**THE UNFOLDING OF TRUTH AND SELF-REPRESENTATION
WITHIN THE CRACKED MIRROR IN SHAKESPEARE'S
*RICHARD II***

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***Abstract:** Shakespeare's Richard II deals with the controversy between the divine and the mortal aspects of the King. According to Kantorowicz's The King's Two Bodies, the King had two bodies: a Body Natural and a Body Politic. In the deposition scene of the play, Richard exploits the divine authority by undoing himself as if in a sacramental ceremony and asks for a mirror in order to see whether the change in his kingly nature has affected his face. My paper will deal with the unfolding of unendurable truth and the self-representation of Richard II in the duality of his image within the cracked mirror.*

***Keywords:** appearance versus reality, cracked mirror, duality.*

Introduction

In Shakespeare's time, the divine right of kings was a dogma based upon the notion that the monarch received his authority from God and a king was regarded as having been anointed with sacred balm. In *Richard II*

Shakespeare deals with the conflict between the divine and the mortal aspects of the King.

Kantorowicz (1981:7) states in *The King's Two Bodies* that the King is regarded as having two bodies: in Kantorowicz's terms, 'the one whereof is a Body Natural, consisting of natural Members and is subject to Passions and Death, whereas the other is a Body Politic and the Members are his Subjects and the Body of the King never dies'. In the deposition scene, King Richard exploits the divine authority by undoing himself as if he were in a sacramental ceremony. First he asks for a mirror in order to see whether the change in his kingly nature has affected his face, and then he dashes the mirror into pieces in a sudden fury. This scene appears to be the climax of the tragedy of the dual personality of the King. The physical face reflected in the mirror is no longer the one that shows Richard's inner experience. Richard sees himself as a suffering figure of Christ betrayed by his subjects as well as by himself. The double image of Richard as Richard *microchristus* and Richard *microcosmos* is reflected as Richard the Lord's Anointed and Richard Everyman.

According to Kantorowicz (1981:7), the notion of the King's two bodies consolidates a polymorphic being which includes both the mortal and the divine, setting a pattern for a fluid self which is completely elusive, unstable and self-fashioning. In an essay, Greenblatt (1992:98) states that 'theatricality is power's essential mode' and that 'the modern state is based on deceit, calculation and hypocrisy'. The notion of political power and kingship is based upon a play between displaying and hiding.

Thomas Hobbes (1985[1651]:217) in *Leviathan* defines *Person* as Face, but *Persona* as Disguise or outward appearance of a man,

counterfeited on stage, disguising the Face as a Mask. Questions emerging from this duality come to mind: Where is the monarch's inward sphere? Is it after all possible to conceive an inner self for the Renaissance monarch? Is the essence of the monarch's political power an illusion? Or is it a game of mirrors? Where does the truth lie concerning the human psyche?

The monarch usually shapes himself through a play of multifaceted personae. Thus, Shakespeare's Richard II is torn between such self figures as these: the anointed monarch, the deposed King, the poet, the beggar and the fool. The self-division he portrays is quite curious because Richard 'looks like a King' but has not the spirit of one. Richard II can stand as the opposite of Queen Elizabeth I, who claimed to have a man's spirit in the body of a woman. Elizabeth claimed: 'I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and the stomach of a King' (quoted in Levin 1996:1). But in the affair of the execution of Lord Essex in 1601, the Queen displayed the masculine and cruel side of her royal being instead of the feminine and fragile side of her nature in her political decision of the execution.

According to Greenblatt, theatricality, in the sense of both disguise and histrionic self-presentation, arose from conditions common to almost all Renaissance courts. The manuals of court behaviour offered an integrated rhetoric of the self, a model for the formation of an artificial identity. Dissimulation and feigning became a very important part of the instruction of the courtier, who needed such means of pretence to achieve an agreeable social presence and political virtue. The celebration of the Protean man with a facility to change and to transform himself according to the pleasure of others at court also found expression in Elizabeth's exercise of power, not only in Petrarchan politics but also in her Machiavellian strategies

(Greenblatt 2005:166). As Michel Foucault has indicated, the power of the monarch shares its forms with modes of theatricality: sovereignty is a kind of display of power, in other words, ‘ a political ritual and a manifestation of the power of the sovereign’ (quoted in Barker 1998:53). In the Tudor age, the monarch’s sceptre as the symbol of political power reflects the relationship between state and stage, between the monarch and the performance, between authority and representation.

