

HPHI7008

Fact or Fiction? Literature and History

Assignment 2

***The Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey**

An analysis of the role of the novel in Richard III revisionism

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Josephine Tey's novel *The Daughter of Time*¹, published in 1951 has had a significant and continuing influence on both historiography and detective fiction. The novel explores the mystery around Edward V and Richard Duke of York, known as The Princes in the Tower. The boys were the sons of Edward IV and they disappeared in 1483 while under the care of Richard III. The fate of the princes continues to be debated by scholars, amateur historians and in the popular press. These discussions have intensified since Richard III's body was discovered in a car park in Leicester in 2012 following a search conducted by the University of Leicester and the Richard III Society². The continuing controversy concerning the fate of the princes will be examined only in so much as Tey's novel has influenced both the substance of the debate and the approaches taken to it.

The Daughter of Time will be considered in the context of Tey's body of work and the biographical, educational and literary influences on her approach to researching and writing historically based fiction. The novel includes references to named historical sources, and these will be considered and assessed and Tey's approach will be contrasted with that taken in other historical fiction and with relevant historiography.

Josephine Tey was one of three pseudonyms used by Elizabeth MacKintosh³ who was born in Inverness on 25th July 1896.⁴ She graduated from Anstey College in 1917 and worked as a physical education teacher in several schools in England and Scotland until she returned to Inverness in early 1923 to care for her mother who died of cancer in June of that year.⁵ MacKintosh was the eldest of three daughters and, following her mother's death, she conformed to the convention of the time by giving up her teaching career and moving back to the family home to care for her father who ran a successful fruiterers business.

Housekeeping for her father and helping him with his business accounts allowed Mackintosh time to build a career in writing, first with short stories, novels and plays using the pseudonym Gordon Daviot, a play written under the name of F. Craigie Howe and novels and

¹ Josephine Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, (Sweden: Wisehouse Classics, 2023).

² University of Leicester, *Richard III: Discovery and Identification*, <<https://le.ac.uk/richard-iii/>> [accessed 25/4/2025].

³ Mackintosh will be referred to by the pseudonym she used for each work discussed, and by her own name when discussing her biography or working practice.

⁴ Jennifer Morag Henderson, *Josephine Tey A Life*, (Scotland: Sandstone Press Ltd, 2021), p. 15.

⁵ Ibid. p. 91.

screenplays as Josephine Tey.⁶ MacKintosh died of cancer in 1952 in London, shortly after *The Daughter of Time* was published.⁷

Tey's novel is relevant to the study of the relationship between historiography and fiction because of its influence in Ricardian revisionism and in that the main narrative thread of the novel consists of an analysis of named historical sources. MacKintosh had addressed historical themes in her writing throughout her career. Her most notable success writing as Gordon Daviot was the play *Richard of Bordeaux* which was first performed in 1932 and ran for over a year in the New Theatre in London's West End.⁸ This work took a revisionist view of the reign of Richard II, presenting him as the romantic hero of his marriage to Anne of Bohemia rather than the despotic and weak king characterised by Shakespeare.⁹ The play launched the careers of John Gielgud in the title role and Gwen Ffroncon-Davies who played Anne and was seen by over 400,000 theatre-goers.¹⁰

MacKintosh carried out extensive historical research before writing *Richard of Bordeaux*. She compiled a chronology of Richard's life, wrote biographies of the main characters and drew a map of contemporary London. The archive held by Inverness Museum shows many revisions to the play, with changes made to 'fit historical accuracy'.¹¹ Daviot used modern day language in the play, therefore avoiding the awkwardness of what David Mitchell refers to as 'bygonese'.¹²

Daviot wrote a second historical play based on the life of Mary Queen of Scots as a vehicle for Gwen Ffroncon-Davies. This was first performed in June 1934, again at the New Theatre. It was directed by John Gielgud and starred Lawrence Olivier as Mary's third husband Bothwell.¹³ *Queen of Scots* was less commercially and critically successful than *Richard of Bordeaux*, achieving only 106 West End performances, possibly because although it was based on extensive historical research¹⁴, Daviot failed to present any of the characters

⁶ Henderson, *Josephine Tey*.

⁷ Ibid. p. 317.

⁸ Gordon Daviot, *Richard of Bordeaux*, (Oxford: Oxford City Press, 2011

⁹ Ibid. p. vi.

