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SPECULUM SPECULORUM: KINGSHIP AND SELFHOOD IN SHAKESPEARE'S *KING RICHARD II*

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ABSTRACT. Speculum Speculorum*: Kingship and Selfhood in Shakespeare's* King Richard II. Starting from the premise that the concept of the King's Two Bodies generates the separation between two selves within the nature of a king, I argue that the medieval practice of the *speculum principis* – the mirror of the perfect prince – plays an important part in the process of fashioning the kingly stance. Given that, in the Christian tradition, the mirror stands on the polarized ground between resemblance to the divine and self-idolatry, the reflection of the self is always deceitful. Two Shakespearean plays will serve for the analysis of the link between mirrors and kings: *Richard II* and *Richard III.* In *Richard II*, Shakespeare creates a climactic scene in which, after having relinquished his crown to Bolingbroke, the newly deposed king demands a looking-glass to identify the remaining aspects of his former self. The article reads the reversal of the sanctified ceremonial coronation, the substitution of investiture by divestiture as a demonic rite of reciting Scripture passages backwards. This act activates the most dramatic effects, transforming Richard's looking-glass into what Ernst Kantorowicz famously calls a "magic-mirror." The ambivalence of the mirror is manipulated by Shakespeare in order to unveil Richard's two-fold persona. The dissolution of kingship leaves behind a fragmented selfhood that can no longer ensure Richard's survival, reducing him to nothing.

Keywords: *mirror, kingship, selfhood, crown, deposition,* Richard II

REZUMAT. Speculum Speculorum*: Regalitate și personalitate în* Richard al II-lea*, de William Shakespeare.* Pornind de la conceptul celor Două Corpuri ale Regelui, care generează separarea dintre cele două identități ale regalității, studiul de față urmărește practica medievală *speculum principis* – oglinda prințului perfect – și prezintă rolul pe care aceasta îl joacă în configurarea identității regale. În tradiția creștină oglinda e văzută, pe de o parte, ca obiect folosit

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pentru căutarea asemănării dintre om şi divinitate şi, pe de altă parte, ca obiect al idolatriei de sine. Reflexia sinelui în oglindă este una înşelătoare. Două texte shakespeariene vor servi ca analiză a relaţiei dintre oglindă şi regi: *Richard al II-lea* şi *Richard al III-lea*. În *Richard al II-lea,* Shakespeare creează o scenă în care, după delegarea coroanei lui Bolingbroke, proaspătul rege depus cere o oglindă în care acesta urmăreşte identificarea aspectelor sinelui anterior. Inversul ceremoniei de încoronare – substituirea învestiturii cu depunerea – este interpretat ca ritualul demonic de citire inversă a unor fragmente din Scriptură. Această scenă declanşează efecte dramatice, transformând oglinda lui Richard în ceea ce Ernst Kantorowicz numeşte „oglinda magică." Ambivalenţa oglinzii este utilizată de Shakespeare pentru dezvăluirea celor două identităţi ale lui Richard. Disoluţia regalităţii are ca urmare un sine fragmentat, care nu îi mai asigură lui Richard supravieţuirea.

Cuvinte-cheie: *oglindă, regalitate, sine, coroană, depunere,* Richard al II-lea

In *Genesis*, it is firmly and repeatedly stated how God wanted man to mirror him: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness […] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them" (*The Holy Bible,* 1.26-27). However, the meaning of God's intention to sanctify the earth with the presence of man does not reside in the image, as it is nothing by itself, but in the likeness he conferred on man. Thus, according to the biblical narrative, in the genesis of our world there was intended a perfect mirroring between man and his creator. The emergence of sin darkened the mirror, and as a result, man and God could no longer compete in likeness. In *Proverbs* 7.27 it is said that the Bible is "the unstained mirror" intended to educate man. It is in this divine model that the lost resemblance can be restored. Man must now strive to come near that likeness. Ideally, the subject must look in the mirror for his spiritual identity and not for the carnal envelope of his body. It is why, in the religious vocabulary of the Middle Ages, this mysterious object collected very polarized symbolic meanings: it was either an idealized version of the self or a pejorative reflection, a means of self-knowledge or an instrument for the paying of compliments, flattery and self-aggrandizement.