Foucault’s approach to power and authority as a theatrical display is akin to Queen Elizabeth’s words, since she said: “We princes are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world. The eyes of many behold our actions: a spot is soon spied in our garments, a blemish quickly noted in our doings” (quoted in Montini 1999:219). Thus her royal power is manifested to her subjects as if in a theatre. The theory of power and kingship is based upon a play between showing and hiding. The play of authority and stately power is dependent upon visibility. Thus, in this way, it plays with illusion and reality and indeed is very close to the art of histrionics.

Kantorowicz has stated that:

for the King has in him two Bodies, *viz.*, a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body. (1981:7)

The concept of the body politic as superior to and somehow beyond the natural laws of the body natural is indeed an attempt to create what is “the Immutable within Time”. (Kantorowicz 1981:8). Not only is the body politic “more ample and large” than the body natural, but there dwell in the former certain truly mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of fragile human nature. (Kantorowicz 1981:9) Thus, kingship transcends the laws both of Time and of Nature. As Kantorowicz states in *The King’s Two Bodies*, “the mortal king was God-made, but the immortal king man-made.” (1981:318) This kind of creature sets a pattern for the modern self, a fluid self, unstable, self-fashioning, sharing the social environment moulded by the king himself. The king will undoubtedly remain a *persona ficta*, like an abstract emblem of perfection in the eyes of the public. He shapes himself through a play of *multifaceted personae*; the characters and roles he takes on amount to ontological modes of being. Thus, the political theory of power and kingship is chiefly based upon a play of showing the mask and hiding the true face. The epiphany of kingship operates very like a theatrical illusion on stage, allowing a fusion between the audience and the image of the monarch.

By contrast with Elizabeth I’s self-fashioning representation in armour at Tilbury, encouraging her warriors by her speech and reflecting this monarch’s masculine aspect which is indeed ‘the presence of an absence’ in Holderness’s terms (2000:13), Richard II in Shakespeare’s play throws his warder down to stop the chivalric combat, thus disappointing the combatants, Hereford and Mowbray, who were expecting to show the power of their masculinity and defend the honour of their names in chivalric fashion. In his presentation of the monarch’s power Richard II prefers a softer way rather than combat, thus manifesting a feminized form of

authority. In the foreground lies the unfinished business of the murder of the Duke of Gloucester, Thomas of Woodstock, who cannot be avenged because nobody, not even John of Gaunt, could dare to raise his hand against the anointed King, the minister of God on earth. In his speech to the combatants Richard II describes his kingship in maternal terms, with the earth of the kingdom being seen as a mother who fosters and nurses the sweet infant of peace.

On his return from his Irish expedition Richard uses the same kind of feminine imagery for his royal kingdom as he kneels down to kiss its mother earth as if in a ritual of devotion. What Richard displays in his speech is the expression of an excessively feminine emotion rather than the masculine strength of a sovereign. In his sensitive speech which starts ‘I weep for joy’ (III, ii, 4) Richard expresses his feelings about his return to England in maternal metaphors in which the comparison rests upon the meeting of a mother with her child after a long absence. As Graham Holderness states:

Richard, by contrast, claims a maternal relation to the kingdom, thus confessing to a relationship of emotional intimacy and weakness. As a mother, playing with her child, he occupies a ludic world of infancy, and his imagination populates itself with childlike fantasies of omnipotence. This ‘fond’ play is therefore both affectionate and foolish; the ‘favours’ he offers to his beloved earth link royal patronage to a childish megalomania. In this fantasy the creatures of the earth - toads, adders, stinging nettles - can be relied upon to guarantee the loyalty so manifestly refused by Richard’s human subjects. (2000:193)

Coppélia Kahn (1992:75) in “The Shadow of the Male” states that Richard’s tragedy is that he fails to comprehend the meaning for his kingship of his identity as a man. She asserts that *Richard II* can be seen as an *agon* between maternal and paternal images of kingship, with Richard identifying

himself with England as an all-providing mother and Henry Bolingbroke with the patriarchal principle of succession and chivalry.

