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### **Cornwallis' Paradoxical Defence of Richard III : A Machiavellian Discourse on Morean Mythology ? \***

**S**IR William Cornwallis The Younger was a minor political figure around the end of the sixteenth century. He was M.P. for Lostwithiel (1597) and Oxford (1604). He was knighted in 1602 but either shunned or failed to get courtly advancement. He died *circa* 1631 having apparently spent most of his life quietly studying. A friend of Ben Jonson and John Donne, he emulated Montaigne in his writings, but has been little studied except (if it is an exception) for the attention given to his excursus into Tudor political mythology which is the principal subject of this paper. <sup>1</sup>

In 1617, he published a volume of essays, or paradoxes, expanded from a collection printed in the previous year. Amongst the new material was a paradox praising Richard III, followed by another praising venereal disease (« The French Pocks »). *The Praise of King Richard* has hardly been taken more seriously than the essay on *The Pocks*. <sup>2</sup> It has been left very much on the margins of critical attention as a curious aside to important matters ; after all, it keeps dubious company. Richard's apologists have been happier with Buc and Walpole, for Cornwallis is prepared to accept Richard's major « crimes » -- a viperish move in the eye of the enthusiast. Historiographers have measured *The Praise* by later historiographical standards, although the work is a paradox not a history. <sup>3</sup> Rosalie Colie has noted the paradox form, but has dismissed *The Praise* as a failure. <sup>4</sup> Where the juxtaposition of *The Praise* of Richard with the praise of *The Pocks* has been noted, little has been done with it. <sup>5</sup> Zeeveld saw *The Praise* as merely appropriated to the paradox form by one who virtually plagiarised from an early Yorkist defence of Richard against the calumnies of More and/or Cardinal Morton. Ramsden and Kincaid, accepting More's authorship of *The History*, have still seen *The Praise* as an attack on Morton, specifically upon a lost pamphlet known to recusants. <sup>6</sup> It is

perhaps significant that missing authors should assume such significance despite the fact that the whole broadly Morean tradition, up to and including Shakespeare's play, would have stood in such powerful and precise counterpoint to the argument of *The Praise*.<sup>7</sup> Such authors serve to haunt the text, distracting from context. Indeed, the closest we get to any illuminating context for the work is in the intimations of residual Yorkist loyalty, conservative disgruntlement or recusant discontent.<sup>8</sup> Cornwallis' paradox might have turned out to be the « first snowdrop »<sup>9</sup> of revisionism to penetrate the wintry wastes of Tudor orthodoxy, but it has been followed by no glorious summer of interpretive intent.

Obviously enough, the following is meant as some sort of monument to be hung up for the memory of Cornwallis. I shall begin by noting the intricate weave of intellectual contexts which seem so obviously to delineate the work : consisting of the paradox genre and the Morean tradition of Richardian mythology which Cornwallis approaches through a Machiavellian style of argument.

Since Erasmus' punning *Moriae Encomium* (1511), the production of paradoxes had become a vogue-ish if varying sport.<sup>10</sup> But as the term itself had meant different things since antiquity, the designation 'paradox' was suggestively ambiguous rather than neatly informative. A paradox could be a reflexive contradiction, and such *insolubilia* had played an important part in the development of medieval logic.<sup>11</sup> A paradox could be a false encomium, as developed by Gorgias to display rhetorical *techne*, and in this sense it occurs in the title of Cornwallis' *first volume of paradoxes*, 1616. Further, echoing etymology, a paradox could be any view stipulated, correctly or not, to be against common opinion. These three differing sense of the term often over-lapped and were not always disengaged by those who wrote paradoxes.<sup>12</sup>

Not surprisingly, different rationalisations were developed for indulging in paradoxicality. On the one hand, paradoxes were justified as merely witty diversions ; on the other, they were promoted as a means of grasping some ultimate truth. So there was, in Renaissance paradox literature at least, a contradiction, perhaps something close to a meta-paradox. Certainly, the whole literature was aporetic, potentially subversive of common belief, and cloaked in ambivalence. And yet, with Christian belief associated with paradox, all paradoxes might bask in some of the light of theological authenticity.<sup>13</sup> What much of the paradox literature came to have in common was the presupposition, or the explicit claim that the paradox required the reader to think through

critically within the terms circumscribed by the discourse.<sup>14</sup> It is important to stress here that this freed the author from an authoritative control over, or a responsibility for, the reader's specific understanding. In general terms such a tenuous relationship had provided an evocative theme for Cornwallis' literary mentor Montaigne whose *Essays* play self-consciously with what is seen virtually as a paradox of the book.<sup>15</sup> Donne however, had made the point more explicitly in calling his paradoxes « swaggerers », like swaggering youths, they were harmless if resisted ; but how and in which ways are we intended to resist ? Much later, John Dunton was to encapsulate a whole tradition of paradox justification by suggesting (through a paradox) that paradoxes were both frivolous and seriously mind-stretching.<sup>16</sup> They could be so, I suggest, by advancing propositions to which the author might not really assent and by leaving open how far there was any serious intent behind the discourse. In this light, it is little wonder that Cornwallis' relationship to his *Praise of King Richard III* should be uncertain -- a point not conspicuously helped by the scholarly fecundity of generating hypothetical authors for missing works.

