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Résumé de l'article

Cet article montre que la pièce de théâtre de John Ford, Perkin Warbeck, doit être comprise dans le contexte des nouvelles lectures jacobéennes de l'historiographie du règne d'Henri VII. On y retrace les origines et la circulation des confessions d'imposture de Warbeck, pour ensuite exposer combien les chroniqueurs du XVIe siècle se sont fiés à la télépathie, à la voyance, aux faux raisonnements et au bruit des invectives. L'article met en lumière la réévaluation de ces mémoires des années 1490 par d'importants historiens du XVIIe siècle. On y montre ainsi que Ford ramène cette affaire à l'état d'indétermination qu'elle avait sans doute pour ses contemporains, en éliminant la catégorie de la confession religieuse et en mettant en avant la stratégie de « realpolitik », qui menait à ne pas répondre aux questions persistantes de l'Assemblée au sujet de l'identité réelle de Perkin.

"No chronicle records his fellow":
Reading *Perkin Warbeck* in the Early Seventeenth Century

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This article argues that John Ford's play Perkin Warbeck *should be read in the context of "new" Jacobean readings of the historiography of Henry VII's reign. After tracing the origins and dissemination of Warbeck's scaffold confession of imposture, and exposing the sixteenth-century chroniclers' reliance on mind-reading, clairvoyance, fallacious reasoning, and shrill invective, the article reveals the revaluation of this received "memory" of the 1490s by influential seventeenth-century historians. I argue that Ford's elimination of the confession and his strategy of staging realpolitik as a kind of non sequitur response to the audience's persistent questions regarding the "truth" of Perkin's identity return the story to the indeterminacy it had for its contemporaries.*

Cet article montre que la pièce de théâtre de John Ford, Perkin Warbeck*, doit être comprise dans le contexte des nouvelles lectures jacobéennes de l'historiographie du règne d'Henri VII. On y retrace les origines et la circulation des confessions d'imposture de Warbeck, pour ensuite exposer combien les chroniqueurs du XVIe siècle se sont fiés à la télépathie, à la voyance, aux faux raisonnements et au bruit des invectives. L'article met en lumière la réévaluation de ces mémoires des années 1490 par d'importants historiens du XVIIe siècle. On y montre ainsi que Ford ramène cette affaire à l'état d'indétermination qu'elle avait sans doute pour ses contemporains, en éliminant la catégorie de la confession religieuse et en mettant en avant la stratégie de « realpolitik », qui menait à ne pas répondre aux questions persistantes de l'Assemblée au sujet de l'identité réelle de Perkin.*

One might well say, echoing John Ford's prologue to his play *Perkin Warbeck: A Strange Truth* (printed 1634), that the only thing more curious than the playwright's return to a dramatic genre "So out of fashion, so unfollowed" such as the history play was his choice of subject matter, "A history of noble mention, known, / Famous, and true" (Prologue, 2 and 15–16):[1] the story of the 1490s struggle between the two rival claimants to the English throne, Henry VII and Perkin Warbeck, the latter claiming to be one of the surviving sons of Edward IV allegedly murdered by Richard III in

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1. All citations from the play refer to John Ford, *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck: A Strange Truth*, ed. Peter Ure (London: Methuen, 1968).

the Tower.[2] Critics have studied the play's place in the history of its genre,[3] its relation to its political milieu,[4] as well as Ford's adaptation of the story he found in two direct sources, Thomas Gainsford's *The True and Wonderful History of Perkin Warbeck* (1618) and Sir Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* (1622),[5] but perhaps the most heated debate has been waged regarding our understanding of Ford's personal opinion about Perkin's claim.[6]

2. Michael Hicks considers Henry's struggles against Lambert Simnel, Perkin Warbeck, and the de la Pole inheritors of the Yorkist claim as part of the "Second Phase" of the "Third War" (1485–1525) in the Wars of the Roses. In his view, this was not a singular war but three different conflicts fought over different causes, and it only eventually became a dynastic struggle which it had not been throughout. For his account of the period under discussion here, see Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 233–52.

3. For scholarship that situates it in the broader theatrical context of the history play under the first two Stuarts see Anne Barton, "He That Plays the King: Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* and the Stuart History Play," in *English Drama: Forms and Development: Essays in Honour of Muriel Clara Bradbrook*, ed. Marie Axton and Raymond Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 69–93; and Miles Taylor, "The End of the English History Play in *Perkin Warbeck*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 48.2 (2008): 395–418.

4. Among the many readings that situate the play in a Jacobean or Caroline context, two stand out for their richness. Dale Randall's argument for the Jacobean moment reveals a very tight ideological connection between Henry VII and James I on a personal, cultural, and political level. Lisa Hopkins, on the other hand, presents an intricate web of familial relationships and political alliances among Ford's aristocratic patrons in a Caroline context, and she suggests its potentially subversive reception in the reign of Charles I. See Dale B. J. Randall, *"Theatres of Greatness": A Revisionary View of Ford's* Perkin Warbeck (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Press, 1986); Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), and "John Ford and Charles Aleyn: Two 1630s Histories of Henry VII," *Notes and Queries* 47 (2000): 483–85.

5. See Peter Ure, introduction to *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck: A Strange Truth* by John Ford, ed. Peter Ure (London: Methuen, 1968), xvii–lxxxix, xxxv–xlv; Taylor; Willy Maley, "Fording the Nation: The Abridgement of the British Problem in *Perkin Warbeck*," *Critical Survey* 9 (1997): 11–31; Joseph Candido, "The 'Strange Truth' of *Perkin Warbeck*," *Philological Quarterly* 59 (1980): 300–16. Bacon's completed work was printed in 1622, but it is important to note that a manuscript draft of what would eventually become the *History* was written in the reign of Elizabeth, and this is the source text John Speed identifies in the margins as "*Sir* Fr. Bacon. frag. MS" in his *Historie of Great Britaine* (1611) for the reign of Henry VII (John Speed, *The History of Great Britaine* [London, 1611], 728 and *passim*). For the full text of Bacon's early draft, see Brian Vickers, ed. *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII by Sir Francis Bacon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 209–14.

6. For a detailed overview of the various critical viewpoints up to 2015, see Gilles Monsarrat, "John Ford's Substantive Accidentals in *Perkin Warbeck*," *The Library* 16 (2015): 446–57, 446–51.

Whatever views have been proposed about Ford's understanding of Perkin and Henry VII as historical figures, critical attention was repeatedly drawn to one inescapable moment in the play that influenced each critic's view: the absence of Perkin Warbeck's confession of his imposture which exists in both Gainsford's and Bacon's texts in the moments preceding Perkin's public execution.[7]

Whereas most critics have been concerned with contextualizing and explaining the meaning of Ford's redaction of the "historical facts" only in relation to Gainsford and Bacon, it is equally important to pay attention to other contemporary readings of this story. To be sure, George Crymes's response to Ford's play, eternalized in the "Commendatory Verses" published with the play, calls attention to the absence of the familiar elements of the story, when he complains that Perkin's "execution / […] rest[s] unmentioned" and "His birth's collusion […] / Lie[s] buried in the story," but Crymes is convinced that Perkin's "Title, doubtless [was] proved unjust" ("Commendatory Verses,"

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7. Among the readings that do not accept Perkin's claim, Henry sometimes comes off as a "flawless" or "ideal" king for the nascent early modern world—see H. J. Oliver, *The Problem of John Ford* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1955) and Donald K. Anderson Jr., *John Ford* (New York: Twayne, 1972)— or conversely, as "a real king, […] a practical, cautious, unheroic individual, greatly occupied with questions of cold cash" (Barton, 77). Some readers have suggested that Perkin, in fact, unsettles the notion of Henry's "ideal" kingship through his more decorous performance of "royalty" and that Perkin "as opposed to the Machiavellian Henry or the feudal James […] figures actorly modernity" as a site of "anxiety about royal effectiveness and legitimacy" (Jean Howard, "'Effeminately dolent': Gender and Legitimacy in Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*," in *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions*, ed. Michael Neill [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 261–79, 264). Others have argued that Perkin manifests a kind of lunacy, an aristocratic delusion (Clifford Leech, *John Ford and the Drama of His Time* [London: Chatto & Windus, 1957], 92; Ure, "Introduction," lxxvii), or an embodiment of a common motif in Stuart drama of "the waking man's dream" (Barton, 79). Ellen Ryan Dubinski's argument attempts to sit on the fence on the issue of "kingship" whereby Henry is an "admirable and competent leader of his nation" while Perkin elicits the audience's "sympathy as the king of passion and imagination" (Ellen Ryan Dubinski, "The Chronicling of Majesty in *Perkin Warbeck*," *Iowa State Journal of Research* 59 [1985]: 233–40, 233). Illustrating the futility of the debate about kingship in Ford's play, and emphasizing royalty's fundamentally performative nature in the stage world, Alexander Leggatt perhaps comes closest to the mark when he writes, "If we seek for 'the reality of kingship' in *Perkin Warbeck* we find ourselves chasing shadows" (Alexander Leggatt, "A Double Reign: *Richard II* and *Perkin Warbeck*," in *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Comparison*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986], 129–39, 134). For a more complete overview of the various readings, see Monsarrat, 446–51.

3.3–4, 9) thereby showing that Ford's contemporaries had the same version of history as many modern critics and were just as likely to be resistant to the playwright's rendition of what they thought they *knew* about this story. As I shall show, although Ford is the most famous and perhaps most controversial early modern reader of the Perkin Warbeck saga, he was neither alone in turning to this story in the first third of the seventeenth century, nor the only one to see problems in how it had been handed down to his generation.[8]

I shall argue that one reason—if not the most important—why Ford and his contemporaries turned to this story in particular is that they had an opportunity to encounter it in a context that simply had not been available to Elizabethan readers, and that Ford's crucial choice to eliminate the confession may have been in line with the thinking of some of the historical authorities of his own time. In the first decades of the Stuart century we find an intricate web of connections between historiographic texts and their authors, who all turn to the story of Henry VII's reign in strikingly new ways. Not only do they begin to analyze the king's personality in approaches typical of the nascent *politic* style of historiography, but they also emphasize the causes of the rebellions against him, the role of the common people in them, and the instability of memory; perhaps most importantly, in a meta-historical fashion they provide us with information about why this story had not been told in this way before.[9]

In an important recent study, Philip Schwyzer traces how "memories and postmemories" of the reign of Richard III were "preserved, transmitted, and transformed," and shows how the "orally transmitted" memories of Richard III remained "distinct from and sometimes at odds with his image in written history—down to the end of the sixteenth century, and even beyond."[10] Relying

8. Ure and Hopkins have established a very convincing case for composition shortly before the play's publication date in 1634, but Randall offers a plausible earlier composition date late in the reign of James I, around 1623. My argument remains unchanged regardless of the date because my study is primarily focused on the decade preceding this plausible ten-year frame as the crucial context that may have shaped Ford's reading of history. See Ure, "Introduction" and "A Pointer to the Date of Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*," *Notes and Queries* 17 (1970): 215–17; Hopkins, *John Ford;* Randall.

9. For an excellent overview of the changing "posthumous reputation" of Henry VII in early modern historiography and beyond, see Sydney Anglo, "Ill of the Dead: The Posthumous Reputation of Henry VII," *Renaissance Studies* 1 (1987): 27–47.

