

**Representing Women and Resistance to Tyranny in More's
Historia Richardi Tertii.**

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In this article, the author explores the role of women in More's *Richard III*, identifying the various stereotypical elements to be found in the attitudes and characterisation of the work. The individual strengths of the roles of women in the work are uncovered, particularly in their relationship to the tyrannical context in which they sought to assert values of compassion and truth. Giving specific focus to Queen Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV, and Mistress Shore, the writer contrasts their presence in the work as representing respectively eloquence and love.

Words: Misogyny, eloquence, stereotype, love.

L'auteur explore le rôle des femmes dans le *Richard III* de More ; il identifie les stéréotypes qui se révèlent dans les attitudes des personnages, telles que l'ouvrage les caractérise. Il dégage les traits saillants des femmes dans le rôle que leur impose un climat de tyrannie, où elles s'efforcent de faire prévaloir des valeurs de compassion et de vérité. Les deux rivales que sont l'épouse d'Edouard IV et sa très influente maîtresse sont ici mises en contraste, l'une représentant l'éloquence, et l'autre l'amour.

Mots-clés : misogynie, éloquence, stéréotype, amour.

In *Historia Richardi Tertii*, written at much the same time as *Utopia*, there is neither the truly eutopian nor the Utopian but rather, of course, the dystopian.¹ More tells of an England made dystopian

¹ Reference is to *In Defense of Humanism Letters to Dorp, Oxford, Lee, and a Monk Historia Richardi Tertii*, ed. D. F. Kinney, *The Yale Edition of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 15 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). That edition will hereafter be cited as CW 15. I have of course consulted *The History of King Richard III*, ed. R. S. Sylvester, *The Yale Edition of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), hereafter cited as CW 2. In relation to the versions of More's history contained in that volume, see especially J. H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pages 75-154 and P. Grant, *Literature and the Discovery of Method in the English Renaissance* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pages 19-47. Reference to the Latin verse will be from *Latin Poems*, eds C. H. Miller, et al., *The Yale Edition of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 3, 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). That edition will be cited as CW 3, 2. Reference to the English verse will be from *English Poems Life of Pico The Last Things*, eds A. S. G. Edwards, K. G. Rodgers, and C. H. Miller, *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). That edition will be cited as CW 1. Reference to *Utopia* will be from *More: Utopia Latin Text and English Translation*, eds G. M. Logan, R. M. Adams and C. H. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). That edition will be cited as *Utopia*. In connection with the early modern debate about women see (among more recent and many commentaries): I. Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); L. Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), especially at pages 18-48; A. Grafton and L. Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Duckworth, 1986), pages 29-57; A. Blamires, ed., *Woman Defamed and Defended An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); O. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her A History of Women in Western Europe Volume One 1500-1800* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995); P. J. P. Goldberg, "Women," in R. Horrox, ed., *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pages 112-131; A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1700* (1994; rpt. London: Phoenix, 1996). It should be mentioned in this context that the best reading known to me of More's *To Candidus* (to which I shall subsequently be referring) is P. J. Benson's in her *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pages 158-166.

by Richard of Gloucester, later Richard III, and the women who feature most prominently in his narrative—Queen Elizabeth and Shore’s wife—are portrayed sympathetically yet also misogynically, as being in their very different ways heroic, flawed, vulnerable.² They are heroically resistant and they are victims; what they resist is tyranny but that does not solely victimise them. They are public figures who cannot retreat into a safely private, domestic world—even if doing so were what they wanted; they do not act in a public sphere made safe by social training and political structures that minimise the possibility of political power’s illegitimate acquisition or use. Although to some extent idealised, they are by no means represented as ideal. Nor are they identified merely as the products of their society. Instead they are memorably individuated recreations of women who encountered and opposed, as More’s version of the past would persuade its readers, a singular and internal threat to the common weal in England. According to More, at the heart of the queen’s resistance lay eloquence whereas love (desire and charity) lay at the heart of the resistance by Shore’s wife. To perceive how the queen and Shore are represented as women, and as having exercised their respective forms of resistance, is to understand More’s detailed focus on them in the *Historia* as major opponents of tyranny. It is thus also to understand with greater clarity his representations of Richard, the man whom he portrayed as the recently notable, English instance of tyranny, and of Edward IV.

At the start of *Historia Richardi Tertii* it is primarily through women that More’s narrator suggests the nature of the England—but also of the world—in which his history—and, by implication, all

² By “misogyny” in the accounts of the two women, here I mean simply this: although the Queen and Jane Shore are in general portrayed sympathetically, their portrayals identify them, insofar as they are women, as therefore possessing certain gender-pervasive flaws and weaknesses, as being susceptible to gender-pervasive imperfections which men (as men) usually do not possess. Thus the sympathetic portrayals of the Queen and Shore reflect the misogyny of early Tudor culture, in which More’s text participates. “Jane Shore” is of course a misnomer. On More’s identifying of Shore’s wife see CW 2, pages 219-220 and 314-315.

history—unfolds. When listing the children of “King Edward, the fourth of that name,” he describes them as follows:

Edward, the heir-apparent, about thirteen years old; Richard, Duke of York, two years his junior; Elizabeth, who later by the guidance of fate became the consort of Henry VII and the mother of Henry VIII, a queen of remarkable beauty and character; Cecily, not as fortunate as she was fair; [Bridget, who imitated the virtue of her namesake, took vows, and led the life of a religious in a convent of cloistered nuns at Dartford; Anne, later honorably married to Thomas, at that time Lord Howard and afterwards Earl of Surrey;] Catherine, who experienced many changes of fortune, occasionally benign but more often unfavorable, and who at last, if this change be the last (for she is still alive), gained the generous favor of fortune she eminently deserved through the pious goodwill of her nephew, King Henry VIII. (page 315)³

Not much is said there of the king’s sons—their stories will come later, interwoven with Richard of Gloucester’s story. But the narrator makes a point of observing that Elizabeth’s life was guided providentially, that Cecily’s was not fortunate in proportion to her beauty, that Catherine has been tossed about by extremes of chance. He emphasises that Bridget chose a life of virtue. Her having done so seems to have placed her beyond chance’s power, for her life is summarised as one set devoutly apart from the world. Anne, on the other hand, seems to have married well and to have been left otherwise untouched by chance—in so far as that can be associated with her marriage. So the England, the world, in which More’s *Historia Richardi Tertii* unfolds has much in common with the world portrayed in his *Fortune Verses*. In particular, both insist on the power of chance over individual lives and that virtue enables escape from chance. Through his description of Edward’s daughters, then, More’s narrator implies that the world of his and of all history is in

³ “*Eduardo videlicet [. . .] consecuta est*” (page 314).

basic respects the world as presented throughout *The Consolation of Philosophy*.⁴

In that world he portrays the queen and Shore's wife, respectively the wife and mistress of Edward IV, resisting in their different ways the incarnation of unnaturalness and of tyranny that is his Richard. His characterization of the queen begins negatively and its misogynic elements, though to be cunningly transcended, are never denied. She is introduced as a woman vigorously and perhaps violently pursuing power. Amidst an account of ruthless, male political ambition the narrator says this: "For whether the queen's faction laid a trap for him [the Duke of Clarence] (for the queen's partisans and the king's kinsmen were bitterest enemies, as women by nature and not out of malice almost always hate those who are dearest to their husbands) [. . .] he was condemned by a full parliament to the most grievous punishment" (page 323).⁵ Despite her rank, the narrator parenthetically remarks, the queen was still as naturally contrary as any other woman—so she possessed a contrariness that went beyond mere passion. His emphasis on her pursuit of power evokes the conventional charge against women of their being ambitious; on the other hand, of course, the queen's pursuit of political power is recounted immediately after the identification of Richard, Duke of York's three sons as "insatiably ambitious, hungry for power," and iteration of specifically George's "greed for power" (page 323).⁶ Her ambition does not differentiate her from her husband or from his brothers.

⁴ The allusion to Providence likewise, of course, associates the world of More's history with that of *The Consolation*.

⁵ "*Nam siue [. . .] acerbissimo supplicio adiudicauit*" (page 322).

⁶ "[*A*]uidi potentiae"; "*regnandi cupiditas*" (page 322).

What More's narrator subsequently suggests, however, is the extent to which her perhaps murderous ambition is overwhelmed by Richard of Gloucester's definitely and extensively murderous will to power. Yet the moment when the reader sees her ambition succumb to Richard's is also the moment when her characterization is shown as transcending the misogynic: that when More stages her disputation with Cardinal Bouchier. In her long exchange with the cardinal a number of important things are simultaneously at stake. Certainly two are the life of her son and hence, indirectly, legitimate succession in England; but there are others, for example the interpretation and maintenance of church tradition, the acknowledgement of and obedience or deference to natural law, the power of prudence and, as well, the power of eloquence. A major reason for that simultaneity is the fact of the queen's being in sanctuary with her son; another is the no less obvious fact of her being a woman and mother. When, in effect, she loses a disputation she appears to have won, her defence of church tradition and of natural law, her attempts to exercise power through prudence and eloquence elevate her beyond her actual failure and the flaws attributed misogynically to her.

In order to understand the queen's sad moment of transcendence, one has first to consider More's preludes to it: a speech by Richard; a principled although acquiescent response to Richard by the cardinal, who speaks very briefly; a lengthy speech by the Duke of Buckingham. The terms for the queen's dispute with the cardinal originate with Richard, whose speech denounces the queen's having taken refuge in sanctuary. Much of what Buckingham will thereafter argue derives directly or obliquely from the Protector's condemnation of the queen. Richard starts by condemning the queen as an unnatural mother. She is, he claims, Medea-like in her readiness to "sacrifice her own children"—through an abuse of sanctuary—and thereby exact "vengeance on those whom she hate[s]" (page 361). In addition, Richard casts the queen as a type of female recalcitrance, weak judgment, and ambition for political control: ultimately, in consequence, as an offender against natural law and prudence, as a distinctly female enemy to the common weal (page 365). Buckingham's speech ingeniously elaborates on the themes prominent

in that of his master. There, furthering the Protector's desire to separate royal son and mother, he attacks the queen for being a woman, for being the kind of woman and mother that he alleges she is, for having ill-advisedly taken sanctuary (a church tradition, according to him, in need of reform), and for being directed neither by prudence nor by natural law. To get what the Protector and he want (separation of son from mother), Buckingham has to overcome multiple obstacles (motherhood, royalty, the Church). The problem is, of course, that the different obstacles and single objective coalesce in the one ambitious, desperate and hostile, female existence. Since, therefore, what Buckingham has to contend with when he speaks in support of Richard is perfectly clear, it comes as no surprise to the reader that Buckingham develops Richard's multiple arguments and that More assigns Buckingham a cunningly deliberative, smoothly ruthless speech—credibly deceptive, in its portrayed context, and evidence both of its speaker's and of More's rhetorical virtuosity.

