UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

A WAR OF ROSES: AN EXAMINATION OF TUDOR MYTHOGRAPHY IN SHAKEPEARE'S FIRST TETRALOGY OF HISTORY AND GEORGE R.R. MARTIN'S, *A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE* SERIES

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BY

KATHLEEN CONLEY

ADVISOR: CHRISTINE CHISM

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ABSTRACT

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The matter of how much George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series drew from William Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History is a debate among critics and academic scholars. George R.R. Martin defends the darkness of his work with the claim of historical accuracy, particularly concerning the Wars of the Roses. What becomes overlooked is the influence of William Shakespeare's *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III)* and *Richard III* in the perception of the Wars of the Roses. A few critics accuse Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History of diminishing historical complexities to promote what is known as the Tudor myth. The Tudor myth is a form of realist mythography that takes historical figures and makes evil of them by painting them as larger than humans. They achieve this by generating discourses on supernatural creatures. The Tudor chroniclers then attach these discourses to historical figures like Richard III and Margaret of Anjou. Thus, academics often accuse Martin's, *A Song of Ice and Fire* series of promoting a form of historical mythography. My thesis examines this reductionist framing of William Shakespeare and George R.R. Martin, specifically regarding Richard III and Margaret of Anjou and their parallels to Tyrion and Cersei Lannister. Despite the Tudor influence, Shakespeare and George R.R. Martin demonstrate how families and dynasties become forums for creating power. The construction of these powerful systematic forums ends up breaking people. My thesis will look at some of these characters who end up on the sidelines rife with anger due to the stark ethical schema of evil forced upon them.

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"And I have a tender spot in my heart for cripples and bastards and broken things." – George R.R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*

Introduction

"The true horrors of human history derive not from orcs and Dark Lords, but from ourselves," claims the modern fantasy author, George R.R. Martin. The series, *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin follows the perspectives of nine characters who grapple with their roles in their respective noble houses amidst the war over the Iron Throne. The historical events that shape Martin's major plot points and characters originate from the Wars of the Roses. The most evident of the existing comparisons is the parallel between the Lancaster and York Houses and the Lannister and Stark Houses. Though, George R. R. Martin is neither the first nor the most famous writer to have been inspired to explore the "true horrors of human history" enacted in the Wars of the Roses. William Shakespeare also adapts the Wars of the Roses in *Richard III* and *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III).* Specifically, Shakespeare's historical plays delve into the strategies and the scarring that human cruelty and evil imprint upon characters such as Richard III and Margaret of Anjou. The plays of William Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History have influenced subsequent medievalist literature and modern fantasy works like *A Song of Ice and Fire.*

How much George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series drew from William Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History is often debated among critics and academic scholars. George R.R. Martin defends the darkness of his work with the claim of historical accuracy, particularly concerning the Wars of the Roses. A few critics accuse Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History of diminishing historical complexities to promote what is known as the Tudor myth. Are the critics correct? Is George R.R. Martin reinforcing a harmful portrayal of

history? Or does George R.R. Martin's work build upon Shakespeare to deconstruct these archetypes, myths, and "otherings?"

My thesis intends to explore how Shakespeare appropriates and distorts the events of the Wars of the Roses in *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III)* and *Richard III* to demonstrate how character archetypes upheld within Renaissance morality plays shape and influence modern fantasy works like George R.R. Martin's, *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. My project aims to help readers understand the effects that ethical distortion and appropriation have on the perception of the Middle Ages and other medievalist texts. To achieve this, I will examine a few of the critical accusations levied against Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History for diminishing historical complexities and promoting what is known as the Tudor myth. To poach historical truths from the Tudor forms of realist mythography, I scrutinize writings and propaganda from historical chroniclers and literary authors of various backgrounds, periods, and political sides.

I wish for readers to understand how Tudor mythography is a form of realist mythography that takes historical figures like Richard III and Margaret of Anjou and makes evil of them by painting them as larger than humans. The Tudor dynasty effectively achieved this form of propaganda by generating discourses on witchcraft, demons, and other supernatural creatures such as fairies and changelings. This supernatural phenomenon becomes a social construction designed to promote the idea of predetermined and innate forms of evil that naturally occur or influence humans. These forms of propaganda prevent individuals from looking at the systematic structures and events that coerced them to commit their respective grievous actions. The English chroniclers and portions of William Shakespeare's *Richard III* frame Richard III's scoliosis as proof of the inborn satanic forces that drive him towards immoral behaviors. Conversely, Margaret of Anjou is seen as a woman possessed with the spirit

of a man whose mind is still malleable due to womanhood causing her intellectual weakness. Her powerful political status breaks the established patriarchal gender roles and causes her to become a promiscuous witch figure in Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History.

Nonetheless, critics of Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History often overlook the critiques William Shakespeare makes of Tudor forums of power. Indeed, Shakespeare caters to the Tudor mythography that portrays Richard III and Margaret of Anjou as individuals who have gone mad with power due to the influences and curses of evil forces. Though, what is forgotten about are the restraints placed upon Shakespeare due to the censorship and limited forms of free speech during the time. In the play, *Richard III*, Richard III expresses open discontent at the ableism he faces and feels that society forced him to take up the role of the villain. While Shakespeare's *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III)* and *Richard III*, follow Margaret of Anjou as she is pressured by the Duke of Suffolk to engage in English politics and war. The audience witnesses Margaret's descent towards madness and the association of witchcraft due to the patriarchal forces that fragment her mental state.

While it is also true that George R.R. Martin takes Shakespeare's rendition of Richard III and Margaret of Anjou for the construction of Tyrion and Cersei Lannister, he also seeks to expand upon Shakespeare's critical analysis. The *A Song of Ice and Fire* series demonstrates how families and dynasties create power and reserve it for family members that fit the standard bodily ideal.[1] Yet, George R.R. Martin shows how the very construction and existence of these powerful systematic forums ends up breaking people. As a result of that breaking, my thesis will

[1] I define the bodily ideal of the Middle Ages and Renaissance period as follows: White, able-bodied, and upper-class male. Therefore, even existing as a woman during this time is an aberration.

look at both Tyron and Cersei who end up on the sidelines cursing and violently acting out in a way that parallels the chroniclers' "othering" of Richard III and Margaret of Anjou.

In the first chapter, I suggest that different politics emerge from these "otherings" along with the stark ethical schema that plagues the historical complexity of the original late medieval society. For instance, Richard the III of York becomes a Vice figure in *Richard III*, and scholars such as Thomas More and Polydore Vergil write extensively on how his evil is tied to his physical deformities and the nature of his bloodline. Anti-witchcraft texts such as *Malleus Maleficarum* generate the supernatural discourse More and Vergil draw upon in their portrait of Richard III. While William Shakespeare inherits the language and framing both historians engage with, this section explores how ableist judgments motivate Richard III in *Richard III* to act as the Vice character. The existence of plays such as *The True Tragedy of Richard III* more closely align with original historical sources further demonstrating that Shakespeare approached Richard III with more nuance than credited. From this, George R.R. Martin takes from Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III but increases the sense of injustice inflicted on Tyrion Lannister.

In the second chapter, I explore how systematic patriarchal structures work to demonize and break women who stray from established gender roles. The section explores how Margaret of Anjou is perceived as a witch figure or "she-wolf" in the historical chronicles and Shakespearean literature. The chapter analyzes the originations of witchcraft and the images often associated with the English witch. Anti-witchcraft texts like *Malleus Maleficarum* work to strip women of their bodily autonomy by portraying them as sexual fiends when they diverge from patriarchal norms. I then look at how the historical chroniclers and Shakespeare take from these texts to create fictitious events and frame Margaret of Anjou as a sexually deviant witch

figure. Though, like Richard III, this section also examines how William Shakespeare humanizes Margaret and criticizes the toxic masculinity set up by patriarchal structures that drive her toward cruel behavior. George R.R. Martin then takes from Shakespeare's portrayal of Margaret and increases the cruel behavior Cersei Lannister exhibits to demonstrate the cycle of violence patriarchal structures produce.

Through this project, while I recognize the fabrication and twisting of historical events, I wish to counter the critics who dismiss both Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History and George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series as entirely harmful. In this thesis, I recognize the fictitious mythography Shakespeare and George R.R. Martin work with but wish to show how these authors' dramatizations still work to criticize the otherization, violence, and oppression these established forums of power cause.

Villains, Vices, and Beastly Imps: From Richard III to Tyrion Lannister

"Of Joffrey's death I am innocent. I am guilty of a more monstrous crime…I was born. I lived. I am guilty of being a dwarf," utters Tyrion Lannister, the infamous witty dwarf in George R.R. Martin's, *A Storm of Swords*. Here, Tyrion stands trial for the accusation made by his own family of poisoning his nephew, Joffrey, during a wedding feast. As Tyrion reflects, the existing evidence for his alleged murder is hardly tangible. It is his sister and father's preexisting hatred of Tyrion's dwarfism and the unfortunate death of his mother during birth that drives their suspicions. The scene George R.R. Martin constructs metaphorically parallels the trial Richard III faces with historians who propagate Tudor myths that surround his moral character. Like Tyrion, Richard III is accused of ordering the deaths of his nephews Edward V and Richard, Duke of York to secure the English crown for himself. The Tudor chroniclers who wrote about Richard III often emphasize the hideousness of his physical disabilities. To them, Richard III's disability is grotesque like a biblical demon, and innately drives his repugnant actions. William Shakespeare's play *Richard III* only seems to build upon this historical mythography by associating Richard III with devil imagery that frames him as an evil beyond human comprehension. Simultaneously, Shakespeare's Richard III repeatedly expresses discontent at the ableism he faces and attributes his villainy to societal oppression. Yet, there is a significant difference between the two characters: Innocence. While Richard III is entirely guilty of his treasonous behavior in Shakespeare's histories, Tyrion is falsely accused of his crimes. So, why did George R.R. Martin frame Tyrion as innocent?

In this chapter, I examine how William Shakespeare and George R.R. Martin explore the violent effects of ableist mythologies and bodily ideals. In the play *Richard III*, Shakespeare still props up the Tudor regime by framing Richard III as guilty of all his malevolent crimes. Nonetheless, what sets the *Richard III* play apart from typical Tudor propaganda, is that Shakespeare affords Richard III a proximate cause for these crimes. Rather than claiming Richard III's actions come from his nature and phenotypic characteristics, William Shakespeare shifts the blame towards potential systematic causes. Furthermore, the uncovered play, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, potentially written by Shakespeare opens the door toward thinking and doubting the established Tudor mythography. Later modern fantasy author George R.R. Martin establishes his version of the Richard III archetype, Tyrion Lannister, as entirely innocent of the treachery he is accused of. Readers witness Tyrion repeatedly shrug off the ableism he faces until it simply becomes too large for him to disregard. His initial innocence increases the sense of injustice he faces. It shows that systematically viewing disabilities as immoral unleashes an unavoidable cycle of violence.

William Shakespeare constructs his portrait of Richard III by drawing from attributes atypical of what is known as the Vice character. Later, I will discuss how Thomas Preston's Vice character, Ambidexter in the play, *Cambises*, informs how Richard III is written about. Though, what is the role of the Vice character? What does the character archetype entail? In his journal piece, "Tragic Themes in Three Tudor Moralities," P. Happe defines the Vice's role and purpose in Renaissance morality plays as follows:

> The Vice's origins are obscure, but one may be reasonably sure that one of his earliest functions was to take part in the moral conflict by acting against the hero, tempting and deceiving him along the way to damnation. Thus, when our three dramatists come to

> present a tragic situation…they turn to the Vice as a means of illuminating the tragic conflict (208).

While the Vice as a stock character traces its origins back to the Middle Ages, morality plays produced under the Tudor dynasty put a human face to the archetype. As Happe points out, the literary dramatization of a past historical conflict led to the Vice's humanization. Moreover, morality plays during the Renaissance became a simplified way for the general populace to comprehend history. By casting historical figures like Richard III as a supernatural 'evil' personified, people overlook environmental or systematic dynamics that drove them to violent actions. Instead, attaching the Vice character to historical figures shifts the discourse toward supernatural natural creatures like fairies or changelings. With no tangible evidence for the existence of magical beings beyond superstition, the ruling class easily molds the definitions of what constitutes supernatural and inhuman. It is an erasure of historical complexity through dehumanization to the benefit of the ruling powers. The formation of the Vice character provided the ruling class with an easy propaganda tool to villainize their political opponents. The ruling dynasty stays in power through the scapegoating of others as it causes the populace looks outward to criticize instead of inward.