Cornwallis justified his decision to bring out his *Essays* in familiar enough terms. « Seeing opinion of a little nothing is become so mighty that like a monarchess she tyranniseth over judgement I have been undertaken to anatomise and confute some few of her traditions ». <sup>17</sup> This, however, does not get us far with our loosely attached author. And his decision to bring out his paradoxical *Praise of King Richard* in conjunction with a *Praise of the French Pocks* creates, through a disconcerting juxtaposition, interesting interpretive possibilities. Not the least of these is that, underlying the extreme hostility to Richard's traducers, is a strong affinity with More's *History*. One may put the whole matter paradoxically, loosely speaking : -- meaning is revealed in the absence of a restricting authorial intention ; and once cast in the paradox mode and in the context of a paradoxical counterpart, *The Praise*, which reads as an attack on *The History*, can be seen to be fundamentally at one with it. To see how, we will need to turn to (of all people, one might think) Machiavelli, who is so easily contrasted with More.

*The History of King Richard III* can arguably be seen as the most important text through which the unsavoury reputation of Richard (deformed, unscrupulous, tyrannical) was established -- hence my synoptic references to the Morean tradition or mythology. Left in these general terms, the tradition stretches to encompass Shakespeare's play.

A passing allusion indicates that a play or plays about Richard might have provided Cornwallis with some incentive to reconsider the dominant image of Richard ; but it is More's *History* that can be seen as the most consistently appropriate counterpoint to *The Praise*, that is, as the first of my pre-texts for the elucidation of Cornwallis' paradox. Indeed, there is hardly a point raised in *The Praise* which cannot be taken to a distinct locus in *The History*.

For More, Edward IV is a good and noble king, structurally a necessary contrast to the eruption of the evil Richard.<sup>18</sup> In *The Praise* Edward is ruled by lust and as a result creates many of his own political problems. Warwick is alienated and Edward gains his throne more by fortune than prowess. Unlike Clarence, Richard stayed loyal to Edward, despite his elder brother's failings. In this way, the image of Edward provides a contrast to Richard itself in counterpoint to More's own use of contrasting character. Again, for More, Hastings is a relatively innocent victim of dissimulation and incipient tyranny (*History*, 46-9, line 26). In contrast, *The Praise* asserts,

« The state being... in labour with innovation the peers in council about their infant king's coronation, all busy yet dissenting in their business ; in a council holden at the Tower, Hastings Lord Chamberlain was apprehended, and no sooner apprehended, was executed. The not leisurely proceedings by form of law, may seem to plead Hasting's innocency, the Protector's cruelty. But they that consider the nature of the people of that time, apt to sedition, greedy of innovation... will hold the Protector in that action very judicial and, if guilty of anything, of discretion and policy. But could Hastings be innocent, when Commynes reporteth him to be a pensioner of the French King, Louis the XI the only subtle prince of that time ? He of all other, that most effected tyranny and was the natural enemy of this kingdom ? » p. 10.

Several things begin to emerge in this passage : -- the rhetorical appeal to understanding people in their own contexts ; the claim that loyalty to country justifies policy and peremptory action ; and the intimation of courtly intrigue. Another pertinent illustration is provided by the case of Dr. Shaa. More regards Shaa as Richard's creature, one who is attempting to orchestrate some semblance of popular acclaim for the fledgling tyrant, and by thus prostituting his religious authority and calling, losing all credibility, and (More seems to imply) as a result bringing down divine judgement upon himself (*History* 66, line 15f). *The Praise*, however, argues that there is no evidence of any plot between Shaa and Richard ; it is more likely that Shaa was simply an ambitious cleric who

acted independently in order to ingratiate himself. It is as a result of this Cornwallis claims, that he is punished -- for interfering in the *arcana imperii* without encouragement or understanding.

Or, consider the shared *topoi* of Richard's decision to seize the throne and his public condemnation of his own mother for adultery. For More both the accusation and the usurpation stem from long term and closely held ambitions. In *The Praise* they are both matters of political contingency. After Edward's death the queen and the new nobility were, we are told, very strong and sought to rule the kingdom through the infant princes ; but Richard acted quickly as a defender of the old nobility and of the people's rights.

« For well he saw he would not live, unless he were a king : that there was no safety but in sovereignty. » p. 9.

Usurpation, in short, was a matter of self-defence. As for his mother's adultery, three possibilities are put forward in mutual tension, though they do not quite amount to paradoxes within a paradox form. We are told that adultery is little wonder in the female sex (which may not be an entirely serious remark) ; that the very act of accusation was a sign of how impartial Richard was, as he put justice before kinship ; and that, if she was innocent, the extremities of Richard's position made him choose the lesser of two evils, p. 12.

Again, it was crucial to the plausibility of More's case that Richard « ...was in wit and courage equal... » to his brothers (*History*, 7, line 17-18), but this point is stressed to a different end in *The Praise*. Thus it is remarked that even Richard's worst enemies cannot deny these qualities. Similarly Richard's alleged malformation, asserted by Rous, and symbolically developed by More, is turned back upon the received tradition. Where More had stressed Richard's extraordinary inferiority to his brothers (*History*, 7, line 14-15), as an outward sign of his moral deformity, *The Praise* states that either nature was to blame, or that having lavished so much attention on his mind, he neglected his body. As with the explanation of the adultery accusation, the alternatives create an ambivalence as to what the author believes. In either case, the Silenic twist neatly counterpoints the melodramatic symbolism of More, p. 3-4.

Both authors emphasise the fault of ambition. « Such a pestilent serpent is ambition... » (writes More) « he turneth all to mischief ». (*History*, 12, line 21-5). From a general statement More focuses on Richard as the serpent's exemplification. In contrast *The Praise* univer-

salises rather than particularises. The opening sentence of the essay claims baldly that by degrees all princes are tainted by ambition. Of Richard, Cornwallis asks :

« Was he ambitious, who was only content with the limit of his own country ? who sought to be rather famous for instituting good laws than for achieving great conquests ? » p. 15.