To glance at some of the detail in Buckingham's speech illustrates what has been just now suggested but is important for another reason as well. Because the cardinal transmits or translates to the queen much of what Richard and, subsequently, Buckingham argue, her dispute with him forms an implicit response to the Duke and, therefore, the Protector. By way of beginning, Buckingham picks up a phrase used by the cardinal, who has been speaking immediately before him. When Bourchier announces his willingness to address the queen on the Protector's behalf—but not to “impair the immunity of [. . .] sanctuary”—he closes with the words “maternal indulgence and womanly fear” (pages 365 and 367 respectively).⁷ “Womanly fear?” said the Duke of Buckingham. “No; the woman's invincible stubbornness” (*ibid.*).⁸ Buckingham starts his speech by picking up Bourchier's allusion to female weakness (which echoes an allusion to

⁷ “[M]aternam indulgentiam ac muliebre[m] [. . .] metum [. . .]” (page 366). Cf. CW 2, pages 194-195.

⁸ “Muliebre[m] [metum]” inquit Dux Bukyngamiae [. . .]” (page 366).

that by Richard) and replacing it with condemnation of the queen as a striking incarnation of female recalcitrance (a charge the Protector has made directly). In order to elaborate on, rather than merely to iterate, Richard's depreciation of her, he relocates her in terms of Richard's misogynic clichés. The queen is to be recognized as primarily recalcitrant, not weakly fearful. Just so, he knows when to deviate from Richard in order to strengthen and advance the Protector's case. He suggests that, even if the queen's judgment may be relatively weak and unsound, it is nevertheless sufficiently strong for her to choose a better course of action: women lack sense, but the queen actually “has quite a bit, for a woman” and therefore may have wit enough to acknowledge that her son doesn't need confinement in sanctuary (*ibid.*).⁹ He goes on to assert that, none the less, she may reject prudent counsel's correction of her imprudence; in that case, according to Buckingham, she will reveal her governance of the young duke to be driven by female obstinacy instigated by malice. On the other hand, he suggests, if she really is a mother driven by “irrational fears [that] even extend to imagining that her son is in danger” (pages 367-369), then she is in fact so unreasonable—though rather, “no doubt,” self-interestedly calculating—a mother as to be placing her son in harm's way. Now he “languish[es]” in sanctuary; soon, of a certainty, he will be lost to his brother because his own mother will spirit him abroad (page 369). Accused of female weaknesses, accused of departing from them in viciously female ways, the queen is portrayed as an unnatural mother. Thereupon Buckingham deals astutely with the Church. Sanctuary, he argues, although “based on a venerable tradition” has become much abused—often by women. It is a tradition needing reform. The queen has misused it; an immediate and appropriate correction of that specific abuse would be for the Protector's agents to liberate her son into the Protector's care (pages 369-377).

⁹ He adds: “[S]he surely does not suppose she has more foresight than any of us, in particular those whose good faith she has no cause to question, [. . .]”

When the cardinal transmits or translates Buckingham's and Richard's arguments to the queen, More presents her as being variously victimised: by Richard's cunning ambition; by that ambition's knowing facilitators; and by the (male) *naïveté* or witlessness unknowingly complicit with it. Comprehensively duped by both Richard and Buckingham, the cardinal initially puts forward some of their main arguments. He indicates to the queen that her virtual imprisonment of her son in sanctuary, dividing royal brothers, marks her as at once an unnatural and politically imprudent mother. The interests of the realm, of her friends, of herself and of her sons would benefit were she to accept his "sound and useful advice as her trustworthy and loving friend"—advice "to set the duke free" (page 379). He begins, then, by representing the queen to herself as a specifically female enemy to the common weal. He appeals to her through what he naively takes to be argumentation innocently urging the common good but what she understands to be (as of course does the reader) Richard's disguised argumentation in support of his will to tyrannic power. Her response is a deliberately nuanced counter-representation, in which she portrays herself to Bouchier as the necessarily female preserver of natural law and prudence. Doing so, contesting identification of the natural and the prudent in her circumstances, she covertly defends her son's life from the Protector's desire to end it. Not by accident does she raise the issue of her younger son's health. Sanctuary, her parental presence and her son's health are indivisible, she replies. According to her, in the "shelter[ing]" isolation made possible by the Church her son can fully benefit from her maternal care (page 379).¹⁰ Her argumentation implicitly unites ecclesiastical tradition with natural law—the latter being doubly evoked, by her pervasive appeal to motherhood (pages 379-381) and by her passing appeal to "medical authorities" (page 381)—in order to suggest that true prudence lies, first, in her continued exercise of a mother's unique ability to protect her son's

¹⁰ Not merely her younger son but both her sons would benefit from that, she in fact tells Bouchier—who is presumably deaf to what she implies about the health of her son currently in the Protector's care.

life and, second, in her concomitant protection of the royal succession (pages 379-381).