What drives historians and William Shakespeare to attach Richard III's persona to the literary Vice is his familial relation to the Yorks and his eventual position as king during the Wars of the Roses.[2] As such, it is difficult to poach the true history of Richard III because centuries of Lancaster, Woodville, Tudor, and upper-class propaganda manipulate the way authors choose to write about him. The disinformation surrounding Richard III continues to run

[2] It is important to note that the House of York lost their claim to the English Crown in the Wars of the Roses. Therefore, the accounts I mention were written by and for the Lancastrian Tudors.

rampant in modern historical accounts of the Wars of the Roses. For instance, British historian Dan Jones who graduated from the University of Cambridge and went on to produce the documentary *Secrets of Great British Castles*, frames Richard III's actions in his book, *The Wars of the Roses: The Fall of the Plantagenets and the Rise of the Tudors*, as follows, "Richard's violent and unprincipled coup, snatching office on entirely specious grounds and by murderous means, dealt a severe blow to the fragile dignity of a Crown that had been fought over and grabbed back and forth for nearly thirty years" (318). In his book, Jones often alludes to how Shakespeare fabricates fictional narratives for dramatization and the Tudor dynasty's comfort. Nonetheless, he continues to echo the unscrupulous tone that Shakespeare and many historians take on regarding Richard III. Regardless of Jones' intent, he uses the word "crown " as a collective stand-in for the Tudor-approved aristocracy. His tone is moralized when he talks of Richard III's rise to power as offensive and disgraceful due to his alleged murder of Edward V and Richard, Duke of York.

There is no unbiased nor solid evidence that Richard III conducted a coup and unjustly killed his nephews in a power-hungry rampage. The historical frame Jones adopts was written by and for the Tudor victors. Jones is not alone in falling prey to promoting Tudor mythography. Historians such as Tim Thornton often turn to Sir Thomas More's, *The History of King Richard III*, as evidence of Richard III's violent rise to power and murder of the princes due to More's supposed reliance on personal experience, "...it also impacted on More as one living and writing among people for whom memories of those times were strong and immediate. A. F. Pollard in 1933 suggested that More's sources importantly included a group of surviving witnesses of the key events of Richard's reign" (23). Thornton believes in Thomas More's credibility and places a great deal of trust in him collecting an array of truthful sources to accurately reflect their lived

experiences under Richard III. Still, trusting More to provide an objective perspective and research process proves difficult due to his position as Lord High Chancellor under Henry VIII. Considering Thomas More's execution on July 6th, 1535, for refusing to sign the Act of Succession [3] - it is not unreasonable to suspect More's inclination to tiptoe around Tudor sensitivities.

The truth of Richard III's reign is drenched in propaganda due to his Yorkish ties and politics. Thus, it is important to keep these biases in mind while deciphering texts that deal with his physical "stigmatism" or reference his "evil" nature. And yet, there is evidence that Richard was very different to More's description would later lead individuals to believe. In 2012 archaeologists uncovered Richard III's body under a parking lot which allowed individuals a better picture of Richard III's actual physical appearance, as analyzed by Dr. Piers Mitchell, "The physical disfigurement from Richard's scoliosis was probably slight since he had a well-balanced curve…a good tailor and custom-made armor could have minimized the visual impact of this" ("Scientists Use 3D Scans to Uncover the Truth about Richard III's Spinal Condition"). The discovery of Richard III's actual physical impairment is significant because Tudor historians like Thomas More dehumanize him by using caricatured exaggerations of his disability. Again, this especially clouds Thomas More's credibility as a historian and calls into question the accuracy of his *History of King Richard the Third*.

Now we come to the actual descriptions Sir Thomas More provides in his personal portrait of Richard III. It is important to note that Thomas More's devout anti-witchcraft

[3] By the Act of Succession of March 1534, subjects were ordered to accept the king's marriage to Anne as "undoubted, true, sincere and perfect" ("The Break with Rome").

sentiment blackens his descriptions of Richard III's scoliosis. In Sir Thomas More's, *The History of King Richard the Third*, the physical description he grants Richard III reads as follows:

> Richard the third son, of whom we now entreat, was in wit and courage equal with either of them, in body and prowess far under them both, little of stature, ill featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left should much higher than his right, hard favoured of visage, and such as is in states called warly, in other men otherwise, he was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from afore his birth, ever froward (7).

As mentioned, Richard III lacked a hunchback as confirmed by his uncovered remains. Thus, one can assume the 'Quasimodo,' image seen here is a complete fabrication of More's construction. The other issue as noted earlier on with More's portrait is the clear exaggeration of Richard III's slanted shoulders. Most of all, More links Richard's appearance with his cruelty through word arrangement by placing "hard favoured of visage" before "states called warly." To be "hard-favoured" is to be "unattractive," which More ties to being in a "warly" state, meaning that war and rigidness are in Richard III's nature as exhibited by his appearance.

When reading through the histories of Richard III, it is important to keep a wide variety of biases in mind, both among contemporaries and later historians, if historical accuracy is on the line. While this chapter focuses on Richard III's disability and its ties to 'villainy' in literary history, it is important to understand that Richard III's reformist policies alienated not only his political enemies among the Lancastrians but also had reason to upset the nobility more broadly. Paul Murray Kendall states, "The remarkable work of [Richard's] Parliament lay in a series of statutes directly sponsored by the King and his council. Three of these were aimed at correcting economic injustices; three, at safeguarding the rights of the individual against the abuses of the

law itself" (339).[4] Unsurprisingly, most accounts produced and referenced in relation to Richard III's reign originate from the upper classes. Indeed, Dan Jones is correct in that Richard III upset the "fragility" of the English crown, but not for the reasons he believes.

Navigating Humanizations of Shakespeare's Richard III among the Tudor Mythography

That said, I will delve more into how bodily disability becomes a codeword for moral corruption in the accounts of Sir Thomas More and Polydore Vergil – accounts that influenced Shakespeare's, Vice-parodying Richard. I argue that Vergil's and More's accounts of Richard are influenced by the anti-witchcraft sentiment of the fifteenth century, as they attach the king to auras of supernatural evil. In the quotation mentioned above, More clearly states that Richard III's maliciousness predates even his birth through the use of the word "afore." Whereas the use of "froward" implies that Richard III's "evil" will continue after death, which adds a supernatural context like what is eventually seen in Preston's Ambidexter character.

Thomas More continues to describe Richard III in *The History of King Richard the Third* as resembling an agent of the devil: " …the Duchess his mother had so much ado in her travail, that she could not be delivered of him uncut: he came into the world with the feet forward, as men be born outward, and (as the fame runneth) also not untoothed" (More 7). For one, More establishes this religious otherization by placing Richard III in a position that juxtaposes him with the births of "normal" men. Never in the passage does he refer to Richard III as a "man" or a part of "men" apart from his use of male pronouns.

[4] "The first of Richard's statues took action against 'privy and unknown feoffements'" (339). The other three statutes, "…sought to refine and reform the machinery of justice, so that forms of law might no longer be used as instruments of extortion and opppression" (340).

More also strips away Richard's innocence by describing his birth as an event that caused his mother a great deal of pain. The description More gives of Richard III resembles the description given of changelings from Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum* [5] - which states, "Another terrible thing which God permits to happen to men is when their children are taken away from women, and strange children are put in their place by devils" (406). Certainly, to More, Richard III's disability is strange and therefore a sign of his ties to Satan. Stanford Professor David Riggs provides a similar analysis of Sir Thomas More's description in his book, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories*: "The monster who emerges from Sir Thomas More's History of King Richard III is a creature of popular demonology conceived in a spirit of classical irony…More took pains to preserve the Tudor myth about the Yorkist Antichrist who was born with hair and teeth" (143).

Much of the same sentiments in Thomas More's work are echoed by Polydore Vergil in *Polydore Vergil's English History*, especially with his description of Richard III:

> "He was lyttle of stature, deformyd of body, thone showlder being higher than thother, a short and sowre cowntenance, which semyd to savor of mischief, and utter evydently craft and deceyt…The whyle he was thinking of any matter, he dyd contynually byte his nether lyppe, as thowgh that crewell nature of his did so rage agaynst yt self in that lyttle carkase" (226).

Contrary to Thomas More's description, Polydore Vergil bluntly implies that Richard III is a demonic creature trapped inside the body of a man. He does this by segregating Richard III's

[5] The *Malleus Maleficarum* or Hammer of Witches, was written in 1486 by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. It is regarded as a handbook for the detection and identification of witches and witchcraft. Many of the stereotypes that surround witchcraft originate from this composition.

"crewell nature," from his physical body. Polydore then implies that Richard's material body serves as a cage or "carkase" for this "crewell nature." As such, the habits that he carries combined with his physical appearance exist as proof of a separate evil entity within him. Like More implies the demon that Vergil believes inhibits Richard III predisposes him towards evil.

Similarly, Thomas Preston's play, *Cambises*, creates its fictitious Vice character, Ambidexter, to shift culpability away from King Cambises' questionable actions. Essentially, during Ambidexter's introduction, he outwardly reveals his intentions to tempt individuals like King Cambises toward sin, "To conquest these fellowes the man I wil play / Ha, ha, ha! ye will make me to smile / To see if I can all men beguile" (1.2.143-145). Immediately, Ambidexter positions himself as an entity separate from "man" which works to indicate his presence as an agent to the devil. He talks in a tone of condescension and experience when it comes to beguiling men. Instead of blaming King Cambises for committing grievous acts such as marrying his sisters, part of the accountability shifts to the demonic Ambidexter. Inherently, the corrupt actions of the reigning monarch shift to an "otherized" Vice character who behaves like a caricature of a satanic figure. Ambidexter faces no social pressure nor possesses any reason to feel forced toward their villainy. His outwardness about the pleasure he takes in driving men toward sin indicates he relishes his association with the devil. The defeat of Vice characters such as Ambidexter serves as a form of escapism. In hard times, people desire a form of mental release, so they turn to morality plays to watch 'evil' satisfactorily beaten and overcome. Effective escapist works abandon realism for the sake of comfort. Consequently, as is seen with Ambidexter, historical complexities get abandoned for the sake of maintaining the audience's comfort. These shallow ethical caricatures not only become repurposed by Shakespeare but were later utilized by authors of epic fantasy works in their creation of the aforementioned 'dark lord.'

Soon after the revelation of his motivations, Ambidexter provides the metaphorical context behind his name, “My name is Ambidexter, I signifie one, / That with bothe hands finely can play” (1.2.150-151). Just as an ambidextrous person can utilize “both hands” on a literal basis, Ambidexter means to “play” both sides by doing good and bad deeds for power. In other words, he acts in contrary ways and his actions always possess a double purpose. On the other hand, Shakespeare references Ambidexter’s double-meaning explanation directly in *Richard III*. Moreover, the word-for-word tone of Richard’s dialogue at times in the play appears exaggerated to the point of satire. In the play, when Richard greets his nephew, Prince Edward, upon his arrival in London after King Edward IV’s death, he remarks, “I say, without characters fame lives long. / Aside. Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralize two meanings in one word” (3.1.81–83). Once more, as Ambidexter does, Richard invokes the 'dual' and double-faced nature prevalent in the Vice archetype. However, Ambidexter utilizes metaphor to describe his role as a Vice, using words such as “hands” that can “finely play.” Conversely, Richard outright casts himself as a Vice and explains his role’s purpose in a straightforward tone, stating that he moralizes “two meanings in one word.” Unlike Preston’s work, it's as if Shakespeare is subtly poking fun at the moral biases of the Tudors. Additionally, Ambidexter’s otherness is displayed through his relations with Satan, whereas Shakespeare’s “othering” Satanic imagery is tied to monstrous descriptions of Richard III’s disability. Therefore, while William Shakespeare seems to draw from Thomas Preston’s Vice character, Ambidexter, Richard III is written and villainized in a way that caters to the Tudor bodily ideal.

