“The King’s Two Bodies” Encounter Machiavellian Philosophy in *Richard II*

Shu-hua Chung

ABSTRACT

In Renaissance England, rulers applied the king’s two bodies—the body politic and the body natural—and Machiavellian philosophy to control their states and solidify their political power. In *Richard II* (1595), Shakespeare responded to the king’s two bodies and Machiavellian philosophy by describing the conflict between King Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke. At the coast of Wales, Bolingbroke’s power, facilitated by the rebellious troops he has mustered, eclipses Richard’s kingship. In the scene at Flint Castle, when Richard’s followers have joined Bolingbroke’s army to challenge the former’s kingly status, his body politic has been threatened; the unity of his two bodies is at the brink of disintegration. At Westminster, Richard eventually gives away his crown as the balm used to anoint a king. Reduced as a man only with a natural body, Richard is deposed. Bolingbroke, ironically, follows Machiavellian philosophy to act like a pious man, making his voyage to the Holy Land. This article argues how the medieval philosophy of the king’s two bodies, focusing on God’s will, gradually shifts to the Renaissance Machiavellian philosophy that emphasizes individual will, by examining the struggle between Richard and Bolingbroke.

KEYWORDS the king’s two bodies, the body natural, the body politic, Machiavellian philosophy, political power, conflict

---

Ex-position, Issue No. 46, December 2021 | National Taiwan University
DOI: 10.6153/EXP.202112_(46).0007

Shu-hua CHUNG, Assistant Professor, Department of Fashion and Cosmetology Design, Tung Fang Design University, Taiwan

Introduction

In *Richard II* (1595), Shakespeare subtly depicts the inevitable struggle between King Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke. The play starts with Richard's charge of treason, as he orders a trial by traditionally chivalric combat and banishes his cousin Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, for six years and Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, for life. Before departing for Ireland to quash a rebellion, Richard visits Bolingbroke's dying father, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Richard's immediate seizure of Gaunt's estate after his death appalls numerous noblemen, and his incompetent ruling drives them to pay allegiance to Bolingbroke, who has come from France with an army. Confronting a full-scale revolt in England, Richard is unable to regain dominion and is forced to abdicate the throne in favor of Bolingbroke, who becomes Henry IV. Being confined in the prison of Pomfret Castle, Richard is murdered by Sir Pierce of Exton, who has acted upon a cue from Henry. Exton's act is, however, dismissed by Henry, and the murderer is eventually banished by the new king. The play ends with Henry planning his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in order to atone for the murder. Shakespeare portrays their personalities—Bolingbroke's decisiveness and activity in contrast to Richard's indecision and passivity—as one of the factors resulting in a new state. The playwright depicts not only a military encounter but also a confrontation between two political philosophies, by virtue of displaying the relationship between God and kings and how monarchs employ theology for their political aims. Underneath the military conflict between Richard and Bolingbroke lurks the encounter between the king's two bodies prevailing in the Middle Ages and still being practiced in Shakespeare's days, as well as the Machiavellian philosophy emerging during the Renaissance period. The king's two bodies, including the mortal body natural and the immortal body politic, resulted from God's will. In the play as in history, Richard's defeat and Bolingbroke's rise to power suggest that the theory of the king's two bodies is fading out while Machiavellian philosophy is gaining currency. During the Renaissance period, people's pursuit of individual will or freedom was affirmed emphatically, and humanism took over the dominant theology of the Middle Ages. This article attempts to examine how the medieval philosophy of the king's two bodies progressively turned into the Renaissance Machiavellian philosophy through the rise and fall of the two rulers after their military encounter.

