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Volume 18 Number 1

- 3 Leo Strauss
*translated by
Robert Bartlett* Some Remarks on the Political
Science of Maimonides and Farabi
- 31 Joseph Cropsey On Ancients and Moderns
- 53 Laurie M. Johnson Rethinking the Diodotean Argument
- 63 Jacob A. Howland Socrates and Alcibiades: Eros, Piety, and
Politics
- 91 Drew A. Hyland Plato's Three Waves and the Question of
Utopia
- 111 Pamela K. Jensen Beggars and Kings: Cowardice and Courage
in Shakespeare's *Richard II*
- 145 Christopher A. Colmo Reason and Revelation in the Thought of Leo
Strauss
- Discussion*
- 161 David Lowenthal Comment on Colmo
- Book Review*
- 163 Will Morrisey *Taming the Prince: The Ambivalence of
Modern Executive Power* by Harvey C.
Mansfield, Jr.

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Beggars and Kings: Cowardice and Courage in Shakespeare's *Richard II*

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Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Richard II* depicts the simultaneous decline and fall of one king and the meteoric rise of another.¹ The exalted King Richard becomes a beggar, and Henry Bolingbroke, who is introduced in the play on his knees, a petitioner to Richard, becomes king in Richard's place. By his flagrant abuses Richard himself provokes Bolingbroke's challenge to his rule and then capitulates to Bolingbroke without lifting a hand to defend himself. The play is thus a comprehensive portrait of King Richard's self-defeat and, with it, the irreversible dissolution of the political order over which he presided.

Shakespeare likens Richard's England to the garden of Eden at the time of the fall. The "sea-walled garden" of England is a fortress "built by Nature for herself / Against infection and the hand of war" (II.i.42-44; III.iv.43). Against destruction at its own hand, however, the manmade disorder that undermines from within, nature can erect no barrier. Like a new Adam in "this other Eden, demi-paradise," Richard reenacts the fall of man (cf. III.iv.73-76).

Richard's shattered career culminates, albeit unexpectedly, in a kind of triumph and self-redemption. His political fall proves in fact to be the antecedent to his natural rise. An inward regality takes the place of the outward one that he loses with the name of king. For reasons that become clear as the story unfolds, Bolingbroke's meteoric political ascent merely marks the beginning of his inward decline and long infirmity. *Richard II* portrays a double reverse of fortunes, each with a double meaning. One man acquires his royal spirit only at the cost of his crown, and the other acquires the crown only at the cost of his royal spirit. Each man is only ever half a king; neither is kingly when he is king.

Like Adam, Richard sins in ignorance about himself. To become a true king, Richard must first be taught to know himself as man. In particular, he must discover the arms with which man is endowed by nature and their place on earth. He will come to recognize first his weaknesses and then his strengths.

The quest to join a commanding and free nature to a sovereign place is Shakespeare's underlying theme in the play, the natural pattern for which is the sun—the godlike, majestic, and imperturbable natural sovereign. Shakespeare uses this royal image to betoken both the lifegiving power of royal riches and

the manly robustness of royal spirit, by contrast to all that is beggarly and slavish, specifically denoted in the play by the inverse images—everything pale and cold, e.g., cowardice, corpses, peace, and the lifeless moon. (see I.i.69, 189; I.ii.34; II.iii.94; II.iv.10; III.ii.75; III.iii.98). The resplendent “living fire” that characterizes royal autonomy also leads Shakespeare to use images evocative of the sun and of hotblooded, high-spirited horses interchangeably throughout the play. In both the plot and the imagery he affirms spiritedness (in Greek, *thymos*) as an essential ingredient of genuine regality and highlights its presence in the actions pertaining to sovereign men—standing up for oneself against detractors, defending just causes, and accepting rather than abnegating responsibility for the care and defense of what is rightfully one’s own.

With a face “like the sun” (IV.i.284), Richard occupies a place in the political firmament parallel to that of the sun in the actual firmament. By the divine favor that is manifest in his birth and in accord with ancient custom, Richard is said to bear the Divine Person on earth. Richard compares himself both to Phaëthon, son of Apollo (III.iii.178) and to Christ, son of God (iv.i. 170–71, 239–42. See Figgis, pp. 5–7, 79–80). He is God’s vicar and stands in His place: “God’s substitute / His deputy anointed in His sight” (I.ii.37–38; IV.i.126–27). The political authority of the rightful king who rules under divine aegis is presumed to be undergirded by a power which in its very nature is infinitely greater than that of any man or group of men, however large or highly born. The link between the king and the invisible armies of “God omnipotent” is marked by visible signs or symbols—titles, the crown, the sceptre, anointing oil, etc.—which are, as tokens of divine grace, endowed in their turn with sacred significance.

To indicate Richard’s sacred character he is also given a godlike exterior. The gorgeous opulence and glittering splendor of the court and the majestic appearance of the king are meant to represent to the dull, earthly understanding the heavenly order of things and the surpassing beauty of divine governance. The king is not God but is in every way a facsimile of God: the type or “figure” of divine majesty (IV.i.125).

Without ever reflecting much about it, Richard comes to believe that the emblems of divine election, which radically alter his appearance from that of other men, actually transfigure him into something more than man, making him not only inviolate but also invulnerable. Beguiled by the outward beauty of his office and flattered by the semblance or shadow of divinity he bears, Richard allows himself to be deceived by surface appearances. His outward likeness to a god causes him to forget his humanity, both his weaknesses and his strengths. He overlooks both his mortal flesh and blood and his genuinely godlike and majestic soul. Locating his majesty in what is visible to the eye, the nature Richard imputes to himself is an inversion of the one he actually has. He endows himself with a self-sufficiency that approaches a faith in an immortal body rather than an immortal soul, as if the king’s body rather than his soul were made in the image of God.

Esteeming himself to be virtually the equal of a god, Richard expects his own will to be effortlessly executed by his mere command or fiat and his heart's desire purchased for the price of breath (III.ii.164–65). Believing that he is spared the exertions of ordinary mortals, he shirks his duty to cultivate order in his own life and in his realm. His affectation of divinity essentially amounts to a wanton dereliction or neglect, an infamous evasion of responsibility toward himself and what is rightfully his own (cf. Prospero, *The Tempest*, I.ii, 75, 89ff.). Indolent beyond measure, as if every day were a holiday, Richard immerses himself completely in an edenic freedom from every toil and care. Disdaining to “trim and dress” the royal political garden, as even Adam was charged to do in Eden, he turns instead to dallying sport and wastes his “idle hours” on trifles and “light vanities” (II.i.38; III.iv.86). The frequent claims of commentators that Richard is unpolitical, a better poet than a king, while not persuasive to me, are based on the *kind of king* Richard thinks he is (cf. Sen Gupta, pp. 118–20 and Ornstein. pp. 108, 118–20).

Mimicking a divine insouciance, Richard is equally careless of friend and enemy. He does not think he needs to cultivate well-armed friends on whose hearts and hands he can rely, nor to check the spirited self-assertions of well-armed enemies. In place of real friends, he collects mere “followers in prosperity” and parasites, who consume his substance all the while appearing to hold him up (II.ii.84–85; III.iv.50–51).

The first act of the play depicts the doubly self-destructive negligence regarding friends and enemies that is the most dire consequence of Richard's lack of self-knowledge. Shakespeare's presentation of Richard's dismal failure as the arbiter of the quarrel between Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, and Henry Bolingbroke, soon to be Duke of Lancaster, confirms the truth of the royal gardeners' famous assessment of the king's errors (III.iv). Although Richard clearly favors the loyal Mowbray over the insolent Bolingbroke and discerns the difference between them (I.i.85–86; 11–17), he neither helps the one nor hurts the other. By the end of Act I, Richard has, on the contrary, strengthened his real enemy and cavalierly cast aside his most steadfast friend. The events of the first act mark the beginning of Richard's gradual isolation and divorce from every friend and supporter, an irreversible process continuing until his death.

As the play opens, “Old” John of Gaunt brings his “bold” son Henry Bolingbroke into court at Richard's command, in order to “make good” his accusation of high treason against Mowbray, whose spokesman and surrogate father is no less than the king himself. Owing to Richard's own dilatoriness (I.5), Bolingbroke's damaging allegations have been bruited about publicly for some time, thereby creating an incendiary and highly-charged atmosphere for the interview. Richard recognizes that the nobles' proud and bold natures make them headstrong and hard to manage. “High-stomach'd are they both and full of ire. / In rage, deaf as the sea, hasty as fire” (II.18–19). To curb their hot spirits the cool and composed king thinks he need only make them feel his

immeasurably greater power, which they cannot fail to do in his so conspicuously regal presence. Let them hurl their insults at one another as freely as they may, in the end they must submit. As Richard will tell Mowbray, "Lions make leopards tame" (I.174).

Striking a post of godlike remoteness from this petty wrangling of his "puny" subjects, Richard disdains to take the dispute seriously. Nor does he attend to its real, by contrast to its apparent, cause. Proclaiming himself to be an upright and impartial judge, Richard nevertheless makes his preferences known. To expose the true and the false or counterfeit subject, which he already knows, Richard invites the nobles to vent their grievances in a war of words, casually delegating responsibility in this affair to his favorite Mowbray, as Gaunt delegates his to Bolingbroke. Since men do not necessarily say what they feel or feel what they say, the verbal contest is bound to be inconclusive. Indeed, with the exception of the guileless Mowbray, who is incapable of dissembling (II. 132–34; cf. II. 41–42), the purposes of all the other characters are concealed.

Striking the pose of Richard's loyal servant that is the perfect counterpart to Richard's pose, Bolingbroke feigns a desire to protect the king (II.31–34). He accuses Mowbray of instigating every treason in the realm in general for the previous eighteen years and, in particular, of killing his and Richard's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester. Swearing by "the glorious worth of my descent," Bolingbroke vows passionately to avenge his uncle, whose blood "like sacrificing Abel's cries . . . / To me for justice and rough chastisement" (II.103–6). The rumors alleging that Mowbray killed the duke at Richard's behest, although Shakespeare leads us to conclude they are false (IV.i.86), satisfy the impetuous Bolingbroke as to Mowbray's absolute guilt (cf. Bullough, p. 391). By accusing Gloucester's murderer of committing Cain's crime, however, Bolingbroke confirms that he is really seeking the author rather than the agent of the crime. Contrary to appearances, then, Bolingbroke has come to court not as Richard's friend, but as his enemy, not to submit to Richard's justice, but to expose his injustice.