With the censorship of the time, it became a necessity for William Shakespeare to preserve and regurgitate pieces of Sir Thomas More and Polydore Vergil’s court propaganda for his security and protection against the Tudors. Thus, William Shakespeare pulls from these two

Tudor propagandist exaggerations, along with the dramatic framing of Thomas Preston's Vice character, Ambidexter, to construct a dramatized Tudor version of Richard III. In the opening moments of Richard III, Richard soliloquizes the motivation behind his cruel aspirations:

> I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them (1.1.16–23).

Like More and Polydore, William Shakespeare ties Richard III's anger and resentment to his physical disabilities. In addition to this, Richard III's entrance parallels Ambidexter in that he performs a soliloquy detailing his malevolent intentions. However, unlike Ambidexter – and unlike More and Vergil, Shakespeare humanizes Richard and attributes his malice not to a demonic nature but rather to the stigma of his disability itself. By letting Richard III explain his position in society, Shakespeare uncovers what Richard suffers as he is stigmatized for his deformity. Likewise, William Shakespeare also writes Richard III with an inferiority complex, seen when he declares himself as "curtailed," inferring that his physical appearance is a reduction of his moral character. This resembles More's damning descriptor, "hard favoured of visage" as Richard III's underdeveloped physicality translates to a lack of forming "developed" morals. Later in the soliloquy he outright states that due to his disability, he "...cannot prove a lover," therefore he is, "...determined to prove a villain" (1.1.28–30). Thus, even as he is humanized, Richard III echoes both Polydore and More's historical accounts, when he

essentially states that he is an unfinished piece of human nature. His deformity is a negative burden he carries that has gradually warped him.

When Richard III doubles downs on his villainous behavior, his character becomes centered around being a Vice of necessity rather than a virtue of necessity. It implies judgment and recognition by William Shakespeare of the harm generated by others who push forward damaging ableist narratives. It makes Richard III a sympathetic character and deepens his humanization. His character is a psychological analysis of the harm caused by individuals' judging him as evil due to the conflation of moral unsightliness with bodily 'unsightliness.'

Furthermore, during the final act of *Richard III*, Richmond, also known as Henry VII, performs presents a soliloquy to the audience that further lambasts Richard III's treachery to the crown, "Of England's chair, where he is falsely set; / One that hath ever been God's enemy. / Then if you fight against God's enemy, / God will, in justice, ward you as his soldiers" (5.3.257–260). By Richmond declaring Richard III as God's enemy, he constructs a juxtaposition that infers he is an agent of Satan. Satanic imagery is repeated profusely throughout William Shakespeare's, *Richard III,* as a trademark of his moral standing as a Vice. "A bloody tyrant and a homicide; / One raised in blood, and one in blood established" (5.3.252–253).

There is a too-quick judgment made that conflates bodily deformity with moral deformity. The consequence of this judgment causes individuals to read the demonic epitaph of Richard III as the final epitaph. This makes it difficult to conceive him as divergent from the status of a Vice. Whatever humanization exists is plastered because it suits the Tudor regime. What is of course intriguing then is Richmond's remark also parallels Dan Jones' earlier descriptions of Richard III's offense to the alleged fragility and dignity of the English crown. Of course, while both Polydore and More describe Richard III in similar coarse terms, the dramatic

framing employed especially resembles Preston's use of devil symbolism with Ambidexter. At the beginning of the play, Richard III makes this declaration to the audience, "And thus I clothe my naked villany / With old odd ends stolen out of Holy Writ / And seem a saint, when most I play the devil" (1.3.337–339). Once again, double-faced imagery associated with the Vice archetype surfaces again in the saint and devil contiguity. Similarly, at the end of *Cambises*, Ambidexter overtly announces his sinful relations to the devil, by remarking at the King's death, "The Devil take me, if for him I make any moan" (10.1172). Essentially, if Ambidexter makes his presence known after witnessing the king's death he will enter hell as many individuals note of Richard III. Again, there is a tone of self-recognition that Richard III possesses but Ambidexter does not. Richard III talks about 'playing' the devil as if he is playing a role lumped upon him. However, Ambidexter infers that his reason for living at all is the devil. There is a direct attachment that Preston's Ambidexter has with the devil, that is absent in Richard III's character.

Nonetheless, what differentiates Shakespeare's rendition of the Vice's association with the devil from Preston's, is how they feel towards their designated "devil" label. Tonally, it often appears that Richard III feels forced to assume the role due to social pressures that surround him. The pressure he faces is caused by others' ignorance, ill-judgment, and ableism, which forces him to lash out in acts of violent revenge. His lashing out comes from his frustration of being perceived as merely a punching bag. It is an understandable motivation that the audience can relate to and root for. His hunger for power is that of an underdog, as many individuals understand how terrible it is to be endlessly misjudged and spat on. Jeffrey R. Wilson argues in *Shakespeare and Game of Thrones* that Shakespeare's specific portrayal of Richard III aided in creating an entirely new character archetype, "With Richard III, Shakespeare invented the

stigmatized protagonist: the central figure whose character and plot are closely bound up with his or her negotiation of negative social attitudes heaped upon him or her in response to some innate aspect of his or her identity (1) that he or she has no control over, but (2) that has come to signify illegitimacy" (79). As mentioned, William Shakespeare provides Richard III with his own subjectivity by granting him a point of view through his lengthy monologues. His anger at the world stems from the otherization he faces from society due to his disability. By framing Richard III's villainous activities as coerced by his struggles as a disabled individual, the audience continues to sympathize with him because he is seen as a product of an oppressive system. In other words, Richard III's evil is shaped by his environment, rather than being born with a naturalistic or predisposed inclination toward evil.

For instance, there is a dualistic interpretation one could make concerning many of the lines Richard III utters in the play, which includes his opening soliloquy:

> I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them (1.1.16–23).

Again, Shakespeare offers Richard III a quality that neither More, Polydore, and affiliated Tudors do not: A chance to share his perspective and agency. Yes, it is possible to interpret words such as "curtailed" to mean Richard III entered the world incomplete and therefore the notion of morality is incomplete as More believes. However, the word "fair," followed by, "cheated" in the next line echoes Richard's envy toward those who navigate society without

stigmatization. The envy he feels from being othered shifts toward resentment in that he feels cheated out of an otherwise "normal" physical disposition. Anyone who ever felt themselves an outcast then becomes encouraged to relate to Richard III's anger and villainous behavior. Moreover, while Richard III refrains from mentioning human individuals, the fact that even dogs treat him cruelly adds a layer of extreme absurdity to the ableism he faces. Consequently, these absurd levels of otherization Richard III encounters explains the cold personality imprinted upon him. If an animal known for expressing unconditional love resents Richard III, why would he not feel forced to take up villainy? Thus, his later reflection in the play's opening contains a dualistic interpretation, when he exclaims the lines, "And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover / To entertain these fair well-spoken days, / I am determined to prove a villain" (1.1.28–30). Shakespeare's efforts to frame Richard III's villain status because of his othering by ableist peers allow the audience to sympathize with his motivations. While not stated outright, the forum of power Richard III exists under ends up breaking his moral character and ends with him seeking out and enacting Machiavellian politics.

There exists a play with the title, *The True Tragedy of Richard III* is speculated to have been published on June 19th, 1594. Whereas the known *Richard III* play is cited as being published on October 20th, 1597. The fact that *The True Tragedy of Richard III* came to fruition before the official release of *Richard III* is cause for speculation. The existence of an alternative version of the play may demonstrate the censorship of William Shakespeare that *Richard III* appeared to undergo before its official publication. The conception and exaggerations of Richard III as a Vice likely came from a rewriting of *The True Tragedy of Richard III*. Despite the subtle commentaries contained in *Richard III*, the existence of *The True Tragedy of Richard III* and its potential relationship and shared authorship with *Richard III* raises questions about the

censorship of William Shakespeare by the Tudors. Curiously, as Ramon Jiménez notes, the events that occur in *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, prove more accurate to historical sources:

> The other major difference between the two plays is the treatment of the murders of Edward IV's two young sons, and of his brother George. In True Tragedy it is the murder of the two princes in the Tower that is dramatized; the murder of George, Duke of Clarence, is only reported. In *Richard III* it is the murder of Clarence that is dramatized, and the murder of the princes that is reported. With respect to time and circumstance, the murder of the princes in True Tragedy adheres more closely to the sources ("The True Tragedy of Richard the Third: Another Early History Play by Edward De Vere").

The notion that Richard III killed his brother George, Duke of Clarence to further secure the English crown for himself is a fictional fabrication exclusive to *Richard III*. George, Duke of Clarence was convicted of treason against King Edward IV and executed at the Tower of London in 1478. On multiple occasions, George, Duke of Clarence conspired with Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick of the Lancastrians to seize the English throne for himself but switched sides upon discovering that Henry VI was the intended heir (Dougherty 120). The execution is arranged through formal means, rather than Richard III informally hiring two murderers to do away with Clarence as seen in *Richard III*. While Shakespeare still acknowledges Clarence's relations with Neville, Earl of Warwick, *Richard III* still frames him as a victim of Richard III's evil:

> To slay the innocent? What is my offense?
> Where are the evidence that doth accuse me?
> What lawful quest have given their verdict up
> Unto the frowning judge? Or who pronounced
> The bitter sentence of poor Clarence' death?

Before I be convict by course of law (1.4.166–171).

Again, the dramatization displayed is absent in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* but is likely included in *Richard III* for Clarence's new devotion to honor to juxtapose Richard III's 'honor less' behavior. It also positions Richard III as a man who is willing to operate outside the law to secure power. Again, the William Shakespeare scene deviates from reality as historical sources state that Clarence was indeed convicted. On the other hand, the murder of Richard III's nephews, Richard, and Edward, is an event shrouded in mysterious and less tangible circumstances. Unlike Clarence's conviction, there is very little hard evidence that can properly and completely dismiss Richard III as being their potential murderer. Though, once again, the purpose of alluding to the existence of *The True Tragedy of Richard III* is not to paint Richard III as innocent.

As we can see, while Shakespeare inherited Tudor mythology that scholars deem as harmful, he still finds ways to convey and complicate Richard III's portrayal in *Richard III*. He humanizes Richard by showing that his 'evil' choices and desire for power stem from refusing the 'weak,' half-made, disabled societal perception of him. The alternative play, *The True Tragedy of Richard III* shows how Shakespeare and contemporaries sought to upend the established Tudor view by disputing some of the imagined facts *Richard III* is based upon. Nevertheless, by implicating the ableist judgments that drove Richard's initial choice to play Vice, Shakespeare suggests that there exists an underlying even more villainous Vice at work: The ableism of Richard's surrounding society and Tudor audiences that intertwine moral and bodily disfigurement with one another. George R.R. Martin then takes and expands these ideas presented by Shakespeare in the formulation of Tyrion Lannister.

The Innocence of Tyrion Lannister

Now, we turn to George R.R. Martin's modern rendition of the Vice caricature Tyrion Lannister. His character draws from Shakespeare's presentation of Richard III as a stigmatized protagonist. With no constraints of censorship and punishment from an overarching monarchy, George R.R. Martin is free to explore and criticize the systematic ableist powers that entrap Tyrion Lannister. Like Richard III, in the play, *Richard III* the ableism Tyrion faces for his dwarfism ends up breaking him to the point where he feels the need to assume the moral role of a monster that his family members think he is. However, George R.R. Martin amplifies the sense of injustice and directly addresses the ramifications of ableist societal mythography. While Richard III's death is a justice brought about by his misdeeds, Tyrion is wrongly accused of grievous acts. In other words: Tyrion is framed as an innocent individual, consistently 'disabled' by the society that surrounds him. His disability is often portrayed as a symbol of resilience against an oppressive society instead of a physical element that leads to inevitable corruption.