In this essay, I will examine the multiple symbolisms of the mirror from a theological and medieval perspective. The belief that the mirror is the object through which man may seek his resemblance to the divine is transferred to the mirror-books, also known as the *speculum principis*, which show a prince's perfect image. The present study will focus on the liaison between the mirror

(of the perfect prince) and two Shakespearean plays, *King Richard II* and *King Richard III.* I will revisit the well-known notion of the king's two bodies and establish how such enormous power possessed by a king can be justified. Given the constraints of an academic article, my analysis of the two plays will focus on only a limited number of key scenes, including an elaborate interpretation of the Richard II's deposition scene.

There are two Christian texts that frame the medieval understanding of the mirror as an ambivalent item. In the epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, the former reveals how the knowledge man has of God is *per speculum in aenigmate*, "through a glass, darkly" (*1 Cor*. 13.12). According to Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, Saint Paul's mirror offers merely a "veiled image or representation of truth" (97). In the second instance, Saint James portrays the man who does not keep the word of God as someone who "looks at himself in the mirror, sees himself as he is, and after having looked, goes away and forgets at once what he is like" (*James* 1.23). The stark difference between the two texts is that the former aims at piercing the surface of the mirror in order to gain access to the true essence of the self, whereas the latter presents man's inability to see beyond his own earthly and deformed image. Nevertheless, both texts stress the paramount importance of the mirror as an item of divine resemblance and of the truest representation of the self. Melchior-Bonnet argues that, for medieval theologians, any representation of man that does not attend to his divine aspects is wicked and even idolatrous: "The moral status of imitation and of looking upon oneself is ambiguous due to the sacred character of the likeness. Imitation, when it is not interacting with or related to the divine, reduces itself to trompe l'oeil. Lucifer is the great usurper of likeness, sin being the foremost of false appearances" (100). Imitation always runs the risk of becoming immoral due to its ambivalent trait of revealing both the seen and the unseen sides of man.

Just like the Bible was the mirror in which man could recognize his likeness to God, the mirror-books known as *Speculum Principis* became the means for a prince to aim for perfection. The notion of *speculum*, namely mirror, was of the utmost importance in the ancient convention of political discourse. *Speculum principis* – the mirror of the perfect prince – consisted of advice addressed to the monarch on his duties. Similar to the Bible, the *Speculum* was supposed to properly guide and educate the prince in order to become the perfect version of the divine model intended for him. Imagery associated with mirror, glass, image, idea or counterfeit is abundant in Shakespeare's plays, as the *speculum* was a standard concept in Elizabethan political discourse. John Dickinson, writing on John of Salisbury, offers the following description of the virtues of the perfect prince:

> The king should be chaste and avoid avarice; he should be learned in letters; he should be humble; he should banish from his realm actors and mimes, buffoons and harlots; he should seek the welfare of others and not his own; he should wholly forget the affections of flesh and blood and do only that which is demanded by the welfare and safety of his subjects; he should be both father and husband to them. (Dickinson 319)

Although *Speculum Principis* has its derivatives called mirror-books, it cannot be called a literary genre, but rather a convention of political discourse.

I shall establish the way in which mirrors are related to kings by analysing Shakespeare's *King Richard II* with reference to a counter-image in *King Richard III*. Kings are, in the theory of the divine right, God's sacred mission to dignify the Earth, as they are the embodiment of both the human and the divine. This is why the item of mirror is loaded with different meanings, the most important being the reflection of kingship and selfhood. According to King James, the monarch must resemble God's divine power on earth: "Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a manner of resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king." The concept of kingship is that of the monarch ruling as the chosen vice-regent, independent of the consent of the commons, above ecclesiastical authority and outside the laws of the kingdom (Carroll 127). But how can such power be justified among subjects? The theory of the Divine Right of Kings has been questioned and doubted time and again. One of the leading justifications for the monarchical power was the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies. Ernst Kantorowicz makes use of Edmund Plowden's *Reports,* a work which collected the arguments and judgements made in the king's court regarding the "mystical talk" of kingship:

> [T]he 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. (Kantorowicz 7)

Kantorowicz describes the body politic as "a likeness to the 'holy sprites and angels', because it represents, like angels, the Immutable within Time" (7). But what is the unifying element between these two bodies? The answer is provided by the historian in his study *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. He argues that the Body politic encompasses the Body natural, as the latter is the lesser one and so the former is consolidated. The Body natural, adorned and invested with the Estate and Dignity royal, and the Body politic are "together indivisible" (9). A portion of the natural self is always lost, as the Body politic is the greater and the more inclusive of the two. Thus, the anointed king is an entity similar to the Holy Trinity, multiple bodies in one Person. The result of this concept is that the king is infallible: although the body natural is subject to decay, his mortal flaws cannot be used against the validation of a monarchical decree. Given that the Body politic is not subject to death as the natural Body is, the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies provides the solution for the troubling questions of succession:

> […] or as to this Body [politic] the King never dies, and his natural Death is not called in our Law the Death of the King, but the Demise of the King, not signifying by the word (*Demise*) that the Body politic of the King is dead, but that there is a Separation of the two Bodies, and that the Body politic is transferred and conveyed over from the Body natural now dead, or now removed from the Dignity royal, to another Body natural. So that it signifies a Removal of the Body politic of the King of this Realm from one Body natural to another. (13)

Hence the saying "The king is dead, long live the king", as there is, at least in theory, no gap between one monarch and the one who succeeds him.

The doctrine of the King's Two Bodies and the *Speculum Principis* are both dramatized in Shakespeare's plays. In the Elizabethan Age, the mirror became a universal symbol for instruction, knowledge and understanding. In *Richard II* in the deposition scene (VI. i) the looking glass becomes a central motif. Highly loaded with symbolism – both truth telling and falsity, both vanity and self-knowledge – the mirror activates the most powerful dramatic effects, becoming, in Ernst Kantorowicz's words, "a magic mirror" (39). According to Walter Pater, what takes place in this scene is an inverted rite, one of degradation and decay, held in a ceremony in which the order of the coronation is reversed. It is almost a demonic world turned upside down, where disorder is the norm: the roles of the dominant and the dominated are exchanged, as the king must learn "[t]o insinuate, flatter, bow and bend [his] knee" and be instructed in "submission" (IV. i. 166-68); the peers in Parliament can only be

thieves, devils or traitors, a fact confirmed by Richard's initial "God save the King" (172), which is met with silence and thus it is he who supplies the "amen" and be "both priest and clerk" (17*3*). This ritual recalls the lords' blasphemous violation of the sanctity and integrity of kingship. The court is inverted by a demonically false *speculum of rex in parliamento.* Richard demands the preeminent regal emblem "Give me the crown" and while giving it to Henry, he creates a peculiar image, "Here, cousin, / On this side my hand and, on that side thine" (182-83). The ceremonial tableau takes the form of a mirror: two cousins, face-to-face, holding the royal crown between them. Faced with a familiar, but now alien object of the crown, he seems to see how fully he has identified with it and the other symbols of power. Hence, in response to Bolingbroke's "I thought you had been willing to resign", Richard claims "You may my glories and my state depose, / But not my griefs; still I am king of those." He insists that these griefs and cares, though "given away", they "tend the crown and still "with [him] they stay" (190, 192, 198-9).

