

Researching Richard III's Epitaph

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Sir George Buc,¹ who in around 1619 wrote *The History of King Richard the Third*, the first scholarly defence of the king, presumably saw a copy of the epitaph of Richard III in a manuscript book chained to a desk in the Guildhall and copied it. Another version of this epitaph was published by Francis Sandford with the comment, 'His Epitaph registered in a Book in the Colledge of Arms (differing not much from that mentioned by Mr *George Buck's* History of this King) ... I have here inserted'.² Two previous articles in *The Ricardian* discuss these and two manuscript versions of the epitaph: John Ashdown-Hill, 'The epitaph of King Richard III', *The Ricardian*, volume 18 (2008), pages 31-45 and Emily Kearns, 'Richard's epitaph revisited', *The Ricardian*, volume 24 (2014), pages 75–86.

Most important to note in considering Buc's version is that, because the epitaph was nearly at the end of his text, and the final few pages of his original manuscript are entirely burned away, no trace of the epitaph remains there. The only extant sources for it are the three scribal manuscript copies made for Buc's great-nephew (Mr George Buck, cited above) and his later very heavily revised published edition of it. Plagiarizing his deceased great-uncle's work (one of several of his works with which he did this, including one which was in print), the great-nephew had copies made to dedicate to potential patrons. His greatly reduced, heavily revised, generally useless³ printed edition appeared in 1646. There are two basically separate works, which should not be – but often are – confused, usually now with the inexplicable effect of granting preference to the latter:

(1) The work of Sir George Buc, Master of the Revels under James I and prior to that an experienced ambassador and published author. This is extant as

¹ Though for my first two editions of the *The History of King Richard the Third*, Gloucester 1979 and 1982, I used the family spelling 'Buck' to refer to Sir George, I am now, and for the new edition on which I am currently at work (to be published by Shaun Tyas), adopting the spelling 'Buc', which he used as a pen name. I have been forced to do this to distinguish him and his work from the plagiarized, sloppy revision and reduction of it by his great-nephew, George Buck, which unexpectedly was reprinted just after I had completed my edition of the original and unaccountably remains more popular, despite its appalling reputation (which for centuries, and more recently through the agency of A.R. Myers, adversely affected Sir George Buc's reputation as well). That a facsimile of the 1647 reissue of the 1646 version by the younger Buck is available cheaply and another (oddly misattributed to 'Sir George Buck') has been digitized and is thus freely available on the internet, may provide a partial clue to its popularity (and a warning).

² Francis Sandford, *A Genealogical History of the Kings of England*, London 1677, p. 410.

³ It was described as 'nearly worthless' by Frank Marcham, *The King's Office of the Revels*, London 1925, p. 3.

BL MS Cotton Tiberius E. X. He entitled it *The History of King Richard the Third*.⁴ His work on it was completed mainly in 1619, though there are some stray notes giving the date 1620, and it was the culmination of long, active interest in Richard III. He did extensive research on the subject for several years and was one of a coterie of antiquaries researching this and similar topics, with whom he discussed the subject. He died (on 31 October 1622)⁵ before he could bring this work to a complete state of final revision and fair copy. Damage to the manuscript in the Cotton collection's fire of 1731 resulted in a degree of destruction that increased towards the end. Having recovered this work as far as possible, I completed in 1973 an edition of it which was published by Alan Sutton in 1979 and 1982.

(2) The younger Buck's 'work', entitled *The History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third*, 'composed in five Bookes by GEO. BUCK Esquire', published (posthumously) in 1646, 27 years after the date of most of the original, and reissued the next year.⁶ On Sir George's death the younger George Buck probably stole his great-uncle's manuscript *History*, along with others of his works, and, however he came by them, made a sort of 'career' of trying to pass off his revised versions of these as his own, evidently without success.⁷ He did no original research and contributed almost no added material, rather making deletions which grew more numerous as he progressed. He died in 1645, before his printed version – by this time lacking all the original's contemporary references and a considerable amount of its documentation and

⁴ No title page survives in the original manuscript. I discovered a copy of the title page, in Sir George's hand upside down and written over, serving as the back of a page in another work of his, Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. B. 106, f. 3^v. Bodleian MS Malone 1 confirms this title and BL MS Egerton 2216 comes close, omitting 'King'. Assuming, therefore, that this was Sir George's choice of title, I gave it as the title of my edition of his work.

