The English Terrorist: Shakespeare’s Richard III and the Politics of Memory
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Richard Raspa’s research interests are interdisciplinary and include Shakespeare, folklore, narrative, and medical humanities. Raspa has co-authored 5 books, one of which, *Italian Folktales in America: The Verbal Art of an Immigrant Woman*, received the Botkin Prize, from the American Folklore Society for the best first book in the field of folklore. A Fulbright recipient to Italy and an Ellsworth Fellow, he is also Adjunct Professor in the School of Medicine, where he teaches medical humanities to fourth-year medical students doing rotations. Currently he is working on the topic of vitality and ageing: deconstructing the myths. He has twice received the highest teaching award at Wayne State University, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1987 and 2005.

In order to confirm himself as the next king, Shakespeare’s eponymous hero, Richard III, reconfigures the history of his family to create a self-serving cultural memory of England’s past. He constructs a series of narratives that represent not historical facts of personal and family identity but fictions he invents to get the power he feels is owed him.

Then, Richard imposes his fiction of the past. In that transaction, characters are separated from what they believe and value and from their capacity to make sense of things. His strategic interactions elicit their guarded weaknesses and he is able, thus, to instill fear in them, deconstructing their memory of events with his truth claims. They are left reeling in doubt and fear, and are, in a word, terrorized.

His narratives lead to his conspiring in acts of remorseless carnage, acts that immobilize England’s governing officials and ecclesiastical leaders as the country plummets toward chaos.

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