¹⁰ Henderson, *Josephine Tey*, p. 2.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 142-143.

¹² David Mitchell, 'Past Imperfect', *Daily Telegraph*, 8 May 2010, pp. 20-21, < [David Mitchell on Historical Fiction](#) > [accessed 28/4/2025].

¹³ Henderson, *Josephine Tey*, p. 174.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 178.

sympathetically and the plot lacked what De Groot refers to as the 'aesthetic strategies designed to persuade an audience of the veracity of the representation'.¹⁵

In 1937 MacKintosh published a biography of the seventeenth-century Scottish historical figure John Graham Claverhouse, still using the Daviot pseudonym.¹⁶ *Claverhouse* was the culmination of several years research and demonstrates her continuing attraction to reevaluating the life of a controversial historical character and her willingness to take a revisionist approach. Daviot dedicated the book 'TO THOSE WHO may not prefer Scotland to truth, but certainly prefer Scotland to enquiry', a quotation from Dr Johnson which was also referenced by Walter Scott.¹⁷ MacKintosh's experience with this book influenced her approach to *The Daughter of Time* in another way. She didn't enjoy the academic rigour needed to write a work of non-fiction history and she argued that in the future she wanted to focus 'on the story, and on her own interpretation of events'.¹⁸ Furthermore, she saw herself as a writer, not a historian, and 'felt that the common-sense she applied to her reading of history books gave her a fresh and important perspective'.¹⁹

The Daughter of Time was not the first text in which MacKintosh addressed the life of Richard III. In the 1940's she wrote a play called *Dickon* which was published after her death under the Daviot pseudonym. This play covers the period from just before the death of Edward IV in 1483 to the eve of the battle of Bosworth in 1485 and takes the form of a chronological narrative.²⁰ Although the structures of the two works are very different, *Dickon* can be seen as a precursor to *The Daughter of Time* as they both draw on the same body of research and both take a revisionist view of the subject.

The Daughter of Time was the fifth Josephine Tey detective novel and features Tey's serial detective Alan Grant who is immobilised in hospital following an accident while solving a previous case. A sixth novel in the series, *The Singing Sands* was published in 1952, shortly after the author's death. In *The Daughter of Time* Grant is too depressed and bored to read and this prompts a friend to bring him prints of the faces of historical characters who have

¹⁵ Jerome De Groot, *Remaking History: The Past in Contemporary Historical Fictions*, (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 16.

¹⁶ Henderson, *Josephine Tey*, p. 200.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 201.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 206.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 205.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 308.

been involved in mysteries to keep him entertained. Grants selects the portrait of Richard III and this sets him on the path to attempting to solve the case of the princes in the tower using policing techniques which were considered modern in the late 1940s.

Mackintosh was not the first author to take a revisionist approach to the life of Richard III, even though the majority of scholars maintain that it is likely that Richard was responsible for the death of the princes.²¹ In the eighteenth century, Horace Walpole claimed that he 'submitted the Tudor myth to the scrutiny of "enlightened reason"'.²² However, when *The Daughter of Time* was published, Tey's approach was unique within both the detective and historical fiction genres. Many writers of historical fiction carry out extensive research and some acknowledge their sources using bibliographies.²³ However, Tey's sources and her analysis of them forms the central narrative of the novel, an approach which influenced subsequent authors and has encouraged some readers to consider the book a work of historiography. Tey's use of these sources will now be examined.

The portrait of Richard III that piques Inspector Grant's interest in revisiting the story of the princes in the tower is the first source to which Tey refers. Grant is reputed to have an instinct for establishing not only the guilt or innocence of a suspect based on a study of their face but also the crime of which they are guilty. He argues that 'it was not possible to put faces into any sort of category but it was possible to characterise individual faces'.²⁴ Grant has an emotional reaction to the portrait before he knows who the subject is. He wonders who the sitter is

A judge? A soldier? A prince? Someone used to great responsibility, and responsible in his authority. Someone too-conscientious. A worrier: perhaps a perfectionist.....Someone too who had suffered ill-health as a child.²⁵

Grant is shocked to discover that the print is of a portrait of Richard III from the National Portrait Gallery. His reaction summarises the prevailing view of Richard III in the 1950's. 'So

²¹ Geraldine Barnes, 'Truth, fiction and *The Daughter of Time*', *Sydney Studies in English*, 26 (2000), <[Truth, Fiction, and 'The Daughter of Time' | Sydney Studies in English](#)>, p.3 [accessed 30/4/2025].