⁵ Mark Eccles, 'George Buc, Master of the Revels' in *Thomas Lodge and Other Elizabethans*, Cambridge, Mass. 1933, p. 484 derives the date of Buc's death from his inquisition *post mortem*, C 142/566/17. However, John Ashdown-Hill in *The Last Days of Richard III and the Fate of His DNA*, Stroud 2013, p. 92 cites it as '1622?' but gives no reason for querying this government document.

⁶ In the late 1960s I proved – I still think conclusively – that what was generally regarded as a 'second edition' was in fact a reissue. I established this by taking my copy dated 1646 to various libraries and comparing it in detail with other copies, some dated 1646, some 1647, around 20 in all. There were no examples of regular differences between individual copies. Though my introduction to Sir George's *History* (p. xcvi), states that the books labelled 1647 are a reissue, nearly everyone (though not, thankfully, quite everyone) neglects this, giving no explanation for so doing. If someone has done another study contradicting my findings, I should be grateful for details. If not, I shall make the point about the reissue clearer and more prominent in my new edition. At the time I completed it I had not expected anyone ever to have reason to refer to the 1646 edition again.

⁷ The whole subject of the transformation of Buc's original into the plagiarized edition Buck Junior put out under his own name is covered in detail both in the Introduction to my edition (pp. lxiv-lxxxvi) and in my article 'George Buck Senior and George Buck Junior, a literary-historical mystery story', in *Richard III Crown and People*, ed. J. Petre, Gloucester 1985, pp. 245-51 (first published in *The Ricardian*, vol. 4 (1978), pp. 2-8).

reduced to half its size – was published. The book (though far less so the three scribal manuscript copies he had made on the way to it) is essentially a travesty of his great-uncle's work.

The above-mentioned articles by Ashdown-Hill and Kearns, as well as Ashdown-Hill's later comments in *The Last Days of Richard III* are, one would assume, attempting to track down the most accurate representation of what the epitaph actually said. In considering extant versions there is a problem when they come to Buc, since of necessity this text must be supplied not from the original manuscript of his work, but from his great-nephew's copies of it,⁸ and these differ in accuracy, usually at random. However, rather than beginning with the earliest extant versions, i.e. the three manuscript copies made for George Buck Junior, they bypass these and zero in on the printed edition, the great-nephew's final, most recent revision. They do not ever explain why.

I had assumed that the general rule in examining evidence for a text no longer extant to determine as accurately as possible its original form and substance was to concentrate first on the *earliest* representations of that text, since these are not only nearest in time to the lost original but also have not gone through processes of copying and/or printing which are liable to introduce more errors than were present in earlier versions. That the great-nephew was dead by the time 'his' book was published may suggest he might not have had time to correct scribal errors before publication, as he certainly was unable to correct printing errors.⁹ Fortunately there exist three scribal manuscript copies from around five years prior to Buck Junior's edition, around twenty years after Buc Senior's original. These are easily accessible, all in major libraries, one in London, one in Oxford, one in Toronto. My general assumption in creating my edition of Sir George's work was that, to recover material in it which had suffered burning, it made most sense to check the printed edition as a last resort, since it may *sometimes* come up with a better reading than do the manuscripts. Ashdown-Hill claims that the '1619 version' is more accurate on the epitaph, but if he is referring to my edition, it really cannot be, since of necessity it relies entirely on the three manuscript copies

⁸ Ashdown-Hill writes as if unaware that these pages are missing in Buc's original, and in 'The epitaph', p. 31 cites it as an 'extant text' of the epitaph.

⁹ It was not known until 1982 that George Buck, Jr. had died in 1645, before his plagiarized, revised and truncated *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third* was published. The information appears in the entry 'Sir George Buc' in 'Brief Lives', *Studies in Philology*, vol. 79 (1982), pp. 18-19, by Buc's impeccable biographer Mark Eccles. To his credit Ashdown-Hill is aware of this being a posthumous publication – 'a posthumous edition published in . . . 1647 [sic]', he says in 'The epitaph', p. 34, repeating this information in *Last Days*, p. 102. But neither he nor Emily Kearns, who is also aware of it, makes any capital this: Buck Junior not being alive to correct the publication seems to have for them no apparent bearing on the possible accuracy/inaccuracy of his text.

and the 1646 printed edition. And as will be seen, I made and allowed mistakes in it.