Indeed, had Richard been more ambitious, like Henry V, and led out the nobility and people of England

« to embroe their warlike swords...in the blood and bowels of strangers...he might (perhaps) have had a fortunate success. » p. 16, cf. 14.

Princely rapacity, is changed in Richard to an ambition for glory (not just power) through law, not war ; and this is coupled with the insinuation that Henry V's policies were both cynically self-serving and bloody. At the same time, it is made clear that Richard, having established his prowess and courage, chose the way of the lawmaker, but when his brother and country required it (another assertion of loyalty) had made his name terrible amongst the Scots. So, *The Praise* turns incidental detail and innuendo on its head and begins to fashion an image of a prince pointedly at odds with the Ricardian mythology. To this end, its author is able to enlist the very hostility of Richard's critics and turn his attack back on the integrity of historiography. So much has Richard been defamed that, where his critics have not specified a fault, we have every right to assume that there is a compensating virtue. This ingenious but specious play on the law of the excluded middle allows *The Praise* to claim, on the evidence of historiographical silence alone, that Richard was modest in dress, not given « to any riot nor to excess... » p. 13. Again, « ...doubtless they which object lesser crimes would not have omitted these... » (Ibid).

As it stands, this line of argument does not necessarily undermine what Sylvester has specified as the main vice stemming from Richard's ambition in More's *History*, namely Richard's consummate and destabilising dissimulation.<sup>19</sup> It is the inner evil only masked by Richard's outward display of virtue. Externally modest, Richard is arrogant of heart, « not letting to kiss whom he thought to kill » (*History*, 8, line 8-9). The result, is a fearsomely corrupt and uncertain political ambience in which there is no reliable distinction between friends and foes ; and despite all appearance there is always danger under every courtly courtesy. *The Praise's* response is shrewd. Richard, it suggests, cannot win. If he has faults, his critics take them at face value ; yet if he displays virtues, his detractors remain unimpressed :

« Those virtues (which in other men are embraced, for which they are esteemed as Gods) they impute to him rather to be enamellers of vices... his humility they term secret pride ; his liberality prodigality... »<sup>20</sup> p. 17.

As for the evidence of his crimes which are the consequences of these alleged vices, Cornwallis maintains it is often negligible. More had exploited reportage, giving drama and immediacy to his narrative, and, one suspects, in order to claim something of the authority of a Thucydidean tradition of oral participant historiography. For *The Praise* such ploys are all simply a matter of relying on opinion. Alluding to Sidney's attack on historical knowledge, *The Praise* ironically laments,

« Alas, poor men, how could they be believed, whose greatest authorities...are built on the notable foundation of hear-say ? » p. 11.

Had Richard founded a dynasty, these same historians would sing to a different tune. Gradually then, the author puts himself in a position from which he would be able to write off the whole Morean tradition as slanderous, unreliable, implausible, the work of desperate, dishonest political creatures. Interestingly, however, such an easy way out is avoided. The major crimes attributed to Richard are accepted and this becomes the *topos* from which to explore the initial proposition that all princes are ambitious.

Many, claims *The Praise*, have secured themselves even by the destruction of their heirs -- it must be a lesser crime to rid oneself of those who are not. In any case, the murder of the princes gave the whole community more security. Richard's crime was thus against God not against the realm. Duty to country embraces and takes priority over lesser duties owed to one's family. So it seems, just as Richard saved himself physically by usurping the throne, he sacrificed himself morally for the good of the realm,

« new necessities require new remedies, and for him there was no remedy but this one. » p. 19.

The picture emerging of Richard, his environment, and of the character and priorities of political conduct seems to me to be a strongly « Machiavellian » one. If there are two images of Richard at the end of the 16th century, they seem circumscribed by the conflicting possibilities of two Machiavellis. The Richard of *The Praise* is manifestly not the stage caricature Machiavelli which was, like More's monster evil, dissi-

mulating, given to ruthless and complicated plots. Rather, he is a Machiavellian in the sense of one who is operating in an uncertain political world, barely distinct from warfare; a world for which military skill, initiative and prompt action are as necessary in leadership as loyalty and fortitude are in service. *The Praise* displays Richard as having the qualities appropriate to leading and following alike, just as it intimates that Edward was a prince of fortune. Above all, as a leader, Richard was a man of « policy » -- an ambivalent term associated with Machiavellians -- and whose policy was guided by *necessità*, -- a vital term in Machiavelli's vocabulary indicating the compelling circumstances which render a certain course of action necessary if one is to survive.<sup>21</sup>

Now, this violent political world was also one in which patriotism, an appeal to country, community, the common weal, the *patria*, provided a central and terminologically refined rhetoric of political justification. Richard murdered for the realm, stresses *The Praise*, and Machiavelli's Rome was founded on such a crime as Richard is portrayed as committing from necessity.<sup>22</sup>

It is, moreover, difficult to think of the author of *The Praise* not having in mind the Romulus and Remus *topos* in the reference to murdering kin; and one should note in this context the play with Machiavelli's twin pillars of political foundation, good arms and good laws.<sup>23</sup> Capable of good arms, Richard attempted to secure his realm and his future reputation on the foundation of good laws. He neglected good arms, however, in the sense that he did not take the expansionary way of Rome (favoured by Machiavelli) and of Henry V.<sup>24</sup> This, we are told, might « perhaps » have saved him; but in this « perhaps » and the less than flattering reference to Henry V's sanguinary stomping over France, there is the ambivalent hint that the price for success might have been too high. So in many ways Richard was a new prince, and like so many (Cesare Borgia and Castruccio Castracani are the most famous) he fails. Part of the reason seems to lie in his relative lack of Machiavellian ambition and military aggression. But the newness is important too. For Machiavelli, new, that is illegitimate princes, operate largely within a corrupt court and communal environment.<sup>25</sup> They can never be sure of the distinction between friend and foe; those who are close are always a danger. Above all court politics thrives best in a morally corrupt world.<sup>26</sup> It is probably fair to say that Machiavelli's exploration of princely politics as much as the draconianly simplistic nature of some of his explicit advice contributed to the odious reputation he acquired