In the first book, *A Game of Thrones*, Tyrion's introductory description greatly resembles the opening soliloquy in Act I scene I of *Richard III*. Yet, instead of Tyrion introducing himself as Richard III does, he is first described from Jon Snow's point of view, "Tyrion Lannister, the youngest of Lord Tywin's brood and by far the ugliest. All that the gods had given to Cersei and Jaime; they had denied Tyrion. He was a dwarf, half his brother's height, struggling to keep pace on stunted legs" (50). In contrast to Richard III's beginning soliloquy, George R.R. Martin's text shifts the point of view from a personal account of disability to an outsider's perspective. Instead, Martin shifts the framing to Jon Snow's personal biases, which extend to societal ableism at large. Despite the differences, much of the same language used to describe Richard III continues

with Tyrion Lannister. Jon Snow claims that the "Gods" denied Tyrion the able-bodied stature of his siblings. This echoes Richard III's qualms about being cheated of beauty, except he levies the blame on "nature" rather than the "Gods." Jon Snow, the supposed bastard of Lord Eddard Stark, also uses the word, "half" like Richard III does to enunciate the inferior way society views Tyrion. Because of his perceived bastard status, it is possible that when Jon Snow sees Tyrion for the first time, his insecurities infect the way he chooses to depict Tyrion. Outside this scene, Tyrion is repeatedly referred to as a "half-man" by other characters of the work, which continues to parallel Shakespeare's language of reduction regarding Richard III.

What differentiates the beginnings of Tyrion's arc from Richard III's, is his willingness to persevere despite his disability. In contrast to Richard III, Tyrion wishes to subvert the monstrous label the surrounding characters inflict upon him. He refuses to fall to villainy as a means of exerting and seizing power that is taken from him. In the beginning chapters of, *A Game of Thrones*, Jon Snow miserably reflects upon his status as a bastard, which prompts Tyrion to share his perspective as an "othered" individual, "Would you rather be called the Imp? Let them see that their words can cut you and you'll never be free of the mockery. If they want to give you a name take it make it your own. Then they can't hurt you with it anymore" (179). As the series progresses, Tyrion Lannister's initial optimism and desire to rise above the labels given to him are torn apart by the forums of power he exists in. Still, Tyrion Lannister strives to distance himself from outright villainous actions for the sake of proving the forums of power that stigmatize him as wrong. Letting "them see that their words can cut you," shows that Tyrion believes falling toward pessimism only amplifies ableist narratives. Conversely, Shakespeare's Richard III is never shown to desire roles outside of villainy. His version of Richard III starts and ends with him as a Vice with no desire to transcend the status forced upon him. George R.R.

Martin chooses to show Tyrion's descent toward moral ambiguity to demonstrate how forums of power work to destroy his individualized identity.

As atypical of the Vice archetype, Tyrion is associated repeatedly with demonic forces and imagery. Like Ambidexter and Richard III, Tyrion is paired with the Westeros equivalent of an agent of Satan. Tyrion being called an "imp" by various characters is one instance of society associating him with demonic imagery. In, *A Clash of Kings*, before the Battle of Blackwater [6] - in King's Landing, an armorer suggests a helm design that he believes would best suit Tyrion Lannister in the approaching battle, "The scales gilded bright as the sun, the plate enameled a deep Lannister crimson. I would suggest a demon's head for a helm, crowned with tall golden horns. When you ride into battle, men will shrink away in fear," which prompts Tyrion to reflect, "A demon's head, Tyrion thought ruefully, now what does that say of me" (235). In medieval England, knights typically wore armor decorated with Christian iconography as a symbol of protection. The armorer's suggestion for Tyrion is ironic, yet also reminds him of the malevolent image forced upon him. Ambidexter is direct in his desire to lure men toward sin, while Richard III simply doubles down on the demonic iconography paired with him. Once more, what differentiates Martin's Tyrion is his melancholic reaction to the imagery associated with him. He appears to become existential, which allows him a moment of vulnerability not seen previously in Shakespeare's Richard III. On a metaphorical level, the armorer encourages Tyrion to assume the role of a demon. The typecast Tyrion is encouraged to fill works to strip his humanity and his emotional reaction is a response to that dehumanization. George R.R. Martin granting Tyrion a reaction to the devil iconography increases his agency concerning Shakespeare's Richard III.

[6] The Battle of Blackwater is the climax of *A Clash of Kings*. It is a battle fought between forces loyal to King Joffrey Baratheon and the forces loyal to his encroaching uncle, Stannis Baratheon.

In the later chapters of *A Clash of Kings*, Tyrion Lannister reclaims the labels of malevolence given to him in a manner reminiscent of Shakespeare's Richard III. In an exchange with Lord Varys before the Battle of Blackwater, Tyrion Lannister quips, "The dwarf, the evil counselor, the twisted little monkey demon. I'm all that stands between them and chaos" (647). The remark calls back the words of advice and encouragement Tyrion Lannister gave Jon Snow. As such, George R.R. Martin shows that Tyrion Lannister is earnest and resilient about his desire to put on a mask of infallibility in the face of ableism. It is like the scene wherein Richard III declares to Prince Edward, "Thus, like the formal Vice," in a tone that resembles satirical self-aware humor. Though Richard III's self-awareness still leads him to commit his crimes, Tyrion Lannister is determined to poke fun at the labels to lessen their power. While Richard III gives in to the role society typecasts him as Tyrion uses humor to cling to his individualism and resist the forums of power adamant about his innate evilness. The brand of satirical humor Tyrion adopts as an act of resilience only amplifies the sense of injustices he later faces.

Like William Shakespeare, George R.R. Martin seems to draw directly from the writings of Sir Thomas More and Polydore Vergil with the insults directed at Tyrion. At the start of *A Storm of Swords*, Tyrion asks his father, Tywin Lannister, to acknowledge him as a son which prompts him to lash out, "You ask that? You, who killed your mother to come into the world? You are an ill-made, devious- disobedient, spiteful little creature full of envy, lust, and low cunning" (64). In historical documents, Sir Thomas More focuses on the alleged pains Richard III's mother experienced during his childbirth. While it is probable this detail of Richard III's background is fabricated, George R.R. Martin draws from More's words by killing off Tyrion's mother during childbirth. Just as Vergil refers to Richard III's personality as mischievous and deceitful, Tywin refers to Tyrion as devious and spiteful. Tywin's refusal to call Tyrion a son

establishes him as an abnormality of the Lannister bloodline. George R.R. Martin's word choice is meant to demonstrate the immediate harmful effects of mythography generated from the overruling forums of power.

Just before the Battle of Blackwater, George R.R. Martin begins to allude to the path of darkness Tyrion is heading down. When his sister, Cersei Lannister, begins to torture a prostitute by the name of Alayaya after mistaking her for Shae.[7] Likewise, Cersei informs Tyrion about her continued intent to harm Alayaya if her brother refuses to disobey her, to which he responds, "...he'd reached for his father's voice, and found it. 'Whatever happens to her happens to Tommen as well, and that includes the beatings and rapes'" (779). At this point in Tyrion's character arc, he may be bluffing with his dark threats concerning Tommen. Either way, it is the first time Tyrion threatens to sexually assault and beat someone with his blood. It is akin to Richard III's desire to kill his own family for respect and political power. As shown beforehand, Tyrion subconsciously admires his father Tywin's power and his ability to command respect. As seen through his earlier pleas, Tyrion longs for Tywin's approval and wants to feel needed. If Tywin is respected for the fear he strikes in his political opponents, why not take on his trademark characteristics? Tyrion's previous easy-going nature in *A Game of Thrones*, and the blockades he faces for his dwarfism begin to ignite desperation within him. Since he fails to garner respect from others through friendly means, he intends to force respect by producing fear. Though, because of the vulnerabilities Martin reveals about Tyrion and the senseless beating of the innocent Alayaya, the audience comes to understand his treasonous considerations.

[7] Shae is a prostitute who was in an exclusive relationship with Tyrion Lannister during the events of *A Game of Thrones*, *A Clash of Kings*, and *A Storm of Swords*. Despite the tragedy of their relationship, Tyrion Lannister fell deeply in love with her.

Ultimately, it is Tyrion's trial in George R.R. Martin's third book, *A Storm of Swords*, that drives the Lannisters' frustrations to the surface. Because Tyrion is granted point-of-view chapters, the truth of Tyrion's innocence is never left to mystery. When Tywin tries to manipulate a false confession out of his son, Tyrion snaps and states, "'Of Joffrey's death I am innocent. I am guilty of a more monstrous crime.' He took a step toward his father. 'I was born. I lived. I am guilty of being a dwarf, I confess it. And no matter how many times my good father forgave me, I have persisted in my infamy'" (958). Because Tyrion is innocent of his crimes, the break in his character despite his efforts to let ableism roll off his back derives further sympathy from the audience. The weight of Tyrion's words when he reflects that he is punished for "living" lines up with his current actions. The oppressive hierarchical structure that disables Tyrion causes him to lash out with a statement that seems to echo sudden violent desires, "Nothing but this: I did not do it. Yet now I wish I had…I wish I had enough poison for you all. You make me sorry that I am not the monster you would have me be" (958). This remark is essentially Tyrion's equivalent of Richard III's "I am determined to prove a villain," moment. It is especially powerful because the trial scene demonstrates how Tyrion also cannot, "...prove a lover," as he is rejected or betrayed by the ones, he seeks love from. Not only does his father reject him, but his lover Shae betrays him by testifying against him and accusing him of mistreating her. In Shakespeare's Richard III, the audience never comes to witness the injustices that prompt Richard III's desire to reclaim control through villainy. Instead, the audience may choose whether Richard III's vocalizations about maltreatment prove truthful. The trial scene also demonstrates what incites the chain of violence produced by ableism. Just as Jon Snow lashes out at Tyrion due to his insecurities that stem from his 'otherness' Tyrion begins to lash out at everyone due to the way he is treated for his dwarfism.

It is only a few chapters later in *A Storm of Swords* when Tyrion fails his trial by combat wherein, he outright decides to envelop himself in the monstrous label. It is when Tyrion's brother, Jaime, visits his cell to free him, that he decides to give in and lies about killing his brother's son Joffrey [8] - "I am the monster they all say I am. Yes, I killed your vile son" (1061). This remark could also reflect Tyrion's, "I am determined to prove a villain," moment. If individuals insist on casting Tyrion as evil, he sees it as futile to continue attempting to change that stigma. Especially if it only leads to an increase in harm inflicted upon him. As foreshadowed, Tyrion's desire for control and respect prompts him to mimic the ways his father commands respect: Through fear**.** [9] It is through fear that Tyrion will force individuals to grant him autonomy just as William Shakespeare's Richard III does.

It is also in Martin's third installment, *A Storm of Swords,* where Tyrion Lannister begins to display concrete signs of morally breaking under people's efforts to "disable" him. The time it takes for Tyrion to bend is another way George R.R. Martin increases the presence of the conscious workings of individuals' ableist mythography. Ultimately, it is the trial wherein Tyrion is falsely accused of killing his nephew Joffrey along with the betrayal of his lover Shae that drives him toward 'unjust' murderous actions. After his brother Jaime breaks him out of imprisonment, Tyrion makes his way toward his chambers wherein he intends to murder Shae as

[8] Joffrey Lannister is the child of Jaime and Cersei's incestuous relationship with one another. This explains Jaime's mixed feelings at the prospect of Tyrion murdering his child.

[9] In the books, Tywin often refers to his father Tytos Lannister as a 'weak' man who let others trample all over him. Tytos is also a departure from the Westeros bodily ideal. It causes Tywin to inherit traits he believes make him respectable which carries over to Tyrion and Cersei.

an act of revenge.[10] Nonetheless, when Tyrion approaches his bedside, the sound of her voice stirs up a mixture of contradictory emotions within him, "That might have hurt me once, when I still felt pain. The first step was the hardest" (1065). Here, Tyrion admits to himself that his maltreatment ignited a numbness toward the murderous action he is about to commit. Though, he contrasts the tone of his thoughts by remarking about how challenging it is to take the steps towards his bed to view the face of his victim. While Richard III murders in cold blood like Tyrion, he displays no internal complications regarding his actions. Moreover, George R.R. Martin provides numerous scenes that demonstrate the betrayals and cruelty Tyrion faces for the sake of generating sympathy among his readers. In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the oppression that Richard III faces is only implied in his speeches. Though, it is Shae's murder wherein Tyrion decides to become the monster and demon people accuse him of being. It is the same defeated, "go with the flow" attitude Richard III demonstrates right at the beginning of *Richard III*.