It becomes obvious to me with the considerable confusions in the articles by Ashdown-Hill and Kearns and in Ashdown-Hill's *Last Days* that I need to be clearer about the relationships between the two very distinct texts by the two very distinct authors (or rather between the author and the plagiarist). It is by no means a matter of 'one Buck is as good as another'. I have bracketed those stages no longer extant:

- 1) In 1619, with some additions in 1620, Sir George Buc wrote his manuscript *History of King Richard the Third* (for which no other title has ever been discerned). He revised it over and over in progress, so the manuscript contains more than one version of numerous segments, and the whole is of varying legibility. That this manuscript eventually suffered from burning meant that margins and beginning and end are damaged or missing in whole or in part.
- 2) When Sir George died the manuscript came into the hands of his unscrupulous great-nephew, who, writing first on the original manuscript, crossed out passages and revised stylistically.
- 3) [G. B. Junior then had a master scribal copy made. This was about two-thirds the length of the original. Changes remain mostly limited to style and length. The scribe often failed to read proper names correctly and clearly did not know Latin. This stage of the process is not extant.]
- 4) From this master copy in the early 1640s George Junior had at least three copies made in succession to give to prospective patrons.
- 5) [The work was then more drastically cut and revised in style, content and length, deleting or altering especially personal references specific to Sir George's period and associates and uncomplimentary remarks about Henry VII and his followers. This text is generally much more inaccurate and sloppy than the copies cited in 4). The manuscript version of this stage is not extant.]
- 6) The above version was published in 1646, the year after George Junior's death. The unused pages were bound and reissued the next year.
- 7) My edition, first published in 1979, relies almost exclusively on 1) and 4) above, the latter to fill in damaged or missing passages, with minor assistance from 6).

Details of the sort of changes George Junior made at the various stages appear in my edition, Introduction, Chapter V.

The four extant sources for the epitaph, in order of production, I identify with the following codes.

E = BL MS Egerton 2216.

M = Bodleian MS Malone 1.

F = MS in the Sidney T. Fisher Rare Book Collection, University of Toronto.

P = the printed edition of 1646.

I found in the course of puzzling over Ashdown-Hill and Kearns's choice of the latest available text that I had been wrong in assuming the likelihood of the scribal copies being always more accurate, specifically in the representation of this epitaph. Could this be the reason Ashdown-Hill and Kearns chose to ignore them? For the first time I noticed by systematic comparison of just the Latin passages in the manuscripts with the printed edition that the latter tends to be more accurate more of the time: someone has gone through and corrected a lot (not all) of the attempts at Latin deriving from the scribe, who was not, as both Buc Senior and Buck Junior were, a competent Latinist.

Below is my latest version of the text of the epitaph as given mainly in the great-nephew's earliest surviving manuscript copy of Buc's *History*, but corrected where necessary from the later copies, followed by textual notes. I have corrected both the epitaph and the textual notes for the forthcoming edition. Where readings differ I have chosen the most grammatically accurate since these would best reflect the work of Sir George. Having checked this (at last) very carefully, I can confidently recommend it as the most accurate extant version of the epitaph Buc himself saw in a manuscript book in the Guildhall.¹⁰ The punctuation here and throughout my edition is mine, because there is no point in trying to reproduce accidentals in a work based on so many different hands.¹¹

The annotations in the textual notes make use of the codes (given above) which refer, in order of their composition, to the three early manuscript copies, all made for Mr George Buck in the early 1640s from the same non-extant scribal copy of Sir George's original, and to the printed edition. The manuscript copies have much less drastically revised the original on the whole than has the 1646 edition. It will be noted, however, that despite its overall deficiencies the 1646 printed edition is here cited for several corrections: this is because when dealing specifically with passages in Latin it is generally more accurate than the scribal copies. I have given all variants in the textual notes here, though I shall not do so in my revised edition, where I shall cite only those used in supplying my text. Brackets, as in my edition, indicate text taken not from Buc, Sr.'s original manuscript but from Buck, Jr.'s scribal copies.

¹⁰ Ashdown-Hill in 'The epitaph', p. 33 claims Buc 'stat[ed] that in or shortly before 1619' he saw the text of the epitaph there, citing p. 217 of my edition as the source for this information. My edition mentions no date on which he saw the epitaph text and I am unaware of a date given by him elsewhere.

