SHAKESPEARE'S SECOND RICHARD

By TRAVIS BOGARD

A WRITER is moulded out of faults, and the greatest become much more the better for having had the courage to be a little bad. All writers experiment in some degree with technique, but not many, after their apprenticeship has been served, appear willing to desert the manner in which one achievement has been attained for another, untried, yet potentially permitting fuller and more complex expressiveness. Even less frequently does an established writer change the manner of expression midway in the work, destroying the unity of effect by radical alterations in technique while the work is in progress. In a novel or poem, at least, the new manner is not likely to emerge unexpectedly; a work written for publication can be withheld until its parts are integrated. A dramatist, however—especially one working in close conjunction with a voracious theatre—may not have such an opportunity. Deadlines render revisions luxuries and make beneficial experimentation a catch-as-catch-can matter. Under such circumstances, discoveries that cannot be ignored are likely to be dangerous to both the art and the commerce of the theatre.

In the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, there is ample evidence of this experiment-on-the-run, and very little of it is important. Marston, for instance, tried everything on for size, and none of it fit. All of his experimentation led him to nothing better than (in Alfred Harbage's memorable phrase) "a five-act lapse in taste."1 With Shakespeare, however, the case is altered, and to the student of his work, particularly the student of his dramatic technique, the imperfect pieces can be in some ways more instructive than those secure in their achievement. After all analysis of King Lear one sees only what is amazingly there. To get behind the work, to see its tricks, to see how it was done is nobody's business, and the play will defeat impertinence. But in the lesser works, where meaning is not so dense, technique less assured, the student can sometimes see the acts of formation which later artistry learns to hide, and he can learn from these the truth of what later he can only wonder at. Thus, the imperfect pieces, particularly of a dramatist like Shakespeare, help to illuminate, first, the masterpieces whose dramatic technique can be more completely understood because of the slight imperfections occasioned by the experiments and, second, the dramatist, who, because of a momentary lack of complete assurance, stands revealed off guard, caught in an act of hesitant choice of an untried way, which in Shakespeare's case led toward a country altogether new.

1 Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions (New York, 1952), p. 244.

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It is, probably, an ultimately dissatisfying view of the two plays that holds Richard III to be almost without qualification successful and Richard II "imperfect." even in the relative and limited sense suggested here. It makes matters worse to say that the difference between the plays is most notably to be attributed to the characterization of the two Richards, Richard III again being a skilful artistic achievement, Richard II being an unsynthesized portrait almost always inadequate to the demands that the play potentially makes upon him. Yet a study of Shakespeare's development of characters fit for tragedy may at least consider as a probability that, had Shakespeare contented himself with the techniques of Richard III, and had his impulses not overruled his sense of artistic propriety, Richard II would have been a better play, but the great tragedies would have been at a farther remove. It is doubtless extravagant to hold that except for the sudden surprising experimentation of Richard II, Shakespeare's tragedies would have been no more remarkable than Chapman's or Webster's. Nevertheless, in Richard II Shakespeare began to move in a way that none of the Jacobeans followed; it is here, in fact, that Shakespeare first became himself.

What matter, then, if Richard II is an artistic imperfection, if its preliminary assurance is destroyed midway by an unexpected problem of character and is shaken by the excitement of a new solution? It is a heady play for all that, a stageworthy play, and a valuable play to study, for in it—specifically in the "Deposition Scene"—the maturing Shakespeare first explored the ground leading to the achievement of tragedy in the fullest, most unqualified sense of the term that must be reserved for perhaps a dozen plays in the world's history.

In writing Richard III, Shakespeare demonstrated his complete mastery of the known world of drama which from the first provided the solid base of his explorations. Within its obvious limitations, it is an astonishing success, and Shakespeare may well have taken pride in his accomplishment. Unquestionably, it was the best chronicle history London had seen, and in it, for the first time in his non-comic drama, Shakespeare appeared totally certain of the ways to produce the effects he wanted.

Compared to the miscellany of Henry VI and the partially controlled

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2 I am here concerned only with the techniques of characterization of the hero in the non-comic drama. To the developmental "line" I am experimentally tracing, neither King John nor Romeo and Juliet is particularly relevant. I am assuming that Richard II follows Richard III by about two years. In so doing, I do not mean to imply that there is any inevitable connection between the plays or any special continuity between the characters of the heroes. Because of their revealing contrast, I link them as way-stops on Shakespeare's development of the technical skills which made his tragedy possible.
narrative of *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard III* attains structural unity unusual for a play of the period. The purely theatrical requirement of concentrating the action on the star’s role, together with the limitation of material in the play’s sources, may have made some of this unity an easy, perhaps accidental achievement. A more reliable sign of technical competence is the ease with which Shakespeare accepts the limitations his medium placed on the depiction of character.

