

Descanting on Deformity: Richard III and the Shape of History

And thus having resolved all the doubts, so farre as I can imagine, may be moued against this Treatise; it onely rests to pray thee (charitable Reader) to interprete fauorably this birth of mine, according to the integritie of the author, and not looking for perfection in the worke it selfe. As for my part, I onely glory thereof in this point, that I trust no sort of vertue is condemned, nor any degree of vice allowed in it: and that (though it not be perhaps so gorgeously decked, and richly attired as it ought to be) it is at the least rightly proportioned in all the members, without any monstrous deformitie in any of them.

James I, *Basilikon Doron*

Upon a time when Burbidge played Richard III there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him that, before she went from the play, she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained and at his game ere Burbidge came. Then, message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third.

John Manningham's *Diary*, 13 March 1601

How does the logic of ghostly authorship inform—or deform—not only the writing of literature but also the writing of history? As a way of approaching this question, I begin with a passage from *The Comedy of Errors*:

O! grief hath chang'd me since you saw me last,
And careful hours with time's deformed hand
Have written strange defeatures in my face:
But tell me yet, dost thou not know my voice?

(5.1.298–301)¹

A complex interrelationship between time and deformation is clearly outlined in Egeon's plea for recognition. For time's hand is already deformed as well as deforming, and it is, explicitly, a writing hand. Be-

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tween the "deformed hand" and the still recognizable speaking voice comes, as always, the shadow. Hand/voice; written/spoken. Here, though, that which is *written* is deformed, twisted out of shape, imbued with "strange defeatures." The wonderful word *defeature* means both "undoing, ruin" and "disfigurement; defacement; marring of features" (*OED*). In *The Comedy of Errors* it is twice used to describe the change of appearance wrought by age upon the face, both in Egeon's speech given above and in Adriana's lament for her lost beauty, its loss hastened, she thinks, by her husband's neglect: "then is he the ground / Of my defeatures" (2.1.97-98). It is unfortunate that "defeature" has become, as the *OED* points out, "obsolete," "archaic," "now chiefly an echo of the Shakespearean use," because it offers a superbly concrete picture of the effects of ruin, the visible, readable consequences of being—or coming—undone.

I would like to arrive, in this essay, at a consideration of the way in which "time's deformed hand" writes, and thus defaces, history. The concept of defeature is a useful place to start from, since the visible marks of political defeat are often written, or characterized, in what one age will call history writing and another, propaganda. My subject, the "defeatured" player in this exemplum, will be Richard III, an especially interesting case not only because of the fascination that his story has exercised on both admirers and detractors, but also because, like Oxford and Bacon in the Shakespeare authorship controversy, Richard III has been the occasion for much amateur detective work and for the foundation of both English and American societies to clear his name. The Richard III Society, originally known as the Fellowship of the White Boar, was founded in England in 1924; the Friends of Richard III Incorporated, the Society's American counterpart, included among its founding members the actresses Helen Hayes and Tallulah Bankhead.

The most recent full-length study of Richard, by Charles Ross,² while in most ways apparently an extremely careful and balanced account, shows the usual pique at this "amateur" espousal of Richard's cause, which has led in turn to the unwelcome development of amateurs writing history: "an Oxford professor of English law, a headmaster at Eton, several peers of the realm and a number of historical novelists and writers of detective stories," prominent among them women. Ross cites Josephine Tey, Rosemary Hawley Jarman, and "a number of others, nearly all women writers, for whom the rehabilitation of the reputation of a long-dead king holds a strange and unexplained fascination" (p. 11). By implication these women are following the self-deluded path of the Lady Anne, whose "strange and unexplained" capitulation to Richard's suit in Shakespeare's play demonstrates female folly and a slightly sentimental

belief that a bad man can be reformed or redeemed by the love of a good woman.

Ross's view of Richard is fact-oriented, balanced but binary. He concludes that Richard "does not appear to have been a complex man," and that "any contrariness of 'character' of Richard III stems not from what we know about him but from what we do not know about him" (p. 229). It is the historian's job to discover the facts, and thus to dispel mystery, fantasy, undecidability. With this decidedly "professional" (p. li), male, and hegemonic view of the use and abuse of history writing, set forth in an introductory chapter that is designed to articulate "The Historical Reputation of Richard III: Fact and Fiction," we may begin our consideration of a dramatic character who is self-described as both deformed and defeatured, himself compact of fact and fiction: "cheated of feature . . . deformed, unfinished . . . scarce half made up" (*Richard III*, 1.1.19-21).

I

Shakespeare's use and abuse of history in the *Henry VI* plays, and particularly in *Richard III*, is often viewed as a consequence, deliberate or adventitious, of the move by Tudor historians to classify Richard III as self-evidently a villain, his deformed body a readable text. Shakespeare, in such interpretations, emerges as either an unwitting dupe of More, Hall, and Holinshed, or as a coconspirator, complicit in their design, seizing the opportunity to present the Plantagenet king defeated by Elizabeth's grandfather as unworthy of the throne, as unhandsome in person as in personality. Either the dramatist was himself shaping the facts for political purposes, or he was taken in by the Tudor revisionist desire to inscribe a Richard "shap'd" and "stamp'd" for villainy.

In either case, the persuasive power of the portrait has endured. As recently as 1984, for example, René Girard could assert confidently that "when Shakespeare wrote the play, the king's identity as a 'villain' was well-established. The dramatist goes along with the popular view, especially at the beginning. Richard's deformed body is a mirror for the self-confessed ugliness in his soul."³

It is clear, however, that no account of Shakespeare's literary or political motivations in foregrounding his protagonist's deformity is adequate to explain the power and seductiveness of Richard's presence in the plays. Indeed, the very fascination exerted by the historical Richard III seems to grow in direct proportion to an increase in emphasis on his deformity.

It may be useful here to document briefly the ways in which the vagaries of transmission, like a game of historical telephone, succeeded in instating Richard's deformity as the party line. The story of Richard's

prolonged gestation, "held for two years in his mother's womb, emerging with teeth, and with hair down to his shoulders," like the picture of the hunchback, "small of stature, having a short figure, uneven shoulders, the right being higher than the left," is first told in the *Historia Regium Angliae* of Warwickshire antiquary John Rous, who died in 1491.⁴ Polydore Vergil, Henry VII's Italian humanist historian, situated Richard in the scheme of providential history as the antagonist of Tudor ascendancy. Thomas More's *History of Richard III* established the enduring popular image of the villainous king as monstet, in an account that artfully ascribes some of the more lurid details to rumor while passing them on.

