious level. In fact, reshaping the reader's imagination to operate in accord with humanist principles is arguably a more effective tactic than attempting to persuade the reader by rational arguments.

### **3.4 The Answer to the Puzzle of Edward's Character**

At last it is time to sketch a solution to the puzzle of Edward's character. In the pages that follow I will describe Edward's main character traits, drawing on the techniques for comparing words and deeds in order to discern character. Edward's four most prominent character traits are selfish irresponsibility, imprudence, ambition, and (on the positive side) courtesy. For the sake of clarity, I will contrast Edward's character traits with the relevant humanist principles which they violate or adhere to. However, the ordinary reader of the *Historia* does not need to have an explicit grasp of the humanist principles of kingship in order to draw the correct conclusions about Edward's character. So long as the reader's image of the ideal king has been shaped by the humanist principles of kingship, it is quite possible for the reader to recognize Edward's most

prominent character traits. In everyday life, people regularly discern character without needing to think consciously about the standards by which they are judging the person. It is only when one attempts to explain a person's character traits to others, as in this chapter, that one is forced to justify one's conclusions by an explicit account of the standards by which one is assessing the person's character.

### **3.4.1 *Selfish Irresponsibility***

The first character trait to discuss is Edward's selfish irresponsibility, which characterizes almost every aspect of his reign. This character trait is in contrast to the humanist principle that the king should put the good of the people ahead of his own desires. Instead of being concerned with the good of his country, Edward devotes himself to the pursuit of pleasure and neglects his duties as a king. Edward's careless attitude on serious subjects is conveyed memorably in his jesting reply to his mother when she objects to his proposed marriage to Elizabeth. As the narrator expresses it, "[H]e answered many points in earnest and several in jest, since he recalled he had outgrown his mother's authority as his guardian" (CW15 442/11–12). For example:

Now, then, my darling mother, that blot of the twice-married state you inveigh against does not have me particularly terrified; I would willingly let some underprelate reproach me with it if I ever aspire to the priesthood, for to the best of my memory it is no obstacle to ruling a kingdom. Finally, as for her having children from her previous marriage, by heaven I even regard that as a gain; indeed, I too have several without ever having been married. In this way we have both furnished proof that our marriage will not be a barren one. (CW15 444/19–26)

Another scene conveys the same sense of jesting carelessness:

For the king in a merry mood used to maintain that he had three fine harlots, each one with her own special distinction, one of them the most cheerful, another the most astute, and the third the most saintly of all the world's harlots, since she scarcely ever left church but to come to his bed. (CW15 428/11–16)

Of course, there is nothing wrong with jesting; More himself was known for his jests. The problem is when Edward's careless attitude is carried through into how he leads the kingdom. Edward's passions lead him to be very negligent in his duties. This is explicitly stated in the beginning of the *Historia*: "Even though these divisions among his supporters caused Edward himself some distress, for as long as he stayed in good health he managed them rather

negligently.”<sup>74</sup> It requires mortal illness to motivate Edward to take the factions seriously and attempt to resolve them. There is also the suggestion of negligence in the following phrases: “No war was at hand, and none threatened, except for the one war that no one expected” and “though he feared nothing less than what actually happened” (CW15 318/9–11, 328/29–330/1). Even the wisest king cannot foresee all dangers, but considering that Edward has personal experience of how the “lust for supremacy” leads to civil war, it does not seem like it would take much foresight to realize that his sons are threatened not only by bad counsel but also by rivals to the throne (CW15 334/14–15).

Edward’s irresponsibility is caused partly by an indolent dismissal of serious duties, but still more by his devotion to pleasure. Edward is so abandoned to pleasure that even the encomiast admits that “from early youth throughout his whole life, whenever his business did not call him away, [Edward] was wholly given over to his appetite and lust, like virtually all mankind.”<sup>75</sup> By using the phrase “whenever his business did not call him away,” the encomiast tries to maintain that even though Edward was “wholly given over” to his passions, they were still sufficiently under control that they were not harmful to the kingdom. The encomiast says, “This fault of his was not particularly irksome to the people, since one man’s pleasures could scarcely be extravagant enough to be burdensome to everyone, and since he used to procure what he wanted with presents or wheedle it out with entreaties, never resorting to violence. . . .”<sup>76</sup> The evidence provided in the *Historia*, however, shows that Edward’s lust did great harm to the kingdom. This is clear from the interaction between Edward and Elizabeth, which is recounted in detail. When Elizabeth approaches Edward with the petition that he restore her lands to her, he says that “he would willingly give her even more if she would repay him with

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<sup>74</sup> *Hae diuisiones amicorum quanquam nonnihil erant ipsi Eduardo molestae tamen dum erat incolumis eo neglegentius eas habuit . . .* (CW15 328/24–26).

<sup>75</sup> *genio ac libidini ab ineunte statim aetate per omnem vitam quatinus eum res gerendae non auocabant admodum dedebatur / more hominum fere omnium* (CW15 316/27–318/2).

<sup>76</sup> *Id vitium eius non admodum fuit molestum populo / quod neque vnus voluptas viri diffundere se tam late sufficebat vt omnibus fieret graue / et ille vel precio quod libuit emercari solebat / vel precibus eblandiri / nusquam grassatus violentia . . .* (CW15 318/3–7).

one little kindness” (CW15 438/13–14). This “one little kindness” is her virtue, and the scene is a clear example of how he “used to procure what he wanted with presents or wheedle it out with entreaties.” It is also an example of how Edward’s lust *does* interfere with his business of ruling the kingdom. It interferes, first of all, with his duty to establish justice as he listens to the plea of a suppliant. Later, it interferes with his duty to establish peace for the kingdom through a prudent marriage—not necessarily a foreign marriage, but at least one that does not reignite civil war by offending Warwick. Buckingham is quite accurate (for once) when he says that Edward “was seduced by the beauty of a widow who happened on the scene and brought him to put pleasure before fealty (*fides*)” (CW15 450/21–23). As in many other instances, Edward chooses his personal pleasure instead of keeping faith with the people of England by putting their good ahead of his own. More emphasizes the ill effects of Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth in his description of Warwick’s anger: “But upon his return the Earl of Warwick was so angry about having his mission made pointless that he gathered an army and drove the king into exile, returning Henry from prison to the throne although Edward had had Warwick’s help in deposing him” (CW15 448/4–7). In reality, Warwick did not drive Edward into exile until six years after Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth, but More telescopes history and makes it sound as if Warwick drove Edward out of England immediately after Edward’s marriage (CW2 237–38). Readers are meant to realize that Edward’s lustful marriage to Elizabeth resulted in civil war and thus is a prime example of Edward putting his own desires ahead of his duty to his country.

Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth is also one of the root causes of Richard’s rise to power after Edward’s death. Arguably, Edward is more responsible for Richard’s rise to power than anyone but Richard himself, since Edward’s irresponsibility creates the opportunity for Richard to take control. The narrator explains that according to some, Richard hoped to claim the throne for himself “if his brother should happen to die (as he actually did) leaving children not old enough for rule, a hope strengthened by the king’s frequent feasts and immoderate eating” (CW15 326/9–11). The implication of this statement is that Edward brought on his own death by his immoderate lifestyle. If he had lived another five to ten years, what a difference it would have

made to the fate of the kingdom! His eldest son would have been old enough to take up the rule, and Richard would not have had the chance to usurp command as the Protector. Edward's death while his sons are minors is essential to Richard's success.

The other essential element in Richard's plot is the "old vying factions at court":

And so, well aware of the old vying factions at court (factions which he had even done all that he could to foment), with the king's relatives envying the queen's kindred for all their authority and wealth and being envied for the same things in turn, he supposed it would further his plans a great deal if he secretly served his own interests under a pretext of partisanship, as if he were going to avenge previous injuries, and exploited the anger and ignorance of one faction to wipe out the other. (CW15 328/10–17)

The existence of these "old vying factions" is Edward's responsibility, not only because he neglects to reconcile them until he is on his deathbed, but also because he brings them about in the first place by marrying Elizabeth and then encourages them through favoritism. Edward's negligence and favoritism are evident in the account of the rivalry between Hastings and Rivers:

[F]or [Hastings] then stood indicted before Edward, on a charge leveled by the queen's brother, Lord Rivers, as if he had been plotting to hand over Calais, of which he was captain, to the French. Even though, as it soon became obvious, the charge was pure slander, caused by Rivers' resentment at losing an office to Hastings which he thought had been intended and promised to him, it still seemed to Hastings initially that, what with the guile of his accuser and the nightly speech of the queen into the king's ears, which were prejudiced ahead of time, he was in serious danger.<sup>77</sup>

The conflict described in this passage probably would not have arisen if Edward had not given Rivers the impression that Calais was "promised to him" and then later changed his mind and awarded the office to Hastings. To encourage faction in this way is highly irresponsible of Edward. Unfortunately, Edward's reign is filled with selfish irresponsibility, in strong contrast to the humanist principle that the king should put the good of the people ahead of his own desires.

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<sup>77</sup> *Fuerat enim tum reus apud Eduardum factus accusante Riuro germano Reginae tanquam agitauisset consilium de prodendo Gallis Caleto / cuius presidij prefectus erat / quae tametsi (quod paulo post inclaruit) mera esset calumnia / indignante Riuro sibi illum in eo magistratu prelatum / quem velut destinatum ac promissum ipse sperauerat / tamen accusatoris dolo et nocturna Reginae oratione preoccupatis Regis auribus / initio sibi magno in periculo versari videbatur* (CW15 418/3–11).

### 3.4.2 *Ambition*

The second character trait to discuss is Edward's political ambition, which threw the country into civil war. Edward's ambition is described quite strongly even by the narrator when he depicts the three sons of York as "insatiably ambitious, hungry for power, and too quick to resent both superiors and equals" (CW15 322/2–4). Buckingham's condemnation of Edward for causing civil war is highly ironic since he and Richard are doing exactly the same thing, but it is useful as a statement in brief of the multiple struggles involved in Edward's consolidation of his power: "for in winning his throne, in defending it, in being deposed, in returning to win it again, and in taking vengeance on those who deposed him, he spilled more English blood than it formerly cost us to conquer France twice" (CW15 460/17–19).

Edward's behavior is contrary to humanist standards of kingship because he makes the English people suffer to satisfy his ambition instead of recognizing that war is one of the greatest evils any kingdom can undergo and should be avoided if at all possible. Erasmus argues that even if the "rights" of a Christian prince—such as the Yorkist claim to the throne—are "established beyond doubt," he must still ask himself "whether they have to be vindicated to the great detriment of the whole world" (*Education* 106). As discussed earlier, Edward acknowledges the truth of this argument on his deathbed. Lamenting the slaughter that the "wicked ardor for glory" has caused in England, Edward declares that if he had been able to foresee his ambition's ill effects, "[he] would never have sacrificed so many men's heads to see men on their knees doing [him] honor" (CW15 334/14–26).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> It is possible that Edward's deathbed speech is insincere and that he is not actually sorry for his ambition. Instead, he might simply be using rhetoric to discourage the ambition of his hearers, since their rivalry would be harmful to his children. This interpretation is supported by the parallel between Edward's deathbed speech and that of Micipsa, who was insincere in his deathbed professions of affection for Jugurtha in Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum* (9.4–11.1). Similarly, the way Edward describes pride and the lust for supremacy as an odious monster (*Tam execrabilis bellua superbia est et precellendi cupiditas*) recalls the words of Tiberius when he pretends not to want power and tells his friends that they little know what a monster supreme power is (*quanta belua esset imperium*; CW15 334/14–15; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 24). When I discuss Edward's imprudence in the next section, I will explain why I believe Edward's repentance is sincere enough at the moment, although not so sincere that he would be able to resist falling back into his old habits if he recovered.

Besides the damage it causes to the country as a whole, Edward's ambition is also responsible for the death of his brother Clarence. Edward may have his fatal rivalry with his brother in mind when he tells those gathered around his deathbed, "[W]e see that as a rule none feud more bitterly than those whom either natural or human law should deter most completely from all enmity" (CW15 334/11–14). The account in the *Historia* purposely leaves it unclear whether Clarence was innocent or guilty:

George, Duke of Clarence, tall and distinguished, might have seemed fortunate in every respect if either his own greed for power had not turned him against his own brother or his enemies' slander had not turned his brother against him. For whether the queen's faction laid a trap for him (for the queen's partisans and the king's kinsmen were bitterest enemies, as women by nature and not out of malice almost always hate those who are dearest to their husbands) or the duke's own insolence made him aspire to the throne, in any case he was indicted for treason, and innocent or guilty, he was condemned by a full parliament to the most grievous punishment. But the king withheld the severity of his punishment (*atrocitatem penae*) even as he upheld the death penalty; to make his death as easy as possible, his head was immersed in a barrel of Cretan wine and his breathing was cut off until he expired; and the very man who had ordered his execution lamented it bitterly when he heard it had been carried out. (CW15 322/5–14)

More's narrator offers two explanations for Clarence's death, one more sinister than the other. In this, he imitates a technique used by Tacitus in the *Annales*. As explained in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Tacitus frequently offers two or more explanations for an event, one of which involves sinister scheming. Though this gives the appearance of objectivity to his history, readers are more likely to remember and be convinced by the sinister explanation. Similarly, readers of More's *Historia* will probably be convinced that Clarence was executed unjustly, even though the narrator says that he may in fact have been guilty of treason.

Whether Clarence was innocent or guilty, it does not say much for Edward's character that he has his brother executed in circumstances so obscure that people cannot tell whether Clarence was actually guilty. This suggests that Edward's concern for maintaining his power is so strong that he does not wait for clear evidence of guilt even in the case of his brother. To be sure, Edward is said to have wept when he hears that his brother is dead, but this simply makes him appear hypocritical. In fact, the episode could be a reference to Suetonius' description of the cruel and manipulating hypocrisy of Domitian because More uses the same words as Suetonius

when speaking of the “severity of his punishment” (*atrocitatem penae* in More and *atrocitate poenae* in Suetonius):

[Domitian] had brought some men charged with treason into the senate, and . . . he had no difficulty in causing them to be condemned to suffer the ancient method of punishment. Then appalled at the cruelty of the penalty (*atrocitate poenae*), he interposed a veto, to lessen the odium, in these words . . . “Allow me, Fathers of the senate, to prevail on you by your love for me to grant a favour which I know I shall obtain with difficulty, namely that you grant the condemned free choice of the manner of their death [i.e., the opportunity to commit suicide]; for thus you will spare your own eyes and all men will know that I was present at the meeting of the senate.” (*Domitian* 11)

Edward’s gesture of offering mercy to a condemned man is a sign of clemency that Erasmus recommends, but having Clarence drowned in a barrel of Cretan wine is neither respectful nor necessary (*Education* 70; CW15 322/14–8). As Sylvester indicates, if Edward simply wanted to lighten the mode of Clarence’s death, he “could easily have commuted the sentence to beheading, as was often done in the case of a nobleman convicted of treason” (CW2 165). The whole episode reflects poorly on Edward—not only in his ambition that may have overreacted to the suspicion that his brother was plotting against him, but also in the suggestion that he is overly influenced by the flattery and self-interested advice of factious counselors.

Thankfully, Edward’s “lust for supremacy” seems to be satisfied once he has obtained the throne of England. When Edward announces his intention to marry Elizabeth, his mother advises him to “establish a marriage alliance with some foreign king, who would furnish not only protection to strengthen his throne but also a chance to enlarge his dominions” (CW15 440/10–12). Edward refuses, telling his mother, “Indeed, I would not even want any new titles in a distant domain to accrue to me in my wife’s name, since on those terms so much land and sea is already supposed to belong to me that it would be more than enough for any one ruler to claim and defend it all faithfully” (CW15 444/4–7). Edward is not actually concerned about the difficulty of ruling an extensive kingdom. He is usurping a humanist argument in order to persuade his mother not to oppose his marriage to Elizabeth. Even though Edward is insincere in his use of humanist rhetoric, the fact that he relinquishes the chance to increase his domains shows that his “lust for supremacy” has been satisfied. Edward is no Alexander the Great with

an insatiable desire for conquest. On the contrary, once Edward has obtained supreme power in England, he seems content to devote himself to “the enjoyment of [his] present prosperity” (CW15 444/1–2). It is true that the encomiast mentions a recent battle with Scotland and refers to “obtain[ing] tribute from France,” but these are not signs of Edward’s desire to extend his dominion. England had been at war every few years with Scotland and France for centuries, and only someone with great dedication to the cause of peace could have ended these conflicts. Edward does not have this dedication to peace, so it is not surprising that the periodic wars with Scotland and France continue. Edward’s main occupation, however, is to enjoy his good fortune by indulging his “appetite and lust.”<sup>79</sup> As explained earlier, Edward’s self-indulgence and negligence have serious consequences since they lay the groundwork for Richard’s usurpation. Nevertheless, Edward would have been even further from the humanist principles of kingship if he had been driven by a desire for conquest.

### 3.4.3 *Imprudence*

Edward’s third character trait is imprudence. In *The Education of a Christian Prince*, Erasmus declares, “One day the prince will realize that it was pointless to extend the frontiers of his kingdom . . . but before then many thousands of men have been either killed or maimed. These things would be better learnt from books, from the reminiscences of old men, or from the tribulations of neighbors” (104). The problem with Edward is that, like many other human beings, he is not convinced by maxims learned “from books, from the reminiscences of old men, or from the tribulations of neighbors” when they go against his present passions and inclinations. In his argument with his mother prior to his marriage with Elizabeth, Edward expresses how important his present pleasure is in making decisions. He explains, “[N]or do I think it very judicious to be induced by the hope of future gain (something promised more often than furnished by these foreign marriages) to spoil the enjoyment of one’s present prosperity; for what sense of that can a man have who is mated for life with a woman he cannot bear to look at?” (CW15 442/26–444/3). Although Erasmus shares Edward’s poor opinion of foreign marriages,

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<sup>79</sup> *genio ac libidini* (CW15 316/27)

he would not approve of how Edward gives supremacy in the decision-making process to “the enjoyment of one’s present prosperity” (*Education* 95–98; CW15 444/1–2). Edward’s words reveal that he is motivated primarily by the passions of the moment and that he does not have the prudence to think or care about the consequences of his actions.

Edward’s susceptibility to his present feelings and desires explains why he sounds so wise on his deathbed, when he repents of his ambition and explains the danger of flattery with great clarity (CW15 334/14–26, 332/9–14). On his deathbed, Edward finally “feel[s]” (*sentio*) the nearness of death, the approach of judgment, and the unimportance of worldly ambition and lust (CW15 330/17). Edward undoubtedly knew all these truths as maxims before; his familiarity with virtuous maxims is shown by his ability to mouth humanist maxims to his mother, as well as by his comment on his deathbed about how much preachers have to say about “those places” to which he is going, i.e., purgatory, heaven, or hell (CW15 332/25–334/1). While Edward was healthy, these maxims were powerless to change his behavior, since he does not have the prudence or self-control to act according to reason against the inclination of his passions. He admits this himself when he declares that he would never have pursued his ambition if he had been able to “foresee and anticipate its ill effects as distinctly *in thought* as [he] later experienced them in deed” (CW15 334/22–23; emphasis added). On his deathbed, however, the situation has changed; now the maxims are convincing because they are backed up by his physical sensations. Notice the emphasis on his feelings in the opening sentence of his deathbed speech: “Illustrious gentlemen . . . you see and I feel where my own life now stands” (CW15 330/16–7). A little later, Edward’s reference to how much preachers speak about heaven and hell shows that he is highly aware of his proximity to the afterlife: “I am not sure that any preacher’s words ought to affect you more deeply than mine, since I am going hence so soon to those places about which they have so much to say” (CW15 332/26–334/1). This comment also calls to mind the many sermons he has heard in his lifetime which, presumably, went in one ear and out the other and shows how unconvincing he finds the maxims of preachers in comparison with the testimony of a dying man who feels in his own body the proximity of judgment and (he hopes) can communicate a similar feeling to his listeners.