Richard's authorization of Gloucester's murder is the original sin, the immediate consequences of which supply the material from which Shakespeare's play is wrought. In keeping with his dramatic theme and the imagery, Shakespeare refashions the historical material he read in the chronicles of Raphael Holinshed (See Bullough, pp. 358–60, 390 and Oman, pp. 97 ff.). While not literally a fratricide, this act does manifest a wanton and unnatural indifference to the close ties of kinship born of wilful, imperious pride. Inverting the natural order, Richard is brutally hardhearted where he should be clement and metes out retribution where he should foster reconciliation (I.ii.3–41; II.i.128–31). As the first Plantaganet "to raise this house against this house" in violence (IV.i.145), Richard relaxes the restraints upon illicit ambition in his subjects supplied by filial piety and the sanctity of ancient traditions. He evinces in

doing this wrong, then, the same reckless self-neglect that Gaunt is said to show in complaisantly suffering it to be done, teaching “stern murder how to butcher” himself (I.ii.32).

Contrary to appearances, Richard is not a godlike judge, but an all-too-human sinner. Shakespeare designs the first scene specifically to point up the ironic disparity between the semblance or facade of perfect justice Richard presents and the actual injustice that lies behind it. Punctiliously adhering to its outward forms, the semblance or shadow of justice Richard gives his subjects—the name and not the thing—is in truth all that he can offer.

Bolingbroke is introduced into the play as Richard's opposite—the dauntless defender of inherited rights and of the familial integrity on which they depend. His father's apparent willingness to submit to injustice out of loyalty to Richard's sacred name and godlike appearance, so obviously contradicted by Richard's unkingly behavior, is to betray what is godlike and regal in himself. Taking on himself the royal responsibility for promoting right order that Richard contemns, Bolingbroke gives men what they deserve: he chastises the arrogant and succors the weak and abused. His real justice sets off Richard's mock justice more clearly by contrast. By boldly passing judgement on the king, however, Bolingbroke unequivocally serves notice on the world that he is not the king's subject.

Richard's design to use Mowbray to ensnare Bolingbroke only incriminates himself. Under Richard's injunction that he “speak freely, Mowbray comes perilously close to confirming the open secret of the realm that Richard himself ordered the duke's death. “For Gloucester's death / I slew him not, but to my own disgrace / Neglected my sworn duty in that case” (II.132–34). To shield Richard as far as he can, the reverent Mowbray exposes himself, trying to make up for an injustice against the Lancasters he refused to commit by attempting to pay twice for one he did (II.135–42). Mowbray's reaction to Richard's unjust request indicates the plight of those honorable and just men who wish nothing more than to serve their liege. Richard's injustice sets them at war with themselves. They are torn between serving Richard at all costs and upholding righteous causes and hence are pulled in two directions at once. They must either stay their hands or suppress their hearts, but their hearts can no longer be synchronized or “confederate with” (V.iii.53) their hands, shattering forever the harmony between the inner and the outer man. Mowbray can no longer serve Richard with his whole heart but neither can he leave him (I.iii.170–171). Deeming himself to belong to Richard, Mowbray speaks or is silent, is set in motion or “cased up,” entirely at Richard's command (I.i.123–24; iii.87–92, 161–72). He takes one path and Bolingbroke takes the other, emancipating himself from Richard's service in fact long before Richard releases him from it in form (I.i.181). For one reason or another, Richard has no whole men left to serve him. Affecting to hold Mowbray responsible for Richard's wrong is a subterfuge that enables Bolingbroke to evade responsibility for

his. Throughout the play, he and his supporters intentionally employ the fiction of independent agents to obscure the wrong lurking behind the right (see II.i.241–45; III.i.1–28; V.vi. 38–41). By contrast to Gaunt, who has fixed his gaze on Mowbray (I.ii), Bolingbroke refrains in name only from attacking the man he deems to be king in name only. He sets out to undo his father's work while appearing to uphold it. All the sons in the play follow a similar pattern with respect to their fathers (see Richard at II.i.176–83; Aumerle at V.iii.60–69; Prince Hal at V.iii.1–3, 21–22; and Harry Percy at II.iii.41–43).

Having deigned to vouchsafe the nobles a chance to make good their claims in bloody speeches, Richard is satisfied that he has done all that a judge should do. What wounded honor must take to be a mere formality and but the prelude to manly combat, Richard deems to be a perfectly adequate substitute for it, as if the dispute itself were a mere formality and the nobles' anger only breath, utterly spent with speaking it (see Menenius' speech in *Coriolanus*, II.i.53–54). If their word means nothing, however, his means everything. As if, like a god, he could calm the raging sea by bidding it be still, Richard bids the fiery and "wrath-kindled gentlemen" to calm themselves and embrace one another as friends; to convert themselves into their own opposites. Just when he should be stern, he is suddenly gentle; where he should mete out retribution, he seeks a reconciliation instead (cf. I.iii.186–87).

This we prescribe, though no physician;
 Deep malice makes too deep incision.
 Forget, forgive, conclude and be agreed,
 Our doctors say this is no month to bleed (II.154–57).

Richard's disclaimer that he is no "physician" is more pertinent than he realizes. Rather than mollifying the nobles, he has only aggravated their enmity, guaranteeing the very result he seeks to avoid. In his quest for an easygoing, lamblike peace, the mock "lion" Richard, armed with nothing stronger than strong language, assimilates himself to his uncle Gaunt, for whom being a "makepeace" even in the face of injustice is a sign of feeble age and the ebbing of his manly spirits. Neither father can control his son (II.159–86). As Richard fails to recognize his own weaknesses, so does he fail to see his subjects' strengths. He judges their natures as his own, by appearances. Effeminate Richard may be content with "the trial of a woman's war," a shouting match between "two eager tongues" (II.48–49), but they insist on showing that they are men in some "chivalrous design of knightly trial" (II.75–76, 81).

Mowbray and Bolingbroke are as profoundly sensitive of their names as Richard is, but are determined, as he is not, to live up to them. Although they are equally obdurate, they are motivated by inverse conceptions of honor. The dispute has called into question Mowbray's fealty and Bolingbroke's sovereignty. One would show that he is faithful and a true subject, the other that he

is fearless and a true king. Mowbray wants to prove to Richard that he is, in his heart, Richard's man, and Bolingbroke that he is, in his heart, his own man. Esteeming himself to be the equal of the king, the audacious Bolingbroke will not take the chance that, by his obedience, he might look like the king's opposite. To go back on his word now might make it seem that he submits not to King Richard, but succumbs rather to his own "pale beggar-fear," or acts from "the slavish motive of recanting fear" (ll.189–193).

The knights' virile, stiffnecked resistance could only have been countered by the king's own intransigence. As it is, the mere appearance of a contest is enough completely to dislodge Richard's resolve, instantly showing up his "unstooping firmness" of soul to be an empty boast and exposing the beggarly heart beneath the royal robes. It is Richard rather than the nobles who is converted into his own opposite in this scene. His beggarly behavior inverts his regal condition. If Bolingbroke will show no cowardice, Richard will show no courage, causing the two men to trade places: the subject rules and the king obeys. Suddenly reversing himself, Richard gives in to the nobles' demand for battle. When his outward majesty proves to be impotent to guarantee that his will be done, Richard admits his impotence in order to preserve at least the outward semblance of his majesty.

We were not born to sue, but to command,
Which since we cannot do to make you friends,
Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,
At Coventry, upon Saint Lambert's day (ll.196–99).

Neither righteous nor valiant, Richard inverts the chivalric code. He is a kind of anti-knight.

Richard's godlike appearance unmans him. He cannot exhibit the strengths of man because he refuses to admit he shares in man's weaknesses. In contrast to Bolingbroke, whose vigorous assertions show he is fit to be king, similar assertions on Richard's part would show him to be only man, demeaning himself in his own eyes. To maintain the artificially enhanced status to which he (though not the regime) has elevated himself, he must abjure the actions of a free man. In the first scene, Richard prefers his godlike appearance to what is godlike and royal in himself. His last speech makes clear that this choice is self-defeating. He marries the look of a god, who is more than man, to the actual behavior of a slave or beggar, who is less.

In apparent conformity with Richard's inclinations, the trial by combat does indeed shift responsibility for right entirely from his own shoulders to Mowbray's on the one hand, and to God's, on the other. "Justice [will] design the victor's chivalry" (l.203). The troublesome choice between subjects that Richard sought in the first scene to avoid is now seized from him and the exercise of his will proscribed. Although the circumstances are inverted, Rich-

ard faces the same choice in the third scene, set at Coventry, as he does in the first. He can either look like a godlike king or act like one, but he is precluded from doing both at once.

In this scene, both Gaunt and Richard feign a godlike detachment or indifference, which they do not actually feel, out of loyalty to the king's appearance. Since they are by no means free of human attachments or the needs of ordinary men, they are pulled in two directions at once. Gaunt can no more turn his back on Richard's insolence than Richard can on Bolingbroke's. While they cannot maintain their unnatural poses, and serve them only with breath and empty gesture, neither do they stand up for themselves and their "own" as free men.² Delegating their rightful responsibilities to others, they both allow themselves to be swayed against their best feelings, only to regret their actions almost immediately and seek to undo them (compare I.iii.149 and II.241–46).

Godlike kings do not fear the outcome of judicial battles. At Coventry, as in the first scene, Richard pointedly inclines toward his favorite in the dispute. Flaunting his insouciant discernment of friend and enemy, he virtually predicts Mowbray's victory and Bolingbroke's death (II.57–58; 97–98). Just when Richard would seem to be at his most godlike, however, the frail man in him momentarily rebels. Like Gaunt, Richard is compelled to admit that "things sweet to taste prove in digestion sour" (I.236). Regretting his decision to let the trial take place, as fearing its wider consequences, reversing himself once more, he seeks to undo the effects of his own handiwork.

Richard assumed earlier that Mowbray could not lose the verbal battle, but now seems to fear that Mowbray may not win the brachial one. With Gaunt's help he banishes Bolingbroke for ten years, only to reduce the term of exile, out of momentary tenderness to Gaunt, to six years, and he imposes "the heavier doom" of lifetime exile on the benighted Mowbray. In so doing, he wrests from the "sky-aspiring" Bolingbroke the victory over Mowbray he feared Bolingbroke might win, only to hand it to Bolingbroke himself. By sacrificing Mowbray, Richard means to appease the Lancasters without hurting himself, as if Mowbray really were, as it only seems, Bolingbroke's true object (cf. Samuel Daniel, *The First Four Books of the Civile Warres*, Stanzas 64–65, and Holinshed, both cited in Bullough, pp. 438 and 393, respectively; see also Shoенbaum, pp. 11–13). Influenced, no doubt, by his false friends, who would see no need for Mowbray, and by his own blind vanity, which can admit no rival, Richard willingly abandons the "bold spirit in a loyal breast" (I.i.181) who was his most stalwart defender. Simultaneously, in place of a real defeat, Richard inflicts on Bolingbroke only an imaginary injury—one that he will not endure. By doing Bolingbroke's unjust work for him, Richard makes himself Bolingbroke's loyal servant or agent and his own worst enemy.

