Holy Dying in *Richard II*

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Dans le Richard II de Shakespeare, 2^{ième} acte, scène 1, le roi Richard assiste à l'agonie de John of Gaunt, considéré—selon les termes de la théorie politique des Tudor—autant comme monarque sacerdotal de droit divin (dans son corps politique) que comme parent (dans son corps naturel). Ces deux fonctions correspondent chacune à une pratique particulière de la sainte agonie : l'agonie canonique, relevant du sacrement administré par les prêtres de l'Ordre pour la Visite des Malades, et l'ars moriendi laïque. La scène en question est construite de manière à montrer que Richard se crée des parodies démoniaques de ces pratiques, renforçant les détails précédant de la pièce le présentant comme rex imago diaboli plutôt que comme rex imago Dei. Toutefois, alors qu'il perd en puissance, Richard reconnaît graduellement la nature démoniaque de ses précédentes représentations de la monarchie, et entreprend un processus d'auto examen qui le prépare à une authentique sainte agonie dans 5.5. Bolingbroke, dans l'intervalle, a ironiquement tenu compte du précédant personnage démoniaque de Richard, lorsqu'il donne des exemples remarquables de la citation prisée des démonologues élisabéthains : « la rébellion est un péché comparable à la sorcellerie » (1 Samuel 15,23). Toutefois, malgré le rattrapage spirituel et personnel de Richard, la pièce de Shakespeare démystifie la royauté en tant qu'incarnation de la monarchie sacerdotale de droit divin, et par la même occasion soulève la question de la possibilité pour tous les humains d'incarner l'idéal du rex imago Dei.

According to its most recent Arden editor, *Richard II* thematizes two politically charged projects not found in Shakespeare's earlier tetralogy of English history plays: "probing . . . divine right as a concept" and scrutinizing "the unstable personality of a king who puts his whole trust in its theoretical protections."¹ One scene, whose rendering of these interrogations is particularly complex and overdetermined, merits a closer look. Act 2, scene 1, in which John of Gaunt departs from this world and King Richard from England, borrows both structure and language from two prescriptions for holy dying: the *Ars Moriendi* and its canonical counterpart, the Order for the Visitation of the Sick. In addition, against the theology of holy dying the scene counterpoises what Iago calls the "divinity of hell." The result, I suggest,

is a demonically inflected discourse of holy dying, by which Shakespeare represents Richard's violation of the sacerdotal king, or *rex imago Dei*, not only as wilful tyranny but as the demonic inverse of that idealization.² An historicized close reading of the scene that teases out threads of theological and demonological inference, and that complements earlier critical insights, enables a more nuanced reading of both character and politics. Richard's own death-scene provides a concluding perspective from which to assess the larger ideological implications of these inferences.

When King Richard goes to see the dying Duke of Lancaster in 2.1, he does so in two distinctive roles: as king and as nephew. This duality (the public figure vs. the private person) would have been understood in terms of the now familiar conception of the "king's two bodies," a fundamental element in Tudor political thinking. In her first address to the Privy Council, the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth spoke of her grief at the death of her sister Mary as coming from her "bodye naturallye considered," but of her power to succeed Mary and rule England as a function of her "bodye politique."³ Just so, in his natural body (his fallible and frangible mortal existence) Richard as kinsman visits his ailing uncle, while in his political body (his incorporation of an immortal, hereditary, and perfect royalty) he comes as a sovereign to his vassal. In the circumstance of Gaunt's imminent death, each of these "bodies" sets into motion a distinct, well-known holy dying practice. As the old Duke of Lancaster's king—especially as the *sacerdotal* king that Richard purports to be in act 1—Richard presides over a version of the liturgical Order for the Visitation of the Sick that is shot through with allusions to witchcraft theory and demonology. As John of Gaunt's nephew, he demonically parodies the *Ars Moriendi*, a lay holy dying practice administered by relatives or friends. To accommodate the dramatic evocation of these different but congruent holy dying practices, and to appreciate the richly intertextual layering of thanatological and demonic signification (in a scene wholly Shakespeare's invention), we will view these ironically invoked, concurrent spiritual tableaux separately—each as through one lens of a stereoscope—so that when we combine the resulting images we can perceive the full dimensionality of the scene. Let us begin with Richard's pretensions to sacerdotal kingship and his regal, pseudo-priestly "Visitation."

I

The notion of the priest-king is virtually inseparable from Tudor formulations of the king's two bodies.⁴ What Ernst Kantorowicz calls the "new pontificalism" of early-modern states depended on the belief "that government is a *mysterium* admin-

istered alone by the king-highpriest and his indisputable officers, and that all actions committed in the name of those 'Mysteries of State' are valid *ipso facto* or *ex opere operato*, regardless even of the personal worthiness of the king and his henchmen."⁵ The scenes leading up to act 2, scene 1 reveal that Shakespeare's Richard shares these assumptions, but they both emphasize and undercut the sacerdotal aspects of his kingship, thus anticipating Richard's perversion of the king's priestly function when visiting Gaunt.

Backed into a corner in act 1, scene 1 by Bolingbroke and Mowbray's refusal to "forget" and "forgive," Richard is forced to proclaim that "Justice [shall] design the victor's chivalry" (1.1.203). Now a king's presiding over a trial by combat implies regal participation in and a priestly administration of the divine power ("Justice") that such a trial invokes. But as we learn in the second scene, despite Richard's shrewdly pious insistence on his "sacred blood" (1.1.119), he in fact embodies and administers only demonic *in*justice, having sacrilegiously spilled his grandfather "Edward's sacred blood" and "hacked down" a branch sprung from "his most royal root" (1.2.17–18). Similarly, in act 1, scene 3, even though suspension of the trial is within Richard's prerogative, given the scene's quasi-religious tone and its dramatic, ritualistic crescendo, Richard McCoy is surely right in saying that the "King's disruption of these proceedings is made to seem an almost sacrilegious violation of chivalric ritual . . ."⁶ In throwing down his warder, furthermore, he both denies the invoked providential Justice an opportunity to function (i.e., to validate Bolingbroke's indirect accusation that Richard had Woodstock murdered), and arrogates justice to himself (endorsed by a pliant "council"), meting out "doom" and "sentence" as if he embodies the very divine Justice he has obstructed. The contrived language of his charges against the dukes—"eagle-winged pride," "sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts," "rival-hating envy"—is ironically self-indicting, too, because these explicitly Luciferian faults lead, he says, to the very horror of which he himself is already guilty: "wad[ing] even in our kindred's blood" (1.3.129–31, 138).

The ceremonial quality of Richard's language in this episode also relates directly, as Charles Forker observes, to his priestly-regal self-identification:

As a king by divine right, Richard assumes that his words have an almost supernatural power to enact what they refer to. His judgment against Mowbray, "The hopeless word of 'never to return' / Breathe I against thee, upon pain of life" (1.3.152–53), takes the absolutism and inevitability of its effect for granted; pronouncement of the sentence becomes inseparable from the punishment. . . . Richard's essentialist conception of language obliterates the space between signifier and signified, like the priest who transmutes the bread and wine of the Eucharist into the body and

blood of Christ by saying the words of institution: "this is my body . . . this is my blood." (pp. 65–66)

Here Richard not only illustrates an *ex opere operato* action like the priest's consecration of the elements, but in fact parodies another specific priestly function. For his striking utterance mimics the exorcist's ritualistic exsufflation, by which the devil is renounced (as in the baptismal rite up to the 1552 Book of Common Prayer) or banished (as in exorcism proper).⁷ Yet Richard's would-be priestly ritual of expunging evil is (like the cancellation of the trial itself) a self-interested stratagem. Mowbray identifies Richard's motive in calling his life-exile "speechless death" and in repeatedly emphasizing the loss of his "language" and the "engaol[ling]" of his "tongue" (1.3.159–73). The malevolent quality of Richard's "breathing" is thus like the pre-conversion Saul's "breathing out threatnings & slaughter against the disciples" (Acts 9:1)—and the opposite of Jesus' beneficent "breath[ing] on" the disciples to infuse them with "the holie Gost" (John 20:22).⁸

Another intimation of Richard as demonic king-priest follows immediately, when Richard demands that Mowbray and Bolingbroke swear on his "royal sword" not to conspire against him while in exile. For in making his "royal sword" (the symbol of God's Justice exercised through kingly power) into the cross of Christ, Richard desecrates a hieratic emblem. Not only, by virtue of the trial's cancellation, has his "royal sword" failed to represent providential "Justice," but Richard makes a cross of "murder's bloody axe," the very instrument by which, in effect, his uncle Thomas of Woodstock was tyrannously and sacrilegiously "hacked down," spilling "Edward's sacred blood," and beginning these "home alarms."

Perhaps the most compelling anticipation of Richard's function as demonic priest-king in 2.1 comes just moments before that scene. When Bushy enters to announce that Gaunt, suddenly and grievously afflicted, urgently desires to see Richard, the King's immediate response is telling:

KING RICHARD   Now put it, God, in the physician's mind
                          To help him to his grave immediately!
                          The lining of his coffers shall make coats
                          To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars.
                          Come, gentlemen, let's all go visit him.
                          Pray God we may make haste and come too late!

ALL   Amen!   (1.4.59–65)

In the BBC rendering of this exchange, Derek Jacobi's Richard sardonically crosses himself, and his followers enthusiastically jeer the "Amen!" This staging exactly catches the appropriate tone, with Richard as mock-priest and the others as congregation (see

1.4.64n). Moreover, Richard's malefic "prayer" clearly inverts the tone, motive, and intention of the opening invocation of the Order for the Visitation of the Sick:

most mercifull God, and saviour, extend thy accustomed goodness, to this thy servaunt whiche is greved with sykenesse, visit him O Lorde, . . . and restore unto this sick person his former health (if it bee thy wil) or els geve him grace so to take thy visitation, that after this painful life [is] ended, he may dwell with the[e] in life everlastyng. [Amen.]⁹

On the grounds of his tyranny alone, Richard would have been considered a demonic king by Shakespeare's contemporaries; while the ideal divine-right monarch was called the image of God, opposites of that ideal—tyrants as well as rebels—were "lively images of the Dark Prince."¹⁰ This kind of figuration is grounded both in the "mutually reinforcing relationship of ideas" that constituted early-modern theological politics and witchcraft theory, and in contemporary dramatic and literary practice. On the first point, for example, "demonological inversion was inseparable" both from "notions of archetypal rebellion" and from conceptions of "pseudo-monarchy." The opposition between a society modelled on "the divine paradigm" and the demonic world turned upside down was "not a polarity like any other but . . . the primary polarity of Christian political thought." Indeed, witchcraft (whose very principle was inversion) was a crime because it was seen as a violation of theocratic principles and as the opposite of sacred authority vested in the divine-right monarch. In a time when "No Devil, no God" was axiomatic, theology and its complement, demonology, were inextricable both from each other and from the political thinking behind sacerdotal monarchy.¹¹