Richard then summons all present to witness his personal act of abdication, performing the ritual of abjuring his monarchical status: "Now, mark me how I will undo myself" (204). He disowns his crown, puts away his sceptre, his tears washing off the holy oil with which he was anointed, and renounces all feudal oaths of loyalty made to him. The ceremony of the "undoing" (203-21) is the disowning of regal self and the realisation of the nothingness that results from it. Its formal structure is a reversal of the normative ceremonies - it is the equivalent of calling up devils by reciting Scripture passages backwards. Yet another histrionic mirror, this performance magically transforms the regal ceremony into a demonic rite. With each performative utterance, an item of the regalia is taken up and then removed from his person: "I give this heavy weight from off my head, / And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand" (204-5). Richard's divestiture of "kingly sway", "balm", "sacred state" is completed by similar symbolic gestures of possession and renunciation. These gestures are enhanced by the anaphora: "With mine own tears I wash away my balm, / With mine own hands I give away my crown, / With mine own tongue deny my sacred state, / With mine own breath release all duteous oaths" (207-10). In the demonic world of Bolingbroke's upside-down Parliament, the solemn ritual of the coronation is thus wholly mirrored in reverse to confirm the violation of God's will for kingship.

However, some critics argue that Richard's loss of crown cannot be attributed only to Bolingbroke's usurpation. Some even venture to say that Bolingbroke's act cannot be called a usurpation, but rather the natural aftermath of Richard's disowning acts unfolding throughout the play. Barbara Baines

pertinently points out that the first step taken by Richard in the process of decrowning himself is his denial of the principles and laws upon which the crown is instituted: "The destruction of the hereditary order in the duchy of Lancaster prefigures the destruction of the hereditary order in larger England" (25). When he denies Bolingbroke's rightful inheritance, Richard denies his own right to the crown, to his own inheritance. Both John of Gaunt and the Duke of York, strong believers in the Divine Rights of Kings, endorse this course of action. If the former prophesies Richard's loss of royal status, the latter supports it. Richard's process of self-deposition is triggered by two key elements happening prior to the deposition scene. In II. i, the dying John of Gaunt prophesies Richard's self-deposition:

> O, had thy grandsire, with a prophet's eye,
> Seen how his son's son should destroy his sons,
> From forth thy reach he would have laid thy shame,
> Deposing thee before thou wert possessed,
> Which art possessed now to depose thyself.
> (II. i. 104-8)

What further enhances this prophecy is Gaunt's conviction that Richard is not deposed by usurpation but by his own actions: "Landlord of England art thou now, not king" (II. i. 113). To Gaunt, it is a *fait accompli* even before Bolingbroke's return from exile. In the confrontation scene between Richard and Bolingbroke (III. iii), the latter kneels and declares "My gracious lord, I come but for my own." Richard's answer unveils that reality shaped in his mind: "Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all." It is clear by now that Gaunt's premonition is materialized.

Ernst Kantorowicz identifies three anticipatory moments in Richard's dethronement. These moments encompass the multiple persons embodied by Richard: King, Fool, God, "Thus play I in one person many people" (V.v.31). Each persona appears to dominate one of these key moments, reaching the ultimate climax of dissolution in the mirror scene. Kantorowicz's prototypes are thus distributed: "[…] the 'King' dominates in the scene on the Coast of Wales (III. ii), the 'Fool' at Flint Castle (III. iii), and the 'God' in the Westminster scene (IV. i), with man's wretchedness as a perpetual companion and antithesis at every stage" (Kantorowicz 27). Each scene represents a new kind of descent from the height of kingship to the nothingness of the self. On the Welsh coast, Richard goes through the initial stage of an epiphany, indicating the numbness of his majesty: "I had forgot myself, am I not king? /Awake thou coward majesty! thou sleepest" (83-4). According to Kantorowicz, Richard experiences a metamorphosis,

slightly moving away from the "Realism" of kingship to its dissolution "Nominalism", a simple *nomen* (29). This state of semi-reality, exposed in the slumber of his *regalia,* foreshadows the royal "Fool" at Flint Castle. Kingship is here modified from permanent life to permanent death:

> For God's sake let us sit upon the ground,
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings—
> How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
> Some haunted by the ghosts they deposed,
> Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed;
> All murdered – for within the hollow crown
> That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
> Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits
> Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
> Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
> To monarchize, be feared, and kill with looks,
> Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
> As if the flesh which walls about our life,
> Were brass impregnable: and humoured thus,
> Comes at the last, and with a little pin
> Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
> (III. ii. 155-70)