Richard speaks once again as the devotee of everything that has a sweet and pleasing appearance or face. His eyes would hate to see "the dire aspect of civil wounds" (II.127–28), and are touched by seeing Gaunt's "sad aspect" (I.209).

To keep the look of peace in view at home, Richard sends the belligerent Bolingbroke away, assuming that once he is out of sight, he is also safely out of mind (I.iv.37). Richard has in fact upheld the semblance of genteel concord in England while actually doing everything in his power to foment civil war. By his own hand the innocent baby peace, whom he envisions to be asleep in the country's cradle, is rendered all the more vulnerable to brazen war's rude intrusions. The apparent resolution he brings to the apparent contest between Mowbray and Bolingbroke insures that the real trial between himself and Bolingbroke will take place.

Richard does exactly the opposite of what his security demands and gives his subjects the opposite of what they deserve. Still unaware of his frailty and of Bolingbroke's vigor, he inverts the order that would obtain "if justice had her right" (II.i.227). He gives quarter to the arrogant and inflicts mortal wounds on the weak (I.iii.172-7;222-24). He is suddenly tenderhearted where he should be stern and stern where he should be tenderhearted. He metes out "rough chastisement" where there should be reconciliation and dreams of reconciliation where there can only be inveterate enmity. Refusing to let Justice speak through him in the first scene, shirking his responsibility to promote right, Richard willingly takes responsibility here for wrong. There is an unmistakable irony in the fact that unjust Richard's "justice" (I.235) rather than Justice designates the victor in the scene. At the end of the first act, Mowbray's true loyalty and Bolingbroke's treachery remain in the dark, an ambiguity that will kill Mowbray and immeasurably help Bolingbroke. In their disparate reactions to Richard's sentence, Shakespeare indicates the full extent of Richard's error (See Mowbray at I.iii.157, 176-77 and Bolingbroke at II. 144-46).

The characters of Mowbray and Bolingbroke make clear that the nobles in the king's employ possess prodigious natural gifts which, if properly directed, redound to the glory of the realm. As in the training of horses, they must be carefully monitored and disciplined to prevent their high spirits from becoming mere stubborn intractability and lawlessness. To avoid the danger to be apprehended from "great and growing men," Richard's gardeners recommend sternness. The king must "wound the bark" of the nation's fruit trees, "[l]est being overproud in sap and blood, / With too much riches it confound itself" (III.iv.57-60). Although Richard by no means refrains from brutal and hard-hearted severity when it suits him, especially toward the fathers of the realm, he permits their obstreperous sons to range freely without bridle or curb until, like Phaeton's "unruly jades," they careen out of control (III.iii.179; iv.30-31). It is not lack of spirit as such, then, but lack of discipline and discretion that defeats Richard. His will "doth mutiny with" his wit (II.i.27-29). Rather than uniting in himself the manly resolution and energy of youth and the prudence of mature age, Richard possesses the untempered defects of both youth and age: in his soul wilful folly and cold effeteness both run rampant (cf. II; 91-110 and II.i.19-25). Richard's own behavior is like that of a refractory horse; a "young

hot colt," who, having never been disciplined himself, is now incorrigible (II.i.15–16, 28–29, 70). With his untamed and lawless disposition, Richard poses the identical problem for his elders that their sons pose for him. Until it is too late, he rules neither them nor himself.³

At the end of the third scene, Richard does assert his sovereign will over the recalcitrant knights and force them to submit, but only when it is too late to reap the benefits of their duty. He becomes most fully their king in the act of releasing them as subjects. By his own admission, the departing oaths they make, to him, though not to God, dissolve as they make them (I.iii.181). In the first of several such divorce rituals in the play,⁴ king and subjects are united only at the moment of their final sundering; their harmony reigns for a fleeting moment and then melts into thin air.

Shakespeare affords a first glimpse of the real Richard, ensconced among his intimates, just at the moment of his dizzying pyrrhic victory over Bolingbroke. He heaps scorn on his cousin Bolingbroke, exhibits a shocking contempt for his dying uncle Gaunt, and above all, displays a callous indifference to his subjects, whose lives and livelihoods he is prepared to plunder to pay for his own extravagant pleasure or that of his special friends. Richard derides Bolingbroke for his "courtship of the common people"—he bestows reverence on "slaves," kneels to "poor craftsmen," and, in general, makes beggars feel like kings (I.iv.24ff). For his own part, however, Richard thinks he may treat even the wealthiest and most warlike gentlemen in the realm as slaves and beggars. With the burdensome taxes he imposes on the commons and the contempt and arbitrariness he evinces toward the nobles, Richard alienates the affections of both classes of his subjects more certainly and at a rate almost faster than Bolingbroke can "dive into" them.

The commons hath he pill'd with grievous taxes,
And quite lost their hearts; the nobles hath he fin'd
For ancient quarrels, and quite lost their hearts (II.i.246–48).

With the wholly unflattering portrait of Richard that finally emerges in the first act, Shakespeare highlights the discord between the inner and the outer man. Richard's godlike regality looks to be only skin-deep; a gorgeous but flimsy veneer, glossing over a myriad of all-too-human vices. The real order inverts the apparent order. Rather than exposing the true and the false subject, the first act raises an altogether new question: Who is the true and who is the false or counterfeit king? If Bolingbroke is only the apparent subject, by contrast to Mowbray, Richard is only the apparent king, by contrast to Bolingbroke. Lacking every regal quality, Richard is the semblance or shadow of a king, the name and not the thing (*All's Well That Ends Well*, V.iii.307–8). Conversely, as even his enemies are forced to admit, Bolingbroke has everything rightly pertaining to a king (including, in some respects, the kingdom) but the name. The look is on one side but the regal virtues are on the other.

Instead of showing Richard to be a demigod, as implied by his appearance, his vain response to his exalted status shows more clearly than anything else could do that he is only man. The artificial attributes with which Richard believes he is endowed as king actually prohibit the development of the natural strengths he has as man, creating an antithesis between his real and his apparent selves. At the same time, not being forced to restrain themselves in recognition of his frailty, his baser passions can enjoy free reign. Inverting the natural order of ruling and ruled in his soul, Richard's innocence promotes the exercise of his vices and hampers the exercise of his virtues. The focus on Richard's lack of self-knowledge as the cause of his problems argues against the view that *Richard II* is a Shakespearean indictment of Christian principles for dividing the king from himself by dividing his loyalties between heaven and earth (cf. Bloom, pp. 56, 59–60).

Blind to the value of the soul's goods, Richard is preoccupied with the cultivation of his godlike exterior. To make his own court splendid, he copies the unmanly novelties of more sophisticated and imperial ones, doting, for instance, on the reports of "fashions in proud Italy" (II.i.21–23), and surrounds himself with other forms of external beauty in sumptuous and unstinting proportions (see Holinshed in Bullough, pp. 408–9, 395). He pursues magnificence as if the look of regality were the only royal virtue and frugality the only vice, the latter implying a beggarly resourcelessness and hence servility. Vastly overestimating the worth of glittering trifles, he wastes or squanders everything that is genuinely precious—the "jewel" Mowbray, the "precious stone" England, and reputation, "the purest treasure mortal times afford" (I.i.177; II.i.96–103).

Whatever damage he is capable of inflicting, however, Richard's despotic career is bound to be very short-lived. (See Oman, p. 139, Figgis, p. 77). Like a prodigal son on a whirlwind spending spree with his inheritance, thriftless Richard will soon draw down his father's capital and find himself in embarrassed circumstances, "bankrout, like a broken man" (1.257). Nearly prostrate under the burden of his wanton expenditures, the "declining" and "drooping" land faces ruin with him.

Representing the nation, the dying Gaunt has nothing left to spend but a little breath (1.150), which he improvidently squanders on Richard in one last effort to warn the king of the peril of his own improvidence. Gaunt accuses Richard of effectually deposing himself by his reprehensible behavior and finally withholds from him the name of king (II.i.113). Pointing to the inversion of the natural order created by Richard's abuses, Gaunt, who is "gaunt as the grave," comes to life on his deathbed, while boundlessly extravagant Richard, apparently in the full bloom of youth and health, hastens toward a premature death (II.i.95–96; III.iv.48–49; V.vi.51–52). The apparently rich Richard misses his real similarity to the gaunt Gaunt, whose opposite he seems to be, but it will not be long before Richard stands literally in his uncle's place.

As soon as Gaunt dies, without a single misgiving or second thought, Richard confiscates Gaunt's estate to fund his war in Ireland, which is to say, he usurps Bolingbroke's rightful inheritance. This action is so unjust and so palpably self-destructive that even York's long-suffering patience finally gives way. In the spirit of a true friend, York importunes Richard to think of himself. His ostentatious disdain for Bolingbroke's hereditary rights undermines the sanctity of such rights in general and mocks the ancient traditions on which his own security absolutely depends: "for how art thou a king. / But by fair sequence and succession?" (II.i.198–199). Only a king can so effectively dislodge the pattern of habits and convictions that Time's "charters and . . . customary rights" have made to seem immutable.

In all innocence, Richard escapes the obtrusive reach of his uncle's sober counsel by rushing off to Ireland, while resting secure in the belief that York's obviously just intentions will serve him well at home (II.i.221; III.ii.89–90). With "signs of war" unnaturally hung about his "aged neck" the infirm and feeble York is an apt stand-in for the king (II.ii.74–5; 82–83). Inheriting a disorderly and destitute nation, York must contemplate a resort to Richard's own tactics to make even a show of resistance against Bolingbroke (II.90–91). Bolingbroke returns to England as Richard leaves, taking advantage of the opportunity created by Richard's "absent time" as Richard took advantage of his. Acknowledging the irony of this fact, the discerning but helpless York notes that while Richard is gone "to save far off," Bolingbroke and his friends have come "to make him lose at home" (II.80–83).

As York predicted, Richard's dispossession of the banished Bolingbroke prompts the wholesale defection of the nobles. While Bolingbroke's own plans are at most only accelerated by it, Richard's action turns those nobles who might yet have remained a check on Bolingbroke and his rivals into his staunch supporters. In the common cause of complaint he gives them, Richard also achieves an alliance between nobles and commoners that would otherwise be difficult to sustain.