Bouchier, in rehearsing or recreating the arguments of Richard and of Buckingham, brings the power of eloquence to bear upon the queen. He has, after all, earlier said to Richard, "I will attempt the task [of winning over the queen] so energetically that it will be quite evident to everyone that the real stumbling block was not my lack of diligence [. . .]" (page 367). Contesting that power she matches the cardinal in ability to argue by ethos, pathos and logos. More portrays her as formidably eloquent. He does so, in part, for an obvious reason: she is a mother and queen arguing desperately in defence of her child's life against the agent of a political rival. Yet there is a less obvious though no less important reason, namely, that she is simultaneously arguing on two fronts and addressing two audiences. She disputes with the cardinal but is therefore dealing both with what he says and with what Richard—and (or) Buckingham—has put in his head; she addresses the cardinal but knows that what she says will be recounted to the Protector and his court. As eloquent in argument as she is astute, she appears even from the start of her exchange with Bouchier to be heroic: desperate, undeniably still flawed and nevertheless heroic in her defence of the otherwise undefended against the finally insuperable.

It is illuminating, that being so, briefly to contrast More's representation of the queen with the figure of the ideal wife as described in his poem *To Candidus*. There More's narrator asserts that the ideal wife will possess *Summa eloquentia / Iam cum omnium graui / Rerum scientia*: "the highest eloquence with deep [or, thoughtful] knowledge of all things [or, matters]."¹¹ He continues: "Such a woman, I suspect, was Tullia—never was daughter more

¹¹ CW 3, 2 lines 154-156, my translation with incorporation of C. H. Miller's "thoughtful" for "gravi."

beloved by a father, himself in learning second to none."¹² In *To Candidus*, then, the ideal wife is portrayed as being among other things a perfect orator. Her uniting "the highest eloquence" with "deep knowledge" implies as much; that suggestion is affirmed by the subsequent allusion to Tullia and to her father, Cicero. As I have observed elsewhere, however, this perfect orator—this perfect female humanist—is also wholly domestic: she voices her eloquence in private for the well being of her husband and not in public for the good of the community. Now it is self-evident that the queen is a public figure and that, in her dispute with the cardinal, she argues eloquently for what is at once a personal and a public good. On the other hand, she is disputing in confinement. The notionally ideal wife in More's poem exercises her eloquence in the imposed confinement of home; the queen disputes eloquently in a chosen refuge from the public world. In *To Candidus* the ideal *mulier economica* has safety in her imposed containment; the queen has a precarious safety—one ultimately and obviously doomed—in the retreat she has chosen yet to which she has also been driven by her well-grounded fears.

That the safety of the queen and of her son is ultimately doomed seems clear to the reader, I would suggest, not simply because he or she may already know what will happen next nor because the queen is a woman and therefore supposedly weak, being especially vulnerable in a male and ruthless political domain. After all, as regards the latter reason, Richard has destroyed powerful men; no opponent has so far been able to withstand him. Further, the queen has been a powerful, perhaps ruthless politician in her own right and she has not become personally weak—although weakness has been a generic accusation conveniently directed against her by Richard, Buckingham and the cardinal. It is instead because she, as sole defender of the otherwise undefended, faces opposition that she cannot overcome. True, the cardinal has earlier defended sanctuary: he has told Richard that sanctuary must not be profaned and that

¹² "*Talemque suspicor [. . .] Fuisse Tulliam*" (lines 169-173—C. H. Miller's translation).

motherhood must be respected. Yet even Bouchier demeans sanctuary—and motherhood—when urging the queen to surrender her son. Therein he follows Richard. More's narrator reports that, having "gain[ed] the title of Protector," Richard soon accused the queen of "cruelty" to her children, emphasising the ill-treatment supposedly directed against her younger son, "since she had deprived him of his freedom, dragged him away from the brightness and splendor of his fortune, and hidden him away in a wretched sanctuary, in darkness and filth as it were [. . .]" (page 361). Bouchier's initial address to the queen refers to the perceived disreputableness of her younger son's "lurking in sanctuary" (page 379).¹³ When the queen responds he then repeats the phrase—applying it to the queen herself—and adds to it with words like those of Richard. He says: "But if you are determined to lurk in this sanctuary, a general consensus has determined that it is much more in the duke's interest to live at large with the king to their mutual benefit and advantage in conditions of dignity and splendor than for him to lead a wretched existence in a squalid lair with you, to the deprivation of the one, to the disgrace of the other, and certainly to the sorrow of both" (page 381).¹⁴ The man who has claimed that he will not "impair the immunity of [. . .] sanctuary" has been so gullible in his political dealings, and is therefore so incapable of prudence, that he cannot recognize the queen's as a genuine case of sanctuary.¹⁵ Deprecating her retreat into protection by the Church, he unwittingly attacks sanctuary itself.

¹³ "[I]n asylo delitescere," page 378.

¹⁴ "[S]in tibi ipsa [. . .] et squalore ducere," (page 380). The important phrase here is, "in hoc asylo delitescendum [. . .]"