Literature Review on Political Philosophies in *Richard II*

Many scholars have contributed to the study of the political philosophies in *Richard II*. In *The Theory of the King's Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare* (2000), Albert Rolls argues that Shakespeare examines the dialectic between the king's two bodies in order to explain "a moment of historical change" (3). In *Two Funerals and Two Bodies of King Richard II* (2010), Kosana Jovanović interprets how the explanatory value of the theory of the king's two bodies taking God and Christ as the center is positively tested when Richard II is defeated (1). In "The Practicalities of the Absolute" (2012), James Philips declares that the problem confronting King Richard II and his subjects is "how to recognize justice, how to give its absoluteness room for operation in the body politic" (161). In "Propping Up in the King's Two Bodies in *Richard II*" (2012), Ema Vyroubalová and James Robert Wood affirm that the king's body politic in *Richard II* depends on "the king's physical body" and on "the human bodies and material possessions" (1). In "The King's Two Bodies in Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *King Lear*," through the examples of *Richard II* and *King Lear* (2014), Sėlima Lejri delineates "the representation of kingship in Tudor and Stuart England and its articulation" in Shakespeare's political drama (43). In "Kingship as Divine Right in Shakespeare's *King Richard II*" (2016), Shamsi Farzana emphasizes Shakespeare's advocacy for the divine right of kingship and explores the ideally impeccable and honest king who takes responsibility for God and for his country (40). In "Ernst Kantorowicz, Shakespeare, and the Humanities' Two Bodies" (2017), Stephanie Elsky analyzes two essays—Lorna Hutson's "Imagining Justice: Kantorowicz and Shakespeare" and Victoria Kahn's "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*"—and argues that both of them implicitly respond to "the current debate about the methods and aims of literary criticism and those of humanist criticism more broadly" (12). In *Representations of Kingship and Power in Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy* (2000), Amanda Mabillard asserts that "Richard's selfishness and lack of Machiavellian political sophistication have thrown the country into crisis" (12). In *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne* (2002), Hugh Grady argues that Richard is a "poor Machiavellian who needs to study the details of his *Prince* much more closely" (74). In "Bolingbroke, A True Machiavellian" (1948), Irving Ribner declares that Bolingbroke's "political activity" in *Richard II* closely adheres to Machiavelli's "political philosophy" in *The Prince* (183). In *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (2002), John Roe asserts that Henry's victory at the end of the play depends on "a combination of favorable circumstances and personal initiative elements" which Machiavelli identifies as necessary in the beginning of *The Prince* (60). In "Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli" (1996), Stephen B. Hollingshead takes it to be Shakespeare's stance that "the Christian virtue of mercy is the essential kingly virtue," in response to Machiavelli's complaint that "Christianity makes men feeble, incapable of following the Romans in search of worldly glory" (1). The above researchers focus either on the theory of the king's two bodies or on Machiavellian philosophy, but not on both political philosophies, whereas I will examine the two political philosophies side by side.

Primary Political Theories during the Renaissance Period

The philosophy of the king's two bodies prevailed in the Middle Ages: for those monarchs who desired to control their state and solidify their political power, this mysterious theology could persuade their subjects and people to trust a king anointed by God. In *Commendation of the Laws of England* (1543), Sir John Fortescue (c. 1394-1476) described "in considerable anatomical detail the form of the English body politic, noting the linguistic and symbolic connection between laws and ligaments" (3). Edmund Plowden (1518-1585) transformed the concept of the king's two bodies from abstraction to a concrete, physical demonstration in the body of the king. In *The Commentaries or Reports* (1571), he comments on reports about how lawyers codify the concept in examining land-ownership:

> [T]hat by the Common Law no Act which the king does as king, shall be defeated by his Nonage. For the king has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the king does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body. (212a)

Plowden goes on to expound the political philosophy of the king's two bodies:

> [A]lthough he [the king] has, or takes, the land in his natural Body, yet to this natural Body is conjoined his Body politic, which contains his royal Estate and Dignity; and the Body politic includes the Body natural, but the Body natural is the lesser, and with this the Body politic is consolidated. So that he has a Body natural, adorned and invested with the Estate and Dignity royal; and he has not a Body natural distinct and divided by itself from the Office and Dignity royal, but a Body natural and a Body politic together indivisible, and these two Bodies are incorporated in one Person, and make one Body and not divers, that is the Body corporate. So that the Body natural, by this conjunction of the Body politic to it, (which Body politic contains the Office, Government, and Majesty royal) is magnified, and by the said Consolidation hath in it the Body politic. (213)

The philosophy of the king's two bodies means that the king's body natural is visible and has physical feelings, suffers, and dies as naturally as humans do, while the king's body politic is invisible and spiritual, transcending the earthly and serving as a symbol of majesty endowed with the divine right to reign. The philosophy of the king's two bodies pervasive in medieval Europe still dominated Renaissance England. As Ernst H. Kantorowicz notes, "[t]he mystic fiction of the 'King's Two Bodies,' as divulged by English jurists of the Tudor period and the times thereafter, does not form an exception to this rule" (3). The Renaissance monarchs' inheritance and embodiment of the medieval king's two bodies was undoubtedly for the purposes of concretization, consolidating their supreme authority, confirming their political legitimacy, and conveying the idea that the king never dies. Elizabeth I became queen at the age of twenty-five (1558), her reign ratified with a speech pronouncing her adoption of the political theology of the king's two bodies, the body natural and the body politic (Loades 36-37). Elizabeth I's adoption of the medieval political theology strengthened a female monarch's political authority in a patriarchal system.

Alongside the late medieval and Renaissance doctrine of the king's two bodies, Machiavellian philosophy began to come to the fore in Renaissance England. From the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, the model of kingship based on the medieval theory of the king's two bodies gradually shifted attention from God, Christ, Law, and polity to Man (Kantorowicz 495). Visualizing the tension of the "two bodies" in man, Dante Alighieri wrote *Monarchy* (1312-1313), a Latin summary treatise of political philosophy with special attention to secular and religious power. Enea Sivio Piccolomini, famous for his humanistic ideas and later to become Pope Pius II (1405-1464), produced tracts on political and theological controversies. In a humanistic style, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* (1513), a collection of political principles for rulers, especially for new rulers. In the book, he shows how a new ruler is required to bear the capability of leading a dispersed people toward a newly built state, with examples of leaders drawn from the Bible, of kings from Roman mythology, and emperors from Italian history.