The nobles readily surmise that Bolingbroke's plight, "bereft and gelded of his patrimony," can be theirs at any time (II.i.240–45). As a consequence of Richard's abuses, moreover, England herself languishes in captivity. In their impatience to shake off their "slavish yoke," adroitly managed by Northumberland, they lightly relegate all scruples and circumspection to the fearful and fainthearted (II.297–299. See Bolingbroke at I.i.69–72). Like their horses, they rush to Bolingbroke's side, "[b]loody with spurring, fiery-red with haste" (II.iii.58). Northumberland knowingly takes advantage of the nobles' liability, as a consequence of their high spirits and resolve never to look like cowards, to sophistic self-deception about the nature of their action. Imperceptibly, he plants on Bolingbroke's behalf the seeds of a second wrong to supersede the first committed by Richard. Relentlessly cataloging Richard's crimes, while affecting to hold Richard's flatterers responsible for them (II.i.241, 245) See

Bolingbroke at III.i.8–27), Northumberland takes pains to shroud the real goal in darkness. When it is too late to turn back, the nobles will discover they have embroiled themselves in a tangled web of self-contradiction from which they will never be able to extricate themselves. Their second wrong will not make a right. Nor can they mimic Richard's crimes without further jeopardizing the rights they meant to secure.

Richard's abuses clearly plunge his subjects into a quandary from which there is no escape. They must choose between two equally disadvantageous alternatives, which pull them in two directions at once. They must "find out right with wrong" (II.iii.145; II.ii.111–116), whether by suffering it to be done or by doing it themselves.⁵ To be true to what is best in Richard, his godlike name and appearance, they must be false to what is best in themselves; to be true to themselves, they must be false to Richard. Assisted by the natural propensities of their ages, the fathers take one path and the sons take the other. Each side is guilty, however, of an equal and opposite excess. If Richard and his supporters procrastinate and shrink back from real and mock old age, Bolingbroke and his supporters are too rash and eager from real and mock youth. If there is too much of the feminine in one camp, there is too much undisciplined masculinity in the other. With natural cooperation of young and old, male and female ruled out by Richard's disorderly rending of the familial and social fabric, neither side is able to check the excesses of the other, permitting the defects of both youth and age, in the realm as in Richard, to express themselves without reserve. The persistent disjunction between action and vision guarantees a tragic outcome. That the sons are, no matter what they do, perilously embroiled in the fathers' quarrels establishes the context for the truancy of Bolingbroke's "unthrifty" son, Prince Hal (V.iii.1–5).

Shakespeare fully appreciates the untenability of the nobles' situation. No more than he glosses over Richard's sins, however, does he endorse the insurgents' excesses or fall prey to their self-delusions. He apportions moral responsibility with care and precision. Richard's unjust actions have given way to an equally unjust reaction. If moderation and justice are not to be expected in these circumstances, they are to be desired, and without them there can be no restoration of stability.

Bolingbroke is already on his way home bearing "the tidings of . . . comfort" well before Richard's latest injustice offers him so convenient an excuse to strike (II.i.199–200). Like a godlike king, he repeals his own sentence, becomes "his own carver," and cuts out his own way (II.iii.144; II.ii.49–50).

If Richard has made manifest the limits of man and virtually symbolizes human frailty, Shakespeare's Bolingbroke typifies all that is majestic and commanding by nature in man. He is especially associated, therefore, with the royal autonomy conferred by "self-borne," "braving," "uplifted," and "glittering" arms and the "body's valor" (see I.i.37, 46, 76, 92, 108; II.ii.50; II.iii.80, 95, 112; III.iii.116).

Bereft of his name and high position, banished Bolingbroke experiences the same disorientation that Richard himself is destined to undergo. Although he is “a prince by fortune of [his] birth” (III.i.16), Richard’s decree has made him seem to be a nobody, a contemptible pauper or vagrant, an almsman on “enforced pilgrimage,” a “wandering vagabond” (I.iii.264; II.iii.120). Bolingbroke’s heart disdains to stoop to his beggarly station. He bluntly repudiates the imaginary reverse of fortunes his father offers to console him during his exile (I.iii.279–80, 288–94), in favor of a real one. “O, who can hold a fire in his hand / By thinking on the frosty Caucasus? / Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite / By bare imagination of a feast?” (II.294–97). Let dallying kings try to fool their hearts with hollow words, the plight of the daring Bolingbroke is remediable by force of will. Perfectly armed in body and soul, Bolingbroke sets out to recover the seemingly exterior complement to his inwre spirit, the “name” or “sign” that is his true inheritance (II.iii.71; III.i.25). His kingly behavior will invert his beggarly condition.

Bolingbroke is as immoderately a lover of war as Richard is of the genteel arts of peace. Nearly every speech he utters in the first act is a battle cry or call to arms. His sublime self-assurance exceeds the proper bounds of manly courage and reflects instead a vain and distorted view of his own powers. He harbors an illusion about himself that is merely the inverse of Richard’s. For opposite reasons, neither Richard nor Bolingbroke believes he can be defeated. If Richard believes he is invincible because he is king and so more than man, Bolingbroke thinks he is invincible because he is man. Both affect a godlike self-sufficiency. Bolingbroke is thus Richard’s antithesis in everything but blinding pride. So long as he lives under the delusion that his powers are unlimited, and is, in this respect, innocent of his true nature, genuine contentment will elude him.

Bolingbroke’s immunity to the charms of the goods of the imagination and hence of the soul indicates that, like Richard, he has never confronted the possibility of frustrated desire. In place of such counterfeit goods, Bolingbroke seeks the, as he thinks, solid and durable prizes, weighty to appearance, that cannot evanesce or melt, like shadows, into thin air. This is really to say, then, that Bolingbroke is at least as concerned for his escutcheon or ornamental shield and coat of arms as for his real shield and iron arms (III.i.24–27; II.iii.120–23). In his quest to surround himself with the goods that look most costly and substantial, he succumbs to the allure of Richard’s golden crown and squanders away what is genuinely precious. Lacking the natural check on the sensing eye that can only be supplied by the eye of the mind, he becomes the dupe of appearances (cf. Traversi, pp. 28ff.). Deceived both about his own powers, which are so immense in “ostentation,” and about his object, he trades in the substance of a rightful power for what will prove to be, because he achieves it unjustly, its mere semblance or shadow (see Antonio, *The Tempest*, I.ii.112–16). As in Eden, a mock sweetness, lovely to the eye, is his undoing.

When Bolingbroke encounters his uncle York on his return, he gives out that Richard's usurpation of his ducal estate rather than his own self-propelled haste compelled him, entirely against his will, as it were, to return (II.iii.133–36). Easily penetrating his disguise, York complains in the strong language that is his only resource that his nephew's graceful gestures of obedience and "stooping duty" are all "deceivable and false" (II. 83–84; II.ii.49). He only stoops to conquer. Bolingbroke's "ostentation of despised arms" and the bloody war he threatens to visit on the "pale-fac'd villages" (II.iii.94), make his true intentions clear enough. Like the "shrewd steel" he carries, his heart is, in truth, steely, cold, and implacable. Exactly mimicking the king he challenges, the rights and fair sequence and succession Bolingbroke insists on for himself, refusing to concede one "title," he intends to deny to his rival. He has in fact come back to force Richard to surrender not his "own," as he insists, but Richard's own (II.iii.148–49; III.iii.196).

As Richard's evident opposite, Bolingbroke is at the very peak of his power to attract friends, among the closest of whom he wears the name of "banished traitor" proudly, like a badge to herald the contrast. It is up to them to guarantee that he is not impecunious and a beggar forever, forced to dispense his thanks in words, "the exchequer of the poor" (II.iii.65–68). In return for his verbal assurances to his friends, Bolingbroke receives a real service from them. Northumberland's stance of peremptory defiance toward Richard, in particular, enables Bolingbroke to do everything to seek the crown, while appearing to do the opposite.

Bolingbroke settles easily in Richard's absence into Richard's role, zealously taking on himself the work that Richard shunned. Since the just cause and the unjust cause are assisted at the same time and by the same actions, the line of demarcation between them is invisible (II.iii.165–67; cf. III.i.33–34). Without ever having to show his hand and by doing good, then, Bolingbroke presently gathers strength and momentum for his eventual treason.

Bolingbroke's security depends entirely on his ability to evade responsibility for the wrong he does. As if inferring divine approbation of his designs from his easy success, Bolingbroke insists to York that he does not oppose divine will (III.iii.15–19). For a time every circumstance contrives to keep him in the dark. He does not so much seem to climb on his "ladder" Northumberland as he seems, as if by some deft sleight of fortune's hand, to levitate to the throne. In the poet Daniel's words: "he seems not t' affect / that which he did effect" (see Bullough, p. 440; cf. Wilson, pp. xx–xxii; Tillyard, p. 460).

By the time Richard finally realizes his danger, the political inversion has already begun to take place. He awakens to his true interests only after he has acted irrevocably against them (Holinshed in Bullough, p. 401).

Immediately upon his return to England, Richard discovers the stealthy and swift efficiency with which Bolingbroke has established his position in England, blanketing the countryside with "hard bright steel, and hearts harder than

steel" (III.ii.111). The political tempest Richard's dissoluteness threatened to bring on the nobles (II.i.263–69) is, "in reversion" his, the legacy of his own sins. In wave after wave, the tidings of calamity crash in on him (for the tempest imagery see II.ii.99; iv.22; III.ii.3, 105–9). Upon hearing the devastating news, however, the king remains at first nonchalant and serenely unconcerned for his security, no more worried about repelling his challenger, now he is come, than he was about provoking him.

For every man that Bullingbrook hath press'd
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel; then if angels fight
Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right (III.ii. 58–62).

The Bishop of Carlisle vigorously expostulates with Richard to remember that God's grace supports but does not replace the king's arms. It is true that rightful kings are not left defenseless, but they must cooperate with divine intention by using the mortal weapons they have at hand" . . . else heaven would, / And we will not. Heaven's offer we refuse / The proffered means of succors and redress" (II. 30–32). Try as they may, however, Richard's friends cannot call forth his manly strengths, since he refuses to admit he shares in man's weaknesses. When they urge him to be a man instead of a coward, he insists he is a king instead of a man (II. 82–85); 188–91). Any exertion whatever to keep his position beyond the expenditure of "breath," the bare enunciation of his will, would imply equality with his adversary, dragging him down to his adversary's level. Richard finds himself, therefore, once again forced to choose between his real and his apparent strengths, with deference to his god-like appearance absolutely debarring him from the action appropriate to free men. Godlike kings need not defend themselves against "weak men." The one has no other arms but breath, the other must refuse all arms but breath. The "breath of worldly men" is nothing; "the breath of kings" is all (I.56;I.iii.215). To join the combat between heavenly angels and weak men, Richard need only invoke his name, holding it before him like a lodestone. "Is not the king's name twenty thousand names? / Arm, arm, my name! a puny subject strikes / At thy great glory" (III.ii.85– 87).

Richard is compelled by his predicament inadvertently to acknowledge that the king's strength is no more or less than the strength of his subjects; his life-blood is theirs (II. 76–77). The effortless execution of the king's will comes to sight as a mere stage effect or optical illusion achieved by the hands and hearts the king commands. Richard's speech serves, then, to accuse himself for evading the responsibility for his own defense. Heaven cannot, however, be expected to pay the defenders whom Richard has simultaneously preyed upon.