Richarde the third sonne, of whom we nowe entreate, was in witte and courage egall with either of them, in bodye and prowesse farre vnder them bothe, little of stature, ill fetured of limmes, croke backed, his left shoulder much higher then his right, hard faouered of visage, and suche as in states called warlye, in other menne other wise. He was malicious, wrathfull, enuious, and from afore his birth, euer frowarde. It is for trouth reported, that the Duches his mother had so muche a doe in her trauaile, that shee coulede not bee deliuered of hym vncutte: and that hee came into the worlde with the feete forwarde, as menne bee borne outwarde, and (as the fame runneth) also not vntothed, whither menne of hatred reporte aboue the trouthe, or elles that nature chaunged her course in hys beginnunge, whiche in the course of his lyfe many thinges vnnaturallye committed.⁵

More's account was borrowed by both Hall and Holinshed, and survives substantially unchanged in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. We might note that there is already a disparity between Rous's "history" and More's. Rous describes Richard's right shoulder as being higher than his left. More, with equal particularity, asserts that "his left shoulder [was] much higher than his right." The augmentation "much" puts a spin on the reversal; More grounds his own authority in rhetorical emphasis and in doing so further distorts the figure of Richard—and the rhetorical figure for which he will come to stand. Both the change of shoulder—toward the sinister—and the emphasis implied by "much" suggest the pattern of amplification and embellishment characteristic of the Richard story throughout its history.⁶

In the first tetralogy, unusual stress is placed on Richard's physical deformity, which is repeatedly anatomized and cataloged. King Henry calls him "an indigested and deformed lump" (*3 Henry VI* 5.6.51), Clifford a "foul indigested lump, / As crooked in thy manners as thy shape!" (*2 Henry VI* 5.1.157-58), and the Lady Anne a "lump of foul deformity" (*Richard III* 1.2.57). Significantly, he is at once "misshap'd," unshaped, and preshaped. Born in a sense prematurely ("sent before my time"), feet

first, and with teeth already in his mouth, to the wonderment of the midwife and waiting women (*3 Henry VI* 5.6.52, 75-76), he is disproportioned and deformed, but at the same time unfinished, incomplete, as his own testimony makes plain. Nature, he says in *3 Henry VI*, conspired with love

To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub,
To make an envious mountain on my back
Where sits deformity to mock my body;
To shape my legs of an unequal size,
To disproportion me in every part,
Like to a chaos, or an unlick'd bear-whelp
That carries no impression like the dam.

(3.2.156-62)

In the opening soliloquy of *Richard III*, he recurs to this description, again placing the blame on nature and love.

I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time,
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—
Why I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And descant on mine own deformity.

(1.1.16-27)

Generations of readers have been strongly affected by this relation between the deformity and the moral or psychological character of Richard. One such reader was Sigmund Freud, who turned to the example of Richard's deformity to characterize patients who think of themselves as "exceptions" to normal rules. Such patients, Freud says, claim that "they have renounced enough and suffered enough, and have a claim to be spared any further exactions; they will submit no longer to disagreeable necessity, for they are *exceptions* and intend to remain so too."⁷ This claim seems apt enough for Richard's opening soliloquy, which Freud goes on to quote: "that figure in the creative work of the greatest of poets in whose character the claim to be an exception is closely bound up with and motivated by the circumstance of congenital injury" (p. 160). But when Freud comes to discuss the passage, he finds it to signify not Rich-

ard's desire to deflect his energies from love (for which his deformity renders him unsuitable) to intrigue and murder, but rather a more sympathetic message for which the resolution to "prove a villain" acts as a "screen." The "something much more serious" (p. 161) that Freud describes behind the screen is, essentially, a variation on the theme of the family romance. His Richard declares,

Nature has done me a grievous wrong in denying me that beauty of form which wins human love. . . . I have a right to be an exception, to overstep those bounds by which others let themselves be circumscribed. I may do wrong myself, since wrong has been done to me—and now [says Freud] we feel that we ourselves could be like Richard, nay, that we are already a little like him. Richard is an enormously magnified representation of something we can all discover in ourselves. We all think we have reason to reproach nature and our destiny for congenital and infantile disadvantages; we all demand reparation for early wounds to our narcissism, our self-love. . . . Why were we born in a middle-class dwelling instead of a royal palace? (p. 161)

For Freud, then, Shakespeare's Richard III represents not so much a particular aberrant personality warped by the accident of congenital deformation, as the general psychological fact of deformation at birth and by birth, the congenital deformation that results "in ourselves," in "all" of us, because we are born to certain parents and in certain circumstances, incurring, inevitably, certain narcissistic wounds. Thus for Freud the character of Shakespeare's Richard marks the fact of deformation in the register of the psychological, just as we shall see the same character mark the inevitability of deformation in the registers of the political and the historiographical.

Moreover, in Freud's narrative the political is also explicitly present, though it is signified by a lacuna, a lapse in the progress of his exposition. "For reasons which will be easily understood, I cannot communicate very much about these . . . case-histories. Nor do I propose to go into the obvious analogy between deformities of character resulting from protracted sickness in childhood and the behaviour of whole nations whose past history has been full of suffering. Instead, however, I will take the opportunity of pointing to that figure" (p. 160), and so on to Shakespeare and Richard III. What is the "obvious analogy" he resists? It seems reasonable to associate the "deformities of character resulting from protracted sickness in childhood" and, indeed, the "behavior of whole nations whose past history has been full of suffering" with some specific rather than merely general referent. And if we consider the year in which this essay was first published, in *Imago* 1915-16, we may be reminded of the circumstances of Germany in the First World War and,

most directly, of the personal circumstances of Kaiser Wilhelm. For Wilhelm II of Prussia was born with a withered arm, a congenital defect that made him the target of gibes from his childhood playmates, including his cousin, who would become Czar Nicholas of Russia. As a recent historical study describes him, Wilhelm II "was a complicated man of painful insecurity—his left arm was withered and useless—who sought in pomp and bluster, in vulgar displays of virility, to mask his handicap and to assert what he devoutly believed in: his divine right to rule. But he craved confirmation of that right and yearned to be loved and idolized. Beyond the flawed character was a man of intelligence and vision."⁸

Wilhelm II, then, is also considered—or considered to have considered himself—an "exception" to normal rules. Freud takes exception to mentioning him—or even, perhaps, to consciously identifying him—and instead displaces his analysis onto the safely "literary" character of Shakespeare's Richard. And Richard's opening soliloquy, descanting on deformity, provides a revealing narrative of the ways in which the line between the "psychological" and the "historical" is blurred.