Machiavellian philosophy in Renaissance England was a humanist monarchical discourse inseparable from English history, regardless of whether the Englishmen's attitude toward *The Prince* was positive or negative. Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540), who had brought the manuscript of *The Prince* with him from Italy, closely followed the Machiavellian philosophy (Einstein 292). Having read *The Prince* in 1527, Cardinal Reginald Pole (1500-1558) in the *Apologia* (1539) connects the events of English history with the Machiavellian doctrine and maintains that the appearance of Machiavelli marked the beginning of a sacred epoch in history because *The Prince* "was written by Satan in the same sense where Scripture was written by God" (Donaldson 8). Machiavellian philosophy was broadly read and discussed from various perspectives in Renaissance England though Machiavelli had been condemned by both Protestants and Catholics and officially banned in Elizabethan England (Grady 30). In 1576, the French lawyer Innocent Gentillet (1535-1588) wrote *Sermon on the Means of Governing*. It was translated into English by Simon Patericke in 1576 and published in 1602, with its corrupted version of the Florentine's philosophy, but an English translation of *The Prince* must have existed in 1585 (Ribner 177). Machiavellian philosophy was also an influence embodied in particular characters in Renaissance drama, such as Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* (1589-1590) and Faustus in Doctor Faustus (c. 1588-1592) by Christopher Marlowe, as well as Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603). These characters, for most scholars, are often classified as evil protagonists. Machiavellian philosophy drives the Renaissance humanist political discourse with an insistence that the claim to princely status is "a moral claim"; a prince is so called "by reason of his virtue and by virtue of his reason" (Stacey 19). It is prospering as shown in the fact that characters in Renaissance literature pursue their desire for power, wealth, and knowledge rather freely.

Political Philosophies in *Richard II*

In *Richard II*, Shakespeare artfully represents the historical events that occurred during the last two years of Richard's life, from 1398 to 1400, portraying historical figures, engaging with the philosophy of the king's two bodies, and mixing the realization of this philosophy with the unfolding of the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603). King Richard II's reign (1377-1399) stretched over a transitional period between the late medieval era, when the philosophy of the king's two bodies with its God-centered ideas was still flourishing, and Renaissance Europe, where humans started to displace God's central position. Later generations judged that Richard II's reign had been "a turning-point in political history, or in constitutional development" (Goodman and Gillespie 1). True to its historical roots, *Richard II* is unique for the forum it sets up for the confrontation between the theory of the king's two bodies and the Machiavellian philosophy. Debora Shuger points out that *Richard II* centers on "the relation of Christianity to the exercise of politic power" (55). Similarly, Farzana observes that this play can be viewed as "a turning point in the history of England as the throne is taken over by a more commanding king in comparison to King Richard II" (49). In the beginning of the play, Richard expresses a Machiavellian stratagem in his banishment of Henry and Mowbray (1.3), and shows off his wealth while mentioning the Irish wars (1.4). Confronting Bolingbroke's victorious return from Ireland, Richard becomes "the opposite of Machiavelli's prince" (Grady 74), and instead seems to believe in the philosophy of the king's two bodies, appealing to the divine right to protect a monarch's ruling power. Divine right originated from the medieval idea that God had bestowed earthly power on the king, just as God had given spiritual power and authority to the church, centering on the Pope. During the Renaissance period, the French jurist Jean Bodin (1530-1596) wrote this theory on the basis of the interpretation of Roman law (Farzana, 41-42). James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, wrote the Scots textbooks of divine right in 1597-1598 in order to develop the theory of divine right.

In Shakespeare's play, a sick Gaunt who is loyal to his country reproaches Richard for leasing out royal lands and considers him no longer a king disposed by divine right: "Landlord of England art thou now, not king, / Thy state of law is bond slave to the law" (2.1.113-14).[1] When the banished Bolingbroke returns to England, York explicates that the king is anointed by God and hence supposedly possesses power: "Com'st thou because the anointed king is hence? / Why, foolish boy, the king is left behind, / And in my loyal bosom lies his power" (2.3.95-97). Bolingbroke realizes that his greatest contrast with Richard lies in the fact that it is Richard who inherently benefits from God's divine right, though they are cousins sharing the same royal blood. In order to alter his destiny as a subject and his dangerously political situation, Bolingbroke tries to usurp power and responds to York, "I am a subject, / And I challenge law" (2.3.132-33). At the coast of Wales, faced with his defeat and Bolingbroke's victory, Richard grows melancholic and despairs. To encourage Richard, Carlisle proclaims Richard's status as a powerful king on account of divine right: "Fear not, my lord. That Power that made you king / Hath power to keep you king in spite of all" (3.2.27-28). God can confer power on Richard but cannot absolutely protect him from his unexpectedly forceful enemies. As a king, he is too cowardly to resist Bolingbroke's overwhelming rebellion. It is Bolingbroke's personality that helps him win the support of most noblemen. Susan Wells observes that Richard tries to "solve the problems of a modern state with the tools of traditional rule," that is, by retreating to the private sphere, a sphere of significance outside the state, a location for intimacy and interiority, whereas Bolingbroke "challenges the state on the basis of his 'private right'; his subjectivity becomes an instrument of rule" (103). In the play, before Flint Castle, York has no idea why Richard, an anointed king, is in a hurry to escape from the decisive moment, wondering, "Alack the heavy day, / When such a sacred king should hide his head!" (3.3.8-9). Richard's encounter with Bolingbroke unfolds not only through military struggle but also by the political debate between the theory of the king's two bodies and Machiavellian philosophy, a conflict between providence and fate.