Richard soon learns that his false friends are already dead (II. 138–40), and that his true friends, languishing too long in his disfavor or indifference—all

his "northern castles" and all his "southern gentlemen," peers and commoners, young and old alike—have fled with their arms to "wait upon" his foe (II.201–3). Like the dispersing Welsh forces, Richard's entire military strength steadily ebbs away before a single arrow is unloosed or a single sword unsheathed (II.iv.7; ii.73–74). He is completely unmanned: he has the names of twenty thousand men, but not the men themselves. (*2 Henry IV*, I.ii.56–57; III.ii.124–35). Soon all Richard's remaining power can be measured by the "weak arm" of Salisbury (I.65), the palsied arm of York (II.iii.104), and a few "private friends," the forlorn and ragtag remnants of his once resplendent court. When he learns that even York has "join'd with" Bolingbroke, Richard must give himself up for lost.

Those whom Richard repels are irresistibly attracted into the sphere of Bolingbroke, whose name exerts the very magnetic power Richard ascribed to his own. While Richard has only mock men, Bolingbroke, in a nationwide renaissance of manly spirit, is able to convert even mock men into men: "[w]hitebeards," boys with "women's voices" and "female joints," and "distaff-women" themselves impulsively rise up, like men, against the king (III.ii.112–20).

Finally forced to abandon his wild and vain hopes of rescue, Richard's spirit plummets to the opposite extreme. In the psychic as well as the physical sense, he is completely unmanned. He goes in an instant from arrogance to abjectness, from fearless nonchalance to "an age fit of fear." The proud, unflappable king becomes "woe's slave" (II.190,210,215–18). Stunned by the sudden revelation of his own vulnerability, Richard gives himself over to an extended meditation on death, in which he converts, to good effect, the symbol of his apparent invincibility into a memento mori (see *Henry V*, IV.i.230–84; *1 Henry IV*, III.iii.30–31).

Decked out in royal splendor and speaking in the formidable accents of royal ceremony, "the antic" Death sets up his court inside the crown "that rounds the mortal temples of a king." With a sinister delight he infuses the king with "self and vain conceit," seducing him to believe he is invulnerable and the fleshy walls of his life like "brass impregnable." Once the unsuspecting and foolish king, bewitched by his godlike looks, has given the fullest possible scope to his arrogance, death comes in his true guise, ends the ghoulish charade, and "with a little pin / Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!" (III.ii.169–70). Bitterly chiding his own erstwhile simplicity and guilelessness, Richard seems to see himself at last through his uncle Gaunt's eyes. He has harbored no flatterer greater than the "thousand flatterers" who have attended him in the form of regal vanity (II.i.100). Succumbing to the allure of the crown has not prolonged Richard's life, but hastened his death. Its real meaning is the inverse of its apparent meaning. The "hollow crown" adumbrates "the hollow ground" (III.ii.160, 140).

At last disenchanting and wide awake, Richard strains to disinter his real

self. He is determined not to make the same mistake twice and vows never to be deceived by appearances again. In his efforts to overcome one powerful illusion, however, Richard merely falls prey to the inverse one. Having previously been blind to the man in the majesty, he now insists there can be no majesty in the man. Richard has been attuned only to the frailties of men, from which, as king, he believed himself to be blessedly immune. The truth that he, too, is only “weak man” leads him to assume that he is all weakness.

I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me I am a king? (II.175–77).

As blind to his strengths as he was formerly to his weaknesses, Richard’s false sense of security was bound to give way in his very first challenge to the most abject fear. Imagining himself to be resourceless and without any arms of his own, however, Richard disparages man and demotes him from his rank by nature. The king who saw himself to be more than man now esteems himself to be a natural slave or beggar, who is less. Still confusing his self and his station, he is still deceived by appearances.

Being forced to forfeit his false likeness to the divine, which lay in an imperishable body, Richard comes very close to denying the true likeness—the priceless spark of golden divinity he carries within himself and man’s true “own.” Richard represents man as soulless matter or dust—“gilded loam or painted clay” (I.i.179). Without the crown, he claims to have nothing left to call his own but death, which is nothing, and that “small model of the barren earth” draping his bones, which is also nothing (II.ii.150–52).

Although Richard professed to be inwardly “arm’d” against his calamity (II.93, 104), his soul’s armor suffers, in fact, from the same neglect and underdevelopment as does his army. Man’s awareness of his limits is the indispensable precondition to the development of his strengths. Never knowing fear, Richard has also been prevented from acquiring courage. He surrenders less to Bolingbroke than to his own slavish passions.

The Bishop of Carlisle and later the queen both exhort Richard to remember who he is. His regality is, like the lion’s, by nature; it resides in his “heart,” his “intellect,” his “shape and mind” (V.i.26–33). Not being subject to political defeat, man’s true regality can only be deposed by vile self-conquest; the subjugation of his naturally ruling to his naturally slavish elements. For Richard to be overcome by superior force is deplorable, but to conquer himself by surrendering to fear is to become his own worst enemy and “a traitor with the rest.” Contemning his own natural powers, Richard only augments Bolingbroke’s strength and bolsters death’s ascendancy over him (III.ii.180–82; V.i.24–25, 38–39). Only slaves let themselves be conquered by fortune. From this non-Machiavellian perspective, it is not the recognition of limits that prevents one

from being free, however: fortune derives all its power from submission to the slavish passions. Fear of death and not death itself makes Richard "servile" (184–85). If there is, in fact, no way for Richard to overcome the advantages Bolingbroke has won by his own remissness, Richard need not surrender his regal soul along with the crown. In these dire circumstances the whole difference between a beggar and a king shows itself in the ultimate decision to "fear and be slain" or to fight and be slain. Since this choice depends only on self-mastery, it is never too late for the soul to arm itself. Strength of soul amplifies the body's armor, but the armed soul need not fail when the armed body does. Properly fortified, man's soul is, in fact, indomitable (Machiavelli, Ch. 25, pp. 98–101; Montaigne, pp. 150–59).

Unable to forget either his old greatness or his new smallness, his formerly great name or his newly great grief (III.iii.136–39), Richard's soul is torn in two. In his confusion about what he is, he sometimes says things he does not feel, but which seem appropriate to his new condition, only to call them back almost immediately as being inappropriate to his old one (II.127–36). Throughout, he tries to gain access to his true self by adopting the posture befitting his station. Striking one inauthentic pose after another, casting about for the one that fits, Richard finds no satisfaction (cf. Ornstein, pp. 109–10).

While Bolingbroke seeks the station that answers his kingly pride of heart, Richard strives to humble his heart in accord with the decline in his political status, as if his reduced and narrow straits supplied the full measure of his spirit. As earlier he mimicked the posture of proud sovereignty suited only to gods, so now does he try assiduously to frame his spirit to a docile and groveling servility, adopting a posture of "base humility" suited only to beggars and slaves. If he is no longer a sacred king, perhaps he is a mendicant pilgrim or holy beggar, an outcast forced to wander aimlessly, defenseless against the abuses of men, but still beloved by God (II.147–59; see also V.ii.1–6, 29–36).

Richard's intense desire somehow or other to restore the harmony between the two halves of his being that would yield a state of rest, expresses his longing for self-knowledge. Not yet knowing himself as man, who is touched by both the beggar and the king, Richard assumes he must be all one or all the other. His spirit thus swings freely between the two outermost boundaries or poles of existence, from god to natural slave and back again, altogether bypassing man.

By contrast to the first act, however, the discord between his inner and outer selves that Richard experiences no longer signifies a heart too beggarly to rule as king, but indicates, on the contrary, that something in him is too royal to suit his beggarly condition and stubbornly refuses to succumb. His royal spirit disdains to stoop to his lowly station and sets itself against his own baser inclinations, preparing him to master them. Almost despite himself, the king within rebels against the beggar without. As his apparent strength was married to real weakness, so now must his obvious weakness contest with a newfound

strength, gradually turning him into his own opposite. Without denying the tragedy of Richard's fall, Richard is destined to discover the strengths of man, not by winning, but by having to bear the utmost adversity and defeat. Precisely because his situation is irreparable, he will be forced back on his own hitherto untested resources. An inner victory is thus being prepared for him in tandem with his outward defeat. From now on, Richard will ever more clearly combine the look of a beggar and the heart and deeds of a godlike king. (see V.ii.23–33). Because of the war he successfully wages with himself against the total collapse of his spirits, Richard shows himself to be an increasingly formidable rival to Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke is surprised to discover that Richard has installed himself at Flint Castle, for instance (III.iii.20–24; c.f. Holinshed, in Bullough, pp. 402–3).

The closer Bolingbroke approaches the crown, the more he tries to obscure behind Northumberland all the regal boldness he was so anxious to display in the first scenes. Although Northumberland doesn't refer to Richard as king, Bolingbroke, for his, part, is scrupulously deferential, reiterating "King Richard" five times in a single speech (III.iii.31–66). As the time for an accounting of responsibility draws near, he wants to avoid looking like Richard's opposite. He proceeds toward Richard in the guise of utmost humility, like a vassal come "to beg enfranchisement on his knees" (III.iii.114). While Bolingbroke conspicuously preens himself outside the king's castle so that Richard may see his "fair appointments," he sends Northumberland to make manifest to Richard his foul intentions. As Bolingbroke intends Northumberland to deliver his assertions of "allegiance and true faith of heart" to Richard, they barely conceal his defiance (II.36 ff). Speaking with the duplicitous double tongue of "lurking adder," he threatens as he soothes. An imperial Richard gives back to Bolingbroke, through the same Northumberland, at least as good as he gets. The hideous scourge of civil war that threatens to descend on England will not be visited by Bolingbroke's supporters on Richard, but by Richard's supporters on Bolingbroke; it will not be fought to gain the crown but to keep it. Richard promises Bolingbroke, as his own rather than Richard's own, a legacy of "crowns" as the wages for his sins, which he will inherit long after Richard has paid the bitter price of his. "But ere the crown he looks for live in peace, / Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons [shall] bedew / Her pasters' grass with faithful English blood" (II.75–100).

From misplaced gentleness, Richard would not fight Bolingbroke when he had the strength; now that he is willing to do so, he cannot. Having no external resource left but breath, Richard has no choice but to surrender his crown to Bolingbroke's show of force. Descending finally like a falling star to meet Bolingbroke in the "base" court, "where kings grow base," Richard yields to Bolingbroke all that his rival craves but dares not ask for.

Bol: My gracious lord, I come but for mine own.

Rich: Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all (II.196–97).