The chief problem of character in *Richard III* was, presumably, to create an imitation of a human being who reasonably could be the agent of the evil episodes which history recorded. It is here precisely that the histories fail; they give no inkling of what kind of man it was who committed the deeds attributed to Richard. To find a man in the raw materials of the histories seems an impossible task. The apparent optional courses for a dramatist both lead to monsters: on the one hand a monster of melodrama, on the other a monster of unintentional farce.

Shakespeare’s Richard, however, is neither of these, but a restrained creation, credible at least in context. It skirts the coasts of melodrama and farce, braving both, wrecking itself on neither. No merely primitive response, no jeers, no hisses will suffice to do Richard justice. His energy and his intelligence are worthy of respect; his humorous bravado woos his hearers; his fellowship with evil is so commendably frank as, almost, to clear him of the stigma of hypocrisy. He has in his misshapen way a dark charm that makes him tolerable, if nothing more, and that suggests the restraint with which Shakespeare treated him.

Yet such subtilizing characteristics as he possesses are not in themselves enough to save Richard from the melodramatic or the unintentionally farcical. Tragic drama lapses into melodrama, as comedy into farce, at the moment when the characters cease to be entirely credible as the perpetrators of their deeds. For a play of high dramatic intention on a serious historical theme, the creation of a credible king was an indispensable condition. Here, one would assume, Shakespeare’s materials failed him by not providing the clues to Richard’s essential nature. Here also, his technical achievement would be most unlikely to support him, for the carefully motivated, full-length portrait of the historical Richard was a different matter from the imaginary (and melodramatic) Titus and from the minor images of historical persons who scurry through the three parts of *Henry VI*. Here, finally, and perhaps most importantly, to the creation of a deeply human creature, the drama of his time provided no entirely competent guide.

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One historian bothered by the same problem is C. R. Markham, who considers the implications in “Richard III: A Doubtful Verdict Reviewed,” *English Historical Review*, vi, 250–283, 806–813.
Harley Granville-Barker's distinction between "explicit" and "implicit" drama is serviceable in indicating why this was so. Implicit drama carries within its design the totality of its meaning; explicit makes its points as points, setting forth its meaning less by its design than by explanations that accrue during the course of the play. As Granville-Barker states it:

There are roughly two methods of playwriting, that demanding explicit interpretation, and that in which much of the meaning is left implicit, to be conveyed by the actors, not in words nor even in very forthright action, but largely by demonstrating the sort of pattern made in the relations and attitude of the characters toward each other and in the contrasts between them, the dialogue stressing the significance of the design thus formed. Marlowe's, for an example, is wholly "explicit" drama, as is more primitive drama than his. So are Shakespeare's early plays, and his method in general remains throughout as explicit as the nature of play or character will allow it to be.

To the time of Richard III, Shakespeare's possible models and Shakespeare himself had written almost entirely explicit drama. There are moments in Marlowe when the verse seems about to do more than decorate or explain the action. The savage reiteration of the word "Lucifer," for instance, in Mephistophilis' exposition to Faustus about hell suggests an unexplored depth of emotion in the devil which is not commented upon. Again, the varieties of ironic intonation given to the word "Persepolis" in Tamburlaine II.v suggest vitally a quality about Tamburlaine's goal that is never fully explained. In Marlowe, probably the signal example is Faustus' final soliloquy, where emotion is suggested connotatively as well as described by the imagery. But even this scene is "explained," its significance explicitly set forth by the closing chorus which instantly follows. At best, Faustus' soliloquy was only a suggestion of the way language could implicitly present the vivid reality of a man's inner being.

The dialogue of Richard III is almost completely explicit in its formulations. Richard, like Tamburlaine, is part orator, and in that capacity—in which he, like Tamburlaine, takes pride—he continually descants on his own deformity, describes and explains his actions, and states his motivation. The other characters are not far behind. An astonishing amount of the physical action is indicated and explained by the actors as they act:

I'll kiss thy hand
In sign of league and amity. (I.iii.280–281)

See, where his Grace stands 'tween two clergymen. (III.vii.95)

The Use of the Drama (Princeton, 1945), pp. 43–44.

* All quotations from Shakespeare are from The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, ed. W. A. Neilson and C. J. Hill (New York, 1942).
Emotional response is detailed with exactitude. Obvious instances are Clarence's dream and the lamentations of the queens, but the effect is carried on in less conspicuous passages as well:

- Look I so pale, Lord Dorset, as the rest? (II.i.83)
- My heart is ten times lighter than my looks. (V.iii.3)

Motivation is similarly treated. "I am determined to be a villain," Richard says at the outset, and explains succinctly why this is so. His later motivation is reduced to simple statements of rudimentary fact, serving in the main to clarify possible obscurities and to explain transitions. Continually, in short, the dialogue points to the visual image which the actor will of necessity create and to little, if anything, deeper. It is, though eloquent and elaborate, basically a kind of dramatized stage-direction.