The king who, according to the notion of the King's Two Bodies, should never die is replaced by the king who always dies. It is the beginning of the separation between the two bodies: "For you have but mistook me all this while: / I live with bread like you, feel want, / Taste grief, need friends – subjected thus, / How can you say to me, I am a king?" (171-2). The Body natural takes precedence over the Body politic, thus unveiling selfhood in opposition to kingship. This instance is yet another reversal of form. The only thing left in this scene is the semblance of kingship: "Yet looks he like a king" (III. iii. 68) declares York. In what follows, the "Name" of kingship reappears: "O, that I were as great / As is my grief, or lesser than my name!" (136). The realization of the permanent loss of kingship has a peculiar effect on Richard, allowing Shakespeare to conjure up the image of the Fool, whom the playwright uses as a countertype of Lords and Kings. Both Richard and Northumberland remark the former's abandonment of senses: "I talk but idly, and you laugh at me" (171), "Sorrow and grief of heart / Make him speak fondly like a frantic man" (185-6).

Finally, the third important scene in the departure from kingship takes place at Westminster (IV. i). If in the previous two scenes Richard either tried to hold on to his "Name" or justify it by keeping up appearance, at Westminster, it becomes next to impossible to expound his kingship (Kantorowicz 34). Thus,

the natural sequence of events forces Richard to undo his kingship and begin to depose himself. As previously stated, his act becomes one of a reversed ceremony, which carries as much weight and solemnity as the coronation itself. It is the ultimate act of renunciation, stripping himself of all the regal symbols of dignity and reducing himself to nothing but the unfortunate Body natural:

> Now mark me how I will undo myself:
> I give this heavy weight from off my head,
> And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand.
> The pride of kingly sway from out my heart;
> With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
> With mine own hands I give away my crown,
> With mine own breath release all duteous oaths:
> All pomp and majesty do I forswear…
> (IV. i. 254-61)

Along with the items of power pertaining to his *regalia*, his name is irrevocably taken away: "I have no name… / And know not now what name to call myself" (254-5). It is common in Shakespeare's stylization to form compounds of similar sound / nəʊ nɒt naʊ / to emphasize the nothingness of his state. Having disowned himself of the outer kingship, he attempts to recover any bits of his former status by establishing an inner kingship. Thus, Richard asserts his unshakable position by making use of the analogy of the two buckets, a metaphor by which he seems to reverse the hierarchical pairings of high/low and up/down: "Now is this golden crown like a deep well / That owes two buckets, filling one another, / The emptier ever dancing in the air, / The other down, unseen and full of water: / That bucket down and full of tears am I, / Drinking my griefs, whilst you mount up on high" (IV. i. 184-89). The bucket rising high is obviously Bolingbroke, yet, though its position carries the usual implications of high office and success, its "lightness" denotes lack of substance, and the potential to be easily swayed; the heavy bucket, while still figuring Richard's lowered status and heavy heart, also implies the weight of his natural authority, something that cannot be easily removed, as it is God-given. The exchange culminates in Bolingbroke's annoyance and subsequent question: "Are you contented to resign the crown?" (200). Richard remains elusive and ambivalent: "Ay, no. No, ay…", fearing that in parting from the regal emblem of the crown he "must nothing be" (201). According to Harry Levin, Richard's *yes* and *no* are meaningless, "there can be no identity under such conditions" (115).

After the legal rite of abdication, Richard asks for a mirror to read in it. As it is stated above, man is supposed to look in the mirror in order to identify his likeness to the divine. That is, man is required to look for the spiritual self he

