

Clarence's calumniator corrected

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WHEN I accepted the Editor's kind invitation to write a synopsis of my book for the *Ricardian*, I was only too well aware that I was sticking my head in the lion's den and exposing myself to attack. I have not been disappointed. Miss Isolde Wigram's reply in the last issue is lively and entertaining, but it misses its target, since she failed to understand exactly what I was saying or why I said it.

Miss Wigram's main line of argument is to charge me with sins of omission: my article 'omits some facts which are, or could be, of importance in a study of the subject'.¹ Her points certainly deserve consideration and that is why I treated them at length in my book. It is rather unreasonable to expect a nine page article to contain all the matter in a 270-page book, particularly in the light of my opening footnote, which reads:

'Unless otherwise stated, this article is based on my book *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence* (Gloucester, 1980) . . .'²

What could be clearer than that? Had Miss Wigram read the book before writing her reply, as she should have done, she could not have framed her criticisms in their present form. Of course this does not mean that my conclusions are above criticism—no historian can claim that—but it does mean that she would have had to take account of the evidence and reasoning on which those conclusions were based. Miss Wigram would also have found that I am well acquainted with Professor Kendall's sadly outdated book and took account of it in my own work.

I find it ironic that Kendall should have been invoked where he is weakest and I am strongest, on the Warwick inheritance. This has been discussed at length both in my book and in an article published in 1979.³ Some of Kendall's facts are wrong and it is particularly surprising to find the following sentence quoted with approval:

'If any motive besides a delicate and honourable consideration for her feelings prompted him [Richard] to this situation, it is not evident'.⁴

It is mere speculation that Richard cared for Anne's feelings, though he may have done; there is ample evidence that he did so with her inheritance in mind. In seeking her inheritance, Miss Wigram suggests that Richard 'was no doubt thinking of his wife and possible children'.⁵ Quite: so was Clarence. That does not excuse either of them for seeking more than their strict due. The dispute does not reflect creditably on any of the brothers. Difficulties arise only because Miss Wigram wants Richard completely exonerated.

As for Clarence's fall, Miss Wigram may rest assured that the points she raises—such as the precontract—have been treated fully in my book.⁶ When Mancini and More say that Richard regretted Clarence's death I do not doubt that they are quoting Richard himself, since he wrote to similar effect to the Earl

of Desmond after his accession.⁷ By then, of course, he had every reason to exaggerate the length of his rift with the Wydevilles. There is no strictly contemporary evidence that he took this attitude in 1478 and much to the contrary, as I indicated in my article.⁸ Perhaps I should have enlarged on each item listed, but I think that the article was quite long enough. The various advantages Richard secured are important:

1. Because they are a quite exceptional sequence, unparalleled elsewhere in Richard's career.
2. Because some of them, including items 1, 4, 5 and 9 mentioned by Miss Wigram, were former possessions of Clarence or taken at the expense of his heirs. In each case Miss Wigram has missed the point and I refer her to my discussions of them elsewhere.⁹

In short, there is little in Miss Wigram's article that is not treated in my book or in the sources there cited. Three other points deserve attention:

1. That Clarence must have resented missing the chance to be Lancastrian king on Prince Edward's death. When Clarence changed sides in 1471, he was in danger of losing everything he had to irreconcilable Lancastrians, not of becoming their king. Instead of feeling regrets, he could think himself lucky to have escaped so lightly.¹⁰
2. That Clarence was still seeking the throne after 1471. Rumours to this effect have not been substantiated and King Edward's behaviour shows that he disbelieved them. Clarence did not replace those noble allies killed at Barnet and Tewkesbury and remained till death a politically isolated figure, lacking the noble support needed to usurp the throne.¹¹
3. That Clarence could have used the Duchy of Burgundy to usurp the English throne. Miss Wigram admits that Clarence could 'have had his attention fully occupied in being Duke of Burgundy'.¹² Certainly he could: Mary of Burgundy was engaged in war with France, which resulted in the loss of Burgundy itself, Artois and other possessions by 1482. That her losses were so small owed much to her Habsburg husband, the Archduke Maximilian, who commanded resources that Clarence could not match.

To sum up. Miss Wigram's points are covered in my book, which I recommend her to read. She need not blench at the thought since, contrary to her expectation, I am not out to whitewash Clarence or blacken Richard. Had she read my article with greater care, she would have appreciated that I do not deny that Clarence was

'false to his brothers and the House of York, and then to Warwick, whose defeat and death could be attributed directly to Clarence's defection'.¹³

What I actually said was that Clarence 'was less frequently false and perjured and much more consistent than is generally supposed'. I made no moral criticism of Richard for 'abducting Anne, doubtless with her consent', or for endowing masses for Clarence's soul, and I had no particular desire to convict Richard of Clarence's death. I do not find Clarence attractive, any more than I claim this for such contemporaries as Edward IV, Warwick, the Wydevilles or Richard. One does not need to like the objects of one's study: it is better not to if one is to achieve critical understanding, to attain to 'the truth and impartiality' to which Miss Wigram pays lip service.

It was Professor Kendall, Richard's apologist, who initiated our modern practice of looking to Richard's early life to illuminate his career as king. My book adds considerably to our knowledge of that early life and this extra information is not incompatible with a favourable view of Richard as king, which does not concern me. To reject what I have said without reading it is unwise. It is also unjust to apply standards of evidence to Clarence that are repudiated for his younger brother.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. I. Wigram, Clarence still perjurd, *Ricardian*, No. 73 (1981), p.352.
2. M. A. Hicks, The middle brother: 'False, fleeting, perjurd Clarence', *Ricardian*, No. 72 (1981), p.310.
3. M. A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjurd Clarence* (Gloucester 1980), pp.113-17, 122-4, 150-1; *Descent, Partition and Extinction: The 'Warwick Inheritance'*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. 52 (1979), pp.116-28.
4. Wigram, *Ricardian*, No. 73, p.352.
5. *Ibid.*, p.353.
6. *Ibid.*, pp.353-5; Hicks, *Clarence*, pp.128-69, esp. pp.130-3, 150-1, 163-4.
7. Hicks, *Clarence*, p.150.
8. Hicks, *Ricardian*, No. 72 (1981), p.309.
9. Wigram, *Ricardian*, No. 73, pp.354-5; Hicks, *Clarence*, 150-1; Hicks, 'Warwick Inheritance', pp.124-5.
10. Hicks, *Clarence*, pp.95-103, esp. pp.99-100.
11. *Ibid.*, pp.115-22, 152-4.
12. *Ibid.*, 130-3.
13. Wigram, *Ricardian*, No. 73, p.352; for what follows, see Hicks, *Ricardian*, No. 72, pp.306, 310; Wigram, *Ricardian*, No. 72, pp.352, 354-5.