¹⁵ Thus Bouchier becomes an outstanding instance of what More's narrator calls, with direct reference to Hastings, "The dense blindness of mortal existence!" (page 419). The Latin is, "*O densam mortalitatis caliginem [. . .]*" (page 418). Emphasis on human impercipientia, also expressed through a trope of blindness, occurs in More's Fortune Verses: "(So wretched is our nature and so blynde)." See "To them that tristith in fortune" (in CW 1), line 111.

There can be little wonder, then, that when the queen subsequently dismantles Bouchier's Richard-derived counsel, in effect unmasking the Protector to his agent, the cardinal understands what she says as revealing only her "groundless womanly fear" (page 385).¹⁶ Soon after using those words he even raises the idea that the queen's son cannot claim sanctuary at all—a thought he carefully although vaguely attributes to others—and that removal of the boy, against the queen's will, would thus be legitimate (pages 385-387). In her long and impassioned reply the queen goes so far as to ask Bouchier, "Is there any place in the world holier than this one, the immunity of which no tyrant has ever before now been impious enough to violate?" (page 387).¹⁷ Having none too obliquely identified Richard as a proto-tyrant already more "impious" than his tyrannic predecessors, she is thereupon cast in the role of unknowing prophet. Immediately she adds: "And I for one have no doubt that the spirit of St. Peter, holy guardian of this sanctuary, has no less power to take vengeance upon violators of his sanctuary today than he had in the past."¹⁸ That is indeed the apex of the queen's moment of transcendence—and More's irony is clear: Bouchier, like many other notionally prudent men of state, failed to recognize Richard as a tyrant in the making and so became his puppet (unfortunately, given the issue of sanctuary, his clerical puppet); only a notionally weak woman saw the Protector for what he was and spoke against him, more truly than she knew at the time.

The queen's arguing with the cardinal is, therefore, both necessary and an exercise in futility. His naïve faith in Richard places him beyond persuasion by even her eloquence. She can find no help

¹⁶ "[N]e muliebris iste frustra conceptus timor in mentem tibi subigat" (page 384).

¹⁷ "Estne vllus vsquam locus [...] veritus violare?" (page 386).

¹⁸ "Atque ego [...] quam fuit olim" (ibid.).

in ecclesiastical authority, despite the fact that she has precariously found it in Church tradition. Secular power lies in the Protector's hands and is, of course, directed against her. The opposition to her is insuperable and hence her eloquence can reveal the truth, express her heroic resistance to a proto-tyrant, but do nothing else. More portrays the queen as winning the dispute, in so far as she wins her argument with the cardinal, yet inevitably losing it because there has never been a possibility of her controlling its outcomes. Forced to confront that fact when the cardinal announces he will abandon discussion, she intensifies her inevitable loss by actually handing over her son and thereby giving the cardinal what he wants. His refusal to continue arguing, that is to say, achieves what his eloquence could not. Further, the very ingenuousness of Bouchier when he withdraws from dispute, and not any cleverness on his part, prompts the queen into her disastrous decision. When ceasing discussion he accuses the queen of seeming "to doubt" the "prudence" or the "good faith" of him and of his associates (page 393). More stages his conclusion to the scenario so that the queen, face to face with imprudence and misplaced faith acting on behalf of irresistible bad faith, has to decide on the spot what is the prudent course of action available to her. The only way she can see is that suggested to her by a forlorn yet not unintelligent hope of submission's being met with various mildness or dutifulness. She hands over her son with these words, which emphasise that responsibility for acting with prudence and in good faith does indeed lie with the cardinal, his companions and those they represent:

"Noble sirs, I am not so imprudent as to lack faith in your prudence, nor am I so suspicious as to doubt your good faith; and today I shall give you such a token of my confidence that if you are lacking in either it will inflict an incurable wound on both me and the commonwealth." (page 395)¹⁹

Almost directly after the queen's long, desperate speech of farewell to her son, More's narrator quotes the Protector's brief, wittily sinister

¹⁹ "'Viri' inquit [...] vulnus inflicturum" (page 394).

greeting to the boy: "My dearest nephew and liege, you are a welcome arrival to everyone, and especially welcome to me" (page 397).²⁰ Just as the terms of the queen's dispute with Bouchier originated with Richard, so he has the last word.

The words through which he seeks to exercise the power of misogynic categorisation over Shore's wife, formerly the "favorite" mistress of Edward IV (page 411), have some affinity with but also differ from those he has deployed against the queen. The reason for that seems straightforward enough: like the queen she is an influential woman perceived by Richard as a threat; but she is neither a directly political opponent nor the mother of claimants impeding his way to the throne. Therefore—in order to facilitate both her use in his acquisition of complete tyrannic power and his diminution of her residual power—Richard categorises Shore's wife as being, like the queen, an unnatural woman. In fact, with an arrogant indifference to implausibility he identifies her and the queen as "enchantresses" in league with one another and with other women of the same kind (page 409). Through that ploy he can attack the queen, begin to attack Hastings and diminish the power of Shore herself. It is ironic that, condemning both women as unnatural because they supposedly possess magical power, he makes Shore's wife resemble the queen. Certainly, denouncing her as "a harlot" he also makes her the queen's antithesis (page 425). Yet it is pertinent to recall here that the Protector had earlier compared the queen with Medea so that he might suggest her to be an unnatural mother. Having now labelled her an enchantress, he has unknowingly extended his Medea analogy; having categorized Shore's wife as an enchantress, he has likewise unknowingly and incongruously drawn her into it.