Edward's lack of prudence is due not only to his lack of self-control but also to vanity, which diminishes the possibility of true self-knowledge or knowledge of others. It is because of vanity—a high opinion of his own merits, especially of his right to pleasure and power—that he is unable to grasp the danger he undergoes by displeasing Warwick in his marriage to Elizabeth. His mother is quite correct when she tells him, “I see that you fail to appreciate sufficiently how much in your interest it is to ensure [Warwick] does not have to grieve to see his efforts wasted and the match he arranged made a mockery” (CW15 442/6–8). Edward's reply shows how far his vanity has led him from a true appreciation of his circumstances: “As for the Earl of Warwick, I do not feel so very afraid of him no matter how he is disposed; I doubt that he feels so completely at odds with me that he is bound to resent anything that he knows gives me pleasure” (CW15 444/12–14). This comment implies that Edward's vanity is so great that he believes Warwick and the other nobles who supported his claim to the throne did it because they wanted to give him pleasure, not because they believed he had a better claim to the throne and would be a better ruler than Henry, or, as is more likely, because they sought power and wealth for themselves and believed that supporting Edward was the best way to get it. Of course, Edward says many things jestingly in his dialogue with his mother, so his comment about Warwick being devoted to promoting his pleasure may have been a joking exaggeration, intended only to emphasize how little he cares for Warwick's anger. Even so, to underestimate Warwick's power is foolishness in itself, as the narrator makes clear: “But upon his return the Earl of Warwick was so angry about having his mission made pointless that he gathered an army and drove the king into exile” (CW15 448/4–5). The renewal of civil war is the deadly result of Edward's imprudence, an imprudence that is due partly to the influence of his passions and partly to his vanity.

Edward's vanity is also evident in his belief that he could “restrain either party whenever he pleased” (CW15 328/25–27).<sup>80</sup> The *Historia* shows that far from restraining the factions,

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<sup>80</sup> See the previous chapter in this dissertation, where I explain that this sentence is focalized by Edward and thus reflects Edward's belief about his own abilities, not the narrator's assessment of the situation.

Edward is controlled and manipulated by them, especially by means of flattery. Plutarch's essay "How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend" helps to clarify the relationship between flattery and self-love. Plutarch argues that self-love makes one an easy target for flatterers since the "man who avows that he dearly loves himself" is "his own foremost and greatest flatterer" and thus has little or no self-knowledge (*Moralia* 48f–49a). When a person listens to a flatterer, he is led even further away from self-knowledge and becomes even less able to make prudent judgments. In his deathbed speech, Edward implies that flattery is only a problem for youths and that mature kings like himself cannot be harmed by it, but this simply shows the extent of his self-ignorance (CW15 332/2–3). Edward is unaware of how much he has been ruled by flattery. Richard observes that Edward, "though ripe in both age and experience, was easily swayed at the urging and whim of [the queen's] faction" (CW15 338/26–28). Richard certainly is not the most reliable of witnesses, but his opinion is supported by the narrator's hints that Clarence was executed merely because of the envy of his enemies (CW15 322/5–14). Another example of Edward's susceptibility to the persuasion of others is the influence Shore's wife has over him. The narrator spends significant effort detailing the extent of her influence, and Buckingham exclaims to the Londoners that "Shore's wife, a contemptible whore, had more influence over the prince than all the nobles in his realm" (CW15 428–430, 460/26–462/2). Buckingham's description may be exaggerated, and the narrator contradicts Buckingham's negative assessment of Shore's wife by emphasizing how generously she uses Edward's favor. However, it certainly does not redound to Edward's credit that he is so easily influenced by his mistress. Less shameful to recount but no less problematic is the queen's undue influence over Edward. Her slander nearly succeeds in having Hastings executed: "Even though, as it soon became obvious, the charge was pure slander . . . it still seemed to Hastings initially that, what with the guile of his accuser and the nightly speech of the queen into the king's ears, which were prejudiced ahead of time, he was in serious danger."<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth's marriage to Edward is the primary example of how Edward

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<sup>81</sup> *tametsi (quod paulo post inclaruit) mera esset calumnia . . . tamen accusatoris dolo et nocturna Reginae oratione preoccupatis Regis auribus / initio sibi magno in periculo versari videbatur* (CW15 418/6–11).

is manipulated by people who play to his passions. After his conversation with her, Edward is convinced that Elizabeth is virtuous and resolves to marry her, even though the narrator shows that she is putting on a display and purposely manipulating the king's passions in order to bring about this result (CW15 436/10–440/7).

The following excerpt is probably the best way to summarize Edward's intellectual habits: "taking counsel from his love . . . with his mind already made up he consulted his friends. But the way that he did so made it very clear to them that anyone who opposed his decision would be wasting his time; and so, since they perceived that the marriage was inevitable, they vied in applauding it."<sup>82</sup> This excerpt shows that Edward's reason is subordinated to the urgings of his love—either his love of pleasure or his love of self. This makes Edward highly susceptible to flattery. Unfortunately, the result is a vicious circle in which Edward's self-love discourages honest counsel, while the flattering counsel he receives tends to increase his self-love, decrease his self-knowledge, and undermine his ability to make prudent decisions.

#### 3.4.4 *Courtesy*

The fourth and final character trait to consider is Edward's *comitas* or courtesy. The Latin word has a broader definition than simply "courtesy." Lewis and Short define *comitas* as "courteousness, kindness, obligingness, friendliness, affability, gentleness," and in the Cambridge edition of Erasmus' *Education*, the word is translated as "friendliness" ("Comitas"; *Education* 7–8, 69). This explains why the encomiast associates Edward's courtesy with a "friendly and popular" countenance (CW15 318/27).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, courtesy is a genuine virtue, even though it can easily be simulated by a tyrant in order to gain the favor of the people. Edward's courtesy is probably genuine, not simulated. His willingness to marry a woman of much lower rank than himself and his habit of jesting indicate that his personality is naturally "friendly and popular" (CW15 442/18–21, 428/11–6, 318/27). Furthermore, if Edward regularly engaged in dissimulation

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<sup>82</sup> *amorem consulens suum . . . iamque certus facere / cum amicis consultat / sed ita / facile vt scire possent / quisquis contra suasurus esset / operam esse lusurum: ergo futurum quod videbant / certatim approbant* (CW15 440/3–7).

himself by putting on a false display of friendliness, one would expect him to be more aware of the possibility of deception by others. The scenes described in the *Historia* reveal that he is easily deceived by the dissimulation of others. For instance, Edward is completely taken in by Elizabeth's display of virtue during the interview which leads to his proposal of marriage (CW15 438/14–440/4). Similarly, Elizabeth's slander against Hastings finds an easy entrance into Edward's mind (CW15 418/3–11). The reaction of the nobles to Edward's deathbed speech is a final example of how those around Edward dissimulate, although there is no way to know whether Edward sees through their deception or not (CW15 336/19–23). Unlike Richard, who is said to have "modesty in his countenance when in his heart there was arrogance, uncontrollable, boundless, and monstrous," Edward is probably genuinely courteous (CW15 324/13–14).

To say that Edward's courtesy is genuine does not mean that it is disinterested. The encomiast's description of how Edward sends game into the city shows that he knows how to make use of his natural courtesy in order to curry favor with the people:

In the last summer of his life, while the king was at Windsor, he invited the mayor and several aldermen of London to visit him simply in order to join him in the pleasure of a hunt. There he displayed to them a countenance less stately and lofty than friendly and popular, and he sent such an abundance of game from there back to the city that you could scarcely find anything else which secured him such widespread and hearty goodwill with the people, to whom a small thing performed courteously (*comiter*) often outweighs great favors and is reckoned a token of greater affection.<sup>83</sup>

Edward's "friendly and popular" countenance is said to be "displayed" to the people, which suggests that Edward is intentionally trying to gain popular approval. To employ courtesy to win popular approval is not necessarily a defect. In fact, Erasmus says that "the good prince must take every precaution against falling out of favour with his subjects for any reason," and he encourages princes to practice "mercy, friendliness, fairness, courtesy, compassion"

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<sup>83</sup> *nempe ea estate quae illi suprema fuit / Vindesorae versatus / prefectum Londini atque aliquot e senatoribus accersit ad se / haud alia de causa quam vt venatione secum delectarentur. Ibi eis non tam magnificum ac sublimem quam amicum ac popularem vultum exhibuit / ferinamque tam affluenter inde misit in vrbem vt haud temere inuenias aliud / quod ei aut plurium aut maiorem benevolentiam conciliauerit apud populum / cui plerumque res exigua facta comiter magnis beneficijs preponderat / ac pro maioris in se amoris argumento ducitur.* (CW15 318/23–32)

in order to win their peoples' good will (*Education* 69). The fact that Edward attempts to win good will through acts of courtesy is a point in his favor because it shows that he subscribes to the humanist principle that it is better for a king to be loved by his people than to be feared. Unfortunately, Edward's courtesy is hollow in the absence of more substantial service to his country. It is hypocritical for Edward to send game into the city as a gesture of courtesy while he is simultaneously undermining the stability of the kingdom through negligence and self-indulgence. It is also foolish of the people to value such a gesture of courtesy more than great favors.

Nevertheless, Edward would be a worse king without the virtue of courtesy. Over and over in Tacitus' *Annales*, the Romans appoint client kings for foreign nations; the situation begins well, but generally ends in disaster. At least twice, the cause of the disaster is the client king's increasing haughtiness (11.16–17, 12.29). For example, Tacitus describes the fall of Vannius, who had been appointed the ruler of the Suebi: "brilliant as he was and acceptable to his compatriots in the first stage of his command, later, with its lengthy continuance (*diuturnitate*), he changed to haughtiness (*superbiam*) and was beset by the hatred of his neighbors as well as by domestic disaffection" (12.29). The encomiast is probably referring to this incident in the *Annales* when he comments that Edward's courtesy "was enhanced and extended remarkably" with "the passage of time" even though "a long-confirmed (*diu confirmata*) sovereignty makes many princes turn haughty (*superbiam*)" (CW15 318/21–23). The fact that Edward's courtesy is not replaced by haughtiness as the years go by is to his credit. Courtesy is an appropriate virtue for a king to possess, since it can help unite the people and the king by love instead of fear. Unfortunately, Edward's courtesy is undermined by the vices of selfish irresponsibility, imprudence, and ambition, which means he falls far short of the humanist ideal of kingship.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

More was too much of a realist to expect to see the ascension of an ideal king who would rule entirely in accord with humanist principles. In the *Historia*, he is more concerned with assisting those who are engaged in public affairs to discern character better so that at least it will be easier to avoid tyranny. The importance of being able to discern character is demonstrated

convincingly by the example of Richard, who gains the office of Protector and maintains it afterwards primarily by his ability to “adopt any role, then play it out to perfection, whether cheerful or stern, whether sober or relaxed, just as expediency urge[s] him to sustain or abandon it” (CW15 324/10–13). Is it possible to discern a person’s true character when it is concealed beneath such a convincing mask of false appearances? Thomas More indicates that this sort of perception is possible if one carefully evaluates a person’s words and actions, especially by comparing them to his or her behavior in the past, comparing them to what others say about the person, and comparing them to similar situations in history. It is this type of evaluation that gives Queen Elizabeth her insight into Richard’s character, leading her to exclaim ironically, “I still fail to see any consistency in what he is saying; for the same man who pretends that everything I have is quite safe is unwilling to let me keep even my son, and the same man who maintains I am safe anywhere will not leave me in peace even where robbers find safety” (CW15 382/17–21). Inconsistent behavior is the distinguishing mark of a corrupt character because such a person does not orient his life according to unchanging principles and loyalties. Instead, a corrupt person professes whatever opinions are most useful to him at the moment and “adopt[s] any role, then play[s] it out to perfection, whether cheerful or stern, whether sober or relaxed, just as expediency urge[s] him to sustain or abandon it.” These tactics are usually successful, since the majority of people have not developed the prudential judgment required to discern a false appearance of integrity from actual trustworthiness.

Considering how much destruction is brought about by Richard’s ability to hide his ambition beneath a mask of virtue, it is understandable that one of Thomas More’s goals in writing the *Historia* is to train readers in the character discernment skills required to see through such a mask. The detailed and complex portraits of characters in the *Historia* are provided for precisely this reason. Since most of the characters in the *Historia* cannot be understood without comparing their words and actions throughout the whole course of the history, the process of analyzing their characters prompts readers to deduce important principles of character discernment and trains them to pay attention to the consistency or inconsistency of the words and actions of people in real life.

## Chapter 4: The Puzzle of Queen Elizabeth's Character

The character of Queen Elizabeth is the second main puzzle in More's *Historia Richardi Tertii*. The scene in which Elizabeth debates the issue of sanctuary with the cardinal actually presents two puzzles: first, the puzzle of what she should have done and second, the puzzle of why she chose to do what she did. The first of these puzzles is not so much a character puzzle as an opportunity for the reader to practice prudent decision-making in a difficult situation. Thomas More devotes 24% of the entire *Historia* to this single issue, giving Richard's and Buckingham's speeches to the council at great length and then composing a detailed conversation between the cardinal and the queen (CW15 360/4–396/20). He provides a list of options that Elizabeth considers, allowing the reader to enter into her struggle to make a good decision (CW15 392/9–394/2). There is plenty of opportunity for the reader to wonder, "What would I have done in that situation?" The complexity of the issue is apparent from the different ways that critics have responded to the sanctuary scene and to Elizabeth's character. For example, Elizabeth Story Donno and Andrea Frank argue that the queen views her son as a political pawn (Donno 441; Frank 222–3). In contrast, Lee Cullen Khanna and A. D. Cousins view the queen in a heroic light, admiring her resistance to Richard in the sanctuary scene (Khanna 39–44; Cousins 77–85).

### 4.1 What Elizabeth Should Have Done

Ultimately, More indicates that Elizabeth's choice to entrust her son to the cardinal was a poor decision. According to the narrator, Elizabeth gives up her son in the hope that it will "awaken the care and industry" of the lords if she entrusts her son to them with her own hands, "as if into guardianship and faithfulness."<sup>84</sup> It is certainly true that one person's act of confidence often prompts a similar response. However, one does not need to catch More's reference to Livy<sup>85</sup> to realize how foolhardy it is to rely on a general human tendency—which will probably

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<sup>84</sup> *curam atque industriam eorum quibus iam tradebatur incenderet si ipsa sua manu filium velut in tutelam fidemque committeret* (CW15 392/28–394/1).

<sup>85</sup> In his commentary on page 618 of CW15, Kinney points out the reference to Livy 22.22.14, in which a Spanish double agent persuades a not-so-bright Carthaginian general to release Carthage's Spanish hostages as an act of trust in the Spanish people. This frees the Spanish to fight in support of the Romans without having to fear for the lives of their hostages.

vanish in the presence of bribes or threats—when the life of one’s son and the future of one’s country is at stake. There is only a small chance that the cardinal and other nobles will be able and willing to protect Elizabeth’s son from Richard, regardless of whether she encourages their loyalty by giving him up willingly. For the sake of that very slight benefit, she relinquishes the greater advantage of forcing Richard to show his hand and create widespread resentment by invading sanctuary unlawfully. Richard may have been able to convince the council that he would be justified in removing the boy by force, but the clerics, lords, and citizens beyond the immediate reach of Richard’s bribes and threats would almost certainly object. Given Elizabeth’s rhetorical skill, she could use a description of the forcible removal of her son to turn the tide of public opinion against Richard. It is also quite possible that Richard was bluffing and would not have invaded sanctuary at all if Elizabeth had persisted in her refusal.

One of the main ways More indicates that Elizabeth made a poor decision is by emphasizing Richard’s satisfaction at the outcome of the dispute over sanctuary: “When the boy was brought to him, the Protector hugged him, lifting him off the ground in his arms, and said, ‘My dearest nephew and liege, you are a welcome arrival to everyone, and especially welcome to me’” (CW15 396/13–15).<sup>86</sup> Like the nobles and clergy in the council, Richard seems to have no doubt that it is better to have obtained the boy through “verbal persuasion” instead of by “force” (CW15 376/21). Even more significant is the sentence which concludes the section of the *Historia* devoted to the dispute over sanctuary:

Then they went from there straight to the prince, who was living in London in the bishop’s palace, and from there, escorted through the middle of the city by a large retinue, attended on all sides by cheers which would frustrate the hopes of the cheerers, both brothers immediately entered the Tower, outside which it is thought that they never set foot again. (CW15 396/16–20)

In this final sentence, the narrator emphasizes that the result of the queen’s decision to release her youngest son is the imprisonment and murder of the two princes. All of Elizabeth’s fears are confirmed, and her hope that the cardinal will protect the boys is shown to be empty.

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<sup>86</sup> In the English version of the history, the narrator emphasizes Richard’s satisfaction even more by adding, “And he sayd in that of likelihod as he thought” (CW2 42/17–8).

Granted that the queen should not have given up her son willingly, what should she have done? One option would be to pretend to agree but to ask for a delay. Notice how diplomatic her initial response to the cardinal is: “I certainly would not deny that what you are proposing would be very desirable for my son, that is, spending all his time with the king and enjoying life together with his brother” (CW15 378/21–24). For someone as rhetorically adept as the queen, it would not be difficult to continue on this diplomatic note and use the boy’s illness as an excuse for not releasing him to the Protector right away. She could say, “He’s too ill to be moved right now, but he is slowly recovering. If you return in a week’s time, he should be ready to go with you out of sanctuary.” When the week has passed, she can plead for another week’s delay because the boy has not recovered as quickly as she hoped, and so on.

One of the sarcastic observations she makes later could be used to strengthen her diplomatic appeal for delay. The *Historia* says that she exclaims, “[I]f the boy (God forbid) should die naturally in [Richard’s] custody through no fault of his own, [Richard] could still readily come under suspicion of treachery” (CW15 382/7–9). Worded more diplomatically, this observation could be used to strengthen her argument for why the boy should not leave sanctuary until he has recovered. She could say,

“It has come to my ears that some of my supporters are so inflamed against the Protector that they are willing to cast blame upon him for anything. If the boy’s illness should result in death while he is in Richard’s care, these misguided supporters would attack Richard’s honor and accuse him of doing away with the boy for his own advantage. You can imagine the disturbance and unrest this would produce. In my judgment, it would be best to focus on the prince’s coronation at present. Once that has taken place, people will be less excitable. I pray that by that time the duke will be in better health and will be able to leave sanctuary to join his royal brother. Despite my past differences with Richard, I know how much affection he has for his nephew. However, keeping my younger son in sanctuary while he is so ill seems the best way to avoid civil unrest, which we all dread.”

Richard would no doubt see through Elizabeth’s arguments and realize she is simply playing for time. Having chosen the cardinal as his intermediary, however, Richard must work within the limitations of the cardinal’s conscience. Richard and Buckingham persuade the cardinal to be their emissary only when they portray Elizabeth as acting out of perverse malice and preparing to send the boy overseas into danger (CW15 368/14–25). What if the cardinal were faced with

a diplomatic queen who proves her reasonableness by agreeing with everything Richard and Buckingham say about the importance of the princes being together? This cooperative queen would not sound perverse or malicious, but would simply ask for a delay because of the boy's ill health and the danger to Richard's reputation if the boy were to die while in his care. Richard and Buckingham do not mention the boy's ill health in their speeches to the council, so the cardinal would have to use his own judgment when replying to the queen, instead of echoing their arguments as he does throughout most of his speeches. He might well decide that Richard would appreciate the queen's concern for his reputation or at least that Richard would accept a minor delay rather than undergo the odium of breaking sanctuary. The cardinal must dread the possibility of Richard bringing force into sanctuary, so he would probably be happy to accept any excuse from the queen that he thought would be sufficient to satisfy Richard.

Of course, if the cardinal reported to Richard that the queen had agreed to release the prince in a week, Richard would probably respond that this was merely a ploy by the queen to gain more time. Would Richard immediately break sanctuary and take away the boy by force? It seems more likely that he would be held back by the disapproval of the cardinal—the senior prelate in England and the natural defender of sanctuary—whose conversation with the diplomatic queen would have shown him that the queen is not as malicious and unreasonable as Richard and Buckingham claim. There is a good chance that Richard would find himself forced by circumstances to grant the queen a delay.