Throughout the play England is imaged in the traditional topos as a maternal presence, nurturing her people as her babes. When Richard cannot call upon his identification with mother England, he becomes a hollow King. For him there is no mean between fullness and emptiness, omnipotence and total dejection, because he is emotionally dependent on a boundless supply of reassurance, maternal in origin and nature. For Coppélia Kahn (1992:77), *Richard II* portrays a loss of identity through a loss of kingship. The feminine in Richard II's nature appears as extreme sensibility and a great inclination towards art and poetry.

Most critics have observed that Richard is in love with the sound of his own speech: he is a Poet King as well as a Player King. This astonishing eloquence in speech and artistic imagination seems to be Shakespeare's invention. In Holinshed's Chronicle Richard's beautiful physical appearance is mentioned, but none of the sources credits the King with fine speech. Holinshed represents Richard II as the victim of his own folly and oscillates back and forth between sympathizing with or apologizing for him and lambasting his insolent kingly misgovernance and loose living under the influence of evil counsellors and the frailty of wanton youth.

Regarding the actual historical character of Richard II Christopher Fletcher (2008:7) states that 'the significance of manhood, boyhood, and youth at Richard's deposition arose from the objective reality of the effeminate character of the King'. Fletcher (2008:8-9) asserts that 'by inclination [Richard] was an artist rather than a Warrior', and that 'with highly developed aesthetic sense and love of refinement' he could not share his interests with his subjects. Fletcher (2008:11) concludes that Richard II's

failure is explained by a 'narcissistic personality' which craved praise and attention and ended in his becoming totally detached from reality. Goddard (1951:157) calls him a 'Narcissus-King'.

Concerning the King's downfall, Fletcher (2008:19) puts the blame upon 'the vices of Richard's youthful counsellors' whose actions and flattery were mostly focused upon the vanity and susceptibility of the King who was deliberately misled towards self-pride, tyranny and hence self-destruction.

When Shakespeare's Richard learns the bad news that his 'loyal' subjects are all gone, the blood leaves his face and he turns pale at the terrible loss. The spectators watch him lamenting the dire situation in which he is left and listen to his sad tale about the graves and the murder of kings. The previous imagery about the earth which implies the tenderness of the mother, the care of the womb, now veers toward the image of the earth as the place of the dead, the tomb.

What is striking in the climactic scene in the third act is Richard's separation of the King's two bodies; the immortal one and the mortal one. Regardless of the dogmatic unity of the two bodies, a separation of one from the other was nevertheless possible, namely, that separation which, with regard to common man, is usually called Death. (Kantorowicz 1981:12-13) The divine body of the King is reduced to the mortal body of the King. Richard speaks of the figure of Death, sitting like an antic within the crown of the King and mocking the King's 'seeming' sovereignty and power.

RICHARD II: for within the hollow crown

That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,

Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be feared, and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if the flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable: and humoured thus,
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
(III, ii, 160- 170)

The human and mortal being of the King is felt bitterly by Richard as he utters the next lines:

RICHARD II: Cover your heads, mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty;
For you have but mistook me all this while.
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends – subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?
(III, ii, 171- 177)

As Kantorowicz (1981:31) points out, the fiction of the oneness of the double body breaks apart, and the Godhead and manhood of the King's Two Bodies, both clearly outlined with a few strokes, stand in contrast to each other. Richard II is now no longer performing the role of the monarch, which is to rule as effectively as possible; instead, he appears to be playing the role of the most sensitive poet and the most talented actor, lamenting his calamity as if he were on stage. Richard's belief in the Divine Right of Kings had been expressed in his previous speeches as follows:

RICHARD II: Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.
(III, ii, 54- 55)

This belief is turned totally upside down and shaken by Bolingbroke's supporters. Thus, Bolingbroke's pragmatic and military authority replaces the Divine Right of Kings. As an anointed King, Richard II had never dreamt of such a deposition because he was so sure of his place on earth as the minister of God and believed that no force could take his kingdom from his hands, as seen in his words during the tournament, when he remarks that 'Lions make leopards tame' (I, i, 174).