---

[1] All citations from *Richard II* are from Peter Ure's edition of the play.

In *Richard II*, Richard remains fully confident about the power of his divine right as indestructible by nature or by the people: "Not all the water in the rough rude sea / Can wash the balm off from an anointed king; / The breath of worldly men cannot depose / The deputy elected by the Lord" (3.2.54-57). Withdrawing to Flint Castle after his defeat in Ireland, Richard asks himself, "What must the king do now? Must he submit? / The king shall do it. Must he be depos'd? / The king shall be contented. Must he lose / The name of king? a God's name, let it go" (3.3.143-46). Here, Richard seems to examine the kind of responsibility he should take. He is overwhelmed, so the king's body politic, which has previously coexisted within him, has presumably disappeared. Kathryn Banks argues that the king's body politic is "an important force behind its massive replication in the sixteenth century" (213). Whoever can be anointed as king will possess the body natural and the body politic, so he is vouchsafed by God to obtain a crown and rule the state. Historically, divine right could be endlessly replicated across Renaissance European imperial families. Henry VIII of England, for instance, radically changed the English Constitution by contriving the theology of divine right as a short-term expedient during his reign, though his annulment from his first marriage to Catherine Aragon led him to launch the English Reformation, separating the Church of English from papal authority (Brigden 114). Divine right even pervaded the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European royal families, such as that of Louis XIV of France, who adamantly promoted and practiced the theory of divine right in order to protect his throne and realize his political power. Divine right greatly influenced the kings' subjects by implying that God's will would orient the king at all times. In Act 1, scene 2 of *Richard II,* John of Gaunt's failure to promise the old Duchess of Gloucester to take revenge on Richard for his brother's death is not caused by his fear of the king's power as much as his belief that the King of England has been appointed and secured by God. Were he to retaliate against the king, chosen by God's mandate, he would be committing not only treachery against the king but also blasphemy against God.

In the play, divine right cannot totally safeguard Richard from political crises. Richard's decision in a series of events leading to his overthrow and death is an error highlighting some of his tragic flaws: indecisiveness, abruptness, and arbitrariness. Also, Richard's failure results from his weak personality: he is susceptible to flattery when his subjects use sweet words and ingratiating manners or speak ill of their opponents in order to achieve their ends. Northumberland incisively points out Richard's shortcoming: "The king is not himself, but basely led / By flatterers; and what they will inform, / Merely in hate, 'gainst any of us all, / That will the king severely prosecute / 'Gainst us, our lives, our children, and our heirs" (2.1.241-45). Richard, because of his feeble personality, fails to withstand his subjects' flattery. Such a fault contradicts the following principle, from Chapter 23 of *The Prince*: "a ruler must always take advice, but only when he wants it, not when others want to give it to him" (Machiavelli 94). Machiavelli suggests that an efficacious ruler should be capable of evading his subjects' flattery. A ruler is required to make decisions despite his acceptance or rejection of his subjects' suggestions. Furthermore, he is supposed to bear such wisdom as to judge if his subjects' remarks are fair or not. In the play, Richard comes across as an inefficient ruler according to this political principle.

Richard has a harmonious relationship with God but lacks good terms with the noblemen in the play. Their relationship deteriorates due to his decision to impose taxes on the commoners and to seize Gaunt's property when he dies. Although some subjects such as Bushy, Bagot, Green, and the Duke of Aumerle maintain their loyalty to Richard, his greedy taxation schemes make him lose most noblemen's hearts. As Ross states, "The commons hath he pill'd with grievous taxes, / And quite lost their hearts. The nobles hath he fin'd / For ancient quarrels and quite lost their hearts" (2.1.246-48). Alastair Dunn notes that "the growing fear among the seigniorial classes in England soon translated into opposition to Richard II, manifested in 1399 in a widespread unwillingness to resist Henry of Lancaster's usurpation" (1). Richard's conduct irritates and causes the nobility to help Bolingbroke to secretly return to England and conspire with him against the king. Richard passively goes to the war in Ireland whereas Bolingbroke actively seizes the opportunity to assemble an army and conquers the north coast of England. Accordingly, Richard deserves his punishment for his mismanagement of the country and his involvement in the death of the Duke of Gloucester.