"Unlick'd," "unfinished," "indigested"—"not shaped" for sportive tricks, "scarce half made up." The natal circumstances and intrapsychic discourse of Shakespeare's Richard, who ironically resolves, despite his initial disclaimers, to "court an amorous looking-glass" (*Richard III* 1.1.15, 1.2.255, 262), uncannily anticipate the language of Jacques Lacan's description of the "mirror stage." Lacan writes of

the view I have formulated as the fact of a real specific prematurity of birth in man. . . . This development is experienced as a temporal dialect that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history. The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation—and which manufactures *for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic*—and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid stricture the subject's entire mental development.⁹

Characteristically, Richard turns this chaotic physical condition into a rhetorical benefit, suggesting that he can "change shapes with Proteus for advantages" (3 *Henry VI* 3.2.192), be his own parent and his own author, lick himself into shape—whatever shape the occasion requires. Queen Elizabeth tells him that he cannot win her daughter "Unless thou couldst put on some other shape" (*Richard III* 4.4.286). But the shape in which we encounter him is already a deformed one—the natural deformity of historical record.

Peter Saccio gives a highly useful account of the evolution of Richard the monster in his study of Shakespeare's English kings.

This lurid king, hunchbacked, clad in blood-spattered black velvet, forever gnawing his nether lip or grasping for his dagger, has an enduring place in English mythology. He owes something to the facts about the historical Richard III. He owes far more to rumor and to the political bias, credulity and especially the literary talent of Tudor writers. . . .

As myth, the Tudor Richard is indestructible. . . . As history, however, the Tudor Richard is unacceptable. Some of the legend is incredible, some is known to be false, and much is uncertain or unproved. The physical deformity, for example, is quite unlikely. No contemporary portrait or document attests to it and the fact that he permitted himself to be stripped to the waist for anointing at his own coronation suggests that his torso could bear public inspection.¹⁰

In fact, when we come to examine the portrait evidence, we find that it is of considerable interest for evaluating Richard's alleged deformity. A portrait now in the Society of Antiquaries of London, painted about 1505, shows a Richard with straight shoulders. But a second portrait, possibly of earlier date, in the Royal Collection, seems to emblemize the whole controversy, for in it, X-ray examination reveals an original straight shoulder line, which was subsequently painted over to present the raised right shoulder silhouette so often copied by later portraitists.¹¹

Richard is not only deformed, his deformity is itself a deformation. His twisted and misshapen body encodes the whole strategy of history as a necessary deforming and *unforming*—with the object of *reforming*—the past. Shakespeare exemplifies this strategy with precision in a remarkable moment in *Much Ado about Nothing*, when the vigilant and well-intentioned Watch overhears a comment by Borachio: "Seest thou not what a deformed thief this fashion is?" "I know that Deformed," remarks the Second Watch wisely to himself, "'a has been a vile thief this seven years; 'a goes up and down like a gentleman. I remember his name" (3.3.125-27). Like Falstaff's eleven buckram men grown out of two, this personified concretion takes on an uncanny life of its own in the scene. When Borachio and Conrade are confronted with their perfidy, Deformed is identified as a coconspirator: "And one Deformed is one of them; I know him, 'a wears a lock" (lines 169-70), and again, "You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I warrant you" (lines 172-73). This is precisely what happens to the reinvented historical figure of Richard III.

Created by a similar process of ideological and polemical distortion, Richard's deformity is a figment of rhetoric, a figure of abuse, a catachresis masquerading as a metaphor. In a viciously circular manifestation of Neoplatonic determinism, Richard is made villainous in appearance to

match the desired villainy of his reputation and then is given a personality warped and bent to compensate for his physical shape.

For Shakespeare's play, in fact, encodes what we might call a supposititious presupposition. Richard's deformity is not claimed, but rather presupposed, given as fact in service of the question, "Was his villainy the result of his deformity?"—a question not unlike "Have you stopped beating your wife?" Jonathan Culler has shown that the presuppositions that govern literary discourse are mistakenly designed as givens, as "moments of authority and points of origin," when in fact they are only "retrospectively designated as origins and . . . therefore, can be shown to derive from the series for which they are constituted as origin." As with literary conventions, so also with historical presuppositions that constitute the ground of a discursive continuum—here the "History" of Richard III. To adapt Culler's argument about speech acts, "None of these [claims of historical veracity] is a point of origin or moment of authority. They are simply the constituents of a discursive space from which one tries to derive conventions."¹³

Richard's deformity, itself transmitted not genetically but generically through both historiography and dramaturgy, becomes the psychological and dramatic focus of the play's dynamic. Shakespeare has written history backward, taking Hall's and More's objective correlative (he looked the way he was; he should have looked this way because he was in fact this way; he should have been this way, so he must have looked this way) and then presupposed it. Richard's own claim that he can "change shapes with Proteus for advantages" is a metahistorical comment on his Lamarckian evolution as villainous prototype, every misshaped part an overdetermined text to be interpreted and moralized, descanting on his own deformity. Shakespeare's play brings "Deformed forth" as an embodiment of the historical process that it both charts and epitomizes.

History is indeed shown by the play to be a story that is deformed from the outset, by its very nature. The figure of Hastings, for instance, seems predestined to bring out particularly uncanny modes of deformation through the ghostly doublings of the Scrivener and the Pursuivant. The Pursuivant (an official empowered to serve warrants) who accosts Lord Hastings in *Richard III*, act 3, scene 2, is also named Hastings and appears by that name not only in the Quarto text but also in Hall's *Union of the Two Families of Lancaster and York*. The absence of his name from the Folio has caused some editorial speculation, and the Arden editor's long discussion of this absent name emphasizes the strangeness of the figure: "The entire episode as it appears in F seems pointless: it merely repeats what has already been said by Hastings, adds a superfluous character, and would probably be cut by an economy-minded producer. The

fact that it was not cut in Q suggests that someone felt strongly enough about it to retain it, and that the identity of the pursuivant served to make an ironical point."¹³

According to both Hall and Shakespeare, Hastings receives a number of warnings of the fate that is to befall him. His horse stumbles, Stanley dreams that the boar will raise their helms and sends a cautionary word to Hastings, and still Hastings remains adamantly blind to his danger.