Where in all this is the human being? Where, at least, is his stage equivalent? Where is the misguided and suffering mortal responding with pain to his circumstances? It is doubtful in this play that he exists at all. The explicit method of treating character cannot penetrate deeply into the realities of a human spirit, for such realities, if they are to be received by an audience as real, are not merely grasped by the conscious mind but felt by the total being. What an actor can contribute to Richard should perhaps be acknowledged, but it becomes an act of extraordinary goodwill to pity Richard when he cries,

- There is no creature loves me,
  And if I die no soul shall pity me. (V.iii.200-201)

Where have there been presented the grounds for pity? An audience has not been made to feel, though it may have been made aware of a Richard moved to misanthropy by his deformity which none can love.

Richard, in short, though he has all the vitality a stage figure may need, is not conceived in terms that enable him to claim an audience as Hamlet or Lear claims it. The techniques of character representation are insufficient to establish him as humanly real.

In spite of this, however, his character alone saves the play from melodrama. To explain the working of what surely is a dramatic miracle, one further point must be noticed concerning Shakespeare's use of the techniques of explicit characterization, a use which seems to demonstrate his complete mastery of the available methods of presenting character.

What makes Richard acceptable as a human being in the context of the play is that he faces few if any of the play's situations directly, but always establishes himself at a remove so that a direct, human response to
the events need not be shown. After stating his “determination,” Richard moves almost entirely in the masks of his villainy. “I’ll marry Warwick’s youngest daughter / What though I kill’d her husband and her father.” Enter Anne, on goes the disguise, and Richard clowns through his performance. The audience watches the masker and, fascinated, applauds with him as he utters the cry of sinister glee which caps the wooing: “Was ever woman in this humour won? / I’ll have her, but I will not keep her long.” His words perform two functions: first, they crystallize and, in their disbelief, incorporate the audience’s attitude toward the incredible scene just played, and, second, they reassert Richard’s “determination.” But they do not explicitly or implicitly reveal any deeply felt human response on Richard’s part to Anne’s surrender. Richard judges his performance as masker, and that is all.

Yet a masker is always a mystery. He does not entirely lose his essential humanity in his disguise; if anything, his humanity is made tantalizingly present by the continual emphasis that the wearing of a mask places on it. The man within the mask is always on the fringes of a spectator’s consciousness. And so it is with Richard. Though the man is never seen, the mask suggests his continual presence, and it is by this device that Richard is made to seem a human being.

Shakespeare does not attempt to hide the device. As Richard and Buckingham prepare to face the city, the method of characterization is discussed. He says to Buckingham,

Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change thy colour,
Murder thy breath in middle of a word,
And then again begin, and stop again,
As if thou were distraught and mad with terror?

Buckingham replies,

Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
Intending deep suspicion. Ghastly looks
Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
And both are ready in their offices
At any time to grace my stratagems. (III.v.1–11)

Here and throughout the play, Richard is the actor, simulating a role. Even at the end, his courage triumphant over his fears, he plays a part to his death. He is thus, for the moment of the scene, not required to show more humanity than he does. With the exception of the dream sequence, his human nature remains buried beneath the mask of villainy. Yet, because he is acting, he remains credible, even at his crudest.
The audience, especially, accepts his acting as a possible kind of human behavior, and asks for nothing more convincing.

It is perhaps a trick—that making him so excellent an actor that his mask never drops—but it is also a demonstration of Shakespeare's maturing ability to use fully and freely the means at his hand. It is the obvious way to make the explicit manner of characterization resemble the implicit; it hints at human truth but does not reveal what that truth is. Brought to the test of a direct, unhistrionic response to the facts of his experience—at the end, when the ghosts of his victims troop by him and curse him—then the character takes refuge in rhetorical chop-logic and moral insipidity:

There's none else by.  
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.  
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.  
Then fly, What, from myself? Great reason why,  
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?  
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? (v.iii.182–187)

And so continues his catechism. The characterization of Richard is here at its most thin and obvious, and it is the one point where, humorless and alone, he faces a situation squarely and shows a naked, direct reaction to circumstances. Here, in presenting Richard's suffering, the explicit techniques fail.

At this point, of course, Shakespeare saves himself by stressing the scene more as a symbolic action, less as an image of human suffering. The context of Richard's self-analysis is ritualistic rather than realistic: the obvious design in the scene, the heavy parallelism in staging, language and character, the semi-allegorical rendering of the forces of good and evil—these matters make Richard's soliloquy appropriately symbolic. The episode is thus of a piece with the symbolic scenes of the preceding trilogy. Indeed, its meaning is to be comprehended in full only when it is felt as the obligatory climax of the tetralogy. It is of a different texture from the body of the play.