In his exploration of the theme of divine right, Shakespeare elaborately employs the image of the sun to portray the picture of the king, through Salisbury's comparison of Richard to the sun (2.4.21). Just as the sun is unique in nature, so the king is the only ruler in a country. Such a comparison reveals the importance of the king and the power of his authority. The analogy of sun and king predominated in Renaissance literature. Prior to Shakespeare's *Richard II*, in his poem "Polyhymnia" (1590), George Peele commemorated the thirty-second anniversary of Elizabeth I's reign. In his play, *The History of the World* (1616), Walter Raleigh discussed the unity of the planets with the personality of the gods of ancient mythology. Also, Shakespeare delicately uses a succession of natural images to convey the relationship between Christianity and the king. James L. Calderwood notes that "on Richard's unexamined assumptions, language had been bonded to nature and the world order by virtue of God's certification of him as a Divine Right king" (69). The natural images that the playwright employs concretize the abstract notion of divine right, leading to its core source—God's will. The inseparable relationship between politics and religion in Renaissance England is disclosed in the play and in history. Whether a king can gain political power depends on God's mysterious will.

In the play, Shakespeare vividly shows the inseparability of the name of the king, the body politic, and Richard himself (the body natural) in a dialogue between Aumerle and Richard:

> *Aumerle.* Comfort, my liege, remember who you are.
> *Richard.* I had forgot myself, am I not king?
> Awake, thou coward majesty! Thou sleepest.
> Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?
> Arm, arm, my name! (3.2.83-87)

Richard's explanation of divine right is that "'king' is part of his own proper name—inherently legitimate, inviolable, even unquestionable" (Calderwood 77). Owing to his despair after the loss of the Irish wars, Richard exposes his weakness, denying his identity as a king who possesses the body politic and the body natural derived from divine right. He rather admits only his body natural, saying to the Bishop of Carlisle, "I live with bread like you, feel want, / Taste grief, need friends—subjected thus, / How can you say to me, I am a king?" (3.2.175-77). Conflictingly, while Richard withdraws to Flint Castle and loses the supremacy of a king, he maintains a king's disposition, uttering, "A king, woe's slave, shall kingly woe obey" (3.2.210). As for Richard's perspective toward kingship, Nigel Saul finds Richard's personality similar in history as in the play: the historical Richard is as highly "self-conscious" of being a king and changeable in "temperament" as Shakespeare's dramatical Richard (4). Shakespeare perceives the very essence of Richard's tragedy: though "unkinged," Richard is still "kingly" (Saul 466). Richard is satisfied with his kingship in life, no matter what kind of situation, fortunate or unfortunate, he encounters.

In *Richard II*, there are two obvious contrasting trajectories: one looking for "English history's fulfillment of providential purpose," and the other displaying "how each action engenders its successor according to natural logic, unaffected by external, transcendent will" (Roe 62). Nevertheless, Machiavellian philosophy seems to go onstage and whittle down the striking impact of the king's two bodies in Act 3, scene 3, where Shakespeare portrays Richard's capitulation to Bolingbroke at Flint Castle. Richard has the Earl of Northumberland convey a message to Bolingbroke: if he dares to usurp the throne, God and the king will rain vengeance on him. Richard senses that, by virtue of treachery, Bolingbroke will not let him retain the crown. Bolingbroke's treachery is justifiable according to Chapter 8 of *The Prince*: Two situations are available to someone who aspires to be a ruler, "first, when a man seizes power by some terrible crime and, second, when a private citizen becomes hereditary ruler with the support of his fellow citizens" (Machiavelli 33). In Machiavelli's opinion, a new ruler must seize power by hook or by crook. In the play, when Bolingbroke incessantly schemes to revolt against Richard and replace him, he breaks a subject's oath of loyalty to his king. Shakespeare seems to share the same perspective with Machiavelli when he maintains that "usurpation is necessary for England, but England must suffer for it" (Farzana 42). In Chapter 17 of *The Prince,* Machiavelli asserts the king's attitude toward his subjects: "[t]he ruler who has relied entirely on their promises and taken no other precautions is lost" (66). In the play, Bolingbroke repudiates his obligation of devotion to the king and finally succeeds to the throne by means of usurpation, even if he is not anointed by God. Unlike the common people who await opportunities, Bolingbroke creates opportunities at his will and bravely makes an ultimate choice to change adversities into favorable circumstances. Here, the philosophy of the king's two bodies is seemingly losing ground.

According to Machiavelli in Chapter 18 of *The Prince*, to avoid hazards, a ruler is required to possess a fierce but discreet personality impregnated with the mixed brutality of a lion and a fox. In *Richard II*, Bolingbroke's ambitious and decisive personality successfully guides people to a new state. Upon Richard's embarrassing return, Bolingbroke does not simply reclaim his lands but also take over the crown. Majestically crowning himself King Henry IV, he imprisons Richard at Pomfret Castle. Bolingbroke confidently expresses: "My gracious lord, I come but for mine own." Richard sorrowfully responds: "Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all" (3.3.196-97). Their contrasting dialogue suggests that Richard, still clinging to the philosophy of the king's two bodies, gradually fades from the political stage, whereas Bolingbroke, embodying Machiavellian philosophy, rises to power. In his pursuit of the crown, Bolingbroke's acts are tinged with animal brutality. In Chapter 18 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli writes, "a ruler must be able to exploit both the man and the beast in himself to the full" (69). In the play, Bolingbroke gains power with a series of carefully and methodically devised moves. In Chapter 18, Machiavelli notes, "[w]hat you have to understand is that a ruler, especially a ruler new to power, can't always behave in ways that would make people think a man good, because to stay in power he's frequently obliged to act against loyalty, against charity, against humanity and against religion" (70). Richard's extreme "desire for lands," his attempt to "exploit uncertainties," and his "arbitrary action" provoke the nobility's strong resistance, so he is eventually defeated and ruined (Given-Wilson 122).

