CRITICS on occasion have remarked the peculiar unity of tone which distinguishes Richard II from most of Shakespeare's other plays. Walter Pater wrote that, like a musical composition, it possesses "a certain concentration of all its parts, a simple continuity, an evenness in execution, which are rare in the great dramatist. . . . It belongs to a small group of plays, where, by happy birth and consistent evolution, dramatic form approaches to something like the unity of a lyrical ballad, a lyric, a song, a single strain of music." And J. Dover Wilson, in his edition of the play, has observed that "Richard II possesses a unity of tone and feeling greater than that attained in many of his greater plays, a unity found, I think, to the same degree elsewhere only in Twelfth Night, Antony and Cleopatra, and The Tempest."

How can we account for that impression of harmony, of oneness, which we receive when we read the play or listen to its lines spoken upon the stage? The secret, it seems to me, lies in an aspect of Shakespeare's genius which has oftener been condemned than praised. Critics and casual readers alike have groaned over the fine-drawn ingenuity of the Shakespearean quibble, which, as Dr. Johnson maintained, was "the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it." But it is essentially the same habit of the creative imagination—a highly sensitized associational gift—that produces iterative symbolism and imagery. Simple word-play results from the poet's awareness of the diverse meanings of words, of which, however, he makes no better use than to demonstrate his own cleverness and to tickle for a moment the wit of the audience. These exhibitions of verbal agility are simply decorations scattered upon the surface of the poetic fabric; they can be ripped out without loss. But suppose that to the poet's associational sensitivity is added a further awareness of the multitudinous emotional overtones of words. When he puts this faculty to use he is no longer merely playing a game; instead, words have become the shells in which ideas and symbols are enclosed. Suppose furthermore that instead of being the occupation of a few fleeting lines of the text, certain words of multifold meanings are played upon throughout the five acts, recurring time after time like leitmotifs in music. And suppose finally that this process of repetition is applied especially to words of sensuous significance, words that evoke vivid responses in the imagination. When these things happen to certain words

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—when they cease to be mere vehicles for a brief indulgence of verbal fancy and, taking on a burden of serious meaning, become thematic material—the poet has crossed the borderline that separates word-play from iterative imagery. Language has become the willing servant of structure, and what was on other occasions only a source of exuberant but undisciplined wit now is converted to the higher purpose of poetic unity.

That, briefly, is what happens in Richard II. The familiar word-plays of the earlier Shakespearean dramas persist: John of Gaunt puns endlessly upon his own name. But in this drama a word is not commonly taken up, rapidly revolved, so that all its various facets of meaning flash out, and then discarded. Instead, certain words are played upon throughout the drama. Far from being decorations, "gay, fresh, variegated flowers of speech," as Pater called them, they are woven deeply into the thought-web of the play. Each word-theme symbolizes one or another of the fundamental ideas of the story, and every time it reappears it perceptibly deepens and enriches those meanings and at the same time charges the atmosphere with emotional significance.

The most remarkable thing about these leitmotivs is the way in which they are constantly mingling and coalescing, two or three of them joining to form a single new figure, very much in the manner in which "hooked images," as Professor Lowes called them, were formed in the subconscious mind of Coleridge. This repeated criss-crossing of familiar images makes of the whole text one vast arabesque of language, just as a dozen lines of Love's Labour's Lost form a miniature arabesque when the poet's quibbling mood is upon him. And since each image motif represents one of the dominant ideas of the play (heredity, patriotism, sycophancy, etc.) the coalescing of these images again and again emphasizes the complex relationship between the ideas themselves, so that the reader is kept ever aware that all that happens in Richard II results inevitably from the interaction of many elements.

It is pointless to try to explain by further generalizations this subtle and exceedingly intricate weaving together of metaphor and symbol—this glorified word-play, if you will—which is the key to the total poetic effect of Richard II. All I can do is to draw from the fabric, one by one, the strands that compose it, and to suggest in some manner the magical way in which they interact and by association and actual fusion reciprocally deepen their meaning.