Richard does not, however, give everything of his own away. Behind their ostensibly beggarly postures stand two kings. Not only is Richard's body as low as the kneeling Bolingbroke's, his heart is equally as high (ll.190–95). If Bolingbroke conquers in mock humility, like a beggar, Richard surrenders here with a spark of real defiance, like a king (cf. V.ii.9–10, 18–20, and 31–33) In speeches that combine humility and imperial grandeur, Richard also speaks with two voices. Accordingly, when Bolingbroke asks only to serve the king, the king makes clear that he is being forced to serve the servant (ll.199–201). While agreeing to give the crown to Bolingbroke, he exposes the breach in the natural course of succession that his agreement occasions (ll.204–5). Finally, by anticipating where Bolingbroke means to take him, Richard exposes Bolingbroke's ultimate goal (ll.208–10).

The single long scene depicting Richard's deposition opens with Bolingbroke's final inquiry into Gloucester's murder, specifically to discover "who wrought it with the king" (IV.i.4). On this pretext, Bolingbroke intends to intimidate Richard's "private friends," and, in particular, to bring down his cousin Aumerle (V.ii.41–42). To insure his victory, Bolingbroke must render Richard's isolation complete. He employs the semblance of justice solely to promote injustice, cancelling out thereby Richard's injustice that came to sight with Gloucester's death. Moreover, Bolingbroke's arraignment of *Aumerle* for Gloucester's death at this juncture automatically dispels the illusion of perfect righteousness which his accusation of Mowbray originally created, a tacit admission that he was deceived by appearances. The true and the false man remain in the dark. There will be no reconciliation with the dead Mowbray (IV.i.86–91) and no proper retribution of Aumerle (V.iii.35, 131).

Betrayal of their former friends is the only offering that those nobles who intend "to thrive in this new world" can make to the stern new king to conciliate him (IV.i.78). Their efforts to escape the consequences of one unjust partnership by forming another, in imitation of Bagot's double treachery in the scene (ll.6ff.), are, however, self-defeating. The slippery oath of an oath-breaker can never be trusted. In the united front Bolingbroke and his supporters present to Richard, they have given one another incontestable proof that they hold nothing sacred. They will soon find themselves sorely pressed to find the honor that is reputed to reign among thieves (see IV.i.124–25; *1 Henry IV*, I.i; ii; V.ii). As a portent of the future, the bellicose nobles litter the floor with their gloves or "gages," the merely outward pledges of fidelity and thus a show of hands not hearts (cf. Bolingbroke at II.iii.46–50 and v.ii.11–17). In a parody of this sort of parody of chivalry now prevalent in the realm, the true Prince Hal dissociates himself from the "manual seal of death" by wearing a prostitute's glove as a favor (V.iii.17).

York interrupts Bolingbroke's show of justice with the announcement that "plume-pluck'd Richard" has agreed in private to abdicate, whereupon Bolingbroke consents to ascend the throne "in God's name." The Bishop of Carlisle's vehement objections to these clandestine and summary proceedings, which only

point up the usurpers' injustice, compel Bolingbroke to bring Richard into court in person, whether or not he planned to do so before. When Northumberland presses Bolingbroke, therefore, to grant "the commons' suit," that Richard sign a formal confession of abuses (II.224–27, 272–75. Cf. Holinshed, in Bullough, pp. 410–11), Bolingbroke calls Richard forward that "in common view [h]e may surrender" (I.48). Bearing in mind the double meaning of the word (I.iii.30), in a telling usurpation of his own, the scene becomes Richard's deposition instead of Bolingbroke's.

To exculpate himself from blame, Bolingbroke clearly intends to foist on Richard the full responsibility for the usurpation; to make Richard his agent of injustice. Contrary to his stance of sublime self-assurance, his action reveals an urgent need to soothe the unsteady allies he seems to threaten. The supreme importance of Richard's witting complicity in the deposition also confirms more clearly than anything else could do the truth and practical import of Richard's insistence that "no hand of blood and bone" can make or unmake rightful kings (III.iii.78–81). In order to be formally adopted as Richard's rightful heir, Bolingbroke himself must acknowledge that Richard is the sole fount of legitimate political authority and, therefore, the true king. Accordingly, Bolingbroke has also come to urge the near identity of his and Richard's genealogies (III.i.16–17; iii.105–8; cf. I.i.70–71).

On the surface, Richard seems to comply fully with Bolingbroke's demand. The derelict and negligent king who deposed himself in fact now deposes himself in form. Freely renouncing every one of the royal names and titles, with his "soul's consent," Richard makes "glory base, [and] sovereignty a slave; / Proud majesty a subject, state a peasant" (IV.i.249–52, 203–22).

Bol.: Are you contented to resign the crown?

Rich.: Ay, no, no ay; for I must nothing be;

Therefore no no, for I resign to thee (II.200–201).

In one sense, giving his soul's consent to the deposition does indeed make Richard, as he says, "a traitor with the rest." By so doing, however, he also retains the royal autonomy that is the hallmark of kings. As in the prayer in his opening speech, wherein he takes the parts of "both priest and clerk," Richard performs Bolingbroke's part in the deposition as well as his own. He surrenders only to himself. Although he continues to oscillate in this scene between his high thoughts and his low station, the contrast between his sovereignty and Bolingbroke's utter dependence on others has never been more pronounced. Aloof and self-sufficient, like a god, Richard stands just beyond his enemy's grasp. Once he is in court, moreover, Richard actually does everything but that which he was called there to do. When he is finally asked outright to catalogue his crimes in public, he reminds his opponents' of theirs instead (II.228–36).

Refusing to be judged by "subject and inferior breath," Richard confesses his sins to no one but himself (V.v).

Richard does not however, spare himself. Others may have delivered him to his "sour cross" (II.170–71, 239–42), but his renunciation of the name of king is a kind of self-crucifixion, an act of self-mortification, accompanied by agonizing torment and grief of heart. Serving as his own judge and jury he passes judgement on himself and on Bolingbroke as a just king should do, evenhandedly giving each exactly what is owing. Voluntarily inflicting on himself the punishment he deserves. Richard brings himself down for his own sins. Inverting the first scene of the play, however, Richard shows himself here to be godlike as a judge rather than all too human as a sinner. As Bolingbroke learned how to be an unjust king from Richard, so he has learned from Bolingbroke how to be a just one. His real justice is the foil setting off more clearly by contrast the mock justice with which Bolingbroke opens the scene. Like a true king Richard takes the responsibility for right in this scene and leaves to Bolingbroke, contrary to Bolingbroke's design, the responsibility for wrong. Richard is no longer Bolingbroke's agent of injustice. While profoundly sensitive of his own egregious folly, Richard does not take on himself the sins of others. The usurpers are guilty of breaking faith with God as well as him, a sin for which they must answer to God, if not to him (I.243). Further, while Richard sees the coming retribution for the "foul sin" to be directed by divine providence, the conversion of feelings animating it occurs according to the ordinary mechanisms of the passions involved (V.i.66–68). As he leaves the court for the last time, Richard shows neither a tenderhearted sorrow nor the patient submissiveness of a national martyr or scapegoat. Drawn up to his full height, indignant and imperial, he calls Bolingbroke and the others thieves or "conveyers" all, "[t]hat rise thus nimbly by a true king's fall" (II.317–18. Cf. Ornstein, p. 119).

Paradoxically, then, the effect of Richard's surrender is precisely the opposite of that Bolingbroke intended it to have. Rather than exposing Richard's injustice, it shows up Richard's justice. Rather than emphasizing Richard's weaknesses, it reveals Richard's strengths. Above all, and although Bolingbroke wants nothing more than to look like Richard now, Richard's legitimacy and his justice combine to expose him—the apparent king—as Richard's opposite.

Richard shows himself to be most fully a king in the act of divorcing himself from the crown. The harmony between his soul and his station obtains only for a fleeting moment. Sadly, in this "woeful pageant" or anti-coronation, the authority he wields so well dissolves as he wields it.

Behind Richard's ostensible self-defeat there is real self-mastery. In stark contrast, Shakespeare's source Holinshed reports Richard's compliance throughout the deposition, including the formal signing of a confession, in an effort to propitiate Bolingbroke in order to save his life (see Bullough, p. 408).

Until now Richard has been his own worst enemy because he betrayed what is best in himself, evincing the array of human failings from injustice to cowardice that precipitated the fatal crisis. Acting in accord with what is best in himself, Richard is now a “traitor” only to what is worst in himself. For kingly Richard to unking unkingly Richard, negating his negation of royalty, is to achieve an affirmative result: like every double negative (“no no”) it produces its own opposite. By deposing his former self, Richard cancels out his truant past and purges his soul once and for all of the vanity and folly that had taken root there, choking every wholesome growth (III.iv.41–46). Whipping “th’ offending Adam out of him,” Richard endows himself with a new innocence.⁶ His royal courage will follow in the train of his royal justice.

For every gain that Bolingbroke has made, he must endure a loss of equal extent. Every loss that Richard must endure will be compensated for by an equal gain. The deposition proves to have a double meaning in fact as well as in name. For both Richard and Bolingbroke, every victory is wed to a defeat and every defeat to a victory.

Bolingbroke’s eager receipt of the crown and cares that Richard lays down proves that he is dazzled by the glitter of the “heavy weight” (1.204) he has won. In truth, he inherits nothing but Richard’s cares. Bolingbroke will never possess the opulent royal goods that Richard squandered. Once he is actually king Bolingbroke and his supporters will find themselves beggars again, forced to content themselves with the “bare imagination of a feast” (Oman, p. 154; *1 Henry IV*, III.ii.56–59, IV.iii.74–76; *2 Henry IV*, I.ii.236–37). Bolingbroke already knows all he will ever know of “the breath of kings,” the effortless execution of his will, which he once noted, in a voice as wistful as sarcastic, that King Richard enjoyed, and largely as an effect achieved by Richard himself.

Since he has been spared every exertion beyond breath and killing looks (III.ii.165), Bolingbroke has so far undergone nothing but “the trial of a woman’s war.” Precisely because Richard’s self-conquest has rendered Bolingbroke’s “shrewd steel” unnecessary, he becomes king without ever having tried the much vaunted strength of his “glittering” arms. Only after he already has the crown—when he imagines he really can commend his arms to rust (III.iii.116) and concentrate on reconciliation—does it prove necessary for him to try to win it by his own arms. The one thing he cannot conquer, the infeasible title to the crown, is the one thing he needs. He finds himself hamstrung by his own injustice. As Richard’s crimes strengthened Bolingbroke, so do Bolingbroke’s crimes once more restore vitality to Richard’s cause (IV.i.324–34). Bolingbroke’s new weakness, like his old strength, arises because he looks like Richard’s opposite. Bolingbroke is destined to learn the limits of his own arms and thus of the power of man, not by losing, but by gaining the crown. An inner defeat is therefore being prepared for him in tandem with his outward victory. His cowardice will follow in the train of his injustice, making his situation exactly the inverse of Richard’s. As in Richard’s case, the har-

mony between his soul and his station reigns only for a fleeting moment. When Bolingbroke finally becomes king in name, he is king in name only.