¹¹ Ashdown-Hill in 'The epitaph' states that the manuscript copies contain no punctuation. This is not true, unless he is referring not to the three copies on which my reading of Buc is based (cited as 4 in the list above) but to the two of which he is going to present photocopies later in his article. But at this point he is discussing Buc and Sandford, so presumably he is referring to the copies of Buc. All three of the manuscript copies of Buc have punctuation, which differs slightly from copy to copy.

- 1 [Epitaphium Regis Ricardi Tertii, Sepulti apud
Leicestriam, iussu et sumptibus Sancti
Regis Henrici Septimi
Hic ego quem vario tellus sub marmore claudit
5 Tertius a iusta voce Ricardus eram.
Tutor eram patriae patruus pro iure nepotis,
Disrupta tenui regna Britanna fide;
Sexaginta dies binis dumtaxat adeptis (A) Annos 2 et 52 dies
Aestatesque tuli tunc mea sceptrum duas.
10 Fortiter in bello certans desertus ab Anglis,
Rex Henrice tibi Septime succubui.
At sumptu pius ipse tuo sic ossa decoras
Regem olimque facis regis honore coli.
Quattuor exceptis iam tantum quinque bis annis (B) Anno Domini 1484
15 Acta trecenta quidem lustra salutis erant, (C) die 22 Augusti
Antequam septembris undena luce Kalendas
Reddideram rubrae iura petita rosae.
At mea, quisquis eris, propter commissas precare,
Sit minor ut precibus poena levata tuis.
20 Deo O. M. Trino
et Uno sit laus
et Gloria aeterna
Amen.

Textual notes:

- 5 iusta] P / iustae EFM.
6 patruus] EMF / patrii P.
nepotis] Nepotis P / nepotem EMF.
7 Britanna] MP / Britannia EF.
8 binis] P / binios EM / binius F.
9 Aestestasque EMF / Aetestasque P
anteque] antique P
annos 2 et 52] annos .2. et 52 dies. EMF / Annos 2. & 51. dies. P.
10 certans] EMF / merito P.
12 decoras] from BL MS Additional 45131, f. 10^v / diceras EMF / dicaras P.
15 1485] 1484 EMFP.
16 die .22. Augusti EMF / Die 21. August P.
17 reddideram] redideram EMFP.
18 precare] EMF / precarem P.
21 Uno] P / Uni EMF.

Translation: Epitaph of King Richard III, buried by command and at expense of blessed King Henry VII: I, whom the earth encloses here under varicoloured marble, was by just voice Richard III. Protector of my country, as uncle for the right of my nephew, by broken faith I held the kingdom of Britain; I then bore the sceptre two summers and sixty days minus two. Contending bravely in battle, surely deserted by the English, King Henry VII I fell to you. But you yourself, in piety, honour my bones at your own cost, giving kingly honour to one who was once a king. Three hundred times five years of salvation had passed, only excluding four (and) twice five years, on the eleventh day before the September Kalends, when I had rendered to the red rose the rights which it sought. But whoever you are, pray for my sins, alleviating my punishment with your prayers. Let there be eternal glory to God, the best, greatest, three and one.

Differences between Sandford's version and the versions of the epitaph given by Buck Junior are slight. That adopted by Buck Junior, presumably representing what appeared in Buc Senior, is more favourable to Richard than is the Sandford: 'iusta' is substituted in l. 5 for 'multa', 'certans' in l. 10 for 'merito', 'petita' in l. 17 for 'debita', 'levata' for 'fienda'.¹² We cannot tell for certain who made the alterations in Richard's favour or when, or even with utter certainty whether the two poems which now conclude manuscript copies EM and F appeared in Buc's original at all; though on balance I think we can assume they did, since he refers to them in his list of contents ('The Argument') for Book V. Also, Buck Junior is not given (at least in his manuscript copies, though he occasionally does in the printed edition) to introducing material but rather to deleting it. We may add to this the evidence that Buc elsewhere makes changes favourable to Richard similar to those here. The question of whether Sir George would have chosen to conclude his defence of Richard with two verses uncomplimentary to him is answered by his list of contents at the beginning of Book V, which indicates that this was not planned as his ending: he intended to and perhaps did conclude with 'The author's scope, peroration, et votum' (p. 195 of my edition). Thus though I cannot give positive assurance that the epitaph was in Sir George's original, I can be all but sure of it.