In the historical portrait of Richard II known as the Wilton Diptych, the young king is depicted as having a womanly, graceful beauty and is accompanied by the figure of the Virgin surrounded by angels. In the Wilton Diptych, the young King Richard is depicted wearing a dress of golden tissue decorated with medallions showing a white hart and kneeling in an attitude of reverence before the Virgin, attended by two Kings, Edmund the Martyr and Edward the Confessor, while his patron saint, John the Baptist, lays a protective hand on Richard's shoulder (Bevan 1990:99).

According to Gervase Mathew, the Wilton Diptych represents Richard's coronation in his eleventh year, since there are eleven angels in blue dresses around the Virgin with the emblem of the white hart on their costumes (quoted in Bevan 1990:99). The femininity of the monarch is made obvious by the link with the divine glory of the cult of the Virgin. Richard II is often referred as the '*fair rose*' of the York family whose tender and graceful whiteness was reddened by the Lancastrians. All through Shakespeare's play it is implied that Richard's personal appearance is attractive but somewhat effeminate.

Pointing to the historical fact of Richard's having become King of England at the age of eleven, Harold Goddard asks: "What more natural for a child who knows he is to inherit a throne than to play at being king, or for a sensitive and poetic youth who wears a crown – while others govern in his name – to go on conceiving life as a brilliant spectacle of which he is the center?" (Goddard 1951:149). Shakespeare's Richard II is just the kind of man that this kind of childhood might well have produced. He went on playing king until he was deposed.

From a historical point of view, it is quite true that Richard lost his father at an early age and came under the influence of two strong and powerful women in his life: the first was his mother, Joan, and the second his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, whom Richard tragically lost during the Plague. Thus the feminine factor was extremely powerful in his growing years and was seen in his artistic sensibility towards poetry and music.

Shakespeare's Richard claims a maternal relation to the kingdom and confesses to a relationship of emotional intimacy and weakness. "As a mother, playing with her child, he occupies a ludic world of infancy, and his imagination populates itself with childlike fantasies of omnipotence."

The identification of Richard II with Christ who is betrayed by his disciple Judas is very prominent in Shakespeare's play. On seeing Bolingbroke's supporters Richard voices his resentment:

RICHARD II: ... I well remember
The favours of these men. Were they not mine?
Did they not sometime cry, 'All hail!' to me?
So Judas did to Christ; but He, in twelve,
Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand none.

(IV, i, 167-171)

In *The Meaning of Shakespeare* Goddard (1951:154) states that ‘drowning himself in an agony of self-pity Richard proceeds to uncrown himself.’ Goddard (1951:155) assumes that ‘the more Richard cowers, the more Henry tightens the screws’ and concludes that fear and force become poles of a single entity. Fear becomes as creative as faith and brings into being what it imagines. In Flint Castle Richard accepts his defeat without even defending himself as the King of England and starts talking of worms, epitaphs and wills. He imagines his deposition and the loss of his kingdom in bitter terms. Richard philosophizes his present state as follows:

RICHARD II: Our lands, our lives, and all, are Bolingbroke’s,
And nothing can we call our own but death;
.....
For God’s sake let us sit down upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been depos’d, some slain in war,
All murdered

(III, ii, 151- 162)

Before his deposition, in his creative, imaginative mind, Richard sees his downfall and turns to his subjects, calling himself a human being, a common person like them. Holinshed’s *Chronicle* associates Richard’s downfall and misgovernance with luxurious self-indulgence, whereas Shakespeare’s play associates them with luxurious self-representation. Shakespeare replaces Holinshed’s royal victim with a more complicated figure who seems to go out of his way to have himself victimized and then

blames his victimization on others. Before his deposition, Richard seems to be entertaining the idea of being deposed in a somewhat masochistic way. According to Bryant, these allusions point to ‘a double image of Richard as Richard *microchristus* and Richard *microcosmos*, Richard the Lord’s Anointed and Richard Everyman. (quoted in Brooke 1973:189-190)

In his analysis of the relationship between power and theatricality in Renaissance England, Christopher Pye (1990:153) states that:

Richard II bears quite directly on this smaller drama of power. It too is preoccupied with treason, with transgressed boundaries, with mirrors that both conceal and betray too much.