A delay would benefit the queen's cause in a variety of ways. She might be able to use the time to smuggle the boy out of sanctuary, although this is questionable since Richard would be sure to have it well guarded. At the very least, she could consult with her legal advisors (the "experts" mentioned at CW15 388/19 and 390/16) about what to do if Richard breaks sanctuary;<sup>87</sup> they would be able to prepare a legal defense. Most importantly, she could publicize

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<sup>87</sup> If the queen had taken a diplomatic approach and been granted a delay, the cardinal might not have mentioned Richard's threat to remove the prince by force. However, it is probable that the queen would still have heard about the threat from one or another of the clergy or nobility who were present at the council and would be able to use the delay to prepare for the possibility of force being brought into sanctuary.

Richard's threat to break sanctuary, both among the common people and among the clergy and lords who were not at the council. If such a rumor got abroad, Richard would probably blame the queen's faction for manufacturing lies about him, but from then on, he would have to be very careful not to do anything that would confirm the rumor—especially removing the boy from sanctuary.

Even if Richard barricades the queen in sanctuary so tightly that she cannot get any message to her friends or consult with anyone, a delay would still be in her favor. Richard is counting on seizing power quickly while the nobles are unsure what to think and have their forces at a distance. He and Buckingham manage to convince most of the clergy and nobles in the council that removing the prince by force would not be breaking sanctuary, but a great part of their persuasiveness is no doubt due to the intimidation of their presence.<sup>88</sup> If the nobles and clergy had even a week to think about the situation and consult their legal advisors and each other, it is likely that at least some would perceive the flaws in Richard and Buckingham's arguments. Whether they would have the courage to oppose Richard openly is another question, but they would at least be more on their guard. Richard's plot depends on catching the nobles off guard, so if some of them decide to summon their forces from their home estates, or to leave the city and return to their estates, it would be fatal for his plan (CW15 404/10–14, 432/4–12).

If Richard refuses to grant the queen a delay and insists that his men will remove the boy by force immediately, the queen's best course of action would be to refuse to cooperate. This is the stance that she initially takes with the cardinal, declaring over and over again, in a variety of different words, "[T]he son I have with me will not leave [sanctuary] with my consent" (CW15 390/19–20). She also cites the advice of legal experts and proves that she could easily defend the boy's legal right to sanctuary. Instead of backing down as she does when the cardinal threatens to leave, she should have stood up to Richard's henchmen, forced them to restrain her physically

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<sup>88</sup> Referring to the council's response to the speech Buckingham gives regarding sanctuary, Logan notes, "In the present instance, there is a strong incentive, especially for ambitious people, to believe—or, at the least, appear to believe—the second-most powerful nobleman of the realm, especially when he is speaking on behalf of the *most* powerful one" ("Thomas More" 28–9).

before they could lay hands on her son, and threatened to prosecute them in a court of law. Later in the *Historia*, Richard earnestly tries to draw the colleges of law onto his side, which shows how important it is for him to appear to be law-abiding. This suggests that Richard is only bluffing in his threat to invade sanctuary and that he would not really risk his reputation by doing something so obviously illegal.<sup>89</sup> In that case, a confident defense of sanctuary by Elizabeth would undoubtedly force him to back down. Logan points out that “neither Richard’s father nor Edward IV had declined, in earlier exigencies, to remove noble enemies from sanctuary by force,” but they were actual kings with established power, whereas Richard was in a very precarious position and would not have wanted to risk the damage to his reputation (*History* 47n50).

On the other hand, if Richard is not bluffing, forcing him to break sanctuary in order to obtain the prince would go a long way towards revealing his true intentions to the many people who still believe him to be a worthy Protector. It is true that Richard and Buckingham are able to persuade most of the council that removing the boy by force would not count as breaking sanctuary, but the nobles and clergy at the council are intimidated by Richard’s presence and are not given a chance to hear the queen’s opposing arguments (CW15 376/18–22). If the queen initiates a legal battle for custody of the younger prince, not only the clergy and nobles but everyone in the kingdom would have ample time to hear and discuss both sides of the issue. The strong legal defense Elizabeth gives to the cardinal shows that both law and precedent are on her side. Richard would no doubt attempt to influence the court through bribery or threats, but the example of another lawsuit in the *Historia* shows that the legal system of England at the time had at least a certain degree of independence. The lawsuit in question is the Duchess of York’s attempt to prevent Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth by claiming that he was already married to

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<sup>89</sup> It is “obviously” illegal in two senses. First, if Richard has the prince removed from sanctuary by force, most people would assume it to be illegal, since the average person would not be able or willing to follow the sophisticated line of reasoning that Buckingham uses to prove that the prince has no right to sanctuary. Second, the legal arguments that the queen proffers in her debate with the cardinal show that it would be easy for a lawyer to disprove Buckingham’s sophisticated reasoning and establish that the prince could in fact claim benefit of sanctuary.

Elizabeth Lucy “since they had plighted their troth and confirmed it by intercourse” (CW15 446/14). The narrator explains:

At that point, whether the bishops did not dare to proceed or the king did not want his marriage to be tainted by a sinister rumor which gained weight and authority from his mother’s piety, matters came to a halt until the case was examined and the falsity of that rumor was proven. Lucy was summoned and, although she had been both suborned and encouraged in secret discussions with the hope of becoming the king’s consort if she would assert he had plighted his troth, nevertheless she had no sooner sworn to tell the truth than she confessed that the king had been bound by no promise of marriage. . . . (CW15 446/14–21)

Notice that the attempt at bribery was a failure in this court case because the witness would not perjure herself despite the promise of becoming the king’s consort. Observe also that the English legal system was effective enough to call a temporary halt to the king’s marriage, since either “the bishops did not dare to proceed or the king did not want his marriage to be tainted by a sinister rumor.” The fifteenth-century English legal system, in other words, was effective enough to delay the plans of princes.

On the other hand, the *Historia* also recounts multiple instances in which the legal system of England was too weak to restrain injustice. The first example is the fact that Richard of York, the father of Edward VI, waged war to attain the throne by force instead of accepting the judgment of parliament,<sup>90</sup> which had granted him the throne after King Henry’s death (CW15 320/18–29). Next is the execution of Clarence, who was “condemned by a full parliament to the most grievous punishment” even though there is a strong possibility he was innocent (CW15 322/5–18). Further examples are the facts that Hastings is executed without a trial and the queen’s relatives are beheaded in a similar manner, “unconvicted, unheard, and not even accused” (CW15 430/26–432/1). During his speech to the citizens of London, Buckingham refers to unjust verdicts during the reign of Edward VI, especially the case of Burdet, “an excellent man, cruelly slain for one word which he carelessly let slip over a drink, while the law

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<sup>90</sup> When recounting these events, the narrator comments that the authority of parliament in England “is supreme and absolute” (CW15 320/22–3). As Kinney points out, this ironic statement “is so clearly wrong that it actually draws our attention to parliament’s relative weakness” (141).

was abused for the prince's wanton pleasure . . ." (CW15 458/4–6). Although Buckingham is not a reliable source, the way he cites particular names and circumstances implies that his accusation is based in fact.

If the queen initiates a legal battle for custody of the younger prince, it is not unlikely that Richard would be able to bribe or threaten the judges into giving him a favorable ruling. However, the queen does not need to win the legal battle in order to defeat Richard. The delay and open debate involved in a lawsuit would provide the nobles with sufficient time to discuss the issue, suspect Richard's motives, and gather their forces against him. At least three times in the *Historia*, the narrator explains how important it is for Richard to act quickly before the nobles have time to suspect him and gather their forces. At the very beginning of the *Historia*, after describing Richard's plot to seize the throne, the narrator declares that Richard knew this for certain: "if by any crack his plan should leak out rather prematurely, at once it would happen that an alliance between the opposing factions would be sanctified in his own blood" (CW15 328/21–23). Later, the narrator describes Catesby's role in the plot and emphasizes how essential it is that the suspicion of the nobles should not be aroused before Richard is in a position of power:

For this whole mass of troubles was based on [Catesby's] dissembling; for otherwise Hastings, the Earl of Derby, and many other noblemen of their party would doubtless have gathered their forces and withdrawn in time to confront this threat had not Hastings been lulled by his confidence in Catesby so as to detain all the rest, who were ready to leave, until Hastings himself was taken by surprise, the others were caught dawdling, and all were alike overthrown, not detecting the perfidy of Catesby until they could only condemn it instead of escaping it. (CW15 404/9–16)

After the execution of Hastings and other nobles, Richard moves ahead with a similar urgency to act before the remaining nobles can prepare themselves:

And so when these deeds had been perpetrated . . . while . . . almost all the rest [of the nobles] were residing in London far away from their centers of power, and while everyone was dismayed and unnerved by uncertainty as to where all this was leading and whom one could trust, the Protector decided that he ought to seize the occasion, take advantage of their fear and uncertainty, and put himself in possession of the throne before giving them time to elaborate and think through their plans and withdraw to their various bases with their forces consolidated. (CW15 432/4–12)

All of these passages show how fatal the delay and publicity of a trial would be to Richard's plans.

Consequently, if Richard invaded sanctuary and removed the prince by force, it would be critical for the queen to ensure that his illegal behavior became widely known, not only by initiating a lawsuit for custody over the younger prince but also by publicizing his actions among the general populace. Equally crucial would be the need to protect the princes while they are both in Richard's power. If one or both of the princes were to die during the trial, Richard would certainly be suspected, but he might decide the risk is worthwhile in order to accelerate his plans for usurping the throne. Therefore, the queen should accompany the prince out of sanctuary in order to advocate for her two sons and watch over them while the legal battle is ongoing. Richard could not refuse to give her access to the princes because his ally Buckingham has already declared that the queen would be welcome to care for the princes. In his speech opposing sanctuary in the council, Buckingham declares, "I think there is no one who would not like to see her taking care of the prince too, if only she would make up her mind to reside in a place which would not be unseemly for either of them" (CW15 366/25–27). The cardinal repeats Buckingham's declaration to the queen in terms that are a direct invitation to her to leave sanctuary and care for the princes in the palace: "all of the nobles would be glad to have both of them brought up in your hands and under your supervision, if you can bring yourself to move to a place not unseemly for either your dignity or their majesty" (CW15 380/16–20). Since Richard cannot deny the queen access to the princes, she would have a perfect opportunity to protect them and watch over their interests. Admittedly, the queen would be risking her life by leaving sanctuary, but this would not be too much to expect from a devoted mother—or from a devoted queen, with the interests of the realm in mind.

#### **4.2 Why Does Elizabeth Do What She Does?**

Figuring out what Elizabeth should have done is a challenge that requires the reader to practice using prudence to decide on the best course of action in a difficult situation. However, the real puzzle of Elizabeth's character is figuring out why she decides to permit her son to leave sanctuary when she has just expressed so clearly the many reasons why this is a poor course of action. In the last chapter, I explained how Thomas More presents Edward's character in a

complex way in order to create a “character puzzle” that teaches readers how to discern character in real life. I believe that the portrayal of Queen Elizabeth is a similar “character puzzle” that challenges readers to discern what it is in her character that leads her to make the fatal decision to give up her son to the cardinal.

#### 4.2.1 *Creating the Character Puzzle*

The first step in exploring the character puzzle of Queen Elizabeth is to examine how More turns her character into a puzzle for readers to solve. In the case of King Edward, the puzzle is created by the contradictory ways in which he is described. The encomiast praises him to the skies, while Buckingham condemns him as a tyrant. The classical references in the *Historia* are similarly contradictory since they compare Edward both to Tiberius, a tyrant, and to Germanicus, a virtuous leader. In the case of Queen Elizabeth, More uses a different kind of contradiction to turn her character into a puzzle: the contradiction between her words and her deeds, between her rhetorically powerful argument that there is “nothing more hazardous” than putting both her sons in Richard’s power and her ultimate decision to do just that (CW15 394/20). In fact, one would be justified in applying to Elizabeth the very words she says of Richard: “I still fail to see any consistency in what [she] is saying.”<sup>91</sup>

More uses narrative techniques to emphasize the contradiction between Elizabeth’s words and deeds. The lengthy passage describing her motives for releasing the boy is placed immediately between the two speeches in which she expresses most clearly why giving up the boy is the worst thing she can do. In the first speech, which runs from CW15 386/9 to 390/25, Elizabeth responds to the cardinal’s arguments (or rather, his repetition of Buckingham’s arguments) that her younger boy is not eligible for sanctuary. This speech is too long to quote in its entirety, but below are some of the highlights:

Is the Protector so madly in love with my son that he fears nothing more than that he may make off somehow and give him the slip? . . . [H]e is afraid I might send him away—oh, yes, to send him straight into the traps laid for him on the way! On my word, he does not need to lose any sleep over that possibility. For where can I hope he will be safe if I despair of his being safe here? . . . And I for one have no doubt that the spirit of St. Peter,

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<sup>91</sup> *Neque tamen satis video quomodo ipse secum constet* (CW15 382/17–18).

holy guardian of this sanctuary, has no less power to take vengeance upon violators of his sanctuary today than he had in the past. But supposedly the boy's age is incapable of claiming the privilege; a wonderful argument, so that the privilege which protects brigands cannot help an innocent! Now, as for his claim that the boy does not need the benefit of sanctuary, would that he did not; and he certainly would not if innocence in and of itself were safe against wrongdoers. . . .

But the boy, to be sure, is incompetent to ask for the benefit of this place. What if his uncle heard him asking for it? But suppose that he cannot; suppose that he will not; imagine that he even rejects it and tries to escape; I myself still contend that anyone who removes him against my will, even with his consent, will be violating this sanctuary, unless we are to think that abducting my son is permissible in a place where to take away my horse would be sacrilege. . . . But even if my rights could not shelter him and he could not apply for his own, who does not see that as his legal guardian I can apply for them on his behalf? Unless maybe the law only means for me to take care of his property, taking no thought at all for his person. . . .

I have made up my mind not . . . to entrust any one man with both of [my sons], especially the man whom the nation's laws designate the heir to their throne if both perish. . . . [I]n this instance, if the experts are telling the truth, I am being no more cautious than the common law, which allows no one to become guardian of a person on whose death he would stand to inherit much less than a kingdom. Against these risks the surest and practically the only protection is in the immunity which this place affords, and the son I have with me will not leave it with my consent.

Considering the eloquence and logical force of this speech, it is not surprising that the cardinal can find no answer to the queen's arguments; the only surprise is that he gives no appearance of being convinced but instead threatens to "leave right away," abandoning her to the mercy of Richard's henchmen (CW15 392/5).

The second speech in which the queen expresses why giving the boy up is the worst thing she can do is shorter, running from CW15 394/3 to 396/4:

Noble sirs, I am not so imprudent as to lack faith in your prudence, nor am I so suspicious as to doubt your good faith; and today I shall give you such a token of my confidence that if you are lacking in either it will inflict an incurable wound on both me and the commonwealth. . . . Here is the boy that you want, my son and Edward's, your dear former king; I have no doubt that if I had not chosen to entrust him to you, I could protect him with the hallowed immunity of this sanctuary. But I have even less doubt that some people are such mortal enemies of my blood that if they knew that there was a drop of it hidden in their bodies they would not hesitate to spill it. Furthermore we have learned by experience how easily the detestable thirst for dominion swallows up any feelings of kinship; when brother slays brother and a child forces his way to the throne over his parent's dead body, will a nephew be safe from his uncle? My own children, at any rate, safeguard each other by being kept apart; they give each other life; each one's safety

depends on the other's; and so there could be nothing more hazardous than to entrust both of them to one man, just as it is a very rash merchant, in most people's view, who will risk his whole fortune in one ship. Nevertheless, I give this son into your hands, and in him I also give you his brother; I entrust them both to your loyalty, and from you, before God and men, I will ask for them back again. I know you have a great deal of prudence and even more good faith; you have power and resources to spare, nor will there be any shortage of people who will gladly support you in this cause. But in the name of your faith and my late husband's memory, in the name of my care for my children and my trust in you, I beg one thing only: just as I seem to you to be overly fearful, so on your part do not be overconfident.

This speech eloquently explains why giving up her son to the cardinal, who will deliver him to Richard, is a risky action for her to take. Indeed, she says there is "nothing more hazardous" than what she is doing (CW15 394/20).

In between these rhetorically powerful speeches that explain why Elizabeth should not release the boy, the narrator describes the interior deliberations which lead her to do just that:

Upon these words the queen fell silent, deliberating for a long while. Since it seemed that the cardinal was more bent on leaving than some of his escort and since the Protector himself was on hand in the palace with a band of retainers, it began to enter her mind that her son could not be kept openly in the sanctuary, but that she could not hope to conceal him; that circumstances could not be more awkward for slipping away with him; that there was neither enough time, nor a planned destination; that no escort had so far been chosen, and nothing was ready; so thoroughly had this messenger surprised and overwhelmed her—she who had been carefree, thinking about nothing less than force being brought into the sanctuary, although she now considered that it was surrounded, as well, and that any way out for her son would lead straight to a trap. But since there is occasionally a glimmer of hope in the gloomiest circumstances, at length she had the thought that their uncle's intentions toward his nephews might not be as ruthless as she had supposed; and in any event, if her fear of him was not groundless, it would certainly be too late to help. Besides, the cardinal possessed a mind which had been sufficiently tested [by her], and the loyalty of several of the nobles in his escort was not less verified, and though she feared that they might be deceived, she had persuaded herself they were not able to be corrupted. And so if she was going to send her son away at all, she thought it would be better if she seemed to be giving him up freely instead of unwillingly, since she reasoned it would quicken the interest and diligence of those who received him in guarding his life if she personally handed him over as if into guardianship and faithfulness.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Sub hec Regina longius deliberabunda conticuit: cui / quum Cardinalis ad abitum accincior quam quidam e comitatu suo videretur et Protector ipse in palatio adesset cum satellitum globo / subire animum cepit haud palam seruari filium in asylo posse / celandi vero spem non esse / subducendo illinc nil non inoportunum / neque tempus suppetere / neque quo*

This description of Elizabeth’s interior deliberations contradicts her words to the cardinal on several points. First, she has no confidence that St. Peter will protect her son against Richard’s threat to invade sanctuary. Second, she *would* consider sending her son away if only there was a chance to arrange it. The contradiction between her words and thoughts in these instances is easily explained: since the cardinal is Richard’s emissary, she naturally asserts more confidence than she feels and denies any plans to smuggle the prince out of sanctuary. Nevertheless, the contrast between her earlier professions and her present thoughts is so direct that it helps to alert the reader to the more puzzling contradiction, namely, Elizabeth’s hope that Richard does not have wicked designs on the boys. In light of her own strong arguments given just a minute before, this hope is so unreasonable that it seems impossible she could seriously entertain it. Of course, it would not be surprising if the extreme pressure Elizabeth is undergoing at this moment overwhelms her<sup>93</sup> to such an extent that she no longer perceives Richard’s threat clearly and instead becomes willing to grasp at any straw of hope, however irrational. The passage “so thoroughly had this messenger surprised and overwhelmed her—she who had been carefree,

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*mitteretur prouisum / comites adhuc incertos / imparata omnia / adeo securam nuntius hic oppresserat nihil minus cogitantem quam asylo inferendam vim / quod nunc obsessum etiam reputabat / nec vllum puero exitum nisi in insidias dari. Aliquando contra / vt perditissimis rebus intermicat interim spes / cogitabat non esse fors tam inclementem patruī in nepotes animum quam ipsa concepisset: denique / si non vanus eius timor esset / certe serum fore. Preterea Cardinalis animum satis exploratum habuit / nec minus compertam nobilium aliquorum qui simul venerant fidem / quos vt verebatur ne falli possent / ita sibi persuaserat non potuisse corrumpi. Igitur si filium omnino dimissura sit / prestare censuit / sponte vt illum tradere quam inuita videretur / rata fore vti id nonnihil in conseruandum puerum curam atque industriam eorum quibus iam tradebatur incenderet si ipsa sua manu filium velut in tutelam fidemque committeret. (CW15 392/9–394/2)*

<sup>93</sup> The narrator describes the effect of the cardinal’s visit thus: *adeo securam nuntius hic oppresserat* (CW15 392/15–16). The verb *opprimo* can be translated either as “to overthrow, overwhelm, crush, overpower, prostrate, subdue” or as “to take by surprise” (as in, “to take a city by surprise”) (“Opprimo”). Both of these meanings are appropriate in Elizabeth’s case. Unfortunately, to communicate both meanings of the verb in an English translation, one needs to use two verbs: “so thoroughly had this messenger surprised and overwhelmed her—she who had been carefree.” (For what it is worth, Lewis and Short note that in the Vulgate, the word *opprimo* is used several times with the meaning “to force a woman, commit a rape upon.” The examples provided are Vulg. 2 Reg. 13:12, 14, 32 [2 Sam. 13:12, 14, 32]; Gen. 34:2; and Ezech. 22:11.)

thinking about nothing less than force being brought into the sanctuary” implies that the queen is overwhelmed by fear and a feeling of helplessness when the cardinal’s embassy convinces her that sanctuary cannot protect her younger son and, consequently, that everything she has done so far to protect herself, her children, and her country from Richard’s usurpation is useless. One could interpret the narrator’s account of her internal deliberation (CW15 392/9–394/2) as a psychologically realistic way of describing how the emotions of fear and despair cloud the queen’s mind until she becomes ready to grasp at the most unreasonable hopes: “But since there is occasionally a glimmer of hope in the gloomiest circumstances, at length she had the thought that their uncle’s intentions toward his nephews might not be as ruthless as she had supposed; and in any event, if her fear of him was not groundless, it would certainly be too late to help.” By this interpretation, the queen’s decision to give up her son to the cardinal would be due to overwhelming fear and despair that cloud her judgment until she no longer understands the danger that Richard poses to her son.