In the course of writing this article, I have identified three previously published errors of my own, one quite serious: 1) 'Epitaphum' for 'Epitaphium', 2) 'levat' for 'levata', and (3) the note to 'decoras', which I substituted for 'dicerat' [EMF] or 'dicaras' [P]. The first two are printing errors missed in the proof stage. The last, however, I cited in the textual notes as a variant in Malone 1, but, having just re-checked Malone 1, I have noted that, like the

¹² Note: I did not nor did I intend to mention all the differences between these versions here or in the general notes to my edition (p. 318), only those illustrating the topic specifically under discussion at that point: attitude to Richard. I had assumed this was clear, but Ashdown-Hill in 'The epitaph', p. 44 and *Last Days*, n. 32 to p. 164, says without explanation 'Nichols notes more of Sandford's variant readings than does Kincaid'. Of course he does: he was considering all of them; I was not. Since this was evidently unclear I have clarified it for the new edition.

other two manuscript copies, it reads ‘dicerar’. The only explanation I have now for substituting ‘decoras’, is that I did not recognize and could find no record of ‘dicerar’ as a word, and ‘dicarar’ seems grammatically inappropriate in context.¹³ As anyone who has read other material relating to the epitaph can readily see, I can only have adopted ‘decoras’ – which I did recognize as a word, though it is not a good metrical fit – from Sandford. I now find more justification for it in the two newly discovered versions of which photocopies appear in ‘The epitaph’ so have adopted it from the earlier. Why I apparently witlessly documented it as coming from Malone I cannot begin to speculate at this late date – unless, since producing a version of the last pages from the younger Buck’s copies was so much easier and thus less interesting than working through 500 pages of the elder Buc’s untidy, damaged and massively complicated manuscript had been that I completely took my eye off the ball. As far as proofreading goes, I fear I took too literally the publisher’s statement that his typist copied exactly what he saw. Proofreading was a rushed job, done as pages appeared daily, more rushed toward the end. I can only offer – belatedly – a profuse and embarrassed apology and have as a result of this now double-checked all the textual notes thrice for the next edition, for which I have also organized two expert proofreaders.

*The Complete History of England*¹⁴, reprints the younger Buck’s 1646 edition, telling us in the preface, ‘Twas not fit to let this Work pass without some Animadversions, and to set all things as much in the Light as possible: Mr *Strype*, an industrious Antiquary, has added large Notes and Remarks, from an Authentick Manuscript which he had by him, and from other Authors’.¹⁵ This collection not only reprints the younger Buck’s work, with a very few minor alterations and additions, but adds some translations, including one of the epitaph, rhymed couplets with two tercets, which I took to be typical of the time of publication and assumed to be Strype’s work. As I stated in my Introduction to Buc, page lvii, the only serious differences between the 1646 edition and the reprinted version of it here are the inclusion throughout of rather desultory notes and of translations of some of the foreign passages. There is, for example, also a translation of the poem ‘Tres sunt Ricardi ...’ which follows the epitaph. All are unattributed, so the only logical assumption seemed and still seems to me that they represent Strype’s effort, both because of what I saw as their period style (i.e., Strype’s period rather than Buc’s) and

¹³ As explained to me by Dr John Blundell, editor on the Thesaurus Lingua Latinae project, Munich, to whom I am most grateful for consulting on the epitaph, it can only be a pluperfect form of ‘dico -are’, which really is not sensible in this context. On the other hand, the verb ‘decoras’ is a poor metrical fit.

¹⁴ 2 vols., London, 1706, 2nd ed. 1719. It is uncertain who oversaw this publication. The name of Bishop White Kennett, who wrote some of the later portions, is usually associated with it, but it is not known whether he was in any way responsible for collecting and organizing the whole.

¹⁵ John Hughes in the preface to *A Complete History of England*, London 1706, sig. a^v. The ‘Authentick Manuscript’ was BL MS Harleian 433, which Strype owned at the time.

because they follow a tendency of this edition. As a Cambridge-educated clergyman, Strype would of course have known Latin well.

But Ashdown-Hill, in discussing the epitaph, specifically attributes this translation to 'Sir George Buck',¹⁶ disagreeing, without giving any reason, with the assignment of the book in which it appears to 'Mr George Buck' (i.e., George Buck Junior). Adding to the confusion, he refers to the book by *Sir George*, which he asserts was the first to report the epitaph, as *The History of Life and Reigne of Richard the Third*, stating that 'it' was published 'by his nephew [*sic*] in 1647 [*sic*]'. By associating Sir George with it, he tacitly suggests that this publication (whose correct date is 1646, not 1647)¹⁷ was an accurate representation of Sir George's original and/or that the representation of the epitaph was extant in the original manuscript (Cotton Tiberius E. X). Neither is the case. Claiming (p. 103) that 'Buck' produced the versified English translation, he states that 'its English verse forms are clearly of the seventeenth century'. How this is clear, though, I cannot see.