amongst many readers. On the other hand, anyone critical of, or disappointed in court life might well glean a grim comfort from him. Just as there is no reference to More, there is none to Machiavelli in Cornwallis' text, but certainly, the advice Machiavelli gives in *The Prince* is predicated precisely on the sort of moral corruption that the author of *The Praise* sees as infecting Richard's whole political society. The vignette of the coronation proceedings which I have already cited makes the self-seeking and ambition of Richard's courtly world clear enough. This we are made to understand was typical of those times. Richard seizes the occasion (Machiavelli's *occasione* ?); he puts his faith in the old nobility and in the people and sets about destroying those who were, in being close to him in different ways, most dangerous, -- Hastings, the new aristocracy and the princes.<sup>27</sup>

As is fitting for such a Machiavellian text, the whole matter is decided in the high court of fortune. On Bosworth Field Richard lost everything, but did so also according to Machiavellian precept -- surrendering none of his dignity, and by courage deciding to lose by force rather than by fear.<sup>28</sup> The outcome of the battle may be seen as the ultimate consequence of living in a corrupt environment which Richard could not escape. Cleomenes, as depicted in *Discorsi* I.9 is a striking parallel. He too, killed to acquire supreme authority when already in a position of great power and trust; he too, sought the common good, seeking to consolidate his position in Sparta on the basis of good laws but without craving imperial aggrandisement. He too lost all when attacked from outside, lacking sufficient support. As the picture of Cleomenes is presented in conjunction with that of Romulus, *The Praise* begins to look not simply Machiavellian in a general sense but to be almost a commentary on *Discorsi* I.9.

With respect to the final judgement on Richard, this also looks at least ambivalently Machiavellian, if not itself paradoxical. There is, the author makes clear, a great difference between the world of ordinary people and the world of high court politics. The two operate, to a considerable extent, according to different standards. Richard and the world in which he moved give us a glimpse of the *arcana imperii*; but because it is so different from the world of those of us who are excluded, we should forbear to pass moral judgement upon it. Here there is an echo of *Il Principe* 15, but in addition, the very caveat entered against moral censure is a condemnation of high politics precisely because received moral standards have been appropriated to those denied access to that world. Indeed, Richard's failure is brought about by ill-fortune and by

the fact that he was poorly shaped for the courtly environment. Such a condemnation becomes a paradoxical form of praise within a paradox in praise, and it capitalises fully on the disparate aspects of Cornwallis' revisionist image: Richard's previous life shows him to have been upright and loyal; his princely conduct insufficiently ambitious to ensure survival, whilst the *teleoi* of his actions were at odds with those of the court. Machiavelli's epitaph for Cleomenes might well head Cornwallis' monument to Richard, « *e restò quel suo disegno, quantunque giusto e laudabile, imperfetto.* »<sup>29</sup> The price paid for such ambiguous imperfection in his conduct was life and soul.

One corollary is that, insofar as *The Praise* is broadly Machiavelian in the senses outlined, it indicates how disconcertingly close are the moral worlds of *Il Principe* and *Discorsi*. For although Richard is a new prince, it is the work focussing on the purer ethos of republican politics and Roman virtue that offers the richer pattern of mnemonics, models and sources of illumination. A second corollary is that, belying the surface criticisms and consistent pattern of reversals, *The Praise* is at one with More's *History*, if not with everything in its subsequent tradition. More also had emphasised power lust, ambition and the contagiously corrupting environment of court life. The imagery of appearance and reality, of mask and theatre is as important to him as to the Florentine. Ascending the *scaffold* to play king's games, he wrote with pregnant felicity, was a dangerous business, for when men « cannot play their parts, they disorder the play and do themselves no good. » (*History*, 81, lines 5-10). The difference here between More and Cornwallis seems to lie in the latter's greater ambivalence to the world of the scaffold. But specifically with respect to the texts, the difference is that where More's *History* concentrates the image of tyranny and corruption in a single figure, which by implication overshadows all who have aspirations to play some part on the political stage, *The Praise* dissipates the evil like a disease, stresses necessity and thereby excuses Richard, as Machiavelli excuses Romulus, without denying the evil of his crimes. Despite these differences, the texts of More and Cornwallis stand together as part of an authoritative tradition of political prejudice which is to be found in Plato, was explored in Tacitus, Machiavelli and Guicciardini and which was to continue to set an agenda of aristocratic casuistry into the disastrous reign of Charles I.<sup>30</sup> It ended with the actor king himself ascending the scaffold.

Now, especially insofar as court life was co-extensive with political life, such views as these were subversive; and it has been convin-

ingly shown that More in different ways relied upon protective indirection when discussing politics and corruption. His political writings provide a few unambiguous and explicit criticisms of his own society, but they are full of guarded innuendo; the *Epigrammata* largely are translations from the Greek, and so ambivalently More's own work; the *History* is about another time and another reign; the *Utopia* is about another place, with More himself (if he is in his own character) disputing with Hythloday.<sup>31</sup> The paradox form chosen by Cornwallis provides an alternative but similarly protective strategy reinforced by the style of indirection characteristic of the *History*. As I have noted, with its internal balance of alternate explanations, its air of contradiction in discussing the *arcana imperii*, *The Praise* has built into the already elusive paradox form a range of discursive devices which seem designed to entrap the reader in a network of differing possibilities from which the author is (ambivalently) removed. If the Essex Rising, the court life of the aged Elizabeth, of James, the Cecils and other new men is obliquely the background against which *The Praise* stands out, then such a Morean strategy of indirection would have been circumspect. The need for such caution seems to be admitted and the ambivalence further reinforced at the very end of the essay. After a peroration contrasting Richard's nobility with the obscenity of his posthumous treatment, Cornwallis reiterates that, after all, the essay is « but a paradox ». It is the only piece in the collection to carry the reminder.