²² Kendall, *Richard the Third*, p. 507.

²³ See, for example, Livi Mitchell, *Accession*, (London: Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 406-408.

²⁴ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 20.

that was who it was. Richard the Third. Crouch-back. The monster of nursery stories. The destroyer of innocence. A synonym for villainy'.²⁶

Tey uses a detailed description, or ekphrasis, to bring the portrait to life for the reader.

It was the portrait of a man. A man dressed in the velvet cap and slashed doublet of the late fifteenth century. A man about thirty-five or thirty-six years old, lean and clean shaven. He wore a rich jewelled collar, and was in the act of putting a ring on the little finger of his right hand. But he was not looking at the ring. He was looking off into space.²⁷

The repeated use of the word 'man' in this passage has the effect of humanising Richard and counteracting the usual label of 'monster' or murderer'.

The National Portrait Gallery website lists 27 portraits of Richard III but identifies the one referred to by Tey, acknowledging the importance of the novel in discussions of the reputation of the king. However, according to the Gallery, this portrait was painted in the late sixteenth century. Dendrochronology shows that the oak board on which it is painted comes from a tree which was felled after 1577, although the portrait is probably based on an earlier work which is no longer in existence. The gallery also notes that DNA analysis carried out on Richard's remains shows that he was likely to have blond hair and blue eyes, rather than dark brown hair and brown eyes as shown in the portrait.²⁸ Therefore, the portrait cannot be seen as a reliable source which could be used to assess the character of the sitter, even if it were accepted that such an analysis was possible.

Grant embarks on a quest to learn more about Richard III, consulting several sources. He starts with those most readily available, borrowing a children's historical story book and a school textbook from one of the nurses on his ward, before moving on to more recognised historical texts. The story about Richard in the children's book concerns the fate of the princes in the tower, presenting the orthodox view of 'the innocent children; the wicked uncle'.²⁹ The school text book gives more details about how Richard usurped the throne by

²⁶ Ibid. p 20.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 19-20.

²⁸ National Portrait Gallery, *King Richard III*, < [NPG 148; King Richard III - Portrait - National Portrait Gallery](#)> accessed 29/4/2025].

²⁹ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 25.

declaring the princes illegitimate and that ‘the two young princes who were living in the tower disappeared, and were believed to have been murdered’.³⁰ It has not been possible to establish if Tey was using actual sources in this part of the text, although as she studied history at school she could have been consulting an old textbook.³¹

Using the literary device of intertextuality, Tey references the Gordon Daviot play *Richard of Bordeaux* to establish Grant’s level of knowledge about medieval history. She writes that ‘[h]e knew all about [the deposition of Richard II] because he had seen *Richard of Bordeaux* at the New Theatre; four times he had seen it’.³²

Grant wants to consult more authoritative sources, and his sergeant finds two texts in a London bookshop. The first is described by the bookseller as ‘the best history of England that they have in stock’ and the second is a fictionalised life of Cecily Neville, mother of Edward IV and Richard III.³³ Tey identifies the history book as *Constitutional History* by Tanner. No reference can be found to a book with this name and author, although J.R. Tanner edited a book called *Tudor Constitutional Documents, A.D. 1485–1603* which was published in 1922.

Grant is dismissive of this source, claiming that it was

only concerned with social progress and political evolution; with the Black Death, and the invention of printing, and the use of gunpowder, and the formation of the Trade Guilds, and so forth.³⁴

Grant is more interested in the second source, *The Rose of Raby* by Evelyn Payne-Ellis. He acknowledges it as historical fiction but ‘the almost respectable form of historical fiction which is merely history-with-conversation....[an] imaginative biography rather than an imagined history’.³⁵ Tey quotes extensive passages from this source, with the purpose of showing that the York brothers grew up in a happy supportive household, but that Richard was physically different from his brothers. As Tey summarises,

³⁰ Ibid. p. 26.

³¹ Henderson, *Joesphine Tey*, p. 46.

³² Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 33.