Second, whether in actual witch-trials or in the symbolism deployed in dramatic or literary celebrations of the monarchy, "those who claimed power by divine right" were the natural antagonists of "demons and witches" since the latter's "defeat could only result from supernatural . . . authority" which manifested itself in the "miracles" or "good magic" attributed to the sacerdotal monarch.¹² The court masque, for example, often took its very structure (masque-antimasque; oppositional parallels in ritualistic speech, action, and dance) from the antithesis between the "good magic" of the divine-right monarch (which both symbolized and included all other systems of orthodox order) and the evil magic of counterpoised witch- or demon-figures. Magical, charismatic kingship vs. demonic magic or witchcraft was a well-developed subject in Elizabethan court spectacles long before the Jonsonian masque gave it quintessential expression in the *Masque of Queens* (1609). In fact, from about 1575, Queen Elizabeth participated in numerous courtly entertainments, plays, and masques that celebrated her healing, thaumaturgical, and anti-witchcraft powers.¹³

These dramatic representations of magical, sacerdotal monarchy are concomitant with an increasing official emphasis on sacred monarchy, a trend already noticeable in the *Homilies* of 1547 but especially prominent during the last quarter of the century. Nor is it a coincidence that more witch-trials likely took place under Queen Elizabeth, the majority in the 1580s and 1590s (and these with a high rate of conviction and execution), than during the whole seventeenth century.¹⁴ The demonic is no mere arbitrary metaphor but a powerful conception of moral and political evil intrinsic to early-modern political discourse. Hence the deep interest of King James VI and I in witchcraft eventuated not only in the publication of his *Daemonologie* (1597)—and, indirectly, *Macbeth* (1605)—but in James’s conception of absolutism, defined explicitly as oppositional to the demonic.¹⁵ In this historical context, it is little wonder that Stephen Greenblatt calls witchcraft “a recurrent, even obsessive feature in Shakespeare’s cultural universe.”¹⁶ “The characterization of disorder by inversion, even in relatively minor texts or on ephemeral occasions,” says Stuart Clark, can “be taken to exemplify an entire metaphysic” of demonic topsy-turviness.¹⁷ Thus Richard’s repeated political-theological inversions—his mock-Justice, his parody of exorcism, his sacrilegious and self-indicting oath-giving, and his blasphemous reversal of the liturgical prayer for the dying—exemplify the demonic politics of his upside-down world. In such a world, Robin Briggs demonstrates, “[f]amiliar practices and relationships” remain “quite recognizable, but in distorted or parodic forms.”¹⁸ Richard’s hieratic kingship, as intimated in act 1, is not that of a “deputy elected by the Lord” (3.2.57) who emulates the divine model of rule, but of a *rex imago diaboli* who can only mimic the godly king’s priestly function. For despite his futile invocation of its terms, Richard is “psychologically wedded” *not*, as Forker (following Kantorowicz) suggests, to “christological kingship” (pp. 17–18) but to its opposite, demonic kingship. He has fully *internalized* perverted notions of divinely granted royal power and prerogative which can express themselves only in a demonic *in version* of sacerdotal kingship.

II

Immediately after King Richard’s malefic version of the Visitation rite’s opening prayer, the introductory dialogue of 2.1 prepares us for the ill-intentioned “visit” of a professed sacerdotal king to his liegeman—the first of our stereoscopic lenses. Thus the old dukes of Lancaster and York gravely discuss good government, true counsel vs. flattery, and the destruction of traditional English values under Richard’s body politic, especially in its would-be priestly aspect (2.1.1–68).¹⁹

As truth-telling counsellor opposed to “glosing” favourites who only pander to Richard’s “Will” (desire) and appeal to a “tardy-apish” inclination (17–28), Gaunt repeatedly identifies both his “breath” (words, life) and act of “breathing” (speaking, sustaining life) with his very “life’s counsel,” which his king has ignored. Directly countering Richard’s pseudo-priestly exsufflation, he desires to “breathe [his] last / In wholesome counsel” and, prophetically “new inspired” (breathed into by God) though “expiring” (breathing out, breathing his last), to “breathe truth” in telling of England’s “shameful conquest of itself” (1–2, 8, 32, 66; cf. also York’s references to Gaunt’s “breath” at 3, 30). His quasi-religious “England” speech challenges Richard’s professed hieratic kingship by identifying him with Satan, as the corrupter of “This other Eden, demi-paradise” and “blessed plot,” which is also a “royal throne of kings” (40–42, 51–53). The play’s “first rebel,” Richard is his country’s first enemy; as his body politic incorporates “this England,” he is also his own worst enemy, since England has shamefully conquered “itself” (66).²⁰ Richard is therefore an analogue to Lucifer, “the graunde captayne and father of all rebels,” according to the *Homilie against Disobedience*²¹; and, as political theorists and demonologists alike often repeated, “rebellion is as the sinne of witchcraft” (1 Samuel 15:23).

King Richard’s blasphemous prayer that he will “come too late” unanswered, he now “visit[s]” his dying vassal, the Duke of Lancaster, and completes the demonic mimicry of the Visitation rite that he had begun earlier. In the Order for the Visitation of the Sick (1549; slightly rev., 1552, 1559), the priest utters a salutation (from Luke 10:5), “Peace be in this house, and to all that dwell in it.”²² When Richard visits Gaunt, however, he brings only the callous greeting, “What comfort, man? how is’t with aged Gaunt?” (2.1.72). But Gaunt—already determined to counsel Richard in truth—quickly assumes the instructional and exhortatory role by turning his answers to Richard’s questions into direct confrontations of the “illness” of Richard’s body politic. This stichomythic passage is reminiscent in form of the prayer-and-response and question-and-answer exchanges in the first part of the Visitation liturgy:

KING RICHARD   What comfort, man? How is’t with aged Gaunt?

GAUNT   O, how that name befits my composition!
Old Gaunt indeed, and gaunt in being old.

...

Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave,
Whose hollow womb inherits naught but bones.

KING RICHARD   Can sick men play so nicely with their names?

GAUNT   No, misery makes sport to mock itself.
Since thou dost seek to kill my name in me,
I mock my name, great King, to flatter thee.

KING RICHARD   Should dying men flatter with those that live?
 GAUNT   No, no, men living flatter those that die.
 KING RICHARD   Thou, now a-dying, sayest thou flatterest me.
 GAUNT   Oh no, thou diest, though I the sicker be.
 KING RICHARD   I am in health, I breathe, and see thee ill.
 GAUNT   Now He that made me knows I see thee ill—
                       Ill in myself to see, and in thee seeing ill.
                       Thy death-bed is no lesser than thy land,
                       Wherein thou liest in reputation sick . . .   (2.1.72–96)

Identifying Richard as the one who is truly ill and dying, Gaunt appropriates the priest's role in the Visitation rite as the mode in which he will counsel Richard. The priest's main obligation is to exhort the sick person to accept illness as "Gods visitation" (i.e., affliction) meant to try one's patience, test one's faith, or chastise one's sins, and thus encourage repentance and redemption. For while the Order was to provide "reassurance and support," the ministering priest was also directed "to interrogate the dying person" on matters of faith and morals. "Pastoral practice here was expected to be tough."²³ The sick person was therefore enjoined to examine his conscience, restore any injuries done to others, and forgive any wrongs done to him. Gaunt attempts just this kind of admonition as he shames Richard for his self-inflicted political disease, particularly in his climactic speech (2.1.93–114).

Figuratively, Gaunt implies that the consecration of Richard's "anointed body" had ordained him not to a priestly rule under God, but to a misrule under the influence of flatterers, who demonically invert the physician's curative function to one that wounds (2.1.97–98). These references also recall Richard's own conjuring up of an injurious physician in his mock-prayer, as well as his unwittingly self-undermining jest that "though [he is] no physician" he would "prescribe" a completely inept and improbable treatment for the serious political crisis of the opening scene: "Forget, forgive, conclude and be agreed" (1.1.152–57). That Richard is "no physician" is also a gross understatement. While in act 1, scene 1 he arrogates the role of "omnipotent arbiter with the Christlike ability to heal,"²⁴ this presumption is immediately exposed (in 1.2) as a self-interested sham. Moreover, because the "home alarms" that threaten civil order derive from his sacrilegious and unnatural murder, he is the inverse of the traditional idea that priestly monarchs were to be "healers of the body politic" (see 1.1.154n). Though Richard facetiously claims that "this is no month to bleed," suggesting instead that Bolingbroke and Mowbray "purge [their] choler without letting blood," he has in fact *raised* choler (caused distemper in the body politic as well as in the adversaries) through his tyrannous bloodletting, executed by "Envy's [Malice's] hand and Murder's bloody axe" (1.2.17–21).

Gaunt claims that had Richard's grandsire foreseen his evil, he would have deposed him before he was "possessed" of the crown, since he is demonically "possessed now to depose [him]self" (see 2.1.107–108n). The murder of Gloucester has, in other words, transformed Richard's *possession* of the crown into a willing *possession* by the devil. Immediately after this pun, Gaunt obliquely reinforces this idea in his attack on Richard's farming of the realm: "Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world, / It were a shame to let this land by lease; / But for thy world enjoying but this land, / Is it not more than shame to shame it so?" (2.1.109–12). "Regent of the world" Richard is not, but his corruption of "This other Eden" and his "possession" demonstrate him to be a demonic "lord of this world" in the echoing theological-political sense. St. Paul's name for the devil, "god of this worlde" (2 Cor. 4:4; cp. Eph. 2:1–2, 6:12), is a key phrase in Protestant theology, as was John's "the *prince* of this worlde" (12:31, 14:30). Luther's equivalent term is "*Lord* of this world," while John Knox called the devil the "*prince* and God of this world."²⁵ Gaunt thus stigmatizes Richard Plantagenet as the spiritual kin of Shakespeare's earlier and most notorious demonic tyrant, Richard of Gloucester. This "fiend," "devil," "minister of hell" (etc.), Shakespeare's audience would recall, first wished his brother dead by blasphemously praying, "God take King Edward to his mercy" and then craved only *this* "world . . . to bustle in" (*Richard III*, 1.1.151–52; 1.2.34–44). Similarly, Shakespeare's Richard II prays that God will inspire murder in Gaunt's physician to help *him* quickly to *his* grave, then flaunts his worldly well-being ("I am in health, I breathe"). The *internalized* demonic evil of the latter is more subtly drawn than the extroverted evil of Richard III; but Richard Plantagenet's evil is no less a Luciferian *libido dominandi* for all that.²⁶

The inverted Visitation episode ends as the frustrated counsellor, Gaunt, leaves his unrepentant "careless patient" to an unending "shame" that will survive the imminent "death" of his political body. The recalcitrant Richard angrily but cold-bloodedly "Join[s] with [Gaunt's] present sickness" (2.1.132) and, like the poisoning demonic physician, offers only a malefic wish: "let them die that age and sullens have, / For both hast thou, and both become the grave" (139–40). Shockingly, almost as soon as Gaunt exits, Richard's desire is fulfilled, giving the impression that a witch-like curse has taken instant effect (145–48). The striking terms in which Northumberland announces the duke's death—"His tongue is now a stringless instrument" (149)—doubly strengthen this impression of malefic magic. First, we are reminded that Richard has already, through a kind of malefic exhalation or "breathing," rendered the "tongue" of Mowbray (which could also utter damning truths against him) as useless as "an *unstringed viol* or *harp*" (1.3.161–62). Second, the phrase vindicates Gaunt by ironically echoing these verses from Psalm 71, a reading

of which comes just before the Visitation rite concludes: “I [will] praise thee and thy faithfulness (O God), playing upon *an instrument of music*: unto thee will I sing upon the *harp* . . . My *tongue* also shall talk of thy righteousness.” As if to indict Richard’s brutal perversion of the rite, other verses of the psalm resonate profoundly with the duke’s God-fearing speech and demeanour throughout this scene: “Delyver me (O my God) out of the hand of . . . the unrighteous and cruel man”; “let them be covered with shame and dishonour that seek to do me evil”; “Forsake me not (O God) in mine old age, when I am grey-headed: until I have showed thy strength to this generation.”²⁷ Richard’s terse “amen” to the duke’s demise and to the ironically invoked psalm—“So much for that” (155)—echoes the literal, sacrilegious “Amen” to his original prayer for Gaunt’s death.

