

Old Blood, New Body: Gender on a Spectrum in *Richard II*

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Abstract:

When it comes to Richard II, this is a king with two bodies and not the typical body politic and body natural—but the representation of both the masculine and feminine bodies. In general people have seen Richard as either odd, an exaggerated masculine figure, or simply as a weak king. The loss of his power usually overshadows his reign and his divine right to rule is ignored. I want to connect these things that reflect the parts of Richard and demonstrate how together they make a new type of sovereignty. In my attempt to break down the categories of gender, I offer a blending of the genders to define Richard; although he successfully maneuvers back and forth through ideas of maleness and femaleness, it has an overall negative impact for the citizens on his ability to reign. In this paper, I will demonstrate how the ambiguous gender of Richard hinders him from retaining his crown and ruling among a group of dominant men. While I do not ascribe his masculine femininity as the absolute factor towards his undoing, this text does attribute his androgyny as a significant part in constructing his multilayered persona.

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When it comes to Richard II, this is a king with two bodies and not the typical body politic and body natural—but the representation of both the masculine and feminine bodies. Throughout the play, Richard embraces aspects attributed to both genders and, as Anne Fausto-Sterling writes, “concepts of masculinity and femininity might overlap so completely as to render the very notion of gender difference irrelevant” (Fausto-Sterling 2000, 69). The dilemma of Richard’s kinship, I argue, stems from his performance of a non-binary character, which goes against the masculine idea of a ruler in the early modern period. In the play there is an absence of Richard behaving entirely male or female and in multiple scenes we witness an execution of both equally. Possessing these two genders causes tension between his two kingly bodies, while the feminine invades the political body, the masculine invades his natural body. Operating as a non-binary character, Richard’s uncles and cousins constantly question the king’s inconsistent behavior which ultimately leads to his downfall. In this paper, I will demonstrate how the ambiguous gender of Richard hinders him from retaining his crown and ruling among a group of dominant men. While I do not ascribe his masculine femininity as the absolute factor towards his undoing, this text does attribute his androgyny as a significant part in constructing his multilayered persona. Since Richard does not conform to a

specific identity and navigates between femininity and masculinity, he complicates the way in which he is perceived. Although he is in this complex situation, Richard manages to personally retain his power regardless of the gender he is exuding, in fact he appears to be at his most potent state when he is theatrical and subservient, actions far from the idea of a brawny soldier.

In general people have seen Richard as either odd, an exaggerated masculine figure, or simply as a weak king. The loss of his power usually overshadows his reign and his divine right to rule is ignored. I want to connect these things that reflect the parts of Richard and demonstrate how together they make a new type of sovereignty. The text enables readers to consume Richard as a feminine character, more concerned with dress rather than his country as shown in "Privileging the Feminine: Courtly Revisions of Masculinity," "Richard II was criticized for lavish domestic expenditures, and his penchant for fashionable attire for himself and his court contributed to political opponents branding him as effeminate" (Keiser 1997, 150-151). In my attempt to break down the categories of gender, I offer a blending of the genders to define Richard; although he successfully maneuvers back and forth through ideas of maleness and femaleness, it has an overall negative impact for the citizens on his ability to reign. It is also worth mentioning Christopher Fletcher's text, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics, 1377-99*, and how during Richard's time there was not a concrete definition for the word masculine and instead the word manhood was often used—since he was often considered a boy because of his young age, this would have also stripped him from practicing society's concept of masculinity.

By using queer and feminist theorist more specifically Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, Madhavi Menon, and Anne Fausto-Sterling to analyze this text I believe it opens up the conversation to go beyond the traditional gender aspects. Richard is transformed into this queer character because the way he acts is odd, not only for a king, but for the early modern period in general. As stated before, Richard is constantly switching between the concepts of weak and strong, and when he behaves in a particular way it usually occurs at the least expected time. There are certain features these two theories have, which assists in the consumption of Richard as both man and woman, king and subordinate. Madhavi Menon's *Shakespeareer* shapes the direction that I am trying to take with *Richard II*, by offering a reading that goes beyond labeling Richard as a homosexual and shaping him more as a new portrayal of a king, one who is between both man and God, male and female.