At this point, in a remarkable scene reported by Hall and dramatized by Shakespeare, Hastings encounters the pursuivant who bears his own name. He greets him warmly, reminiscing about the last time they met, when Hastings was fearful for his life. Now, ironically feeling more secure, he rejoices to note that his former enemies, the queen's allies, have been put to death, and he himself is "in better state than ere I was" (3.2.104). Hall moralizes with some satisfaction on this latest ironic twist: "O lorde God, the blyndnesse of our mortal nature, when he most feared, he was in moste surety, and when he reconed his selfe most sur-est, he lost his lyfe, and that within two houres after."¹⁴ Shakespeare makes the same point more subtly and forcefully by prefacing this encounter with Richard's decision to "chop off his head" if Hastings will not agree to their "complots" (3.1.192-93) and then following it with a knowing aside from Buckingham to the audience. The encounter with the pursuivant (literally, a "follower") named Hastings is an example of the uncanny in one of its most direct forms, recognizable and strange at once. The action itself is doubled, as Hastings meets "Hastings" coming and going and does not understand what he sees. Hastings's own name functions in a subdued allegorical way throughout this scene, which could be emblemized as *festina lente*, making Hastings slowly.¹⁵

Another example of doubling and displacement within a historical event is provided by the odd little scene with the Scrivener (3.6). Borrowed by the playwright from his chronicle sources, this scene becomes in its dramatic embodiment a model of history as a kind of ghostwriting, since it encodes and "engross[es]" the fashioning of a rival text. The Scrivener complains that he has spent eleven hours copying the indictment of Hastings "in a set hand," or legal script. The first draft, or "precedent," "was full as long a-doing, / And yet within these five hours Hastings liv'd / Untainted, unexamin'd, free, at liberty" (lines 7-9). The Scrivener laments the duplicity of the times—"Who is so gross/That cannot see this palpable device" (lines 10-11), "engross'd" by his own set hand—and yet who dares to say he sees it?

This packed little scene demonstrates at once the play's preoccupation with writing and the preemptive—indeed *prescriptive*—nature of its po-

litical design. The Scrivener's indignation is both moral and professional, for his task of scriptwriting had begun before the incident that was to occasion it and ended too late to authorize—although it will retrospectively "legitimize"—the death of Hastings. Since the previous scene has already presented the spectacle of Hastings's decapitated head, displayed by Lovell and Ratcliffe to the London populace and an apparently grief-stricken Richard, the existence, belatedly revealed, of a meticulously crafted indictment undercuts the idea of historical accident or spontaneous action. History is not only deformed but also preformed. Hall recounts the story with particular attention to the length of time the drawing of the indictment would take.

Nowe was thys proclamacion made within two houres after he was beheaded, and it was so curiously endyted and so fayre written in Parchement in a fayre hande, and therewith of it selfe so long a processe, that every chyld might perceyve that it was prepared and studied before (and as some men thought, by Catesby) for all the tyme betwene hys death and the proclamacion proclaimyng, coude skant have suffyced unto the bare wrytyng alone, albeit that it had bene in paper and scribeled furthe in haste at adventure.¹⁶

Like the disparity between the "truth" of Shakespeare's play and the historical figure it encodes, the "palpable device" of the long-prepared indictment and the apparent hastening of Hastings's demise opens the question of authority. Which comes first, the event or the ghostwriter?

So far is Richard from being merely the passive psychological victim of his deformity, he early on becomes deformity's theorist and manipulator, not only "descanting" upon it, but projecting and displacing its characteristics onto others. The death of Clarence is a good example of how this works in the play. Clarence is imprisoned at Edward's order, but at the instigation of Richard. The two murderers who go to the Tower to carry out the execution bear Richard's warrant for entry. And Edward is nonplussed when, at the worst possible time from a political standpoint, Clarence's death is announced. "Is Clarence dead?" he asks. "The order was reversed." "But he, poor man, by your first order died," says Richard. "And that a winged Mercury did bear; / Some tardy cripple bare the countermand, / That came too lag to see him buried" (2.1.87-91).

The phrase "tardy cripple" spoken by the crippled Richard is doubly ironic. He himself is represented in this account not by the cripple, but by "winged Mercury," fleet of foot, who bears the message of execution—here, in fact, made possible by Richard's forged warrant. The

"tardy cripple," coming "too lag" to save Clarence, is Richard's displacement of deformity onto the foiled intentions of his well-formed brother the king.

An even more striking instance of this crippling or deforming of the world outside Richard occurs in the scene at Baynard's Castle (3.7), in which Richard enters aloft between two bishops, "divinely bent to meditation" (line 62), and Buckingham stages a public entreaty to persuade him to accept the throne. Buckingham describes Richard as the rightful heir, with "due of birth" and "lineal glory" (lines 120-21), able to prevent the resigning of the crown "to the corruption of a blemish'd stock" (line 122). But his description of the present state of governance is oddly pertinent (and impertinent) to the man he is apparently addressing.

The noble isle doth want her proper limbs;
Her face defac'd with scars of infamy,
Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants,
And almost should' red in the swallowing gulf
Of dark forgetfulness and deep oblivion.
(3.7.125-29)

Here the cripple is England, wanting "proper limbs" (compare Richard's own ironic description of "me that halts and am misshapen thus" as "a marv'llous proper man" in the eyes of the Lady Anne [1.2.250-54]). "Defac'd" and especially "should' red" make the transferred anatomical references unmistakable.

In the final scene of 3 *Henry VI* an ambitious and disgruntled Richard had murmured aside, "Yet I am not look'd on in the world. / This shoulder was ordain'd so thick to heave, / And heave it shall some weight, or break my back" (5.7.22-24). In the scene of the wooing of Anne, Richard protests that Queen Margaret's slanderous tongue "laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders" (*Richard III* 1.2.98), again mischievously calling attention to his own physical deformity; later he is twitted by young York to the same effect ("Because that I am little like an ape / He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders" [3.1.130-31]). Richard's deformed shoulder is what "shoulders" the noble isle of England into near oblivion, but in Buckingham's anatomy of the deformed state the "proper man" is the well-derived Richard, who will restore the kingdom to its wonted shape. In both of these cases a condition of deformity is transferred, to the hypothetical messenger or the diseased polity.

Deformity as a self-augmenting textual effect, contaminating the telling of Richard's story as well as Richard's story itself, has been associated with his literary presence almost from the first. More's account of the

notorious sermon of Dr. Shaa is a good example. Dr. Shaa had been persuaded to preach a sermon in which he would impute the bastardy of Edward's sons and point out Richard's physical resemblance to his father, the Duke of York. He was to have intoned these sentiments, comparing Richard's visage and behavior to those of the admired duke, at the point when Richard himself appeared in the congregation. Richard, however, was late, and the key passage already past when he did turn up. Seeing him enter, Dr. Shaa, in a flurry of discomfiture, began to repeat his point-for-point comparison, but "out of al order, and out of al frame,"¹⁷ to the consternation of the audience. The "shamefull sermon" having backfired, Shaa fled to his house and was forced to "kepe him out of sight lyke an owl," and soon "withered away" of shame.