But in which sense or senses is it a paradox? As a whole, it is certainly not a semantic paradox, though there are traces of such elegant *insolubilia* in the treatment of the *arcana imperii* and in the terms in which the author is prepared to condemn Richard. If the essay is a paradox of false encomium, and therefore not to be taken seriously, does this sufficiently counter the aura of distaste that flows from the account of Richard's world to courts and princes in general? Moreover, the specification of paradox as encomium had been removed from the enlarged second edition in which *The Praise* appears. If it is a paradox in the most general sense of being simply against common opinion, then in no way might its moral force be undermined. We are never told, and so the disarming reminder, by relying on an ambiguous term, only reinforces the protective potential of the genre. That paradox could function in this way is clear from a later work which may even have used *The Praise* as a precedent. Walter Hamond's praise of Madagascar and its lifestyle moves from social criticism of western eating habits and standards of honesty to an explicitly bitter attack on contemporary warfare. But

recognising that military policy is the province of princes and that his forthright criticism may be considered impertinent, he excuses himself by concluding that he is only offering a paradox.<sup>32</sup>

*The Praise* is a good deal more subtle and the result is at one with the common justification for paradoxical discourse -- to make the reader think through the presentation of perplexing and diverse possibility. In this way, generally, the Renaissance paradox was very much a discourse on the metaphor of Zeno's and Cicero's rhetoric, that of persuading with the open palm rather than with the closed fist of logic. Cornwallis' paradox in particular, by a gradual process of entrapment, seems designed to make the reader think critically about received opinion, not to let « such a monarchess tyrannise over judgement. »<sup>33</sup>

This possibility is further reinforced by the apparently sharp contrast between *The Praise of Richard* and the manifestly unserious praise of *The French Pocks*. On the surface, the starkness of the shift is appropriate to the paradox genre, but reference to the misuse of Richard's dead body suggests a tentacle of continuity with the sexual misuse of the living to which Cornwallis turns. Moreover, at the symbolic level, there is a clear sense in which *The Pocks* essay explicates in a more sinister fashion the theme of political corruption which embraced lust and adultery. Amongst the most important and praiseworthy qualities of syphilis is its social exclusiveness. Peasants, we are told know nothing of it, instead we must,

« (seek) amongst the lusty gallants and gay ladies that rustle it in silks. »

Again, it enjoys such prestige that it is spoken of

« ... after the style of Kings, and Dukes, and Grands, in the plural number. »

As he makes clear, it is the royal disease.

« And therefore it may please thee to be advertised, gentle Reader, whosoever thou be that standest upon complement, that whosoever thou shalt salute such a lady or cavalier in the street...know, that by obeysance thou dost homage to two grands, and great personages at once, one to the party principal that is obvious to thy eye, the other to the Pox which he carrieth about him. »

The corruption then, seems endemic to the political courtly class and in this passage we return to a physical symbol for a political ill, of the sort we found in the opening sections of More's *History*, in his des-

cription of Richard's birth and physique. More than this, we have here a clear image at one with the vital political distinction in More and both understandings of Machiavelli, between appearance and reality, of which we must always be aware in the presence of courtly creatures. There is also a Silenic inversion hinted at in the penultimate paragraph of *The Pocks* essay. This perhaps, is intended to recall the Silenic image of Richard's physical presence in the early stages of *The Praise* and which is of course, a reverse image of appearance and reality. Silenus the familiar image of hidden value beneath surface dress was also sometimes portrayed as drunk and insecurely astride a donkey. It is this Dionysian aspect of the discrepant conjunction of appearance and reality to which Cornwallis alludes. Referring to the only noises that the severely pocks ridden can make, Cornwallis writes that it

« is much like the untamed voice and braying of Silenus, his Hobby Horse. »

Did the Silenic Richard ride upon the back of a corrupt world of courtly politics? Serious or not, the essay on *The French Pocks* was pointed enough in its social criticism and I think it is significant that when Cornwallis' essay was digested in Dunton's compendium of paradoxes in 1707, the political and social imagery was noticeably omitted.<sup>34</sup>

So, what is Cornwallis saying in printing his texts in fixed conjunction? Even when using Machiavelli and More as elucidating pretexts, we can, I think, only end with a series of questions. Is he saying, like More, that all those in the ambit of power are susceptible to corruption? Is *The Pocks* essay a continuation of the themes of *The Praise* of Richard, generalised further through physical metaphor? Or, is the tone of the volume simply being lightened by the balance of a serious with a facetious essay, in order to create a tension of possibility, or to assure the reader, by a different route, that *The Praise* is « but a paradox »? To put the matter another way, does the metaphorical interplay between the essays create an intended continuity of theme; or, is the theme an unintended consequence of figurative ingenuity which brings with it an epiphoric train of uncontrolled commonplaces and networks of association? Is there, most simply, a pox on all political houses? Now, these tensions and inversions are all possible given the importance of wit, especially as *discordia concors* in the world in which Cornwallis lived.<sup>35</sup> But the paradox form provides an added complication as a barrier between text and author, which must be obscuring insofar as autho-

rial intention is a court of appeal in which to judge interpretive options. For, as I have indicated at the outset, paradox, if carefully enough structured need not give us, but may only place us between clear answers -- *a discordia* which is not *concors*. Put another way, the appeal to intention which interrupts the flow of interpretive discourse precisely in order to explicate a difficulty, is both suggested and stymied by the structure of the text itself.<sup>36</sup>