³³ Ibid. p. 35.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 35

³⁵ Ibid. p. 40.

[w]ell, that might be fiction, but it was an illuminating glimpse of Richard. The dark one in a blond family. The one who ‘looked like a visitor’. The ‘changeling’.³⁶

Tey also claims that Payne-Ellis quotes from and gives a bibliographic reference to a letter from two of the boys, Edward and Edmund to their father Richard of York, complaining about their tutor:

The conscientious Miss Payne-Ellis had given the reference to this letter (one of the Cotton manuscripts, it appeared) and [Grant] thumbed more slowly in search of more. Factual evidence was a policeman’s meat.³⁷

However, *The Rose of Raby*, like Tanner’s *Constitutional History*, is invented by Tey but the Cotton manuscripts are an archive held by the British Library.³⁸ *Constitutional History* also refers to a well-known medieval source, the Paston letters.³⁹ Tey gives no indication in the text of the authenticity or otherwise of the sources she references but citing actual sources and Grant referring to them as ‘factual evidence’ is likely to convince the reader that they are real. Hilary Mantel has written that

[w]hat really disconcerts commentators, I suspect, is that, when they read historical fiction, they feel their own lack of education may be exposed; they panic, because they don't know which bits are true.⁴⁰

It may be that Tey intended to present these sources as real to the reader or that, as referred to above, she did not wish to be bound by historical accuracy. Grant’s reaction to these two texts, rejecting the dullness of Tanner and feeling that more ‘truth’ can be obtained from well written historical fiction may represent Tey’s feelings about the relationship between fiction and historiography, following her experiences writing *Claverhouse*. The historian and writer of historical fiction Richard Slotkin writes that

³⁶ Ibid. p 43.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 42.

³⁸ British Library, *Cataloguing the Cotton Charters*, < [Cataloguing the Cotton charters - Medieval manuscripts blog](#) > [accessed 30/4/2025].

³⁹ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 36.

⁴⁰ Hilary Mantel, ‘Booker winner Hilary Mantel on dealing with history in fiction’, <[Booker winner Hilary Mantel on dealing with history in fiction | Books | The Guardian](#)> [accessed 30/04/2025].

[a] novel can be as accurate as a history in telling what happened, when and how. It can, and should, be based on the same kind of research and rigorous analysis of evidence. But the distinction and advantage of the fictional form lies in the way it uses evidence and represents conclusions.⁴¹

The next source which Grant obtains is *The History of King Richard III* by Thomas More. More's account was written about thirty years after Richard died, probably in 1515 by which time More was a lawyer and Member of Parliament.⁴² By this time, there was an established tradition of critical accounts of Richard's reign. Henry VII's historian Polydore Vergil wrote that Richard was

little of stature, deformed of body, the one shoulder being higher than the other, a short and sour countenance, which seemed to savour of mischief, and utter evidently craft and deceit.⁴³

The historian John Rous wrote favourably of Richard III during his reign but changed his account following the Tudor usurpation describing Richard as a 'short, deformed, murderous monarch, who had been born with teeth and long hair after a gestation period of two years.'⁴⁴ It is likely that More was aware of these texts and that he understood the dangers of appearing sympathetic to the last Plantagenet king in the early years of the Tudor dynasty.

Kendall identifies John Morton as a further source used by More, and claims that 'other passages reflect the gaudy gossip of the Tudor court'.⁴⁵ Morton was Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor under Henry VII and More was a page in his household at this time.⁴⁶ Morton had been Bishop of Ely during the reign of Edward IV and maintained his loyalty to Edward's family. He was opposed to Richard III's usurpation and conspired unsuccessfully with the Duke of Buckingham to overthrow him in October 1483.⁴⁷

⁴¹ R. Slotkin, 'Fiction for the Purposes of History'. *Rethinking History*, 9(2-3) (2005), 221-236, p. 225.

⁴² Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III*, (Durham: Langley Press, 2015, p. 5).

⁴³ Ibid. p. 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p, 7.

⁴⁵ Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), p. 500.

⁴⁶ More, *Richard III*, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁷ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, pp. 319-321.