Shakespeare eloquently describes Richard's misgovernment by comparing the kingdom to a garden, via a gardener's criticism: "They are; and Bolingbroke / Hath seiz'd the wasteful king. O, what pity is it / That he had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land / As we this garden!" (3.4.54-57). The garden as a symbol of the kingdom is recurrent in Renaissance literature. The relationship between the king and God is symbolized more as that between the king and nature than that between the king and Christianity (Mack 44). The orchard in the play presents "a metaphor for the Kingdom, neglected at its peril." The gardener upholds the idea that managing a country is like organizing a garden, so he laments a wasteful king and talks almost "like a manual for the cultivation of fruits" (Willes 7). Shakespeare makes references to botany as "literary devices" and as "cultural guides" that lead us to "the very heart of social life in Elizabethan and Jacobean England" (Willes 37). Like animal images, plant images often appear in Shakespeare's plays. In *Richard II*, the gardener mentions the cultivation of fruit: “Go, bind thou up young dangling apricots / Which like unruly children, make their sire / Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight, / Give some supportance to the bending twigs” (3.4.29-32). In the sixteenth century, analogy between a fruitful orchard and an ordered family was rather common. The descriptions of managing a garden in the play link “the treatment of land and flora to royal decisions and polities” (Bruckner 130). Here, Shakespeare offers a parallelism between an unkempt garden and a disordered kingdom and suggests that Richard’s downfall and Bolingbroke’s gaining of the throne may lead to peace and order. As the kingdom is compared to a garden, so the king’s body politic is compared to nature. As Amy L. Tigner points out, “The monarch’s body politic” symbolizes at some level the plots, fields, and forest of England, so the land’s decline reflects Richard’s failure to govern the state. As a result, the land suffers from “his loss of the scepter” (13). The human-nature relation in the Renaissance period was understood to be a harmonious one; the injury or destruction of natural plants or natural objects would send a warning that a catastrophic crisis is about to unfold.

In Act 4, Richard, an inheritor of the king’s two bodies, is humiliatingly prevailed by Bolingbroke, a practitioner of Machiavellian philosophy. Hopelessly and helplessly, Richard submits his throne to Bolingbroke, uttering the agony of losing his crown and the sacred state (4.1.207-13). Richard reluctantly admits that God’s safeguard has been transferred from him to Bolingbroke: “God pardon all oaths that are broke to me, / God keep all vows unbroken are made to thee!” (4.1.214-15). His sorrowful complaint implies sheer fragility and impotence on his part. He is so weak as to need divine right to defend himself against rebellion. Divine right can shelter such a weak king neither from crises nor from ruins when the challenger is someone who dares to tempt his fate, such as Bolingbroke. When the theory of the king’s two bodies is replaced by Machiavellian philosophy, the comparison of the kingship to the sun shifts from Richard to Bolingbroke as Richard sighs “O that I were a mockery kind of snow, / Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke, / To melt myself away in water-drops!” (4.1.260-62). Like these disappearing natural images, his body politic is gradually declining and finally languishing out of the political stage.

In *Richard II*, Richard’s body natural and his body politic are both symbolically destroyed when he sadly demands a looking-glass and desperately crushes it. The image of kingship or his symbolic identity is destructed: “Is this the face which fac’d so many follies, / That was at last out-fac’d by Bolingbroke? / A brittle glory shineth in this face; / As brittle as the glory is the face” (4.1.285-88). According to Kantorowicz, the climax of the tragedy lies in this mirror scene in which the looking glass works like "a magic mirror" whereas Richard is comparable to "the wizard" of many fairy tales. He crushes the looking glass madly to efface his features. As Kantorowicz suggests, "[t]he physical face which the mirror reflects, no longer is one with Richard's inner experience, his outer appearance, no longer identical with inner man" (39). When scattering the mirror, Richard destroys his inner world in a refusal to blend with the outside world. He suffers such agony and encounters such a dilemma that, internally, he pines for his identity as king by virtue of symbolic kingship (a divine right that would confirm his political legitimacy) whereas, externally, he is so weak as to submit to the potent Bolingbroke. The shattered mirror implies that his political authority begins to languish while Bolingbroke's Machiavellian political power flourishes.