Within the same chapter of *A Storm of Swords*, Tyrion Lannister admits out loud to adopting his father's "evil" ways. After Shae's murder, Tyrion intrudes upon his father, Tywin in the privy, shoots him with a crossbow, and utters in response to his father's horrified reaction, "Now that's where you're wrong father. Why, I believe I'm you writ small. Do me a kindness now, and die quickly" (1067). Essentially, Tywin starts as Tyrion's FOIL but later stands as a figure that foreshadows his character arc. As mentioned, Tywin Lannister is characterized by his cold, calculating, yet effective war strategies. He is known especially for conducting the Red

[10] During Tyrion's trial, Shae lies claiming that Tyrion not only killed Joffrey but forced her to sleep with him. After the events of the trial, it is implied that she sleeps with Tywin. This greatly hurts Tyrion and much like Shakespeare's Richard III, this causes Tyrion to lash out in anger and heartbreak.

Wedding massacre against the Starks.[11] In other words, this moment in *A Storm of Swords* is the turning point for Tyrion's character. It's as if George R.R. Martin took Shakespeare's Richard III and decided to demonstrate the origin story of his downward spiral toward antagonism.

All in all, George R.R. Martin burrowed a hefty amount from Shakespeare's interpretation of Richard III as a Vice character for his character, Tyrion. Like Richard III, Tyrion's character breaks under the systematic forums of power that render him disabled. Both Shakespeare and George R.R. Martin explore how ableism only increases ableism and essentially becomes a violent ripple effect. Tyrion is repeatedly associated with the Westeros equivalent of satanic and monstrous imagery. Again, just as Richard III does, Tyrion believes that his respect can only become uncovered by igniting fear in others. What George R.R. Martin changes from the Shakespearean rendition of the Vice archetype is the matter of Tyrion's innocence. While Richard III is rightfully convicted of his murderous crimes, Tyrion is innocent and blamed for others' crimes due to his dwarfism. Indeed, Tyrion eventually turns to murder, but George R.R. Martin wants to show how mythography shapes the actions of those around him. The audience is never shown the events that led up to Richard III's cynical worldview, yet the readers follow Tyrion's entire journey from his initial carefree attitude to his resentful tendencies.

[11] The Red Wedding was a massacre wherein the characters Robb Stark, Jeyne Westerling, and Catelyn Stark are all murdered at the hands of Lord Walder Frey. Frey believed Robb's marriage to Jeyne over his daughter was a form of betrayal. Therefore, the conception of Red Wedding was arranged between Tywin Lannister and Walder Frey.

A Matter of Witches, Sex, and Femme Fatales: A Defense of Margaret of Anjou and Cersei Lannister

Amidst the Battle of Blackwater, the Lannister family's queen consort, Cersei Lannister offers Sansa Stark a piece of advice, "Tears are not a woman's only weapon. You've got another one between your legs, and you'd best learn to use it. You'll find men use their swords freely enough. Both kinds of swords." As if to parallel reader reactions, Sansa Stark's face twists in disgust at the notion of utilizing seduction as an alleged weapon against patriarchal powers. Over the course of the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, Cersei Lannister produces an array of divisive reactions across audiences. At worst, some critics believe Cersei continues to bastardize and reinforce misogynistic portrayals of women in power. One reviewer on the site, *Goodreads,* goes as far as to call George R.R. Martin's portrayal of Cersei in the books an "evil harpy" ("Tatiana (the United States)'s Review of *A Game of Thrones*"). The accusations resemble criticisms levied at Henry VI's French wife, Margaret of Anjou's portrayal in William Shakespeare's first collection of history tetralogies: *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III)* and *Richard III*. Both Yorkish and Tudor historians equate Margaret of Anjou to a sniveling, promiscuous, and disloyal woman who turns to witchcraft during her imprisonment under Edward IV. Yet, who was Margaret of Anjou truly? Is she also a victim of both Yorkish and Tudor propaganda? Is Cersei continuing the trend of paranoid misogynistic portrayals or is George R.R. Martin attempting to allude to a bigger picture?

While William Shakespeare must make efforts to uphold the Tudor mythography in his historical plays, what he explores with Margaret of Anjou resembles the injustices explored by Richard III. In her essay, "Rethinking Gender and Genre in the History Play," Martha A. Kurtz defends Shakespeare's Margaret, "In the Henry VI plays Margaret can be seen as a different kind

of critique of the values of the masculine world of war: what is horrifying in men is more vividly horrifying in her because it is unexpected" (271). In other words, Shakespeare's Margaret is a criticism of the patriarchal system in that she reflects its promoted behaviors in the form of a woman. Because Margaret is a woman, displaying stereotypical masculine attributes or traits that go against what is expected of femininity under the Tudor reign raises alarm. Indeed, Shakespeare still exaggerates and twists history for the sake of producing an effective propaganda piece against Margaret of Anjou. Nevertheless, William Shakespeare's subtle yet unique criticism of the patriarchy through Margaret of Anjou later opens the door for George R.R. Martin's, Cersei Lannister. For the sake of surviving in a man's world, why not play the game of politics just as men do?

Associating offensive women in England with witchcraft peaked around the mid-fifteenth century. Though, the reformational policies of Thomas Aquinas in the twelfth century laid down the foundation for the demonization of witchcraft. Innocent magic like mere charms employed in the commonplace practices of herbalism began to generate concern. Even so, it is a generalization and misconception to say that the mere performance of magic itself during the Middle Ages always existed as heretical to religions such as Catholicism. During that time, Catholicism and magic intertwined with one another. It is a simplification to boil the origins of witchcraft concerns to the religion versus magic debate. Rather, Thomas Aquinas began to worry over the potential creeping demonic influence that came with the performance of certain magics, "Thomas Aquinas and other authorities…had approved the use of the occult virtues of natural objects for medical purposes; but Ficino begins to tread dangerous ground when he discusses higher forms of magic, those involving not only natural objects, but also talismans, magical

words, and astrological music" (Mebane 30).[12] Thus, Aquinas did not outwardly shun all magical practices as heretical. Even medicinal practices that may resemble necromancy were still permitted so long as God's words and will become invoked by the user. Still, what Aquinas declared as vulnerable to demonic influence remains highly subjective. The religious subjectivity of Thomas Aquinas allowed him the necessary elbow room to condemn individuals that defied patriarchal normativity. Unsurprisingly, this led to intertwining women with anti-witchcraft sentiment.[13]

While taboo magical practices like necromancy certainly occurred, Aquinas and the clergymen that followed textually twisted the details of the spells. Textual reframing is especially prevalent in spell work surrounding erotic magic. More specifically, in his book, *The Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century (Magic in History)*, Richard Kieckhefer notes, "...in trials for erotic magic it was usually women who were charged with alienating men's affections through magical means, but the surviving formulas for sex-inducing magic typically envisage the use of this magic by men to entice unwilling women" (79). Much of the magic that sparked the witch trials of the fifteenth century concerned acts of nonconsensual sex prompted by erotic magics. As Kieckhefer points out, erotic charms were written primarily for male practitioners.[14] Yet, the staple image of a female English witch the church enforced often took

[12] Marsilio Ficino was an influential Italian scholar, Catholic priest, and astrologer of the early Renaissance period.

[13] "Ulrich Molitoris, after writing at length on the powers of demons, closed his treatise with an apparently gratuitous warning specifically to women, urging them in particular to be on guard against the Devil's wiles" (187).

[14] A written example of one such spell reads as follows, "When you wish to have the love of whatever woman you wish, whether she is near or far, whether noble of common, on whatever day or night you wish, whether for the furtherance of friendship or to its hindrance" (82).

the form of an alluring temptress or succubus figure.[15] The sexual deviant image of the English witch, was a calculated construction by the Church of England to tighten patriarchal control upon female bodies.

Unsurprisingly, the production of *Malleus Maleficarum* in 1486 by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, focused on the sexually deviant witch-image the Church of England produced. Professor and author, Hans Peter Broedel, in his book, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief*, analyzes how *Malleus Maleficarum* uses witchcraft to police women who threatened the structure of the patriarchy:

> In the Malleus, however, witchcraft, femininity, and sexual sin form a tight constellation of interrelated ideas: unbridled feminine sexuality led to witchcraft, which expressed itself most typically in sexual, reproductive, or marital dysfunction; the defining act of the witch was sexual intercourse with the devil; men who committed adultery, whose lusts were unrestrained like a woman's, became liable to the spells of witches; and this feminine vice led directly to a second inversion of the natural order, because such men then allowed themselves to be dominated by women. To Institoris and Sprenger, witchcraft, adultery, and feminine domination lead logically to a coherent, closely interconnected conception of a wide-ranging occult conspiracy against society" (113).

Because existing as a woman in medieval society contrasts the upheld systemic bodily ideal, a sexually promiscuous man's immoral actions still end with the blame of feminine influence. As noted in the previous chapter, in medieval and Tudor societies, bodies that contrast the ideal

[15] "The English witch is almost invariably a woman…usually poor, though there are exceptions, and usually elderly. In most cases she has a bad reputation from the beginning often for unchastity as well as malice– and this is transferred to her descendants" (Rosen 29).

upper-class, able-bodied, male become naturally predisposed to immoral behavior. Again, also note the prevalence of devil imagery concerning individuals that threaten the natural arrangement of societal order. To exist as prone to immoral behaviors is unnatural and therefore a threat to a safe society. As Broedel reflects, to maintain the ideal status quo, radicals like Kramer and Sprenger line their doctrine *Malleus Maleficarum*, with a conspiratorial tone, "Witches who in this way sometimes collect male organs in great numbers, as many as twenty or thirty members together, and put them in a bird's nest, or shut them up in a box, where they move themselves like living members, and eat oats and corn" (121). As shown here, Kramer and Sprenger often conjure up vulgar imagery that positions women as individuals that hope to dominate or humiliate men. Here, the authors conjure up a striking image of a witch stealing away men's genitalia. In a patriarchal society, this phallic imagery is often utilized as a representation of male power. It's as if the witch in this scenario is stealing away conceptions of maleness and male identity. The act of locking away genitalia in a box promotes the idea that women are the ones who seek to police or restrict male bodies. As such, the illustration invoked effectively weaves the authors' conspiracy: If these alleged witches exist without consequence, they will inflict harm and injustices on innocent men.

Because the image of the English witch becomes invoked when an unideal body or an "other" threatens the natural order, Margaret of Anjou becomes an ideal target. According to Alison Weir's, *Lancaster and York: The Wars of the Roses,* Margaret of Anjou allegedly ignited great fear amongst York bloodline, more so, "...than all the princes of the House of Lancaster combined" (434). Hence, the worst of the propaganda and rumors hurled at Margaret of Anjou became produced by York's hands. A pro-Yorkish ballad produced in 1492 mirrors much of the Yorkish distrust and fear of Margaret's reign, exclaiming, "Queen Margaret, I mean, that ever

has meant / To govern all England with might and power, / And to destroy the right line was her intent" (Dockray 61). It became commonplace for the House of York to paint Margaret of Anjou in a domineering tone. Her nickname "she-wolf" given to her by William Shakespeare, likely came from the Yorkish power-hungry and pious depictions of her character as demonstrated in the ballad.