More's text is considered to account for both Richard's enduring malign reputation and for his identification as the murderer of his nephews.⁴⁸ He claims that his sources for the chapter on the princes in the tower are 'not every way that I have heard, but after that way that I have so heard by such men and by such means, as me thinks it were hard but it should be true'.⁴⁹ More recounts how Richard charges Sir James Tyrell with the responsibility for ensuring that the princes do not survive and that Tyrell appoints John Dighton and Miles Forrest to murder the boys. More's account of the murder uses vivid language to recreate the scene

.... this Miles Forrest and John Dighton, about midnight (the silly children lying in their beds) came into the chamber, and suddenly lapped them up among the clothes, so bewrapped them and entangled them, keeping down by force the feather bed and pillows hard unto their mouths, that within a while smothered and stifled, their breath failing ⁵⁰

When Grant receives a copy of More's book, he anticipates that it will help him with his investigation as it is 'the horse's mouth' as far as the story of the princes is concerned.⁵¹ However, on reading More's account, Grant rejects it as hearsay and Tey writes that '... if there was one word that a policeman loathed more than another it was hearsay. Especially when applied to evidence'. Grant argues that Holinshed and, therefore, Shakespeare had taken their versions of events from More's text which had become 'the Bible of the whole historical world on the subject of Richard III'.⁵²

Grant turns to his preferred text, the *Rose of Raby*, for verification of the influence of the Woodville family at the court of Edward IV. Grant thinks that the fictitious Evelyn Payne-Ellis has done a 'good enough job of the story'.⁵³

Having rejected More's account as Tudor propaganda, Grant wants to find 'an actual contemporary account' of Richard's reign despite More being acknowledged as a 'Great

⁴⁸ Ibid. pp. 500-501.

⁴⁹ More, *Richard III*, p 128.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 131.

⁵¹ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 47.

⁵² Ibid. p. 55.

⁵³ Ibid. p 54.

Mind'. Indeed, '[a]s far as he, Alan Grant was concerned, Thomas More was washed out, cancelled, deleted; and he, Alan Grant, was beginning from scratch tomorrow morning'.

Grant enlists the help of a young American research student, Brent Carradine, to help him find 'information about history written in Richard III's day. Contemporary accounts in the British Museum.⁵⁴ In the detective novel, Carradine plays the role of a Watson. As in the Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, many mystery novels include a character who acts as an assistant to the detective. Within the narrative, this character highlights the brilliance of the detective by being less skilled or intelligent and provides a device to allow aspects of the plot to be discussed and explained.⁵⁵ Although Carradine is a trained historian, he repeatedly defers to Grant and calls himself 'someone who looks things up'⁵⁶ and only a research worker'⁵⁷.

Before commencing his work at the British Museum, Carradine suggests that Grant consults a text he is using for his own research into the Peasants Revolt. He refers to this source as 'the modern authority for Richard II – Sir Cuthbert Oliphant'.⁵⁸ This is another source invented by Tey which Grant rejects because of a lack of coherence in the arguments it presents. Describing how he feels about his progress in the 'case', Grant says 'I'm as completely bewildered as Sir Cuthbert Oliphant, bless his heart. The only difference between us is that I know I'm bewildered and he doesn't seem to be aware of it.'⁵⁹ He also claims that Oliphant is biased against the Yorkist cause because he is 'very tolerant of Henry VII's usurpation'.⁶⁰ According to Grant, Oliphant also disproves the myth of Richard's disabilities

According to Sir Cuthbert, the hunchback is a myth. So is the withered arm. It appears that he had no visible deformity His left shoulder was lower than his right, that was all.⁶¹

From his research at the British Museum, Carradine reports that there were no contemporary accounts of Richard's reign as all of those written by contemporaries of the

⁵⁴ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 58.

⁵⁵ Martin Edwards, *The Life of Crime*, (London: Collins Crime Club, 2022), p. 27.