At this concluding point, however, it may be replied that we do have a clear statement of intention. When found within the text, such statements may plausibly be seen as synthesising the conflicting claims of authorial authority and textual autonomy. Cornwallis' claim that he had a mind to « anatomise » some of the traditions of « the monarchess of opinion » who tyrannised over judgement, does not quite have this apparently dialectical status, but it cannot be overlooked, especially as it is an injunction to the reader to exercise judgement. But even, or perhaps, above all, this statement does not resolve the problems of meaning circumscribed by the paradox. Given that one of Cornwallis' acts of anatomisation was a praise of syphilis, another a praise of Nothing (a poem which tells us that nothing is more valuable than gold and so forth), the question of his seriousness continues to arise. Intriguingly, and more importantly, however, there is an aporetic possibility even here. Indeed, the statement of intention comes close to encapsulating the peculiar interpretive difficulties that can attend paradoxicality through its reflexivity and economy. It is, after all couched in the very imagery which threads through both *The Praise* of Richard and that of *The Pocks*. But it is more than a matter of resonance. Although we are now unfamiliar with the definitional nicety involved, Cornwallis' intellectual environment would have taken for granted the importance of nominal definition. And, in terms of nominal definitions, the very notion of a monarchess tyrannising (or, conversely of a tyrant ruling) would have been a simple contradiction in terms. Monarchs ruled, tyrants tyrannised. Cornwallis may have been using his terms according to the theoretically loser conventions of real or imperfect definition, but if he was not, the oxymoronic yoking of tyranny and monarchy leaves us where we started with respect to authorial intention, the propositions we are asked to take seriously, and the seriousness of the whole enterprise remain in doubt. As we have no way of knowing the definitional model which informed Cornwallis' statement of intention, we may be trapped in a metaparadox.

What we may say with certainty (and it is this which seems to irritate men like Sir Francis Bacon) is that to enter the play of paradox making is to enter a set of chinese boxes, a maze of conflicting and yet enticing possibility enjoyed much for its own sake, and which leaves the author at still a further remove from the world as a set of problems to be solved, and from the energies of our judgement.<sup>37</sup> Having located the author as not quite where we want him, it may be folly to pursue him further. More, who was trapped, not as author but audience and dedicatee in the title of that first great Renaissance paradox, might have appreciated both the vehicle and the protection it could afford. Perhaps however, he would not have been so happy with his own symbolic authority, which did much to reinforce the image of a king whom beleaguered recusants might otherwise have exploited as a symbol of royal legitimacy before the coming of the dynasty that broke with Rome.

This sort of imponderable is ironic and, in a vulgar sense might be seen as a paradox of history. But in an interpretive context, Cornwallis' paradox assumes a greater significance, for it gives an interesting twist to the allegedly firm dichotomy between the claims of authorial intention to provide a criterion of interpretive legitimacy and (to invoke the muddled metaphors commonly in play) those of « textual autonomy ». Thus, Cornwallis' handling of the paradox genre provides strong grounds for doubting a major thesis in P.D. Juhl's important reformulation of the authorial intention model of interpretation, specifically his argument that literary texts cannot carry logically incompatible meanings.<sup>38</sup> But one can equally ask, if an author might intend to give a text autonomy, and structure a text to this end, how far is the relevant text divorced from authorial control? Perhaps we need to re-think, not just where Cornwallis stands with respect to his text, but also where we think we stand with respect to the rather crude battle lines of interpretive controversy.

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## NOTES

1. The sparse details of Cornwallis' life are taken from *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, n.d. vol. 4., p. 1169.
2. *Essayes or Encomiums* (1616), The title page before the new material was changed to *Essayes of Certain Paradoxes*. The work is unpaginated, and I have used it in conjunction with the Folger ms (V.a.132) I refer to it as *The Praise*. A.N. Kincaid and J.A. Ramsden *The Encomium to Richard III*, Turner & Devereaux, London, 1977, have provided a valuable scholarly edition taking account of all the manuscript variations. Page numbers in my text refer to the page numbers in their edition.
3. P.M. Kendall, *Richard III*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1955 ; see the perceptive remarks of A.N. Kincaid, ed., Sir George Buc, *The History of King Richard III*, Sutton, London, 1979, p. xcvi.  
For the treatment of the work as failed history see e.g. Charles Ross, *Richard III*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981, xlviii, and citing A.R. Myers' dismissal in « Richard III and the Historical Tradition », *History*, 53, (1968), p. 185.
4. Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1966, p. 8.
5. Roxane C. Murph, *Richard III : The Making of a Legend*, Scarecrow Press, 1977, p. 50 f.
6. W.G. Zeeveld, « A Tudor Defence of Richard III », *P.M.L.A.* 55, (1940), p. 964f ; cf. A.N. Kincaid and J.A. Ramsden, *Encomium*, Introduction ; and A.N. Kincaid, « Introduction to Sir George Buc », *History*, p. ciii-civ. My point is not to deny that a now lost tract may have been used as a synechdoche for the whole tradition, for there is no reference to a chronicler. Rather the point is to deny the usefulness of the hypothetical tract, especially in the presence of say, More's work.
7. For accounts of this tradition see Alison Hanham, *Richard III and His Early Historians, 1483-1535*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1975 ; Murph, *Richard III* ; Ross, *Richard III*, Introduction. All of these, however are concerned with accuracy and fairness to Richard. To help avoid such judgements in terms of moral and historiographical propriety, criteria which perhaps do not fit too comfortably with each other, I refer to the Richardian tradition as mythology.
8. Zeeveld, « A Tudor Defence » ; cf Ramsden and Kincaid, *The Encomium*.
9. Ross, *Richard III*, p. xlviii.
10. To give an idea of the diversity of things that could shelter under the capacious umbrella of paradox : -- Andrea Alciati, *Paradoxorum in Pratum Libri VI, Opera varia*, 1548, a thoroughly serious legal treatise ; Ortensio Landi, *Paradossi cioè sententie fuori del comon parere* (1544) a miscellany of short essays introducing topics which were to