holds within and see it reflected in the mirror. Richard becomes unmistakeably aware of the loss of his external likeness to kingship. Still, in trying to create an inner representation of kingship, he demands a mirror, which is the literature of the self, to *speculate* his persona after the renunciation of his royal dignity. He is thus looking for his royal virtues reflected in the face of the mirror, but they do not appear in the *speculum princiis*. It is by now evident that the need for self-knowledge is an expressed concern: "Let it command a mirror hither straight, / That it may show me what a face I have / Since it is bankrupt of his majesty" (265-7). He needs to know whether his loss of kingly identity will be reflected in his physical appearance. The Elizabethan mirror is often employed with the function previously encountered in iconography, that of showing either the past or the future. In this light, the mirror may not only be intended to show Richard's semblance to a former king, but also reveal Bolingbroke's future. Robert M. Shuler calls Richard's reading in the mirror a threat to expose Bolingbroke's past and present treachery (166). Ernst Kantorowicz famously called Richard's mirror a "magic mirror." Schuler suggests that the actual looking glass carries literal magical traits. These are expressed by Richard himself by addressing the mirror when it is given to him: "flatt'ring glass […] Thou dost beguile me" (IV.i. 279-81). The magical connotations attributed to the looking glass are further enhanced by Richard's prior act of "undoing" his kingship. Rid of his former *twin-born* self, he appears to charge the scene with occult associations, seeking help elsewhere. Following the episode of the inverted rite of coronation, the demand for a mirror can be read in Elizabethan terms as a definite demonical and magical ritual. There is an aggressiveness in the mirror episode that signals Richard's intention to turn the remaining action to victory. He does so by deploying his own self-scrutiny as a weapon against Bolingbroke, and then by turning the conventional iconic mirror of self-examination into a literal magic mirror:

> Give me the glass, and therein will I read.
> No deeper wrinkles yet? hath sorrow struck
> So many blows upon this face of mine,
> And made no deeper wounds? O flattering glass,
> Like to my followers in prosperity,
> Thou dost beguile me! Was this face the face
> That every day under his household roof
> Did keep ten thousand men? was this the face
> That, like the sun, did make beholders wink?
> Was this the face that faced so many follies,
> And was last out-faced by Bolingbroke?
> A brittle glory shineth in this face:
> As brittle as the glory is the face;

Dashes the glass against the ground
For there it is, crack'd in a hundred shivers.
Mark, silent king, the moral of this sport,
How soon my sorrow hath destroy'd my face.
(277-91)

He sees nothing more than his own face, without visible changes after his loss of kingship. But what is made clear is that the outer and inner face are not identical. This is the moment when Kantorowicz's prototypes – the King, the Fool and the God – dissolve and break into pieces (Kantorowicz 27). This utterance is "a kind of soliloquy", as it is intensely private and introspective. The word "face" is easily understood in the context of the *speculum principis* as the sum total of the king's royal virtues. Not only the physical mirror, but Richard's monarchical face is cracked. The smashing of the mirror symbolises the "brittle glory" of his face and of his office.

Furthermore, Richard's choice for the word "out-faced", instead of "usurped" or "deposed", showcases his preference and concern for his image as king, given that the self had already been defeated by Bolingbroke. To Bolingbroke, he divulges a moral: "How soon my shadow hath destroy'd my face" (290-1). Shadow, the antithesis to sunlight, befits his present unkingly stance and even redirects him from the world of outer appearances to a sphere of innate realities, wherein "shadow" connotes something that is unreal and unnatural. At this point, Bolingbroke, whom Anita Howard calls "the new voice of authority" (86), indicates that his reflection was only a "shadow" (293) and cannot be destroyed along with that glass: "The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy'd / The shadow of your face." Richard's reply suggests both that his shadow has substance, as it is full of grief, and that he dreads being reduced to his mere humanity, to his Body natural:

'Tis very true, my grief lies all within;
And these external manners of laments
Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
That swells with silence in the tortured soul;
There lies the substance…
(295-*9*)

According to Schuler, Richard turns this opportunity to his advantage by insisting "not only on the difference between 'shadow' and 'substance' – between his 'external manners' and 'the unseen grief … in the tortured soul' – but also on

the increasingly glaring discrepancy between Henry's ceremonial show ('shadow' = 'theatrical illusion') and the demonic reality of the pseudojudicial proceedings now underway" (165).