To begin, it is important to note that I am using Jack Halberstam's term for masculinity to discuss Richard's enactment of it or albeit lack thereof. He writes in "An Introduction to Female Masculinity," "Because so few people actually match any given community standards for male and female, in other words, gender can be imprecise and therefore multiply relayed through a solidly binary system...Ambiguous gender, when and where it does appear, is inevitably transformed into deviance, thirdness, or a blurred version of either male or female" (Halberstam 1998, 20). Richard embodies this blurriness, while he is not fully feminized or masculinized it is essential to recognize this in-between space he is occupying. The play itself tries to position Richard in belonging to a specific gender, while I believe, from Halberstam's blending of male and female, he is a combination

of both. He may not represent the traditional idea of a king, but he is still the king nonetheless. When it comes to the legitimacy to the throne there is no doubt Richard II's blood secures him. Son of the Black Prince, the crown rightfully becomes the possession of ten-year old Richard, after the passing of both his father and grandfather. Even though he is technically king his youth restricts him from ruling England and his uncles assume responsibility over the land and their young nephew. The lack of control Richard has when he gains the crown foreshadows his inability to maintain his nobility. When the audience encounters Richard II he is well out of his adolescences; however, a suspicion about his potential to rule effectively looms about the land. Almost instantly he is contrasted with his manlier cousin Bolingbroke, who will question Richard's gender and leadership until he is deposed. The gardener comments on the failed rule of Richard,

They are; and Bolingbroke
Hath seized the wasteful king. O, what pity is it
That he had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land
As we this garden! We at time of year
Do wound the bark, the skin of our fruit-trees,
Lest, being over-proud in sap and blood,
With too much riches it confound itself:
Had he done so to great and growing men,
They might have lived to bear and he to taste
Their fruits of duty: superfluous branches
We lop away, that bearing boughs may live:
Had he done so, himself had borne the crown,
Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down. (3.4. 55-67)

This particular language sets up the comparison between Richard and a nurturer within the text. He neglects to care for his people and similar to the weeds, Bolingbroke overtakes Richard and assumes the dominate position. Richard fails in being both king and mother via the wording of the gardener, he does not direct the men that are growing under his rule in a particular way and they eventually become disorderly. Cynthia Herrup writes, "To rule well required both traits associated with both the masculine and the feminine: kings had to be both unyielding and tender, both economical and bountiful with words and goods, and both courageous and peace loving" (Herrup 2006, 498). Nonetheless, the way this scene is presented makes it seem as though Richard is punished for not being both mild and severe in keeping his subjects at a distance. The very men beneath him consume the upper hand when they infiltrate Richard personally and politically. Here his fluidity allows his court and his cousin to usurp his politically position, which negatively impacts him in the end. This scene goes on to have Richard's queen enter into the conversation and usurp the dominant role of a ruler speaking to a servant. In the absence of her husband, Isabella takes on the manly figure, as her husband is shaped into this delicate body on a doomed path. Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer

Munroe writes, “Feminist scholars have tended to see Queen Isabella as possessing importance typically only as she exists as yet another early modern ‘mirror’ to Elizabeth or other notable historical woman or extension of Richard’s masculinity or potential redemption; she is they claim, a ‘pathetic melancholy spectator of her husband’s downfall,’ characterized more by her absence than her presence, or a type of biblical Ruth” (Laroche 2014, 43). The text is often trying to have someone fill in the parts of masculinity that Richard lacks, making his feminine masculine presence appear as more of a problem than it should be considered. By reading Queen Isabella as an extension to her husband’s maleness, I argue it shows how freely gender truly is among both sexes. The writers of this text goes on to claim, “In both cases, the female and the nonhuman serve the masculinist construct” (Laroche 2014, 43). The traits that create the identity for what is male would not be possible without the identity of women. The ability to define masculinity has to have something to differentiate itself from, and when Richard closes the gap on differences he becomes a complexed character.