Richard II is unquestionably an exciting play in the theatre and the study, but it does not represent a technical achievement comparable in perfection to that of Richard III. It overreaches itself, goes beyond its anticipated limits, and is therefore less than perfect.6

6 To say this is not for a moment to agree with Stopford Brooke's similar statement about the mirror episode in the Deposition Scene. Brooke writes: "Shakespeare has evidently spent so much trouble over this scene that he has over-done his work. He has introduced that spectacular scene with the mirror which is quite unnecessary, which sins against the 'Not too much,' and which, worst of all, not only lowers our pity for Richard because it
To speak of "imperfections" is not to deny that the play has its unity. Indeed most critics and actors of the title role have been able to see consistency in it. Hardin Craig, for instance, finds Richard to be generally a "sentimentalist." G. B. Harrison notes that he is "forever posing." To Bradley, he, like Romeo, is an "infatuated man," made tragic—if at all—by the great range of his fall from prosperity to death. E. K. Chambers conceives of him as a dreamer, and, from the practical stage, Margaret Webster, perhaps borrowing the conception from Walter Pater, describes him as "the poet who happens to be king." Although the evaluation of Richard's character varies with the individual commentator, the convergence of these and other descriptions of him is enough to suggest that an area of agreement as to what he is has been generally reached. He is a divided being, a king, the anointed of God, but also a man, frail and doomed in his frailty. Indeed the opinion is repeatedly advanced that Richard is his own Judas, the man betraying the king. At least since Pater's essay, this conception appears to have been the accepted organizational core around which the king's separate appearances have been synthesized into consistency.

To see Richard as a unified character is undoubtedly best, but an alternate view is possible. It can be maintained that the character of Richard is only to be synthesized by the actor's (or critic's) contribution to the role, which in this instance amounts to sleight-of-hand. Shakespeare is unquestionably concerned with Richard as both a public and a private figure, but the question may be raised whether he is entirely successful in presenting both aspects of Richard simultaneously. Does he perhaps rather present now the king, now the man, allowing the two to alternate so that a tension develops which prohibits the fusion of man and king into a single portrait? Further, a comparison of Richard's consecutive appearances might well suggest that there are three, possibly four Richards in the play, no one of them brought fully into conformity with any other. His first appearance as God's delegate, the symbol of kingliness, is not notably reaffirmed by his appearance as the petulant exhibits his theatrical folly in public, but also degrades the character of Bolingbroke. . . .

I wonder Shakespeare's exquisite delicacy toward human nature could have permitted it" (Lectures on Shakespeare, London, 1905, pp. 94-95). The affair of the mirror is, indeed, the crux of the matter, but Brooke's conclusion is in total opposition to mine.


8 To say this of the character and the techniques which produced it is not to deny that the play has the singleness of mood, the unity of tone which Wilson claims for it. Cf. King Richard II, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge, 1939), p. xiv.
prince of the scene with Gaunt. Upon his return from Ireland, he and his situation claim sympathy as they have not done before, and again may well cause an audience to reevaluate its earlier impression. Finally, although lines of circumstantial and psychological development are drawn, an audience may sense that the philosopher of Pomfret Castle was not really anticipated by the poseur on the battlements at Flint.

The present intention is not to dispute the prevailing view of Richard directly, beyond inquiring whether the actor must not labor diligently in the tournament scenes to create a subtle portrait of frivolity where Shakespeare has—in allowing Richard not only to claim but to assert a king's power—provided a portrait of arbitrary, even despotic force.\(^9\) A synthesizing core of character can certainly be found, as the success of the play onstage adequately attests, but it is perhaps worth noting that each of Richard's appearances must in some degree be reinterpreted by later disclosures, and that, in this necessity, the portrait of Richard is different from the unvarying consistency of Richard III or from the portrait of Hamlet which builds itself smoothly from scene to scene, amplifying, complicating, but withal confirming the initial impression presented.

That there is the possibility of disunity in Richard's character is at least suggestive of some slight uncertainty on Shakespeare's part as to the effect he wanted in the character or the means by which the effect was to be achieved.\(^10\) This is admittedly speculative, but setting impressionistic considerations of unity or disunity aside, it would appear that having chosen the story of Richard II, Shakespeare would be faced with two unusual and perhaps unexpected technical problems.

For one thing, the career of Richard centers unavoidably on the opposition between Richard and Bolingbroke, with the result that, however fortuitously, Richard II is the first play in English which is developed

\(^9\) Margaret Webster notes that the director has a difficult job of work bringing the play into focus in the first two acts (op. cit., p. 170). Wilson apparently accepts a twofold image of Richard at the same time as he defends it, when he remarks that Shakespeare constructed his play from two “legends” about Richard: “that of his supporters, which represented him as a saint and martyr, compared his sufferings and death with those of Christ himself, while they accounted for his capture by an act of base betrayal; and secondly, that of the Lancastrians which depicted him as a weak, cowardly, moody man who surrendered himself and abdicated of his own free will.” My position is in tentative disagreement with that of Wilson, who comments that “Shakespeare's genius succeeded in fusing these originally contradictory conceptions and in composing therefrom the figure of a king who seems to us one of the most living of his characters” (op. cit., p. lix).