Only when he is king himself does Bolingbroke come to feel the awesome power of Richard's legitimate authority and, for the first time, to fear him (V.iv). Abandoning his original intention to win friends by mildness, he decides to kill Richard (see IV.i.271, 304, 310, V.i. 51–54, 84). Amidst the numerous happy reports of other fallen rebels at the end of the play, Exton congratulates Bolingbroke heartily for attaining the death of Richard, "the mightiest of thy greatest enemies," inadvertently exposing the depths of Bolingbroke's previously "buried fear" (V.vi.30–32).

If Richard's life shows edenic idleness, surfeit, and monstrous waste, Bolingbroke's, in keeping with the post-edic imagery Shakespeare employs, consists in unremitting, frenzied, and heartrending toil. In all his reign, the "holiday" he dreams of as respite from the works of war, and which seems tantalizingly near at hand (III.i.44; V.vi.49–50), recedes farther and farther from his grasp and forever eludes him (*2 Henry IV*, IV.v.197–98).

The arms of the unruly nobles are rendered by Bolingbroke's violation of hereditary principles infinitely more dangerous in the realm than they ever were before. Bolingbroke has simply removed what was the single most important restraint upon their political ambitions, calling down on his own head, therefore, the "thousand dangers" with which York threatened Richard. His incessant wars also doom Bolingbroke to repeat Richard's alienation of the commons, whose pursestrings are the keys to their heartstrings (II.ii.129–31) and with whose assistance he might have checked the nobility. Finally, Bolingbroke aggravates a baneful ecclesiastical ambition, from which, in Shakespeare's account at least, Richard was spared. Once their fate is divorced from that of the sitting king, the clergy strive all the more to become an independent fount of power, making full use of the distinctive weapons at their disposal—religious zeal and "the sacrament"—to vex and harass Bolingbroke and his heirs (IV.i.133, 326–29; V.ii.97–99).⁷ The inescapable conclusion to be drawn is that in the achievement of the crown, Bolingbroke has only won a pyrrhic victory, one the costs of which—to self, to dynasty, and to country—far outweigh any possible benefits, and hence one more apparent than real (cf. Ribner, pp. 160–62, 164–68; Campbell, pp. 168, 212).

Richard's "little world," the populous English commonwealth, finally contracts itself to the "little world" he inhabits in his prison cell, where there "is not a creature but myself" (V.v.4,9; II.i.45, 105). Only now that he is nothing can Richard try, really for the first time, his own inner resources. Although his body is enslaved, Richard's "brain" and "soul" unite to display a godlike self-sufficiency. Lacking every material to form or animate, from nothing. Richard brings to life all manner of imaginary men and conditions. His political kingdom may have shrunk to the impecunious and gaunt contours of a prison cell, but his inner kingdom expands to encompass the whole world.

In one sense, Richard's mock men confirm man's smallness. From nothing

man can in fact make nothing. Richard's imaginary progeny, moreover, pre-
 sage death rather than life; like the queen's own "life-harming heaviness," this
 pregnancy is the antithesis of the natural operation it mimics (II.ii). By intimat-
 ing the durability of his ineffable soul, however, Richard's ephemeral creations
 show the way to his true self and "own." Nature herself deceives by appear-
 ances. The real order inverts the apparent order: the insubstantial shadow is the
 substance and the palpable substance the shadow. The dazzling material goods,
 heavy in appearance, of which Richard is deprived, are actually "heavy noth-
 ings" that are worth less than they seem. The shadowlike goods of the soul,
 which seem to be light and airy nothings, mere breath or the stuff of dreams,
 prove to be incorruptible and of priceless worth. Richard's invisible soul is a
 profusion of riches and source of life, a garden or womb, and his durable-
 seeming body is a tomb, the "frail sepulchre of flesh" over which, to live fully,
 the soul must declare its sovereignty and from which, to live forever, the soul
 must be "banished" (I.iii.196). As an amalgam of body and soul, man is a
 compound of substance and shadow, something and nothing, and, as Richard
 himself will discover, never "nothing" in every sense. Thus, however much it
 might seem, Richard still keeps something of his own. He has undergone the
 dissolution of everything but himself (IV.i.261-62).

Richard enters vicariously into the lives of all the inhabitants of his imagin-
 ary kingdom without availing himself of any comfort. He plays "in one person
 many people, and none contented" (V.v.37-38). Assembling themselves into a
 three-tiered social order, Richard's thoughts represent the varying sorts of "vain
 conceit" or hubris underlying the restless discontentment characterizing most
 men's lives. At the apex of the soul's regime the sophisticate reason proudly
 asserts its sovereignty over humble faith, only to founder on the shoals of the
 "scruples" it throws up for itself, and "set[s] the word against the word" (II.11-
 14); see also V.iii.119-222). In the next class, ambitious and lionlike thoughts
 "plot unlikely wonders," viz, a stunning escape from prison, inevitably failing
 which they "die in their own pride" (II.18-22). Even Richard's ostensibly mod-
 est and lowly thoughts, like "seely beggars" in the stocks, console themselves
 with the flattering reflection that others have been where they are and "for-
 tune's slaves." Insofar as they fail to reckon with their own faults, however,
 and bear their misfortunes on others' backs (II.29-30), they can only win, as
 Richard himself once did, a counterfeit equanimity that cannot be sustained. In
 each of these instances, the vanity impeding the soul's composure arises be-
 cause of man's failure to acknowledge his own limits: the weakness of his
 vision, the vulnerability of his arms and the mortality of his body, the down-
 ward pull of the appetites. Richard's case shows, however, that whether
 through their own blind sinning or that of others, even sacred kings can find
 themselves beggars. In Richard's case, then, all men must learn to recognize
 themselves (cf. Tillyard, pp. 246, 251-52). Out of the deposed King Richard
 Shakespeare fashions the perfect type or figure of man, the vicar of man, who

stands in his place. "Nor I, nor any man that but man is, / With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd / With being nothing" (ll.39–41).

By repeatedly recrowning and redeposing him, Richard's imagination apparently consigns him to ceaseless desultory motion.

Sometimes am I king;
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am. Then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king;
Then am I king'd again, and by and by
Think that I am unking'd by Bullingbrook,
And straight am nothing (ll.32–38).

With characteristic self-sufficiency, in the wild fluctuations of his spirit Richard acts out in a tragic mode the burlesque rendering of the main plot in the immediately preceding scene: the comic risings and fallings of the three Yorks in the matter of Aumerle and Bolingbroke's own oscillations in response to them, which remind him, he says, of the comedy "The Beggar and the King" (V.iii.76–80).

Finally bearing his misfortunes on his own back, a wise man now (l.63), Richard accepts the full responsibility for irrevocably destroying the "concord of my state and time." Inverting the perspective of the royal gardeners, who discern the political disorder on the basis of the "law and form and due proportion" they cultivate in their little world, Richard infers the need for moderation and regularity from the disorder he has wrought in his—coming by the opposite route to the same conclusion. When he hears time kept poorly and the lack of "proportion" in the music that filters into his cell, Richard recalls the "disordered string" of hours and days that comprise his own life. He bitterly chides himself for possessing sensibilities so acute he can detect minute mistakes in music, while he was for so long utterly heedless of the gross discord and lawlessness engulfing him (ll.44–49). "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me." In this rueful backward glance and reflection on what might have been, the possibility of his own composure is born. Like Adam, Richard sees himself clearly only in retrospect. His self-knowledge is presented by Shakespeare as the equally tragic and comic residue of sin.

Richard's fretful meditations culminate in a final burst of high spirits that enables him to impose order on chaos. His last deed is a courageous and daring act of self-defense that has no hope whatever of succeeding. To arouse the anger that can help to conquer fear and to give vent to her own, the queen once held up for Richard's imitation the defeated king of beasts (V.i.29–34). Like "the lion dying [who] thrusteth forth his paw with rage / To be o'erpow'r'd," Richard hurls defiance at those who have come to overpower him, brutally killing two of his wouldbe assassins before he is himself brought down by the doomed Exton (V.v.107–8, 115–16; V.vi.34–36, 42–44). In his barren

and tomblike cell, stripped of the royal insignia, wielding a profane and expropriated axe instead of his own sacred sceptre, Richard experiences his most fully majestic moment. Despite appearances to the contrary, one cannot fail to recognize the royal heart beneath the beggar's rags. At the last, Richard withholds from "Henry of Lancaster" the name of king he had seemed earlier to bequeath to him. He finally accepts the royal responsibility to defend to the death himself and what is rightfully his own. His regal behavior inverts his beggarly condition.

By making himself the implacable arm of avenging justice, Richard assimilates himself in an instant to the best qualities in his adversary. While Bolingbroke has come unwittingly to represent man's limits, Richard now embodies man's strengths. His stunning exhibition is indeed the only feat of arms and manly trial in the play. In death, if not in life, he is the foremost exemplar of the code of chivalry: as warlike as righteous and "[a]s full of valure as of royal blood" (V.v.113).

Richard finally achieves self-rule, overcoming the oppressive fear of pain and death which threatened to unman him and bound him like an abject slave to his enemy. Richard cannot turn back the clock or work the miracles that would heal the rupture in the social order or in his life that he himself created. If he cannot literally break free of his enemy's grasp and tear down the prison walls, he does break out of the inward prison within which his regal spirit has been "cased up." Because of his human frailties, Richard has always been his own greatest enemy. Now, however, the conquerer of himself becomes the master of himself and restores the natural order of ruling and ruled in his soul. Although forced to submit to his body's enemy, he lays his soul's enemy to rest. Resolving for a noble over a base death, Richard converts death and defeat into their opposites and liberates himself, as Carlisle instructed, from fortune's thrall. "Fear, and be slain—no worse can come to fight, and fight and die is death destroying death / Where fearing dying pays death servile breath" (III.ii. 183–85).

If Richard's response to his exalted station shows him to be only man, not god, his response to his enslavement proves that he is at least man, not beast. His armed resistance to Bolingbroke's agents preserves the distinction between might and right that would be blurred by passive acquiescence and overcomes the indifference to justice caused by the overwhelming power of the appetites or animal passions.

Richard dashes his killers' hopes that he would conveniently kill himself by eating poisoned food (V.v.97–101). Shakespeare's depiction thus shows to be impossible the "report of common fame" that Holinshed holds to be improbable, namely that Richard was defeated, as he allowed himself to be deposed, by an appeal to the frailties of his flesh. He was, it was said, "tantalised with food and starved to death" (see Bullough, p. 413).