In this little story Dr. Shaa sees himself as a writer of predictive history, predicating the future on a repetition of the past (the second Richard an image of the first). But his narrative, out of all order and out of all frame, like Richard's own misshapen body, becomes in More's retelling the perversion and distortion of its intended form and design. Moreover, Dr. Shaa himself is contaminated by the rhetorical force of the prevailing mythology about Richard. In the course of More's account Shaa himself becomes deformed, or "withered," as if by the disseminated agency of his ignoble association with Richard, whose own arm is "like a wither'd shrub" (3 *Henry VI* 3.2.156), "like a blasted sapling, wither'd up" (*Richard III* 3.4.69). The figure of Richard keeps escaping its own boundaries, to appear uncannily replicative in the authors of his twisted history.

Other putative sources for Shakespeare's play have suffered the same suggestive narrative contamination. Francis Seager's complaint, *Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester*, one of the tragedies published in the 1563 *Mirror for Magistrates*, is described by a prose commentator in the volume as appropriate to its subject. The roughness of the meter was suitable, since "kyng Rychard never kept measure in any of his doings. . . . it were agaynst the *decorum* of his personage, to use eyther good Meter or order."¹⁸ The "decorum of his personage" seems also to have affected the Arden editor, Antony Hammond, who describes this same poem as "a dull, lame piece of verse."¹⁹

Such observations reflect the powerful ghostly presence of the lame and halting Richard. E. M. W. Tillyard, writing of the first tetralogy, remarks upon "the *special shape* in which the age of Elizabeth saw its own immediate past and its present political problems," and again of "the *shape* in which the War of the Roses appeared to Shakespeare's contemporaries."²⁰

That "special shape" is Richard's. Images of "the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice" were commonplace in Tudor writings (this partic-

ular phrase comes from the second preface to Grafton's *Chronicle at Large* (1569), probably written by Thomas Norton, the author of *Gorboduc*; but when the subject turned explicitly to Richard, the correspondence of physical, moral, and poetic or stylistic deformity seems particularly overdetermined.

Bacon's essay "Of Deformity" reads like a description of Richard III, though it may have been provoked more directly by Robert Cecil.

Deformed persons are commonly even with nature; for as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature; being for the most part, as the Scripture saith, "Void of natural affection," and so they have their revenge of nature. Certain there is a consent between the body and the mind, and where nature erreth in the one, she ventureth in the other. . . . Whosoever has anything fixed in his person that doth induce contempt, hath also a perpetual spur in himself, to rescue and deliver himself from scorn; therefore all deformed persons are extreme bold. . . . Also it stireth in them industry, . . . to watch and observe the weakness of others that they may have somewhat to repay. Again, in their superiors it quencheth jealousy and it layeth their competitors and emulators asleep; as never believing they should be in possibility of advancement, till they see them in possession. So that, upon the matter, in a great wit deformity is an advantage to rising. . . . they will, if they be of spirit, seek to free themselves from scorn, which must be either by virtue or malice.²¹

Samuel Johnson cites these sentiments with approbation in his notes on 3 *Henry VI*, making explicit their relevance to Richard ("Bacon remarks that the deformed are commonly daring, and it is almost proverbially observed that they are ill-natured. The truth is, that the deformed, like all other men, are displeased with inferiority, and endeavour to gain ground by good or bad means, as they are virtuous or corrupt").²² And, indeed, this too may be an instance of overdetermined contamination. Dr. Johnson's stress on "deformities" reflects his own self-consciousness of deformation. Suffering from scrofula as an infant, Johnson was marked throughout life by "scars on the lower part of the face and on the neck,"²³ which he sought to conceal in his portraits by presenting the better side of his face to the painter's view. Until the age of six he bore on his arm an open, running sore, or "issue," cut and left open with the idea of draining infection. This, and the partial blindness also induced by tuberculosis in infancy, produced in him a "situation so appalling," writes Walter Jackson Bate, that "we are naturally tempted to speculate on the psychological results" (p. 7).

But Johnson's most striking observations about deformity in Shakespeare occur in another connection. "We fix our eyes upon his graces, and turn them from his deformities, and endure in him what we should in another loathe or despise." The subject of these comments, astonishingly, is not Richard III, but Shakespeare himself—and the "deformities" are those of literary and dramatic creation. "I have seen," he continues, "in the book of some modern critic, a collection of anomalies, which shew that he has corrupted language by every model of depravation, but which his admirer has accumulated as a monument of honour."²⁴ "Anomalies," "corrupted language," "model of depravation"—all this sounds very like Richard III as he is received by a reluctantly admiring audience. Not only does Richard theorize his own deformity, he generates and theorizes deformity as a form of power.

II

In a response to a recent collection of essays entitled "*Race, Writing, and Difference*," Houston A. Baker, Jr., discusses Shakespeare's Caliban as an example of what he calls "the deformation of mastery," the way in which a representative of the indigenous population finds a voice within the colonialist discourse of the master, Prospero.²⁵ Caliban, the "hooting deformed of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," provides for Baker an opportunity to describe "a drama of deformation" as it is articulated by the indigenous Other that advertises itself through a phaneric mask of display. Caliban's metacurses, his deployment of language against language, are a result of his conscription by Western culture, his "willingness to barter his signs for the white magician's language" (p. 392). His physical deformity and his curses are alike indices of this double bind. What Baker proposes—and he is here troping the present-day Afro-American scholar's discourse on Caliban's—is a "'vernacular' invasion and transcendence of fields of colonizing discourse in order to destroy whitemale hegemony" (p. 382). Unable to go back to a prelapsarian or pre-Prosperian innocence (another impossible and hypothetical origin only fantasized in retrospect by the play), Caliban and his twentieth-century heirs must find a solution to the double bind in a "triple play" of what Baker calls "supraliteracy," the deployment of the vernacular, "hooting" phaneric deformities that are the sign of the slipped noose, of the freed, independent, and victorious subject.

What Baker is here calling for, in an elegant phaneric display of his own, is essentially a rhetoric and a politics of deformation. His word "hoot," which he takes from an ethological description of gorilla display,

nowhere appears in *The Tempest*, but it suggests the “mimic hootings” of Wordsworth’s Boy of Winander, and even the phaneric “hoos” of Stevens’s Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan.

The “deformed slave” who is Caliban has lately been taken as the site of deformation for a number of contemporary debates. Thus we might consider Caliban not only as a figure for the colonized subject, but also as a figure for mixed genre, as Paul Howe has suggested,²⁶ or (on the model of Frankenstein’s monster) as a figure for woman. And this kind of deformation, too, has potential relevance for Richard III. In the course of Shakespeare’s play Richard himself develops what is in effect a rhetoric of deformation, calling attention to the novelties of his physical shape and the ways in which that shape liberates him from the constraints of conventional courtly deportment. “Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,” Richard himself feels free to cheat and dissemble; “deformed, unfinished,” he freely descants on his own deformity.