Another interesting reading of the mirror scene is provided by Ema Vyroubalova and James Robert Wood. Their research presents the interdependence between people and props on the theatrical stage. Often the people become like props, while the objects become like people. The mirror is an essential stage prop, which Richard employs in order to reveal either his past glories as king or his present woes. However, the mirror is rather an "unresponsive object" (16) for Richard, as it shows him unchanged. The accurate reflection of Richard is precisely this one, without encompassing either kingly triumphs or human miseries. The authors argue that Richard expects the mirror to be a "responsive living being" (16), not an inanimate object. Yet, it is this unchanged mirror image that "causes Richard to become aware not only of the mirror's unresponsive materiality but also the unresponsive materiality of his own body" (16). That is to say, it is not only his Body Politic that deserts him but also his Body Natural.

Harold C. Goddard calls Richard's mirror the perfect symbol for the "Narcissus-King" (188). In the medieval understanding, the mirror was an item used for spiritual purposes: the gaze that pierces through the mirror must find the resemblance between man and the divine. Narcissus's wrongdoing springs from his utter ignorance of the inner self and its resemblance to God. Melchior-Bonnet, whose study *The Mirror: A History* offers a thorough and detailed presentation of the history of mirrors, points out that "[a]ll references to the mirror up until the baroque period invite a movement beyond sensory appearances and a discernment of illusions aimed at reaching the light of the pure mirror" (100). It is why, she explains, Narcissus is placed by Dante in Purgatory alongside counterfeiters, who are all guilty of being pleased with the falsity of tangible appearance. In his quest for a restored identity, Richard looks both for his inner and outer image. Accordingly, I venture to argue that the resemblance between him and Narcissus lies not in their sins as much as in their tendency towards self-destruction: Narcissus dies by self-infatuation, while Richard dies of self-dissolution. What further differentiates Richard from Narcissus is the former's pursuit of self-knowledge, a process triggered by having seen his reflection in the mirror, where he acquires the kind of knowledge that transfigures him into his true self: "[…] and straight am nothing." He then insists that the only way to gain true access to one's self is accepting the desolate condition of being nothing: "But whate'er I be, / Nor I, nor any man that but man is, / With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd / With being nothing" (V.v. 38-41). In this prison soliloquy, Richard also states his

discontentment vis-à-vis the "little world" he inhabits. To Schuler, this "little world" (9) of Richard is "nothing", so he renounces it for the sake of a "spiritual crown [which] can make one 'pleased' and 'content'" (Schuler 171). And as Pamela Bickley suitably points out, Richard's loss of title results in his reduction to nothing (194).

Teresa Baluk-Ulewiczowa draws attention to the fact that in Elizabethan and Jacobean times, there was a custom for the most prominent courtiers and public figures to write books of advice for their sons – the "parentic mirror-books" (34). Thus, in his history plays, Shakespeare places the father-son relationship against the background of mirror-books. In *Richard II* Shakespeare illustrates the typical-father-son / tutor-pupil relationship by making the king's two uncles, John of Gaunt and Edmund, Duke of York, father figures. The dying Gaunt prophesies Richard's downfall, but first attempts to instruct him: "And thou, too careless patient as thou art, / Commit'st thy anointed body to the cure / Of those physicians that first wounded thee." In the tradition of the *speculum principis*, a king's courtiers and advisers were also considered to be a reflection of the king's image: "A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown" is Gaunt's assessment of Richard's followers (II. i. 97-100). Yet the most relevant text in this regard might be *Richard III*. Baluk-Ulewiczowa attaches to the item of the mirror the metaphor "for human beings who inherit (or do not inherit) their ancestor's virtues" (34). The Duchess of York compares her two dead sons, Edward IV and the Duke of Clarence, to "images" of "a worthy husband" as she "liv'd with looking on his images" (II.ii.49-50). The two dead sons were images of the former king, but now death renders them "two mirrors of his princely semblance [that] / Are crack'd in pieces" (51-2). This instance is suggestive of the son's devotion to follow their late father's guidance in their duties. However, she calls her usurping son, Richard of Glaucester /ˈglɒstə/, a "false glass" (53) /glɑːs/as he shatters his legitimacy through his murderous acts. Thus, Richard does not mirror his ancestors and is therefore not the embodiment of inherited kingly virtues. There is no *speculum* as far as he is concerned, and so the transfer of the Body politic from the late king to his successor does not take place.