Richard is not alone, as the reader clearly sees, in portraying "Jane Shore" misogynically. More's narrator comments as follows on the Protector's having accused Shore of sorcery:

²⁰ "[A]duenisti / charissime [...] profecto gratissimus" (page 396).

But since it was impossible to make such a frivolous charge stick, to keep from admitting that they were persecuting her unjustly, they were reduced to the one charge that not even she could deny, since the whole populace was as certain that it was the truth as that it was ridiculous at that point for anyone to make such a terrible crime of it, namely, that she was a harlot. (page 425)²¹

The narrator's misogyny appears, I think, not in his unruffled acceptance of Richard's accusation but amidst his consequent exculpation of Shore for having become Edward's mistress. Even if, he observes, her marriage had been neither ineptly arranged by her parents nor (on her part) loveless, she was after all just a young girl—and therefore readily to be seduced by ambition, by the opportunity to possess extravagant adornment and to gain pleasure. She was, he indicates, after all just a young woman who no doubt possessed a woman's typical weaknesses (page 427).²² However the reader clearly sees that, in addition to the misogyny evident in the portrayal of Shore by More's narrator, there are sympathy and admiration; in fact, the narrator portrays her as having transcended her implied weaknesses and as having been tacitly resistant to Richard. She achieved the former, it is suggested, through her urbane charitableness at court before the passing of her royal lover. Through that charitableness, it is suggested as well, she transcended—at least to some extent—her sexual transgression. Since Shore's resistance to Richard is portrayed in the *Historia* as tacit not voiced, and as expressing endurance in the face of persecution not defiance, More's narrator presents her resistance not as resembling that of the queen

²¹ "[V]tpote vanissimi" [...] *esset meretrix*" (page 424).

²² "Even had it been otherwise, the glamor of such a great suitor and the heady spectacle of a man feared by others deferring to her and imploring her favor, as well as the prospect of finery, a lavish feminine wardrobe, and furthermore leisure, extravagance, and pleasure, could easily make an impression in the girl's tender heart." ("*Et alioqui tanti [...] puellae animum vellicare*" [page 426].)

when in sanctuary but rather as complementing it. Her demeanour and behaviour throughout her elaborately staged, public humiliation—which is her particular moment of resistance in the history just as the queen's is her dispute with the cardinal—are described as if they had possessed an eloquence of their own. The narrator, certainly, creates an eloquent image of Shore's wife in representing her as at once having withstood and almost triumphed over the public degradation that Richard inflicted on her. Thus although her implied flaws, her rising above them and her passive resistance are less spectacularly presented in the *Historia* than are those attributed to the queen, and appropriately so, she is nevertheless characterized as having been and as still being a woman of no slight significance. Edward's mistress may not figure, in other words, as prominently in More's narrative as does the queen; none the less, "Jane Shore" is useful to More in his account of Richard as an embodiment of the unnatural and the tyrannic.

In order to clarify that usefulness I want to return to the exculpation of Shore for having become Edward's mistress. There the most interesting thing seems to be that the misogyny of More's narrator is *sympathetically* intended: designed to elicit the reader's sympathy for Shore by associating her with generic female flaws. As a result the portrait of Shore harmonises with the narrator's earlier portrait of Shore's royal lover. The public body of King Edward, so to speak, is described in terms of the just, Christian prince: he has courage and discretion, showing justice as well as mercy in peace and prudence as well as boldness in war (page 317). In the very last stage of his reign he attempts to engender Christian charity among those who will survive him (pages 333-335). The private body of the king is, however, described by More's narrator as follows:

Even so, from early youth throughout his life, whenever business did not call him away, he was particularly given to dissipation and wantonness, like virtually everyone else; for you will hardly persuade anyone in good health to restrain himself when his fortune permits great extravagance. This fault of his was not particularly irksome to the people, since

one man's pleasures could scarcely be extravagant enough to be burdensome to everyone, and since he used to procure what he wanted with presents or wheedle it out with entreaties, never resorting to violence. Besides, after passing the midpoint of life, he—like most people—became less immoderate in his final days, when his kingdom was perfectly calm and its affairs in a flourishing state. (pages 317- 319)²³

Just as More's narrator partly excuses Shore's sexual transgression by an appeal to generic female flaws, so he likewise excuses Edward's concupiscence by an appeal to generic human weakness. In both cases, the narrator seeks not so much to condemn as to mitigate judgment, to evoke sympathetic understanding while not altogether denying culpability. Further, the narrator links Shore with Edward not only in terms of sexuality and weakness. He connects both through charity, through compassion displayed in a fissuring courtly society. Thus he associates Shore with one of the main qualities by means of which he can make Edward resemble a just Christian prince (despite the king's very obvious, personal imperfections). In fact, by focusing on her charitableness he does not merely link her positively with Edward.²⁴ He makes her, like the late king, in effect an *exemplum* of what Richard could not be; he indicates that, as a woman, she was more than the sum of her (implied) weaknesses and her sexual transgression.