This interpretation is untenable, however, as shown by Elizabeth’s final address to the cardinal at CW15 394/3–396/4, already quoted above. If Elizabeth were so “overwhelmed” by fear and despair that she could no longer grasp the threat that Richard poses, she would not be able to express the danger as clearly as she does in her last words to the cardinal and his companions. Elizabeth’s arguments in this final address are not a mere repetition of those in her earlier speech from CW15 386/9 to 390/25, though they are just as compelling. Rather, she brings forth new arguments from experience (“we have learned by experience how easily the detestable thirst for dominion swallows up any feelings of kinship”) and from proverbial wisdom (“it is a very rash merchant, in most people’s view, who will risk his whole fortune in one ship”). Clearly, Elizabeth’s mind is not too “overwhelmed” by fear and despair to fashion a logically compelling final appeal to the cardinal.

Considering how More structures the scene, with the queen’s internal deliberation situated between her two strongest expressions of the danger Richard poses to her children, I believe we can eliminate the theory that the queen is so overwhelmed by the pressure of sudden

fear and despair that she loses her ability to think rationally and no longer understands the danger that Richard poses to her son. What is the solution, then, to the strange contradiction between Elizabeth's convincing arguments about the danger Richard poses and her decision to release her son to the cardinal? Elizabeth herself emphasizes this contradiction in her final speech to the cardinal when she says, "[T]here could be nothing more hazardous than to entrust both of them to one man, just as it is a very rash merchant, in most people's view, who will risk his whole fortune in one ship. Nevertheless, I give this son into your hands, and in him I also give you his brother . . ." (CW15 394/20–23). By these words, Elizabeth hopes to demonstrate how much trust she has in the cardinal. At the same time, the words help to create a "character puzzle" for readers by showing that Elizabeth is giving up her son despite her clear understanding of the danger.

As we have seen, the long passage describing Elizabeth's internal deliberation (CW15 392/9–394/2) helps to create the character puzzle because it so thoroughly contradicts Elizabeth's words elsewhere. This passage also encourages readers to grapple with the character puzzle because it describes the workings of Elizabeth's mind with psychological subtlety and at unusual length. This gives readers the sense that the puzzle of Elizabeth's character is meant to be solved—that enough information is provided for the reader to figure out why Elizabeth gives up her son. More could have described Elizabeth's deliberations more briefly, perhaps as in the following:

The queen fell silent, deliberating for a long while. It began to enter her mind that her son could not be kept openly in the sanctuary, and so if she was going to send her son away at all, she thought it would be better if she seemed to be giving him up freely instead of unwillingly. (Abbreviated version of CW15 392/9–394/2)

This version of the passage still contradicts Elizabeth's eloquent explanations of why she should not give up her son, but it does not invite the reader to grapple with the problem. It recounts Elizabeth's deliberations at a swift pace, instead of slowing down and describing her thoughts and motives one by one over the course of an entire page. Readers might notice the contradiction between her deliberations and her words, but since the passage is so brief, it would be reasonable

for them to assume that it is something the author wishes to gloss over. In contrast, the slow, measured pace of More's original passage is like a magnifying glass that invites the reader to treat the contradiction as a character puzzle and grapple with it closely.

### 4.3 Solving the Puzzle of Elizabeth's Character

Now that we have explored More's method of creating the character puzzle and bringing it to his readers' attention, it is time to examine why Elizabeth gives up her son. In the last chapter, I explained that More uses the puzzle of Edward's character to teach readers three techniques of character discernment: comparing the character's words and deeds from both the past and the present, comparing what others say about the character with how the character behaves, and considering how people in similar situations have acted in the past. When it comes to understanding Elizabeth's character and why she gives up her son, the first technique is the most useful, namely, comparing her words and deeds from both the past and the present. In her case, we can also compare her words and deeds with her *thoughts*, thanks to the narrator's account of her interior deliberations in CW15 392/9–394/2.<sup>94</sup> The other two techniques of character discernment are also relevant to solving Elizabeth's character puzzle, but to a lesser degree. Therefore, I will base the structure of my argument on the first technique—comparing Elizabeth's words, deeds, and thoughts—and bring in the other techniques when they are relevant.

#### 4.3.1 *Comparing Elizabeth's Words and Deeds from the Past*

A close examination of Elizabeth's words and deeds prior to the critical scene in sanctuary reveals three important characteristics: she is the leader of a faction, she is motivated

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<sup>94</sup> Although the narrator cannot be trusted to convey information in a straightforward manner (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation), I believe More intends the account of Elizabeth's deliberations to be interpreted as accurate glimpses into her mind. (Accurate, that is, as far as their narrative function goes. In a historical sense, More could not have known what Elizabeth was thinking when she faced the cardinal in sanctuary in 1483.) More's narrator does not simply lie; when he seems to convey falsehoods, it is because he is using irony, or speaking in the rhetorical mode of an encomium, or focalizing the point of view of a character. In the case of Elizabeth's deliberations, there is little or no hint of these literary techniques except for focalization, which actually serves to increase our insight into Elizabeth's mind by giving a clearer picture of her thoughts.

by ambition more than by love and family affection, and she relies heavily on the bonds of *fides* forged by personal relationships in order to achieve her goals. I will explore each of these characteristics in detail before moving on to explain how they are relevant to understanding the sanctuary scene.

#### **4.3.1.1 *The Leader of a Faction***

The first thing readers learn about Elizabeth is that she is the leader of a powerful faction in Edward's court and that bitter hatred exists between her and the kindred of the king. The narrator describes the king's relatives as "envying the queen's kindred for all their authority and wealth and being envied for the same things in turn" (CW15 328/12–4). When the narrator recounts the execution of the king's brother George, Duke of Clarence, he suggests that Clarence was actually innocent, but was destroyed by the slander of his enemies:

George, Duke of Clarence, tall and distinguished, might have seemed fortunate in every respect if either his own greed for power had not turned him against his own brother or his enemies' slander had not turned his brother against him. For whether the queen's faction laid a trap for him (for the queen's partisans and the king's kinsmen were bitterest enemies, as women by nature and not out of malice almost always hate those who are dearest to their husbands) or the duke's own insolence made him aspire to the throne, in any case he was indicted for treason, and innocent or guilty, he was condemned by a full parliament to the most grievous punishment. (CW15 322/5–14)

As mentioned in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, More's technique of offering two explanations for Clarence's death is not as objective as it may seem, since readers are more likely to remember and be convinced by the more sinister explanation.

The theory that Clarence was executed unjustly by the contrivance of the queen and her faction is supported by the account of the queen's efforts to have Hastings executed for treason.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> The suggestion that Clarence was executed unjustly is also supported by a classical reference to Seneca's *Phaedra* (also called the *Hippolytus*). This play tells the story of how Phaedra slanders her step-son Hippolytus, telling her husband that Hippolytus raped her. Her husband, Theseus, is convinced by her slander and persuades his father Neptune to punish Hippolytus with death. Theseus weeps when he hears how Hippolytus was dragged to death behind his chariot and exclaims, "For his guilt I desired to kill him, but now he is lost, I weep" (1117). The messenger responds, "A person may not rightfully weep for what he himself desired" (1118). In the notes to CW15, Kinney points out that the narrator's description of Edward weeping after the death of Clarence may be a reference to this passage (CW15 609). It is difficult

At CW15 418/6–11, the narrator describes how Elizabeth’s brother, Lord Rivers, accuses Hastings of “plotting to hand over Calais, of which he was captain, to the French.” This charge is “pure slander (*calumnia*),” the narrator says, “caused by Rivers’ resentment at losing an office to Hastings which he thought had been definitely intended and promised to him.”<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, Hastings is brought into serious danger by Lord Rivers’ accusations and by “the nightly speech of the queen into the king’s ears, which were prejudiced (*preoccupatis*) ahead of time.”<sup>97</sup> This description of the queen’s slander seems to be modeled after the description of slander in Lucian’s discourse *De Calumnia* (Διαβολῆ), the first of Lucian’s works to be translated into Latin and one of the most popular (Thompson 859–60). The relevant excerpt from Lucian’s discourse is provided below in English:

In the first place, if you like, let us bring on the star of the play, I mean the author of the slander. That this person is not a good human being admits of no doubt, I am sure, because no good person would make trouble for his neighbor. . . . Furthermore, that such a person is unjust, lawless, impious and harmful to his associates is easy to see. Who will not admit that fairness in everything and unselfishness are due to justice, unfairness and selfishness to injustice? But when someone plies slander in secret against people who are absent, is he not selfish, inasmuch as he completely appropriates his hearer by getting his ear first (*προκαταλαμβάνων*), stopping it up and making it altogether impervious to the defence because it has been previously filled with slander? Such conduct is indeed the height of injustice. . . .<sup>98</sup>

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to know whether the parallel between the two scenes is accidental or intentional on More’s part, since More does not use similar vocabulary. If the parallel between the two scenes is intentional, the implication would be that Clarence is indeed innocent and that his death is contrived by the queen and her faction, just as Hippolytus’ death is contrived by Phaedra.

<sup>96</sup> *mera esset calumnia / indignante Riuro sibi illum in eo magistrate prelatum / quem velut destinatum ac promissum ipse sperauerat . . .* (CW15 418/6–8).

<sup>97</sup> *nocturna Reginae oratione preoccupatis Regis auribus . . .* (CW15 418/9–10).

<sup>98</sup> Πρῶτον μὲν δὴ, εἰ δοκεῖ, παραγάγωμεν τὸν πρωταγωνιστὴν τοῦ δράματος, λέγω δὲ τὸν ποιητὴν τῆς διαβολῆς. οὗτος δὲ δὴ ὡς μὲν οὐκ ἀγαθὸς ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστὶ, πᾶσιν οἶμαι γνώριμον· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἂν ἀγαθὸς κακῶν αἴτιος γένοιτο τῷ πλησίον . . . Ἐπειτα δὲ ὡς ἄδικος ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ παράνομός ἐστι καὶ ἀσεβὴς καὶ τοῖς χρωμένοις ἐπιζήμιος, ῥάδιον καταμαθεῖν. τίς γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ὁμολογήσειε τὴν μὲν ἰσότητα ἐν ἅπαντι καὶ τὸ μηδὲν πλέον δικαιοσύνης ἔργα εἶναι, τὸ δὲ ἄνισόν τε καὶ πλεονεκτικὸν ἀδικίας; ὁ δὲ τῇ διαβολῇ κατὰ τῶν ἀπόντων λάθρα χρώμενος πῶς οὐ πλεονέκτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν ἀκροατὴν σφετεριζόμενος καὶ προκαταλαμβάνων αὐτοῦ τὰ ὄψα καὶ ἀποφράττων καὶ τῷ δευτέρῳ λόγῳ παντελῶς ἄβαστα κατασκευάζων αὐτὰ ὑπὸ τῆς διαβολῆς προεμπεπλησμένα; ἐσχάτης ἀδικίας τὸ τοιοῦτον. . . . (Lucian, *Slander* 7–8)

More's description of the queen's slander uses some of the same terms and images as Lucian uses in his discourse, in particular, the word *calumnia*, the word *preoccupatis*, and the image of filling the king's ears with slander ahead of time. The word *calumnia* was the standard Renaissance translation for Lucian's term διαβολή, and since it is also the title of Lucian's work in Latin, simply the use of that word could potentially remind More's audience of Lucian's *De Calumnia*. More's description of "the nightly speech of the queen into the king's ears, which were prejudiced (*preoccupatis*) ahead of time" makes the reference to Lucian more explicit. More's use of *praeoccupo* is difficult to translate into English; although Kinney translates it as "to prejudice," the word literally means "to seize upon, to take possession of or occupy beforehand, to preoccupy" ("Praeoccupo"). The meaning, in fact, is the same as that of the Greek προκαταλαμβάνω, which the Liddell-Scott-Jones (LSJ) *A Greek-English Lexicon* defines as "to seize beforehand, occupy in advance."<sup>99</sup> Lucian uses this Greek term to describe how a slanderer "appropriates his hearer by getting his ear first (προκαταλαμβάνων), stopping it up and making it altogether impervious to the defence because it has been previously filled with slander," and More refers to this image when he describes the queen as taking possession (*preoccupatis*) of the king's ears beforehand.

More's reference to Lucian's *De Calumnia* is highly significant to an analysis of the queen's character. Because More portrays the queen as Lucian's paradigmatic slanderer, it is necessary to apply Lucian's severe condemnation of slanderers to the queen: "That this person is not a good human being admits of no doubt, I am sure, because no good person would make trouble for his neighbor. . . . Furthermore, that such a person is unjust, lawless, impious and harmful to his associates is easy to see." Unjust, lawless, impious, not a good human being, and harmful to her associates: these are the characteristics of someone who practices slander as the queen does against Hastings.

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<sup>99</sup> Guarino Guarini and Lapo da Castiglionchio junior, the first two humanists to translate Lucian's *De Calumnia* out of the original Greek, choose to translate προκαταλαμβάνων as "*prius . . . occupat*" and "*praeoccupet*" respectively. The third humanist translator, Francesco Griffolini, prefers "*prior . . . obstruit*." See Ioannis Deligiannis' *Fifteenth-Century Latin Translations of Lucian's Essay on Slander*, 120, 191, 241.

The problems with the queen's participation in faction are emphasized by a classical reference to women who used their influence to create peace instead of encouraging discord. After Richard proposes to the council that they should remove the younger prince from sanctuary against his mother's will, both the cardinal and Buckingham use the phrase "womanly fear" (*muliebrem metum*; CW15 366/4, 6). The cardinal declares that although he does not think they should remove the boy by force, he will attempt the task of persuading the queen "so energetically that it will be quite evident to everyone that the real stumbling block was not my lack of diligence but rather maternal indulgence and womanly fear (*muliebrem . . . metum*)" (CW15 366/2–5). Buckingham responds by exclaiming: "Womanly fear (*Muliebrem metum*)? . . . No; the woman's invincible stubbornness" (CW15 366/6–7). Kinney points out that the phrase *muliebrem metum* could be a reference to Livy's account of the Sabine women in Book 1 and the story of Coriolanus in Book 2 of the *History of Rome* (CW15 615). When telling the story of the Sabine women, Livy uses the term "woman's timidity" (*muliebri pavore*) in the following passage:

Then the Sabine women, whose wrong had given rise to the war, with loosened hair and torn garments, their woman's timidity (*muliebri pavore*) lost in a sense of their misfortune, dared to go amongst the flying missiles, and rushing in from the side, to part the hostile forces and disarm them of their anger, beseeching their fathers on this side, on that their husbands, that fathers-in-law and sons-in-law should not stain themselves with impious bloodshed, nor pollute with parricide the suppliants' children, grandsons to one party and sons to the other. (1.13.1–2)

Significantly, the Sabine women are in a situation parallel to Elizabeth's, since the two factions have been united by marriage against the will of one party (the relatives of the Sabine women in the one case and the relatives of Edward in the other). Both Elizabeth and the Sabine women could have used the words of Edward in his deathbed speech to address the two factions they each faced: "Illustrious gentlemen, my dear kinsmen by blood and by marriage" (CW15 330/16).

The similar phrase *muliebris timor* is used in Book 2 of the *History of Rome* to tell the story of Coriolanus, a Roman general who led the army of the Volsci against Rome in order to take revenge for injuries done him. When Coriolanus had drawn near to Rome, Livy recounts:

Then the married women gathered in large numbers at the house of Veturia, the mother of Coriolanus, and Volumnia, his wife. Whether this was public policy or woman's fear (*muliebris timor*) I cannot find out; in any case they prevailed with them that both Veturia, an aged woman, and Volumnia should take the two little sons of Marcius and go with them to the camp of the enemy; and that, since the swords of the men could not defend the City, the women should defend it with their prayers and tears. (2.40.1–2)

In this case, the women are not described as overcoming their womanly fear in order to make peace between the opposing parties; instead, it is their fear that Coriolanus will attack Rome that prompts them to go to the enemy's camp. The women succeed in averting the attack on Rome, even though Coriolanus had previously scorned the pleas made by deputies of senators and priests.

As explained in the previous chapter of this dissertation, comparing a person's actions to those of historical figures can be a useful technique for discerning character. The examples of the Sabine women and the mother and wife of Coriolanus demonstrate how much better it would have been if Elizabeth had devoted herself to promoting peace between her own relatives and those of her husband instead of encouraging faction by seeking the promotion of her relatives even by means of slander. Unfortunately, the passages from Livy have only a single phrase in common with More's *Historia*, and even that phrase does not appear in the same form, since More uses the word *metus* in place of Livy's *pavore* and *timor*. Thus, although the stories of the Sabine women and the mother and the wife of Coriolanus shed light on Elizabeth's character, it would be difficult to prove that More intends to refer to them.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> This is especially the case given the possibility of a different classical reference, namely, to Seneca's *Medea*. This play recounts how the barbarian witch Medea murders her two sons in order to take revenge on her husband, Jason, for divorcing her to marry another woman. Medea says to herself, "Drive out womanish fears (*femineos metus*). . . . Savage, unheard-of, horrible things, evils fearful to heaven and earth alike, my mind stirs up within me . . ." (42, 45–47). If one had to choose a single classical reference, the reference to Medea would be the most likely one since Richard explicitly compares Elizabeth to Medea at CW15 360/24. However, More is quite capable of evoking multiple classical allusions with a single phrase. Also, the prominent role given to women in the *Historia* (Elizabeth, Edward's mother, and Shore's wife) suggests that More was reflecting on the role of women and of marriage in public life, a theme which would naturally bring the examples of the Sabine women and the mother and wife of Coriolanus to his classically trained mind.