Validating Gaunt’s analysis of the corruption of Richard’s political body, the king’s concluding action—seizing the duke’s wealth and land, royalties and rights—perversely twists the Visitation rite’s injunction that the dying man charitably make his will. As York insists before going off in despair, this peremptory confiscation of Bolingbroke’s inheritance is a violation of the very cosmic order on which the king’s body politic depends and is supposedly patterned (“Let not tomorrow then ensue today”), as well as an abuse of the “charters” and “customary rights” of “Time.” Once again, that is, Richard undermines the metaphysical and legal bases of his own kingship.

III

The exchange between Richard and John of Gaunt also mimics, in a complementary stratum of signification, key motifs in the *Ars Moriendi*, the second of our stereoscopic lenses. Formulated early in the fifteenth century as an aid to holy dying, the *Ars* was both an elaboration of and a kind of commentary on the Catholic *Ordo ad Visitandum Infirmarum*.²⁸ But unlike the *Ordo* (and its Protestant successor, the Order for the Visitation), the *Ars* was intended not for clerical use but for ordinary Christians in preparation for their own deaths, and as a guide for lay people without immediate access to a priest, when attending their dying relations or friends. By the late sixteenth century it was well established as a kind of layman’s ritual for holy dying and was often substituted for the priest’s canonical Visitation rite. As King Richard is also Gaunt’s nephew, his appearance at the dying man’s side casts him in the communally anticipated role of family comforter and counsellor defined by the *Ars*. Now discerned in his “body natural,” he mimics and reverses the kinsman’s role in the *Ars Moriendi*.

Although the early English texts of the *Ars* diverge somewhat (depending on their Latin or French origins) in all of them the “most influential chapter . . . was devoted to the final deathbed temptations and their remedies. Reduced to the vivid form of eleven pictures with a brief accompanying text, this scheme became the basis for an immensely popular and influential block-book, circulating in England as in the rest of Europe, and accessible even to the illiterate.”²⁹ The five temptations are to unbelief or loss of faith, to despair, to impatience, to vainglory or spiritual pride, and to “avarice” or clinging to earthly life (material goods, wife, and family). Accordingly, five of the celebrated woodcuts depict the temptations of devils surrounding the dying man’s bed, and five depict the exhortations of angels and saints to counter the tempting devils. The eleventh shows the *moriens* being saved, his soul borne up to heaven, to the consternation of writhing, baffled demons and the rejoicing of angels and saints. These striking woodcuts were widely disseminated, even outside the *Ars Moriendi* tradition; Wynkyn de Worde, for example, inserted at least one into almost every volume he published.³⁰

While the Order for the Visitation of the Sick mentions the devil only twice,³¹ he is dynamically active on virtually every page of the *Ars*. In fact, texts and woodcuts have multiple devils directly besetting those near death; their wily temptations are described, their arguments paraphrased or quoted directly. Although these hideously depicted, militant devils may strike us as a throw-back to the late medieval Catholicism that produced the original *Ars*, we should remember that Protestant theology—with its emphasis on the “single sovereignty of God” and a corresponding concentration of evil in His adversary—actually strengthened that demonic presence. As a result, says Keith Thomas, “for Englishmen of the Reformation period the Devil was a greater reality than ever.” Indeed, Satan as a literal, personal entity embattled against the faithful “had a reality and immediacy which could not fail to grip the strongest mind.”³² Despite some differences in emphasis, then, there is a strong continuity between the original Catholic *Ars* and the many post-Reformation English texts in the *Ars* tradition.³³

The approach of death is the most crucial moment in the destiny of the soul, and the time when the devil tempts one most severely. The *Ars* texts defined communal expectations for how family and friends of the dying were to deal with this momentous juncture.³⁴ As John D. Cox shows, Shakespeare explicitly envisions this critical moment in 2 *Henry VI*, when King Henry prays for the dying Bishop of Winchester that God may “beat away the busy meddling fiend / That lays strong siege unto this wretch’s soul” (3.3.19–23).³⁵ These lines echo Thomas Becon’s extremely popular *Ars Moriendi* text, *The Sicke Mannes Salve* (1561), where the dying

man must resist the “horrible assaults” of Satan who is then “most busy,” labouring to “the uttermost of hys power” and aided by “al the infernal army” to win his soul.³⁶ With complex irony, Shakespeare evokes that crucial moment in *Richard II*, as the “grievous sick” and bed-ridden Gaunt is carried onto the stage.

The scene opens with York rightly in the role of comforting kinsman attempting to calm and advise his visibly ailing brother: “Vex not yourself, nor strive not with your breath, / For all in vain comes counsel to [Richard’s] ear” (2.1.3–4). Gaunt, however, is impatient to act as “counsel” to their wayward nephew: “Will the King come that I may breathe my last / In wholesome counsel to his unstaid youth? / . . . Though Richard my life’s counsel would not hear, / My death’s sad tale may yet undeaf his ear” (1–2, 15–16). This devout hope recalls Caxton’s exhortation in *The Arte & Crafte to Knowe Well to Dye*, that each Christian “take hede to pouruey him [the *moriens*] for to come to a goode ende, whyls that he hath tyme and layzer. To this myght moche wele serue a felawe & trewe frende deuoute and conuenable, whiche in his laste end assyste hym truly.”³⁷ The dying Gaunt hopes to be such a “trewe frende” in counselling the worldly living but morally dying Richard. Yet, when his nephew enters with his entourage, the supportive familial and communal experience that Elizabethans expected in such a circumstance quickly transmogrifies from the normal (York comforting Gaunt) to the perverse. The Queen does offer a kindly greeting appropriate to the arrival of kin to the *moriens*’ bedside: “How fares our noble uncle Lancaster?” (71). (By contrast, Richard, who had already mocked consanguinity with Gaunt’s son—“he is but my father’s brother’s son” [1.1.117]—will acknowledge kinship to his uncle only near the end of the exchange, when threatening him.) Like York, however, the Queen recedes from view, and as Richard and Gaunt begin their dialogue, we can envision Aumerle, Bushy, Green, Bagot, and Willoughby—whose “flattering sounds” have fed the youthful Richard’s “Light vanity”—exchanging mocking grimaces reminiscent of their sneering wit and blasphemous “Amen!” to Richard’s witch-like anti-prayer.³⁸ The normal *Ars* scene is weirdly inverted as the weakened, dying relation exhausts himself further by counselling his “healthy” kinsman, and as mocking demonic presences replace comforting friends and relations around the deathbed (see Figure 1).

If we now read the stichomythic passage (quoted earlier) through the lens of the *Ars Moriendi* temptations, it takes on a darkly satanic edge, as Richard interrogates, belittles, and tempts Gaunt to despair (“Can sick men play so nicely with their names? . . . Should dying men flatter with those that live? . . . I am in health, I breathe, and see thee ill”), and as Gaunt defends his moral vision (“No, no, men living flatter those that die. . . . Oh no, thou diest, though I the sicker be. . . . Now He that made

me knows I see thee ill"). With these lines, compare this excerpt from Erasmus's dialogue, *Preparatione to Deathe* (1538):

Dyuell: Thou flattereste thy selfe with vayne hope. Man: He that is verite can not lye. It is thy properte to be false of promyses. . . . Dyuel: Thou departest hence laden with euyl dedes and naked of good dedes. Man: I will praye to the Lorde that he wyll dyscharge me of my euyls, and clothe me in his good thinges. Dyuell: But God heareth not synners. Man: But he heareth penitentes, and for synners he dyed. Dyuell: Thy repentance is to late. Man: It was not to late vnto the thefe. Dyuel: The thefes faithe was stedfaste. Thyne wauereth. Man: I wyll praye to the Lorde that he will encrease my faith. Dyuel: Thou doeste falsely perswade thy selfe that thou haste a mercyfull Lorde, which with so many euyls vexeth and punyssheth the[e]. Man: He healeth as a louyinge phisition.³⁹

Richard not only fails to counsel and comfort; he contributes to his uncle's sickness ("The pleasure that some fathers feed upon / Is my strict fast—I mean my children's looks, / And therein fasting hast thou made me gaunt" [2.1.79–81]) and increases his mental agony by taunting and threatening him. He thus becomes like the tempting and ridiculing devils of the *Ars* texts and woodcuts.

At the same time, however, Gaunt insists on reconfiguring the scene from his own literal dying to a tableau of his morally dying nephew-king ("thou diest, though I the sicker be"). Richard's mocking insistence on the physical well-being of his body natural—"I am in health, I breathe, and see thee ill"—bespeaks his lack of spiritual self-understanding. As Thomas Becon, whose *The Sicke Mannes Salve* (1561) went through eleven editions by 1600 and became one of the best selling devotional books of Elizabeth's reign, urges, "whoseuer is not brought into the knowledge of him selfe, he shall neuer haue delight to come vnto Christ, for such as thinke them selues *whole* [like the Pharisees] have no pleasure in a *phisition*, but they that are sicke [Matt 9:12]."⁴⁰

Perhaps most remarkable in this increasingly bitter exchange is Gaunt's shunning of York's advice to "Deal mildly" with their nephew's "youth" (2.1.69). But Gaunt's rising moral indignation is that of a "trew frende" and "prophet" to Richard as *moriens*. For the *Ars Moriendi* texts emphatically warn friends and relatives *not* to "Deal mildly" with the dying person. Rather, the *moriens* should be confronted plainly with the seriousness of his physical and moral condition, and moved to "holsom feare and drede, and so be saued, [rather] than . . . be dampned with flatterying and false dissumulacion."⁴¹ Indeed, to flatter in this way is a "Diabolical thing" (Caxton) and "devellyke" (*Crafte and Knowledge*) which is how Gaunt characterizes the pernicious influence of Richard's favourites on his "possessed" rule.

The biblical exemplar of such a courageous admonisher—cited consistently from the earliest *Ars* texts to those of the late seventeenth century—is the prophet Isaiah, sent by God to Hezekiah, King of Judah, who was “sick vnto death.” The prophet “glosed hym not” (*Crafte and Knowledge*)⁴² but told him curtly, “Put thine house in ordre [sic]: for thou shalt die, and not liue” (2 Kings 20:1).⁴³ Early in his dialogue with York, Gaunt had contrasted his painful “breath[ing of] truth” with those “whom youth and ease have taught to *glose*” (2.1.8–10), to cover with a fair appearance or “to veil truth in specious language.”⁴⁴ It is precisely as a plain-speaking, self-proclaimed “prophet” (2.1.31) like Isaiah that Gaunt confronts Richard and condemns those who *do* flatter and dissimulate with him: “those physicians that first wounded” him, those glosing “thousand flatterers” who accede to his self-destructive policies such as farming the realm, rather than offer candid good counsel (*flatter* in its various forms occurs seven times in this scene). Thus does Gaunt bluntly insist, “Now He that made me knows I see thee ill” (93), echoing the divine physician Christ’s stinging rebuke to the self-righteous but self-ignorant Pharisees.