Miss Spurgeon has pointed out how in Antony and Cleopatra the cosmic grandeur of the theme is constantly emphasized by the repetition of

3 Appreciations, p. 194.
4 Throughout this paper I use the words image and imagery in their most inclusive sense of metaphorical as well as "picture-making" but non-figurative language.
the word *world.* In a similar manner the symbolism of *Richard II* is
dominated by the related words *earth, land,* and *ground.* In no other play
of Shakespeare is the complex of ideas represented by these words so
tirelessly dwelt upon. The words are but three in number, and superfi-
cially they seem roughly synonymous; but they have many intellectual
ramifications, which become more and more meaningful as the play pro-
gresses and the words are used first for one thing and then for an-
other. As our experience of the words increases, their connotation stead-
ily deepens. In addition to their obvious meaning in a particular context
they come to stand for something larger and more undefinable—a ming-
gling of everything they have represented earlier.

Above all, *earth* is the symbol of the English nation. It is used by Shake-
speare to connote those same values which we find in the equivalent syn-
ecdoche of *soil,* as in "native soil." It sums up all the feeling inherent in
the sense of pride in nation—of jealousy when the country is threatened
by foreign incursion, of bitter anger when its health has been destroyed
by mismanagement or greed. "This earth of majesty," John of Gaunt
calls England in his famous speech, "... This blessed plot, this earth,
this realm, this England." (II.i.41, 50) And a few lines farther on:
"This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land.... " (II.i.57). Hav-
ing once appeared, so early in the play, in such lustrous context, the
words *earth* and *land* forever after have richer significance. Whenever
they recur, they are more meaningful, more powerful. Thus Richard's
elaborate speech upon his arrival in Wales—

As a long-parted mother with her child
Plays fondly with her tears and smiles in meeting,

should add a word concerning a relatively little known book which anticipated Miss
Spurgeon's general method of image-study as well as two or three of my own observations
concerning *Richard II.* This is *Shakespeare's Way: a Psychological Study,* by the Rt. Rev.

6 In *Richard II* the three words occur a total of 71 times; in *King John,* the nearest rival,
46.—I should note at this point that my identification of all the word- and image-themes
to be discussed in this essay is based upon statistical study. A given word or group of re-
lated words is called a "theme" (a) if Bartlett's *Concordance* shows a definite numerical
preponderance for *Richard II* or (b) if the word or group of words is so closely related to
one of the fundamental ideas of the play that it is of greater importance than the compara-
tive numerical frequency would imply. I have not included any arithmetic in this paper
because all such tabulations obviously must be subjective to some degree. No two persons,
doing the same counting for the same purpose, would arrive at precisely the same numerical
results. But I am confident that independent tabulation would enable anyone to arrive at
my general conclusions. Statistics here, as in all such critical exercises, are merely grounds
upon which to base a judgment that must eventually be a subjective one.

7 I am using the text of William A. Neilson and Charles J. Hill (Boston, 1942).
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So, weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth,
And do thee favours with my royal hands.

* * * * * *

Mock not my senseless conjuration, lords.
This earth shall have a feeling, and these stones
Prove armed soldiers, ere her native king
Shall falter under foul rebellion's arms

(iii.ii.8-11, 23-26)

—undoubtedly gains in emotional splendor (as well as dramatic irony) by its reminiscences of John of Gaunt's earlier language. The two men between them make the English earth the chief verbal theme of the play.

Richard, we have just seen, speaks pridefully of "my earth." To him, ownership of the land is the most tangible and positive symbol of his rightful kingship. He bids Northumberland tell Bolingbroke that "every stride he makes upon my land/ Is dangerous treason" (iii.iii.92-93), and as he lies dying from the stroke of Exton's sword his last thought is for his land: "Exton, thy fierce hand/ Hath with the king's blood stained the king's own land" (v.v.110-11). It is only natural, then, that land should be the key word in the discussions of England's sorry condition. Symbol of Englishmen's nationalistic pride and of the wealth of kings, it becomes symbol also of Englishmen's shame and kings' disgrace:

Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world,
It were a shame to let this land by lease;
But for thy world enjoying but this land,
Is it not more than shame to shame it so?
Landlord of England art thou now, not king.