It is easier to recognize the intention of the narrator behind the portrayal of Shore's wife. Shore's wife is a minor character in the *Historia*, merely the one-time mistress of Edward, but her character provides a powerful contrast to the ambitious, factious behavior of Elizabeth and the nobles. More's narrator explains:

Indeed, this little woman—for it would be a crime to slander the devil—was so far from abusing the prince's favor to hurt anyone that she actually helped many people. For she frequently soothed the king's temper, won indulgence for enemies and pardon for offenders, and finally assisted many people in their great transactions, usually for no reward or a token one, something worth having for its appearance instead of its price, whether she considered her actions their own reward, or she wanted to show by good deeds how much power she had over the prince or whether a girl reveling in her present good fortune and having small thought for the future felt no greed for gold. She was certainly so far from being resented that (with the sole exception of the queen) the two factions, who hated each other, both loved her alike; she was little inferior in authority and influence to any of those who at various periods had great power with their princes but who are known to posterity only for their crimes. . . . (CW15 428/22–430/6)

Shore's wife, in fact, has the makings of an excellent queen, since she uses her authority and influence for good and promotes unity and peace instead of faction. Instead of speaking slander into the king's ear in order to achieve the unjust execution of her enemies, Shore's wife "frequently soothed the king's temper, won indulgence for enemies and pardon for offenders" (CW15 428/24–26). It is typical of More's irony that he reveals Elizabeth's faults by means of the contrast between her and one of Edward's mistresses!<sup>101</sup>

#### ***4.3.1.2 Driven by Ambition, not Love***

What character trait motivates Elizabeth's involvement in faction—involvement that goes so far that she speaks slander into the king's ears, acting (in Lucian's words) as someone unjust, lawless, impious, and harmful to her associates? The driving force between the factions in the English court is identified by Edward in his deathbed speech. Edward attributes the two parties' factious behavior to "pride and the lust for supremacy," which he calls an "odious monster":

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<sup>101</sup> James L. Harner argues from the opposite point of view, writing that the portrait of Shore's wife "reinforces the queen's appeal as a pathetic heroine" because "Elizabeth Woodville's virtuous denial of Edward" contrasts with the "ready submission" of Shore's wife (73–4). A close analysis of the courtship scene between Elizabeth and Edward shows that Elizabeth denies Edward's lust not out of virtue but out of ambition. This is especially clear in the more extensive, Latin version of the scene.

Such an odious monster is pride and the lust for supremacy; and once it has crept into illustrious noblemen's hearts, it never ceases to creep forth in contentiousness until it has drenched all in slaughter and bloodshed, as every man tries first of all to be next to the greatest, then to equal him, and at last to excel and surpass him. Would that God would as readily forget as we personally remember what a great conflagration this wicked ardor for glory has ignited and how much slaughter it has provoked in this kingdom within these last few years. . . . (CW15 334/14–22)

Even though the queen is not mentioned by name as one of the auditors of Edward's address, Edward's description of how the factious parties are driven by "pride and the lust for supremacy" must be applied to the queen as much as to the other nobles. Her role in slandering Hastings shows she is deeply involved in the factious behavior of her kin, whether Edward saw fit to summon her to his deathbed oration or not. Furthermore, Edward's account of the factions' behavior is an appropriate description of the queen's slander of Hastings: "For a hostile witness often makes something innocently done appear sinister or a prejudiced hearer makes a minor offense into a major one" (CW15 332/20–22). In light of Edward's description of the role which "pride and the lust for supremacy" has played in the fomenting of faction, it is necessary to conclude that one of Elizabeth's main character traits is "pride and the lust for supremacy"—or to speak less poetically, pride and ambition.

In keeping with his desire to give readers an opportunity to practice their skills of discerning character, More provides readers with several opportunities to verify Edward's words about "pride and the lust for supremacy" by comparing them with Elizabeth's actual behavior. Significantly, these scenes are scattered throughout the *Historia*, forcing readers to make a comprehensive study of her words and deeds throughout the entire text. This imitates real-world conditions for discerning character, since information about a character's previous actions is frequently difficult to obtain.<sup>102</sup> In fact, the scenes in which Elizabeth appears are so out of order that the scene that comes first chronologically is actually the last to be recounted. This scene is the interview with Edward VI that leads to his proposal of marriage (CW15 436/10–448/16). The scene begins:

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<sup>102</sup> Resumes and CVs make a pretense of providing this information, but like the encomium of Edward at the beginning of the *Historia*, they have to be read with a keen eye for bias.

Consequently [Grey's] wife, as I said, after the loss of her husband, the defeat and imprisonment of Henry, and the forfeiture of her own property (for it had been confiscated for Edward because her husband had stood and fallen with Edward's opponents, since on either side the losers are called traitors), went to Edward in mourning attire as a suppliant and threw herself down at his feet, and then when she perceived he had turned to her and stopped, seeming ready to listen, she explained her case verbally and added a plea that by his command some estates which produced little income and which she had been given as a jointure long before by her husband should be given back to her, since what had already become her own property could not be rendered forfeit by any misdeed of her husband, even it were conceded that it was a crime to remain true until death to the king to whom he had sworn fealty, whereas he would rightly have been no less faithful to the new king if the fates had preserved him until one had been chosen by a victory. (CW15 436/21–438/6)

In the scene above, Elizabeth Grey is portrayed as a superlative actress who knows how to use her skills to obtain what she wants. More's description suggests a woman with a supreme sense of timing who understands exactly when to move from a display of humility to rational arguments.

Elizabeth's control of the situation, and her ambition, are even more clear when Edward asks her for her virtue—"a certain trifle" (*paululum . . . quiddam*)—in exchange for her estates (CW15 438/14). More explains:

As long as the king's ambivalent language permitted, she pretended not to know what he wanted, answering everything politely and cautiously, promising to do anything within the bounds of her honor. But when he propositioned her outright without mincing words for dishonor, only then did she openly resist, and yet tempered her speech in a way which inflamed his desire; and when she saw it was burning too hot to be easily quenched, citing as her excuse now the scandal and now guilty conscience, she begged him to stop urging in vain, for though she was by no means so vain as to think herself worthy of being his wife, neither was she so base that she thought she deserved nothing better than to be made the plaything of his wicked wantonness. To the king, who was not at all used to being held off so stubbornly, that new constancy of hers appeared marvelous. Indeed, setting such chastity conjoined with such beauty on par with the greatest of riches and letting his love guide his actions, he quickly decided to marry her. . . . (CW15 438/14–440/4)

In this scene, Elizabeth refuses Edward's attempts to seduce her precisely in order to increase his desire. Conscious of her power as a beautiful and eloquent woman and aspiring to a royal marriage, Elizabeth manipulates Edward's passions so skillfully in this interview that she succeeds in seducing her would-be seducer. (Of course, she does not literally seduce Edward, but

his relatives and friends probably view her success in arranging a royal marriage for herself as worse than a seduction.)

Besides demonstrating her ability to act a part, the scene of Elizabeth's interview with Edward also reveals her ambition. She married her first husband out of obedience to Queen Margaret's wishes, and now she shows little loyalty to her late husband when she perceives that Edward is attracted to her (CW15 436/13–5). Even though Edward is the leader of the Yorkist party, which indirectly caused her husband's death by instigating civil war, she immediately grasps at the opportunity to marry him. Elizabeth has some justification since she is in a difficult situation after the death of her first husband, but More emphasizes her surprising willingness to sleep with her enemy; when describing her marriage, the narrator comments, "[T]he king wedded Elizabeth Grey and took her as his queen who was lately the wife of his enemy and had frequently prayed for his downfall" (CW15 446/25–448/2). More further conveys the inappropriateness of Elizabeth's marriage to Edward by constructing the interview between Elizabeth and the king to resemble the scene in Livy in which Sophonisba seduces Masinissa, an ally of the Romans. As explained in the previous chapter of this dissertation, Masinissa has captured the city of Cirta and its king Syphax. The wife of Syphax, Sophonisba, seduces Masinissa while pretending to be a suppliant. Livy observes that Sophonisba "met him at the very threshold" of the palace, "clasped his knees," and begged him to save her from the Romans by any means, even by death. Livy explains:

[W]hile she was clasping now his knees and now his right hand, begging for his promise not to surrender her to any Roman, and her words were now more nearly those of a charmer than of a suppliant, the heart of the victor was quickly moved not to pity only, but with the amorous susceptibility of the Numidian race the victor was captivated by love of the captive. (30.12.17–8)

Livy notes that "the marriage" between Masinissa and Sophonisba was "hastily celebrated, almost on the battlefield . . . and by such precipitate haste that on the very day on which he saw her as a captured enemy he took her to wife and performed the nuptial rites before the household gods of his foe" (30.14.2).<sup>103</sup> The comparison with Sophonisba emphasizes Elizabeth's

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<sup>103</sup> In Chapter 13 of Book 30, Livy recounts that Sophonisba's first husband, Syphax,

overreadiness to marry her husband's enemy, because Sophonisba seduces and marries Masinissa on the very day she learns that he has captured her husband and taken the city, while her husband is still a living prisoner.

The scene between Elizabeth and Edward demonstrates that Elizabeth's ambition is a more powerful motivation than affection or loyalty to her husband. More's account of the event makes it clear that Elizabeth feels no love or affection for Edward. Even respect for him as a good man must be out of the question, since who can respect a person one is successfully manipulating? Rather, Elizabeth marries him for advantage, just as she probably married Grey for advantage, obeying the wishes of Queen Margaret. Of course, there is nothing intrinsically immoral about marrying without affection, though modern sensibilities, influenced by romantic fiction and film, might say otherwise. Thomas More himself married Dame Alice only a month after his first wife died, "more to have someone to look after his household than for his own pleasure, for she was neither beautiful nor in her first youth . . . but a capable and a watchful housewife," as Erasmus explained in a letter describing More to a fellow humanist (More, *Essential Works* 1372). The fact that Elizabeth's marriage to Edward was motivated by ambition instead of affection is significant not because marriage without affection is immoral, but because it is the first in a series of scenes that show Elizabeth putting ambition ahead of affection.

The next instance in which Elizabeth puts ambition ahead of affection occurs when she allows the crown prince to be sent to Wales. In her debate with the cardinal, Elizabeth asserts

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accuses her of persuading him to renounce his alliance with the Romans and side with the Carthaginians instead. Syphax tells Scipio, the Roman general and his former ally, "The time when he lost his reason [by betraying his alliance with the Romans], when he put out of his head all private guest-friendships and public treaties, was when he admitted a noble Carthaginian lady to his house. From those nuptial torches his palace had taken fire; that baneful fury by all her blandishments had unbalanced and unhinged his mind, and she had never rested until with her own hands she had herself put on him guilt-stained arms against a guest-friend and a personal friend [Scipio]" (30.13.11–2). The applicability of these words to Elizabeth is disturbing since her "blandishments" do indeed create division between Edward and his ally Warwick and bring about a renewal of civil war. In the long term, her marriage with Edward and her participation in faction also create the conditions for Richard to usurp the kingdom and slay the male heirs of Edward; in a metaphorical sense, the nuptial torches of Elizabeth's marriage to Edward do consume the house of the Yorkist party and lead directly to the Tudor dynasty.

that when the crown prince was sent to live in Wales, she approved of it “not very much” (*Non admodum*; CW15 382/3). The narrator explains that the prince was sent to Wales at an early age<sup>104</sup> “so that the authority of the prince’s presence would check the audacity of the wrongdoers” (CW15 338/2–3). The idea that a little boy could curb “evil men” who were “freely and safely engaging in robbery and murder” simply by the authority of his presence is close to absurd (CW15 338/1). Given the danger posed to the prince by the wildness of the country, one would not expect his mother to give her approval to such a plan. Considering that Elizabeth is a woman of superlative rhetorical abilities, it seems strange that she did not convince Edward to keep the prince in London. Instead, Elizabeth approved of the plan (even if “not very much”) and turned it into an opportunity to advance her own party. Through Elizabeth’s efforts, her brother was made the young prince’s governor and his counselors are “all the prince’s closest relatives on his mother’s side” (CW15 338/6–7). The narrator explains that “[t]his arrangement of the queen’s” was “intended to strengthen her faction’s position from the earliest years of the prince” (CW15 338/8–9).

Significantly, the Latin text suggests that Elizabeth was the original instigator of the plan to send the prince to Wales, instead of just turning someone else’s plan to her own advantage. When the narrator explains that Elizabeth intended “[t]his arrangement” (*[e]am rem*) in order to strengthen the position of her faction, it is not clear whether the phrase *eam rem* refers only to the placement of her kin as the prince’s counselors or whether it also refers to the plan to send the prince to Wales in the first place. When the cardinal uses the same words, *eam rem*, at CW15 382/1, he is referring to the plan to send the prince to Wales. The cardinal says, “[W]hen your own dearest son, the heir-apparent, was about to set off for Wales . . . I remember that this thing (*eam rem*) was done according to your singular prudence and with you yourself approving it.”<sup>105</sup> In this passage, the phrase “according to your singular prudence” implies that the entire plan was devised by Elizabeth. If so, it would be another example of Elizabeth’s ambition proving itself a

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<sup>104</sup> In fact, the prince was sent to Wales when he was only three years old.

<sup>105</sup> *quum olim charissimus filius tuus tunc designatus rex profecturus esset in Valliam . . . memini eam rem pro egregia prudentia tua te quoque ipsa approbante fieri* (CW15 380/27–382/2).

stronger motivation than affection, even her affection for her young son.

The next passage in which Queen Elizabeth's ambition is emphasized begins at CW15 350/16. In this case, her ambition is not to achieve a higher position or greater wealth, but to preserve her wealth from destruction insofar as possible. When Elizabeth learns that Richard and Buckingham have arrested her kinsmen and kidnapped the prince, she responds by immediately rushing herself and her household into sanctuary. Once there, her main priority seems to be having as many of her possessions as possible carried into sanctuary with her. More emphasizes this fact by describing in great detail the hustle and bustle of transferring her possessions into sanctuary, a process which even involves breaking through the walls to create shortcuts (CW15 352/19–24). Although More goes out of his way to paint a pathetic picture of the queen, describing her as "sitting on the ground alone, sad and dazed, wringing her hands and lamenting her own and her family's misfortune,"<sup>106</sup> her frightened children are strangely absent from the scene. Could this indicate that protecting her possessions is more instinctive and natural to Elizabeth than comforting her children? This might seem an unmerited suspicion if it were not for More's allusion to the Book of Lamentations. The narrator's description, of Elizabeth as "sitting (*sedentem*) on the ground alone (*solam*), sad and dazed, wringing her hands and lamenting (*complorantem*) her own and her family's misfortune," is almost certainly a reference to the Book of Lamentations, in which the city of Jerusalem is personified as a widow mourning for her children (CW15 352/26–8). Notice the identical vocabulary in the following verses, translated from the Latin Vulgate:

How doth the city sit (*sedet*) solitary (*sola*) that was full of people? How is the mistress of nations become as a widow, the princess of provinces made tributary? Weeping she hath wept (*plorans ploravit*) in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. . . . Her children are led into captivity before the face of the oppressor. . . . The enemy hath put out his hand to all her desirable things, for she hath seen the Gentiles enter into her sanctuary. . . . Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water, because the comforter, the relief of my soul, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy hath prevailed. (Lam 1:1–2, 5, 10, 16)

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<sup>106</sup> *Reginam videt humi sedentem / solam / tristem atque attonitam / complicatis digitis suam suorumque fortunam complorantem* (CW15 352/26–28).

The comparison of Elizabeth to the mourning city of Jerusalem is apt, since she has indeed “become as a widow” and since her enemy does threaten to “enter into her sanctuary.” More enforces the comparison by using virtually the same Latin words to describe Elizabeth: “sitting” (*sedentem*), “alone” (*solam*), “lamenting” (*complorantem*) in the *Historia* and “sit” (*sedit*), “solitary” (*sola*), “Weeping” (*plorans ploravit*) in Lamentations 1:1–2.

Note that the personified city of Jerusalem weeps primarily for her children,<sup>107</sup> but Elizabeth’s children are not even mentioned, although they must have been present. It is true that Elizabeth is said to lament “her own and her family’s misfortune,” but does this indicate dismay that her children’s lives are in danger or regret that her family’s rise in power has been arrested? The fact that the archbishop attempts to comfort her by giving her the seal and promising that if her enemies “anoint anyone to be king but that son of yours whom they have with them, the next day we will crown this other one whom you have here with you” implies that she is more concerned about the political position of her family than for the safety of individual children (CW15 354/6–8). Once again, Elizabeth is portrayed as motivated primarily by ambition, not affection.

#### **4.3.1.3 Overreliance on Fides**

Elizabeth’s third important characteristic relates to the tactics she uses to achieve her ambitions. As she is portrayed in the *Historia*, she advances her faction almost entirely by manipulating the bonds of *fides* created by personal relationships. *Fides* is an important term in the *Historia*, occurring a total of 40 times.<sup>108</sup> In *On Duties*, Cicero defines *fides* as “truth and fidelity to promises and agreements” (1.23). Cicero explains the importance of *bona fides*, “good

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<sup>107</sup> It is true that verse 10 describes how Jerusalem’s enemy has “put out his hand to all her desirable things,” but in the context, the reference is not to ordinary wealth but to the sacred vessels of the Temple, which had symbolic significance as well as monetary value. The fate of the children of Jerusalem is emphasized even more in the second chapter of Lamentations, in which the sacred writer describes how “the children and the sucklings” perished from hunger and were eaten by their mothers, so terrible was the famine within the city (Lam. 2:11–12, 19–20, 22).

<sup>108</sup> Of these instances, 16 occur in the context of the debate over sanctuary: CW15 362/24, 364/7, 366/21, 368/1, 374/3, 378/14, 392/1, 392/4, 392/7, 392/8, 392/24, 394/1, 394/5, 394/24, 394/26, 396/2.

faith,” in all kinds of social relationships: “it was employed in trusteeships and partnerships, in trusts and commissions, in buying and selling, in hiring and letting—in a word, in all the transactions on which the social relations of daily life depend” (3.70). In the *Historia*, the word *fides* is used to speak of trustworthiness and loyalty in a wide variety of relationships: between servant and master, between political allies, between family members, between client and benefactor, between friend and friend, between citizens and king, between husband and wife, and between judge and citizens.<sup>109</sup> In short, *fides* is an essential quality in every kind of relationship in a healthy society.

The scenes described in the *Historia* reveal that Elizabeth’s political life has been spent courting friendship with people in power. The bonds of *fides* created by personal relationships have been her weapons in opposition to the king’s kin. This is not surprising, since she and her relatives cannot rival their enemies in strength of arms. In fact, one of the arguments that Richard’s intermediaries use to persuade the queen to restrict the crown prince’s escort is to remind her of the extent of her enemies’ military resources. They point out that her enemies’ “resources” are “vast” and that the damage caused by a military conflict might very well fall mainly on her relatives, “the very group she most desired to protect” (CW15 342/21–22, 24). Although expressed diplomatically, the implication of these words is that the queen’s faction is weaker in terms of military strength and would be likely to suffer a defeat if the feud came to a test of arms. This is only to be expected, since noblemen like Richard and Buckingham have long possessed wealthy estates and can arm many men. The queen and her relatives, in contrast, have attained prominence comparatively recently.

Furthermore, outside the circle of her own relations, no other members of the queen’s faction are mentioned by name except for members of the clergy. The archbishop of York delivers the seal to her as an expression of his *fides*, and the cardinal is said to “comman[d] some affection and trust (*fidei*) from the queen” (CW15 354/6, 362/24). During the fatal council at

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<sup>109</sup> CW15 338/14; CW15 354/6, 362/24; CW15 374/3; CW15 404/1; CW15 426/13; CW15 438/4, 464/9; CW15 442/14, 446/14, 446/20; CW15 458/10

which Hastings is arrested, the archbishop of York and the bishop of Ely are both imprisoned, along with the earl of Derby and other, unnamed nobles. The earl of Derby is a close friend of Hastings, and therefore he is probably not a member of the queen's faction but is simply too faithful to Edward's children to suit Richard's purposes. The bishop of Ely, on the other hand, might well be one of those who "favor" the queen and are therefore "transfixed with extreme terror" when Richard accuses the queen of plotting to kill him.<sup>110</sup> It is not surprising that the queen would find allies among the clergy, since they would be more likely to show respect for the bonds formed by the sacrament of matrimony.<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately for her, though, the clergy would not have great military strength to oppose to that of Richard and Buckingham.