King Richard, though on his spiritual “death-bed,” is no King Hezekiah. The latter was a pious and faithful monarch, and as soon as he heard Isaiah’s doom he “turned his face to the wall & prayed to the lord” for health (2 Kings 20:2). Not only does Richard refuse his uncle’s godly counsel—suggesting that in his moral sickness he gives in to the *Ars* temptations to unbelief and vainglory—but he flies into a vicious rage, yielding to the third traditional temptation of the *moriens*, impatience, wherein “suche peple ben out of very loue & charyte”⁴⁵ in rejecting their sickness and “abusing those who tend their deathbed.”⁴⁶ The *Ars* woodcuts for the temptation to impatience specifically show a doctor being violently attacked—a detail kept in the many slightly differing versions of this picture (see Figure 2).⁴⁷ Here, Richard rejects his true spiritual physician, and the violence is that of verbal abuse (“A lunatic lean-witted fool / Presuming on an ague’s privilege!”) and actual death-threat: “Wert thou not brother to great Edward’s son, / This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head / Should run thy head from thy unreuerent shoulders!” (2.1.115–16, 121–23).

This is Gaunts’s cue to accuse his kinsman directly of the initiating *familial* desecration that Richard has tried so hard to suppress, and that most blatantly gives demonic irony to this inverted *Ars* scene:

O, spare me not, my brother Edward’s son,
For that I was his father Edward’s son.
That blood already, like the pelican,
Hast thou tapped out and drunkenly caroused.

My brother Gloucester, plain well-meaning soul—
 Whom fair befall in heaven 'mongst happy souls!—
 May be a precedent and witness good
 That thou respect'st not spilling Edward's blood. (124–31)

The witchcraft associations of this hideous image of revelling in the blood of a “plain well-meaning” kinsman are unmistakable. Hamlet, for example, at “the very witching time of night, / When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out / Contagion to this world . . . could . . . drink hot blood” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.388–90). Since his ancestors' blood is also his own, Richard is again self-violating, the “insatiable cormorant . . . [that] soon preys on itself” (2.1.38–39). The unnatural behaviours of the carousing pelican chick and cormorant in humans can only be demonic, just as King Lear imagines that only “pelican daughters”—or “unnatural *hags*” (i.e., witches violating nature)—who feed on a father's blood could explain Poor Tom's demonic possession and madness (*King Lear*, 2.4.278; 3.4.69–75). Richard's unnaturalness or “unkindness” now threatens to “To crop at once [the] too long withered flower” of another uncle's life (2.1.133–34). John Baxter insightfully elucidates the complex interplay in this passage between the natural and the unnatural (the “unkindness” in Richard's “Join[ing] with” Gaunt's sickness) as it relates to “the bonds of nature and kinship, the proper relationship between kin, and between a king and his subjects.”⁴⁸ But, as we have seen (for example, in Gaunt's pun on “possessed”), and as the imagery of a play like *Macbeth* constantly makes explicit, the unnaturalness of breaking such bonds is fundamental to the definition of witchcraft.

His admonition rejected, Gaunt concludes with another vatic condemnation, suggesting that Richard's shame will be like the torments of the damned: “Live in thy shame, but die not shame with thee! / These words hereafter thy tormentors be” (2.1.135–36). Indeed, something like this will come to pass in the deposition scene, when Richard shrinks from reading out his “weaved-up follies” before Parliament, lest he be “shame[d] . . . in so fair a troop.” Urged a fourth maddening time to do so, he cries out in anguish to Northumberland (probably echoing *Doctor Faustus*), “Fiend, thou tormentest me ere I come to hell!” (4.1.228–31, 270n). For the present, though, he remains impervious to his uncle's chastisements, callously greeting the news of his death with derision (“The ripest fruit first falls, and so doth he. / His time is spent; our pilgrimage must be” [2.1.153–54]) and failing to understand the need for the spiritual pilgrimage he will eventually make.

Richard's seizure of his uncle's (and his cousin's) wealth within moments of Gaunt's death shows Richard to be avaricious (the *Ars'* fifth temptation) in pursuing wilfully vain schemes, instead of attending to his own diseased and dying spirituality.

The confiscation is all the more shocking in the scene's literal *Ars Moriendi* context, for it places Richard among those whom Sir Thomas More called the "rabble of fleshly frendes, or rather of flesh flies" who are concerned only with the dying man's property, instead of his spiritual welfare.⁴⁹ Richard's very first utterance upon learning of Gaunt's illness, we remember, was a demonic prayer for his immediate death, to enable the preemption "of his coffers" (1.4.61).

The unnaturalness of this action and of the whole scene is powerfully expressed by Ross, after Richard's brusque departure. Bolingbroke is, he says, "Bereft [deprived by robbery] and gelded of his patrimony" (2.1.237; emphasis added), an arresting metaphor redolent of witchcraft. Citing Ross's line to illustrate the transferred and figurative meaning of *geld* ("To deprive of some essential part; to mutilate"), the *OED* signals the aberrant connotation of the term. Probably the most notorious *maleficium* of the witches—because it perversely assaulted the natural orders of marriage, family, and society itself—was the causing of impotence or infertility.⁵⁰ Only a few lines before Ross's remark, York had lamented Richard's "prevention of poor Bolingbroke / About his marriage" with the French king's cousin (167–68), a "pestilent kind of proceeding against that nobleman," according to Holinshed.⁵¹ Just as Richard's antipathy to the spiritual order is manifest in his perversion of the traditional *Ars Moriendi* role of "trewe frende" to his dying uncle, and in his own portrayal of a spiritually diseased *moriens* impatient of spiritual counsel and carelessly acceding to the devil's deathbed temptations, so his contrariety to the familial and social order is seen in his despoiling Bolingbroke of the ancestral lands upon which aristocratic familial and political life is based, and in his attempt to prevent his cousin from extending his line. "Thou doest seek to kill my name in me" (86), Gaunt had rightly said.

AS SOON AS RICHARD departs for Ireland at the end of 2.1, Bolingbroke's landing at Ravenspurgh is announced (2.2), and the next three scenes show the banished duke gaining in power. With Richard's return to England in 3.2, the play begins to bring into sharper focus Richard the private man, who fully emerges only in act 5. In these intervening scenes, he gradually recognizes the demonic quality of his kingship, a progressive awareness which in turn enables him to confront his human identity and his spirituality. Richard's incremental acknowledgment of himself as diabolical "ape" of the divine-right *rex imago Dei*, though not the sole determinant, is an important component in the oft-noted sympathetic development of his character, as he loses power and as Bolingbroke gains it. Nowhere is this more evident, or his

new self-understanding more clear, than in the way he prepares for and meets his own death, an event that is also crucial to the play's political vision.

IV

At first sight, King Richard's violent murder in a stony Pomfret cell hardly seems the model of "holy dying" as envisioned either in the Visitation rite or in the *Ars Moriendi*. And yet, while yielding to historical necessity in its physical details,⁵² Shakespeare nevertheless shows him preparing for and experiencing a holy death. He receives admonition and self-knowledge from neither priest nor kinsman, however, but from the disasters of his misrule and his own recognition of them as products of a self-deluded Luciferian pride.

His initial steps toward holy dying are taken—though slowly and erratically—upon his arrival at Barkloughly Castle (3.2). At first, it is true, he still imagines himself as quasi-divine sacerdotal king, as he clings to what Charles Forker calls "a hieratic reliance on purely verbal defences" (p. 66). Thus, by merely addressing his "dear earth" he thinks he can conjure from it spiders, toads, and adders to attack Bolingbroke's men, or even turn her stones into "armed soldiers" protective of "her native king" (3.2.4–26). Then, still clinging to the divinity that supposedly hedges an "anointed King," he fancies himself as sun-like majesty whose rising (as in a court masque) will terrify the mere night-thief Bolingbroke, or at whose command a God-sent angel will confront each enemy soldier. But with the successive news of the Welshmen's desertion, the popular uprising in support of Bolingbroke, the deaths of his favourites, and the loss of his uncle York's men and all his strongholds, Richard begins to recognize his heretofore unwittingly internalized demonic "monarchiz[ing]" as a mere travesty of godly rule. Seeing himself as a typical—or archetypal—king "Infus[ed] with self and vain conceit," he recalls Marlowe's demonic hero, "swoll'n with cunning of a self-conceit, who, "falling to a devilish exercise," "His waxen wings did mount above his reach." The equivalent of this Daedalus-Icarus-Lucifer image (see *Doctor Faustus*, Prol. 20–23n)⁵³ appears in Richard's next scene where he compares his own prideful "mounting" and "falling" to that of "glist'ring Phaëton," deservedly punished for Luciferian overreaching: "Down, down I come . . ." (3.3.178). In that scene at Flint Castle, though still not free of self-pity, he is also able to imagine the renunciation of his regal jewels for a set of beads, his gorgeous palace for a hermitage, his figured goblets for a dish of wood, and his "sceptre for a palmer's walking staff," thus envisioning his true spiritual pilgrimage which he had misrecognized when mocking Gaunt's death and boasting that his own "pilgrimage" was still to

come (2.1.154). "I'God's name let it [the "name of King"] go" (3.3.146–51), he now says, acknowledging and rejecting his former reliance on mere words and names as hieratically and magically efficacious.

The deposition scene (4.1) develops his moral consciousness further. Literally giving away his crown and sceptre (fulfilling his imagined renunciation in 3.3), he also removes the "pride of kingly sway from out [his] heart," "With [his] own tongue den[ies] [his] sacred state," and "All pomp and majesty . . . forswear[s]" (4.1.206, 209, 211). Finally, calling for a mirror, he can "read . . . the very book indeed / Where all my sins are writ, and that's myself" (4.1.273–75), making a confession informed by genuine self-knowledge.

In these public scenes (3.2, 3.3, 4.1) Richard's renunciations are, of course, forced upon him, and he does have an eye to the impression he makes on others. Nevertheless, while I can scarcely do justice to their complexity here (Kantorowicz, for example, analyzes these scenes in detail as revealing the gradual separation of Richard's "two bodies"³⁴), it is fair to say that in each of them Shakespeare is at pains to sketch in and anticipate the spirituality that Richard fully displays in his two remaining scenes, which are more intimate and reflective. In these last appearances, Richard heroically struggles to redefine himself without recourse to a mystified "body politic" that could too easily relieve him of personal responsibility. Seemingly inspired by the *Ars Moriendi* he had earlier abused, Richard completes his pilgrimage as a private man.