The perception of Richard becomes swayed since his actions of kingly command differs from his dramatic speech, dress, and deed. The social idea of how he should dominate over his land conflicts with his deliberate conscious decisions. Aside from gender grouping, Richard is behaving the way he wants to, which helps strengthens his individuality and places him on a spectrum. With this being said, I think it is important to start at the end of the play for the best description of Richard, where although he is physically and emotionally at his weakest state, he is more forceful than we have seen. The deposition scene captures the beautiful language of a fallen king to his usurper. Although Richard is weeping at this moment of defeat, his speech is stronger than his words at the beginning of the play. Instead of emasculating him fully, his tears provide him with a source of strength. The weeping done before the court makes this entire exchange of titles more personal and intrusive—and having the amount of control to allow others to invade and observe the wounds of a crumbling sovereign solidifies Richard’s endurance and perseverance. By openly displaying his weakness, he takes rule over what his audience is able to experience. While the play makes it seem as though Richard is the spectacle, it is really all those who are watching him that is show, as he has already labeled them as traitors similar to Judas. A tearful Richard states,

Mine eyes are full of tears; I cannot see.
And yet salt water blind them not so much
But they can see a sort of traitors here.
Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself
I find myself a traitor with the rest,
For I have given here my soul’s consent
T’undeck the pompous body of a king,
Made glory base and sovereignty a slave,
Proud majesty a subject, state a peasant. (4.1. 234-243).

Ricard hurls insults as he stands at the center of their attention and his crying should alter our perception of him; yet, the action of sobbing becomes weakened by his powerful words. By essentially emasculating him and stripping him of his power, his court becomes the weak men. Those who followed him before are now turning their backs on Richard's complicated rule and reality. Their traitorous positions morally situate Richard above them, even though he is the wounded one. Nevertheless, the text and many others read this display of sobbing as a loss of control. Dorothea Kehler states in *King of Tears: Mortality in "Richard II"*, "Watching Richard the king weep, helplessly they witness loss of control where control is most expected" (Kehler 1985, 10). While it appears Richard makes his court and his citizens uncomfortable by deviating from their expectation of him, I believe his tears cloak his slander towards his betrayers—and their confusion about the entire scene unfolding is what makes them uneasy. He is not fully masculine and not fully feminine, but performing an action of both genders. His feebleness does not incapacitate Richard, however, it does bewilder his audience. Thus, the ambiguity of Richard is again the focus since his words stray from his presentation of them. Donovan Sherman writes a seemingly similar argument pertaining to Richard's control,

The most prominently cast-off object is, of course, the king himself, who in his deposition ends where he began, in a public display of monarchical power transferring hands. Seemingly unlike the other discarded items and with an oft-noted irony, the king actually has a degree of agency in the very act of removing his agency. While Richard is largely despised and ridiculed, he is also the only figure capable of serving the connection between the divine and the political. (Sherman 2014, 22-23).

The uniqueness of Richard is often underestimated in this play, because his theatrics are viewed as a negative rather than as an absolute source of power. Sherman's assessment emphasizes my point of Richard being made more powerful via the fluidity of his gender.

Judith Butler discusses the problem with assigning an identity to a specific gender in her book *Gender Trouble*. Because gender is fluid and unrestricted, categorizing something as only womanly or manly becomes problematic. Butler states, "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler 2007, 191). Richard's transition between society's belief of what is female and what is male is questioned only because it is different. Since Richard is the king then this idea of aggressiveness and assertiveness is something he should perform all the time, but these traits are not just reserved for the men. The text leaves room for the argument to develop more through the women within the play, who are widows, wives, and mothers. There are three moments where the women command the respect from the men in court and express their thoughts and voices freely. The Duchess of York pleads to King Henry, "A woman, and thy aunt, Great King; 'tis I. Speak with me, pity me! Open the door! A beggar begs that never begged before" (5.3. 74-76). While the Duchess of Gloucester demands revenge from Gaunt, "In suff'ring thus thy brother to

be slaughtered, Thou show'st the naked pathway to thy life, Teaching stern murder how to butcher thee. That which in mean men we entitle patience, Is pale cold cowardice in noble breast. What shall I say? To safeguard thine own life, The best way is to venge my Gloucester's death" (1.3. 30-36). In both of these scenes we see the women taking on a very authoritative role, exacting some form of response from the men they are speaking to.