It is not in strength of arms that the queen can rival her opponents, but in personal influence with the king and other members of the court. The queen is an expert at developing relationships with people in power and then using those relationships to forward her ambitions. The primary example of this is her success in encouraging Edward's attraction for her until he proposes marriage. She approaches Edward in mourning attire to court favor with him as a suppliant, and when she discovers that Edward is attracted to her, she manipulates his attraction to achieve a royal marriage. Once they are married, Elizabeth continues to use her relationship with Edward as a tool for advancing her ambitions. When Hastings is accused of treason, the queen prejudices Edward ahead of time by whispering slander into his ears every night (CW15 418/9–10). She may have employed these same techniques to have Clarence executed, although the narrator says it is possible Clarence was executed justly (CW15 322/6–14). Richard testifies to the effectiveness of Elizabeth's tactics when he describes them to the faction of the king's kin:

"I think you remember," he said, "how [Edward], though ripe in both age and experience, was easily swayed at the urging and whim of [the queen's] faction, far more easily than was compatible with his own honor or anyone's interests besides the immoderate

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<sup>110</sup> *cui qui fauebant ad eam vocem miro pauore defigebantur* (CW15 408/15)

<sup>111</sup> Consider Edward's exhortation on his deathbed: "one of these factions is my kindred by blood and the other my kindred by marriage, and that you yourselves are related by ties either of blood or of marital affinity; and if we took Christ's precepts as seriously as Christian men ought to (and would that we did), the latter bond, joined by the sacrament of marriage, would certainly be no less effective in joining men's hearts than an actual blood-tie . . ." (CW15 334/2–8).

[advancement] of those who were as eager to hurt us as to benefit themselves. And so if the personal influence of some of our number had not carried more weight with the king than any considerations of kinship, they might quite easily have trapped and destroyed some of us, every bit as easily as they destroyed someone else just as closely related to the king [i.e., Clarence]. And yet with heaven's help we have lived through that danger; yet an even greater one is in store for us if we let the [young] king's affections be steered in whichever direction seems best to our enemies, who would have little trouble producing an order for our destruction even without the king's knowledge unless God or your vigilance ensures that their malice recoils on them." . . . With these words and letters, and others like them, he greatly inflamed people already smoldering, two of them in particular: Edward, Duke of Buckingham, and Richard Hastings. (CW15 338/26–340/24)

Notice that Richard does not refer to the queen's faction as being a threat through force of arms. Instead, he focuses on the danger of the queen and her faction using their relationships with the young king to manipulate him for their own purposes. This line of argument would especially awaken fear in Hastings' breast, since the queen's slander nearly resulted in Hastings being "trapped and destroyed" like Clarence.

Although Richard has no regard for the truth, his description of the queen's tactics in this passage is largely confirmed by other passages in the *Historia*. The narrator explains that the queen purposely surrounds the crown prince with "all the prince's closest relatives on his mother's side" in order to "strengthen her faction's position from the earliest years of the prince" (CW15 338/6–9). In light of this, it is not unreasonable for men like Buckingham and Hastings to fear that the queen's kin will attempt to "augment their own power by lavishing indulgence and favors on a boy prince who was naturally accommodating, gullible on account of his age, and too susceptible to the slanders of backbiters" (CW15 338/22–25). Even Edward's deathbed speech confirms Richard's claim that the queen's relatives will attempt to advance their own party by spoiling the prince with flattery and indulgence. Describing the dangers of flattery, Edward says, "[W]hen everyone tries to ingratiate his own faction with the prince, the result is that his favor, more than truth and expediency, determines how people advise him" (CW15 332/9–11). Edward addresses his deathbed speech to both factions equally, but since flattery is an example of the manipulation of personal relationships, it is especially relevant to the queen.

The queen is largely successful in advancing her faction's position and influence through personal relationships, but too much reliance on personal relationships can also be a weakness. This is especially the case during a time when it is difficult to "tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear" (CW15 398/19–20). Twice Richard persuades Elizabeth to do what he wants by presenting his argument through intermediaries who possess her trust (*fides*). The most important instance is when Richard sends the cardinal to persuade her to allow her son to leave sanctuary; Richard chooses the cardinal because he commands "some affection and trust (*fidei*) from the queen" (CW15 362/24). Well before the crucial debate over sanctuary, however, Richard persuades the queen to send only a small escort with the prince by communicating his argument through "suitable intermediaries" (CW15 342/11). The qualification that makes these intermediaries "suitable" is almost certainly that they are trusted by the queen. Besides reminding the queen of her opponents' military strength (as discussed above), Richard's "suitable intermediaries" lay a surprising amount of stress upon what others will think of her: "the whole cost of the conflict . . . would be blamed by everyone wholly on her friends, who would be charged with disrupting the commonwealth for the sake of a private feud and unjustly destroying the accord that her own dying husband was responsible for ratifying" (CW15 342/23–344/1). The messengers' emphasis upon what others will think of her implies that Elizabeth is very concerned about her reputation, a fact that is not surprising since she depends so heavily on relationships with others. Relationships are based upon mutual *fides*, or trust, and a general belief that Elizabeth "unjustly destroy[ed] the accord that her own dying husband was responsible for ratifying" would injure her reputation and undermine trust between herself and her political allies (CW15 342/27–344/1). The desire to maintain good relationships with her political allies might explain why she allows the chancellor to take back the seal he had delivered to her as a pledge of his *fides* (CW15 354/10, 25–27). She would rather relinquish the seal than risk weakening her alliance with the chancellor by implying that she mistrusts him.

Although I have argued that Elizabeth relies too much on the bonds of *fides* forged by personal relationships, I do not mean to imply that she should have devoted more of her energies

to developing a military force. Besides military might and personal alliances with people in power, there are at least two other political tools depicted in the *Historia*: the power of popular opinion and the authority of law. Richard is aware of how powerful these two tools can be and does his utmost to curry favor with the public<sup>112</sup> and with the colleges of English law.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately the queen does not seem to recognize or value these tools.<sup>114</sup>

#### ***4.3.2 Comparing Elizabeth's Thoughts, Words, and Deeds in the Sanctuary Debate***

Now that we have compared the queen's words and deeds in the rest of the *Historia*, it is time to examine her thoughts, words, and deeds during her debate with the cardinal over sanctuary. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the queen should have taken a diplomatic approach and pretended to agree with Richard's request while asking for a delay because of her son's illness. Considering Elizabeth's rhetorical abilities, this seems like a natural strategy for her to utilize, and indeed, her first words to the cardinal are quite diplomatic. She begins by calling the cardinal "[r]everend father" and declaring that she agrees "that what you are proposing would be very desirable for my son, that is, spending all his time with the king and enjoying life together with his brother" (CW15 378/22–24). Elizabeth then briefly suggests that both boys should stay with her in sanctuary so they can benefit from her motherly care (CW15 378/24–27). Since she knows this suggestion will not be considered, she concludes by using the younger boy's illness as an excuse for why she will not allow him to leave sanctuary (CW15 378/28–380/13).

The cardinal responds by agreeing with her that no one is more fitting than herself to care for her sons, so long as she agrees to live outside of sanctuary (CW15 380/14–20). He reminds her that it is not always necessary for a child to be raised by his mother, as shown by the fact that she allowed her eldest son to be raised in Wales (CW15 380/25–29). The cardinal

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<sup>112</sup> CW15 356/25–358/14, 454/13–472/22, 484/8–16

<sup>113</sup> CW15 484/4–8

<sup>114</sup> She appeals to the law several times in her speech to the cardinal, but she never considers putting the law into action. When the narrator describes what goes through her mind during her long silence before giving up her son to the cardinal, it does not include any mention of calling for representatives of the law to protect her or starting a legal battle to get her son back.

concludes, “I remember that this thing was done according to your singular prudence and with you yourself approving it” (CW15 382/1–2). For some reason, the cardinal’s reference to how she allowed the crown prince to be raised in Wales disrupts Elizabeth’s poise. Elizabeth might be annoyed at receiving such a strong rebuttal from someone she believes is loyal to her faction.<sup>115</sup> The cardinal’s response is certainly apt and undermines any further arguments she might have considered making about how children should not be separated from their mothers. She might also dislike being reminded how badly the plan to send the prince to Wales turned out, since it gave Richard the opportunity to seize control. The cardinal refers to her “singular prudence,” but it was also her prudence that resulted in the prince being brought back to London without an armed escort.

Regardless of why the cardinal’s reply disturbs her poise, Elizabeth’s second address to the cardinal is much less diplomatic than the first. She responds to his claim that she approved of the crown prince’s stay in Wales with the words “not very much,” and briefly declares that the cases of her elder son and her younger son are unlike since her younger son is currently in weak health (CW15 382/3). Although this reply has some validity, it is undermined by the fact that the crown prince, like all children, must have been sick many times during the ten years he lived in Wales. Her awareness that the crown prince would go through many childhood illnesses did not prevent her from entrusting him to the care of others. Perhaps this is why Elizabeth does not elaborate further on her younger son’s ill health or repeat that she cannot entrust him to anyone else’s care. Instead, she changes the subject and begins to speak more harshly about Richard. She says that Richard misrepresents her with “sinister language” and attacks her “devoted concern

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<sup>115</sup> That the cardinal was loyal to the queen’s faction in the past is shown by Richard’s description of him as someone who “commands some affection and trust from the queen” (CW15 362/24). This is verified by the description of Elizabeth’s thoughts when she is deciding whether or not to release her son from sanctuary: “Besides, the cardinal possessed a mind which had been sufficiently tested [by her], and the loyalty of several of the nobles in his escort was not less verified, and though she feared that they might be deceived, she had persuaded herself they were not able to be corrupted.” *Preterea Cardinalis animum satis exploratum habuit / nec minus compertam nobilium aliquorum qui simul venerant fidem / quos vt verebatur ne falli possent / ita sibi persuaserat non potuisse corrumpi* (CW15 392/22–25).

for [her] son” (CW15 382/12–13). She points out how inconsistent Richard is since “the same man who pretends that everything I have is quite safe is unwilling to let me keep even my son, and the same man who maintains I am safe anywhere will not leave me in peace even where robbers find safety” (CW15 382/18–21). She ends by declaring that she will not allow her son to be separated from her and that she will not leave sanctuary and cast herself into danger after her remaining kinsmen, “[f]or I would much rather that they were here with me in safety than that I were out there with them in the same mortal danger” (CW15 382/30–31).

If Elizabeth were anyone else, it would not be surprising that she starts to lose her temper as she discusses Richard’s behavior. Elizabeth certainly has grounds for anger, but her behavior in other parts of the *Historia* shows that she is a consummate actress and quite capable of controlling her emotions when she believes it is in her best interest. Consider how skillfully she moderates her behavior during her fateful first interview with Edward. The fact that he indirectly caused the death of her husband and has confiscated her property does not provoke her to anger; she is far too prudent to miss a chance of bettering her situation by losing her temper. So why does she allow herself to lose her temper during her debate with the cardinal, instead of taking a diplomatic approach and asking for a delay? The most likely reason is that she is overconfident and does not yet realize the gravity of the threat. At this point in her conversation with the cardinal, she has no idea that Richard has threatened to remove her son by force. The narrator describes her as “carefree, thinking about nothing less than force being brought into the sanctuary” (CW15 392/16–17). Since this is the case, she has no motive to pretend to agree and ask for a delay instead of simply giving the cardinal a flat refusal. After all, she has kept a son safe in sanctuary before; why should she think the current occasion is any different (CW15 388/28–390/10)?

Unfortunately, the queen’s angry accusations against Richard alienate the cardinal. He has been loyal to her faction in the past, which is why Richard selects him to talk to her; Richard says the cardinal “commands some affection and trust from the queen” (CW15 362/24). This means that, politically, the cardinal is in an extremely precarious position right now. Despite his association with the queen in the past, the cardinal wants to prove his loyalty to the new

administration; notice how eagerly he tells Richard that if he fails to persuade the queen to release her son, it will not be for want of trying (CW15 366/1–5). If the cardinal listens to the queen’s reasonable arguments about the boy’s health and about the legal status of sanctuary, he will give the impression that he is also convinced by her accusations against Richard. This is something he wants to avoid at all costs, since their conversation is taking place in front of a variety of witnesses, including nobles loyal to Richard. If the queen had been more diplomatic and only spoken politely about the Protector (as she does at first), the cardinal would have been able to listen to her arguments without compromising his own position.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, instead of continuing on a diplomatic tack, the queen becomes more and more angry.

That the queen’s anger makes the cardinal extremely uncomfortable is shown by his response when one of the nobles asks the queen if she knows why danger ought to threaten any of her relatives. After the queen’s angry and sarcastic reply, the cardinal gestures to the noble to be silent: “Then the cardinal, first nodding a warning to that loose-tongued fellow that he should be quiet and stop harping on that jangling chord, promptly comforted the queen about her friends’ misfortune . . .” (CW15 384/7–9). As explained in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, this sentence is focalized through the cardinal, which means that the adjective “loose-tongued” and the metaphor “stop harping on that jangling chord” express the cardinal’s point of view. The fact that the cardinal considers the noble “loose-tongued” and characterizes his inquiry as harping on a jangling chord shows that the cardinal is not interested in understanding the queen’s concerns or determining the truth of her relatives’ guilt. Rather, his main concern is to remove the prince from sanctuary, since this will prove his loyalty to the new administration and will prevent Richard from bringing force into sanctuary. Even if he fails in his goal of obtaining the prince, the cardinal is determined at the very least to avoid compromising himself irrevocably by appearing to believe the queen’s accusations against Richard.

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<sup>116</sup> It is possible that the cardinal would even have agreed to defend her son’s right to sanctuary. Note that when the cardinal addresses the queen to explain Buckingham’s argument that the prince is not able to claim sanctuary, he is careful not to say whether he agrees with the argument or not: “Some deny that you even have the right to keep his brother apart from the king . . .” (CW15 384/27–8).

After the cardinal has gestured to the noble to be quiet, he informs the queen that the Protector has threatened to invade the sanctuary with force (CW15 386/4–5). He explains the Protector’s argument that this will not break sanctuary since the boy is not eligible for sanctuary (CW15 384/27–386/3). The queen responds with an eloquent, lengthy, and extremely angry speech in which she thoroughly refutes the Protector’s arguments (CW15 386/9–390/5). Unfortunately, she does not adapt her rhetoric to her audience. Her arguments about why it is dangerous to put her son in the hands of Richard are objectively convincing, but in the circumstances they simply alienate the cardinal further by increasing the awkwardness of his situation. Surrounded as he is by nobles loyal to Richard, the cardinal does not dare to show agreement with any part of the queen’s speech lest he seem to agree with her accusations against Richard. The narrator explains:

When the cardinal saw that his long arguments were getting him nowhere and that she was growing more and more heated, using harsher expressions the longer she argued and grimly assailing the Protector’s good faith, which the cardinal did not like to hear questioned because he believed it was genuine, he finally responded that he was not going to debate the matter any longer; if she wanted to entrust the boy to them, they would bind their good faith for his safety, but if she was determined to keep him, they would leave right away without saying another word about it, since she seemed to doubt either their prudence or good faith in the matter, their prudence if she thought they were dupes of another man’s perfidy, their good faith if she thought they were knowing accessories.<sup>117</sup>

This passage is crucial for understanding the queen’s motives because it is “upon these words” by the cardinal that the queen falls silent, “deliberating for a long while” (CW15 392/9). The queen realizes that the cardinal is threatening to leave her to the mercy of Richard’s henchmen, “[s]ince it seemed that the cardinal was more bent on leaving than some of his escort and since the Protector himself was on hand in the palace with a band of retainers” (CW15 392/9–12).

Notice what the narrator says at this point: “*it began to enter her mind* that her son could not be

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<sup>117</sup> *Cardinalis vbi vidit sese multum vrgendo nihil promouere / sed illam / magis magisque incensam / posteriora quaeque duriora iacere / tristibusque verbis fidem Protectoris inuadere / quam ille / quum integram crederet / grauatim audit insimulari / denique respondit haud diutius rem disputaturum: si Regina puerum vellet credere / fidem ipsos suam in eius incolumitatem obstricturos / sin retinere certum esset / discessuros illico / nec verbum addituros amplius in ea re in qua vel prudentiam eorum suspectam illa / vel fidem habeat / prudentiam si alienae perfidiae creduli / fidem si prudentes ministri putarentur* (CW15 390/26–392/8).

kept openly in the sanctuary” (CW15 392/12–13; emphasis added). Until this point, it seems, Elizabeth has not taken Richard’s threat to invade sanctuary seriously—probably because she sees how flimsy Richard’s arguments are. It is only after the cardinal appears unconvinced by her counter-arguments and threatens to leave, abandoning her to Richard’s henchmen, that “it began to enter [Elizabeth’s] mind that her son could not be kept openly in the sanctuary.” After all, the cardinal is the highest-ranking cleric in England and therefore the natural defender of her son’s right to sanctuary. When the queen realizes that her arguments do not move him—that the cardinal himself will not object to Richard bringing force into sanctuary—she concludes that sanctuary is powerless to protect her son.

Elizabeth has just offered powerful legal arguments in defense of her son’s right to sanctuary, but it is evident she does not believe canon law can be effective without the cardinal. She sees the law as a tool wielded by powerful individuals, not as something with independent authority, and to a certain extent she is right. After all, this is how she and her faction treated the law in the case of Hastings and (probably) Clarence. When recounting the execution of Clarence, the narrator notes that he was “condemned by a full parliament,” and undoubtedly Hastings would also have been executed with all the legal trappings of justice (CW15 322/13). On the other hand, Edward’s mother was able to use canon law to delay Edward’s marriage, even though the clergy were probably hesitant to oppose the king. The example of the lawsuit initiated by Edward’s mother shows that the 15th-century English legal system had at least a certain degree of independence. Richard could probably gain a favorable ruling by bribing or threatening the judges, but regardless of which side won the legal battle, the delay and open debate involved in a lawsuit would give the nobles sufficient time to discuss the issue, suspect Richard’s motives, and gather their forces against him.

Regrettably, the idea of starting a legal battle for her son’s right to sanctuary does not enter the queen’s head during her long silence. Nor does it occur to her to use Richard’s threat of breaking sanctuary in order to turn public opinion against him by revealing his true purposes. The first step in this “publicity campaign” would be to make a dramatic display of physical

and verbal resistance when (and if<sup>118</sup>) Richard's henchmen came to take the boy by force. Although Elizabeth's anger does more harm than good in her debate with the cardinal, her skill at vituperation and her talent for acting would be invaluable if she were facing Richard's henchmen. We can be certain that descriptions of the angry and tearful queen being physically restrained by Richard's men while her sick and weeping son was dragged away would spread through the city like wildfire.

The next step in the queen's campaign would be to leave sanctuary and insist that she be allowed to live with her sons in order to care for them. Richard could not deny this request since Buckingham already stated she would be welcome to care for the princes if only she would leave sanctuary. Once out of sanctuary, she should continue to arouse popular opinion against Richard, while also initiating a legal challenge to Richard's action in removing her son from sanctuary. The success of this double appeal to the people and to the law would depend on many factors. From the *Historia* we know that Richard is very concerned about popular opinion and about retaining the appearance of legality. We also know that few individuals in the *Historia* actually wish Richard to become king. Even Buckingham is only persuaded to support Richard's usurpation once he believes it is too late to prevent it, and Hastings, originally Richard's ally, loses his head for his loyalty to the princes (CW15 398/20–400/2, 406/1–4, 412/15–21). This suggests that if the queen were to take a public stand in opposing Richard, a significant proportion of the citizens, lords, and clergy would flock to her leadership.

We do not know how Richard would have responded if the queen appealed to the people and the law because she does not even consider these methods of opposition. Instead, after deciding that it would be impossible to smuggle her son out of sanctuary, Elizabeth concludes that her best option is to relinquish her son willingly:

[T]he cardinal possessed a mind which had been sufficiently tested [by her], and the loyalty of several of the nobles in his escort was not less verified, and though she feared that they might be deceived, she had persuaded herself they were not able to be corrupted.

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<sup>118</sup> Remember, it is possible that Richard is bluffing and would not have invaded sanctuary if the queen had steadfastly resisted him.