Act 5, scene 1, for example, depicts a colloquy of spiritual admonition between Richard and his "good sometimes queen," with Richard urging that their "holy lives must [now] win a new world's crown" (5.1.24, 37). He counsels her, in fact, to take his words of advice and farewell "As from [his] death-bed" (39), indicating his dying to, and renunciation of, the world, as well as identifying himself as a *moriens* deliberately preparing for a holy death. Despite obvious differences in situation, Richard's exhortation is strongly reminiscent of the *moriens* Epaphroditus' speech to his wife in Thomas Becon's enormously popular dialogue, *The Sicke Mannes Salve*. Epaphroditus begs his "sweet wife," "be not heauie, neither take thought for me, but rather pray that the good will of God may be done in me. And be as well contented that I shoulde, at the calling of God, goe from thee, as euer thou wast to haue me in thy company. I haue run my race" (p. 107). Richard says to his wife,

Join not with grief, fair woman, do not so,
To make my end too sudden. Learn, good soul,
To think our former state a happy dream,
From which awaked, the truth of what we are

Shows us but this. I am sworn brother, sweet,
 To grim Necessity, and he and I
 Will keep a league till death. Hie thee to France,
 And cloister thee in some religious house.
 Our holy lives must win a new world's crown,
 Which our profane hours here have thrown down. . . .
 Think I am dead, and that even here thou tak'st,
 As from my death-bed, thy last living leave. (5.1.16–25, 38–39)

Having “run his race,” Epaphroditus aspires to the same scriptural “new world’s crown” that Richard now seeks. Epaphroditus’ neighbour and chief counsel, Philemon, reminds him that “No man is crowned except he striue lawfully” (p. 113), paraphrasing 2 Tim. 2:5. Men run an earthly “race,” St. Paul elsewhere says, “to obeine a corruptible crown: but we for an vncorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:24–25); and “I have foght a good fight, and haue finished my course: I have kept the faith. For hence forthe is laid vp for me the crowne of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:6–8; cf. the apostle Peter’s promise of “an incorruptible crowne of glorie” [1 Peter 5:4]).

These well-known scriptures are also cited or paraphrased in *Ars* texts by Erasmus, Thomas Lupset, and Myles Coverdale,⁵⁵ and they are implicit in the widely circulating *Ars* woodcuts depicting the third temptation (to spiritual pride or vain-glory), where devils proffer the *moriens* crowns of *self*-righteousness, the demonic contrary of the Pauline and Petrine crowns (see Figure 3). In Richard’s former blind insistence on his divine right we can see a deluded spiritual pride that confused the earthly power of his body politic with moral righteousness and infallibility. When concealing his murder of Woodstock and falsely swearing his impartiality toward Bolingbroke and Mowbray in the first scene, for example, he laid claim in the same breath to both his “sacred blood” and “the unstooping firmness of [his] upright soul” (1.1.118–21). By act 5, however, he no longer confuses an earthly crown with that of the righteous. His earlier presumption to divine favour and protection is now gone, and he acknowledges the Gardener’s view that his “waste of idle hours [had] quite thrown down,” demonically perverted, his lineal “crown” (3.4.65–66). Most important, he sees the humble *struggle to achieve* an “incorruptible crowne of glorie” as his remaining life’s work. Even before entering Pomfret, then, he has died to the world and overcome “the two weaknesses [according to the *Ars Moriendi*] to which the dying man is especially prone,” the temptations to spiritual pride and to “avarice” or love of earthly things and persons.⁵⁶

Richard’s last scene (5.5), especially in his long (and only) soliloquy and in the manner of his death, shows him confronting the other three *Ars* temptations—impatience, loss of faith, and despair—as he fulfills his spiritual pilgrimage. The

prison-cell setting is important here, as it literalizes a constant theme of the *Ars* texts, the commonplace that the body, the world, and mortal life itself are all “prisons” from which death alone releases us.⁵⁷ Thus Richard’s soliloquy begins by “compar[ing] / This prison where I live unto the world” (5.5.1–2), and his dying speech welcomes his liberation from these “ragged prison walls,” his “gross flesh,” and the world itself.

The tempering of Richard’s former impatience—especially visible in 2.1 where, as a “too careless” *moriens*, he testily refused Gaunt’s moral instruction—is a major aspect of his character development in the second half of the play. In 5.1, for example, his calm acceptance of “the truth of what [he is]”—“sworn brother . . . To grim Necessity . . . till death” (5.1.19–22)—is evidence of his willing assent to spiritual chastening. In the next scene, York tells us in retrospect of Richard’s acceptance of suffering after his capitulation at Flint Castle, when publicly mocked, abused, and humiliated during Bolingbroke’s triumphal return to London: his “tears and smiles” were “The badges of his grief and patience” (5.2.32–33). That patience is now reflected in his imperturbable understanding, even when beginning to populate “this little world” of his mind with “still-breeding thoughts,” that “no thought,” any more than any person “of this world,” “is contented,” that is, morally at ease and spiritually satisfied. This conviction is repeated a few lines later (“Thus play I in one person many people, / And none contented”) and again by way of conclusion: “Nor I nor any man that but man is / With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased / With being nothing” (5–11; 31–32; 39–41). In this context, “nothing” means both “dead” and “nothing *in the world*,” which he has renounced. For the influential preacher William Perkins, only the meditation on death “serues to stirre vp contentation [contentment] in euery estate & condition of life that shall befall vs.”⁵⁸ Similarly, as Richard imagines himself in the “estate” of “king” or “beggar,” or in his newly understood “condition” of private person and imprisoned soul, he is “contented” only in the hope that easeful death will finally bring the true contentment of release and a spiritual crown.

At the same time, as *Ars* texts insist, the *moriens* must undergo rigorous spiritual exercise, particularly against the remaining temptations to unbelief and despair. Both the anonymous *Crafte and Knowledge* and Caxton’s *Arte & Crafte*, for example, specifically urge the dying man, in the absence of kinsmen or neighbours as counsellors, to interrogate himself regarding his beliefs and state of soul.⁵⁹ This Richard does, confronting immediately, in “the better sort” of thoughts, on “things divine” (5.5.11–17), his prospects of salvation. Here faith and hope are countered by despair, for the “word” of God’s mercy (“Come little ones”) seems contradicted or “set . . . Against” the “word” of God’s sternness (“It is as hard to come as for a camel / To

thread the postern of a small needle's eye"). Interestingly, Richard's "scruples" capture the ambivalence generated by the *Arts Moriendi* itself. As Nancy Lee Beaty points out, the Christian "ethic of gratitude" for Christ's redemptive love "has never been preached to the exclusion of more legalistic forms of moral sanctions." Characteristic of many *Ars* texts is an "alternation of threats and 'comfortable words'"; consoling reminders of God's mercy are countered by sharp warnings.⁶⁰

And yet the very scriptures Richard cites provide a resolution to this seeming contradiction. Christ's second injunction, which follows hard upon the first in all three synoptic gospels, is prompted by the sudden appearance of a man (in Matthew, a young man; in Mark, a man who came running up to Jesus; in Luke, interestingly, "a certaine ruler") who asks what is necessary for eternal life beyond fulfilling the commandments (see Matt. 19:16–30; Mark 10:17–31; Luke 18:18–30). The man is told to give all he has to the poor. Seeing his dejection at such a prospect, Jesus remarks (in all accounts), "With what difficultie shal they that haue riches, entre into the kingdome of God!", then adds the forbidding camel-needle's eye comparison. In two of the three gospels, Jesus' followers are "excedingly amazed" (Matthew) or "much more astonied" (Mark) at this sweeping exclusion of the wealthy, and in all three the disciples themselves worriedly ask, "And who then can be sau'd?" Reassuring but inscrutable, Jesus replies, "The things which are vnpossible with men, are possible with God. . . . And whosoever shal forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my Names sake, he shal . . . inherite euerlasting life. But manie that are first, shalbe last, and the last shalbe first" (Matthew's version). Here, then, is the resolution of Richard's (and the disciples') doubts. The temptation to despair is to be overcome by reliance on those things "possible with God" alone. Recognizing that only faith, not human reason, can achieve "content," Richard therefore ceases to reason with his "scruples" or doubts. Moreover, he has indeed forsaken both family and all the world's goods for the sake of a "holy life," having become the solitary, homeless and possessionless "hermit" and "pilgrim" of his earlier imaginings (cf. 3.3.147–52). As well, having been "first" (as "king") and then "last" (as "beggar"), Richard can now anticipate being "first" again, in the transformed sense of wearing a "new world's crown."

Thomas Lupset's *Waye of Dyeinge Well* comments relevantly on the passage Richard has been considering: "Not that it is impossible for a riche man to be sau'd, but by cause it is harde for a man in a whelthy state to kepe his minde in a due order to Godward without beyng drowned or infected by the contagious lustes and corrupted plesures, the which foloweth the fortunate lyfe of this worlde."⁶¹ It is precisely the "fortunate lyfe of this worlde" that Richard has recognized as but a

“dream” and renounced as mere “profane hours.” And even though “thoughts tending to ambition”—fantasies of escape from his flinty prison—might still intrude, they “die in their own pride,” and he dismisses them as futile and unworthy. Or if he has “thoughts tending to content”—which only flatter his conscience in momentarily allowing him to escape his “shame”—the “kind of ease” they provide fails to “content” him, as would imagining that he is “kinged again” (and surrounded by more glosing flatterers). The calm, hopeful conclusion of Richard’s soliloquy on the state of his soul is that only with a holy death will he be truly “eased.”

When the sound of music breaks off these musings, though able to madden him at the thought of “Bolingbroke’s proud joy,” it has the same double message as Scripture and the *Ars Moriendi*. First, it chastens and forces him to acknowledge the weakness and failure of his “profane hours.” Because of the demonic discord of his rule, he had been unable to “hear [his] true time broke” or to maintain “the concord [harmony, peace] of [his] state and time”; instead he “wasted time” as Time “now doth . . . waste [him].” And yet, the music is also “a sign of love,” and Richard blesses “his heart, that gives it [him]” (5.5.64–65). The music, then, both admonishes and comforts him, strengthening his faith against despair.

The Groom now enters, and a similar double effect occurs. The Groom’s account of roan Barbary under Bolingbroke’s management at first sparks Richard’s anger: “Would he not stumble? Would he not fall down, / Since pride must have a fall, and break the neck / Of that proud man that did usurp his back?” This is a momentary relapse. Just as he had expected the “favours” his “royal hands” had bestowed upon his “dear earth” (3.2.11) to conjure a protective response from his land’s spiders, toads, adders, and stones, so his horse ought to have remained loyal to him alone: “That jade hath eat bread from my royal hand; / This hand hath made him proud with clapping him” (5.5.84–85). As well as inciting a short-lived return to self-indulgent magical thinking, roan Barbary symbolizes Richard’s former “fortunate lyfe of this worlde,” for the *Ars* woodcuts illustrating the temptation to avarice invariably show devils pointing to the loved-ones and possessions that the dying man must leave behind; specifically, the demons torment a dying *rich man* with the images of his well-stocked wine-cellar (often pointing to a servant helping himself to some vintage or other) and his horse, being led away by a groom, for use by another (see Figure 4). Richard’s momentary wavering here is understandable—and in a poignant reunion calculated to evoke pathos, it makes him all the more human.