\(^10\) Granville-Barker noted a similar uncertainty in the portrait of Polonius (Prefaces to Shakespeare, Princeton, 1946, i, 204). Something of the kind may have happened in the characterization of Angelo, whose hypocrisy in the affair of Mariana is never really reconciled with the initial characterization of his uprightness.
around a major and continuing conflict of two individuals. Tamburlaine, Faustus, Barabas had no significant opposition to their courses of action. Structurally considered, the sum of the barons in *Edward II* does not equal one Bolingbroke. The conflict of Hieronimo with the Balthazar-Lorenzo faction is developed late in the action of *The Spanish Tragedy* and is only obliquely realized as conflict. Titus, Richard III, John, and the rest fight a general opposition rather than a man. It is not until *Richard II* that a play evolves from the character and destinies of two individuals. Not Fortune's design but his own character puts Bolingbroke on the throne, as Richard's character causes his dethronement and death. What is important is the character of each as it is revealed in the crucial, central struggle, and, consequently, the demands on the playwright's skill at imaging character become much greater. Motivation, action, reaction, consistency—all the elements which can be slighted under the conditions of a play like *Richard III* become vital to a narrative developed in terms of focal conflict.

The second unusual demand, again perhaps an accident of Shakespeare's choice of materials, resulted from Richard's being a gentle prince. His gentleness meant that the language of his story had to be refined from what had sufficed for the stories of Richard III and Titus Andronicus. Coarse-grained rhetoric was quite adequate to project the brutal passion of those stories. Richard III, it will be remembered, is part orator. In *Richard II*, however, though Shakespeare retained the obvious rhetorical character of the verse of *Richard III*, he made it not quite so starkly the language of the orator. There is evident a much greater attempt to adapt the language to the human situation here than in the earlier play, with the result that the rhetoric becomes less trenchant, more subtly aureate. Yet, as it becomes an increasingly subtle vehicle for the projection of emotion, of necessity it will reveal more about the character who speaks it. It follows readily enough that as an audience is permitted more complex and subtle insights behind the façade of character, mere trickery—the creation of an actor king, for instance—will not entirely suffice. There must be something at the character's core which can be seen; a spiritual reality must be projected at all costs.

Both the structure and the language of *Richard II*, therefore, suggest that the techniques for imaging character so successfully mastered in

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11 It is needless to add that the sustained lyricism of *Romeo and Juliet* would be inadequate to the uses of the chronicle history.

12 There is nothing, for instance, even in the most ceremonial moments of *Richard II* to parallel such scenes as ii.ii in *Richard III*, where all individuating characteristics of the queens are obscured in their choric lamentations. On the transitional aspects of the rhetoric of *Richard II* see Madeleine Doran, *Endeavors of Art* (Madison, 1954), pp. 240–241.
Richard III could not entirely have sufficed Shakespeare in his present need. Yet as he begins Richard II, he falls back on the identical device that he used in Richard III. He makes, or forces his actor to make, Richard an actor king.13 E. M. W. Tillyard has accurately noted the pervasiveness of the “formal and ceremonial nature” of Richard II. His instances include not only the character of Richard, but the language, the action, the emotion and the cosmic references of the entire play.14 In all its aspects, it is a highly stylized play, going far beyond Richard III in its concentration on ritual emotion in ritual event. Richard, as he is first presented, is in perfect accord with this pageant-like ritual. He is the spire of court ceremony; he is on display as an incarnation of the anointed king: “Impartial are our eyes and ears,” he says in the first scene. “Lions make leopards tame. . . . We were not born to sue, but to command. . . .”

Unhappily for the actor playing Richard, there is not enough here to anticipate firmly the shallowness of his character as it is revealed in the second act. Gaunt’s comment on him (I.ii.37-41) suggests that there may be less in Richard than meets the eye, but the point is not decisively made there or elsewhere in Richard’s early scenes. All the actor can do to coordinate the early appearances of Richard with those following is to play Richard as one who obviously enjoys the formalities, and who enacts his role therein to the full. Only by this means can he achieve an effective acting point from the stopping of the tournament and prepare for the Richard of the scenes with the dying Gaunt. The possibility of synthesis is there, no doubt, but the playwright has not helped the process by giving the king any of the self-awareness which produced the explanatory ironies of character in Richard III.

The absence of explicit clarification of the precise nature of the character is unusual, but it is little more than a straw in the prevailing wind, perhaps the result of accident rather than experiment. The difficulty with Richard in the first two acts is that he is not “determined” to be anything. When a character has a positive course of action, when what he holds most desirable is strongly evident, the techniques of explicit characterization are serviceable enough. They are less effective in delineating the quiescent, somewhat passive characters whose part is

13 Richard’s acting, of course, is not merely a technical convenience but an integral part of his character. Shakespeare from the first could evolve the spirit from the mechanical operations of his stage. Yet it is important to see that, all differences between their characters aside, Richard II and Richard III are projected by the identical technical means: both are shown to be acting. Their acting suggests the presence though it does not reveal, implicitly or explicitly, the substance of a deeper reality in the character.