10. Philip Schwyzer, "Lees and Moonshine: Remembering Richard III, 1485–1635," *Renaissance Quarterly* 63 (2010): 850–83, 850, 851.

on the prism of memory studies employed especially by social psychologists, Schwyzer examines the contexts of memorial activity informing Shakespeare's *Richard III* when it emerged in the last decade of the sixteenth century,[11] as part of the temporal arc known to social psychologists wherein there is "a tendency on the part of both individuals and groups to revisit the past at intervals of twenty to thirty years, confronting traumatic or transformative events and evaluating them in a fresh light."[12] Tracing the various "flashbulb memories" and "memories of informants" of the sixteenth century, with particular attention to Sir Thomas More's account of the Ricardian years, Schwyzer identifies the ebb and transmission of *viva voce* testimony (as well as rumour) by nameless contemporaries and their entry into the codified pages of chronicled memory, and suggests that there may even have been a reverse influence from such textually recorded memories on the culture, as "the Richard of textual history began from a very early point to influence oral traditions and even private memories of Richard's reign."[13]

> Yet the pressure of textual history on living memory would not have been experienced solely or universally as a pressure to conform. With the emergence of an official version comes the possibility of consciously dissenting oral traditions. For some, the awareness that their private recollections conflicted with or disproved the public version of events may have lent additional urgency to preserving the memory and passing it on.[14]

It is not unimportant to note that the subject of Schwyzer's study stands as a *prequel* to the story of Perkin Warbeck, for his fate and identity are inextricably tied up with the mysterious death of the two princes in the Tower. And, not surprisingly, among the people whom Schwyzer identifies as crucial preservers and transmitters of dissonant memories of the time of Richard III, two men play an equally crucial role in the retelling of Perkin's story in the first two decades of the seventeenth century: John Stow and Sir George Buck, "for whom storing up and sharing such subversive information was a source of intellectual

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11. Schwyzer, 851.

12. Schwyzer, 855.

13. Schwyzer, 856, 858–59.

14. Schwyzer, 859.

and interpersonal enjoyment."[15] Just like in the case of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the works by Gainsford, Bacon, and Ford emerge at the tail end of

> a period after the extinction of living memory, but still within the horizon
> of what is variously termed *active memory* or *communicative memory*, the
> period of ninety to 120 years in which memories may be transmitted over
> three or four generations, while retaining at least some of the vividness
> and immediacy of personal recollection.[16]

If the fame of the Old Countess of Desmond "who liued in the yeere 1589. and many yeeres since, who was married in Edward the Fourths time"—and who, by other accounts, perhaps once danced with Richard of Gloucester, grew a third set of teeth, and lived to be 140[17]—is connected to her incredible longevity, we must remember that for Sir Walter Raleigh and Fynes Moryson, the writers who mention her in her ripe old age, she stood as a conduit of *living memory* of the 1480s and 90s, and through her they felt a proximity to that period even while writing in the second decade of the seventeenth century—the same time when Gainsford, Buck, and Bacon turned to writing about Henry and Perkin. As long as "contemporaries" like the Countess were in their midst, the events of a turbulent past might not seem so very distant—not in a chronicle and not on the professional theatrical stage. Two history plays performed in 1633 that narrate the events that the Countess of Desmond was imagined to have witnessed in her youth—Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*—both rely on the ebb and flow of memory in the nation.[18] But the

15. Schwyzer, 866.

16. Schwyzer, 862.

17. Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* (London, 1614), 78; Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary… Containing His Ten Yeeres Trauell through the Twelue Dominions*, 3 vols. (London, 1617), 3:1.3.43. Also see Schwyzer, 870–71, and Anthony M. McCormack, "Fitzgerald, Katherine, Countess of Desmond," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9573.

18. Karen Britland suggests that a court performance of Shakespeare's *Richard III* by the King's Company on 16 November 1633, in celebration of Henrietta Maria's twenty-fourth birthday, "spoke directly to the queen," thereby making the lessons of English history from the 1480s relevant to her own political involvement as a woman in the 1630s (*Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 132–35). Britland does not mention Ford, but *Perkin Warbeck*'s coincident emergence strongly suggests the resurgent topicality of the political concerns from the end of the fifteenth century. See also Hopkins, "John Ford." For Caroline re-imaginings of fifteenth-century

instability of memory proves to be an even more important factor in the case of *Perkin Warbeck* because Ford's re-imagining of the past appears to be grounded in a decisive shift in the historiographic community towards a revaluation of the received account of the events in the 1490s.

Kevin Sharpe's "representational approach"[19] has revealed how the Tudor and Stuart monarchs took great care to construct and market their images as part of a broader process of "legitimizing" their authority. Scholarship of early modern historiography, and especially of Holinshed's *Chronicles*,[20] has moved away from simplistic notions of their function as propagandistic peddlers of theories of obedience and the Tudor "myth," but Sharpe's nuanced understanding of "legitimation" as a "cultural process"[21] and its fundamental connection to cultural memory[22] offers a useful framework for this study of the historiography of the reign of Henry VII:

> Legitimation unquestionably involved an *appeal to the past*, to tradition; but, necessarily, at moments of crisis or change, legitimation might require a *departure from tradition*, if a departure was not publicly proclaimed. […] More than a narrowly legal or constitutional process, the legitimation of a ruler necessitated the (more or less) difficult process of establishing an interpretation of the past, as well as present, texts of the culture which subjects were willing to endorse; at times even to create a shared myth. Legitimation I take in this study to be a cultural process enacted in and through histories, paintings, legends and prophecies as much as the usual political pronouncements, enacted that is by means of fictions as much

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history, see Igor Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation: Ideals, Memory, and Practical Policy in the Chronicles* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 243–46.

19. Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 16.

20. See Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's* Chronicles (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation*; Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, and Felicity Heal, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's* Chronicles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

21. Sharpe, *Selling*, 11.

22. "Memory, memories we should say, because they are not predominantly archival but personal, psychological imaginings and constructions as well as unmediated recollections, are never removed from the present self, society or state but are part of the formation and legitimation of selves, communities and polities" (Sharpe, *Selling*, 12).

as truths. The legitimation, exercise, representation and perception of authority are inextricably connected to cultural memory.[23]

While there is no evidence that Henry VII ever directly interfered in the work of any of the historians writing in his lifetime, we should remember that there are significant differences among the texts left to us by Henry's contemporaries, particularly regarding their effectiveness in disseminating a specific portrait of the king. C. S. L. Davies differentiates between "court" texts such as Bernard André's that reflect an "authorized" self-image (or "how Henry wished himself to be considered") and "out-of-court" texts like the chronicles.[24] The effectiveness of any historiographic text from this period can be measured by looking at how much of the disseminated specific information was absorbed culturally in the commonwealth of royal-image consumers.

I shall show not only the popularity and continued impact of some of these works well into the seventeenth century, but perhaps more importantly the specific "images" of Henry and his rival that they relayed to posterity. These records of the first and greatest challenge to Henry Tudor's legitimacy indeed reflect a distinct "cultural process" but they also refract what originally was the product of confused misapprehension and narrow partisan interest into a "received truth" handed down to posterity. In other words, if we are aware that propaganda and conscious self-image construction was very much the name of the political game in the 1480s and 90s, the effectiveness of each side's propaganda campaign can be gauged by looking at what political sound-bites "stuck" in the public consciousness and entered the chronicles. It is clear that some of these elements took far too long to be adopted by the chroniclers, which may in part explain some of the historiographic doubts informing readings in the seventeenth century. Some Stuart historians seem to have understood that what they were reading were "interpretations of the past" if not "shared fictions," as they began to peel back the veneer of antiquity from the "strange truth" of Perkin's story and to investigate the solidity of its two main buttresses—that Richard of York had been killed in the Tower and that Perkin Warbeck was a base Fleming. Their results ultimately unsettled the received image of Henry VII as "England's Solomon."

23. Sharpe, *Selling*, 12.

24. C. S. L. Davies, "Information, Disinformation and Political Knowledge under Henry VII and Early Henry VIII," *Historical Research* 85 (2012): 228–53, 244–46.

Modern critics have debated the meaning of Ford's excision of Perkin's confession on the scaffold after his capture by Henry VII, but the full range of the effects of this omission has not been ascertained until now because most past studies focused almost exclusively on Gainsford's and Bacon's texts as a kind of pattern critics anticipated Ford to follow.[25] As we shall see, the very *appearance* of Perkin's confession in early modern historiography is far more notable than its absence.

Perkin Warbeck in the sixteenth century

Gainsford's and Bacon's texts were published a full 120 years or more after the execution of Perkin Warbeck. Their narratives perfectly reflect an *ex post facto* approach to the account of the historical events, whereby whatever mystery existed in "real-time" regarding Perkin's origins and identity is consistently and repeatedly refuted by Gainsford's at times hysterical and Bacon's more sober refutations with appeals to the "truth" revealed in Perkin's scaffold confession.[26] Whereas Gainsford's text is decidedly literary in character, chock-full of

25. In 1970, Jonas Barish interrogated the critics' over-reliance on "official" Tudor historiography in their refutations of Ford's "subversiveness" and in their arguments to prove Perkin's imposture, pointing to their extratextual expectations according to which a playtext could not communicate any message not found in what they conceived to be univocal sources, while failing to understand that "much of what critics have seen as 'evidence' for disallowing Perkin's claim is simply an endorsement of the verdict of history, which happens to coincide with the verdict of Perkin's enemy" ("*Perkin Warbeck* as Anti-History," *Essays in Criticism* 20 [1970]: 151–71, 157). Barish argues that Ford's play "serves notice on us, if notice were needed, that we are not to equate the Perkin of the play with the vulgar upstart of the historians" (154) and that "Ford himself studiously refuses to declare for either party in the dispute" (159). Ivo Kamps situates Ford's play in the context of broader historiographic developments under the Stuarts and observes that the central element of "providentialist and 'great men' historiographical models," the differentiation of king and subject, is absent in Ford's play; he argues that in the text "the emphasis in the royal legitimation process falls less on the sacredness of personal or moral character or genealogy than on the performance of royal power and authority, especially as that *performance* is recorded for posterity by historians" (*Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 171). See also Taylor for a discussion of the work as "a history play about the end of history plays" (395).

26. Observing the influence of *ex post facto* deductions in early modern historiography, Alison Hanham urges historical scholarship to pay attention to the occasional discord between "living tradition" and "written authority," in the way Schwyzer's study makes abundantly clear. See Alison Hanham, *Richard III and His Early Historians, 1483–1535* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 116.

Euripidean quotations and allusions employed by omniscient narrator and characters alike, Bacon's work is a Tacitean *politic* history, yet one not altogether immune to an older hermeneutic resembling More's in the *History of Richard III* (ca. 1516–18),[27] in which the deepest insincere motivations of a historical figure can neither remain concealed from the piercing gaze nor escape the mind-reading prowess of a historian. The narratives differ only in the degree of the shrill invective hurled at Perkin's character, and the possibility of his identity as Richard Duke of York is never entertained seriously by either author.