As Edward lies dying he makes a speech that seems to signal the transition from an almost golden age of government to one that is

²³ "*Ceterum genio [. . .] florentium fuit*" (pages 316-318).

²⁴ Compassion and charity are virtues conventionally ascribed to women, just as lechery and ambition and love of luxury are vices conventionally attributed to them. More can thus play conventionally "female" vices against no less conventionally "female" virtues. Edward is not of course feminised by being associated with those virtues, since they are also identifiable with the just, Christian ruler.

certainly iron. More has the king appeal to his faction-riven entourage in an attempt to bring harmony out of growing discord:

“For some years great feuds have been raging among you, often touched off by quite trivial injuries. [. . .] I am certain of this much: your reasons for hate are outnumbered by reasons for love. As for our common humanity and our sworn allegiance to Christ, who gave his soldiers one and only one watchword, that of charity, I leave these points for preachers to handle, though I am not sure that any preacher’s words ought to affect you more deeply than mine, since I am going hence so soon to those places about which they have so much to say.” (page 333)²⁵

Edward adds, reminding the faction members that they are “related by ties either of blood or of marital affinity” (page 335), “God forbid, then, that the very thing which ought to make you most desirous of harmony should give rise to discord” (*ibid.*).²⁶ The king’s attempt in that speech to elicit Christian concord will of course radically distinguish him from Richard, his tyrannic successor. It may be that More’s emphasis on concupiscence and charity in Edward indicates an intention to characterise the king by way of chiefly the concupiscible appetite—with its possibilities for ill and good—but to portray Richard by way of chiefly the irascible appetite’s negative aspects. In any event, the mix of concupiscence and charity delineated in the king occurs likewise in the portrayal of Shore.

Praising Shore’s benevolent social skills, her adroitness in bringing people happily together, More’s narrator talks of her “gracious manner and a winning air of convivial urbanity” (page 429). Therein, he says, and not in her famous beauty lay “her greatest

²⁵ “*Diu iam inter vos [. . .] tam multa predicant*” (pages 332-334).

²⁶ “[*T*]antum prohibeant superi [. . .] concordiam deberet incitare” (page 334).

charm” (*ibid.*).²⁷ He continues: “[*T*]here was no one more adept at enlivening a banquet, whether by tactfully interrupting a grim conversation or by starting a more cheerful one, sometimes entertaining the feasters with witty expressions and jests which raised laughter without hurting anyone’s feelings” (*ibid.*).²⁸ The celebration of Shore as a harmonious presence at court becomes more serious when the narrator remarks, soon after:

Indeed, this little woman—for it would be a crime to slander the devil—was so far from abusing the prince’s favor to hurt anyone that she actually helped many people. For she frequently soothed the king’s temper, won indulgence for enemies and pardon for offenders, and finally assisted many people in their great transactions, usually for no reward or a token one [. . . .] She was certainly so far from being resented that (with the sole exception of the queen) the two factions, who hated each other, both loved her alike; she was little inferior in authority and influence to any of those who at various periods had great power with their princes but who are known to posterity only for their crimes [. . . .] (pages 429 and 431)²⁹

Whether the matter at hand were small or great, according to the narrator, Shore mediated charity—and drew love to herself—in a society then losing that quality and now not much concerned to exercise it on her (page 431). He indicates that, in her case as in the king’s, love was more than merely concupiscence and benefited not merely oneself.

²⁷ “*Nec tamen pulchritudine [. . .] conuiuendi capiebat [. . .]*” (page 428).

²⁸ “[*N*]emo appositior [. . .] nec sine risu” (page 428).

²⁹ “*Quin hec muliercula [. . .] vel perexigua*” (page 428); “*Certum est adeo [. . .] posteris inlarescunt*” (page 430). The first part of the quotation suggests that, as one would have anticipated, Edward’s irascible appetite was in working order—even if subordinate to its counterpart.

Shore's capacity to draw love to herself, be it lust or charity, is nowhere better illustrated in the *Historia* than it is by the account of her public humiliation. Precisely that capacity enabled her, More's narrator suggests, unintentionally to turn Richard's piece of tyrannic theatre against its author: not simply to endure Richard's assault on her but virtually to transform it into personal triumph. Shore's humiliation is described as follows.

[T]he Protector, like a pious, pure prince dropped from heaven to this wretched earth to correct human morals, decreed that in St. Paul's Cathedral, before a great crowd, with the council of London coming forth to worship, she should walk barefoot, marked out by bearing a candle, in front of the cross and the choir singing psalms, in the manner of all those who do public penance there. But her expression and gait were so decorous as she stepped forward, and despite her disheveled and unkempt appearance her face was so lovely, especially when shame sent a most fetching blush into her snowy cheeks, that this great dishonor won her no little measure of praise and goodwill from all those more desirous of her body than concerned for her soul, although even good people who hated her faults pitied her disgrace rather than joying in it, since they considered that it had been arranged by the Protector not out of any real interest in decency but out of hypocrisy and malice. (page 425)³⁰

Richard's humiliation of Shore in St Paul's is presented as a violation of the sacred. It was so, More's narrator implies, because Richard's making Shore act in church as a public penitent evidently expressed his "hypocrisy and malice" rather than "any real interest in decency" (evidently, that is, to the thoughtful eyes of "good people").