In writing assertive women into the play, it makes it easier to comprehend Richard's ability to display submission when Bolingbroke overthrows him; there is power in femininity. R.A. Martin discusses the absence of sexuality within the play, "This is why sexuality in the sense of difference does not exist in *Richard II*. Women are neither erotic objects nor are they autonomous subjects. They remain undifferentiated from their husbands and families, and while they have the status of individuals, they lack the contestatory and potentially dangerous self-sufficiency which marks genuine individuality" (Martin 1989, 257-258). Early on in the paper I introduced the two bodies of Richard, aside from his political and natural body, these are the two genders that mark his individualism. His untraditional manners elicit unwarranted judgment from those who do not view gender as existing on a scale within the text.

Richard II offers a biased reading when it comes to constructing the hierarchy of gender simply based on the contrasting images of the two cousins. Richard's depiction of a softer male complicates the presence of a manlier and tougher Bolingbroke, the one who believes he is the representation England needs, and only one can govern the people. Derrick Higginbottom writes, "The play, though, articulates the difference between Bolingbroke and Richard much more starkly in terms of gender, imagining Bolingbroke as masculine and the king as feminine" (Higginbottom 2014, 64). Bolingbroke and Richard are engaged in much more than family rivalry, their opposing personalities further separate the two men, presenting readers with two examples to characterize a man. *Richard II's* impartial build up to a banished Bolingbroke who has come back to defeat a tyrant king weakens Richard before his death. Here is a subject undermining the decisions of a king. By returning before his banishment Bolingbroke disrespects the authority of his cousin and triggers the same disloyalty in others. Bolingbroke tries to justify returning from his banishment early by referencing to his blood and upon the cruelty of his cousin,

As I was banish'd, I was banish'd Hereford;
 But as I come, I come for Lancaster.
 And, noble uncle, I beseech your grace
 Look on my wrongs with an indifferent eye:
 You are my father, for methinks in you
 I see old Gaunt alive; O, then, my father,
 Will you permit that I shall stand condemn'd
 A wandering vagabond; my rights and royalties
 Pluck'd from my arms perforce and given away
 To upstart unthrifths? Wherefore I was born

If that my cousin king be King of England,
It must be granted that I am Duke of Lancaster. (2.3.112-123)

This scene emphasizes the tension growing between Bolingbroke and Richard, with Bolingbroke representing a more forceful and aggressive vengeance. When Richard abides by the laws of the land, he is illustrated as hysterical; for example, his decision to banish Bolingbroke temporarily was an extreme punishment to take against a kinsman, but the permanent banishment Mowbray receives was justifiable, mainly through him accepting his punishment and no one fighting against it. When Richard is harsh, the men in his court treat his actions as a form of exaggerated masculinity, which feminizes him through their belief that he does not properly perform the manly role. In a sense to compensate for the mannish trait he lacks, Richard inflates his control and Bolingbroke's return hints at the idea that Richard is a king that is not taken seriously. Other men do not take Richard fervently, because of his inability to prove himself more masculine than they are. By not having the expected form of manliness his leadership is questioned and his decisions are often challenged.

Once again the text sets up a biased reading for the type of man Bolingbroke is over the individualism of Richard. Seda Emine writes, "Richard II is the legitimate king with divine right to rule; however, he acts as a weak ruler and fails to exercise justice, which prevents him from having a just government. On the other hand, Bolingbroke take the throne as a stronger and more efficient sovereign as he acts lawfully and has the support of the whole English nation as an ideal ruler" (Emine 2018, 844-845). In this description of Richard and Bolingbroke the words 'weak' and 'strong' are left vague. Which leads me to assign the weakness in Richard to his feminine masculinity. Bolingbroke may act more lawfully, but neither this nor his strength makes him a stronger ruler as the text seems to suggest. The idea that Bolingbroke's undeniable virility boosts his support among the people and makes his removal of Richard from the throne seem acceptable is perplexing in and of itself. Although, Richard may not have been the perfect king to the people, their loyalty to him was equivocal as well. Richard reacts to the news of Bolingbroke and others uprising against him,