And so if she was going to send her son away at all, she thought it would be better if she seemed to be giving him up freely instead of unwillingly, since she reasoned it would quicken the interest and diligence of those who received him in guarding his life if she personally handed him over as if into guardianship and faithfulness.<sup>119</sup>

The narrator's comment that "the cardinal's mind had been sufficiently tested [by her]" shows that the queen understands the need to practice character discernment (CW15 392/22–23).<sup>120</sup> She entrusts her son to a person whose character she has tested in the past and who possesses her "affection and trust" (CW15 362/24). One might ask why she does not reassess the cardinal's character in light of how he silences the "loose-tongued" noble and then threatens to leave her to Richard's mercy, but it is quite possible that she does consider these incidents and realizes that the cardinal's behavior is not that of a trustworthy ally (CW15 384/7). The narrator says that "she persuaded herself that [the cardinal and nobles] could not be corrupted"; the fact that she has to persuade herself of the cardinal's loyalty implies that part of her mind mistrusts him.<sup>121</sup> The cardinal's cold statement that "they would leave right away without saying another word about it, since she seemed to doubt either their prudence or good faith in the matter" makes it clear that his relationship with the queen has been strained by their conversation (CW15 392/5–7). Perhaps she finally realizes that her angry speech against the Protector has put the cardinal in a difficult position, surrounded as he is by nobles loyal to Richard. She certainly realizes that she has

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<sup>119</sup> *Cardinalis animum satis exploratum habuit / nec minus compertam nobilium aliquorum qui simul venerant fidem / quos vt verebatur ne falli possent / ita sibi persuaserat non potuisse corrumpi. Igitur si filium omnino dimissura sit / prestare censuit / sponte vt illum tradere quam inuita videretur / rata fore vti id nonnihil in conseruandum puerum curam atque industriam eorum quibus iam tradebatur incenderet si ipsa sua manu filium velut in tutelam fidemque committeret.* (CW15 392/9–394/2)

<sup>120</sup> CW15 392/9–394/2 is focalized by the queen, so the adjectival phrase "sufficiently tested [by her]" only tells us that she believes she has tested him sufficiently; it does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the narrator/author. However, the fact that the queen believes she has tested the cardinal sufficiently shows that she is aware of the need to practice character discernment. Kinney translates this sentence less literally as "she was assured of the cardinal's good intentions."

<sup>121</sup> Kinney translates *sibi persuaserat non potuisse corrumpi* as "she was convinced they could not be corrupted," but "she persuaded herself that they could not be corrupted" is more accurate (CW15 392/24–5).

offended the cardinal, because the first statement she makes after her “long, thoughtful silence” is an attempt to mollify him and his companions: “Noble sirs, I am not so imprudent as to lack faith in your prudence, nor am I so suspicious as to doubt your good faith, and today I shall give you such a token of my confidence that if you are lacking in either it will inflict an incurable wound on both me and the commonwealth” (CW15 394/3–8).

Why does the queen relinquish her son to the cardinal when she has reason to suspect the current state of his loyalty? Why does she not even consider attempting to save her son by appealing to the laws and to public opinion? The reason may be that she believes her debate with the cardinal has proved the ineffectiveness of both these methods. In her angry harangue to the cardinal and nobles—probably the largest audience she has had since fleeing to sanctuary—she appeals to both canon law and common law and cites the authority of legal experts, but the cardinal is unmoved. He is also unmoved by her vivid exposition of the inconsistencies in Richard’s behavior and the reasons he poses a threat to her sons. Why should she even consider initiating a lawsuit or trying to publicize Richard’s threats to a wider audience if her debate with the cardinal has shown that appealing to the laws and to public opinion is ineffective?

The answer, of course, is that the laws might work if she attempted to have them enforced. As this example shows so forcefully, that is precisely the purpose of legal institutions such as judges and trials: to enforce and clarify the law when it is ignored, violated, or misinterpreted. Remember, Elizabeth would not necessarily need to win the lawsuit; the publicity and delay of a trial would probably be sufficient to defeat Richard’s plot. Another point to keep in mind is that the cardinal does not directly refuse to defend her son’s right to sanctuary; he simply says that if she is determined to keep her son, “they would leave right away without saying another word about it.” Because Richard’s henchmen are nearby, this statement *implies* that he would sanction the removal of her son by force, but he never actually says this. It is quite possible that the cardinal is merely feigning agreement with Buckingham’s argument and that if the queen directly asked him whether or not he would defend her son’s right to sanctuary, he

would be forced to reply in the affirmative.<sup>122</sup>

Similarly, a campaign to publicize Richard's plot might work if she actually directed it to the *public*. The cardinal and the nobles who accompany him are far from an unbiased audience, and they must feel the pressure of Richard's presence nearby just as sharply as she does herself. Elizabeth would undoubtedly be heard more willingly if she publicized Richard's plot to the citizens of London or even to members of the nobility and clergy who were not present at the council. Furthermore, her accusations against Richard would gain great credibility if they were accompanied by the news that Richard's henchmen had indeed dragged the younger prince out of sanctuary against his mother's protests.

Although the tactics of initiating a lawsuit and publicizing Richard's threats to a wider audience might be effective, they would involve significant risk to her own safety. Elizabeth would probably have to leave the protection of sanctuary in order to publicize Richard's actions among the citizens, nobility, and clergy; Richard's guards certainly would not permit them to come to her for that purpose. Leaving sanctuary might also be necessary in order to initiate a lawsuit. As we have seen in our analysis of the queen's character, Elizabeth repeatedly puts ambition ahead of affection. She allows her older son to be raised in Wales for the sake of advancing her faction, and when she flees to sanctuary, she seems more concerned about saving her material possessions and mourning her fall from power than in comforting her children. Although she portrays herself as a loving mother, Elizabeth is not prepared to risk her life in order to protect her son. When Elizabeth entrusts her son to the cardinal, she does not even consider the obvious step of accompanying her sick son in order to nurse him and advocate for his welfare. The risk to her life would be much greater if she were leaving sanctuary in order to initiate a

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<sup>122</sup> Unless the queen forces the admission out of him, though, it makes sense that he would prefer to give the impression that he is on Richard's side; not only is this better for his political career, it is also a more effective way to convince Elizabeth to send her son out of sanctuary. After all, he did promise Richard to attempt the task "energetically" and with "diligence" (CW15 366/2-3). Might one add that he also attempts the task with psychological insight and, possibly, with great skill at dissembling? If the cardinal really is manipulating the queen in this way, it is ironically fitting that she is duped by the same kind of psychological manipulation that she employed to captivate King Edward.

lawsuit against Richard and publicize how his henchmen dragged her son out of sanctuary against her will. Elizabeth is not the kind of woman to take such a risk in order to save her sons.

To put her trust in legal institutions and an appeal to popular opinion would also contradict her confirmed habit of using personal relationships to advance her faction. The queen's entire political life has been spent courting friendship with people in power. Richard understands how to use a variety of political tools to advance his purposes, but the queen has always relied on the manipulation of personal relationships to advance her purposes: seducing the king, surrounding the prince with her kinsmen, and using her relationship with the king to slander Clarence and Hastings. By using the tactics of law and popular opinion, she would be going against her longtime habits of relying on personal relationships. Worse still, she would be injuring her relationship with the cardinal. If she were to confront the cardinal directly about his implicit refusal to defend her son's right to sanctuary, he might agree to defend her son, but he would resent being forced to oppose Richard. On the other hand, if she confronted the cardinal and he refused to defend her son's right to sanctuary and allowed Richard to remove him by force, the queen could not publicize the event or start a legal battle without implicating the cardinal.

The cardinal has already threatened to depart in displeasure, offended that she suspects him of either gullibility or treachery (CW15 392/5–8). By Elizabeth's reckoning, to lose the loyalty of the cardinal would be a devastating blow. She therefore makes it her goal to repair her relationship with the cardinal and the other nobles on the principle that they are her only allies against Richard. In her final speech to the cardinal and the nobles, Elizabeth appeals over and over to their *fides*:

Noble sirs, I am not so imprudent as to lack faith (*fide*) in your prudence, nor am I so suspicious as to doubt your good faith (*fiduciae*); and today I shall give you such a token of my confidence that if you are lacking in either it will inflict an incurable wound on both me and the commonwealth. . . . I give this son into your hands, and in him I also give you his brother; I entrust them both to your loyalty (*fidei*) . . . I know you have a great deal of prudence and even more good faith (*fidei*). . . . But in the name of your faith (*fidem*) and my late husband's memory, in the name of my care for my children and my trust (*fiduciam*) in you, I beg one thing only: just as I seem to you to be overly fearful, so on your part do not be overconfident. (CW15 394/3–396/4)

The way the queen emphasizes *fides* in this passage shows her anxiety to reestablish a relationship of *fides* with the cardinal and nobles. By emphasizing her trust in them, she hopes to awaken a return of *fides* on their part.

Although Elizabeth makes it a priority to reestablish a relationship of *fides* with the cardinal and nobles, this does not necessarily mean that she believes that they will be able and willing to protect her son's life. Even though she is said to hope that "their uncle's intentions toward his nephews might not be as ruthless as she had supposed," this hope is immediately succeeded by despair: "in any event, if her fear of him was not groundless, it would certainly be too late to help" (CW15 392/20–22). Her final speech to the cardinal and her farewell address to her son show that she still perceives the danger as clearly as ever. As she delivers her son to the cardinal, she tells him, "Hug your mother and kiss her one last time at least as you go, without knowing whether you will ever get the chance again" (CW15 396/6–8). At this point, I believe she is fairly certain that her appeal to the cardinal's *fides* will not save her son and that she will not see him again. Her best opportunity to save her son would be to appeal to the law and to public opinion, but she will not risk her life for the chance of saving her son. Convinced as she is that Richard will remove her son by force if she does not give him up, she at least wants to take the opportunity to repair her relationship with the cardinal, which she realizes has been compromised. Ironically, Elizabeth decides to surrender her son to the cardinal not because she trusts his *fides*, but because she doubts his *fides* and hopes to restore it by a display of trust.<sup>123</sup>

Realizing how much the queen values her political alliance with the cardinal helps to explain her motives for entrusting her son to him, but understanding her motives is not the same as approving of them. Her decision to give up her son in order to restore her relationship of trust with the cardinal is yet another example of how the queen puts ambition ahead of affection.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> If the queen realizes that her angry denunciation of Richard has put the cardinal in a precarious position and made it easy for others to question his loyalty to Richard, she may also understand that she can repair the damage by allowing the cardinal to deliver her son to Richard. At the very least, she knows that the cardinal wishes her to relinquish her son and that giving him up will help to mollify the cardinal.

<sup>124</sup> Frank points out that More puts commercial proverbs into the queen's mouth at the end

Arguably, the scene of Elizabeth's parting from her son is intended to arouse not only pity for the boy but also indignation at Elizabeth for allowing her son to leave her so easily:

Then, immediately turning to her little boy (*puerulum*), she said, "Goodbye, my dear son; may the saints provide someone to care for you, or rather, may they care for you themselves. Hug your mother and kiss (*exosculare*) her one last time at least as you go, without knowing whether you will ever get the chance again." And with this (*Simul*), touching her lips to his and making the sign of the cross over him (*cruce eum lustrata*), she turned away tearfully, leaving the little boy weeping. The cardinal and his escort received him and led him directly to the palace between rows of retainers (*satellitum*) which lined the whole route to where the Protector and the nobles were awaiting their return. (CW15 396/5–12)

Considering Elizabeth's less-than-noble behavior in the rest of the *Historia*, her appeal for "the saints" to care for her son could be interpreted as an excuse for neglecting her own responsibility to protect her son. Instead of "turn[ing] away," she should have accompanied her son out of sanctuary in order to care for him in his illness and defend his interests against Richard.

That Elizabeth fails to defend her son properly is confirmed by the way More models the parting scene after a similar scene in Petrarch's tale of Griselda, told in the Latin work "De Obedientia ac Fide uxoria, Mythologia." In this story, a marquis named Walter decides to marry a poor maiden named Griselda. She practices perfect patience and obedience even when Walter, desiring to test her, pretends to have their daughter taken away to be killed. A few years later, he has their son taken away in the same manner. The scene in which Griselda says farewell to her daughter is very similar to the parting scene in More's *Historia*, even to the point of using similar Latin vocabulary.<sup>125</sup> Notice how *puerulum* (396/5), *exosculare* (396/7), *Simul* (396/8), *cruce eum*

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of her debate with the cardinal. In the English *History* the proverbs are "Kepe one safe & both be sure" and "what wise merchant aduentureth all his good in one ship?" while in the Latin *Historia* the queen says, "[I]t is a very rash merchant, in most people's view, who will risk his whole fortune in one ship" (CW2 41/29–30, 31–32; CW15 394/21–2). Frank explains, "[I]n this final moment [the queen] uses the language of commerce and compares herself to a merchant and her sons to goods. Why? We know that Richard sees the children only as stumbling blocks and not as people, but could the queen herself have forgotten the humanity of her own sons?" (222).

<sup>125</sup> In the *Clerk's Tale*, Chaucer adds a few details to Griselda's farewell scenes. More imitates the details in Chaucer's version while also imitating the Latin vocabulary in Petrarch's version. Of particular interest is Griselda's address to her daughter: "Fareweel, my child, I shal thee nevere see, / but sith I thee have marked with the croys / Of thilke Fader blessed moote thou

*lustrata* (396/9), and *satellitum* (392/11, 396/12) in More's *Historia* echo the words *puellulam*, *simul*, *exosculans*, *signum sanctae crucis impressit*, and *satelliti* in Petrarch's story:

But taking up the little girl (*puellulam*) with a tranquil brow, she looked at her a little, and kissing (*exosculans*) her at the same time (*simul*), blessed her and made the sign of the holy cross upon her (*signum sanctae crucis impressit*), and gave her to the retainer (*satelliti*): "Go," she said, "and carry out whatever our master has commanded you. . . ." (My trans.)<sup>126</sup>

The second farewell scene, between Griselda and her son, is similar:

She took up her dear son in her arms; and making the sign of the cross on him, and blessing him as she had done for her daughter, and clinging to him just a little while with her eyes, and kissing him warmly, showing absolutely no sign of sorrow, she gave him to the retainer who had come to seek him. "Take him, too," she said; "do what you are commanded. . . ." (My trans.)<sup>127</sup>

The resemblance between Elizabeth and Griselda in these scenes is significant for two reasons. First, it implies that Elizabeth, like Griselda, believes she is saying farewell to her child forever; she does not think that the cardinal will be able to protect her son. Second, it implies that Elizabeth does not do as much to protect her son as she could have, since she is compared to Griselda, who does not lift a finger to defend her children when she believes they are going to be killed. It is true that Griselda was praised by some Renaissance readers for her wifely patience and submission,<sup>128</sup> but it is another matter altogether to practice submission to a tyrant. Whether

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be, / That for us deyde upon a croys of tree. / Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake, / For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake" (Chaucer IV.555–60). Compare this to Elizabeth's address to her son: "Goodbye my dear son; may the saints provide someone to care for you, or rather, may they care for you themselves. Hug your mother and kiss her one last time at least as you go, without knowing whether you will ever get the chance again" (CW15 396/5–8). Elizabeth's expressions "without knowing whether you will ever get the chance again" and "may the saints provide someone to care for you, or rather, may they care for you themselves" are similar to Griselda's "I shal thee nevere see" and "Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake."

<sup>126</sup> *sed tranquilla fronte puellulam accipiens, aliquantulum respexit, et simul exosculans, bene dixit, ac signum sanctae crucis impressit, porrexitque satelliti: Valde, ait, quodque tibi Dominus noster iniunxit exequere . . .* (Petrarch 197).

<sup>127</sup> *Illam . . . filium . . . amabile in manus coepit, signansque eum signo crucis, & benedicens ut filiam fecerat, & diuticule oculis inhaerens atque deosculans, nullo penitus signo doloris edito, petenti obtulit. Et tene, inquit, fac quod iussus es. . .* (Petrarch 200)

<sup>128</sup> Petrarch writes that a friend who read the story of Griselda said, "If [the story] were true, what woman, whether of Rome or any other nation, could be compared with this Griselda?"

or not Griselda should have tried to defend her children's lives, Elizabeth is certainly wrong to do so little to protect her sons from Richard.

The conclusion that Elizabeth does not do enough to protect her son is supported by another literary reference, this time to Seneca's *Thyestes*. The play as a whole is relevant to More's *Historia* because it has to do with civil war and rivalry between kin, as well as an uncle's murder of his nephews. In order to take revenge on his brother Thyestes, Atreus kills Thyestes' sons and serves them to their father at a banquet. After the banquet, Thyestes has a sense of foreboding but says to himself, "Show your brother a trustful heart! Your fear of *whatever* is either groundless or too late now" (963–65). This is similar to Elizabeth's line of reasoning when she thinks that "if her fear of [Richard] was not groundless, it would certainly be too late" (CW15 392/21–22). In Thyestes' case, however, his fears truly are too late because he has already eaten his children. Elizabeth, in contrast, still has a variety of resources that she could use to defend her sons against Richard (e.g., an appeal to popular opinion, an appeal to the law, physical resistance to Richard's henchmen, accompanying her son out of sanctuary) and should not have despaired so soon.

There is one more set of literary references that should be considered: the many references to Medea, the barbarian witch of classical mythology who marries Jason and helps him steal the Golden Fleece. When Jason divorces her, Medea takes revenge on her husband by killing their two sons with her own hands. When Richard speaks to the council about the need to remove the younger prince from sanctuary, he explicitly compares Elizabeth to Medea, saying, "[S]he hated [the noblemen] so much that like the poets' Medea, she would even sacrifice her own children to take vengeance on those whom she hated" (CW15 360/24). The reference to Elizabeth's "womanly fear" (*muliebrem metum*) at CW15 366/4 and 6 may also be a reference to the story of Medea because in Seneca's tragedy, Medea says to herself, "Drive out womanish fears (*pelle femineos metus*) . . ." (42). Later, Richard calls Elizabeth a "contriver of wickedness" (*sceleris machinatrix*) and accuses her of casting a spell upon his body and withering his arm;

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Where do we find the equal of this conjugal devotion, where such faith, such extraordinary patience and constancy?" (Robinson 196).

this is a reference to Medea's witchcraft, which earns her the title "contriver of evil deeds" (*malorum machinatrix facinorum*) in Seneca's tragedy (CW15 408/14; *Medea* 266, my trans.). There are also many other references to the figure of Medea in the *Historia*.<sup>129</sup>

It is difficult to know how to interpret the references to Medea in More's *Historia*. Richard's comparison of Elizabeth to Medea is so extreme that at first it seems to be simply an example of Morean irony, meant to illustrate how Richard's lies distort reality. The appearance of more and more references to Medea, however, suggest that something deeper is going on. The stories of Elizabeth and Medea are essentially dissimilar, but there are a few surprising parallels. Both marry their enemies: Elizabeth's first husband fights and dies on the Lancastrian side, and Medea betrays her father and country by helping Jason to win the Golden Fleece. Both marry against the will of a parent, since Edward's mother highly disapproves of his match with Elizabeth and Medea elopes with Jason without her father's permission. Elizabeth suffers a fall from prosperity when her husband dies and Richard seizes control of the crown prince; Medea falls from prosperity when her husband divorces her. Elizabeth flees to sanctuary for safety, and Medea is exiled from the country. Even before the fatal decisions that lead to their sons' deaths, both women have a history of using their sons to achieve their goals: Elizabeth arranges to strengthen her faction by means of the crown prince's stay in Wales, and Medea employs her sons as messengers to carry poisoned gifts to Creusa, their new stepmother. Obviously, there is a

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<sup>129</sup> In his commentary in CW15, Kinney notes that the queen's claim that "there are others so deadly hostile to my blood that if they knew that any of it was stored in their own bodies they would not hesitate to drain it out" resembles Medea's exclamation to Jason: "If some love pledge is hiding even now in my mothering body, I shall probe my vitals with the sword, drag it out with steel" (CW15 619; CW15 394/12–14; Seneca, *Medea* 1012–13). At CW15 440/25, the Duchess of York's argument against Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Grey—"Can you bear . . . to have your own blood beget brothers for the children of Grey?"—resembles Medea's scorn at the idea of Jason's new wife bearing brothers for her sons: "Shall Creusa provide brothers for my children?" (Seneca, *Medea* 508). At CW15 362/8–9, Richard refers to Elizabeth as "worse than a stepmother," a phrase that recalls one from Ovid's *Heroides VI*: "Medea is more than a stepmother; the hands of Medea are fitted for any crime" (6.127–28). Finally, More's famous description of the sea rising without a wind ("whether they had a foreboding of great troubles through some secret instinct of nature, as the sea with no apparent reason becomes turbulent in the face of an oncoming storm") is a reference not only to Seneca's *Thyestes* but also to his *Medea*, since both contain this image (CW15 402/2–4; *Thyestes* 961–64; *Medea* 765–6).

great moral distance between Elizabeth and Medea; Elizabeth does not murder her sons with her own hands as Medea does. Nevertheless, the frequent references to Medea may be More's way of prompting readers to consider if Elizabeth is like Medea to a limited extent because of how she sacrifices her children to her own ends.<sup>130</sup>

Even though I have painted a Machiavellian portrait of Elizabeth's character, it is important not to vilify her and exaggerate her responsibility for her sons' deaths. A great part of the problem is the power of habit, which affects not only what one does but also how one thinks. Elizabeth does not consciously calculate the benefits and risks of appealing to the law and public opinion; these options are not even mentioned in the passage that describes her thoughts during her long silence. Nor does she consciously think, "I will sacrifice my son's life to save my relationship with the cardinal." Rather, these calculations are made subconsciously as a result of long habit.