Richard's inspiration is his former groom's report of Bolingbroke's usurpa-

tion of the royal horse Barbary and Barbary's blithe assent to it. Richard withdraws the accusation of treason he initially levels at his horse, only to depict him, for his indifference to justice, and contrary to customary usage, as an unusually cowardly and docile animal. The name invokes both barbary slave and the blackhearted barbarism of Bolingbroke that turns the refined and "Christian climate" into its opposite (IV.i.130–31, 138–44; V.ii.36). Even the most characteristically high-spirited animal is only an animal, a natural slave or beast of burden, "created to be aw'd by man (V.iv.84–91). By analogy, for Richard patiently to abide Bolingbroke's treachery is to transform himself from a man into a vile slave or barbarian and a beast of burden.

I was not made a horse.
And yet I bear a burthen like an ass,
Spurr'd, gall'd, and tir'd by jauncing Bullingbrook (II.92–94).

Richard makes a spirited response to his spirited animal. By helping to contravene the power of mere appetite, the spirited claim to something more for oneself than is available to all, man and animal alike, can be enlisted in the service of the development of the qualities that make man's distinctiveness most pronounced, bolstering, in this case, Richard's refusal to act beneath himself, even in the face of death. To understand the nature of Richard's courage properly, it is necessary, therefore, to transcend the merely metaphorical equation of free men and their horses prominent in the play. The intransigent refusal to succumb to injustice is a peculiarly human response. Without man's recognition of himself as a free being rather than a slave, possessed of a godlike soul, there can be no deliberate resistance to injustice, as distinct from mere rashness. Nor is Richard's uplifted arm a reflex against pain, like a shooting out of the lion's "paw" (see Melville, p. 99). The true courage such as Richard exhibits in this scene requires the cooperation of reason and spirit, wit and will. In his depiction of Richard's final action, Shakespeare indicates his view that nature ordains the marriage of man's spirit and his spirituality, manliness and godliness, and, thus, that genuine regality is the province of man as such.

As Richard showed himself in the deposition scene to be most kingly in the act of uncrowning himself, so does he now come most fully to life in the act of ending his life and, hence, in both cases, with tragic tardiness. Richard displays the full plenitude of human powers—the perfectly concerted actions of the armed body and the armed soul—only at the moment of their violent rupture and permanent divorce, as the bands attaching him to life dissolve. For one fleeting moment, he is both a rising and a falling king. In both a sacred and a secular sense, Richard's spirit rises as his body falls. "Mount, mount my soul! thy seat is up on high, / Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die" (II.111–12).

The mystery or paradox of the resurrection of the spirit to which Richard alludes in his final speech represents the ultimate transmutation or conversion

of one thing into its opposite. In life there is death, but in death there is eternal life. The double inversions of *Richard II*, which show everything turning into its own opposite, adumbrate this fundamental doctrine. Rather than discord between heaven and earth. Shakespeare's play implies a harmony between the secular and the sacred resurrection.⁸ With the grace of God, Richard ransoms himself from the sins that produced his fall (II.i.31–39).

In the parallel lives of Richard and Bolingbroke Shakespeare crafts a natural pair, composed of elements that are indispensable to one another and therefore meant by nature to reside together for their mutual benefit. Although set at odds by their respective acts of injustice, Richard and Bolingbroke represent two halves of the same whole, each the inverse or mirror image of the other. Rather than cousins, they appear in the play as brothers, each one Cain and each one Abel, “[c]urrents that spring from one most gracious head” (III.iii.108. See I.i.104; V.vi.43). The indissoluble union their relationship is meant to describe corresponds to man's own dual nature, in which body and soul, weaknesses and strengths, are welded together. Neither Richard nor Bolingbroke attains the harmony between his soul and his station that he desires because neither man finds his necessary complement in the other. Each possesses only half the truth about man. Until it is too late, Richard sees only man's weaknesses and Bolingbroke only man's strengths; Richard sees every sort of being but man, and Bolingbroke sees only man. The lives of Richard and Bolingbroke bring Shakespeare's audience by opposite routes to the same conclusion. It must be said, however, that Bolingbroke remains throughout essentially the foil to set off the greater Richard by contrast, as indicated by the shift from the plane of tragedy to comedy for Shakespeare's history of *Henry IV*. Richard's range of experience, like Prospero's, alone permits the incorporation of sub- and trans-political perspectives into one's view of human life.

Richard II depicts the negation by the rough, uncouth hand of man of that which was established by custom, nature, and nature's God. The restoration of concord to England is not a task that can be accomplished by the hand of man, however, and proves rather to depend on a certain, perhaps providential, cooperation of man, nature and time. By his own admission, Bolingbroke's death achieves what all the incessant labors of his life could not (*2 Henry IV*, IV. in 198–200). Although man cannot supplant nature's creativity, however, the arms he has by nature give him a distinctive work.⁹ Man must husband nature's rich profusion in order to bring forth its best fruits and to check the otherwise overwhelming presence of deformity, wildness, and waste. Since man's powers are neither superfluous nor unlimited, political wisdom requires that clear-sighted appreciation of man's strengths be wedded to clear-sighted cognizance of the insurmountable limits to his powers. Eschewing both the blind king's “vain conceit” and the beggar's “base humility,” genuine pride and genuine humility must be conjoined. The truth at the core of political wisdom is, then,

like the antagonists in the royal family, and like man himself, a whole or unity composed of opposites.

Shakespeare, like Machiavelli (ch. 18, pp. 68–71), recommends a double nature to remedy the fundamental political problem. He associates himself here not with the lion and the fox, but with the lion and the lamb (II.i.73–74. See *Henry V*, III.i.1–16), reflecting his greater preoccupation throughout with the prince's justice than with his grandeur, or, rather, making his justice the keystone of his grandeur. Richard and Bolingbroke ultimately represent two types of souls or distinct aspects of the soul that must be amalgamated in a single man, achieving the soul's harmony by counterpoint. Like the other natural pairs of opposites in the play whose salutary rivalry has been disrupted by injustice—male-female, youth-age, the works of war and the recreations of peace—their natural dialectic insures that each may check the excesses of the other for the benefit of both. The foundation for political wisdom to which the play points is a lesson in moderation.

Shakespeare does agree with Machiavelli on the importance of the prince's knowing how to avoid being deceived by appearances,¹⁰ making clear that, by nature's own design, a certain degree of cunning is necessary to know nature: one must not fail to recognize either the flesh-and-blood man beneath the golden crown or the godlike royal spirit encased in the flesh-and-blood man. The goods of the soul supply the indispensable check on the tendency, which is so prominent in exalted men as to be their peculiar liability to be deceived by appearances (*Measure for Measure*, II.ii.110–23). Shakespeare himself deals entirely in these goods. His airy nothings, so much like dreams, point to a realm of surpassing beauty that need not be unlocked, as it is in Richard's case, by sorrow, a realm which, once glimpsed, arouses longings to transcend the plane of justice altogether, wherein human limits must invariably manifest themselves, and to seek satisfaction instead in a godlike contemplation of the human soul: the name Man is contained within the wondrous name Miranda.

NOTES

1. All citations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*. The original version of this essay was delivered at an NEH-sponsored conference, "On the Role of Spiritedness in Politics," hosted by the Olin Center of the University of Chicago in May 1986, honoring the work of Joseph Cropsey. I am indebted to Fred Baumann, Kenneth Jensen, and Catherine Zuckert for their editorial and substantive suggestions.

2. Compare Gaunt and York at I.iii.241–46 and V.ii.89, 94. Throughout the play both Gaunt and York experience a wrenching conflict of loyalties, pulling their hearts one way and their hands and tongues another. Loyalty to the apparent king or king in name makes Gaunt, mimicking Richard's tendencies, an excessively hardhearted defender of Bolingbroke, once he has the name of king. Since their hearts cannot be in their assertions, however, their loyalties are worth less than it seems. Both men must use sophistry and "false hypocrisy" even to espouse in speech the positions

they take in defense of the two kings (I.ii.36–40; V.iii.100–110). Cf. Kantorowicz, pp. 19, 39–40, and Campbell, p. 197.

3. It is important to note, however, that Shakespeare actually ameliorates the accounts of Richard's crimes found in his major source, Holinshed's *Chronicles*. The play does bear out Holinshed's ascription of Richard's excesses rather to "the frailtie of wanton youth than the malice of his hart." See Bullough, pp. 402, 395, 409. Indicating that the attempt to reach Richard is fraught with peril for the counselor, Shakespeare plants hints that Gloucester, "plain, well-meaning soul" is killed for his pains (II.i.115–31). Richard is orphaned as a young boy because of England's war with France, raising an interesting speculation about Shakespeare's wider judgment on English affairs. See York (II.i.179–82) and Northumberland (II.252–55); cf. Churchill, pp. 383–84.

4. See, e.g., I.ii. 54–55, 73–74; II.ii.141–49; V.i.71–73; cf. II.iii.49–50.

5. See II.ii.111–16. By contrast to their male counterparts, the Duchesses of Gloucester and York are prepared in the name of their "own" to let kings suffer wrong (I.ii.36; V.ii.98–100).

6. Richard's ritual of purification as he descends the throne is knowingly imitated in every essential point by the new Henry V, whose conversion into his opposite as he ascends the throne is well known (*Henry V*, I.i.25–37; *1 Henry IV*, I.ii.213–17).

7. For a negative view of the importance of the commons' judgement in the change of kings and the clergy's feelings toward them, see *2 Henry IV*, I.iii.86–100. Holinshed reports both that Richard plundered the church and that the Archbishop of Canterbury sided with Bolingbroke in the usurpation (see Bullough, p. 403). In Shakespeare's portrait, the role of religion in politics in the new court remains as pronounced, but is no longer conservative, posing for Bolingbroke the inverse of the problem presented to his pious father. Instead of being adduced, if weakly, to justify suffering wrong, religion now lends its name to treason, helping to change its color. Religion becomes, then, the useful instrument of sincere and insincere adherents alike.

8. Gaunt compares England's fame as the source of royal life, "this teeming womb of royal kings," to that of the empty tomb or "sepulchre" of the king of kings and the source of life everlasting—"the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son" (II.i.51–56).

9. There is an intentional connection in the play between the preponderance of negative words and the prominence of "hands" and "arms." Even the gardener's proper work is essentially negative: hacking down, pruning, defoliating, being "like an executioner." See *A Winter's Tale*, IV.iv.95–97; Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Birthmark."

10. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. 6, 8, pp. 21–25, 34–38; Montaigne, "Of cannibals," "Of the inequality Among us," in *Essays*, pp. 150–59, 189–96. As both Oliverotto of Fermo and Alexander VI illustrate in Machiavelli, the protean arts of deceiving by appearance, which might also be necessary to the prince, and the art of avoiding deception are two distinct arts, not necessarily found in the same men. See Machiavelli, ch. 18, fourth paragraph, p. 70; Guicciardini, bk. 6, pp. 171–74; *Henry V*, II.iv.36–40; IV.vii.

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