But this is not how Perkin appears in the first historical accounts about the 1490s written by contemporaries of the events who would have had a chance to record either their own first-hand experiences or the *active*, orally-communicated memory of other eyewitnesses.[28] In the twenty years after Perkin's death, five texts emerge that make significant mention of him and his activities. Of these, three can be called vernacular "civic" chronicles: Richard Arnold's (printed in 1503), Robert Fabyan's (completed in 1504, printed in 1516 as the *New Cronycles of England and France*) with its "continuation" published by William Rastell in 1533, and the manuscript of the *Great Chronicle of London* completed around 1512. The remaining two texts are in Latin and penned by "foreigners," humanists who joined the court of Henry VII after Bosworth: Bernard André's *Historia regis Henrici Septimi* (written ca. 1500–02) and the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil whose manuscript was completed in 1513 but printed at Basel with revisions in 1534.[29]

Richard Arnold's *Chronicle*, whose descriptive title page reads *In this booke is conteyned the names of ye baylifs custos mairs and sherefs of the cite of london from the tyme of king richard the furst* (1503), has been dismissed by

27. Hanham, 146–47.

28. Davies suggests that little of the "background information" about the king "leaked out" to inform the writer of the *Great Chronicle* ("Information," 248). Hanham's caveat is well-taken: "The idea that any person who lived at the time of the events he reports is necessarily a reliable witness to them would not be entertained by any historian who gave the matter due thought, and a journalist, lawyer, or policeman would assure him that even actual eye-witnesses seldom agree about the details of what they saw. But all the same it is often taken for granted that Rous and Fabyan knew what they were talking about because they lived in the period concerned" (Hanham, 105).

29. Vergil arrived as a scholar with an established reputation to England in 1502, and undertook to write a history of England whose first draft reached to its completion date in September 1513 (the Vatican Manuscript); it circulated in manuscript form while material was added and edited until its first publication in Basel in 1534 (Hanham, 125).

most modern historians as a "hotchpotch […] intermingling of such material as documents on civic land tenure, forms for the 'making of indebtors', instructions for making vinegar or soap, and the earliest extant version of the very popular 'Ballad of the Nut-Brown Maid,'" but it also contains many important documents for the history of London, and was rightly held in high regard by several mid-century English chroniclers including the great London historian John Stow.[30] In the portion of the text that records the events of Henry VII's reign, it is a typical civic chronicle whose perspective is from inside London's walls, and events are mentioned only when they approach the city or take place within it. The complete text of Perkin's agency in history between 1493 and 1499, organized by mayoral years and the election of sheriffs, in Arnold's text occupies a single page,[31] and the annalist's telegraphic account manifests a myopic inability (or unwillingness) to recognize context and causality. Arnold pays equal attention to a sudden and inexplicable landing in the Downs by "one perkin warbek Callyng hym self kinge Edwardis sonne" with the loss of 160 men, his death at the very next mention, "perkin warbeck aforenamed was conuicte of treson & drawe~ from ye tour to tyburne & there ha~ged & beheded," the execution for treason of the Earl of Warwick "son to ye duke of clare~ce before reherssed whiche Erle had been kepte in the tour from the age of xi," and a particularly bad bout of weather with "gret flodis & wyndis thundring & lyghtni~gis." Arnold was a London merchant with connections to Flanders at the time of the events and may have even witnessed Perkin's public shaming and execution,[32] yet he makes no mention of a confession, nor does his brief account ever question Perkin's identity with any more force than to state that the man called himself "the ij. sonne of kinge Edward the iiij." Arnold's chronicle may share a common source with numerous other London chronicles—perhaps even a lost urtext C. L. Kingsford termed the "Main City Chronicle"[33]—but it is important to note that in the oldest chronicle printed immediately after Perkin's death, there is no mention of his confession—public or otherwise.

30. See Peter C. Herman, "Arnold, Richard," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/681.

31. Richard Arnold, *Chronicle* (London, 1503), A7v.

32. See Herman.

33. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley, introduction to *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (1938; reprint Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983), xv–lxxvi, xviii.

This omission is not characteristic only of haphazard London chronicles such as Arnold's;[34] even histories reflecting Henry's project of image-construction and public display[35] present similar problems of omission. André's incomplete *Life of Henry VII* is characterized by his imitation of classical models like Sallust and Suetonius,[36] excessive compliment to his royal patron, and the frequent insertion of himself into the narrative as a witness of several events, but scholarly attention has been drawn to the many blank pages into which he planned to insert the details of events and the names of persons he apparently did not know at the moment of composition. In that discourse punctuated by silence we can equally "witness Tudor tradition in the making and to see the context that first gave rise to [the] caricature of the historical Richard III" and a "poignant testimony to disappointed hopes and dashed expectations" of the king following the death of his firstborn Arthur.[37] Only the last few pages of André's narrative deal with Perkin Warbeck, but they do so in ways unfamiliar to us in Ford, Gainsford, Bacon, and every other sixteenth-century chronicle. According to André, Perkin's fall begins with his abandonment of his men at Exeter after confessing to them the "folly" of his fraudulent claim; thereafter he surrenders to Henry and begs his pardon, which the king grants, sparing his life.[38] The historian evidently harbours no sympathy for Perkin, but the hardest treatment of the man comes at the hands of his wife, Katherine Gordon, who berates him for the indignities to which he subjected them while lamenting her own loss of "virtue."[39] As favourable as the *Life* is to Henry's reputation, in André's account we find no public confession, and even no execution of the pretender. For all we know, Perkin continued his life at Henry's court like a bizarre double of Lambert Simnel—another former pretender turned Henry's falconer. Although one can easily attribute the absence of the public confession and execution to the incompleteness of the work, the meaning of André's

34. For a tentative reconstruction of some of these civic chronicles as repositories and patchworks of vivid recollections, see Davies, "Information," 251–52.

35. Sharpe, *Selling*, 61–69.

36. Daniel Hobbins, introduction to *The Life of Henry VII* by Bernard André, trans. and ed. Daniel Hobbins (New York: Italica Press, 2011), xi–xl, xxv–xxx.

37. Hobbins, xxxix.

38. Bernard André, *The Life of Henry VII*, trans. and ed. Daniel Hobbins (New York: Italica Press, 2011), 66–68.

39. André, 69.

textual lacunae and these final omissions of what readers of Ford's play have believed to be the historical truth may well transcend the physical state of the manuscript. They also reflect an author's autobiographical self-fashioning as a blind man and indicate a fundamental aspect of his historical hermeneutics in which "personal memory is incommunicable: since he cannot possibly become a retrospective witness […], there is apparently no way for his page to be filled."[40] Although there is much hearsay in André's history, he most often declines to add into the text anything that he did not witness for himself, or for which he could have cited *viva voce* testimony. The absence of a signed public confession in this case might just as easily suggest that it never occurred as that André did not have the time to include it in his work. Regardless, André's work creates very few ripples in early modern historiography. The manuscript seems to have been unknown to any Tudor chronicler and finds its first recorded historiographic reader in John Speed, who uses it sparingly, perhaps recognizing the narrative's shameless literary artifice and encomiastic purpose. Gainsford, who has nothing but contempt for Perkin in his own literary narrative, also seems not to have known it, for it is doubtful that he would have passed up the opportunity to subject the pretender to the lashings of his wife's tongue as another means of debasing his ethos.

Even Polydore Vergil, the famed Italian humanist commissioned to compose a history of England down to his own time and whose account of Henry's reign is on the whole complimentary of the king,[41] never mentions a public confession. To be sure, Vergil does not spare Perkin from invective and moralizing vitriol, but this most important chink in Perkin's armour is absent. This is how Vergil recounts the discovery of Perkin's identity:

> Aft this, so that neither in England nor anywhere else might men be misled by gullibility (which can easily worm its way into the mind of even the best of men), or stubbornly persist in this madness, he sent spies to all the cities of Belgium who might investigate the origin of this Duke Richard by promising rewards to informers. And he wrote to his friends that they should do the same. These, coming to France, went their different ways,

40. Schwyzer, 853.

41. Vergil notes Henry's growing avarice, but appears to have softened this aspect of the monarch's personality for the printed version of 1534. For the differences in the portrayal of Henry in the Vatican Manuscript (1513) and Vergil's printed text, see Anglo, 30–31. Also see Hanham, 125–51.

some came to Tournai and learned that this Richard had been born of low degree and that he had originally been named Peter Warbeck, as was established by the evidence of many men. Therefore these royal agents, having performed their task, quickly returned and related what they had discovered. And some friends of the king made this all considerably plainer by their letters and secret messengers. Therefore Henry took great pains to have news of this exploded fraud quickly published, not only throughout England, but also through all overseas parts. And he sent to Archduke Philippe and his councilors (for Philippe was not yet of age to rule) Sir Edward Poinings and William Warham, a lawyer and a priest, endowed with great modesty and gravity, who were to make open declaration that that young man was born of shabby stock and had falsely assumed the identify and name of Duke Richard for York, who had once been murdered, together with his brother Edward, in the Tower of London at the command of his uncle Richard. There was nobody who did not know this, and to think or maintain otherwise was the height of folly, since it was sufficiently established by no mean logic that by putting to death Edward, the elder son of his brother Edward, Richard would have gained no extra security, had he allowed his second son Richard to be spared, for in the name of his father he would have been the rightful heir to the kingdom of England. They were therefore to request Philippe and his noble councilors that they refuse to place in any belief in that manifest lie, filled with singular wickedness, and give no assistance to that false person who was fraudulently usurping Richard's name and breeding, against a man who in previous years had supplied aid to their Prince Maximilian when he was hard-pressed in a French war and suffering from domestic seditions.[42]

Vergil makes clear that the "discovery" of Perkin's identity happens immediately before the actionable employment of the information as part of Henry's diplomatic offensive aimed at neutralizing Philip of Burgundy's support for Perkin. According to Vergil, Perkin was a fraud because Henry said so, based on the intelligence of his paid spies whom the king had sent *only* to Flanders to specifically discover information about Perkin; because the story of the

42. Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia* (1555), trans. Dana F. Sutton, online, http://www.philological. bham.ac.uk/polverg, "Reign of Henry VII," chapter 26, paragraph 25.

murder of the princes in the Tower with the survival of one prince, assuming a murderer's "logical" motives, made no sense at all; and because the Burgundians owed Henry for his alliance in the past. As schemes of proof go, this is hardly an open-and-shut case.

Robert Fabyan's chronicling output has a somewhat tangled textual history that influences how early modern English historians like Stow understood the account of Henry's struggles with Perkin, and consequently it casts a long shadow down to Ford's time. *The New Cronycles of England and France* printed by Pynson in 1516 as "anonymous" covers English history to 1485, concluding with the chronicler's remark that the work was completed in 1504. It is the printer William Rastell who identified Fabyan as the author of this work upon its reprinting under the new title *The Chronycle of Robert Fabyan* in 1533, and Rastell appended to it the text of a "continuation" extending history to the accession of Henry VIII. There is a stylistic dissonance between the first edition of Fabyan's chronicle and its continuation, as the latter is annalistic and exhibits the same urban myopia we saw in Arnold. Events of national importance are mentioned when they literally materialize in front of the chronicler's eyes. Thus, the entire struggle between Henry VII and Warbeck in Fabyan's text occurs in the span of three paragraphs, and the entries begin when the chronicler becomes aware of Perkin in 1496, three years later than in Arnold's work, and conclude with Perkin's death in 1499. A single sentence notes the sudden appearance of the rebellious Cornishmen at Blackheath and their dispersal in battle, the Scottish invasion of the North, Perkin Warbeck's landing in Cornwall and assault of Exeter, his captive progress through the streets of London, and his execution alongside the Earl of Warwick.[43] Missing, again, is the connective tissue between these events—their context and import.