“Man,” writes Nietzsche in his essay “The Use and Abuse of History,” “braces himself against the great and ever greater pressure of what is past: it pushes him down or bends him sideways, it encumbers his steps as a dark invisible burden which he would like to disown.”²⁷ So Richard “Crook-back” (3 *Henry VI* 1.4.75; 2.2.96; 5.5.30) is bent not only by specific historical distortions but by the intrinsic distortion of history, which Richard bears, like an ape, on his shoulders. Again, as *Titus Andronicus* particularizes in its decapitations and cutting off of hands the dismembering of historiographical writing, so *Richard III* anatomizes the dangers of re-membering, of history as an artifact of memory.

Writing of what he describes as “monumental history,” Nietzsche argues that

as long as the soul of historiography lies in the great stimuli that a man of power derives from it, as long as the past has to be described as worthy of imitation, as imitable and possible for a second time, it of course incurs the danger of becoming *somewhat distorted*. . . . there have been ages, indeed, which were quite incapable of distinguishing between a monumentalized past and a mythical fiction. . . . Monumental history deceives by analogies: with seductive similarities it inspires to fanaticism; and when we go on to think of this kind of history in the hands of gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels, then we see empires destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions launched and the number of historical “effects in themselves,” that is to say, effects without sufficient cause, again augmented. (Pp. 70–71)

“Gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels,” “wars and revolutions launched,” “princes murdered,” the past “somewhat distorted” in the direction of mythical fiction—Nietzsche is uncannily describing not only

monumental history but also Richard III—and *Richard III*. Moreover, Richard himself in his opening soliloquy articulates the process of monumental history.

Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
Our stern alarums chang’d to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.

(1.1.5–8)

This is the description of something completed and assimilated, something finished—against which Richard remains defiantly incomplete and imperfect: “curtail’d of this fair proportion, / Cheated of feature by dissembling nature, / Deform’d, unfinish’d, sent before my time / Into this breathing world scarce half made up” (lines 18–21). Yet Nietzsche, too, writes of the consciousness of history as something that reminds man of “what his existence fundamentally is—an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one” (p. 61). So the imperfect and unperfected Richard stands over against “the phrase ‘it was’” (p. 70).

It is in the multiple narratives of birth that Richard comes most clearly to stand as an embodiment of the paradoxical temporality of history. On the one hand, he is premature: “deform’d, unfinish’d, sent before [his] time.” Yet on the other, he is born too late, “held for two years in his mother’s womb, emerging with teeth,” overdeveloped and overarmed. Both Robert N. Watson and Janet Adelman²⁸ have identified, in psychoanalytic terms, another birth scene, a fantasized one in which the “unlick’d bear-whelp” carves his own way out of the womb, making a birth canal where none exists.

Seeking a way, and straying from the way,
Not knowing how to find the open air,
But toiling desperately to find it out—
Torment myself to catch the English crown;
And from that torment I will free myself,
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.

(3 *Henry VI* 3.2.176–81)

Figuratively, this may be seen as a process of violently willful biological birth; politically, it presents itself as a birth of historical process. Premature, Protean, fully and functionally toothed, Richard here hews out an historical path, the way to the crown (and to the chronicles). The violence of his act is inseparable and indistinguishable from that act itself. His use of history is simultaneously and necessarily its abuse.

There is another retelling of the birth story in *Richard III*, this one by the Lady Anne:

If ever he have child, abortive be it,
 Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
 Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
 May fright the hopeful mother at the view,
 And that be heir to his unhappiness!

(1.2.21-25)

This passage, too, can be conceived as a description of autogenesis. The fantasy child who is to be the only offspring of Richard and Anne is Richard himself.²⁹ A different construction, or reconstruction, of Anne's speech, however, might read this predictive curse as the birth of history. History—the historical subject and the synthetic Shakespearean history play—is the prodigious and untimely result of the union of chronicle and drama. Anne's imagined scene of the mother's dismay (she does not, of course, envisage *herself* as the "hopeful mother" of his child) strongly recalls King Henry VI's account of the birth of Richard: "Thy mother felt more than a mother's pain, / And yet brought forth less than a mother's hope" (3 *Henry VI* 5.6.49-50).

As I have argued elsewhere,³⁰ recent critical displacements of the once-fashionable notion of "providential history" by a politically self-conscious, ideologically determined reshaping of historical "fact" have foregrounded the degree of belatedness intrinsic to and implicit in Elizabethan history plays. The "now" of these plays is always preeminently the "now" of the time of their literary genesis—the time is manifestly out of joint, and the retrospective reconstruction of history ("to tell my story," to pursue Hamlet's own chronicling of the process) is the only means of shaping time at either the protagonist's or the dramatist's command. "May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?" asks Lear's Fool (*King Lear* 1.4.223), but the cart, or tumbril, of historical events inevitably draws the hero's charger in its wake. Thus the repudiation of the fiction of historical accuracy or "objectivity," the self-delusive and far-from-benign assumption that the past can be recaptured without contamination from the present, has become a crucial starting point of both the Foucauldian and the deconstructive projects. For history is always in the process of deconstructing itself—of becoming, as it always was, "history," the story that the teller imposes upon the reconstructed events of the past.

This is not new news to the chroniclers of chroniclers. Sidney's famous description of the historian in his *Apologie for Poetrie* characterizes him as "loaden with old mouse-eaten records, authorizing himself (for the most part) upon other histories, whose greatest authorities, are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay, having much ado to accord differing writers, and to pick truth out of partiality."³¹ The historian is constrained by

his burden of facts; "many times he must tell events, whereof he can yield no cause; or if he do, it must be poetical" (p. 233)—must, that is, make the move from "fact" to fiction, "for that a feigned example, hath as much force to teach, as a true example." One of the best known passages in the *Apologie* addresses the question of theatrical fictions, mimesis, and allegoresis.