Let us look again at More's description of Elizabeth's thoughts during her long silence. Once the cardinal threatens to abandon her to Richard's henchmen, she concludes it is impossible to keep her son in sanctuary either openly or secretly. She then frantically considers if it would be possible to smuggle her son out of sanctuary and decides it is infeasible. This is the point at which one would expect the queen to consider initiating a lawsuit, appealing to public opinion, and/or accompanying her son out of sanctuary. Because of her long habit of putting ambition ahead of affection, these options—fraught with risk to herself and doubtful of success—do not even enter her mind. Instead, the narrator records three suppositions in a row that sound very much like excuses:

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<sup>130</sup> Kinney agrees, observing that Richard's comparison of Queen Elizabeth to Medea is "apt" since her factional maneuvers create the opportunity for Richard to kidnap the crown prince: "if the queen had not tried to exclude her own foes from the Prince of Wales' council to start with, and if she had not then tried to hide her own long-range intentions by bringing the prince back to London with only a small escort of her allies, Richard's plot could have never materialized" (139). Similarly, Alistair Fox declares, "It is the queen's own ambition that is responsible for her committing the fatal errors of judgement that ruin her party and deprive her children of life and the succession" (92). Like Kinney, Fox is referring to the queen's decision to bring the prince back to London with only a small escort. When one considers the queen's failure to defend her son's right to sanctuary, the comparison to Medea is even more appropriate.

But since there is occasionally a glimmer of hope in the gloomiest circumstances, at length she had the thought that their uncle's intentions toward his nephews might not be as ruthless as she had supposed; and in any event, if her fear of him was not groundless, it would certainly be too late to help. Besides, the cardinal possessed a mind which had been sufficiently tested [by her], and the loyalty of several of the nobles in his escort was not less verified, and though she feared that they might be deceived, she had persuaded herself they were not able to be corrupted. (CW15 392/18–25)

The ideas that Richard might not be as ruthless as she supposed, that it is too late to help, and that the cardinal and nobles are not able to be corrupted (note that she has to “persuade herself” of this) sound like subconscious justifications that she uses to silence her conscience while she decides to give up her son to Richard. Once she has made the decision to relinquish her son, she immediately pivots her attention to her new goal of restoring and strengthening her relationships with her political allies:

And so if she was going to send her son away at all, she thought it would be better if she seemed to be giving him up freely instead of unwillingly, since she reasoned it would quicken the interest and diligence of those who received him in guarding his life if she personally handed him over as if into guardianship and faithfulness. (CW15 392/25–394/2)

Notice the wording of the last phrase: “*as if* into guardianship and faithfulness.” Elizabeth does not really believe the cardinal and nobles will be able to protect her son, but she puts on a display of belief, a display that is intended to convince not only the cardinal and nobles but also herself.

When the queen brings out her son and hands him over to the cardinal and nobles, her words are a direct reply to the cardinal's complaint that she “seemed to doubt either their prudence or good faith in the matter” (CW15 392/6–7). She says, “Noble sirs, I am not so imprudent as to lack faith in your prudence, nor am I so suspicious as to doubt your good faith, and today I shall give you such a token of my confidence that if you are lacking in either it will inflict an incurable wound on both me and the commonwealth” (CW15 394/3–8). It would be hard to imagine a more direct effort to repair her relationship with the cardinal or stronger evidence that her focus has changed from attempting to save her son to attempting to repair her relationship with the cardinal and other nobles. This change in focus explains how she can give up her son even as she states that it is the most hazardous thing she can do: “there could

be nothing more hazardous than to entrust both of [my sons] to one man, just as it is a very rash merchant, in most people's view, who will risk his whole fortune in one ship. Nevertheless, I give this son into your hands, and in him I also give you his brother . . ." (CW15 394/20–4). She could not have given up her son if his safety was her primary goal. Rather, she releases her son because she believes the most fruitful way to advance her interests is to repair her relationship with the cardinal, at the cost of giving up her son.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Logan declares that the "major thematic statement of the *History*" is that "factional divisions and selfish ambition among the powerful were necessary conditions for Richard's usurpation" ("Thomas More" 183). This theme is certainly apparent in Elizabeth's example. Although I have focused on the queen's character in this chapter, she is simply one example of the corruption among the nobility that create the conditions for Richard's rise to power. Consider how readily Hastings and Buckingham join Richard "in conspiring to exterminate the prince's maternal supporters on the pretext that they were their enemies" (CW15 340/22–3, 342/4–5). Later, Hastings offers his "word of honor (which everyone trusted completely)" that Richard and Buckingham mean no harm by arresting the queen's kindred, even though he knows this is untrue (CW15 356/4–5). Once Richard has both princes in his power, Buckingham's reluctance to support Richard's usurpation is overcome by selfish self-interest: "since he believed he could not beat the nefarious conspiracy, he joined it as a partner and ally, and decided that since he could not remedy the public evil he would turn it as much as he could to his private advantage" (CW15 398/23–400/2). Breen argues that More "intimat[es] that even the most infamous tyrant in England's history was in large part a product of a badly flawed system" (486). This is not accurate if it is interpreted to mean that More believes Richard was simply responding to the conditions around him and had no moral culpability himself. However, More's *Historia* certainly teaches the lesson that a society in which the majority of people operate out of self-interest, with little respect for honesty or justice, is one in which tyranny can flourish.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

As I have stated before, I believe the unique narrative voice in *Historia Richardi Tertii* is so sophisticated that it makes More's history superior as a work of art to Sallust's *Bella* and Tacitus' *Annales*. Sallust, Tacitus, and More share a common goal: to promote civic virtues in their readers. More focuses particularly on developing the virtue of prudence in his readers, especially by teaching his readers how to discern character in real life. In order to do this, More uses narrative techniques to imitate a society in which one cannot "tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear."

Instead of beginning the *Historia* with reliable narration, More begins with a misleading portrayal of Edward IV in the rhetorical genre of the encomium, a genre that is particularly liable to bias. As explained in Chapter 2, the encomium undermines the narrator as a source of certainty in the history, since the picture of Edward in the encomium is contradicted by the portrayal of Edward in the rest of the history. More then fills the *Historia* with a multiplicity of voices and points of view, many of them untrustworthy. Significantly, More uses at least as much mimetic indirect discourse as Tacitus and more direct discourse than Sallust. Much of the remaining narrative text conveys the point of view of characters through focalization, a technique in which the content or style of the narration changes to reflect the point of view of one of the characters. More even uses divergent focalization—in which the character's opinion differs from that of the narrator—to create narrative puzzles that encourage the attentive reader to think twice about everything in the history, even statements that appear to be spoken by the narrator. Divergent focalization is an extremely rare technique in classical Latin prose; More's extensive use of the technique shows his creativity and willingness to break new literary ground.

The unstable narrator created by the encomium, the unusually high percentage of direct discourse and mimetic indirect discourse, and divergent focalization: these three narrative techniques set More's *Historia* apart from his Roman models and allow him to imitate a society in which one cannot "tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear." The result is a complex narrative that is the perfect arena for teaching the art of character discernment, especially through

the “character puzzles” of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth. These character puzzles are carefully constructed to assist the reader in discovering and exercising the principles of character discernment.

In the absence of a stable narrative voice, the task of discerning character in the *Historia* requires many of the same skills that are needed to discern character in real life. For example, in order to solve the character puzzle of King Edward, it is necessary to compare his words and actions from all parts of the *Historia*. From this experience, thoughtful readers can deduce the importance of comparing words and deeds, even if they were previously unfamiliar with this principle of character discernment. To help readers make this deduction, More repeatedly emphasizes the difference between words and deeds. Many of the passages relating to Edward depict scenes from his youth; this serves as a practical demonstration from which the reader can derive an important principle of character discernment: that one should study a person’s *past* words and deeds as well as his present ones. It is also necessary to compare Edward’s words and behavior with the conflicting descriptions of his character given by the encomiast and Buckingham. Similarly, when discerning character in real life, it is useful to compare a person’s actions with what other people say about him. The fact that the *Historia* is filled with references to historical figures and events serves as a reminder of how helpful it can be to consider how people have acted in the past in similar situations. Knowledge of history can help us interpret the characters of those around us.

In order to help readers assess Edward’s character correctly, More presents the puzzle of Edward’s character against the backdrop of humanist principles of kingship. The simplest way for More to communicate these principles would have been to include a short philosophical introduction to the *Historia*, but this type of introduction would require the creation of an authoritative narrator, something that More studiously avoids doing. Instead, More sprinkles humanist principles throughout the *Historia* in the mouths of characters like Richard, Buckingham, and Edward. For example, when Richard finally accepts Buckingham’s offer of the kingship, he declares that rule is only just if it is according to the will of the people. He says:

I consider it to be neither possible nor proper for anyone to rule unwilling subjects. For my own part, at least, though I know that there is no other to whom the crown rightly belongs by inheritance, I consider your desires more important than any number of laws, which derive all their efficacy from you . . . I regard only the management of these realms [of England and France] as my own, but the title and the profit and the ownership as totally your own—as a genuine commonwealth. (CW15 480/7–20)

Even though Richard and the other characters in the *Historia* are generally insincere in their mouthing of humanist principles, the fact that the principles are repeated in multiple contexts by multiple characters creates a consistent context throughout the work by which the behavior of kings (and aspiring kings) can be judged. It is actually more effective for the humanist principles to be voiced by men like Richard and Buckingham because it implies the principles are self-evident propositions that even tyrants cannot deny, though they might not put them into practice. Readers who would disagree with a direct presentation of humanist principles might be led to consider the same principles as self-evident simply through the effect of hearing them repeated over and over again by a variety of characters in the *Historia*.

The four humanist principles that are voiced most frequently in the *Historia* are the importance of the king and the people being united by love, not fear; the need for prudence and the danger of flattery; the danger of ambition and the evil of war; and the need for the king to put the good of the people ahead of his own desires. Significantly, it is not necessary for the reader to come to an explicit recognition of these principles in order to draw the correct conclusions about Edward's character. More's narrative techniques will be equally effective if the constant repetition of humanist maxims in the *Historia* manages to reshape the reader's mental image of the ideal king merely on a subconscious level. After all, people regularly discern character in everyday life without needing to think consciously about what standards they are using.

What conclusions, then, does More want readers to draw with regard to Edward's character? One of Edward's most prominent character traits is selfish irresponsibility. The way the *Historia* is constructed encourages readers to compare Edward's words and deeds from all parts of the work, and this comparison reveals that Edward devotes himself to satisfying his sensual desires and neglects his responsibilities as a king. The primary example of Edward's

selfish irresponsibility is his lustful marriage to Elizabeth, which results in civil war and leads to the creation of dangerous factions. To help the reader understand the gravity of Edward's marriage to Elizabeth, More telescopes history and makes it sound as if Warwick drives Edward out of England immediately after Edward's marriage (CW15 446/23–448/7). In reality, Warwick did not drive out Edward until six years later (CW2 237–38). The way More telescopes history in this case is meant to help readers perceive that Edward's lustful marriage to Elizabeth resulted in civil war and thus was a prime example of Edward putting his own desires ahead of his duty to his country. Furthermore, Edward is arguably more responsible for Richard's usurpation than anyone besides Richard himself. For example, Edward's immoderate lifestyle leads to his early death while his sons are still minors, creating the opportunity for Richard to usurp the throne. Edward is even responsible for the existence of the factions which Richard manipulates in order to gain the throne, since he creates the factions by marrying Elizabeth, encourages them through favoritism, and neglects to reconcile them until he is on his deathbed.

Comparing Edward's words and deeds and examining what others say about him also reveals that he is (in the narrator's words) "insatiably ambitious, hungry for power, and too quick to resent both superiors and equals" (CW15 322/2–4). Edward's ambition led him to continue the civil war begun by his father and then to revive the war when Warwick's rebellion forces him to flee the kingdom. On his deathbed, Edward expresses his regret and claims that if he had realized the evil effects of ambition, he would never have tried to become king at the cost of "so many men's heads" (CW15 334/19–26). Edward's ambition also makes him responsible for the death of his brother Clarence, who may have been innocent.

Imprudence is a third character trait that is revealed by a close examination of the *Historia*. The events of the *Historia* show that Edward is highly imprudent. Edward's words to his mother prior to his marriage to Elizabeth reveal that he is motivated primarily by the passions of the moment and that he does not have the prudence to think or care about the consequences of his actions. He is ruled by his desires instead of by reason, as shown by how he "tak[es] counsel

of his own love” when deciding to marry Elizabeth.<sup>131</sup> To make matters worse, Edward’s self-love makes him susceptible to flattery, and the flattering counsel he receives tends to strengthen his self-love, decrease his self-knowledge, and destroy his ability to make prudent decisions.

Edward’s fourth important character trait is his courtesy, which endears him to his people. This courtesy is mentioned at the very beginning of the *Historia*, when the encomiast describes how Edward hunted with the mayor and aldermen of London and sent game into the city (CW15 318/23–32). It is to Edward’s credit that he desires and values the love of his people instead of wishing to control them by fear. However, his display of courtesy is only an empty show as long as it is accompanied by the vices of selfish irresponsibility, ambition, and imprudence.

Overall, Edward falls far short of the humanist ideal of kingship, since he is ambitious, imprudent, and prone to flattery. Furthermore, he habitually puts his own pleasure ahead of his people’s good. The process of analyzing Edward’s character teaches important skills for discerning character in real life.

The other major “character puzzle” in the *Historia* is that of Queen Elizabeth. The first challenge is to discern what Elizabeth should have done during the crucial scene in sanctuary. As explained in Chapter 4, More indicates that Elizabeth should not have entrusted her son to the cardinal. A much better course of action would be to take a diplomatic approach and pretend to agree to send her son out of sanctuary but to ask for a delay because of her son’s illness. If Richard refused to grant a delay and removed the boy by force, the queen’s best option would be to publicize Richard’s behavior and initiate legal proceedings. Even if Richard managed to control the outcome of the trial, the delay and publicity of a lawsuit would be fatal to Richard’s plans. The queen should also accompany her son out of sanctuary in order to care for him and defend his rights.

After readers have grappled with the problem of what Elizabeth should have done to protect her son, they are faced with a more difficult puzzle, that of discerning what it is in Elizabeth’s character that leads her to give up her son to the cardinal. The difficulty of this puzzle

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<sup>131</sup> *amorem consulens suum* (CW15 440/3)

is due to the contradiction between Elizabeth's argument that there is "nothing more hazardous" than to put both her sons in Richard's power and her ultimate decision to do just that (CW15 394/20). Why does Elizabeth give up her son when she understands the danger so clearly?

A comparison of Elizabeth's thoughts, words, and deeds reveals several important characteristics. First of all, Elizabeth is the leader of a faction and is even willing to employ slander against her opponents. To help readers recognize the gravity of this offense, More describes Elizabeth's slander of Hastings with vocabulary that recalls Lucian's discourse *De Calumnia*. Significantly, Lucian describes the slanderer as "unjust, lawless, impious and harmful to his associates" (8). Second, Elizabeth is driven by "pride and the lust for supremacy" and habitually puts ambition ahead of affection. This is especially clear from how she allows the crown prince to be sent to Wales at an extremely young age, turning the circumstance into an opportunity to advance her own faction. Finally, Elizabeth habitually advances her faction by manipulating her personal relationships with people in power; an excellent example of this is her attempt to have Hastings executed by slandering him each night to the king.

Because of her habit of putting ambition ahead of affection, Elizabeth approaches the decision of whether to give up her son not as a mother, but as the leader of a faction. She is primarily concerned with what will advance her political interests and restore her fortunes, not with what will save her son. Up until her debate with the cardinal, keeping her younger son safe has been a key component of her plan to restore her fortunes. Once the cardinal convinces her that Richard will obtain her younger son by force regardless of her objections, her plans change. The narrator explains, "[I]f she was going to send her son away at all, she thought it would be better if she seemed to be giving him up freely instead of unwillingly" (CW15 392/25–7). Her new goal becomes the restoration of her relationship with the cardinal, which she realizes she has injured during her debate. This, she believes, is the most fruitful way she can advance her interests at the moment.

The possibilities of initiating a lawsuit and/or appealing to popular opinion do not occur to her during her long silence because they would require her to undergo considerable risk for

a small chance of success. The chance of success seems smaller to her than it really is for two reasons. The first reason is that she is not thinking as a mother to whom any possibility of saving her son's life is valuable. Instead, she is comparing the chance of advancing her interests by means of her son's life to the chance of advancing her interests through her relationship with the cardinal. The second reason is that her prior habits of factional intrigue and reliance on personal relationships lead her to underestimate the value of legal institutions and popular opinion. This is especially the case after she "tests" these techniques in her debate with the cardinal and finds them ineffective; the cardinal is not moved when she cites the law, and he is not convinced by her condemnation of Richard. Of course, the cardinal's reaction to the queen's rhetorical appeal to the law and to her condemnation of Richard is hardly an accurate indication of what would happen if she actually gave legal institutions and public opinion a chance to operate. To give them a genuine chance, however, would involve significant risks to herself; she would have to abandon her relationship with the cardinal, leave sanctuary, and provoke Richard by initiating a lawsuit and publicizing his misdeeds.

Elizabeth is not a coward, but she makes her decisions according to the calculus of ambition, not of affection. She is a queen first and a mother second. When deciding her course of action, the benefits must be worth the risks. From Elizabeth's perspective, the risks of appealing to the law and to popular opinion are very high and there is only a small chance of success. If she relinquishes her son, the risks to herself are low (since she will remain in sanctuary regardless of what happens to her son), and she will hopefully regain the cardinal's loyalty and strengthen her position for future intrigues. The record of history shows that Elizabeth was resourceful and knew how to utilize her daughters as pawns just as well as her sons; by marrying her daughter to Henry VII, she reestablished herself as the queen mother after Richard's death. Even as the character of Elizabeth provides readers with practice in discerning character, it also demonstrates an important theme in More's history: that the corruption among the nobility was a necessary condition for Richard's rise to power.

In the previous chapters of this dissertation, I have analyzed the narrator and main

characters of the *Historia* to show how More wrote with the rhetorical and moral goal of teaching readers how to discern character in situations when one cannot tell whom to trust. More's particular goal of teaching character discernment is part of a broader aim that he shared with Sallust and Tacitus: to help prevent tyranny by promoting civic virtues in his readers. Although More's aim in the *Historia* is similar to the aims of Sallust and Tacitus, the sophistication of More's narrative techniques—from the encomiastic introduction and divergent focalization that imitate a society in which one cannot “tell for certain whom to trust and whom to fear,” to the use of “character puzzles” to teach the skills of character discernment, to the embedding of humanist principles of kingship in the mouths of Richard, Buckingham, and Hastings—suggests his *Historia* deserves to be ranked above Sallust's *Bella* and Tacitus' *Annales* as a work of art.

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