Although Arnold's and Fabyan's narratives do not necessarily reflect an indifferent contemporary's camera-eye perspective, it is not unimportant to note that Fabyan himself was probably better informed than a common citizen and perhaps in a better position than Arnold to know some of the political goings-on in the 1490s, having served as sheriff, alderman, and Master of the Drapers' Company.[44] Yet he too makes no mention of the confession. Although

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43. Robert Fabyan, *Fabyans Cronycle* (London, 1533), Pp3r–Pp4r.

44. Fabyan was sheriff in 1493, alderman for Farringdon Without (from December 1494), and Master of the Drapers' Company in 1495–96 and 1501–02.

we need not expect a propagandistic "spin" favourable to Henry VII from a contemporary of the events who was not a commissioned royal historiographer like André, it is worth noting that the conclusion of Fabyan's chronicle in 1533 offers one of the first articulations of the ethos of Henry VII as Solomon, which will become a favourite refrain in the vernacular chronicles of the sixteenth century, in the *laus* of the king's life: "I myghte conclude yt hys actes passed all the noble actes of hys noble progenytours syne the conquest / and may moste co~gruly aboue all erthly prynces, belykened vnto Salamo~ kyng of ye Israelytes and be called the seconde Salomon for hys great sapience & actes by him done hys lyuys tyme executed."[45] For Fabyan's historiographic successors like Stow who read both editions of his chronicle, the modern historian's problem of discerning the two authorial personas and the possibly different rhetorical motives behind the stylistic dissonance of the "original" and its "continuation" did not exist.[46] Early modern historiographers had a tripartite composite view of "Fabyan's" account of Henry VII's reign, and when reading Rastell's *printed* "Fabyan" saw in his text more sympathy for the king than for the rebel.[47] The references to Henry as England's "Solomon" are repeated in the 1587 text of Holinshed's *Chronicles* and perhaps not surprisingly find their echo on the

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45. Fabyan (1533), Pp6r. Stylistically and rhetorically this is a typical dynastic *hosanna* that appears in most chronicles of the period, but the trope of Henry as "Solomon" is thereafter echoed frequently in subsequent vernacular chronicles; Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation*, 241–49. Anglo identifies the Solomon reference as early as 1509 in an elegy published by Wynkyn de Worde (29). Henry consciously executed a visual self-representation as Solomon in his building of the royal chapel at Westminster Abbey (Sharpe, *Selling*, 63); Sharpe notes the interesting afterlife of Henry VII's original Davidic-Solomonic trope as it is enriched by his son Henry VIII into a Davidic-Solomonic-priapic-Christic composite.

46. Hanham notes the "unmistakeable connections" between B.M. MS. Cotton Vitellius A. XVI, Fabyan's two printed chronicles, *The Great Chronicle of London*, and John Rastell's history, (1529), arguing that "Fabyan, like Rastell, seems to have been a compiler and correlater rather than a composer of original work," and that "the publication date of his work may well be irrelevant in any consideration of its influence on other writers, because it is very likely it circulated in manuscript before reaching print" (111).

47. The subsequent discussion will consider Fabyan, the author of the continuation of Fabyan, and the writer of the *Great Chronicle* as one and the same person primarily because John Stow, who had all three works in his possession for several decades, considered them all as the work of Robert Fabyan and conflated them in his own transmission of their accounts. Therefore, whereas "Pseudo-Fabyan" may be a better designation for an authorial persona that is at best based on a high likelihood of Fabyan's authorship, whenever I refer to "Fabyan" it should be understood to refer to "Stow's Fabyan" who may have never existed in reality.

professional stage in the ecstatically prophetic coda of the anonymous Queen's Men's play, *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (1594).[48]

The Great Chronicle of London is the third text in this composite view of "Fabyan's" chronicling output, as understood by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historiographers.[49] The manuscript of the chronicle was conflated with and attributed to Fabyan by most historians including Foxe, Stow, and Hakluyt.[50] In contrast to the annalistic continuation appended by Rastell in 1533, the narrative of *The Great Chronicle* dealing with events from 1496 to 1512 appears in a section composed by a single hand[51] and contains the same level of analytical commentary that characterized Fabyan's chronicle printed by Pynson in 1516 as well as many of the same stylistic turns of phrase. The *Great Chronicle*, like most of its generic compeers, is agglomerative, compiling information present in other city chronicles, but in this section of the narrative devoted to the reign of Henry VII it is a historical document of the greatest importance:

> The writer had before him for the greater part of his task a fairly full
> and detailed chronicle which has not survived, but which was obviously

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48. Anonymous, *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* (London, 1594), I1v.

49. "The second portion of the Great Chronicle covering the period 1439–1512 is written, with the exception of an inserted quire of eight folios, in a single handwriting which […] is the same as that of Holkham MS. 671 and Nero C XI—the two manuscripts which we believe to be the originals of Fabian's Chronicle. Though, like all histories, it is a compilation and depends for its outline and much of its material on the Main City Chronicle, it is the work of a single author and exhibits his attitude towards events and his characteristic style of writing from beginning to end" (Thomas and Thornley, lxxi).

50. The "authorial" connection of Fabyan and the manuscript is also granted by modern historians; see Thomas and Thornley, xvii, xxiii; Hanham, 110–11. "It is probably true to say that no surviving London chronicle of the fifteenth century was the handiwork of an original author or was copied at first hand from any other of the chronicles which have come down to us. They are in fact isolated survivors of a legion of lost chronicles, and among these lost chronicles must be reckoned the archetypes—those original compositions or compilations, which the professional manuscript writers copied with more or less accuracy, blending and amplifying to suit their purposes" (Thomas and Thornley, xxv).

51. Thomas and Thornley, lxiv–lxv. The same hand plausibly ascribable to Fabyan records the events from 1439 to 1512, but there is a break in the narrative at 1496 when a list of mayors and sheriffs from Henry IV to Henry VIII is inserted; after this point, the narrative resumes and continues to 1512 in what can be considered "the second volume of the second chronicler's work" (Thomas and Thornley, xx). The main events related to Perkin's story come after this narrative pause.

used either at first or later hand by the author of the well-known Fabian's Chronicle, ending in 1485, by the several compilers of the later portion of Vitellius A XVI, and by the writer of the continuation for the years 1485–1509 which Rastell added to Fabian's Chronicle in his edition of 1533. Our compiler's reliance upon this work, however, is not slavish. He blends with his narrative facts and details which he must have heard from older men who had been eyewitnesses of the events he describes. From the early years of the reign of Edward IV his story is coloured by an old man's remembrance of his reaction to the public events of his youth. The later portion after 1485 grows in interest as the author describes events from the point of view of an onlooker, restating in his own words and expanding with his own historical recollections the chronicle which he is using as a framework. All such original work must possess its value, if only as affording an insight into contemporary habits of thought.[52]

It is true that there is "no indication of what readership it might have had in manuscript,"[53] but what is easily traceable is its influence on the few readers we *do* know about, because in their own historiographical works, published later, they chose to either adopt or reject information exclusively found in *The Great Chronicle*. As a ventriloquized text, the manuscript proved to have a more profound impact on a nation-wide readership who encountered it second-hand, mediated by the printed chronicles of the sixteenth century, than it ever could have achieved as a civic chronicle surviving only in manuscript.

Before his capture, Perkin makes a total of five appearances in the narrative of *The Great Chronicle* which was obviously composed at some temporal distance from the events, frequently relying on an unspecified source text—perhaps Kingsford's lost "Main City Chronicle."[54] Thus, in one place "Fabyan" pleads ignorance regarding the fates of Perkin's two captured

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52. Thomas and Thornley, xxxix.

53. Davies, "Information," 233.

54. The *ex post facto* approach to Perkin's story is evident from a marginal notation "*Inicium Perkyn*" in the second chronicler's hand at the first mention of the as yet nameless pretender still in Flanders, when Sir Robert Chamberlain "was goyng ovyr In to Flaundyrs ffor than was talkyng In Secret wyse that the duchesse of Burgoyn had In her kepyng the duke of York" (Anonymous, *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley [1938; Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983], fo. 221v, p. 244). That the entry was written some time after the events is also evident in the chronicler's reference to the "kyngis

followers taken to the king after the failed landing in Kent: "what cam of theym myne auctour shewith not."[55] Throughout the narrative, the author imposes on Perkin a kind of *damnatio memoriae* by refusing to use either his "true" or assumed names and referring to him almost exclusively as a "mawmet," while employing rhetorical constructions of foreshadowing that indicate a *post festum* emplotment of the whole. Even if the chronicler was an actual contemporary of the events, his dispositional and elocutional approach to the narrative reveals a distinctly teleological framework. It is also evident that he had access to the king's correspondence with the City of London, quoting from Henry's letters to the mayor, but at other times the absence of some key ingredients of what we understand to be Perkin's story, or the facts of his imposture, is odd. Thus, there is no mention at all of Lambert Simnel who will later be invoked time and again as a pattern for Perkin's conspiracy, nor is there any awareness that Perkin had been hosted by James IV or that the invasion of the North was prompted by the Scottish support of the pretender. Crucially, it contains the first reference to Perkin's confession, not only providing its full text but also a key piece of information that the

> conffession as before is Rehersid thus enpryntid many of theym were sent Into all placis of Engeland & ellis where that the trowth of such covyrd malice & ffalshode abhomynable mygth be knowyn, to the grete Rejoysyng of all the kyngis ffreendis & trewe subgectis, and utter discomfort & grete agony unto all his enemyes.[56]

The chronicler thus makes known the laudable epistemological aim for the publication of the confession, that the "trowth of such covyrd malice & ffalshode abhomynable mygth be knowyn," but the propagandistic value of Perkin's confession is also made explicit as its copier had a clear understanding of its differentiated audience response: to regale the king's friends and to agonize his enemies. No copies of this original printed confession have survived.

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palays of Sheen now namyd Richmount" (*Great Chronicle*, fo. 225r, p. 247); Sheen palace, which burned down in 1497, was rebuilt and renamed in 1500.

55. *Great Chronicle*, fo. 9v (255v), p. 276.

56. *Great Chronicle,* fo. 18v–19r (264v–265r), p. 286. For the full text of the confession, see pp. 284–86. Vitellius A XVI, a manuscript that shares many similarities with the *Great Chronicle* and Fabyan, also contains the confession with only slight differences.