What child is there, that coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes? If then a man can arrive, at that child's age, to know that the poet's persons and doings, are but pictures what should be, and not stories what have been, they will never give the lie, to things not affirmatively, but allegorically, and figuratively written. And therefore, as in history, looking for truth, they go away full fraught with falsehood; so in poesy, looking for fiction, they shall use the narration, but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention. (P. 249)

This quotation, often cited, is frequently truncated by the omission of the last sentence. Its sense seems to be that poesy—which here includes drama—is less culpable of distortion than history, because it does not pretend to objectivity. Or, to put the position somewhat differently, its distortion is the product of design. A very similar position is adumbrated in "The Use and Abuse of History," in Nietzsche's argument that the only possible "objectivity" in the framing of history comes in the work of the dramatist, who alone writes history as an expression of the "artistic drive" rather than as a putatively authoritative and objective record of *what was*. For drama, in Nietzsche's terms, offers

an artistically true painting but not an historically true one. To think of history objectively in this fashion is the silent work of the dramatist; that is to say, to think of all things in relation to all others and to weave the isolated event into the whole: always with the presupposition that if a unity of plan does not already reside in things it must be implanted into them. Thus man spins his web over the past and subdues it, thus he gives expression to his artistic drive—but not to his drive towards truth or justice. Objectivity and justice have nothing to do with one another. (P. 91)

By contrast to drama all other modes of historical writing are fundamentally unsatisfactory, constructive in some ways but destructive in others. Since they are written by historical subjects in effect created by the very history they seek to document, there can be no objective or authoritative vantage point for their observations. And this point is oddly but firmly insisted upon by both Sidney and Nietzsche. Thus Sidney claims that "the best of the historian is subject to the poet; for whatsoever action, or

faction, whatsoever counsel, policy, or war stratagem, the historian is bound to recite, that may the poet (if he list) with his imitation make his own" (p. 234). And Nietzsche writes that the human subject must situate himself or herself "against history" (p. 106); "if you want biographies, do not desire those which bear the legend 'Herr So-and-So and his age,' but those upon whose title-page there would stand 'a fighter against his age'" (p. 95).

The title page of biographies; "the history of great men" (p. 95). It is often asked about Shakespeare's *Richard III*, as about other pivotal works in the Shakespeare canon (e.g., *Julius Caesar*): Is it a tragedy or is it a history? Is it, as both Quarto and Folio title pages call it, "the tragedy of Richard III," or, as the Folio classifies it, generically to be listed under the histories? Nietzsche has here uncannily provided an answer to the question of *why* this is a question: the birth of history can only be presented as the birth of tragedy.

"The Use and Abuse of History" (1874) is indeed in some sense a coda or extrapolation of Nietzsche's great study of the rise and fall of the tragic vision in ancient Greece, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871). In that work, as Hayden White has noted, Nietzsche "lamented the decline and fall of ancient tragedy, and named the modern historical consciousness as its antitype."³² "The Use and Abuse of History" continues this exploration of what has gone wrong, of what has been lost with the loss of the classical tragic vision.

But Nietzsche's remarks are not confined to the Greeks alone. There is another dramatist who haunts Nietzsche's text, and that dramatist, perhaps unsurprisingly, is Shakespeare. Twice he takes as his starting point what someone else has said about Shakespeare's intersection with the modern historical world. Quoting Franz Grillparzer, Nietzsche critiques the contemporary German's sensibility, developed, so he says, "from his experience in the theater. 'We feel in abstractions,' [Grillparzer] says, 'we hardly know any longer how feeling really expresses itself with our contemporaries; we show them performing actions such as they no longer perform nowadays. Shakespeare has ruined all of us moderns'" (p. 81). Shortly thereafter, Nietzsche quotes Goethe: "Goethe once said of Shakespeare: 'No one despised outward costume more than he; he knew very well the inner human costume, and here all are alike. They say he hit off the Romans admirably; but I don't find it so, they are all nothing but flesh-and-blood Englishmen, but they are certainly human beings, human from head to foot, and the Roman toga sits on them perfectly well.'" Nietzsche takes this opportunity to condemn present-day literati and officials, who could not be portrayed as Romans

because they are not human beings but only flesh-and-blood compendia and as it were abstractions made concrete. . . . creations of historical culture, wholly structure, image, form without demonstrable content and, unhappily, *ill-designed form* and, what is more, *uniform*. And so let my proposition be understood and pondered: *history can be borne only by strong personalities, weak ones are utterly extinguished by it* . . . He who no longer dares to trust himself but involuntarily asks of history "How ought I to feel about this?" finds that his timidity gradually turns him into an actor and that he is playing a role, usually indeed many roles and therefore playing them badly and superficially. (pp. 85–86)

"*Ill-designed form* and, what is more, *uniform*." For Nietzsche the modern politician's failure lies precisely in his conformity to unthinking standards of political correctness, what Nietzsche scornfully calls "objective" standards, as if any strong personality, in his view, could be "objective" or subscribe to an "objective" reading of history. "Ill-design" for Nietzsche is thus the obverse of what it is for *Richard III*. In Shakespeare's play Richard's physical appearance, his ill-design, perversely glories in its difference from the usual, the uniform, the fully formed.

The famous scene in which he woos and wins the Lady Anne ("and will she yet abase her eyes on me. . . . On me, that halts and am misshapen thus / My dukedom to a beggarly denier, / I do mistake my person all this while! / Upon my life she finds (although I cannot) / Myself to be a marv'lous proper man. / I'll be at charges for a looking glass" [1.2.246–55]) displays a Richard whose narcissistic posturing translates ill-design ("misshapen thus") into "proper" or handsome appearance—and thus to *proprietary* and *appropriative* behavior, made possible by his flouting of the conventional *proprieties*.

Shakespeare appears a third time in this relatively short essay, when Nietzsche is offering a critique of the "philosophy of the unconscious" of Eduard von Hartmann (p. 115). Von Hartmann's description of the "manhood of man" is ironically disparaged by a citation from Jaques's celebrated speech in *As You Like It*, on the seven ages of man—a citation that not surprisingly encodes the word "history":

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange, eventful history,
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.
(2.7.163–66)

The Richard who comes into the world already provided with teeth is an apt counterimage to this toothless historical deterioration. Yet, as

these citations make clear, the power of drama as a historical force can be enfeebling as well as enabling, reducing men to actors in the very act of raising history to drama. "Overproud European," writes Nietzsche in an apostrophe that neatly deconstructs Pico's *De dignitate hominis*,

you are raving! Your knowledge does not perfect nature, it only destroys your own nature. Compare for once the heights of your capacity for knowledge with the depths of your capacity for action. It is true you climb upon the sunbeams of knowledge up to Heaven, but you also climb down to chaos. Your manner of moving, that of climbing upon knowledge, is your fatality; the ground sinks away from you into the unknown; there is no longer any support for your life, only spider's threads which every new grasp of knowledge tears apart.—But enough of this seriousness, since it is also possible to view the matter more cheerfully.