Ashdown-Hill states that John Nichols prints the Latin version in *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (1795) and in the second edition of William Hutton's *Bosworth Field* (1813) accompanies it with a rhymed translation which he attributes to Buck.¹⁸ In fact Nichols includes both original and translation in both works. In a footnote in each (p. 298, n. 7 in *County of Leicester*; p. 222 in *Bosworth Field*) Nichols references the translation as coming from 'Kennett's' edition of the younger Buck's garbled and truncated version, viz.: 'Buck's Richard III in the "Complete History of England," vol. 1, p. 577'. But Nichols does not attribute the translation either to the stated author of that work (Mr George Buck) or to Sir George. In fact he does not attribute it to anyone at all.¹⁹ So the assignment of authorship to Sir George comes from Ashdown-Hill alone.²⁰

¹⁶ P. 102: 'The text was first reported by Sir George Buck in 1619 at the end of his *History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third*' (a book which, of course, Buc did not write). He then proceeds to attribute the translation to Buc: 'he seems also to have produced the versified English "translation" from which most commentators have worked' (p. 103). Though he routinely confuses Buc Senior with Buck Junior, in this instance he clearly intends Sir George, who 'gave his source for the epitaph' (p. 103). His index clarifies the matter by containing only one 'Buck' entry for the relevant pages, viz. 'Buck, Sir George'. But he does not indicate why he settled on Sir George as author in preference to *Mr George*, whose name is clearly attached to both the edition of 1646 and that of 1706, or at all.

¹⁷ See n. 4 above.

¹⁸ 'The epitaph', Appendix 2, p. 45: 'the . . . versified English translation, which Nichols ascribed to Buck'.

¹⁹ Nichols, *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, 4 vols., London 1795-1815, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 298. Hutton, *The Battle of Bosworth Field*, London 1813, p. 222. Not satisfied to refer only to the facsimile of this edition of Hutton I also checked several original copies of its second edition.

²⁰ In her catalogue for the National Portrait Gallery exhibition, *Richard III* (London, 1973), pp. 68-69, Pamela Tudor-Craig also included this translation, deriving it from Nichols, *History and*

He goes on about it repeatedly in both article and book. It is not surprising that, having invented it, he begins by questioning his attribution, calling it when he first mentions it in 'The epitaph', p. 39, 'Buck's(?) verse translation'. Later in *The Last Days* he starts somewhat cautiously: 'Buck ... seems ... to have produced the versified English translation' (p. 103). But a few lines later he calls it confidently 'Buck's English version' and still later in a heading (p. 165), 'Buck's published "translation"²¹ of Richard III's epitaph'. He then refers to it quite definitely as the translation which Nichols 'ascribed to Buck', with a footnote (n. 36, p. 200) citing the correct page number in Nichols's *History ... of Leicester* on which Nichols does not ascribe it to anyone. Though he allows the foregoing to stand, his doubts then resurface in the same footnote, 'The translation may indeed be by Buck, but curiously it does not figure in the published editions of Buck's *History of Richard the Third*. It is impossible to ascertain which Buck or which book he means, since neither book has precisely that title, though both have similar titles. Since the epitaph does not now appear in Sir George's work, he can really only be speaking here of the 1646 edition by George Buck Junior, in which it does not appear, and the two editions of it (1706 and 1719) in *The Complete History of England* with notes by Strype, in which it does. If it is the 1646 edition of which he is now speaking in the plural, Strype's notes do not, of course, figure in it, having been written sixty-plus years after it appeared. I see no reason not to ascribe the translation's date likewise to 1706, which would mean the same logic applies to its failure to appear in the 1646 edition.

The plot thickens still further when Ashdown-Hill proceeds to claim in 'The epitaph' (p. 44, n. 98) that 'Curiously, Nichols published a composite text containing elements of Buck 1619 (which was not published in his day) and Buck 1647 [*sic*]', a statement he repeats verbatim in *Last Days* (p. 200, n. 32). This is no composite. Nichols is referring here to the 'Kennett' republication of the younger Buck's 1646 version. Now the 'editor' of this, John Strype, has not consulted my edition by means of time travel (though Ashdown-Hill in another book does refer to Buc, Sr.'s work as 'published in 1619').²² It is clear Strype is

Antiquities of Leicestershire. She does not attempt to attribute it to Buc or anyone else or to indicate that Nichols does.