Much of the Tudor propaganda utilized against Margaret, stems from the chroniclers who blamed her husband, Henry VI's, inability to govern the English Crown. Between the years 1459 and 1460 a contemporary account titled, *An English Chronicle*, penned by an unknown author, lambasts Margaret for, "gathering riches innumerable," and allowing, "...the Earl of Wiltshire, treasurer of England, to enrich himself, fleeced the poor people, disinherited rightful heirs and did many wrongs" (80). Strangely, Henry VI is absent from any culpability or blame for the inequalities brought forth by the English Crown. While Henry VI is framed as incompetent, no direct political blame is placed upon him. Instead, Henry VI is criticized for his malleability due to being submissive to his wife's overbearing persona. The contemporary, *An English Chronicle*, then goes on to accuse Margaret's son, Edward of Westminster of being a bastard, "The queen was defamed and denounced, that he who was called prince was not her son but a bastard conceived in adultery," which continues to conclude, "And she made her son, called the prince, give a livery of swans to all the gentlemen of the countryside and to many others throughout the land, trusting through their strength to make her son king" (80). Accusing Margaret's son Edward of bastardy became a common attack for those on the Yorkish side to make. These claims would especially strengthen Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York's [16] - legitimacy and rights of inheritance to the English throne. The author of the passage also paints Margaret in a

[16] Richard Plantagenet is not to be confused with his youngest son King Richard III talked about in Chapter 1.

scheming tone, blaming her domineering ways and motivations on wishing to seat her bastard child on the throne. The Tudor dynasty would later exemplify these mythographic claims of bastardy as I will explore.

The general patriarchal bias that was rampant within the Middle Ages makes poaching truthful accounts of Margaret of Anjou a challenge from her Lancastrian bloodline. Intriguingly, accounts from opposing houses and foreigners with Yorkish bias position Margaret as a masculine "virago"[17]- woman, but the Lancastrian chronicler, John Hardyng refers to her as a, "...piteful desperate ladye" that, "mournes and laments the fate and calamity of her husband" (458). John Hardyng's depiction of Margaret casts her in the emotional, feminine, but acceptable, 'distressed damsel' role. His account positions Margaret as a passive observer or meek consort to her husband, Henry VI. On the other hand, Hardyng's account ironically calls to question the validity of Margaret's demonic "she-wolf" reputation. Though, negative attitudes amongst the noble classes of Lancastrian society also expressed discontent like the Yorks. The English theologian and academic, Thomas Gascoigne, of fifteenth-century Oxford University, writes, "Almost all the affairs of the realm were conducted according to the queen's will, by fair means foul, as was said by several people. What will be the result of all this, God knows" (Wilkinson 128). What prompts Margaret's domineering reputation, comes from the weak-willed, politically inexperienced, and malleable reputation her husband Henry VI carried.[18] As

[17] Virago is an archaic term that is used to refer to a woman who has masculine strength, spirit, or qualities.

[18] "After 1459, however, there were the beginnings of those rumors and libels which would undermine her reputation as a queen and as a woman. Finally, under the pressure of a factional strife, the full picture of the ambitious woman, the virago with the spirit of a man, the adulterous queen, began to appear. If the king could not easily be criticized, a Frenchwoman whose family members were enemies of the realm, could become his surrogate,

mentioned, a woman who attempts to assist or voice her own political opinions is viewed as operating outside the role of queen consort. In the fifteenth century, in England, the concept of a queen regent, who exercises sovereign powers, was unacceptable. Even so, Gascoigne portrays Margaret of Anjou as an individual who seems to possess total control and a lustful desire for dominance over the English crown. While the witch-image surfaces bluntly in Shakespearean histories, the fearful tone of Gascoigne echoes the conspiratorial judgments of Kramer and Sprenger.

It is hard to take Hardyng or even Gascoigne's accounts of Margaret as truth when individuals outside English rule write about her in a tone of marvel. A depiction of Margaret as an empowered political figure appears in, *Commentaries of Pius II, Book IX*, wherein he writes, "All marveled at such boldness in a woman, at a man's courage in a woman's breast, and at her reasonable arguments. They said that the spirit of the Maid who had raised Charles to the throne was renewed in the Queen" (580). While it is possible that Pope Pius II held a certain degree of bias against the queen [19], - he holds no personal nor direct familial ties to the conflict of the houses brewing in England. As head of the Catholic church and ruler of the Papal States [20] - Pope Pius II attempted to take up the role of a mediator between the Houses of York and Lancaster. His desire to play the intervener between the two houses influences the unbiased way he attempts to speak of political figureheads and family members. While Pius II associates

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a useful device in an age of growing literacy in which both rumor and propaganda could and did influence popular opinion" (Lee 193).

[19] "...Margaret of Anjou, was the daughter of Rene of Anjou who claimed the Sicilian throne, and if Pius tended to exhibit bias against the English Queen, very likely her family connections were partially to blame" (193).

[20] The Papal States were sovereign territories of the Pope held from 756 to 1870.

Margaret's persona with masculinity, he refrains from utilizing such terms to demonize like her fellow Englishmen do. His tone is never one of disgust or abhorrence. Despite being a man of faith, Pius II never draws parallels to any demonic or satanic imagery. He stands in awe of Margaret's strong abilities in the realm of politics. He only refers to her as masculine due to the systematic stereotype of femininity intertwining with intellectual weaknesses. Instead, Pius II seems to view her as a fellow intellectual, seen by his referral to her arguments as 'reasonable.' It is historical chronicles like Pius II's that further increase skepticism towards the malicious portrayals of her character in historical and literary works produced under the Tudor reign.

The critics of Margaret of Anjou possess a certain degree of merit when it comes to the suspicions of their character. All those educated enough to write extensively on Margaret of Anjou's character existed in upper-class English society. The English crown is still an oppressive structure designed to uphold policies that primarily benefit the noble class and suppress the lower classes. To paint Margaret of Anjou as a feminist figure of progressive behaviors and political policies only generates new mythologies that further romanticize the English monarchical structure. Though, to purely frame Margaret of Anjou as a pompous elite figure without struggle or motivations for her hatred of the Yorks is also a simplification. After the Lancastrian defeat at the Battle of Towton, Margaret of Anjou fled to avoid Yorkish imprisonment; the chronicler Georges Chastellain's description of her arrival in Burgundy in 1463 describes her condition during this time, "...poor and alone, destitute of all goods and all desolate. [She] had neither credence, nor money, nor goods, nor jewels to pledge…It was a thing piteous to see, truly, this high princess so cast down and laid low in such great danger, dying of hunger and hardship" (61). While a large portion of Margaret of Anjou's life existed in luxury, her upper-class position was by no means stable. Her identity as a Frenchwoman situated in an English Lancastrian

household led to a tumultuous life. This chapter simply seeks to discern the truths of Margaret's character while cautioning against the potential 'realist' appearing mythography produced by patriarchal structures and political opponents.

In Defense of William Shakespeare's "She-Wolf"

"An extension of a patriarchal Tudor historiography, the history play is seen by these writers as inherently a 'men's world' in which women are the naturally feared and opposing Other whom they minimalize, weaken, and exclude to maintain its own generic identity," declares Kurtz in her essay, "Rethinking Gender and Genre in the History Play." When the Tudors seized control of the English crown throughout the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the existing medievalist accounts of Margaret of Anjou became repurposed to enforce their ruling dynasty. It is no surprise that the preexisting bastardization of Margaret's character based on her gender and bodily autonomy only seems to heighten with the release of Shakespeare's First Tetralogy of History. While certain Tudor chroniclers such as Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall speak of Margaret in admiration of her strength, they still blame the aberration of Margaret's 'femininity' for making her character intrinsically malleable to 'evil' forces. It is why William Shakespeare's *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III),* and *Richard III* follow and dramatize the deterioration of Margaret's moral character. Likewise, it is Margaret's descent toward the practices of witchcraft that becomes a symbol of her moral corruption. Though, I also wish to counter the critics and propose that William Shakespeare constructs a powerful woman with the intent to criticize patriarchal practices. In Shakespeare's First Tetralogy, Margaret of Anjou behaves as unlawfully as the men around her but forums that exist around her force her to assume the role of a witch.

As mentioned, the Italian historian Polydore Vergil influenced much of the Tudor perceptions of historical figures and provided the loose framework William Shakespeare draws upon in his First Tetralogy. He primarily uses Vergil's tone and prose of condemnation regarding Richard III for his rendition of the Yorkish king. Yet, what of Margaret? Despite Vergil's pessimistic writings on Richard III, he speaks in admiration of Margaret of Anjou's abilities in the realm of politics, "...a woman of sufficient forecast, very desirous of renown, full of policy, counsel, comely behaviour, and all manly qualities, in whom appeared great wit, great diligence, great heed and carefulness" (71). The descriptors chosen by Vergil resemble Pope Pius II's words, particularly about her "manly" qualities that he equates to her political character being "great." Like Pius II, Polydore Vergil attempts to play the role of a diplomat in his historical writings due to his perspective as a foreign outsider. In contrast to Pius II's Yorkish bias, Vergil's loyalties to the Tudor reign cause him to exaggerate the 'evilness' of individuals such as Richard III. Nevertheless, the misogyny of the time and Polydore Vergil's need to criticize the fall of the Lancasterian House surfaces in the way he blames her for the failures of her husband, "...but she was of the kind of other women, who commonly are much given [to] mutability and change. This woman, when she perceived the king her husband to do nothing of his own head [following her marriage in 1445] but to rule wholly by [Humphrey] Duke of Gloucester's advice" (71). Rather than Henry VI being blamed for his malleability, the blame shifts to Margaret for her predisposition toward mental and intellectual weakness due to her womanly nature. As noted previously, the moralists of the time saw women as prone to magic and supernatural phenomena because of their weak minds. In his First Tetralogy, William Shakespeare seems to draw upon Polydore Vergil's framing of Margaret of Anjou's inferior mind through her descent toward witchcraft.

Above all, William Shakespeare seems to draw from Edward Hall's chronicle published in 1548 titled, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* in his construction of Margaret of Anjou. According to Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare. Henry VI, Richard III, Richard II*, Edward Hall doubles down on the ideas put forth by the demonization pushed by Margaret's contemporaries, "...most of the evils of Henry VI's reign were due to his marriage with Margaret of Anjou, and her hostility to Duke Humphrey, and her love for Suffolk" (11-12). Yet, one mythography is added by Edward Hall not previously mentioned by her contemporaries: The potential affair with William de la Pole, the Duke of Suffolk. In its entirety, the idea that Margaret of Anjou conducted an affair with the Duke of Suffolk is a Tudor invention. It is a way for the Tudors to bash Margaret based on being disloyal to her husband. Moreover, it brands Margaret's moral character as debauched. Recall that the staple image of the English witch is often an immoral figure that engages in unchaste behaviors and sexual transgressions. In William Shakespeare's *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III)* Margaret's fabricated affair with Suffolk is at the forefront, which is implied to lead to her complete moral decline in *Richard III*.

As mentioned, the idea that Margaret of Anjou and the Duke of Suffolk became lovers is a complete myth pushed forth by Edward Hall and promoted by William Shakespeare. Additionally, in *Henry VI Part 1*, he dramatizes this fabrication by making Margaret of Anjou a prisoner captured by Suffolk in the battles against King Charles VIII, "Be what thou wilt, thou art my prisoner" (5.3.45). What drove Shakespeare to make Margaret a prisoner to the Lancastrians? Why choose Suffolk? William Shakespeare needs to provide a motivation behind the malleable mind of Margaret that Vergil mentions in his writings. Simply, Suffolk is a threatening male power that looms over Margaret. Even after Margaret marries Henry VI and

relinquishes the title of a prisoner,' it is a metaphor for her mental submission to Suffolk. For instance, in *Henry VI Part 2*, Suffolk places himself as the primary figurehead in the two's plans for the downfall of the Duke of Humphrey [21] - "So let her rest. And, madam, list to me, / For I am bold to counsel you in this" (1.3.95–96). Then he declares a few lines afterward, "So, one by one, we'll weed them all at last, / And you yourself shall steer the happy helm" (1.3.102-103). One may argue that the Shakespearean addition is a subversion to Vergil's claim of Humphrey dominating Margaret of Anjou's politics. Even so, Margaret of Anjou is still framed as falling prey to a man's political maneuvering. She never operates as an independent body or mind within these initial scenes. With Humphrey being of Lancastrian blood, the myth Shakespeare makes Margaret a treacherous figure. Like Shakespeare's Richard III, she seems to inhibit Vice traits like playing both sides to selfishly further her power.