While Richard II could be purely mirrored in the *speculum principis*, as a God-chosen sovereign, Richard III is a self-crowned king, an antithetical figure, representing, in Marie-Hélène Bernault's words, "the fallen nature of man" (110) and the deformed Body politic: a twisted mind in a twisted shape. Baluk-Ulewiczowa proposes that, in *Richard III,* Shakespeare "sports with *speculum* concepts and terminology in Richard's soliloquies" (33). She argues that from the beginning of the play, that is from the "Winter of Our Discontent" soliloquy, he displays his familiarity with, and disregard for the derivative mirror-books when he reveals

that he is not "made to court an amorous looking-glass" (I.i.15) His second soliloquy emerges at the end of his courtship of Lady Anne, where he twice employs the metaphor of the looking-glass, but this time, surprised at his swift success, he decides to get a mirror to see what it is about his "shadow" that made her take him for "a marvellous man." I would also argue that what takes place in this soliloquy is a representation of Richard's need to counterfeit his image as king through abundant adornment of the self: "I'll be at charges for a looking-glass / And entertain a score or two of tailors / To study fashions to adorn my body: / Since I am crept in favour with myself, / I will maintain it with a little cost" (I.ii.258-60, 267-68). This decoration is not merely meant to cover his deformity, as he declares himself "Cheated of features by dissembling Nature, / Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before [his] time […] half made up - / And so lamely and unfashionable" (I.i. 19-22), but rather to act as an adornment of the hidden self in order to become an apparent king. The general cultural belief in Shakespeare's time was that bodily deformity implied moral deformity. Stephen Greenblatt argues that Shakespeare does not completely repudiate this assumption, but rather "allows his audience to credit the notion that a higher power, whether nature or God, has provided a visible sign of the villain's wickedness" (41). The struggle between selfhood and kingship reaches its climax in the two soliloquies. While in his first soliloquy, Richard declares his discontentment with glancing at his true self in the mirror and chooses to merely "spy [his] shadow in the sun" (I.i. 26), in his second soliloquy, he declares a different position. The adornment of his body generates the desire to look at himself in the mirror: "shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass" (I.ii.67-8). The emphasis is on the words "spy" and "see", which present Richard's unmistakable want to be (falsely) transfigured by kingship. However, his selfhood cannot be hidden by the mere show of adornment, as he had ruined his right to kingship through the unnatural murder of his kinship. Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of Edward IV, recognizes Richard's false kingship: "Hid'st thou that forehead with a golden crown" (IV.iv. 140), and unmasks him.

In the end, most of the natural self is lost in majesty. Neither Richard II nor, as I have established, Richard III can separate the many personas they embody, but even more so, it is impossible to remove kingship and preserve an intact selfhood. The mirror of the perfect prince – *speculum principis* – provides the kind of self-fashioning that promises the appropriate conduct in such a stately position. It offered the perfect rhetoric of the self, which could become a model for crafting an artificial identity. The kingly stance has always been associated with theatricality, as it requires the staging of certain traits in order to exhibit an agreeable social image and, above all, admirable political virtues.

Thus, it could be argued that kingship is what Thomas Hobbes calls *Persona*, while selfhood is *Person* (217). If the latter can be seen as the face, the former is most certainly the mask. It is why a monarch cannot escape the inevitable intertwinement of *Person* and *Persona*, as it implies the cloaking of outer appearance in order for him to become a staged figure. The two images of selfhood and kingship always mirror each other. The interplay between displaying and hiding is a veritable mirroring of the two selves integrated in one Person. Richard II's stolen title reduces him to nothingness. His lesser self, the Body natural, is meaningless without being encapsulated in the regal self. Kingship and selfhood cannot be separated from one another.

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