(ii. i.109-113)

Northumberland's sad allusion to "this declining land" (ii.i.240), York's to "this woeful land" (ii.ii.99) and Richard's to "this revolting land" (iii.iii.163) carry on this motif.

But earth, while it emblematizes the foundation of kingly pride and power, is also a familiar symbol of the vanity of human life and of what, in the middle ages, was a fascinating illustration of that vanity—the fall of kings. "Men," Mowbray sighs, "are but gilded loam or painted clay" (i.i.179); and Richard, luxuriating in self-pity, often remembers it; to earth he will return.

Ah, Richard [says Salisbury], with the eyes of heavy mind
I see thy glory like a shooting star
Fall to the base earth from the firmament.

(ii.iv.18-20)

The earth, Richard knows, is accustomed to receive the knees of cour-
tiers; “Fair cousin,” he tells Bolingbroke after he has given away his kingdom for the sheer joy of listening to himself do so, “you debase your princely knee/ To make the base earth proud with kissing it” (iii.iii. 190–1). And the idea of the ground as the resting place for suppliant knees, and therefore the antithesis of kingly elevation, is repeated thrice in the two scenes dealing with Aumerle’s conspiracy.8

The irony of this association of earth with both kingly glory and abasement is deepened by another role the word has in this earth-preoccupied play. For after death, earth receives its own; and in Richard II the common notion of the grave has new meaning, because the ubiquitous symbol of earth embraces it too. By the beginning of the third act, earth has lost its earlier joyful connotation to Richard, and this king, whose feverish imagination no amount of woe can cool, eagerly picks up a hint from Scroop:

Scroop: Those whom you curse
Have felt the worst of death’s destroying wound
And lie full low, grav’d in the hollow ground.

* * * * *

Richard: Let’s talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.
Let’s choose executors and talk of wills;
And yet not so; for what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives, and all are Bolingbroke’s,
And nothing can we call our own but death,
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
For God’s sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings.

(II.ii.138–140, 145–156)

And later, in another ecstasy of self-pity, he conjures up an elaborate image of making some pretty match with shedding tears:

As thus, to drop them still upon one place,
Till they have fretted us a pair of graves
Within the earth.

(III.iii.166–168)

8 The much admired little passage about the roan Barbary takes on added poignancy when the other overtones of ground are remembered:

King Richard: Rode he on Barbary? Tell me, gentle friend,
How went he under him?

Groom: So proudly as if he disdain’d the ground.

(v.v. 81–83)
The same association occurs in the speeches of the other characters. Surrey, casting his gage at Fitzwater's feet, envisions his father's skull lying quietly in earth (iv.i.66–69); a moment or two later the Bishop of Carlisle brings news that the banished Mowbray, having fought for Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field, "at Venice gave/ His body to that pleasant country's earth" (iv.i.97–8); and in the same scene Richard, having handed over his crown to the usurper, exclaims,

Long mayst thou live in Richard's seat to sit,
And soon lie Richard in an earthy pit!

(iv.i.218–219)

A final theme in the symphonic pattern dominated by the symbol of earth is that of the untended garden. Miss Spurgeon has adequately emphasized the importance of this iterated image in the history plays, and, as she points out, it reaches its climax in Richard II, particularly in the allegorical scene of the Queen's garden. In Shakespeare's imagination the misdeeds of Richard and his followers constituted an overwhelming indignity to the precious English earth—to a nation which, in happier days, had been a sea-wall'd garden. And thus the play is filled with references to ripeness and the seasons, to planting and cropping and plucking and reaping, to furrows and plowing, and caterpillars and withered bay trees and thorns and flowers.