Bolingbroke succeeds thanks to his vigorous disposition. In Chapter 3 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli dictates, "Having learned from the rebellion, he'll have fewer scruples when it comes to punishing troublemakers, interrogating suspects and strengthening any weak points in his defenses" (8). Personifying the qualities of a ruler as noted in *The Prince*, Bolingbroke keeps a decisive attitude different from Richard's indecision when he is confronted with those noblemen who rebel against him. In Act 5, after having discovered a letter where Aumerle conspires with other noblemen to assassinate the new king at Oxford, the Duke of York reveals his son's treachery to King Henry IV, but Bolingbroke spares Aumerle as a result of the intercession of the Duchess of York. Facing York's almost fanatical insistence that the king should execute his son, Bolingbroke responds, "I pardon him, as God shall pardon me" (5.3.129). On the other hand, when encountering dissidents, Bolingbroke decisively sentences them to death, saying, "Good uncle, help to order several powers / To Oxford, or where'er these traitors are" (5.3.138-39). He is a brave leader who can quickly make wise decisions to resolve crises. In contrast, Richard cannot make any correct judgment due to his irresolution. In Act 1, in the tournament scene, Richard unwisely interrupts the tournament and sentences both Bolingbroke and Mowbray to banishment from England: he reduces Bolingbroke's original ten-year banishment to six years upon seeing Gaunt's grieving face but banishes Mowbray for eternity. Although Richard at first insisted on their banishment believing that allowing them to stay in England would possibly trigger a civil war (1.3.125-33), his later decision allows Bolingbroke to return to England, eventually leading to a turn of fate for both of them.

Once his body politic has been destroyed, Richard is transformed from weakness to nihilism, a situation incisively echoed in Prince Hamlet's reflection on his own dilemma, and Richard says: "Think that I am unking'd by Bolingbroke, / And straight am nothing" (5.5.37-38). As for Bolingbroke, his next move is to suggest to the noblemen that his "living fear" be eliminated. In Act 5, scene 4, interpreting King Henry IV's "living fear" as a reference to the still-alive Richard II, an ambitious nobleman, Exton, goes to the prison and murders Richard. Judging from his behavior, Bolingbroke can be considered a follower of *The Prince.* In Chapter 3 of the book, Machiavelli avers that "a ruler who has taken territories in these circumstances must have two priorities: first, to eliminate the family of the previous rulers; second, to leave all laws and taxes as they were" (8-9). Unlike Richard, who keeps an ambivalent feeling toward his rival, Bolingbroke bears neither love nor tolerance for his foe. He takes resolute steps to solve a complicated problem without scruples: he encourages Exton to assassinate Richard.

At the close of *Richard II*, ironically, Henry IV does not appreciate the murder and in fact condemns the murderer: "With Cain go wander through shades of night, / And never show thy head by day nor light. / Lords, I protest my soul is full of woe / That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow" (5.6.43-46). Bolingbroke's pretending to be innocent by washing his hands recalls Pilate's statement of innocence regarding the death of Christ (Matt. 27.24). For Bolingbroke, in order to attain a better state, it is necessary to provoke a revolution against a king incapable of retaining political legitimacy. In Chapter 15 of *The Prince,* Machiavelli points out, "there'll always be something that looks morally right but would actually lead a ruler to disaster, and something else that looks wrong but will bring security and success" (61). To build a new, better state, a ruler should be brutal without minding others' criticism. In order to establish a dynamic state, the ruler is allowed to be cruel. In Chapter 17 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli states, "A ruler mustn't worry about being labeled cruel when it's a question of keeping his subjects loyal and united" (65). Ferocity is necessary for an effective ruler, despite people's condemnation. At the end of the play, Bolingbroke vows to journey to Jerusalem to cleanse himself of his part in the death of Richard, stating, "I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land, / To wash this blood off from my guilty hand" (5.6.49-50). As king, Bolingbroke pretends to be pious and religious, echoing Chapter 18 of *The Prince*: "So a ruler must be extremely careful not to say anything that doesn't appear to be inspired by the five virtues listed above; he must seem and sound wholly compassionate, wholly loyal, wholly humane, wholly honest and wholly religious. There is nothing more important than appearing to be religious" (Machiavelli 71). To achieve his political goal, Bolingbroke can put on a disguise. To some degree, he is a hypocritical ruler. He adapts to different situations in order to advance his cause.

Conclusion

In Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the conflict between Richard and Bolingbroke reveals not only King Richard's deposition of the crown in favor of Henry Bolingbroke but also a transformation of political philosophies from the theory of the king's two bodies to Machiavellian philosophy. As historical records show, Richard inhabited a watershed between medieval and Renaissance England. In the play, Richard, too, stands at the boundary between the two-bodies doctrine and the Machiavellian tenet. The play illustrates how almost all monarchs try their best to take advantage of theology for political gains, but not all of them can acquire political legitimacy. As to if all kings are protected by God thanks to divine right, Henry Ansgar Kelly suggests that "we must answer in the negative, for not even the characters themselves are dramatized as considering any of the play's vicissitudes to have been brought about by God" (214). In the play, Richard's deep belief in the theory of the king's two bodies conferred by divine right sways as he begins to oscillate between hope and despair when challenged by Bolingbroke. Besides the failure to protect himself from political crises via divine right, Richard is wretchedly defeated due to his tragic flaws, not least of which melancholy and indecision. In comparison, in addition to being a practitioner of Machiavellian philosophy, Bolingbroke triumphs because of his personal charisma and decisive personality. Bolingbroke's substitution of Richard as the new king suggests that the medieval philosophy of the king's two bodies gradually wanes in its effects on the political stage whereas the Machiavellian values begin to prevail. Furthermore, Renaissance English would also witness the displacement of God in the political realm. *Richard II* serves as a forum showcasing the confrontation between two important political philosophies in history.