Mine ear is open and my heart prepared.
The worst is worldly loss thou canst unfold.
Say, is my kingdom lost? Why 'twas my care,
And what loss is it to be rid of care?
Strives Bolingbroke to be as great as we?
Greater he shall not be. If he serve God
We'll serve Him too, and be his fellow so.
Revolt our subjects? That we cannot mend.
They break their faith to God as well as us.
Cry woe, destruction, ruin, loss, decay:
The worst is death, and death will have his day. (3.2.89-99)

When the citizens stop believing in the capability of Richard, they lean on the manlier Bolingbroke. The way he runs his country loses him followers and allegiance, which continues to emasculate him. His subjects, those who were supposed to obey his command, find security in the opposite of their king. Richard's unconventional kingship clashes with the gender model for his period, in the attempt to stray from what is considered normal he widens the gap between those who will honor his position and those who believe he is unfit.

Richard's ambiguity pairs well with the position of the king, mainly because the king is already equipped with the idea of two bodies. The king has to split himself to meet the demands of the people and fulfill his own pleasures, separating the bodies does not alter the king however. This is because what the body natural does should not influence the body politic, the concept runs parallel to Richard's feminine masculinity. His language constantly provides him with the strength he needs regardless if he is appearing feminine or masculine. In Judith Brown's essay "Pretty Richard (in Three Parts) from *Shakespeareer* she writes, "The sweet tongue is thus the shared sign of pleasure—sensual, poetic, rhetorical, formal—and yet, and yet this is the complication, it will also be the instrument of Richard's demise as king, his untimely commands, his disproportionate demands. Richard's unguarded tongue will lead to his unguarded reign, a reign more thoroughly, openly, and delightfully sensual than it is cautious, abstemious, or judicial" (Brown 2011, 287). I believe this quotation emphasizes both the two bodies and the two genders of Richard. The elements that characterizes him as feminine makes him manly and authoritative, while those luxuries he enjoys gives him an outlet to practice and shape his language. Things that Richard finds pleasurable are not things that the other men in the court would deem brawny, this is the level of complication Brown talks about, the blurriness of the middle ground. The femininity that strengthens him also weakens him through the act of being deposed at the end of the play. Bolingbroke and the other courtly men are not impressed by the tongue of Richard and makes it out to be a disadvantage for him.

Richard introduces a new way to govern over the people in a temperate way and the old traditions of boisterous ruling is challenged. While some of his uncles abide by the old laws, the younger generations want changed but not the changes brought on by Richard. Many of the old laws make Richard untouchable as the deputy of God; therefore, even though he is considered an awful leader there is an aspect of loyalty that remains. Imke Lichterfield writes, "When Richard realizes that his inheritance derived from the old customs and tries to insist on them, the tides have already turned against him. His crown is practically usurped and his title lost before Bolingbroke even ascends the throne" (Lichterfield 2016, 203). This coincides with my belief that Richard is deposed way before the action of it, his blood and rightful legitimacy to the crown does not matter anymore. He is a king that does not represent the people or dominance and he must be removed. Courtly men discuss the trouble with Richard's rule,

WILLOUGHBY:

The king's crown bankrupt like a broke man.

NORTHUMBERLAND:

Reproach and dissolution hangeth over him.

ROSS:

He hath no money for these Irish wars,
His burdenous taxations notwithstanding,
But by the robbing of the banished Duke.

NORTHUMBERLAND:

His noble kinsman. Most degenerate King!
But, lords, we hear this fearful tempest sing,
Yet seek no shelter to avoid the storm.
We see the wind sit sore upon our sails,
And yet we strike not, but securely perish. (2.1. 258-267)

The money that is supposed to fund the wars is supposedly paying for lavish parties and fancy clothes for Richard. What he chooses to focus on, the arts, should be the least of the king's concern when the citizens are hungry and the land is in danger of being overtaken. Northumberland, Willoughby, and Ross interrogate the obvious fact that Richard is broke and his tyranny must be stopped somehow. However, given the language of the men if Richard's bankruptcy would have stemmed from financing wars, then their perception of him might have been formed differently. Recurrently, his effeminateness hinders their perception of him as a trustworthy king. He does not do his job when it comes to the land and its citizens; therefore, he is no longer the king they need. Bolingbroke on the other hand, is the image of a warrior and someone who will protect the nation if a battle were to arise. His burliness is comforting, while the softer Richard is contentious.