In the later scenes of *Henry VI Part 2*, Margaret of Anjou operates as an extension of the Duke of Suffolk's villainous scheming. For one, Margaret of Anjou presents her concerns over the Duke of Humphrey's corroded and damaging protectorship, "The reverent care I bear unto my lord / Made me collect these dangers in the Duke" (1.3.34–35). Like a mirror, the Duke of Suffolk enforces Margaret's points in just a few lines afterward, "Well hath your Highness seen into this duke, / And, had I first been put to speak my mind, / I think I should have told your Grace's tale" (3.1.42–44). While Margaret is the first to speak, the scenes before indicate that she only does so because Suffolk is utilizing her position as queen for his gain. Like what Hall and Vergil propose in their chronicles, Margaret of Anjou only seems to operate as a political mouthpiece to the man who previously threatened her with imprisonment. Her mind is swayed

[21] The Duke of Humphrey was the youngest son of Henry IV and brother of Henry V. He is Henry VI's uncle and advisor.

by the power of a man in the same way that echoes John Hardyng's previous descriptions of a passive Margaret.

In *Henry VI Part 3* Margaret of Anjou begins to turn utterly mad, cruel, and morally depraved. In the play when the Yorkish Edmund, Earl of Rutland and son of Richard Plantagenet, the 3rd Duke of York falls at the Battle of Northampton, Margaret of Anjou mocks his father by placing a paper crown atop his head. "And I, to make thee mad, do mock thee thus / Stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance" (1.4.89–90). There is insufficient historical evidence that Margaret of Anjou mocked or engaged with Richard Plantagenet in a heated exchange like the one seen in *Henry VI Part 3*. It is likely a dramatization of William Shakespeare's construction meant to portray the breaking point toward Margaret's moral decline. Her behavior carries the tone of a sadist, seen through her drive to "sing" and "dance" at Richard Plantagenet's grieving. Critics of Shakespeare's First Tetralogy perceive the scene as fearmongering. Because of their intellectual weaknesses, it became common to portray women in positions of power as prone to hysteria or mad behaviors akin to what Margaret demonstrates.

The sadistic behavior enacted by Margaret of Anjou allows for the beginnings of her association with witchcraft. In response to her cruel behavior and mocking, Richard Plantagenet spirals in a rage and levies numerous insults at her:

> She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France,
> Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth:
> How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex
> To triumph like an Amazonian trull
> Upon their woes whom Fortune captivates
> But that thy face is vizard-like, unchanging,

Made impudent with use of evil deeds (1.4.112–119).

As mentioned, the nickname “she-wolf” concerning Margaret is a Shakespearean construction. It calls forth a beastly image of the queen but is also utilized to otherize her based on her foreignness. Though, like Richard III, demonic and satanic imagery like that of the Vice archetype is associated with her. Richard Plantagenet’s use of the word “adder” resembles biblical serpent imagery. Like Satan disguised as the serpent that tempted Adam and Eve, Margaret operates by the same seductive and demonic methodology. The use of this biblical allusion invokes the temptress image that is becoming of the English witch. Richard Plantagenet continues to reinforce her unchastity and sexual impurity by calling her a “trull” which is slang for prostitute. To use the word, “vizard” says that Margaret keeps up a mask to perform her evil deeds. Again, the illustration Richard Plantagenet presents resembles the double-faced nature seen within the Vice caricature. The only addition to Margaret’s demonization is her reputation as a temptress and witch because of her sex.

Thus, within William Shakespeare's First Tetralogy, it is unsurprising that Margaret of Anjou’s character arc concludes with the surrounding characters casting her off as a witch. It is ultimately William Shakespeare that directly associates Margaret with witch-imagery. While the previous chroniclers speak of detesting her moral character, none of them blame acts of witchcraft as Shakespeare does with the queen. By showing Margaret as a character that engages in affairs and cold-hearted masculine behaviors, the audience assumes that her mind is under the influence of Satanic evil. In the play, *Richard III*, Margaret’s madness continues while her haggard appearance only aids in emphasizing her role as a witch. She is associated with a prophetess who commonly lays curses upon the Yorks. This includes King Richard III himself when he yells at her in an exchange, “Foul, wrinkled witch, what mak’st thou in my sight”

(1.3.164). Likewise, before he is executed for treachery, the Duke of Buckingham curses Margaret's name, reflecting, "Thus Margaret's curse falls heavy upon my neck: / 'When he,' quoth she, 'shall split thy heart with sorrow, / Remember Margaret was a prophetess'" (5.1.25–27). Margaret only physically appearing in two scenes within *Richard III* becomes the defining point of Shakespearean critics' qualms with her character. She is largely omitted and is continuously referenced as a witch when she appears. Other times Margaret is only mentioned by name.

Alternatively, what is less explored is William Shakespeare's underlying commentary on the harmful systematic effects of patriarchal dominance. While Margaret's character in the First Tetralogy is drenched with Tudor mythography, Shakespeare offers a critique of toxic masculine values that arise during the war through her. As a Frenchwoman with a minimal dowry to her name, Margaret of Anjou is forced to take on toxic masculine traits for her survival. While the inclusion of Suffolk is itself a Tudor myth designed to portray Margaret as impure, Shakespeare uses subtext to paint a more complex picture. In *Henry VI Part 1,* when the Duke of Suffolk first takes Margaret to ransom her off, he begins to change his mind in an aside, reflecting, "She's beautiful, and therefore to be wooed; / She is a woman, therefore to be won" (5.3.78–79). Suffolk's comment coincidentally frames him as the initial seducer over Margaret. The tone of the comment is rife with aggression and arrogance. He speaks of Margaret in an objectifying way as if she is a challenge or prize, he must enchant.

The aggressive advances of William de la Pole, the Duke of Suffolk understandably seem to instill anxiety in Margaret of Anjou. His gestures begin to make Margaret uneasy to the point where she wishes for her rescue, "Perhaps I shall be rescued by the French / And then I need not crave his courtesy" (5.3.104–105). The discomfort expressed implies that Margaret is fearful of

potential sexual assault. Her desire to appease him is forced as shown through the desire for rescue. It again positions Suffolk as the violent pursuer moreover Margaret. When Suffolk announces his intentions to make her queen, Margaret finally speaks up, “To be a queen in bondage is more vile / Than is a slave in base servility, / For princes should be free” (5.2.112–114). Here, Margaret outright rejects the sex slave undertones of Suffolk’s proposal. If she becomes queen, she must operate as an independent body free from imprisonment. Therefore, Shakespeare’s Margaret outright rejects submitting to normative patriarchal structures from the earliest interactions of her character. She commands respect from the men who surround her, paralleling the headstrong ways Pius II speaks of her character.

Nevertheless, while the Duke of Suffolk wishes for Margaret to follow his political instruction, she is still capable of forming her own opinions on matters. At the start of *Henry VI Part 2*, she calls out her husband’s foolish idealism that stems from his religious faith:

> His champions are the prophets and apostles,
> His weapons holy saws of sacred writ,
> His study is his tiltyard, and his loves
> Are brazen images of canonized saints (1.3.59–62).

Typically, women became stereotypes by supposedly allowing idealism to plague their minds with irrational behaviors. With minds allegedly drenched with unpragmatic thoughts, they were prohibited from holding sovereign power. Yet in *Henry VI Part 2*, Shakespeare reverses the gender roles by making Henry VI an emotional man driven by faith with no mind for politics. On the other hand, Margaret of Anjou is the one to call out Henry VI’s religious delusions as being useless in court politics.

While *Henry VI Part* 2 contains scenes wherein Margaret seems to operate under Suffolk's schemes, when Suffolk is murdered, she is forced to operate independently. In her final speech, when Yorkish forces turn on Henry VI in an assault on the kingdom, she tells him, "What are you made of? You'll nor fight nor fly. / Now is it manhood, wisdom, and defense, / To give the enemy way, and to secure us" (5.2.75–77). Ironically, it is Margaret of Anjou who implies her husband lacks any manhood. She blasts him for his lack of pragmatism and indecisiveness in allowing the English Crown to get to its tumultuous state. The behavior of Margaret's husband forces her to take on a masculine role to save the kingdom. It is only a few lines later that she outright bashes Henry VI's irresponsible political maneuvering, "Of all our fortunes; but if we haply scape, / As well we may– if not through your neglect" (5.2.80–81). With no Suffolk to instruct her on what to say, Margaret takes full autonomy over her words and opinions. These scenes contrast the submissive and codependent Margaret of Anjou historians such as Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall suggest.

Due to the burden of power and being forced to assume the toxic masculine values often exhibited in war, Margaret of Anjou begins to mentally break. In a sense, both a criticism of the patriarchy and the inclusion of Margaret's vulnerabilities are left omitted by the chroniclers. There is a different interpretation of Margaret of Anjou's sadistic lines wherein she spits at Richard Platanegent, saying, "And I, to make thee mad, do mock thee thus / Stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance" (1.4.89–90). It is often in dramatizations that men fall to the whims of sadistic pleasures due to the barbaric persona promoted during the war. It is not often a role seen in female characters at the time. The audience witnesses Margaret of Anjou's journey from an anxious fourteen-year-old girl to a ruthless blood-craving queen broken by war. To survive under patriarchal conditions, one must shun 'feminine' traits and operate as Margaret

does. In a way, Henry VI's failings reflect the patriarchal world shunning idealistic behavior within politics. In Sarah Pagliaccio's essay, "In Defense of Shakespeare's Queen Margaret of Anjou," she makes the point, "Unlike Margaret of the chronicles who sat on the sidelines of the battlefield while Clifford struck down York, Shakespeare gives Margaret direct action against York" (56). Why did Shakespeare grant Margaret a larger role within his plays? Like *Richard III*, Shakespeare wishes to critique how framing historical figures as pure auras of evil prevents people from understanding why they commit the grievous actions they commit.

In the play *Richard III*, the Yorks look upon Margaret as a haggard old yet dangerous witch. If one read the play *Richard III* in isolation from the other histories, one would assume Margaret is mere sexist stereotyping enforced by both the York and Tudor rulings. Coincidentally, this simplification of her character parallels that of her contemporary and Tudor chroniclers who refuse to recognize the bigger picture. It is why her speech at the beginning of the play to Richard III holds different interpretations dependent on the plays seen or read:

> In sharing that which you have pilled from me!
> Which of you trembles not that looks on me?
> If not, that I am queen, you bow like subjects,
> Yet that, by you disposed, you quake like rebels.
> Ah, gentle villain, do not turn away (1.3.158–163).

With context from the previous plays, one would know that Margaret is simply standing up to the Yorkish forces who killed her son and stole away Lancastrian lands. Her assumed madness is from war emotionally fragmenting her mental state. It is a sad display to witness. Nonetheless, the wider picture is dismissed by the Yorks when Richard III calls her a witch in response.

Like Richard III, Shakespeare inherited a Tudor mythology that he both conveys and complicates by humanizing Margaret of Anjou's supposed moral descent. While William Shakespeare aids in fabricating historical events such as Margaret's affair with the Duke of Suffolk, we see her initial unassuming persona hardened with the horrors of war. The initial threat of imprisonment, the terrible politics of her husband, and the family she watches die around her lead her to adopt cruelty. Though, because she operates outside the designated role of a passive damsel, she is looked upon as merely evil and cast off as a witch by Yorkish forces. Tudor audiences who look at Margaret of Anjou as a horrific hysterical woman for her actions, act in the same misogynistic ways the Yorks and her surrounding society do. In the *A Song of Ice and Fire series*, George R.R. Martin only extends upon these criticisms put forth by Shakespeare through the character: Cersei Lannister.