It seems curious that Ashdown-Hill should assume – when it is clear from my edition that I had dealt with Buck, Jr.'s *History* and Strype's notes to it in *A Complete History of England* (Introduction, pp. lvi-viii) – that in a thorough study of Buc's writings and their afterlives, I would have missed any suggestion that he was the author of this translation.

²¹ 'Translation' is in fact the usual term for a work that interprets a text with a version of it in a different language, whether it is accurate in all details or not (and by its very nature it cannot be). Of course it is not possible, or desirable, for a verse translation to be literal, nor is it expected.

²² *Eleanor, the Secret Queen*, Stroud 2010, p. 165. There are other curious statements in this book: one (p. 165) is that Buc 'may possibly' have had access to sources no longer extant. I thought I had made it abundantly plain that he unquestionably had. Another (p. 166) is an attribution to Beaumont and Fletcher in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (recent scholarship tends to attribute this to Beaumont alone: see Revels Edition ed Sheldon Zitner, Manchester 1984) of having invented

also unaware of Buc's original manuscript, which in his time, not yet fire-damaged, would still have contained the epitaph. The explanation lies in my having taken the revised reading 'decoras' from Sandford (accidentally misattributing its source).

Emily Kearns had the opportunity in her article 'Richard's epitaph revisited' to set many of these confusions straight but chose not to do so. Her acknowledgement at the outset of research by John Ashdown-Hill is probably at the root at least of her frequent confusion between the works of Buc Senior and Buck Junior and of her incessant misdating, like his, of the 1646 edition. Following Ashdown-Hill in conflating the date of the original manuscript with Buck Junior's name and book title, Kearns assigns the code 'B1' to 'the text as given in the 1619 version' of 'George Buck's *History of the Life and Reigne ...*' (p. 75), thus putting the cart before the horse: the genuine author's original manuscript (*which no longer contains the epitaph*) has curiously become a 'version' of the later bastard publication by his great-nephew. The waters are further muddied by her reference to 'Buck's two texts' (p. 76), with no indication of which Buck she means: there are extant no texts of the epitaph from Sir George and four from Mr George, three scribal manuscripts and one printed edition. And these differ from each other, as can be seen in my textual notes, above.

Both Ashdown-Hill and Kearns in analysing the epitaph sensibly ignore the edition of Mr George's 'work' in 'Kennett'. Kearns has accepted (p. 75, n. 2) at the beginning of her article that the epitaph is not extant in Tiberius E.X, so presumably she is leaving Sir George out of account entirely. And she therefore leaves me out because I can only depend on the three manuscripts and printed edition generated by the younger Buck, and of course when possible one examines originals oneself rather than relying on someone else's observation. Being on the Oxford faculty, Kearns is fortunate to have Malone 1 nearby, but she never mentions it. She does need to explain all this clearly, since as it stands it is not at all clear what 'B1' is meant to pertain to. She assigns 'B2' to, presumably, a separate work, which certainly seems to be the younger George's printed edition. But essentially there cannot be a 'B1' and 'B2' since all extant versions of the epitaph which presumably emanated from Buc come from Buck.

the name 'Jane Shore' 'to give the character a name on stage', he says. He gives the date 'when Beaumont and Fletcher produced their play', by which I can only assume he means when 'they' wrote it, as 1609. But with its first recorded performance in 1607 that is impossibly late. And there is in this play not a character but a passing reference in the Induction to a play entitled *Jane Shore*. The source of the name must have been earlier for mention of such a play to make any sense. The two-part *True Tragedy of Edward IV*, probably by Thomas Heywood, written around 1600, features Jane Shore as a prominent character, which may have led to its being popularly referred to as *Jane Shore*, and if so it is to this play that the Grocer's Wife, a comic framing character representing popular theatrical taste, would be alluding in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (she is portrayed as the type who would remember a prominent character's name rather than the play's title). Since the body of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* satirises another play by Heywood, it would be appropriate for it to make a sly allusion to a Heywood play in its Induction.