Stephen Greenblatt (quoted in Orgel & Keilen 1999:154) argues that in the Renaissance “power...not only produces its own subversion but is actively built upon it”. In the scene of Richard’s deposition the monarch takes on a different role in which sovereignty proves itself absolute in mastering its own subversion. Thus Richard’s rule assumes its most irrefutable form through negation. Richard explains in bitter terms how he will undo himself, as follows:

RICHARD II: With my own hands I give away my crown,
With my own tongue deny my sacred state,
With my own breath release all duteous oaths;
All pomp and majesty I do forswear;
(IV, i, 207- 210)

Before the eyes of his former supporters at Court Richard II unking himself so that the power of the monarchy is transferred in a ‘seeming’ legitimate way. Richard deprives his body politic of the symbols of its dignity and

exposes his poor body natural to the eyes of the spectators (Kantorowicz 1981:36). Self-deprived of all his former glories, Richard goes back to the role of the Fool (Kantorowicz 1981:37). The theatricality in Richard's conduct, with regard to his deposition as seen in the "mirror" game, comprises within it the drama of the betraying gaze in terms of an optical trope – anamorphosis – that bears on the politics of theatre itself. The double edge of betrayal reflects both Richard's betrayal by his subjects and his self-betrayal at the same time. Richard's gaze turned upon his inner psyche displays a guilty conscience resulting from his self-evaluation, as he says:

RICHARD II: Mine eyes are full of tears, I can not see.
And yet salt water blinds them not so much
But they can see a sort of traitors here.
Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
I find myself a traitor with the rest.
For I have given here my soul's consent
T'undock the pompous body of a king.
(IV, i, 244- 50)

Richard feels himself to be a traitor to his own immortal body politic and to kingship. In other words, the king's body natural becomes a traitor to the king's body politic. The inverted rite of decoronation seen in Richard's words: "Here, cousin, seize the crown" (IV, i, 190) shows Richard having the coronation both ways: Richard forces Bolingbroke to re-enact the usurpation, publicly dramatizing the act of illegal seizure, while presenting himself as the usurper's Christ-like victim. But later he shifts from the victim's pose to the sinner's and starts to perform an act of degradation. What he proposes to remove from his person and offer to Bolingbroke is a

debased crown, a gift that has poison in it. In perversely staging the pathos of victimization and the power of a self-deposing sinner, Richard stigmatizes Bolingbroke as a usurper.

Schwartz (1982:120) argues that Richard's act of violence in the "mirror" scene entails a fragmentation that leads both to purely theatrical assertions of regal identity and to a first recognition of the individual behind such theatricalizing. The mirror scene is the climax of that tragedy of dual personality. The physical face which the mirror reflects is no longer one with Richard's inner experience; his outer appearance is no longer identical with the inner man. (Kantorowicz 1981:39) In the mirror, the duplications which are present in the roles of the King, the Fool, and the God in Richard's being, all dissolve into pieces (Kantorowicz 1981:27). Goddard (1951:157) in *The Meaning of Shakespeare* calls Richard the Narcissus-King in the deposition scene when Richard smashes the mirror into pieces. Richard displays narcissistic tendencies, as seen in his choice of costume, in his conduct at the tournament and in his use of eloquent language. The mirror, which was the emblem of self-conceit and vanity during the medieval period, can here be identified with the lake in Greek mythology into which Narcissus falls and drowns after gazing too long upon his own beauty. He thus dies because of his infatuation with his own image. As the image in the mirror displeases Richard, it evokes a desire for self-annihilation. Like the mythical Narcissus, Richard brings about his own destruction. The cracking of the mirror stands for bad luck, which becomes quite significant as Richard directs the deposition scene and desires that the cracked mirror may bring bad luck to Bolingbroke during his reign.

The mirror cracked into many pieces stands for reality in pieces, as in a Cubist painting. The mirror no longer shows the face of King Richard but

fragmented images of himself in which he is no longer the King but an ordinary man, a prisoner doomed to be murdered in his cell since his continued existence will soon be found dangerous for the realm. The mirror cracked into pieces is good for nothing, just as the presence of Richard will come to Nothing. Richard has no heir of his own body, no continuation of his line. At the end of the ceremonial rite of decoronation Richard is denuded of royalty, stripped of his defining character, his very being, and reduced to an alienated anonymity:

RICHARD II: I have no name, no title –
No, not that name was given me at the font –
But ‘tis usurp’d.