As we know, this moment of public confession following Perkin's surrender at Taunton is not his last act of independent agency on the historical stage; two failed escapes from captivity follow, the latter of which (a plot to escape from the Tower with the imprisoned Earl of Warwick) would be used as a pretext for the execution of the last Plantagenet. But *The Great Chronicle* presents a rather confused picture of this brief period. The failed attempt to claim sanctuary at Sheen ends with Henry merely leading his captive through the city to Westminster in a kind of walk of shame: "In his soo passing toward his lodging yood the fforenamyd perkyn ledyng a Gentilman by the arm upon whom was not a lytill wondering, nor yit ffewe cursys cast at his hede, þt tyme & sundry dayes afftyr."[57] There is no mention of Perkin's renewed imprisonment, or of the second failed escape that later renditions of history narrate as the famous conspiracy to liberate or execute Warwick (depending on your political bias). Instead, at some point after being paraded through Westminster by the king, Perkin is suddenly "areynyd In the whyte halle at westmynstir" with three others, all of whom "were there ffor treason cast and adjugid to be put to deth."[58] Soon thereafter, in equally bewildering fashion, we hear for the first time of the "real" Warwick[59] and understand his fate: "The said Erle of warwyke for Tresons by hym there confessid & doon, submyttid hym unto the kyngis grace & mercy whereafftyr he was there adjugid to be drawyn hangid & quartered, and afftir conveyed agayn to the Towyr."[60] Perkin makes a brief reappearance at the scaffold, where he repeats his confession and proceeds to his execution, accepting "deth paciently";[61] this is immediately followed by Warwick's own death.[62] This conclusion, which omits any mention of capital crimes and any logical connections between the many executions itemized in the previous pages, ends the narrative in an anticlimactic, acontextual vacuum, with what some later readers understood to be the senseless judicial murder of both the

57. *Great Chronicle*, fo. 16v (262v), p. 283.

58. *Great Chronicle*, fo. 23v (269v), pp. 290–91.

59. Shortly before, the chronicler had told us of the "fake" Earl who had been captured, but no connection had been made either to Perkin or the "real" Earl.

60. *Great Chronicle*, fo. 24r (270r), p. 291.

61. *Great Chronicle*, fo. 24r (270r), p. 291.

62. *Great Chronicle*, fo. 24v (270v), pp. 291–92.

"mawmet" and the last undoubtedly living male descendant of the House of York.

It is important to reiterate that the text of the confession in *The Great Chronicle*—along with its almost perfect copy in Vitellius A XVI—is its *only* occurrence before its printed emergence in Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (1548).[63] After that point in time, which Sydney Anglo identifies as a historiographic "pivot" in the portrayal of Henry towards an image of the "pacifier of discord and bringer of union,"[64] the confession was disseminated widely and lives on even today. This is the historiographic moment when the "grand narrative" of the events of Richard III's reign and their consequences, which had hitherto proven "elusive," was "forged" by yoking More's and Vergil's narratives into a coherent story that even James I on the first day of his first parliament could see himself continuing.[65] Following Hall, all the subsequent vernacular English chronicles—Grafton's *Chronicle at Large* (1569) and both of Holinshed's 1577 and 1587 texts— present a similar, neatly packaged narrative of Perkin's rebellion against Henry as the deeds of a fraud who—in the shared view of Hall, Grafton, Holinshed, and Fleming—could not possibly have been the prince from the Tower, and each concludes with the confession Perkin was made to read at the scaffold to validate their view of him as an impostor. In an extremely important addition to this new, *printed vernacular* version of the Perkin saga that took shape in the wake of Grafton's and Hall's translation and adaptation of Vergil's narrative, Grafton's *Chronicle at Large* and the two texts of Holinshed's *Chronicles* also republish Hall's report of the "fame" that Warwick's death was connected to Ferdinand of Aragon's demand as a condition for his daughter's marriage to Henry's son Arthur.[66]

63. Although Richard Grafton had printed Hall's *Union*, five years earlier, when printing his own continuation of John Hardyng's verse chronicle (1543) he was obviously unfamiliar with the manuscript of the *Great Chronicle* because none of its information for the events of the 1490s is included. Instead, Grafton relied on a free (and uncited) translation of Vergil's account (Hanham, 144). Hall, on the other hand, may have used either the manuscript or an earlier source in addition to Vergil (Thomas and Thornley, xviii; Hanham, 146).

64. Anglo, 33.

65. Davies, "Information," 231; Anglo, 33–34.

66. Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (London, 1548), iii3v.

Put quite simply, Perkin's confession born in the *Great Chronicle* was taken by the historians of the second half of the sixteenth century as the admission of Perkin's imposture and read back onto all of his deeds and words, thus becoming the most important plank in the argumentative structure of every subsequent narrative that sought to discredit Perkin's claims. Consequently, in every narrative the belief in Perkin by the crowned heads of Europe and some of the nobles and commons of England had to be mistaken. After all, was Sir Thomas More, the great authority on all matters Ricardian, not ventriloquized verbatim in every chronicle, and did he not tell the story of the slaughter of the boys by their uncle, and promise one day to return to the story of Perkin? In a passage from his incomplete *History of Richard III*, reproduced by all the major early modern vernacular chronicles beginning with Grafton's continuation of John Hardyng's verse chronicle (1543), More sees the moment of Richard's rise to power through what he firmly believes was the murder of his nephews in the Tower, and contemplates its repercussions in history a decade later:

> Now fell there mischeefs thicke. And as the thing euill gotten is neuer well kept, thorough all the time of his reigne neuer ceassed there cruell death and slaughter, till his owne destruction ended it. But as he finished his time with the best death and the most rigtehous, that is to wit, his owne; so began he with the most pitious and wicked, I meane the lamentable murther of his innocent nephues, the yoong king and his tender brother: whose death and finall infortune hath naithelesse comen so farre in question· that some remaine yet in doubt, whether they were in his daies destroied or no. Not for that onelie that Perkin Werbecke by manie folks malice, and mo folks follie, so long space abusing the world, was as well with princes as the poorer people reputed and taken for the yoonger of these two; but for that also that all things were in late daies so couertlie demeaned, one thing pretended, and an other meant.
>
> Insomuch that there was nothing so plaine and openlie prooued, but that yet for the common custome of close and couert dealing, men had it euer inwardlie suspect; as manie well counterfaited iewels make the true mistrusted. Howbeit, concerning the opinion, with the occasions moouing either partie, we shall haue place more at large to intreat, if we hereafter happen to write the time of the late noble prince of famous memorie king Henrie the seauenth, or percase that historie of Perkin in

anie compendious processe by it selfe. But in the meane time, for this present matter, I shall rehearse you the dolorous end of those babes, not after euerie waie that I haue heard, but after that waie that I haue so heard by such men and by such meanes, as me thinketh it were hard but it should be true.[67]

For whatever reason, More neither completed his story of Richard III nor ever began the histories of Henry VII and Perkin. In addition to André's more famous examples, this may be another instance of historiographic silence shaping the transmission of the memory of Perkin Warbeck from the first years of the Tudor era to the beginning of the Stuart century. More, a contemporary of Vergil's who may have listened to the same "old men" of Fabyan's generation, mentions that some people were still not convinced about Perkin's identity at the time of his writing of the narrative almost twenty years later. It seems that at the temporal limits of *living* memory and at the start of the period of *active* or *communicative* memory there was a dissonance in the remembrance not only of what had happened to the two princes in the Tower but also regarding the very facts related to Perkin Warbeck's insurgency.

As Alison Hanham explains, in the past many scholars exhibited a tendency to treat an "anecdote" found in Vergil's *Anglica Historia* as "true because it is also found in More's *History of King Richard the Third*, or that a certain statement of More's is supported by the *Great Chronicle of London*," but such comparisons and conclusions based upon them are "as illogical as suggestions that a tradition reported by Vergil is authenticated by its appearance in the work of Edward Hall, in a case where Hall's text is little more than a translation of Vergil's."[68] Instead, Hanham argues, we should treat the appearance of such details across the texts of the early sixteenth century as "traditions" that are "valuable for any of three reasons: as genuine historical evidence, as an interesting indication of opinion current at the time they are recorded, and as subsequently influential."[69]

Is it surprising, then, that Stow—a man familiar with all of the aforementioned texts who also owned the manuscript of *The Great Chronicle*

67. Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 3 vols. (London, 1587), 3:734.

68. Hanham, 103. For an example of such reasoning, see Ian Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491–1499* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2009), 283.

69. Hanham, 103.

from at least 1570 until his death in 1605, which contains some eighty-seven interpolations in his own hand[70] and was considered by him to be a part of Fabyan's *oeuvre* and a major source for his own works—alone among the Tudor chroniclers did not see fit to reproduce Perkin's confession into either his *Chronicles of England* (1580) or his *Annales of England* (1592)?[71] There can be no doubt that Stow was meticulous about preserving the records of antiquity wherever he could find them, regardless of how fanciful or discordant they may have proved to be in relation to the majority of historiographic sources for an event,[72] so what could have been the motive for his choice to ignore the *one* place in all his reading that seemed to confirm Perkin's imposture? Is it, perhaps, because he considered it a spurious "tradition" unworthy of preserving? Or was his omission directly intended as an oblique critique of his political *present*, Elizabeth's regime in the Tudor twilight, in the way many have read Ford's own rhetorical maneuvering three decades later? Whatever his motivations may have been, in the example of Stow's reading of his sources and his selective adaptation of their facts we can see the tug-of-war between "the invocation and the attempted erasures of memory" as the two rival poles of "the history of legitimation and authority" perhaps because he, as a chronicler, was at the very least aware that "memory, like tradition, involved invention as well as selection" and that the chronicles as "'repositories of memory' combined history and invention to validate present persons and policies through representations and performances that connected the present to an actual *and* imagined past."[73]

Perkin Warbeck in the seventeenth century

Let me be clear: it is not my aim to argue that Perkin Warbeck was Richard Duke of York. I do not know and frankly I do not think there is any way to discover

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70. Thomas and Thornley, xvi and xxii.

71. In Stow's lifetime, the *Annales* were reprinted in 1600, 1601, and 1605. All of Stow's texts refer to a confession written in Perkin's own hand, but none of them reprints it.

72. Such as the chronicle of Dunmow; see Igor Djordjevic, *King John(Mis)Remembered: The Dunmow Chronicle, the Lord Admiral's Men, and the Formation of Cultural Memory* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 43–55.