³⁰ "[...] Protector / vt pius [...] honesti studio procuratum" (page 424). Germain Marc'hadour has observed to me that the English translation "indicates more clearly" than does the Latin that "her being barely clothed discovered her beauty."

In addition, the narrator suggests, it was so because Richard compelled Shore to act as—to play at being—a penitent. Working her way through her assigned role, she may have blushed but that seems to have been occasioned by her subjection to a "great dishonor" and not by a sense of religious guilt. Further, her blushing with shame heightened her already considerable beauty—as did the decorousness of "her expression and gait." Hers was, then, a command and directed performance yet one perhaps not altogether uncalculated by her; and to whatever extent her performance may have been calculated, it was certainly one ordered by the Protector yet beyond his control. As a result Shore attracted "no little measure of praise and goodwill from all those more desirous of her body than concerned for her soul [...]" She had, that is to say, the erotic allure of a Mary Magdalene seemingly without the latter's contrition. Thus, staging her condemnation for sexual transgression, Richard staged rather her sexual power and his hypocritical malice. Moreover if the spectacle of her humiliation excited, as is ironically remarked, the carnality for which she was in part being notionally punished, it also aroused compassion ("even good people who hated her faults pitied her disgrace [...]"). One could say that whereas, in effect, Richard successfully violated sanctuary in his assault on the queen and on her son, his violation of St Paul's in order to assault Jane Shore proved a dramatic failure.

It is not long after recounting Shore's moment of endurance and virtual triumph that More's narrator deftly juxtaposes description of the woman as she was with portrayal of her as she is. In essaying the latter he focuses on her capacity now to draw love to herself, to arouse lust or compassion. He says, first:

[N]ow she is a little old woman of seventy, wrinkled, rivelled, emaciated, and cadaverous, rapidly withering away, leaving no trace of that much-esteemed body besides dry skin and bones. And yet even as she is, if one looks at her face more attentively, one can conjecture which features restored and

repaired in a particular manner would make her face fair again. (pages 427-429).³¹

He also says:

But this very woman, so famous once, who has now outlived virtually all of her friends and acquaintances and who with the years has passed on in effect to an alien century, her memory of that early luxury almost effaced by her long years of hardship, today ekes out a wretched existence by begging, although some are still living and pretending not to know her who would now be her partners in adversity had she not once salvaged their fortunes. (page 431)³²

That portrayal of Shore as she is—not quite decrepit, not quite destitute, victimised through deliberate and ungrateful neglect—variously suggests how her status has changed. The change can be simply described, of course, in broad terms. Once a celebrity whose body and character were thought attractive, today Shore is a beggar, seeming all but unable to evoke physical interest or even compassion. Yet, as can be seen distinctly, More's narrator does not portray Shore in just that way. The history of "Jane Shore" is not merely the tale of a woman who, once an emblem of beauty and urbane charitableness, now emblematises *vanitas vanitatum*, contempt for the fleeting goods of this worldly life. The narrator does indeed suggest that those things are part of her history but he indicates that others are as well. They are, surely, these: that even amidst the decay of her beauty some of its former and extraordinary allure may still be discerned (for Shore still has the power to rouse the imagination's mildly erotic play); that even after a fall from high—if not altogether honourable—estate into

³¹ "[S]iquidem nunc septuagenaria [...] formosam redderent faciem" (pages 426-428).

³² "At eadem tam [...] ipsa aliquando conseruasset" (page 430).

wretchedness she still has a dignity, a worth earned by her past kindnesses, her past acts of compassion.

Just as one can see comparisons and contrasts between the image of the queen in More's *Historia* and that of the ideal wife in his *To Candidus*, so one can see affinities and differences between the image of Shore's wife and that of the sexually transgressive woman in his epigram "On a Maid with Unmaidenly Habits."³³ Not least among those affinities, in the latter case, is the apparent though not identical fascination with which each woman is described; not least among the differences is Shore's larger practice of love. Further, as far as differences are concerned, in their Boethian, dystopian, English environment the queen and Shore are necessarily far removed in basic ways from the mode of femaleness that More inconsistently sketched in the non-European—but nevertheless deeply problematic—culture of his *Utopia*. On the other hand, the queen and "Jane Shore" are not after all entirely different from the women in *Utopia*. Utopian women are at times described misogynically and are shown to be radically subject to men; it is said, too, that they may be variously heroic.³⁴ In any event, however, two concluding points should be made here. First, the queen and Shore's wife seem designed in More's *Historia* to individuate complementary forms of female resistance to tyranny and thus to help in the defining of an historical tyrant (as More apparently saw Richard to have been). The representations of the two women therefore help, likewise, in the characterisation of Edward IV—and thereby in heightening the antithesis between Edward as almost just, Christian prince and Richard as certainly not that. The last point is simply this. More's representations of the queen and Shore seem, as well, undesignedly to reveal the intricately mingled sympathy with and antipathy to women that can be seen in so many of his writings.

³³ See CW 3, 2 page 147.

³⁴ See, for example, *Utopia* pages 137, 195, 237, 201, 211-213, 233-235.