But he immediately regains his moral equilibrium. The line, “Forgiveness, horse,” may appear ludicrous on the page, but it is Richard’s heartfelt renunciation of his magical fantasies and the version of divine right upon which they were

based. Roan Barbary, he now understands, is but an animal “born to bear” and has no instinctive sense of “royalty.”⁶² It is also a humble acknowledgment that his jibe at Bolingbroke—“pride [*arrogance, haughtiness*] must have a fall”—applies equally to himself; he is now capable of a fuller understanding of *pride* than when he self-pityingly had exclaimed, “Time hath set a blot upon my pride [*splendour or glory*]” (see Forker’s glosses at 3.2.81). As well as reminding Richard of his former delusion and arrogance, however, the Groom’s visit, like the *Ars* texts, the Gospel story of the rich man, and the music, speaks of love. Therefore, with sad humility and self-deprecation Richard calls the Groom his “noble peer” then “gentle friend,” and speaks kindly to him as the Keeper roughly expels him: “If thou love me, ’tis time thou wert away.”

The brief incident with the “sad dog” (5.5.70) who brings Richard’s food but refuses to taste it, precipitates the entrance of Exton and his men, but it also ironically reprises the *Ars Moriendi* temptation to impatience (see Figure 2). In throwing the food and attacking the surly Keeper, however, Richard is not impatiently rejecting loving care, good counsel, or spiritual nourishment (as he had done in 2.1) but spurning poisoned food and discourtesy. He attacks an accomplice to murder, not a healing physician. We may even be reminded of the just anger of an otherwise patient Jesus when violently overturning the money-changers’ tables in the temple.

Holinshed’s claim that Exton killed Richard “without giuing him respite once to call to God for mercie of his passed offenses” (5.5.98–118n) is true to the play’s letter but not its spirit. For while Richard does instinctively and courageously defend himself against his assailants when they “*rush in*” (stage direction), he has already completed his *Ars Moriendi* preparation for death. Therefore, he is calm and fearlessly accepting when it comes a few moments later: “Mount, mount, my soul! Thy seat is up on high, / Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward here to die” (111–12). In direct contrast to his presumptuous Luciferian-Phaëton “mounting” and demonic “falling” “Down, down,” this is the definitive and perfect version of the play’s prominent rising-falling imagery, and Richard’s confidence in his salvation demonstrates his readiness for holy dying. Both tenor and tone of his last speech, moreover, are consistent with the concluding passages of most of the *Ars Moriendi* texts. The earliest ones, for example, end with “one of the great [and ancient] liturgical prayers of the Church, . . . the *Proficiscere anima Christiana*,” an invocation “confidently hopeful in its mood” which asserts the “dominant message” of “confident hope and of joy,”⁶³ as does Richard’s final utterance. In *Crafte and Knowledge*, the last paragraph begins with a translation of this prayer, “Go, Cristen soule, owt of thys world” and concludes, “in pease be thy place, and thy dwellynge in heuynly Ierusalem euerlastyngly, bi the

mediacion of oure Lord Ihu Cryste . . . ”⁶⁴—lines that clearly anticipate Richard’s urgings to his own soul to “Mount, mount . . . on high.”

V

Though emphatic, the moral and spiritual turn of act 5 has been largely ignored or downplayed by political and characterological critics alike, who seem embarrassed by Richard’s martyr-like death and morality-play-like salvation.⁶⁵ The play’s focus on Richard’s private spirituality is, however, crucial for an appreciation not only of his characterization, but of Bolingbroke’s, and consequently of the play’s political stance.

Regarding Richard’s character, we can now reassess what Charles Forker sees as a major thematic innovation in *Richard II*: scrutinizing “the unstable personality of a king who puts his whole trust in [the] theoretical protections” of “divine right” (p. 51, above). I hope to have shown instead that while Richard *invokes* divine right and its catch-phrases, he actually “puts his whole trust” in an unwittingly perverted version of that “theory” which he has internalized. In his self-conception—unchecked by self-examination or conscience—Richard is (to use Kantorowicz’s terms, above) a “king-highpriest” who alone wields an indisputable power synonymous with his “Will,” and whose political actions “are valid *ipso facto* or *ex opere operato*,” regardless of their (im)morality or practical (in)efficacy. But by having Woodstock murdered, by farming the realm, by seizing Bolingbroke’s inheritance, Richard displays his so-called divine-right as its contrary, the Luciferian *libido dominandi* of the tyrant. Richard’s “instability” (while often described as that of a “poet” or “actor”) is a function of moral confusion and self-ignorance which, shocked out of complacency by Bolingbroke’s surge to power and his own failures, gradually yields to self-scrutiny and self-understanding, a rejection of his formerly internalized (per)version of kingship, a preparation for “holy dying,” and a literal eleventh-hour Christian salvation.

Bolingbroke’s character—devoid of expressed motive and wholly lacking in interiority—is a function of his morally contradictory project “To find out right with wrong” (as York astutely names it from the start, in 2.3.145), which can only become an ironic recapitulation of Richard’s earlier demonic rule. I have suggested elsewhere how this inherently flawed venture is characterized from its inception as demonic;⁶⁶ here we have space only to show how the details of Richard’s murder and those of the play’s final moments represent, according to the logic of the play’s chiasmic structure, Bolingbroke’s political ascension as demonic fall, set off against

Richard's upward spiritual trajectory toward holy dying. The relationship between Richard and Bolingbroke is therefore more subtle than in the conventional view, which unproblematically identifies protagonist and antagonist with competing political theories, thus creating a supposedly "implicit opposition between absolutist and constitutional monarchy" (Forker, p. 22), or between a "medieval" divine right and a "modern" Machiavellian pragmatism. I suggest that while of course the two principals, *as characters*, oppose each other, *both* of their presumed "political theories" are represented as *opposing* the *ideal of divine-right*, just as tyrant (Richard) and rebel (Henry) alike were (and are) "images of the Dark Prince" (cf. n.10). This way of reconfiguring character and politics has significant ideological implications.

Bolingbroke's rule recapitulates Richard's perhaps most obviously in the murder of his cousin. This point is made figuratively as well as literally, if we grant (as seems very likely) that Holinshed's graphic description of Richard's assassination informed the original staging of the play. Here, Richard kills four of his nine assailants; then, as he tries to avoid the others, Sir Piers of Exton, who had "lept into the chaire where king Richard was woont to sit, . . . felled [him] with a stroke of a pollax . . . vpon the head, and therewith rid him out of life" (5.5.98–118n). As Gloucester was "hacked down" by "Envy's [Malice's] hand and Murder's bloody axe," so "*Here Exton strikes him [Richard] down*" (original stage direction) with a poleax, cracking *his* "vial full of Edward's sacred blood." Richard's earlier sacrilege against kin is both replicated and greatly amplified, however, as Bolingbroke has spilled "the King's [own] blood" (5.5.110).

Richard's assassination is, moreover, figured repeatedly as an assault by a demonic king's agents. We might take Richard's damning imprecations against them—"The devil take Henry of Lancaster and thee [the Keeper]!"; "Go thou [the second assailant he has killed], and fill another room in hell!"; and "That hand [Exton's] shall burn in never-quenching fire"—as incidental, except that Shakespeare has Exton immediately cap and validate these demonic attributions:

As full of valour as of royal blood!
Both have I spilled. O, would the deed were good!
For now the devil that told me I did well
Says that this deed is chronicled in hell.
This dead King to the living King I'll bear. (113–17)⁶⁷

Of course that "devil" is the "living King" himself, whose "own mouth" (5.6.37) had "wishtly" "urged . . . twice together" that Exton *would* do well to rid him of "this living fear" (5.4.1–7), and who will banish Exton as Richard had banished his agent Mowbray. Further, when condemning Exton "With Cain [to] wander thorough

the shades of night," Henry ironically reverses the effect of his Cain-Abel allusion in the first scene (1.1.104), as now Richard "is more like Abel, who, according to medieval typology, prefigured Christ," while Bolingbroke "now plays the role of Cain" (Forker, p. 77), whom biblical commentators linked with Satan. All these details help transfer Richard's demonic misrule to Bolingbroke, and concretize the "familiar association between treason and the demonic"⁶⁸ by which "rebellion is as the sinne of witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:23).

The imagery of the play's closing moments confirms Bolingbroke's assumption of Richard's old mantle; a stark contrast is drawn between Richard's "soul" which has confidently mounted up to heaven and Bolingbroke's "soul . . . full of woe" at the sacred "blood" on his "guilty hand" (5.6.45, 50). That same "blood," the new king admits, "sprinkl[es] [him] to make [him] grow" (5.6.46)—a powerful evocation of witch-like perversion, since *sprinkle* connotes beneficent aspersion (cf. *Tempest* 4.1.18–19), and since he grows by the same unnatural nourishment that Richard, pelican-like, got from Gloucester's blood.

If the play concludes with a "saved" Richard (through holy dying) and a trammelled Bolingbroke, it does not, however, endorse Richard as a "divine right" monarch. Indeed, in its second great thematic innovation—"probing . . . divine right as a concept"—the play articulates an ideological stance that is paradoxically both conservative and potentially subversive.

According to Charles Forker, in death Richard's "body mystical [i.e., body politic] will rise to join the divine source of its sacramental power, while his body natural will sink down . . . to earth" (p. 44). Richard's murder, moreover, is "meant to be received . . . as a tragical outrage against divine-right legitimacy" (p. 49). I suggest instead that despite the audience's empathy for Richard, the play intimates that neither he nor perhaps any other *de facto* monarch should be embraced as the inheritor and embodiment of "divine-right legitimacy."

First, it is not the legal fiction of his mystical body politic that Richard urges to "mount on high," but his old-fashioned Christian "soul"; he has rejected all notions of earthly power, and in act 5 categories shift from the political ("the king's two bodies") to an explicitly biblical and moral emphasis on the "new world's crown" won only by Christians living "holy lives" (5.1.24). This may be considered a weakness in dramatic construction (one of the play's "curious shifts of thematic emphasis and plot direction" [Forker, p. 48]). And it is true that Richard's effort "to come to terms with his own tragedy" may seem "flawed and incomplete, too deeply mired in pain, regret, and frustration to allow for full moral self-recognition or access to the larger, more metaphysical significances of his experience" (p. 46).

And yet, Richard's death and his preparation for it are so dramatized that we are encouraged to think as Gaunt did: "More are men's ends marked," and "Writ in remembrance," "than their lives before" (2.1.11, 14). Or as Malcolm did: "Nothing in his life / Became him like the leaving it. He died / As one that had been studied in his death, / To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd, / As 'twere a careless trifle" (*Macbeth*, 1.4.7–11). As though schooled by the *Ars Moriendi*, Richard understands that his "eternal jewel" (as *Macbeth* calls it) is truly "the dearest thing he ow'd," and his earthly life indeed but "a careless trifle." But Richard's spiritual triumph is also his human tragedy: for *only* at the moment of his holy dying is he worthy of the sacerdotal kingship to which he had laid claim—when, ironically, he no longer desires or values an earthly crown which, he now understands, brings no "content." But what we see is *not* (*pace* Forker) a divine-right king "heroically *repossessing* the sacred title for which his birth had destined him" (p. 44; my emphasis). While Exton, who knows nothing of the inner transformation we have witnessed, feels his deed was a hellish sacrilege against "royal blood," we feel that the "tragical outrage" is not directed against a *theory* ("divine-right legitimacy") but against the *person* Richard has become through patient physical and spiritual suffering: a *man* who has redeemed a life of Luciferian pride and power, and achieved moral resolution and spiritual "content."