73. Sharpe, *Selling*, 13.

his true identity with any certainty.[74] That enough people in his time seemed to believe him is certainly interesting, but what is truly fascinating—and the subject of this discussion—is how the memory of the 1490s was transmitted through the next century and half. I am also not trying to propose a new reading

74. The "modern" historians' project to discover the true identity of Perkin Warbeck begins with James Gairdner's 1898 reconstruction of Perkin's history "from original documents" in an appendix to his *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third to which is added the Story of Perkin Warbeck* (1898; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 263–335. Many of the archival letters from Spanish, French, and Imperial ambassadors illustrate the chaotic misapprehensions of whatever may have been the "truth" amid diplomatic and political machinations that shaped their understandings of the events and their hopes for outcomes favourable to their respective employers; thus, Gairdner's archival work reconstructs a picture in which it is far from certain that Perkin was an impostor. Gairdner's case for his imposture rests on two keystones intended to buttress Perkin's scaffold confession with irrefutable *documented* proof of its veracity: 1) King Henry's letter from Kenilworth to Gilbert Talbot on "20 July" (which Gairdner deduces to have to be in 1493 because court records for 1494 and 1495 do not allow Henry to be at Kenilworth on that day) where we find the details of Perkin's Flemish biography several years before Henry sends his ambassadors to Flanders to discover it (275–77); and 2) Perkin's "letter to his mother" discovered in two copies by James Weale in Flanders—one at Courtrai and the other at Tournai in private collections—and *neither* written in a hand contemporary with the events (329–32). Gairdner trusts the authenticity of both documents on no firm evidence. In his introduction to the text of the "letter," Gairdner argues: "this document, […] it will be admitted must be, if genuine, the most absolute and conclusive proof of the falsehood of Perkin's pretensions and the truth of his confession" (329). Gairdner's zeal to believe the documents is betrayed by his yoking together of the imperatives "will be admitted" and "must be" with the conditional "if genuine." Wilhelm Busch, a contemporary of Gairdner's and a major authority for much twentieth-century scholarship on Henry VII, is more succinct about the foundation of the "case" against Perkin: "This story of Perkin Warbeck's previous history rests upon the confession he made publicly in June, 1498," and he goes on to cite *The Great Chronicle* and Hall's *Union* as the authorities to confirm its printing and wide dissemination; see Wilhelm Busch, *England under the Tudors: Henry VII (1485–1509)*, trans. Alice M. Todd (London, 1895), 335. Although most modern historians seem to have rejected these late copies of the letter to Perkin's mother as forgeries, or simply heeded Gairdner's caveat ("if genuine"), it still crops up from time to time, sometimes as a distraction, in otherwise excellent scholarship: e.g., see S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 91–92; 91n2. Ian Arthurson's *Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491–1499,* published over a century after Gairdner and Busch and intended primarily for a lay audience, excavates and puts together an impressive array of archival evidence confirming Perkin's imposture, yet it seems to be predicated on the premise of seeking to validate the text of the *Great Chronicle*'s confession reproduced at the very start of Arthurson's text. This is an almost perfect echo of Gainsford's rhetorical motive four hundred years earlier, and only differing from it in style as Arthurson refrains from taking Euripidean liberties with his narrative. In seeking to validate the central document in the debate about Perkin's identity, Arthurson ignores Gairdner's caveat regarding the letter to Perkin's mother and considers it authentic (279).

of Ford's play; instead, I am interested in the historiographic context that may have informed his reading of history and led him to present an unrepentant "impostor without precedent" and to body forth the metahistorical importance of Daubeney's words at the end of the play, that "No chronicle records his fellow" (5.3.208–09). Around the time of James I's accession to the throne it is clear that there existed enough readers and writers of history who raised doubts about the way in which memory had been transmitted to them. The Jacobeans inherited an image of Henry as the English Solomon, but it is their attention to the particulars of the story of the princes in the Tower—to André's and More's many blank pages alternately promising and withholding details amid the confused, alternating reticence and verbosity of their composite "Fabyan"—that began to unsettle this royal portrait.[75]

The carefully constructed image of Henry as "England's Solomon" that comes out of the Tudor chronicles by 1603 is consistent, and there is hardly any substantive variance in the information presented by the major chroniclers. Only the tone may vary: most are like Abraham Fleming in the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* and choose to vent their outrage and disbelief at Perkin's effrontery, while Stow alone seems emotionally indifferent even while communicating the facts known about the events: that Perkin seems to have been an impostor, most probably a creature of Margaret of Burgundy, and that Henry triumphed. But at the start of the seventeenth century, the *authority* of the various texts of the Tudor chroniclers was not the same. Of all the Tudor historians, Stow seemed to wear a mantle of special authority for at least two reasons. First, as a historian and antiquarian he had become one of the most esteemed men of his time, and this ethos conferred an authority on his texts and opinions at the end of the century much as Vergil's and More's authority had made theirs credible at its start. Second, Stow's *Annales* was the last major chronicle to be published in the reign of a Tudor monarch. Since the early modern chronicler's approach to historiography was agglomerative, by looking at Stow's last text any reader not only had an opportunity to learn history as presented by probably the most learned antiquarian of his time, but even more importantly had a chance to see Stow's presentation of the last iteration

75. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is not unimportant to note that James I likewise styled himself as Solomon throughout his reign and that any Jacobean reference to Solomon could therefore be considered topical, if not a direct reference to the king; see Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 11–123.

of history in his times, after he had subjected it to his own critical judgment and eliminated whatever he believed was extraneous or erroneous. It is crucial, therefore, to observe that in Stow's *Annales* we find neither Perkin's signed and publicly delivered confession nor any mention of the fact that the Earl of Warwick executed together with him also happened to be the last Plantagenet. Surely the latter was too important an idea to have escaped him—but then, this may well have been in obeisance to the spirit of his times. After all, Henry VII's great care for image-making in emblems and architecture indicates a clear desire to construct himself as a scion of the House of Lancaster, and thus as a fruit of the same Plantagenet family tree rather than as a founder of a new dynasty.[76] Therefore, the more important question ought to be *not* how Fabyan or Stow managed to miss the point that Henry had eliminated the last Plantagenet, but rather, who noticed this fact first and made mention of it in a way that dissociated Henry VII from the Plantagenet stock? John Speed, a man who knew Stow personally, soon after Stow's death was able to make the dynastic inference with no difficulty.

The reign of James I began amid a flurry of excitable hopes for the British Project and poetical panegyrics such as Samuel Daniel's,[77] and perhaps it is this general atmosphere of royal celebration that Speed addresses at the start of the reign of Henry VII in his *History of Great Britain* (1611), the first chronicle of the Stuart century. The opening paragraph of his narrative is indicative of a distinct tonal change in historiography as Speed's refusal to indulge in overt "Panegyrical flourishes" for Henry VII, who should elicit praise for his own merits, is here tempered by an analytical sobriety and knowledge of the contexts that brought Henry to the throne and kept him on it: the "mixture of *courage* and *skill* […] to the verification of that rule*, That things are kept by the same Arts whereby they were gained*."[78] Although this work is in form a chronicle, Speed's analytical skill and the toning down of the role of Providence in human affairs to one of an agent supplying the "concurring disposition of all important Circumstances, without which [Henry's] attempt might haue

76. Davies, "Information," 246–47. Also see C. S. L. Davies, "A rose by any other name," *Times Literary Supplement* 5.489 (13 June 2008): 14–15.

77. Samuel Daniel, "A Panegyrike Congratulatorie Delivered to the King's Most Excellent Majesty" (1603), *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel*, ed. Alexander Grosart, 4 vols. (London, 1885), 1:143–67; especially see stanzas 41–43 for an explicit comparison of Henry VII and James I.

78. Speed, 727.

proued disasterous" make Speed's narrative similar to the new *politic* style of history-writing.[79]

Even though Bacon's *History*, published in 1622, seems to be Ford's source for an ambivalent portrait of Henry in the play,[80] Speed in 1611 specifically names a manuscript of Bacon's *History*[81] as his own direct source, along with Fabyan, Holinshed, and for the first time, Bernard André. Bacon's political analysis of Henry proved to be more influential for future generations, but it is Speed who gives perhaps the first analysis of the cracks in the story of the king's troubles with the pretender, and who provides us with some stunning *viva voce* testimony about what the historiographers were discussing among themselves. Following the first report of the rebellion of Lambert Simnel, Speed writes:

> Here we must confesse that our authors leade vs into a perplexitie: Some affirming, that this counterfet [**Note: Holinsh. Iohn Stow.**] was exhibited to the world vnder the name of *Edward* Earle of *Warwick*, sonne of the Duke of *Clarence*, by the most turbulent and fatall Earle of *Warwicke* slaine at *Barnet-field*. But hereunto reason [**Note: *Lambert Simnels Historie* rectified and vindicated.**] seemes repugnant. For what ground of claime could that Gentleman haue, not onely for that his Father was attainted, but much more for that the Queene of *England* then in being, was the indubitate eldest daughter and heire of King *Edward* the fourth, and sister and next heire to *Edward* the fifth? Neither wants there ancienter authority then any of the others, affirming, that this Idoll did vsurpe the

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79. Speed, 727.

80. Allison Machlis Meyer emphasizes the Jacobean contexts of Bacon's narrative: "Bacon's involvement in the political crises of 1620–21 suggests they would have been at the forefront of his mind as he began the History" ("The Politics of Queenship in Francis Bacon's *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII* and John Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*," *Studies in Philology* 111 [2014]: 312–45, 323). She goes on to impose the calendar of political events as a conscious framing of the narrative with an emphasis on "public opinion about royal marriage and queen consorts in his narrative" (319–20).

81. For a reprint of the complete manuscript, probably begun in the late years of Elizabeth's reign, see Vickers, 209–14. The fragment provides a blueprint for the detailed narrative in terms of the characterization of Henry and Perkin, Bacon's political analysis of the historical events, and his rhetorical thrust in painting Henry as an early modern prince compelled by the circumstances of the time "to descend to the employment of secret espials and suborned conspirators"; Bacon identifies Perkin (along with Simnel) as an "idol and counterfeit" and the plot against Henry as a "dark and subtle practice" (Vickers, 212).

name [Note: Bern. Andr. MS.] of one of King *Edwards* sonnes; many arguments concurring to buttresse this affirmation. For, if at the same time (as *Polydor* writeth) it was bruted, that *the sonnes of King Edward the fourth had not* [**Note: Ioh. Stow was often heard to maintaine this opinion in seeming earnest.**] *been murthered vnder their vsurping Vncle Richard, but were escaped, and liued in obscurity beyond the Sea*; how can that be true, which *Stow* and the rest (who follow *Polydore* therein) affirm, that *Lambert* was crowned King of *England* at *Dublin* in *Ireland*, as heire to *George Duke of Clarence?* For with what iniurie to the roiall brethren (fa
ined to be aliue) was that? Verily there seemes no coherence in the circumstances, nor apparence of truth in the substance. And how much stronger to the purpose of the Conspirators was the fiction of an *Edward*, the Kings sonne, and himselfe once proclaimed King, then of an *Edward*, who was but an Earle, and a Duke of *Clarences* heire? But you will aske, what was the poore Earles part in this tragedie? what other? then that by rumoring his murther, they might bring the person of King *Henry* into common detestation for his crueltie; for clearing whereof the King publikelie afterward shewed the Earle to the view of all. And albeit the vulgar fame is, that *Lambert* was called *Edward*, yet [**Note: Ber. Andr. M. S.**] one who then liued, saith directly, that this Cypher was dubbed & mounted from his owne meane ranke to the title of a King, vnder the name of the second brother, who for certaine was called *Richard*: but what Record there is to the contrary, is to vs as yet vnknowne; for our vulgar Bookes extant can hardly passe with a Iury of ordinary Criticks, and Censors for vnchallengeable euidence.[82]

Speed's confession about the problems with his sources commends him as a historian as much as it indicts him as one who, despite the observation that "our vulgar Bookes extant can hardly passe with a Iury of ordinary Criticks, and Censors for vnchallengeable euidence," chooses to use the source most favourable to Henry—André's *Life*—as a mould into which the facts must fit. Even more fascinating is his remark in a marginal note that Stow "was often heard to maintaine this opinion in seeming earnest" that Edward IV's two sons were not murdered in the Tower. Given that Stow never articulated such a view

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82. Speed, 730–31; rendered in square brackets and **bolded** are Speed's marginal notes.

in his published chronicles during his lifetime, Speed's marginal comment published some six years after Stow's death stands as a crucial piece of evidence that the community of early modern historiographers obviously maintained personal opinions about the history they studied and that these views were not always reflected in their published works. To be more precise: Speed's comment may begin to explain some of Stow's reticence in his treatment of Perkin Warbeck's rebellion as well as his conscious decision to ignore the confession that most of his colleagues had reprinted in their texts.