14 Shakespeare’s History Plays (New York, 1946), pp. 245 ff.
more to suffer than to act. A villain in a tragedy is easier to depict than a suffering hero. When a character does little, it is difficult to show what he is. When his spiritual greatness is revealed by his assertion of his integrity of spirit, a way must be found to represent the substance of that spirit, or the character will not emerge as more than a curiosity, a kind of psychological object-lesson, soulless as a case history. Explicit techniques alone ultimately will not serve. Only with the aid of implicit suggestion can a playwright represent the inner reality of spirit essential to the tragic sufferers.

In the scene at the death of Gaunt, Richard is presented totally by explicit means. He does nothing beyond his avowed course; he is nothing other than what Gaunt explicitly states him to be. The problem here, of course, was to dramatize the misguided and therefore unworthy king with discretion, for reasons political as well as dramatic. This much Shakespeare accomplishes, but very little more. Richard has not, as a person, entered the action in any vital way, nor has the play achieved force and point. There have been great speeches, but the listless action has not embraced them in a truly dramatic design. They remain a little outside, supererogatory, more the poetry of rhetoric than the poetry of drama.

On Richard's return from Ireland, the essential drama begins, for it is at this point that Richard enters on his way of suffering, and it is here that the conflict between Richard and Bolingbroke emerges. Now action begins to generate, but by what means, as the play develops, is Richard characterized?

The most an audience can know of Richard at the time he appears on the Welsh coast is that he is a shallow, gracefully histrionic person. He does not cheat expectation. Once again, the explicit characterization gives him something of an actor's quality. "Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand" is the musical accompaniment to a ritual gesture. Richard acts and tells why; his words explain his ceremony; his emotion is revealed entirely by his description of it.

Yet shall it be said of this Richard that he is no more than the pageant king of the first two acts, that this is merely an actor's "business," deliberately, somewhat self-consciously pathetic? This indeed has repeatedly been the judgment of his behavior, and certainly there is no clear cause to believe more in Richard's pathos than his pomp. He has not staked any claim to genuine dignity.

This view, however, seems inexact, despite the advantage of its consistency with the precedent action. Richard's ceremony in Act III seems to be meaningful and moving where before it was empty formality. His expression of his devotion to England is not far removed from Gaunt's
eulogy of the blessed isle or Mowbray's lament for his lost language. No one, of course, would claim that Richard's patriotism is equal to Gaunt's, but his expression of it draws on the lyric energies which inform the patriotic utterances throughout the play. The verse at least puts him on the side of the angels. Suddenly, unexpectedly, Richard begins to claim sympathy, and, as he does, the demands on the techniques of characterization become more severe than they have been so far. The ceremonial king of the first act could be easily revealed by his outward show. Similarly, Richard's action toward Gaunt reveals an unworthy mortal without difficulty. In the third act, however, as king and mortal are brought into close conjunction, no presentation of externals will entirely suffice to do justice to the sympathetic Richard—to the suffering king entering the world of the dispossessed.

The third act is the first crucial test of Shakespeare's dramaturgy, and he passes it superbly, using the technical resources he had mastered in *Richard III*. The stylized alternation of courage and despair as Richard receives the news of his losses, the sorrowful splendor of his appearance at Flint Castle—explicit characterization can do no more than this. Richard II is a masker by necessity as Richard III is a masker by choice. To protect himself from the cold eyes of Bolingbroke, he must cling desperately to the mask of the ceremonial ruler. Wavering and faint-hearted, he must force himself to maintain the dignity of a king. The effect is poignant, a moving, if somewhat artificial portrait which presents the idea of anointed majesty, but which at the same time suggests the presence of a suffering human being.

Richard's behavior is the focal center of the action and everyone, including Richard, is concerned with it. Inevitably, therefore, his manner will be felt to be part pose. To be sure, the sense of the *poseur* is dramatically justified. His acting is motivated by circumstances and by his character which shapes itself into an entity in these scenes. The artifice which attends the descriptions of falling majesty seems equally appropriate: it is the actor's mask, the formalized image of woe, reminiscent of the lamenting queens of *Richard III*. Furthermore, the lengthy set pieces by whose means Richard holds attention are sufficiently thoughtful to suggest that he is maturing toward some philosophical acceptance of his mortal world. Finally, the silent skepticism of Bolingbroke casts his action into an ironic dimension and provides the scene with an immediacy, a sense of living presence which the stylized lamenting of Richard by itself can not achieve.