How Cersei Lannister Plays the Men's Game of Thrones: A Defense

In his book *Shakespeare and Game of Thrones*, Jeffrey Wilson argues, "Martin's goal was not to celebrate or even register the achievements of feminism; instead, he sought to advance the feminist cause even further…By first luring his audience into primitive male fantasy full of sexual conquest and dominance, and then pulling back the curtain on the pain and suffering caused by the patriarchy" (89). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, George R.R. Martin's character, Cersei Lannister, is one of the many characters that draws controversy amongst feminist critics. Curiously, much of the debates and criticisms that center around Margaret of Anjou apply to Cersei's character as well. This is due to Martin's Shakespearean inspiration from the First Tetralogy of History, especially regarding Margaret of Anjou. Like Margaret, Cersei Lannister takes on the traditional qualities of a man to effectively play what she

calls the game of thrones. What Martin adds is Cersei's unsubtle desire to become a man to the point where she resents the women around her who display traditional feminine qualities. From her introduction, Cersei seems to scheme her way to power through her bastard son, Joffrey. Cersei's various affairs stem from a desire for validation and physical domination that the men around her strip away. What is absent is the blatant witch status found in Margaret's character. George R.R. Martin instead inflicts the witch status on other characters of his works for the sake of critique. Still, like Margaret of Anjou, Cersei Lannister is a product of the patriarchal world that surrounds her, and the traits she exhibits parallel the male characters of her surrounding society. As mentioned with Margaret, what makes Cersei's cruelty shocking or repulsive to audiences, is that it is often unexpected from a woman.

At the initial start of *A Game of Thrones*, Cersei Lannister is discontented with her arranged marriage with the brutish Robert Baratheon. Often, Robert Baratheon makes lewd remarks at the women around him. It is no secret he sleeps around producing a plethora of bastards. While many attest to Robert Baratheon's inspiration to the Yorkish Edward IV, his unhappy relationship with Cersei mirrors what is seen between Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou in Shakespeare's first Tetralogy of Histories. To reclaim independence in the realm of pleasures, she engages in an incestuous relationship with her twin brother, Jaime, as she reveals to Ned Stark, "We shared a womb together. He came into this world holding my foot, our old maester said. When he is in me, I feel…whole" (468). The inspiration behind Jaime and Cersei seems to stem from Margaret's relationship with the Duke of Suffolk. Martin makes the relationship entirely consensual, albeit still morally questionable. As Margaret sometimes relies on Suffolk for validation, she relies on Jaime's love to make her feel "whole." While Cersei's affair with Jaime seems to stem from self-obsession, it becomes a broken way for her to exercise her bodily

autonomy. In a sense, while Martin takes from the Tudor myth, the abusiveness and misogyny of her husband generate an understanding of her motivations amongst audiences.

In contrast to Shakespeare's Margaret of Anjou, George R.R. Martin increases the archetypal femme fatale role in Cersei Lannister. As stated earlier, her comments to Sansa Stark during the Battle of Blackwater designate her as a femme fatale, "Tears are not a woman's only weapon. You've got another one between your legs, and you'd best learn to use it" (846). Cersei uses her body and the male gaze to her advantage. Like the men who surround her, she also uses sex and sex appeal as a weapon. She uses patriarchal norms to play her own game of thrones. Cersei Lannister's relationship with sex is one of Martin's bigger shifts away from Shakespeare's version of Margaret of Anjou. Martin's Cersei plays less of an active role on the battlefields, namely engaging in the questionable court politics of King's Landing and utilizing her feminine appeal to get her way.

Though, instead of utilizing Cersei Lannister's sexual affairs to demonize her as a woman as the Chroniclers do with Margaret, Martin tries to write from a place of understanding. Nevertheless, much like Margaret, Cersei begins to break under the abuse of the men who surround her. In the fourth installment, *A Feast for Crows*, Cersei Lannister orders a female prostitute to come to her chambers before inflicting sexually violent acts on them, stating, "I am the queen. I mean to claim my rights" (691). At this point in the series, sex has become a power fantasy for Cersei. It is less about pleasure for her, but control or a way to reclaim her "rights." Just as men view her as an object to dominate, Cersei means to reenact her abuse with herself in the role of the abuser. Increasingly, the sex scene becomes sadist and rape driven, as Cersei's inner fantasies reveal, "For a moment she let herself imagine that her fingers were boar's tusks, ripping the Myrish woman apart from groin to throat" (692). Recall the scene in *Henry VI Part 3,*

where Margaret of Anjou places the paper crown atop Richard Plantagenet's head and begins to spit and mock him in a moment of madness. Just as Margaret violently breaks under the weight of the patriarchy, so does Cersei. Coincidentally, she describes her fingers as a boar's tusks, as she previously set her husband up to be killed by a boar on a hunt. Thus, one can assume the prostitute, Taena, is an imaginative stand-in for Robert whom Cersei reenacts her rape fantasy.

Outside Shakespearean histories, George R.R. Martin bases Joffrey's persona and bastardy on the rumors generated by Yorkish Chroniclers concerning Edward of Westminster. Furthermore, in her essay, "Queen of Sad Mischance: Medievalism, 'Realism,' and the Case of Cersei Lannister," Kavita Mudan Finn writes on the Yorkish attempts to frame Edward as a child obsessed with violence, "There are accounts in several Yorkish-leaning chronicles of seven-year-old Prince Edward presiding over the executions of two men who had guarded his father during the second battle of St. Albans in February 1461" (36). Rumors of Edward of Westminster remain unconfirmed by historical sources, but as mentioned it was likely an attack generated by the Yorks to strengthen their claim to the English Crown. Perhaps it is Joffrey's existence that proves the most troublesome out of the mythography produced from history. Characters such as Ned Stark utilize Joffrey's bastardy to weaken his claim to the throne. Nonetheless, Martin makes the existence of Joffrey a complex matter. After all, his birth is the result of Cersei's abuses at the hands of men, namely due to her husband Robert's sexism.

What George R.R. Martin takes yet another change from Margaret of Anjou is her relationship to masculinity. While other characters associate Margaret with manliness, Cersei Lannister repeatedly calls herself a 'man.' In a heated conversation with Tyrion Lannister, Cersei quips, "A pity Lord Tywin Lannister never had a son. I could have been the heir he wanted, but I lacked the cock" (999). Much like Tyrion, Cersei seeks external validation from her father

Tywin. Tyrion believes being able-bodied and possessing colder traits will garner his father's approval. Whereas Cersei believes being born a man would allow her father to admire her traits enough to view her as an equal. It is in this way that Tywin represents and upholds the traditional patriarchal standard that his children struggle to meet. Cersei tries to meet her father's standards like Tyrion by adopting his cutthroat 'masculine' traits. Again in, *A Feast for Crows*, mourns for her father after Tyrion's murder, thinking internally, "I am the only true son he ever had" (69). While Margaret of Anjou inhibited violent tendencies valued by the patriarchy for survival, Cersei seems to openly speak of being a man.[22] At the same time, she dismisses her siblings who fail to uphold traditional patriarchal values that Tywin approved of. Similarly, the men who surround Cersei undermine one another. Because Cersei is a woman these colder traits become seen as more insidious than Margaret's.

In the books, Cersei is never accused of practicing witchcraft or magic despite fitting all the traits that would warrant the label. The role of the witch figure is instead given to other characters such as Melisandre, the Red Witch.[23] Nonetheless, her name, Cersei, bears a resemblance to the Greek enchantress, Circe. In Homer's Odyssey, Circe invites Ulysses and his men to a feast before turning his men into pigs. It bears a resemblance to the vengeful spirit Cersei Lannister exhibits. However, back in 1999, George R.R. Martin denied the parallel between the two figures, "I know my Homer, of course, but Cersei is not based on Circe" ("The

[22] In fact, it seems as if George R.R. Martin is attempting to make a commentary on the restraints of gender roles and performativity. In an article, Sara Salih summarizes how Judith Butler explains these practices, "Gender is an act that brings into being what it names: in this context, a 'masculine' man or a 'feminine' woman" (56).

[23] Melisandre is a deeply religious woman who is loyal to Stannis Baratheon. She is a character often referred to as the Red Witch by those who see her faith as pagan.

Citadel"). Still, the comparisons between Margaret and a witch figure along with the spiteful motivations of Circe warrant further questioning. Cersei is also known to have received a prophecy from a witch in her childhood, known as Maggy and the frog, "'Aye.' Malice gleamed in Maggy's yellow eyes. 'Queen you shall be . . . until there comes another, younger and more beautiful, to cast you down and take all that you hold dear'" (253). The scene bears no resemblance to the witch qualities seen in Shakespeare's Margaret of Anjou but instead resembles the three prophecy-weaving witches in *Macbeth*.[24] Inevitably, Martin still plays with the trope where it concerns witches stirring up chaos and discord through their magic. The witch's prophecy about an opposing queen is likely what began Cersei's growing suspicions and resentment toward other women she views as threatening.

While George R.R. Martin's Cersei Lannister seems to enlarge some of the Tudor mythography present in Shakespeare's Margaret of Anjou; he does so with the intent to criticize patriarchal structures. The abuse she faces at the hands of men like her former husband, Robert Baratheon, and her father, Tywin Lannister drives her to take on traits associated with toxic masculinity. Her sexual promiscuity is a way of her attempting to reclaim her bodily autonomy, which eventually turns to her playing out her power fantasies with her in an abusive role. Both Cersei and Margaret adopt darker and bloodthirsty 'male' characteristics for the sake of surviving the patriarchal world around them.

[24] Also known as the Weird Sisters. They lead the character, Macbeth to his eventual demise in his determination to avoid the prophecy they previously revealed to him.

Conclusion

This paper sought to uncover how literature like William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Henry VI (Parts I, II, and III)* has the power to influence and shape how history is written and seen by modern audiences. It is important to recognize how historians who write about the Middle Ages still fall prey to the ethical propaganda promoted by the chroniclers of the old times. Simultaneously, this project attempts to show that while modern fantasy authors like George R.R. Martin end up utilizing the framing of Tudor myths to construct their characters, there is still a complexity to their portrayals. Neither William Shakespeare nor George R.R. Martin craft characters who are evil for evil's sake. There is no completely stark ethical schema found in either of the authors' compositions. Shakespeare paints both Richard III and Margaret of Anjou as victims of their environments and systematic oppression. George R.R. Martin then takes Shakespeare's framing and expands upon it in characters like Tyrion and Cersei Lannister. The intent behind George R.R. Martin's work aims to show how societal othering creates a cycle of repulsive violence. By stirring up feelings of repulsiveness, Martin hopes this feeling drives his readers to look closely at the systematic structures that produce this abhorrent behavior.

The *A Song of Ice and Fire* series by George R.R. Martin went on to establish the subgenre known as grimdark. Many of the authors who write within this subgenre attempt to mimic what Martin does in his work: Amplify inequalities set in place by the system by showing how otherizing individuals promote a cycle of violence. Authors of this genre include the likes of not only Martin himself but Joe Abercrombie, Mark Lawrence, and R.F. Kuang just to name a few. Each of them cites Martin as inspiration for their works along with citing history as an inspiration for their worlds. Because these authors utilize Martin's framing, it is likely that their books possess historical inaccuracies of their own. Though, with this project, I intended to urge

the importance of the authors' intents to criticize systematic inequalities while recognizing the damages historical mythography causes.

This project only skimmed the surface of both William Shakespeare and George R.R. Martin's critical influences on one another. I see the potential to expand upon this project to include more historical figures, characters, and the addition of what the *A Game of Thrones* HBO show changes from Martin's books. This then would involve looking at all the Shakespearean histories, a deeper dive into Martin's books, and the effects of the changes that the *A Game of Thrones* show makes on the books.

Inspiration from this project was prompted by my love for George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and *A Game of Throne* show. Because Martin inspired many of my creative writing pursuits, I also desired to bring my love of his writing to my research pursuits. The criticism I encountered about George R.R. Martin's works drove me to write a thesis that explored both sides of the debate as to whether *A Song of Ice and Fire* is harmful in its portrayal of the Middle Ages. Indeed, the inaccuracy of the Middle Ages often lays down the foundation for the practices of white supremacist appropriation. The white supremacists of the alt-right often hold a romanticized perception of the period and believe England was an all-white homogenous country. Thus, inaccurate medievalist mythography has the potential to promote inaccurate historical perspectives that aid in furthering white nationalism. Historical awareness is important, but this thesis sought to demonstrate how Martin and Shakespeare wished to instead criticize the systems that promote white supremacist romanticization rather than reinforce it.

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