Richard's speech labels him as weak, even though it is done purposefully and tactically. Charles Forker writes in "Unstable Identity in Shakespeare's *Richard II*", "Though one may acknowledge touches of the feminine in Richard's unstable and mutable personality (his almost maternal approach, for instance, to embracing Bolingbroke at Coventry, his touching the ground of Wales like a mother emoting over her baby, his evasion of Northumberland's written charges by the shedding of tears), it is clear that the central conflict in his tragedy, as Shakespeare presents it, is the progressive intensification of his own self-consciousness about the perplexities of royal identity" (Forker 2001, 17). By switching the thought of traits a king embodies Richard is perceived to be an unstable character; yet, he is the only one who remains the same from the start of the play until the end. Richard's refusal to alter his speech or change his personality solidifies his self-confidence and integrity, the person he is should be welcomed and not crucified. This is one reason he links himself to Christ throughout the text, he is punished for the normal performance of himself. Robert Reed Jr. explains, "Not only were God's powers over man without limit: once they had been willed, they were not reversible" (Reed 2015, 54). With that being said, God did not make a mistake making Richard king and everyone should accept what he brings to the throne, whether they agree with it or not. Richard creates a new sovereign power on a platform God has granted him and those beneath him should follow his lead without hesitation.

Reflecting back on the cultural design of early modern genders that I talk about earlier on in the paper, other essays in *Shakespeareer* assist in analyzing the absurdity of what emasculates a man. Steven Bruhm writes in “The Unbearable Sex of Henry VIII”, “In a similar vein, John Bulwer argued in *Anthropometamorphosis* (1654) that ‘shaving the chin is justly to be accounted a note of Effeminacy.’” Indeed, according to Will Fisher, the clean-shaven man in early modern England ‘quite literally becomes ‘lesse man’ or even a ‘woman’” (Bruhm 2011, 28). I include this excerpt to draw attention to the fact that Richard could have been feminized by anything during his reign, the ability to slip into either gender with ease should not have a negative effect on Richard, yet it does. Richard’s authority within the text starts to diminish the more he is characterized as behaving as a weak king. Masako Hirai writes, “Although Richard seems to be far from an image of power in the proper sense of the word, the play *Richard II* focuses on the theme of power and each separate scene is connected with various kinds of power on various levels. Power here means little in itself. It is interesting because it has something to do with a gap or a dilemma in the play and produce a resistance, and this dilemma is also described on various levels” (Hirai 1997, 371). This gap in the play is the definition of masculinity. Because the text sets up the sturdier, blunt masculinity to prevail over a softer masculine figure, it is hard to consume the play as impartial. While a close reading does provide evidence to how Richard exudes both genders generously, on the surface the favor clearly resides with Bolingbroke. It obvious that two types of powers exist, however, only one is worthy of the crown.

Returning back to the end of the play at the moment where it appears Richard has ceded to his cousin Bolingbroke, his speech restores the brokenness he receives. And through his cries, the natural side of him shapes his vulnerability to be genuine. This act of meekness enhances Richard self-hood without focusing on his gender. Jonathan Lamb notes, “Shakespeare has Richard place himself of the spectrum going from king to beggar and back again, thus making it seem reasonable to call him ‘fragmentary.’ As we have seen, however, the impression of multiplicity derives from Richard’s newfound stylistic wholeness. He knows how to talk about himself as a coherent set of parts because he has begun to talk about his self” (Lamb 2015, 139). Richard’s spectrum goes beyond the political and spills over into the body natural. He is naturally both feminine and masculine and this is what makes him complete. The men in court who do not understand Richard see him as fragmented, mainly because he is not fully male. But they do not realize that they too are lacking in complete maleness. Sherman mentions, “By enacting the space between identities, he melts his subjectivity into a nonmimetic brand of action, manipulating his own vestigial body” (Sherman 2014, 32). His fluidity makes Richard a new ruler, a mixture of old and new laws, male and female, body politic and body natural.