⁵⁶ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 59.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 79.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 62.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 66.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 66.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 67.

king were written after his death, apart from ‘a monkish chronicle in Latin.....but I haven’t been able to get hold of it yet’.⁶² This is likely to be the Croyland Chronicle to which Carradine briefly refers later in the text to further rebut the Tudor myth.⁶³

Carradine also claims that he has discovered that More’s *The History of King Richard III* was only attributed to More because it was found among his papers but that in fact it was written by John Morton and can therefore be dismissed as anti-Richard propaganda, given Morton’s support for the Woodville’s and Henry Tudor.⁶⁴ No source is given for this information and this view is rejected by Kendall.⁶⁵

Tey discusses how popular interpretations of historical events can be widely held even when they have been shown to be erroneous. Carradine offers the example of the Boston Massacre which took place during the American War of Independence. Carradine says that his ‘.... blood used to seethe at the thought of helpless civilians mowed down by the fire of British troops’ when there were, in fact, ‘only four casualties’.⁶⁶ The event was triggered by a British soldier accidentally discharging his musket and several other soldiers firing into the crowd, mistakenly thinking they had been ordered to fire. There were five fatalities and several other casualties, and the British troops were ordered back to barracks to avoid further unrest. However, the Boston globe quoted 96 eyewitness accounts which claimed that the troops had been ordered to fire on civilians and this account has been widely believed.⁶⁷

Grant draws parallels between the myths around the fate of the princes in the tower and events in Tonypandy in the Welsh Valleys where there is a widely held belief that Winston Churchill ordered British troops to fire on striking miners in 1910.⁶⁸ In fact, Churchill ordered 200 Metropolitan police officers into Tonypandy and a detachment of soldiers to be held in reserve in Cardiff. The soldiers were subsequently called in by the local police chief, but they

⁶² Ibid. p. 67.

⁶³ Ingulf, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland: with the continuations by Peter of Blois and anonymous writers*, (Miami: Hardpress, 2019).

⁶⁴ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, pp. 67-69.

⁶⁵ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, pp. 503-505.

⁶⁶ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 71.

⁶⁷ Jed Wallenfeldt, ‘The Boston Massacre’, *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2025), < [Boston Massacre | History, Facts, Site, Deaths, & Trial | Britannica](#) > [accessed 2/5/2025].

⁶⁸ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, p. 71-72.

arrived after the rioters had dispersed and did not open fire.⁶⁹ David Smith quotes the relevant passage from *The Daughter of Time* in his discussion of the riots and their legacy, and notes that

[b]y 1951 the purpose of the historical Tonypandy was that it could be waved as a flag of proletarian resistance or dismissed as a minor scuffle. The very name had come to symbolize subsequent militancy in the south Wales coalfield, to provide an easy reference sign for poets, to stand as dramatic focus for epic novels. Tonypandy had entered into history too soon to escape the burden of its usable myth.⁷⁰

Carradine uses resources from the British Museum, which include unidentified sources, the Chronicle of Croyland⁷¹ and Mancini's near contemporaneous account of the reign of Richard III written for the French court⁷². He produces a detailed timeline of the movements of all the key players from the death of Edward IV until the early years of Henry VII's reign. Grant uses this information to carry out his investigation, identifying means, motives and opportunity and referring to experience with criminals he has investigated. In this way, he reaches the conclusion that the princes survived Richard's reign and were killed by Henry VII to remove the last Plantagenet claimants to the throne.⁷³

However, the evidence which Tey uses to reach this conclusion can be subject to differing interpretations. Writing four years after the publication of *The Daughter of Time*, Kendall rejects both Tey's methods and Grant's solution to the mystery. He agrees that it is doubtful that Richard III was responsible for the death of the princes but argues that it is unlikely that they survived until the end of Richard's reign and that there is some evidence that the Duke of Buckingham ordered their death.⁷⁴

The Daughter of Time enjoyed commercial and critical success. Within the crime fiction genre, it is considered to be 'the most widely acclaimed history-mystery of the 1950s'⁷⁵ and

⁶⁹ Neil Prior, 'Rhondda Marks 100th Anniversary of Tonypandy Riots', *BBC News* (2010), [Rhondda marks 100th anniversary of Tonypandy Riots - BBC News](#) [accessed 2/5/2025].

⁷⁰ David Smith, 'Tonypandy 1910: Definitions of Community', *Past & Present*, no. 87, 1980, pp. 158–84.

⁷¹ Ingulph, *Chronicle* pp. 487–504.

⁷² Mancini, Domenico, *de occupatione regni Anglie*, (Norwich: Imprimis Imprimatur, 2021).

⁷³ Tey, *The Daughter of Time*, pp. 79–130.

⁷⁴ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, pp. 494–495.