It is just here, however, in effectively creating the living presence of Richard, the sufferer—of making Richard an object of pity rather than of wonder—that the explicit manner reaches its limit. Richard is charac-
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characterized by his artifices, by his mask which can be described by himself and his watchers without awkwardness. But of the man, the best the ironic perspective can show is that he is not what he pretends to be. His sorrow and his weakness are suggested by a kind of negative characterization. Richard points out that kings are mortal, but this is different from showing what mortals are when they suffer. Despite the rhetoric which describes his suffering, despite the attempts of the set pieces to suggest growth, Richard's words for all their handsome lyricism do not quite break through to present tragic suffering as a thing felt rather than as a thing discussed.

To a less rhetorical, more oblique, and paradoxically more direct method of revealing suffering, however, Shakespeare was coming as he wrote. As the play stood in relation to the second tetralogy, Richard did not need to be more than the anointed king, a vital link in the world order. He existed primarily to be unkinged, his deposition serving as the cause of all that followed. It is chiefly as the king—passingly unworthy, yet a king—that Shakespeare presented him through three acts. In doing so, he kept well within his proven technical range. Yet as he wrote, his interest appears to have been more compellingly caught by Richard as human being than as king, and the incoordination of the elements of Richard's portrait is the result of the divided view. The pathetic figure huddling in the robes of ceremony is of another order of being than the ceremonial ruler whose principal function is to point out the consequences of rebellion against his holy state. His complete emergence in the deposition scene—the spot can be almost precisely fixed—is the final indication that for Shakespeare the known limits of technique were insufficient, and that the farther ranges of revelation must be explored, whatever the cost to the unity of effect of the present enterprise.

The opening episode of Act iv harks back to the dramaturgy of Henry VI. The stately donnybrook begun by Bagot's charges is muddled and at this point perilously near irrelevance. The tone of the scene rises at the Bishop of Carlisle's prophecy, which has some of the structural function of Margaret's curses in its delineation of the course of destiny. Yet both episodes are little more than curtain raisers to Richard's sacrificial moment.

At his entrance, he speaks again as an actor, this time as the tragedian caught removing make-up and costume:

\begin{verbatim}
Alack, why am I sent for to a king
Before I have shook off the regal thoughts
Wherewith I reign'd?
\end{verbatim}

(The i.v.162–164)

The new role occupies his mind, and gesture suggests itself:
I hardly yet have learn'd
To insinuate, flatter, bow, and bend my knee. (iv.i.164–165)

And he must learn his part more perfectly:
Give sorrow leave a while to tutor me
To this submission. (iv.i.166–167)

The explicit characterization of the earlier sections is still the technical means. Richard is describing himself in literal terms, being somewhat methodically pathetic, and his sorrow, though expressed, is not completely self-expressive. Yet Shakespeare appears instinctively to be seeking a more satisfactory method of projecting the reality of suffering than by describing its appearance, a method that will remove completely from his character the sense of the histrionic which falsifies the suffering. He must show not Richard's vision of his own suffering, but the suffering itself, and he reaches next for an image that will suggest the agony of a man betrayed. A natural, if audacious comparison comes to hand:

Yet 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)

It is a satisfactory moment on many counts. The image has unexpected propriety, for Richard—as the play reiterates—is God's deputy, and, ruling by God's leave, is touched with divinity. It is startling too in its power to eradicate the callow Richard and to give him, almost for the first time in the play, a true dignity. Finally, it serves to lift his personal sorrow from the commonplace, to generalize it by allowing it to touch an archetypal instance of the suffering of the betrayed. It strikes a chord to which all hearers must respond, for it reaches to common roots, and as it does so, the emotion seems unexpectedly more credible and more noble than before. Richard here, and at the repetition of the Christ image at line 239, is suddenly more than an actor.

The idea of suffering grows as the scene moves on, but language and gesture revert to the older manner. The tableau effect of Richard and Henry holding the crown, with the accompaniment of Richard's elaborate conceit of the well with two buckets, "The emptier ever dancing in the

15 An actor could presumably make the image false, as some commentators have found it to be in reading the lines. Cf. the comment by G. B. Harrison (op. cit., p. 192). In view of the opinion expressed about Richard's deposition in the later plays of the tetralogy, however, to read the lines as mere rhetoric would appear to do violence to the central conception of the king's divinity.
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air, / The other down, unseen, and full of water,” is passionless, descriptive only. Similar are the speeches which follow, elaborating stage gesture, ritualistic in effect, but empty of personal emotion. The emotion of the man is obscured by the rhetoric of the king, yet it is alive, coursing below the frigid language, waiting for its moment.

It is when he causes Richard to call for the mirror that Shakespeare begins fully to suggest the reality of suffering in his hero. In Shakespeare’s dramatic development, the incident is significant. Richard calls for the glass to learn the truth about his sorrow, and what he sees gives him pause:

No deeper wrinkles yet? Hath sorrow struck
So many blows upon this face of mine,
And made no deeper wounds? (iv.i.277–279)

The appearance, the gesture, the descriptive language do not tell the truth of the inner suffering. At best, they are a distorted, unfocused revelation. It is a strange moment. There comes a surge of rhetoric reminiscent of Marlowe, and then Richard breaks the glass. As he does so, it is almost as if Shakespeare himself broke the glass by which he had to this moment mirrored suffering.