Kearns gives a formal citation to my edition in a footnote, so is at least aware of its existence, although she calls Buc's original manuscript 'Cotton Tiberius F [sic] x'. She goes a step beyond Ashdown-Hill in noting that I have supplied the epitaph from a 'roughly contemporary' manuscript copy. 'Roughly contemporary' is obviously in the eye of the individual beholder, but I would suggest that the early 1640s are not even roughly contemporary with 1619-20. She neglects to indicate that the person responsible for the three manuscript copies was George Buck Junior, the original author's great-nephew, who was later responsible for the 1646 edition. Perhaps she is unaware of all this, as is suggested on the next page, where she notes that 'Buck 1647' substitutes 'dicaras' for 'decoras'. In fact it does not do so. What it does is substitute 'dicaras', correcting the 'dicerat' of all three manuscript copies. Referring to 'Buck 1647', she suggests this was 'his own correction of what he read in his source'; or alternatively it was 'perhaps most likely to originate with his nephew, who produced the printed edition'. In the context of 'Buck 1647', we can only read the pronouns 'he' and 'his' as referring to George Buck Junior, leading us to envisage a correction by a nephew of Buc's great-nephew. Presumably this was not what she intended. Such incongruities result from a failure to keep hold of the information she had herself cited, that Sir George's manuscript does not include the epitaph, and to consult my analysis of the changes Buck Junior made in the original text over the years. Both she and Ashdown-Hill in discussing the specific poem need to be consistently aware that these are two very different books by two very different people not even very closely related (though commentators including Kearns try to make them so by referring to Buck Junior as Buc's nephew).

While her analyses of Latin wording are useful, Kearns worries excessively over what are self-evidently careless errors in the copies she compares, but makes no attempt to explain why errors by a sloppy scribe are useful in trying to recover what the epitaph actually said. She worries about the substitution of 'aetatesque' for 'aestatesque', which happens only in the printed version. That none of Buck Junior's manuscript copies gives this erroneous reading makes it plain that the printer in 1646 dropped a letter (similarly to my 'levat', cited above, though with a more literal method of dropping). She mentions that 'Buck 1647' gives Richard's date of death erroneously as 21 August 1484, without observing that the manuscripts prior to the 1646 edition, made while Buck Junior was still alive, give at least the correct day.²³ Attention to my

²³Though all three manuscripts give in marginal notes '(A) Annos 2 et 52 dies' and '(B) 22 August 1484 [sic]', the 1646 edition gives '*Annos 2. & 51. dies*' and 'Die 21 August. 1484'. The year is presumably a mistake. (though it would be possible to interpret the year as 1486, 1484 is impossible), and one Sir George would not have made. The day, however, is probably strategic: Henry Tudor dated his reign from the day before the battle. Ashdown-Hill and Kearns do not notice this difference between the manuscripts and the printed edition or comment on its possible significance. Buck Junior for the printed edition, though less so for the manuscript

analysis of the sort of changes Buck Junior makes in the printed edition²⁴ would have made this clear. I still would have liked to hear from Kearns her reasoning for rejecting the manuscript copies entirely, just as Ashdown-Hill did without explanation, following only the printed edition. For although the Latin is generally more accurate in it, that is not the case in every single instance.

In a sense I am grateful for all the confusion, since it has led me to discover and correct a serious error in my textual notes and also to rethink the use of 'decoras' or 'dicaras' and, after long consideration, to re-adopt the former on more solid grounds: an earlier manuscript discovered by Ashdown-Hill. It has also shown me points where what I have written is unclear. Again, finally, there is, in relation to this epitaph, no 'Buck 1' and 'Buck 2'. We have not got and never can have Sir George's original of the epitaph version he copied. Nor can we, concerning the epitaph, properly speak of 'Buc 1619' (or 'Buck 1619'), since it is no longer in that work. We can conjecture probably with reasonable accuracy most of what Sir George copied from the Guildhall manuscript and inserted in his work by looking at (1) the three manuscripts E, M and F, (2) the printed edition. 'Kennett' must be left out of the reckoning, as Ashdown-Hill and Kearns have done, apart from Ashdown-Hill's eagerness to assign the English translation in it to Buc. Of course Sir George Buc was in no position in 1706 to revise an edition of his great-nephew's stolen and massacred version of his work or to insert in it a translation.

copies, was trying to follow the Tudor line in a way Buc Senior had not, nor did Buck Junior feel the need to do so, evidently, when he had scribal copies produced for private distribution.

²⁴ Chapter V of Introduction to my edition of Buc's *History*.