⁷⁵ Edwards, *The Life of Crime*, p. 605.

in 1990 it was voted the best mystery novel of all time by the Crime Writers' Association.⁷⁶ It has influenced subsequent authors to produce similar hospital bed or armchair detective novels, including *A Most Contagious Game* by Catherine Aird published in 1967⁷⁷. Colin Dexter replicates the plot and research methods of *The Daughter of Time* in his eighth novel in the Inspector Morse series, *The Wench is Dead*, first published in 1989.⁷⁸ In this novel, Morse is in hospital recovering from a medical emergency when he is given a book about a historical murder case in Oxford. He decides that the men who were hung for the murder were innocent, and he uses police cold case methods and primary sources to redress the miscarriage of justice.

The Daughter of Time is not a historical novel in the sense of creating a believable world in which historical events take place. However, as Tey purports to use historical sources to solve the mystery, the reader could rely on the novel to form a view about the events described. De Groot argues that in historical fiction '[t]he contract made with the audience is one of trust, the reader or viewer allowing the untruths that are being presented'.⁷⁹ Tey's presentation of historical sources could be said to break this trust as, without extensive research, the reader cannot distinguish fact from fiction.

Outside the world of detective fiction, The Richard III Society highlighted *The Daughter of Time* as one of the main catalysts for the surge in interest in Richard III in the 1950s, alongside Kendall's biography of the king published in 1955 and Laurence Olivier's film adaptation of the Shakespeare play.⁸⁰ The society was founded in 1924 under the name The Fellowship of the White Boar and until the 1950s consisted of 'a small group of amateur historians [who] believed that history had not treated Richard fairly and that his reputation was worthy of re-examination'.⁸¹ The events of the early 1950s prompted the society to change its name and open up its membership to the wider public.

The Richard III Society was influential in the search for the remains of the King and has promoted further research into the fate of the Princes in the Tower. Following the success of

⁷⁶ Hatchards, *Crime Companion*, p. 9.

⁷⁷ Edwards, *The Life of Crime*, p. 186,

⁷⁸ Colin Dexter, *The Wench is Dead*, (London: Macmillan, 1989).

⁷⁹ De Groot, *Remaking History*, p.13.

⁸⁰ Richard III Society, *About Us*, < [About Us - Richard III Society](#)> [accessed 26/4/2025]

⁸¹ Ibid.

the Searching for Richard initiative, the amateur historian Phillippa Langley launched The Missing Princes Project which has subjected evidence to a ‘cold case procedure [which] would introduce modern police investigative techniques to facilitate forensic analysis of existing material’.⁸² There are clear echoes of *The Daughter of Time* in Langley’s approach and she, like Tey, claims that the princes survived the reign of Richard III. Langley’s conclusion is that the princes escaped from the Tower of London and came back to England during the reign of Henry VII as the pretenders Perkin Warbeck and Lambert Simnel. Michael Hicks has dismissed Langley’s interpretation of the evidence and her ‘cold case’ methodology. The debate around the fate of the princes and the reputation of Richard III continues.⁸³

MacKintosh carried out extensive historical research as part of the process of creating her Gordon Daviot and Josephine Tey plays and novels. *The Daughter of Time* raises issues about the importance of narrative in history, the reliability and bias of sources, about bending the evidence to fit a chosen narrative and about the difficulty of countering myths which are widely held to be true. However, she displays these same traits in her attitude to sources, quotes extensively from invented sources and accepts some myths and biases while rejecting others.

MacKintosh was not a historian and did not want to be judged by this standard, particularly after the difficulties she encountered when writing *Claverhouse*. *The Daughter of Time* is widely referenced by the popular press, by Ricardians and by scholars whenever the fate of the princes in the tower is reevaluated, often without addressing the lack of historicity in Tey’s work. Inventing sources, introducing bias and adapting facts to fit a chosen narrative are not acceptable in works of history. However, they are certainly acceptable, and can be necessary, when writing detective fiction. Issues can arise when authorial intent is not known or not respected and, outside of the world of detective fiction, any references to *The Daughter of Time* should take account of this.

⁸² Langley, Phillippa, *The Princes in the Tower: Solving History’s Greatest Cold Case*, (Cheltenham, The History Press, 2023), p.24.

⁸³ Michael Hicks, ‘Historic doubts about the survival of the Princes in the Tower after 1485’, *Historical research: the bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 97(277) (2024), pp. 437–442.

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