WORKS CITED

Banks, Kathryn. "Interpretations of the Body Politic and of Natural Bodies in Late Sixteenth-Century France." *Metaphor and Discourse*. Ed. Andreas Musolff and Jörg Zinken. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 205-18.

Brigden, Susan. *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603*. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Bruckner, Lynne. "'Consuming Means, Soon Preys upon Itself': Political Expedience and Environmental Degradation in *Richard II*." *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now: Criticism and Theory in the 21st Century*. Ed. Cary DiPietro and Hugh Grady. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 126-47.

Calderwood, James L. "Richard II to Henry IV: Variations on the Fall." *William Shakespeare's Richard II*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 67-78.

Donaldson, Peter S. *Machiavelli and Mystery of State.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Dunn, Alastair. *The Politics of Magnate Power in England and Wales, 1389-1413*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2003.

Einstein, Lewis. *The Italian Renaissance in England.* New York: Columbia UP, 1902.

Elsky, Stephanie. "Ernst Kantorowicz, Shakespeare, and the Humanities' Two Bodies." *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 13.1 (2017): 6-23.

Farzana, Shamsi. "Kingship as Divine Right in Shakespeare's *King Richard II.*" *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies* 4.2 (2016): 40-49.

Fortescue, John. *Commendation of the Laws of England*. Trans. Francis Grigor. London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1917.

Given-Wilson, Chris. "Richard II and the Higher Nobility." *Richard II: The Art of Kingship*. Ed. Anthony Goodman and James Gillespie. Oxford: Clarendon, 1999. 107-28.

Goodman, Anthony, and James Gillespie. "Editors' Introduction." *Richard II: The Art of Kingship*. Ed. Anthony Goodman and James Gillespie. Oxford: Clarendon, 1999. 1-13.

Grady, Hugh. *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

Hollingshead, Stephen B. "Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli: The Role of the Christian Prince in the History Plays." Diss. Marquette U, 1996.

Jovanović, Kosana. *Two Funerals and "Two Bodies" of King Richard II: A Study on the Idea of Kingship, Transference of Power and Political Theology*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010.

Kantorowicz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

Kelly, Henry Ansgar. *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1970.

Lejri, Sélima. "With mine own tears I wash away my balm": The King's Two Bodies in Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *King Lear*." *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* 38.2 (2014): 43-56.

Loades, David. *Elizabeth I: The Golden Reign of Gloriana.* London: The National Archives, 2003.

Mabillard, Amanda. "Representations of Kingship and Power in Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy." *Shakespeare Online.* Shakespeare Online, 19 Aug. 2000. Web. Accessed 15 Jan. 2021.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Trans. Tim Parks. London: Penguin, 2011.

Mack, Maynard, Jr. "This Royal Throne Unkinged." *William Shakespeare's Richard II*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 37-46.

Philips, James. "The Practicalities of the Absolute: Justice and Kingship in Shakespeare's *Richard II*." *ELH* 79.1 (2012): 161-77.

Plowden, Edmund. *The Commentaries*. London: S. Brooke, 1816.

Raffield, Paul. "Representing the Body of Law in Early Modern England." *Performing the Renaissance Body: Essays on Drama, Law, and Representation*. Ed. Sidia Fiarato and John Drakakis. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016. 135-44.

Ribner, Irving. "Bolingbroke, A True Machiavellian." *Modern Language Quarterly* 9.2 (1948): 177-84.

Roe, John. *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002.

Rolls, Albert. *The Theory of the King's Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 2000.

Saul, Nigel. *Richard II*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997.

Shakespeare, William. *King Richard II*. Ed. Peter Ure. London: Methuen, 1961.

Shuger, Debora. "'In a Christian Climate': Religion and Honor in 'Richard II.'" *Shakespeare and Religious Change*. Ed. Keneth J. E. Graham and Philip D. Collington. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 37-59.

Tigner, Amy L. *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II: England's Paradise*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2012.

Vyroubalová, Ema, and James Robert Wood. "Propping Up in the King's Two Bodies in *Richard II*." *Early Modern Studies Journal* 4 (2012): 1-24.

Wells, Susan. "The Typical Register in Shakespeare's *Richard II*." *William Shakespeare's Richard II*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 101-09.

Willes, Margret. *A Shakespearean Botanical*. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2015.

***Manuscript received 28 Apr. 2021,*
accepted for publication 28 Sept. 2021