become much re-worked ; Charles Estienne, *Paradoxes ce sont propos contre la commune opinion*, (1553), largely translations from Landi ; *Dieci Paradossi degli academici introdotti da Siena* (1564) topics discussed in ornate dialogue form, including the Platonic tyranny is powerless ; A.M. (Mundy ?), *A Defence of Contraries*, (1593) a translation from Estienne but with different front matter ; Alexandre de Pont-aymery, *Paradoxe apologique*, devoted to the single paradox of female superiority ; Sir George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599) a serious anti-Italian fencing treatise ; John Donne, *Paradoxes* (c. 1590), ed. Helen Peters, Oxford University Press, 1980 ; Giovanni Battista Manso, *I paradossi overo dell Amore* (1608), amongst the least interesting, but another ambitious work of juvenilia, again taking the (relatively) easy way out by using dialogue, featuring Tasso. Sister M. Geraldine, « Erasmus and the Tradition of Paradox », *Studies in Philology*, 61 (1964), p. 41f places Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium* in the context of some of these and other works, but can find no clear place for it -- another tribute to the increasing looseness of the term during the 16th century. See also M.T. Jones-Davies, ed., *Le Paradoxe au temps de la Renaissance*, Touzot, Paris, 1982 for further indication of how many writers and even non-linguistic phenomena can, at times unhelpfully, be slipped under the generous auspices of paradox.

11. Francesco Bottin, *Le Antinomie Semantiche nella Logica Medievale*, Antenore, Padua, 1976. Some of these semantic paradoxes have continued to exercise the minds of modern logicians, most notably Quine and Tarski.

12. Both forms are found, for example in Plato's *Republic*. Glaucon and Adiemantus challenge Socrates through a false encomium of injustice, and Socrates ultimately introduces the doctrine of the philosopher king as a paradox, something against common opinion, *doxa*.

13. Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica* at length, stressing that the Renaissance paradox genre called upon a potent blend of Greco-Roman scepticism, stoicism and Christianity ; and that metaphysical paradoxes were frequently tied to religious belief ; see also Alain Michel, 'Rhétorique, Philosophie, Christianisme : Le Paradoxe de la Renaissance devant les grands courants de la pensée antique' in M.T. Jones-Davies, *Le Paradoxe*, p. 47f ; and Jean Lebeau, 'The Paradoxe chez Erasme, Luther et Sebastien Franck', *Ibid.*, p. 143f. One of John Dunton's paradoxes was a catechism *Athenian Sport*, London, 1707 ; but paradoxicality did not have an unchallenged place in theology. Brown in *Religio Medici* complained that paradoxes should be kept to philosophy.

14. The works of Alciati and Silver are partial exceptions. Silver makes it clear that there is no truth to be gained through uncertainty ; Alciati too had appropriated a tradition of paradoxical uncertainty to the exposition of clear legal truths and method.

15. For pertinent comment on this well noted aspect of Montaigne's *Essays* see Ian Maclean, 'Montaigne, Cardano : The Reading of Subtlety/The Subtlety of Reading', *French Studies*, 37, 2 (1983), p. 143.

16. John Dunton, *Athenian Sport*, First Paradox (There were supposed to be another 1,999, but the reader is mercifully spared all but 139) ; *A Defence of Contraries*, where in Preface to The King Mundy (?) writes that paradox is only to beguile the

time ; and in that addressed to The Reader, that it is intended to be instructive. The slippery purposes of paradox are succinctly outlined by Jones-Davies, *Le Paradoxe*, 'Avant-Propos'.

17. Cited in Helen Peters, (ed.), John Donne, *Paradoxes and Problems*, p. xxii.

18. St. Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III : Historia Richardi Regis*, ed. Richard Sylvester, More, *The Complete Works*, vol. II, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1963, p. 3-4. All references to this are cited as More, *History*. The spelling is modernised.

19. Sylvester, *Introduction to More, History*, xcvi.

20. Retrospectively at least, there is some plausibility in this claim. Sir Richard Barker's popular *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, (1660 ed.) considers Richard so evil that the good things of his reign have to be considered under the discussion of another. A *reductio* (if there isn't one already) might suggest that Alfred The Great be credited with *Magna Carta* and The Great Reform Bill, Richard with burning the cakes.

21. Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Feltrinelli edition, Milan, 1973 edn. I.3., 50 : III. 12 : *Il Principe*. 18. On its own however, necessity would not point to a specifically Machiavellian pre-text. Alberigo Gentili, *De Jure* I xv i.3 cites the *Digest* to the effect that extreme necessity is an exception to every law.

22. Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I.9, where Romulus' crime is mitigated just as Richard's are because « *per il bene comune e non per ambizione propria* ».

23. *Ibid.*, I.4, 21 : III.31 : *Il Principe*, 12.

24. Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I.6.

25. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, a theme penetrating the whole work ; cf. Henry Wright, *The First Part of the Disquisition of Truth Concerning Political Affairs*, London, 1616, p. 20 which seems to be making much the same point as Cornwallis. The work is marked by numerous marginal references to Guicciardini and Machiavelli.

26. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, 15-19, specifically for the theme of appearance and reality. *Ambizione* is the assumed driving force of princes and politicians alike, cf. *Discorsi*, I.37. Kincaid and Ramsden seem a touch innocent in seeing Cornwallis as just another « conservative » supporter of monarchy, *Encomium*, Introduction.

27. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, 9, 19 for reliance upon the people ; *Discorsi*, III.4 for the continuing insecurity of rulers whilst those who have been deposed are allowed to remain alive. Henry Wright, *The Disquisition*, p. 17 for Richard as an example of this sort of behaviour, also in the context of reference to Machiavelli.

28. Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, II.14.

29. *Ibid.*, I.9.

30. Irene Coltman, *Private Men and Public Causes*, Faber, London, 1962 at length, especially on Lucius Cary and Edward Hyde.

31. Damian Grace, « On Interpreting Sir Thomas More's History of King Richard III » in N. Wright and F. McGregor, eds., *European History and its Historians*, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, 1977, p. 11f ; « More's *Epigrammata* » Political Theory in a Poetic Idiom », *Parergon*, n.s. 3 (1985), on whose particularly suggestive work I am relying here ; Richard Sylvester, Introduction to More, *History*, p. xcvi.

32. Walter Hamond (unrelated to J. Hobbs), *A Paradox Proving the Inhabitants of Madagascar... (in Temporal Things) are the Happiest People in the World*, London, 1640. Interestingly, Sir George Buc, *History*, seems to have feared lest his work be considered as a paradox, or did he ? In the dedication he writes of various forms of censure, « some curious, some jealous, some haply malevolent and malicious. But the fairest censure would be that all was a paradox, or countr' opinion. » It is noteworthy that Buc actually qualifies what he means by paradox and his work is precisely the sort of paradox he specifies. Kincaid, however reads « fairest » as meaning worst, which is at least questionable. It seems that almost the very mention of paradox can cause difficulties about authorial intention and concern. So is Buc claiming to be writing in the idiom of Cornwallis (whom he certainly uses)? Is he rejecting paradoxicality, or is he suggesting Cornwallis as not sufficiently serious ?

33. Wright, *The Disquisition* at times achieves a similar effect by structuring his text as a series of questions (a remembrance of Abelard's *Sic et Non*, perhaps) without always answering them. As he relies heavily on Guicciardini, Tacitus and Machiavelli, his similarities to Cornwallis on court life and the *arcana imperii* are instructive.

34. John Dunton, *Athenian Sport*, Paradox 75, « In Praise of the Clap ».

35. There is a specific allusion to *discordia concors*, p. 14, where Henry VII, by marrying Elizabeth of York « united (the Kingdom) by a blessed and happy conjunction of the two contrary factions and thereby established our peace, ceased our discord... » On the discursive strategy itself see Melissa Wanamaker, *Discordia Concors*, Kenicatt Press, N.Y., 1975.

36. Condren, *The Status and Appraisal of Classic Texts*, Princeton U.P., 1985, Appendix, for a brief statement about intentions as interpretive voice changes, logically of the same class as appeals to causation and ideas.

37. Wanamaker, *ibid.*, « The Decline », p. 132-3.

38. P.D. Juhl, *Interpretation : An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary criticism*, Princeton, U.P., 1980, chap. 8.

**Résumé français de Conal Condren : Cornwallis' Defence of Richard III (*supra*, pp. 5-23).**

L'auteur, qui enseigne la philosophie politique à Sydney, rouvre le dossier d'un *Eloge de Richard III* publié en 1617 par William Cornwallis, député au Parlement. N'y a-t-il pas lieu, écrit-il, de relire à la lumière de Machiavel cet essai qui se propose de démolir un mythe de Richard créé par More un siècle plus tôt ? Une lecture paradoxale est d'autant moins arbitraire que le paradoxe connaissait une grande vogue, comme genre littéraire, au début du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle, et qu'un *Eloge de la Vérole* du même Cornwallis semble avoir été conçu pour accompagner l'*Eloge de Richard III*.

Situer ce dernier texte dans le contexte du genre paradoxe résout ou réduit certains problèmes d'interprétation, sans toutefois révéler pleinement les intentions de l'auteur ni la signification de l'oeuvre. Condren se demande si la conjonction de deux pré-textes ne pourrait pas éclairer notre lanterne de lecteurs.

Certes, l'*Eloge de Richard III* se présente comme une attaque contre l'image « orthodoxe » de Richard, et comme une réfutation passablement systématique de l'*Histoire* écrite par More. Et pourtant l'on constate, sous-jacentes aux différences entre les deux auteurs, des préoccupations semblables : l'ambition, le service public, la corruption politique. L'intérêt que porte Cornwallis à ces problèmes s'expliquerait au mieux par référence au *Princé* et aux *Discours* de Machiavel. Son texte apparaît presque comme un commentaire sur *Discorsi* (I, 9) -- Cléomène de Sparte nous fournit l'homologue de Richard ? Condren en induit une similarité de structure dans le « préjugé » politique de More, de Machiavel et de Cornwallis.

La difficulté de percevoir la relation qu'il y a entre les deux *Eloges* de Cornwallis -- soit contraste, soit continuité de thème et de dessein -- corse encore le problème de savoir quelle relation il y a entre lui, en tant qu'auteur, et son *Eloge de Richard III*. Ce cas particulier soulève des doutes sur ce que valent les deux théories d'interprétation : celle qui détermine le sens d'une oeuvre d'après les intentions de l'auteur, et celle