The madly thoughtless shattering and dismantling of all foundations, their dissolution into a continual evolving that flows ceaselessly away, the tireless unspinning and historicizing of all there has ever been by modern man, the great cross-spider at the node of the cosmic web—all this may concern and dismay moralists, artists, the pious, even statesmen; we shall for once let it cheer us by looking at it in the glittering magic mirror of a *philosophical parodist* in whose head the age has come to an ironical awareness of itself. (P. 108)

Self-irony, proclaimed by a philosophical parodist eyeing history (and the construction of the human subject) in a glittering magic mirror. It is a stunning evocation of Richard III. "Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass" (*Richard III* 1.2.262–63). Over and over again, Shakespeare's Richard Crook-back is compared to a spider, spinning plots. Queen Margaret refers to him as a "bottled spider, / Whose deadly web ensnareth thee about" (1.3.241–42), and the hapless Queen Elizabeth recalls her warning when it is too late: "O, thou didst prophesy the time would come / That I should wish for thee to help me curse / That bottled spider, that foul bunch back'd toad!" (4.4.80–81). The Lady Anne likewise classes him with "spiders, toads, / Or any creeping venom'd thing that lives" (1.2.19–20)—even as she succumbs to his designs. Indeed Richard's father, the duke of York, his predecessor in vengeful soliloquy, had claimed for himself the same identification: "My brain, more busy than the laboring spider / Weaves tedious snare to trap mine enemies" (2 *Henry VI* 3.1.339–40).

Is the present afflicted or instructed by the power of tragedy to "weave the isolated event into the whole?" Can the "tireless unspinning and historicizing of all there has ever been by modern man, the great cross-spider at the node of the cosmic web"—occupied with weaving "spider's

threads which every new grasp of knowledge tears apart"—be seen as that which cripples as well as empowers the observer who would profit from historical models, historical example, historical textualizations? This is perhaps the question Shakespeare forces us to ask of our own ambivalent fascination with "that bottled spider / Whose deadly web ensnareth [us] about": Richard III—and *Richard III*—as the dramatization of the power of deformity inherent in both tragedy and history.

Notes

1. *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). All citations from the plays are to this edition unless noted in the text.
2. Charles Ross, *Richard III* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
3. René Girard, "Hamlet's Dull Revenge," *Stanford Literary Review* 1 (Fall 1984): 159.
4. Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 3:223.
5. *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 2 *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard Sylvester (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 7. Sir Horace Walpole, one of the earliest defenders of Richard's reputation, characterized More as "an historian who is capable of employing truth only as cement in a fabric of fiction" (*Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III* [London: J. Dodsley, 1768; reprint, 1965], p. 116), and recent scholars have explicitly identified the kind of "fiction" More is writing as drama. Thus A. R. Myers asserts that "his history is much more like a drama, unfolded in magnificent prose, for which fidelity to historical fact is scarcely relevant" ("The Character of Richard III," originally published in *History Today* 4 (1954), reprinted in *English Society and Government in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. C. M. D. Crowder (Edinburgh and London: 1967), p. 119, cited in Ross, *Richard III*; and Alison Hanham argues that the *History* is really a "satirical drama" meant to display More's own cleverness rather than his command of fact (*Richard III and His Early Historians* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], pp. 152–90).
6. I am indebted to Richard Strier for this observation.
7. Sigmund Freud, "Some Character-Types Met With in Psychoanalytic Work," in *Character and Culture*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 159.
8. Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 437.
9. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," in *Ecrits*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 4.
10. Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 158–59. In a recent study of biography and fiction in Tudor-Stuart history writing (*Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984]) Judith H. An-

derson notes that historians regularly impeach Shakespeare's play for its lack of fidelity to historical fact and points out accurately that the play would lose its power if it did not convince the audience that it was "somehow real history" (p. 111)—"despite ourselves, we believe it" (p. 123). Yet Anderson's view of Richard's deformity is a relatively conventional one. Citing Freud, and reasserting the humanistic commonplace that suffering creates art, she describes Richard as "the misshapen product of his nature and time and also, as we watch him in the play, the product of his own making" (p. 117). Whether self-fashioned or twisted by his own deformity, Richard is seen as compensating for a disability, rather than seizing that disability as the occasion for a theoretical exploration of the nature of deformation.

11. Pamela Tudor-Craig, *Richard III* (1973), cited in Ross, *Richard III*, pp. 80, 92-93.

12. Jonathan Culler, "Presupposition and Intertextuality," in *The Pursuit of Signs* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 177.

13. Antony Hammond, ed., *King Richard III*, The Arden Shakespeare (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 338.

14. Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble . . . Families of Lancaster and York* (1548), cited in Hammond, *King Richard III*, 353.

15. See Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), in *Studies in Parapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 19-60, especially pp. 38-42 on "the double" and the repetition compulsion.

16. Hall, cited in Hammond, *King Richard III*, p. 354.

17. More, *History of King Richard III*, p. 68.

18. Bullough, *Sources* 3:232.

19. Hammond, *King Richard III*, p. 87.

20. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 72, emphasis added.

21. Francis Bacon, *Essays Civil and Moral* (London: Ward, Lock, 1910), pp. 69-70.

22. Arthur Sherbo, ed., *Johnson on Shakespeare* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), 7:605.

23. Walter Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 7. See Bate's sensitive treatment of these physical deformities and Johnson's apparent repression of their origins, esp. p. 9. My thanks to Joseph Bartolomeo for reminding me of the relevance of Johnson's own physical disabilities.

24. Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in *Johnson on Shakespeare*, Sherbo, 7:91.

25. Houston A. Baker, Jr., "Caliban's Triple Play," in "Race," *Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 390.

26. Paul Howe, personal communication, January 1987.

27. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History," in *Untimely Meditations*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 61. Hollingdale translates this famous essay as "On the Uses and Disadvantages

of History for Life." I use his translation, as being the most accurate modern version, but take the liberty of retaining the title by which the piece is best known to English readers—and, I think, most suggestively rendered for argumentation. Page references of this essay are hereafter included in the text.

28. Robert N. Watson, *Shakespeare and the Hazards of Ambition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 20; and Janet Adelman, "Born of Woman: Fantasies of Maternal Power in *Macbeth*," in *Cannibals, Witches, and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance*, ed. Marjorie Garber (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 91-93.

29. See Watson, *Shakespeare and the Hazards of Ambition*, p. 26.

30. Marjorie Garber, "What's Past Is Prologue: Temporality and Prophecy in Shakespeare's History Plays," in *Renaissance Literary Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Lewalski, Harvard English Studies 14 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 301-311.

31. "An Apology for Poetry," in *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. David Kalstone (New York: Signet Classic, 1970), p. 227. Page references of this essay are hereafter included in the text.

32. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 356.