Although Speed does present Perkin as a fraud and reprints the confession, it is Speed's conclusion of the episode of Perkin's failed second escape and the arrest and execution of Warwick that allows us to glimpse his own personal thoughts on the importance of this historical moment. He engages analytically with all the major elements of the *printed vernacular* version handed down to him by his predecessors, including Vergil, Stow's dissonant version, and Bacon's manuscript fragment,[83] and makes several important points for the first time in the historiography of Henry VII's reign that obliquely undermine the "settled opinion" of his predecessors regarding the conclusion of the Perkin-saga as the defeat of an impostor by the rightful king, and brings to the surface what had until this point been only occasional "subterranean rumblings of dissent."[84] In an approach typical of the hermeneutic of chronicles,[85] by focusing on the circumstances surrounding the death of the Earl of Warwick Speed is able to obliquely unsettle most of the received truths about Henry's ethos as England's king—not least of which his role as "Solomon."

Although Perkin's imposture is not in question, Speed calls attention to Henry's behaviour in the events, and draws conclusions about it by bringing out posterity's memory and understanding of the events as they were reinterpreted in their aftermath. Speed reminds us of Katharine of Aragon's comments: "That it was the hand of God, for that to cleere the way to her marriage that innocent Earle of Warwicke was put to vnworthy death." Bacon also agrees that the event was an "ill prognostic" for an unhappy end, and reports Katharine's words that

83. Speed, 745–46.

84. Anglo, 34.

85. See Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation*.

"her former marriage was made in blood."[86] But the difference between Speed and his predecessors and contemporaries, including Bacon, is in the attribution of the agency behind the "formall murder of this harmelesse Gentleman." Following Hall's report of the "fame," Bacon blames the King of Aragon for demanding the elimination of all rival claimants of the English throne before allowing his daughter to marry Prince Arthur. Speed, however, makes it clear that it is Henry who uses the occasion to his advantage, and couches his own negative opinion of it behind a consideration of the act as an analog of Solomon's killing of his elder brother Adonijah.[87] As Speed puts it, "he that will argue from particular facts in Scripture, shall not onely leaue no Adonias liuing, but perhaps no Salomon."[88] In other words, for history to play out according to God's plan, for Solomon to be Solomon, Adonijah had to die. Put differently, Speed implies, for Henry to be king, Warwick had to die.

The application of the analog follows not long thereafter when Speed writes, "To worke this young Warwickes ruine, the mischeiuous and dismall wretch Perkin becomes an occasion, if not an instrument." Speed's oblique commentary relies on our proper reading of the intertextual encodation of his narrative: the allusions to Solomon may carry an independent scriptural ballast, but it is a century-long cultural tradition of imagining Henry VII as England's Solomon that allows the reader to connect the two in a brand new *ideologeme*. In Speed's allegorical scheme there can be no doubt that Henry had committed a fundamentally tyrannical act by killing an innocent man simply because of his superior blood-claim to the throne, but it is only because the reader is invited to consider him as Solomon's mirror-image that we can stomach the narrative and not call the deed by its true name.

Speed goes on to present to us his reading of the importance of the moment in the grand scheme of history. He, like Bacon, is not a providentialist who sees the will of God marked in all events playing out in history, but he does not allow the last Plantagenet to pass without comment in the manner of his sixteenth-century predecessors. Pointing out that the once glorious dynasty "chiefly" for the deeds of the House of York had become "hatefull (as it seemes)

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86. Sir Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 163.

87. 1 Kings 2:46.

88. Speed, 746.

to God and man," the Tudors who were "but two descents English" thought they had assured their occupancy of the throne thanks to Warwick's death, but were ultimately "now after three descents and fiue Princes also vanished."[89] Speed's caustic style in this passage is devastating. The causal relationship of Henry's act of judicial murder and the inevitable extinction of his own line in the third generation is not explicit, but the hint is unmistakeable. As Gainsford writes in the conclusion of his story, this

> was a dangerous time for any Plantaginet to liue in [...] but the King was indeed glad of this occasion, and fortune gaue virtue the check, because as he had imprisoned him without a cause, he knew not what to doe with him without a fault [...] whereupon the King was the gladder to take hold of this opportunitie.[90]

When we see even the greatest seventeenth-century apologist for Henry VII failing to stomach the king's act of judicial murder against the only undoubted rival to his claim, we must recognize in this moment a shift in the axis of the argument encoded in the century-old *narratio* of the turmoil in the 1490s. Instead of continuing to fuss over Perkin's identity, the attention of the first generation of Jacobean historians seems to have shifted to the character of Henry, and their interest to his performance, particularly in the terminus of the crisis with Warwick's execution that revealed to them an able yet ruthless prince whose behaviour followed the pattern of other usurpers. This was Solomon as Adonijah would have known him.

    Given the analytical achievement of Speed's re-envisioning of Henry VII, there ought to be little surprise that the very next serious work of history before Bacon's takes aim not only at Henry VII but also at the century-long established "justice" of Henry's cause at his accession by re-evaluating the reputation of the king whom he slew on the battlefield. Sir George Buck, the author of *The History of King Richard III*, is better known as the Master of the Revels from 1610 after Tilney—a role that connects him with most playwrights writing in

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89. Speed, 746.

90. Thomas Gainsford, *The True and Wonderful History of Perkin Warbeck* (London, 1618), 111–12.

the period, including Ford.[91] But he was also one of the first members of the Society of Antiquaries alongside John Stow, Sir John Hayward, and William Camden, with whom he exchanged books and materials.[92] This is the authority that lies behind his *History* and his clear agenda to vindicate Richard III by deconstructing and refuting all the historical evidence of Richard's tyranny presented in the chronicles up to his time. Buck's scholarship and control of his source materials is extraordinary;[93] he manages to poke holes in virtually all the "facts" of the case handed down to his time as the products of gossip and rumours by unreliable sources and Richard's enemies. Whereas Richard is not the focus of this article, several important details from book 3 of Buck's work dedicated to the charge that he had killed his two nephews in the Tower are relevant because they have a bearing on the re-imagining of Perkin's saga in the years immediately preceding Ford's play.

Buck points out the presence and vibrancy of stories in the 1480s and 1490s that at least one child had survived, which in his view explains the belief of so many people of different social strata in Perkin's claim that he was the Duke of York. In addition, he is skeptical of the veracity of Perkin's signed confession, which he calls "a forced and counterfeit confession drawn from him by threats and by terrors and torture:"[94]

91. If Buck was still maintaining his contacts with various playwrights submitting their texts to the Master of the Revels until 1622, it is entirely possible that John Ford may have had an opportunity to become familiar with Buck's opinion on the story of Perkin Warbeck—whether directly or through the mediation of the Earl of Arundel, who was associated with both men; see Lisa Hopkins, "Acting the Self: John Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* and the Politics of Imposture," *Cahiers Elisabéthains: Late Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 48 (1995): 31–36, 31.

92. Buck used the *Crowland Chronicle*, and he also obviously had access to the Cotton collection (Hanham, 101).

93. In contrast with Buck's text, which he calls "a remarkable attempt to break through the wall of secrecy and propaganda erected by the Tudors" (Anglo, 34–35), Anglo invokes a "modern historiographical commonplace" regarding Bacon's *History*: "Its worthlessness as an original source for the reign of Henry VII. […] It is a labour of haste, dashed off with virtuoso aplomb through scant diligence. It is very much within the tradition of humanist historical writing, showing little of the interest, displayed contemporaneously by Buc, in documentary sources, and concentrating instead upon eloquent expression and arresting aphorisms, served with a relish of invented set speeches" (Anglo, 36).

94. Sir George Buck, *The History of King Richard the Third*, ed. Arthur Noel Kincaid (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1979), 152.

> [W]hen the king saw that [Perkin] could not be wrought to this recantation
> by fair means nor by any cunning persuasion or any flattering devices,
> then his durance was made much more hard, and now he was lodged and
> more hardly and poorly fed and worse clad, until at length he by miseries
> and by torments and other extremities was forced to say anything and
> content to unsay what the king would have him. And then, after that he
> was taken from the Tower and by these cruel methods tortured, he made
> a recantation and a renunciation and of his princely name of Plantagenet,
> and of his parentage, and of his title to the crown, and he confessed and
> professed himself to be but a mean and base son of Warbeck and some
> lowborn woman.[95]

We should not be too hasty to dismiss Buck's account on the basis of his
agenda to restore the reputation of Richard III and to paint his successor as a
tyrannical usurper. A year before Buck completed his work, Gainsford wrote
that Perkin had been "put to the racke, which made him not onley confesse his
pedigree and original but write it with his owne hands."[96] But Buck—who, after
a devastating exposure of Gainsford's erroneous information and fallacious
reasoning through analogous historical exempla of imposture, blasted him as a
"counterfeit historian"—takes the next logical step Gainsford had ignored. His
knowledge of the law informs his opinion that "because the means and effects
of torture are always evil, therefore not only the doctors of civil law, but also of
theology, and the best of them, condemn and abhor tortures."[97] If it was indeed
a confession obtained by torture, Buck suggests, it has no legal weight.

When discussing Perkin, Buck's text, like Speed's, offers the reader an
invaluable glimpse behind the scenes of the historiographer's world:

> The man commonly called Perkin Warbeck was as well with the princes as
> with the common people held to be the younger son of King Edward IV.
> And Richard Grafton affirmeth this. In Flanders, saith he, and most of all,
> here in England, it was received for an undoubted truth, not only of the
> people but also of the nobles, that Perkin was the son of King Edward IV.

95. Buck, 151.

96. Gainsford, 106. It is important to note that only Gainsford and Buck make mention of Perkin's
torture.

97. Buck, 155.

> And they all swore and affirmed this to be true. Thus this honest author. I
> have also heard a very grave and well-learned and well-experienced writer
> **[Note: Mr William Camden]** say there were many wise and grave and
> great persons of good intelligence who lived in that time and near unto
> it, and who affirmed confidently this Perkin was the second son of King
> Edward, and that not only the nobility but also that the people took Perkin
> for the certain Duke of York, and so consequently for the next and true
> heir of the crown.[98]

As in Speed's, in Buck's text we once again encounter a confident command
of the source texts combined with a record of live testimony by his historical
authorities—among whom he identifies Camden in the marginal note—as he
explains how not only the gullible believed Perkin's claims in his own time. And
if Camden's authority and opinion are not sufficient to prove that the "truth"
behind the story may have been different from what the chroniclers had been
insisting for almost a century, Buck invokes another great authority:

> As the good antiquary and diligent searcher of knowledge of the obscure
> and hidden things appertaining to our story, and by name Mr John Stow,
> when I pressed much to know and understand the certainty of this murder
> of the sons of King Edward IV and what he thought of it, and what proofs
> thereof he had found in his various and manifold readings, his answer
> was this, and as peremptory as short, that it was never proved by any true
> evidence nor by credible testimony, nor by probable suspicions, nor so
> much as by the oaths of the knights of the post, nor yet by any fine fiction
> or argument or poetry, that King Richard killed his nephews or was guilty
> of the practice thereof.[99]

Buck's report of his own conversations with the great antiquarian is extremely
important for two reasons. Obviously, Stow's *authority* is an indispensable
building block for Buck's argument that Richard III did not murder his
nephews. But the second reason is far more important for our purpose, as it
reveals Stow's personal understanding of the history of Richard III and Henry

98. Buck, 162; rendered in square brackets and **bolded** is Buck's marginal note.
99. Buck, 173. For the association of Stow and a young Sir George Buck, see Schwyzer, 864–65.