Among the host of garden images in the play, one especially is unforgettable because of the insistence with which Shakespeare thrice echoes it. It is the terrible metaphor of the English garden being drenched by showers of blood.

I'll use the advantage of my power
And lay the summer's dust with showers of blood
Rain'd from the wounds of slaughtered Englishmen;
(III.iii.42–44)

threatens Bolingbroke as he approaches Flint castle; and when the King himself appears upon the walls, he casts the figure back in Bolingbroke's face:

But ere the crown he looks for live in peace,
Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons
Shall ill become the flower of England's face,
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace
To scarlet indignation, and bedew
Her pastures' grass with faithful English blood.
(III.iii.95–100)

9 Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 216–224.
10 We must not, of course, take garden too literally. Shakespeare obviously intended the term in its wider metaphorical sense of fields and orchards.
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The Bishop of Carlisle takes up the theme:

And if you crown him, let me prophesy,
The blood of English shall manure the ground, 
And future ages groan for this foul act.

(rv.i.136-138)

And the new King—amply justifying Professor Van Doren's remark that not only are most of the characters in this play poets, but they copy one another on occasion—echoes it:

Lords, I protest, my soul is full of woe
That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow.

(v.vi.45-46)

This extraordinary series of four images is one of the many examples of the manner in which the principal symbols of Richard II so often chime together, bringing the ideas they represent into momentary conjunction and thus compounding those single emotional strains into new and revealing harmonies. In this case the "showers of blood" metaphor provides a recurrent nexus between the pervasive symbol of earth and another, equally pervasive, symbol: that of blood.

Both Professor Bradley and Miss Spurgeon have pointed out the splendid horror which Shakespeare achieves in Macbeth by his repeated allusions to blood. Curiously enough, the word blood, together with such related words as bloody and bleed, occurs much less frequently in Macbeth than it does in most of the history plays. What gives the word the tremendous force it undoubtedly possesses in Macbeth is not the frequency with which it is spoken, but rather the intrinsic magnificence of the passages in which it appears and the fact that in this play it has but one significance—the literal one. In the history plays, however, the word blood plays two major roles. Often it has the same meaning it has in Macbeth, for these too are plays in which men's minds often turn toward the sword:

. . . our kingdom's earth should not be soil'd
With that dear blood which it hath fostered

(i.iii.125-126)

says Richard in one more instinctive (and punning!) association of blood and earth. But blood in the history plays also stands figuratively for inheritance, descent, familial pride; and this is the chief motivating theme of the play—the right of a monarch of unquestionably legitimate blood

13 Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 334.
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to his throne. The two significances constantly interplay, giving the single word a new multiple connotation wherever it appears. The finest instance of this merging of ideas is in the Duchess of Gloucester’s outburst to John of Gaunt. Here we have an elaborate contrapuntal metaphor, the basis of which is a figure derived from the familiar medieval genealogical symbol of the Tree of Jesse, and which is completed by a second figure of the seven vials of blood. The imposition of the figure involving the word blood (in its literal and therefore most vivid use) upon another figure which for centuries embodied the concept of family descent, thus welds together with extraordinary tightness the word and its symbolic significance. The occurrence of blood in other senses on the borders of the metaphor (in the first and next-to-last lines of the passage) helps to focus attention upon the process occurring in the metaphor itself.

Hath love in thy old blood no living fire?
Edward’s seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
Or seven fair branches springing from one root.
Some of those seven are dried by nature’s course,
Some of those branches by the Destinies cut;
But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester,
One vial full of Edward’s sacred blood,
One flourishing branch of his most royal root,
Is crack’d, and all the precious liquor spilt,
Is hack’d down, and his summer leaves all faded,
By Envy’s hand and Murder’s bloody axe.
Ah, Gaunt, his blood was thine!

(I.ii.10–22)

Because it has this multiple function, the word blood in this play loses much of the concentrated vividness and application it has in Macbeth, where it means but one unmistakable thing; but its ambiguity here gives it a new sort of power. If it is less effective as imagery, it does serve to underscore the basic idea of the play, that violation of the laws of blood descent leads but to the spilling of precious English blood. That is the meaning of the word as it pulses from beginning to end, marking the emotional rhythm of the play.