Looking beyond the apparent reading of the text, this play suggests the existence of a non-binary king in the early modern period. The king’s two bodies are also reflected in his two genders, which blend perfectly together in the creation of a new idea of sovereign power. Although, Richard’s feminine masculinity works against him at the end, his reluctance to conform depicts bravery in the face of king who many believe lacks it. While there are many factors that contribute to Richard’s

downfall, my argument is that many of them would have been overlooked if only Richard matched their description of the model man. While Bolingbroke snatches the crown from his cousin in the play of *Richard II*, in Bolingbroke's own tale we witness that he comes with his own imperfections as well. Nonetheless, Richard dies as a testimony to how people negatively respond to changes. In the disruption of their usual pattern of kingship, Richard creates many enemies, among his family and his citizens.

Reading Richard as a queer sovereign is to examine his performance of the two genders and how he closes the gap between them, showing that there is overlap and analogous traits they share. Butler states, "If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies" (Butler 2007, 9). Richard is reprimanded for not behaving like a man, when the idea of man is significantly opinionated in this text. He is compared to Bolingbroke and when they do not equal one another, he is presumed the weaker of the two—mainly since Bolingbroke publicly talks about battle and fighting, while Richard is more concerned with enacting violence privately. By living on this spectrum of male and female Richard has the freedom to go back and forth between gentle and stern; however, this freedom also costs him, his life. Needless to say, Richard is a threat because he is always in control and he operates beyond the boundaries of gender.

Richard II presents the fall of a tragic king, but depicts a successful individual via Richard. He is not accepted for what he embodies and since he is not the epitome of masculinity he dies without a title or name. Richard says to his cousin, "No, not the name was given me at the font, But 'tis usurped" (4.1.246-247). Bolingbroke tries to take the only source of masculinity that people recognized in Richard and though he succeeds, by the end of this deposition Richard is again convinced that he cannot be copied or disposed of. He is the beginning of a new era of men and his queerness will forever live on. Menon states that queerness "recognized the absurdity of limits and interrupts the ways in which we live our lives and write our texts, but it cannot be contained by how we live and what we write" (Menon 2011, 7). Richard definitely interrupts England with his reign and his deposition, because of his unconventional demeanor. Nonetheless, he remains a prominent figure as a multiplex gendered king who regulates from the margins. It is easy to use Richard's poetical language against him and to emasculate his being—but when reading his words closely his strategically worded wit is apparently one his is greatest and strongest traits.

Ultimately Richard's deposition stems from his fluid personality, which disrupts the concept of sovereignty the early modern period has created. Halberstam writes in *Trans**, "The concept of 'agender,' then, names a wish to be outside of gender norms, rather than the real experience of being so" (Halberstam 1998, 9). This is where we find Richard existing in the play, outside of the normal performances of gender, at any given time he is performing an aspect of both genders; thus making

it hard to identify which category he belongs to. Richard is unable to be labeled and this gives him more freedom as a ruler, which is unacceptable by some of those in his court, especially his cousin. Nonetheless as Harry Benjamin's belief about the wholeness of gender is explained in *Trans** he says, "that no man is 100% man and no woman is 100% woman" (Halberstam 1998, 115). The discrimination against Richard is a modern day nightmare, the idea of a queer ruler makes people upset and they forcibly remove him from his rightful position. As I have stated earlier, Richard may not have been the perfect king and his rule may have been controversial, but it is his ambiguous presence in court that is truly problematic. The people doubt his ability to govern them successfully and instead of having faith in Richard they remove him from authority and give his position to a stronger, vigorous man that his cousin happens to objectify. *Richard II* subtly creates the problem with genders among his court, since Richard would rather dress in extravagant clothing than wear a suit of armor his manhood is questioned and he is sequentially persecuted for his differences. At the end of the play Richard's queer body continues to intrude into the space of both Henry Bolingbroke and England reinforcing this idea that his agender presence will continuously trouble and impact those who knew encountered him. Bolingbroke tries to disassociate himself from the murder of Richard, he even states "Though I did wish him dead, I hate the murderer, love him murdered" (5.6. 39-40). Bolingbroke is forced to confront the uncomfortable double sided feelings about his cousin, further expanding the duplicity of this entire play. Richard's obscure character is transformed into an omnipotent figure, which ties back into his divine right and in the words of Richard, "God save the King!" (4.1.163) and all that he exemplifies.

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