However, precisely because Richard had earlier been portrayed as a demonic "ape" and perverter of divine-right politics, the play does by implication endorse "the sacredness of [the] *office*" (Forker, p. 49; my emphasis) that Richard had abused, and the *ideal* of "divine-right legitimacy" that he had failed to realize and that he (and then Bolingbroke) had demonically turned upside-down. (Demonic figures, we recall, always inverted, aped, or contrarily opposed a *good* or an order that was *absolute*.)⁶⁹ To this extent, the play's politics may be described as conservative. Skeptically, on the other hand, the play shows that, like any political idealization, divine right's terminology and emotive catch-phrases can easily be manipulated to suit the self-interested aims of a given incumbent. More radical still is this implication: that the *rex imago Dei* can *never* be actualized except by the most extraordinary person. Of all the English kings that Shakespeare dramatizes, only one—a distant, eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon *saint*—is imagined as fulfilling the ideal of divine-right and *rex imago Dei*. Shakespeare's Edward the Confessor is a prophet "full of grace" and "sanctity," a beneficently magical and priestly king whose "most miraculous work" of curing the King's Evil by the "royal touch" is ritualized by "Hanging a golden stamp about [the sufferers'] necks, / Put on with holy prayers" that "solicit heaven" (*Macbeth*, 4.3.144–54), and whose existence as positive antithesis to the demonic-

ally contrary Macbeth is dictated by *Macbeth's* overtly oppositional structure. But this epitome of sacerdotal kingship Shakespeare deliberately keeps off-stage, as if to suggest (even when writing under the patronage of the arch-absolutist and demonologist James I) that the actual instantiation of the ideal divine-right king is as unseen and elusive as the ideal itself.⁷⁰

Like some of his contemporaries, Shakespeare seems capable of embracing “polarities” of Renaissance thought, however contradictory they may be: the “mystifying” (“seeing social practices and institutions as participating in the sacred”) and the “demystifying” (“strip[ping] off this veil of sanctity to expose the contingencies of the world’s body”).⁷¹ In *Richard II* Shakespeare mystifies the *ideal* of divine right but demystifies its all-important (practically speaking) corollary, that this ideal is actually (and automatically) incarnated in the anointed monarch.

In fact, just when the theory of absolutism was being given greater official emphasis, late Elizabethans were presented with idealizing representations of their own monarch that jarred with reality. Queen Elizabeth was, for example, celebrated as the divinely-protected lineal descendant of Henry Tudor (despite a 1536 act of Parliament declaring her bastardy and excluding her from the succession); as embodiment of all virtue, including Justice, Love of Subjects, and Peace (despite unprecedented social unrest and economic crises, especially in the years 1594–97, and the financial disasters and military debacles of her “Irish wars” and those in the Netherlands); and as spiritual leader bringing a new dispensation of grace, pressing the New Testament to her bosom (while at the same time appearing as a gorgeous, exotic, and sacred image in a cult of quasi-erotic love). These and other contradictions between Elizabeth’s official representation and the actualities of her reign opened the former up to scrutiny.⁷²

Larger cultural forces, especially the Reformation and the incipient “disenchantment of the world,” were also encouraging the demystification of actual monarchs as “king-highpriests.” The case of the Queen’s one *literal* claim to a priestly or quasi-sacramental “magic”—administering of the “royal touch” or curing the King’s Evil—provides a telling example. Increasingly inimical to anything ceremonially “papist” or “magical,” Protestant theologians felt compelled to revise this ritual’s doctrine and liturgy so as to stress not the Queen’s mystical kingship but her “common humanity” and her need for personal virtue and piety, and for submission to God. The amended ceremony concludes, therefore, with the Queen “‘meekly kneeling on her knees,’ according to the rubrics, [leading] the congregation in prayer. . . . The Queen, no less than her subjects, is obliged to confess her need for mercy and ‘help from above.’” This new liturgy resulted in a dilution of “the monarch’s sacred

mystique” and “rais[ed] questions about the uniqueness of the royal blood and the idea of an inherited sacred power.”⁷³

Significantly, sacerdotal monarchy’s diminution mirrors that of the Reformation priesthood itself. The status of the pre-Reformation priest was based on his sacramental ordination and on his unique ability to dispense the grace needed for one’s salvation. With the Reformation, however, came changes in doctrine, liturgy, and devotional practice that redefined—but not always clearly or consistently—the sacramental role of the priest, and that put more emphasis on the efficacy of preaching and personal sanctity than on the priest as uniquely anointed dispenser of grace that worked *ex opere operato*. It had always been a paradox, says Peter Marshall, “that wicked, or even mundane and mediocre men might be the prime instruments of divine grace.” But that paradox was made even more difficult to accommodate when the reformed Church disseminated “an arch-clericalist world-view, which had no place for fallible ministers” (ministers who were, in fact, neighbours of their parishioners and who often shared their worldly preoccupations), and which created unrealistic and inflated expectations in the laity. When the dress, demeanour, and conduct of their priests failed to express the personal sanctity that would, as it were, “guarantee the spiritual gifts the clergy claimed to be able to bestow,” there arose a “widespread dissatisfaction with the theory and practice of priesthood,” which became “a permanent feature of the English religious scene.” As early as the 1530s it was a familiar adage that in apostolic times priests had been “golden” but now most are “wooden.”⁷⁴

The Tudor theory and practice of the divine-right king was in the same plight. Confusion and inconsistency about the nature and role of the sacerdotal monarch, and of the king’s two bodies, were apparent even *within* the unstable theory of divine right,⁷⁵ while from outside came skeptical and rationalist critiques of the nature and legal obligations of kings, and demands that greater power be given to the aristocracy and to Parliament. In *Richard II*, Gaunt’s rationale for passive obedience neither convinces Woodstock’s widow nor prevents his son from taking up arms against Richard, and the first two acts of the play marshal the audience against the demonically wilful king, who at that stage is certainly (like a bad priest) without either practical “efficacy” or “personal sanctity.”

In the play’s final tableau, Exton presents his “Great King” with a coffin containing the “breathless” body of the “mightiest of [his] great enemies, / Richard of Bordeaux” (5.6.30–33). Technically, according to the theory of divine right and the king’s two bodies, we see the juxtaposition of Richard’s “natural body,” now separated from the “body politic,” with the *de facto* ruler King Henry IV, who now

incorporates that “body politic.” And indeed, King Henry has already been called “a god on earth,” and his “sacred state” (divinely ordained rule) has been honoured. What the play encourages us to see, however, is the body of one man, Richard Plantagenet, who, except in his holy dying, failed to incarnate the lofty ideal of “the figure of God’s majesty,” juxtaposed with that of a living man, Henry Bolingbroke, whose accurate epithet is not “a god on earth” but St. Paul’s name for the devil, “a god of this worlde,” and whose rule is “sacred” only in the sense of the word elsewhere employed by Shakespeare: “accurst.”⁷⁶

Those of her subjects who viewed Queen Elizabeth only through the idealizing lens constructed by court propaganda, saw indeed the “golden” *rex* (or *regina*) *imago Dei* whose power worked *ex opere operato*. Those who opened their other eye to the second lens of their stereoscope, the disenchanting lens focusing on the Queen’s “common humanity” and fallibility as a “wooden” “monarchizer,” might be forgiven a skeptical desire to see her as *in deed* “the figure of God’s majesty” before granting her such a title; for them, her power was valid only *ex opere operantis*, as it were. The demonically inflected discourses of holy dying in *Richard II* both urge the opening of the second eye, and reflect the increasing difficulty of reconciling the two visions.

Illustration 1: *The Temptation to Despair*, Antoine Vérard, *L'Art de bien vivre et de bien mourir* (Paris, 1492–98).

Illustration 2: *The Temptation to Impatience*, Wynkyn de Worde, *The Arte or Crafte to Dye Well* (London, 1505). (British Library Board, reproduced by permission. All right reserved.)

Illustration 3: *The Temptation to Vainglory or Spiritual Pride*, Antoine Vêrard, *L'Art de bien vivre et de bien mourir* (Paris, 1492–98).

Illustration 4: *The Temptation to Avarice: Wynkyn de Worde, The Arte or Crafte to Dye Well* (London, 1505). (British Library Board, reproduced by permission. All right reserved.)

Notes

1. Charles R. Forker, ed., *King Richard II*, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series (London: Thomson, 2002), p. 1; textual citations and further references to Forker's Introduction and notes on the text are henceforth cited parenthetically. For other plays I cite *The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
2. For other manifestations of Richard's demonic representation see my "De-Coronation and Demonic Meta-Ritual in *Richard II*," *Exemplaria* 17 (2005), pp. 169–214; "Magic Mirrors in *Richard II*," *Comparative Drama* 38 (2004), pp. 151–81; and "'Wand'ring with the Antipodes': Witchcraft, Statecraft, and Stagecraft in *Richard II*," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 33.1 (2007), pp. 27–63. In his essay, "Ars Moriendi in Progress, or, John of Gaunt and the Practice of Strategic Dying" (*Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistributing Complicities in Shakespeare*, ch. 10, ed. Peter Erickson [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997]), Harry Berger, Jr. deploys the term *Ars Moriendi* as a sardonic epithet for what he calls Gaunt's "strategic dying," a self-justifying self-representation as "wise, good, and unheeded elder . . . victimized by [unspecified] powers of darkness" (p. 191). While Berger ironically and wittily (though ahistorically) probes Gaunt's unconscious, I try to show how the culturally specific discourses of Elizabethan holy dying and demonology contribute to the *play's* unconscious, particularly in its theological-political dimension.

3. Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), p. 38.
4. See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 441 and sources cited.
5. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and its Late Mediaeval Origins," in his *Selected Studies* (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1965), p. 385.
6. Richard C. McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 1.
7. See F. E. Brightman, *The English Rite: Being a Synopsis of the Sources and Revisions of the Book of Common Prayer*, 2 vols. (London: Rivingtons, 1921), vol. 2, pp. 730–31; *OED*, s.v. *exsufflation* 2; and Edmund B. Keller, "Glimpses of Exorcism in Religion," in St. Elmo Nauman, ed., *Exorcism through the Ages* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1974), pp. 259–311, esp. 287–90.
8. All scriptural citations are from *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, Introduction by Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).
9. Quoted and called a "parody" in Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., *Christian Ritual and the World of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976), p. 50; I see it as a demonic parody. In *The Leasing Out of England: Shakespeare's Second Henriad* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), Coursen calls Richard's invocation an "anti-prayer" (p. 46), and in *Christian Ritual* he says Richard is "disqualified from the priestly role . . . [and] can only preside over . . . anti-rituals" that reflect his violation of "a sacramental" England (see pp. 37–38, 51–53, *et passim*).
10. The phrase is from Fulke Greville's *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, cited in John D. Cox, *Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 16–17. As Cox shows, even in Renaissance "rationalist" political theorists like Greville and Philippe de Mornay, rebels and tyrants were routinely identified, in Augustinian terms, with Lucifer the rebel, and tyranny was defined as Luciferian *libido dominandi*.
11. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 72, 81, 86. See his magisterial "Politics," pp. 549–682.
12. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 551, 552.
13. For Elizabethan examples, see Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 627, 634–54; and Thomas M. Greene, "Magic and Festivity at the Renaissance Court," *Renaissance Quarterly* 40.4 (1987), pp. 636–59. On Jonson's meticulous witchcraft research, see Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 92–93.
14. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), p. 451.
15. See Clark in two works, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 636–37; and "King James's Daemonologie: Witchcraft and Kingship," in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, ed. Sydney Anglo (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 156–81.

16. Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare Bewitched," in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 120.
17. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 72–73.
18. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 31.
19. For a subtle stylistic analysis of these lines and the following exchange between Gaunt and Richard, see John Baxter, *Shakespeare's Poetic Styles: Verse into Drama* (London: Routledge, 1980), ch. 4 and 5, where the plain style of good counsel contrasts the "golden" or "eloquent" style of idealization and flattery, and where Gaunt's use of language is seen as a means of "discovering reality" (p. 76).
20. Hermann Ulrici first called Richard the play's "first rebel" in 1839; quoted in Roy Battenhouse, ed., *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension: An Anthology of Commentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 287. See also Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 38–39; and Alexander Leggatt, for whom Richard "himself rebels" and bears "responsibility for the disorder of his kingdom" (*Shakespeare's Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* [London: Routledge, 1988], pp. 61–62).
21. "Certain Sermons or Homilies" (1547) and "A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion" (1570), ed. Ronald B. Bond (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 210.
22. Quotations are from John E. Booty, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer 1559: The Elizabethan Prayer Book* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), pp. 300–06.
23. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400—c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 315.
24. Mark Bayer, "Is a Crown just a Fancy Hat?: Sovereignty in Richard II," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 28.1 (2002), p. 135.
25. See Thomas, pp. 470–71; my italics.
26. For Shakespeare's increasingly subtle use of witchcraft in the first tetralogy and its internalization in Richard III and Richard II, see my "Antipodes," pp. 5–7, 27–28.
27. A final prayer commends the sick person to the strength of Christ, only in whom health and salvation can be found; see Booty, pp. 305–306.
28. Duffy, p. 314. Just as the *Ordo* became, with the Reformation, the "Order for the Visitation of the Sick" of the *Book of Common Prayer*, so the English *Ars Moriendi*, first translated and printed by Caxton in 1490 as *The Arte & Crafte to Knowe Well to Dye*, spawned a long line of reprints and new books (Catholic and Protestant) on holy dying, written, translated, or printed in England well into the eighteenth century. The following overview is based on Duffy, pp. 313–27; and on Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), pp. 1–10. See also Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), pp. 29–49; and the introduction to David William Atkinson, ed.,

- The English "ars moriendi"* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992). Atkinson's edition includes, as well as Caxton's 1490 *editio princeps*, another contemporary translated version (the *Crafte and Knowledge For to Dye Well*, extant in many manuscripts), and twelve other English texts in the tradition of the *Ars*.
29. Duffy, pp. 316–17.
  30. See O'Connor, p. 170n411, who describes the pictures in detail, pp. 115–19. The third, fourth, fifth and eleventh woodcuts are reproduced in Duffy, figs. 97, 117, 118, 119.
  31. See Booty, pp. 300, 304.
  32. Thomas, pp. 470–72.
  33. While many of my citations are from earlier *Ars* texts, most have counterparts in later exemplars; on the continuity of the tradition, see O'Connor, esp. pp. 191–215. Nancy Lee Beaty analyzes key texts from each major period of theological orientation; see *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the "Ars Moriendi"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).
  34. See Duffy, pp. 322–23.
  35. John D. Cox, *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 12–14, 214 n29. A comic, even satirical, *Ars Moriendi* tableau is evident in the Hostess' account of Falstaff's death in *Henry V*; see Katherine Koller, "Falstaff and the Art of Dying," *Modern Language Notes* 60 (1945), pp. 383–86.
  36. Quoted in Beaty, p. 148.
  37. Atkinson, p. 35.
  38. Of the five, only Willoughby does not appear in 1.4.
  39. Atkinson, p. 62.
  40. Atkinson, p. 119; Becon's language here is very close to the Geneva Bible's gloss on the Matthean passage he paraphrases. On the prolific Becon's fame as popularizer of Reformist theology, see Beaty, pp. 109–10.
  41. *Crafte and Knowledge For to Dye Well* (Atkinson, p. 15); cp. the similar phrasing in Caxton (Atkinson, p. 30). The two following quotations are, respectively, from these pages, except that . Beaty (p. 29) corrects Atkinson's mistranscription, "dwelle lyke," from the *Crafte and Knowledge*.
  42. Atkinson, p. 15.
  43. The story is also told in Isaiah 38:1–9 and 2 Chron. 38:24–33; God heals Hezekiah and grants him fifteen more years of life. For later texts that cite Isaiah for his forthrightness, see Atkinson, pp. 97, 158, 188–89.
  44. *OED*, s.v. *gloss*, v.2a.
  45. Caxton, in Atkinson, p. 24.
  46. Duffy, p. 316.
  47. Different pictorial versions are in O'Connor (two versions, opposite p. 132); T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgment and Remembrance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), fig. 104; and Duffy, fig. 118.
  48. Baxter, pp. 98–99.

49. Sir Thomas More, *Four Last Things* [Workes, 1577], p. 78, cited by Duffy, p. 322.
50. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 88–89; Linda Woodbridge, *The Scythe of Saturn: Shakespeare and Magical Thinking* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 14.
51. Quoted in Forker's edition, Longer Note to 2.1.167 (p. 489).
52. As in Holinshed's main narrative (see below); but the *Chronicles* also cites accounts in which Richard is said to have been starved to death; see Forker's head-note to 5.5, p. 460.
53. *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-texts* (1604, 1616), ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); all quotations are from the A-text. A number of verbal echoes from *Doctor Faustus* (often performed in the years around *Richard II*'s debut) occur in the play; see Forker, p. 164 and my "Magic Mirrors," p. 179 n28.
54. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 27–40; see also Forker, p. 35. For a full discussion of the moral focus of the mirror scene, see my "Magic Mirrors."
55. For Erasmus and Lupset, see Atkinson, pp. 41, 71; for Coverdale (*Treatise on Death*, 1579), see *Remains of Myles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter*, ed. George Pearson, Parker Society Publications 14 (Cambridge, 1846), p. 108 (this is actually a translation of Otho Wermullerus's treatise; see *Remains*, p. 39, and O'Connor, pp. 197–98).
56. Atkinson, p. xiv
57. See, e.g., *Crafte* (Beaty, p. 8); Caxton, Lupset, and John More (*A Lively Anatomie of Death* [1596]) in Atkinson, pp. 8, 21, 73, 179–80; Coverdale (cited in O'Connor, p. 197).
58. *A Salve for a Sicke Man* [1595]; Atkinson, p. 138.
59. See Beaty, pp. 5, 19–20; and Caxton (Atkinson, p. 27).
60. Beaty, p. 9; see also pp. 15–16.
61. Atkinson, p. 83. The Geneva Bible's glosses on the camel-needle simile go even further, explaining, e.g., that God "so gouerneth the hearts of his that their riches do not blinde them" (gloss on Luke 18:27); see also glosses on Mark 10:25 and Matt. 19:26.
62. This kind of magical kingship is definitively mocked in Falstaff's justification for cowardice: "was it for me to kill . . . the true prince? Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules; but beware instinct—the lion will not touch the true prince" (1 *Henry IV*, 2.4.268–71; my italics).
63. Beaty, pp. 33–34.
64. Atkinson, 19–20; Caxton's penultimate paragraph is very close to this (Atkinson, pp. 34–35).
65. A major exception is Martha Tuck Rozett's compelling account of Richard's growth in self-knowledge in his death-scene. She attributes his self-assurance in death—as well as "the confidence which enables [him] to take action against his murderers"—to "the confidence of the elect;" see *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 287–89.
66. See my "Antipodes," pp. 9–10, 35–36; "Meta-Ritual," pp. 198–202, 206; "Mirrors," p. 167, n. 49.

67. Richard's death at the hand of demonic agents and his last words may well have reminded Shakespeare's audience of the Old Man in *Doctor Faustus* who, as opposite to the damned protagonist, when "sift[ed]" by menacing devils, triumphs over them in death and "fl[ies] unto [his] God" (5.1.114–19), as does Richard's mounting soul.
68. Christopher Pye, *The Regal Phantasm: Shakespeare and the Politics of Spectacle* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 123; see also Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), pp. 185–86, 239.
69. On the ubiquitous "rule" or "law" of contraries, see Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 135–47.
70. For more on Edward the Confessor, and for his importance to the historical Richard II, see my "Meta-Ritual," pp. 211–13.
71. See Deborah Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 24.
72. Louis Montrose has persuasively argued that even in apparently idealizing literary representations of the Queen—such as Lyly's *Endymion*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, and *The Faerie Queene*—"the project of elaborating Queen Elizabeth's personal mythology has a recurrent tendency to subvert itself," see *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 165–66. Marie Axton shows how the magical mythology of entertainments that courtiers presented to Elizabeth could be directed against her with "intended mischief" or implied criticism; see "The Tudor Mask and Elizabethan Court Drama," in *English Drama: Forms and Development*, ed. Marie Axton and Raymond Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 24, 34, 46.
73. Deborah Willis, "The Monarch and the Sacred: Shakespeare and the Ceremony for the Healing of the King's Evil," in *True Rites and Maimed Rites: Ritual and Anti-Ritual in Shakespeare and his Age*, ed. Linda Woodbridge and Edward Berry (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 148, 154, 156–57.
74. Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 235–36.
75. As Kantorowicz points out, there were always difficulties—logical, theological, legal—as Tudor jurists "tried to make their intellectual creations comprehensible to themselves and to others" or to sustain such fictions as "two bodies in one person," "two natures in one person," or the "incorporation" of the body politic within the monarch (*The King's Two Bodies*, *passim*, esp. pp. 441, 445, 446). In the instance of Richard II himself, for example, was the king's natural or his political body responsible for "high treason against the Crown" (and what exactly was "the Crown" in such a context)? (see pp. 369, 370–71, 403–406).
76. *OED*, s.v. *sacred*, 5, citing *Titus Andronicus*, 2.1.120. See the "somewhat risible context" of the Duchess of York's fulsome thankfulness at Bolingbroke's pardon of her son ("A god on earth thou art!": 5.3.135n). Forker says Northumberland's adjective in "sacred state" (which he glosses as "royalty by divine authority") is "both ironic and slightly

oily" (5.6.6n); in the deposition scene, Richard had used "my sacred state" to mean "my status as a king by divine right" (4.1.209n). In *1 Henry IV*, only Blunt (never the king himself) refers to Henry as "anointed majesty" (4.3.40), although when chastising Worcester just before the battle of Shrewsbury, the usurper Henry ironically attempts to appropriate the cosmic imagery due a divine-right king (5.1.15–21).