Bolingbroke says with some irony at what he takes to be mere petulance:

The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy’d
The shadow of your face. (iv.i.292–293)

Richard, however, understands a deeper irony in the image than does Bolingbroke:

The shadow of my sorrow! Ha! let’s see.
’Tis very true, my grief lies all within;
And these external manners of laments
Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
That swells with silence in the tortur’d soul.
There lies the substance. (iv.i.294–299)

Shakespeare is not far now from the revealing irony of

But I have that within which passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (Hamlet 1.ii.85–86)

In Richard III, Shakespeare acknowledged no difference between the outer and the inner man. “External manners of laments” were the entire substance, two degrees of appearance the only subtlety. Now—almost with a sense of startled discovery—the dramatist’s perception takes him close to what will be a truth of his craftsmanship: that the
external manner of lamenting is a shadow only, that true grief can only be imaged as it is, in silence and unseen. Amazingly enough, then, Shakespeare finds the means to project the “substance”:

Richard: I’ll beg one boon,  
And then be gone and trouble you no more.  
Shall I obtain it?

Bolingbroke: Name it, fair cousin.  
Richard: “Fair cousin?” I am greater than a king;  
For when I was a king my flatterers  
Were then but subjects; being now a subject,  
I have a king here to my flatterer.  
Being so great, I have no need to beg.

Bolingbroke: Yet ask.  
Richard: And shall I have?  
Bolingbroke: You shall.  
Richard: Then give me leave to go. (iv.i.302–313)

After the ceremony, the symbolic gesture, all the rhetoric of passion, the short lines and their silences are doubly eloquent, and they project matured character with a reality that Shakespeare has not before been able to achieve.16

Thus, for a moment, the man emerges from the ritual pageant and, for that moment, his audience is unconcerned with stories of the death of kings. The mask and the man have been brought into revealing opposition, and in consequence, human suffering, the raw material of tragedy, has moved full sympathy in a way the merely royal story can never do again. The tale of dispossession and its sequent national disturbance was originally the focal matter of the drama, but in Act iv, when Richard’s character moves into a new, sharp perspective, tragedy, as it were, finally upstages history, and from this last imbalance the play never entirely recovers.

What follows in this play is not of especial importance. Even the sequence in which the “discovery” was made concludes with a flatly explicit couplet. Richard’s parting with his queen is in the older manner, and the affairs of the York family are reminiscent of the dramaturgy that found no fault with the miscellaneous episodes of Henry VI.17

The technical mastery of so difficult a matter is not instantly achieved. The soliloquy in Pomfret Castle seems to be trying without conspicuous

16 Cf. Doran, op. cit., pp. 342–343, for a different view of the same lines. Miss Doran’s conclusion that after Richard “the evidence of rhetorical device becomes less; style is put to more oblique uses” is parallel to mine.

17 It is perhaps noteworthy that in the York episodes (v.ii.23 ff.) Richard is compared explicitly with a tedious actor.
success to find a way of imaging the frenzied boredom of imprisonment. It is hard to be sure, but it seems as if in writing the final scene for Richard, Shakespeare looked again at *Doctor Faustus*—the obvious model for projecting strongly felt emotion by semi-implicit means. Earthly scruples quibble with thoughts divine as in Faustus' opening soliloquy, and time passes as at Faustus' end, though without projecting the sense of fatal destiny that Marlowe manages. Marlovian or not, the soliloquy only partially succeeds in showing finally and in combination the king figure and the suffering man. Its formality is a little self-conscious, and it contrasts perhaps too sharply with the simpler pathos of the scene with the groom. In neither episode is Richard the man revealed in more than half light. He is something less than the king of "Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand," and far removed from the simple sufferer revealed in "Then give me leave to go."

Discovery—if discovery it be—did not lead in *Richard II* to full exploration. But there was Brutus coming and the story of Hal and Hotspur, where Shakespeare perfected the implicit techniques that enabled him to approach tragedy greatly. Indeed, it is worth noting in passing that so completely implicit is the characterization of *Henry IV* that Hal's explanatory soliloquy at the end of i.ii appears a blot, difficult for a present-day reader to accept without some sophisticating perception detrimental to Hal's character. Yet the soliloquy is only a momentary reversion to the technique of *Richard III*. Hal says, in effect, "I am determined to be a hero," and his words would not give a moment's pause, had the play been cast in the mold of *Richard III*. The older manner, however, is no longer sufficient to his purposes, for Shakespeare has already travelled far down the road to tragedy he came upon, unsuspecting and unready, during the writing of *Richard II*.