(IV, i, 255- 257)

Nameless, powerless, Richard represents himself as an existential zero, an elimination of all that he has been. Richard now assumes the Divine Power of a very different type of king: he becomes a man of sorrows, a king of ‘griefs’, a sacrificial victim whose power is paradoxically established through the subjugation involved in martyrdom. The mirror which shows his own face ‘bankrupt of majesty’ also has some philosophical and metaphorical dimensions. The mirror is also identified as one of the key images for history, as Beard (quoted in Holderness 2000:204) remarks:

In recalling to mind the truth of things past, which otherwise would be buried in silence, *Historie* setteth before us such effects [...] and layeth vertue and vice so naked before our eyes [...] that it may rightly be called an easie and profitable apprenticeship or schoole for everie man to learn to get wisdom [...] Hence it is that *Historie* is termed of the auncient Philosophers, the [...] looking glasse of mans life. (Beard 1597)

The metaphor of the 'looking glasse' mostly establishes a continuity between appearance and wisdom: on the one hand, it offers an accurate reflection of human reality, on the other hand, it offers a kind of wisdom and an understanding which could be acquired via the process of reflection. When Richard asks for a looking glass to reflect back to himself the climactic moment of his life, what he sees is not an accurate reflection, but a distortion or an inversion of the truth. He expects the mirror to show not only reflective wisdom, but a tragic record of his own troubled psyche. The looking glass is assumed to be capable of not merely reflecting a surface reality, but of disclosing a hidden truth, depicting an underlying reality. What Richard sees in the mirror is the very opposite of what he feels himself to be. What the mirror shows is the image of the beautiful youth and kingly power of Richard as Royal Majesty.

Bolingbroke insists that what Richard saw in the mirror was the shadow of his face. There is no sign of the 'unseen' reality of Richard's tragedy in the reflection of the mirror.

As Kantorowicz states (1981:29), the universal body politic of kingship begins to disintegrate; its transcendental "Reality", its objective truth and god-like existence, so brilliant before, pales into *a nomen*. In his soliloquy in the prison cell in Act V, Richard recognizes the bitterness of his very existence on earth, lamenting that without his crown he is nothing and without his title and kingly status he has no meaning on earth. In his soliloquy, the inner psyche of the King is revealed behind the mask of majesty. In *Richard II* Shakespeare's depiction of the tragedy of the king is mainly focused upon Richard's metamorphosis from the spoilt, irresponsible and capricious king to a meditative, sensitive and self-accusing human being. Richard is not capable of playing with appearance and reality like a

skillful chess player, he is more feminine and weak in his conduct when compared with Queen Elizabeth I. Richard is indeed the 'poet' King.

Conclusion

Shakespeare's Richard II lives within the illusion of his majestic authority which his earlier speeches indicate. Richard repeatedly takes refuge from reality into verbal fantasy and he deploys his verbal power to produce impressions of reality. He is strong enough to overpower his perception of material actuality and his 'hamartia' is that he alone is deluded by these shadows of reality. The fantasy of himself as *le roi soleil* reflects his belief that as an anointed king he is the Deputy of God on earth and that he possesses the divine right of the powers of the King. He cannot divorce himself from the idea of kingly magnificence and royal sanctity. As he becomes absorbed in the pathos of his situation, Richard has no energy left to resist the outside world because his narcissism starves him of substance.

As James Winny in *The Player King* states, "Richard lives on the surface of experience, denied contact with the inward reality of the self by his complete absorption in the identity of the king, which he mistakes for it." (Winny 1968:48). His asking for a mirror in the deposition scene reveals the closed circuit and void of Richard's consciousness. Richard is willingly imprisoned within himself, absorbed by a relationship with his own reflection, which flatters him with his own self-admiring gaze. On this occasion the cracked mirror fails him. He becomes poetically a completely anonymous being, without name, without title and with the shattered images of his broken identity.

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