VII based on a lifetime of antiquarian research, and it hints credibly at a motivation for his deliberate omission of Perkin's confession from his works. If Stow did not actually believe that Perkin was Richard Duke of York, he most certainly lent no credence to the storyline of his imposture stitched together in the wake of the "confession" of Sir James Tyrell in 1502 at his trial for treason, regarding his part in the "murder" of the princes.[100]

Conclusion

As a published record of an early modern reading of medieval history, Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* in our time has been understood as ambivalent largely as a

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100. Fabyan's continuation in 1502 notes Tyrell's execution in one sentence, but makes no mention of his "confession" regarding the two princes in the Tower. *The Great Chronicle*, however, in another example of *ex post facto* emplotment, introduces Tyrell's 1502 confession as a frame for future events (notwithstanding the variety of versions coexisting in the same report and a significant lacuna naming an alternative assassin) beginning with this passage in the reign of Richard III which also serves as the *first* mention of the future king Henry VII in exile: "Thus passyng this trobelous & mysorderid world, word sprang quykly of a Gentylman being In the partyes of Bretayn namyd henry & sone unto therle of Rychmund þᵗ made spedy provicion ffor to cumme Into England to clayme the Croune as his Rygth, Concideryng the deth of kyng Edwardys chyldyr, Of whom as than men fferid not opynly to saye that they were Rydd owth of this world, But of theyr dethis maner was many oppynyons, ffor some said they were murdered atwene ij ffethyr beddis, Some said they were drownyd In malvesy and some said that they were stykkid wyth a Venymous pocion, But how soo evyr they were put to deth, Certayn It was that before that daye they were departed ffrom this world, Of which Cruell dede sir James Tyrell was Reportid to be the doer, But oþer putt that wygth upon an old servaunt of kyng Rychardys namyd, [sic: blank]" (fo. 212v–213r, pp. 236–37). It is More who provides the only "unequivocal citation of the confession" (Davies, "Information," 249) with the greatest details of the plot, along with the names of Tyrell's accomplices: "Black Will" or William Slaughter, Miles Forrest, and John Dighton. According to More, despite their "examination" by Henry VII, only Tyrell ever met the executioner. For Henry's apparently conscious policy of controlling the spread of information such as Tyrell's confession and other staples of the Richard III and Perkin Warbeck stories, see Davies, "Information," 248–53. Analyzing Tyrell's confession in its contexts, Chrimes concludes: "the manifest expediency of the allegation does not make it true," and adds: "There is no reliable evidence that the confession was ever made by Tyrell, or that it was ever published, as it surely would have been if it had been made. The most that can be said is that it appears that Henry VII let it be known that Tyrell had confessed before he was executed, and the reasons for his doing so are obvious enough, as indicated above. The essential incredibility of the whole story as embroidered and enlarged upon by Sir Thomas More in his *Richard III*, and vaguely referred to by Polydore Vergil and the Great Chronicle, was fully exposed by P. M. Kendall, *Richard the Third* (1955), 398–406. For the attainders of Suffolk and Tyrell, and fifteen others, see *R. P.*, VI, 545" (Chrimes, 93; 93n1).

result of its elimination of Perkin's confession and the absence of any soliloquy which might have enabled the audience to know whether he was truly Richard of York or an impostor. Modern critics have always considered the confession an integral part of the story, based on an assumption that Ford learned the story from Bacon and Gainsford, but as we have seen, the clues to Ford's reluctance to stage the confession may lie in the ever-louder mutterings issuing from the society of historians and antiquarians among whom Stow and Camden were authoritative and influential. Ford could have encountered these views as part of the political beliefs of the circle around the Earl of Arundel with which he was associated, or perhaps even directly from Buck who in addition to being Master of the Revels was also Arundel's client.[101]

Speed calls attention to Henry VII's short-lived political gains obtained from the execution of the last Plantagenet, while Buck is dismissive of the storyline of Warbeck's imposture because it was based on the confession of the soon-to-be-executed traitor Sir James Tyrrell and thereafter conveniently, expediently, and retroactively imposed as a frame for the narrative of Henry's war against a dynastic rival. Though he did not leave any personal record of his assessment of the sources he read for his history of the 1490s, Stow must have observed the cacophonic dissonance of the details in the early sixteenth-century sources as well as the glaring omission of Perkin's confession from all but one of them. But none of this is likely to have surprised the antiquarian who was accustomed to the untidiness of texts handed to him by antiquity. If one had to hazard a guess, it was probably the ironing out of all of these historiographic wrinkles into a coherent narrative in the vernacular printed chronicles of the last half-century of his life with which he disagreed most strongly.

In an age when "monarchical rule […] was both public and private, [and] the representation of the royal body was essential to rule—that is to the construction of a bond between ruler and subject"[102]—these connections between ruler and subject were also part of the rhetorical construction of the *memory* of the monarchs in the chronicles, as attested by the many dynastic

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101. Hopkins, "Acting," 31 and *John Ford*, 45–46, and especially *John Ford*, 60–62. Buck was declared a lunatic on 12 April, 1622, so any documentable moment of Ford's meeting with Buck—strictly based on their work in the world of the theatre—would have had to have occurred in the previous year or two, because the earliest evidence of Ford's dramatic work comes from his collaboration with Thomas Dekker and William Rowley on *The Witch of Edmonton* in 1621.

102. Sharpe, *Selling*, 10.

hosannas and references to Henry VII as the English Solomon.[103] Whereas Perkin himself may also have been of the blood royal—something believed by many of More's contemporaries, and probably even by Stow a hundred years later—he was not in the position to "control the representation"[104] of his own physical body and origins in the textual discourse of his day which has, in turn, inevitably skewed posterity's understanding of him. Having been denied the ability to speak for himself, popular resistance to his cause and the rumours and opinions of his enemies inscribed his memory. Conversely, Henry Tudor's great skill in controlling his presentation both in the moment and with a view to history has manifested itself through the works of historians connected to him in various degrees of deference, and presented an image to posterity of a calm, politic, shrewd Renaissance prince. In never having a proper chance to forge his own bond between "ruler and subject" or with posterity either, Perkin resembles another reviled man separated from popular memory by his inability to control either his self-presentation or his memory in historiography: King John.[105]

Fundamentally, this is a story that in its own time as well as a century and a half later depends on the "proper" interpretation of the performance of authority.[106] The late fifteenth-century "commonwealth of *readers*," the chronicles themselves show us,[107] were a disoriented lot, most often unable to "read" the machinations behind the political performances. But their descendants as a literal commonwealth of readers under James I and Charles I prove to be crucial for the re-presentation of Perkin's "strange truth." The application of the story's historical lessons may well have rendered these "readers and spectators of the scripts"[108] into critics of the Stuart government.

Ford's own emplotment of history on the stage, through its emphasis on the language of the theatre, is one that returns the "strange truth" of Perkin Warbeck and his claim to the throne to the indeterminacy it had for its contemporaries—a fact emphasized by Speed, Bacon, and Buck, and even

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103. Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation*, 241–43.

104. Sharpe, *Selling*, 10.

105. See Djordjevic, *King John*.

106. Sharpe, *Selling*, 18.

107. See Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation*, 207–54.

108. Sharpe, *Selling*, 18.

allowed by Gainsford—and presents "Henry VII's efforts to authenticate himself at the expense of Warbeck's counterclaim, as history-in-progress, as opposed to history-after-the-fact."[109] Ford adapts an extremely unstable story in early modern historiography, and places an emphasis on the instability of rhetorical signification in a stage world where "one man's reality is another's idol, and the name of the game is interpretation."[110] Showing that he was indeed a careful reader of history which may well have included the chronicles and not just Gainsford and Bacon, and that he understood Perkin's tragic fate to be a direct result of Henry's more successful *political* maneuvering rather than any proven facts regarding Perkin's identity, Ford anatomizes the rumours of Perkin's origins as words uttered by known persons in known times and places, and the speakers' motives become perfectly identifiable: either political or economic gain. Pointing to the political opportunism of Henry's courtiers, the turncoat Sir Robert Clifford's denunciation of Sir William Stanley as a traitor for his belief in Perkin's Yorkist claim is undercut not only by the Bishop of Durham's ironic awareness that—if proven true—all of them who once served the House of York and now obey Henry would be traitors, "perjured and false, / Who have took oath to Henry and the justice / Of Henry's title," but also by Stanley's metahistorical remark that Clifford's noble name will be the uglier in memory, forever "stamped" as a "state-informer," while Stanley will prove to be "no blemish to his house / In chronicles writ in another age" (2.2.19–21, 2.2.90–91, 2.2.101–02). Similarly, the implied "support" of the English commons for their king is shown to be the result of wholesale bribery, as Henry's victory over the Cornish rebels, despite the fawning Urswick's compliment to him as a "wise king, sent from heaven, / Protector of the just," is undercut moments later by Henry's own words that in order to shore up his hitherto rebellious subjects' obedience to him, he will "throw / A largesse free amongst them, which shall hearten / And cherish up their loyalties" (3.1.36–7 and 3.1.111–13). Even Ford's depiction of Henry's diplomatic success in neutralizing the European princes' support for Perkin and securing their tacit acceptance of him as king of

109. Kamps, 186.

110. Judith Anderson, "'But We Shall Teach the Lad Another Language': History and Rhetoric in Bacon, Ford, and Donne," *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989): 169–96, 177. Ford's first scene in particular "insistently dramatize(s) the fact that the story we hear is one side's interpretation" (Anderson, 175). Kamps argues that the play is a meta-historical exploitation of the "ideological dimension of history-writing" (3, 10, 194).

England is hollow, as it is shown not to be based on any overwhelming "proof" of Perkin's imposture, but rather to be a direct result of each ruler's profit from the negotiations of the Spanish Ambassador Hialas who secures multilateral renewed economic and marital ties between Germany, France, England, Spain, and Scotland (4.3.1–61). Scotland's James gleefully sums up his own profitable horse-trading that effectively sealed Perkin's fate:

> A league with Ferdinand, a marriage
> With English Margaret, a free release
> From restitution for the late affronts,
> Cessation from hostility! and all
> For Warbeck not delivered but dismissed!
> We could not wish it better, Dalyell! (4.3.56–61)

Finally, when the audience hears Urswick condemn Perkin to death primarily for two botched escapes from prison and inexplicably blame Perkin's "witchcraft" for the impending death of Warwick, the "Poor gentleman, unhappy in his fate, / And ruined by [Perkin's] cunning" (5.3.13–19), it can hardly escape the impression that "truth" itself was facing execution in the stage world.

As a result of Ford's strategy of staging *realpolitik* as a kind of non sequitur response to the audience's persistent questions regarding the "truth" of Perkin's identity, the audience is condemned to a "state of suspended judgment."[111] Ford's audience becomes as disoriented as Arnold and Fabyan (at least sometimes) seem to have been inside London's walls, and begins to wonder, as Speed does, what kind of "Solomon" Henry actually may have been, while questioning if Perkin might not, after all, be one of the princes from the Tower.

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111. Barish, 151.