In Richard II, furthermore, the word has an additional, unique use, one which involves an especially striking symbol. It has often been remarked how Shakespeare, seizing upon a hint in his sources, plays upon Richard’s abnormal tendency to blanch and blush. In the imagery thus called forth, blood has a prominent part. How, demands the haughty king of John of Gaunt, dare thou
with thy frozen admonition
Make pale our cheek, chasing the royal blood
With fury from his native residence.

(II.i.117-119)

And when the King hears the news of the Welshmen's defection, Au-
merle steadies his quaking body:

Comfort, my liege; why looks your Grace so pale?

Richard:
But now the blood of twenty thousand men
Did triumph in my face, and they are fled;
And, till so much blood thither come again,
Have I not reason to look pale and dead?

(III.ii.75-79)

This idiosyncrasy of the King is made the more vivid because the imagery
of the play constantly refers to pallor, even in contexts far removed from
him. The Welsh captain reports that "the pale-fac'd moon looks bloody
on the earth" (II.iv.10). In another speech, the words pale and blood,
though not associated in a single image, occur so close to each other that
it is tempting to suspect an habitual association in Shakespeare's mind:

Pale trembling coward, there I throw my gage,
Disclaiming here the kindred of the King,
And lay aside my high blood's royalty.

(i.i.69-71)

And as we have already seen, the King prophesied that "ten thousand
bloody crowns of mothers' sons/ Shall... change the complexion of
[England's] maid-pale peace" (III.iii.96-98). Elsewhere Bolingbroke
speaks of "pale beggar-fear" (i.i.189); the Duchess of Gloucester
accuses John of Gaunt of "pale cold cowardice" (i.ii.34); and York
describes how the returned exile and his army fright England's "pale-
fac'd villages" with war (II.iii.94).

The idea of pallor and blushing is linked in turn with what is perhaps
the most famous image-motif of the play, that of Richard (or the fact
of his kingship) emblematized by the sun. More attention probably has
been paid to the sun-king theme than it is worth, for although it occurs
in two very familiar passages, it contributes far less to the harmonic unity
of the play than do a number of other symbol strains. In any event, the
conjunction of the sun image with that of blushing provides one more
evidence of the closeness with which the poetic themes of the play are
knit together. In the first of the sun-king speeches, Richard compares
himself, at the length to which he is addicted, with "the searching eye of
heaven" (III.ii.37). Finally, after some ten lines of analogy:
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So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke,
Who all this while hath revell'd in the night
Whilst we were wand'ring with the antipodes,
Shall see us rising in our throne, the east,
His treasons will sit blushing in his face. . . .

(III.ii.47-51)

And Bolingbroke in a later scene does him the sincere flattery of imitation:

See, see, King Richard doth himself appear,
As doth the blushing discontented sun
From out the fiery portal of the east.

(III.iii.62-64)

Another occurrence of the sun image provides a link with the pervasive motif of tears. Salisbury, having envisioned Richard's glory falling to the base earth from the firmament, continues:

Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,
Witnessing storms to come, woe, and unrest.

(II.iv.21-22)

In no other history play is the idea of tears and weeping so insistently presented. It is this element which enforces most strongly our impression of Richard as a weakling, a monarch essentially feminine in nature, who has no conception of stoic endurance or resignation but a strong predilection for grief. This is why the play seems so strangely devoid of the heroic; the King and Queen are too much devoted to luxuriating in their misery, and the other characters find a morbid delight in at least alluding to unmanly tears. Characteristically, Richard's first question to Aumerle, when the latter returns from bidding farewell to Bolingbroke, is, "What store of parting tears were shed?" (I.iv.5). Bushy, discussing with the Queen her premonitions of disaster, speaks at length of "sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears" (II.ii.16). Richard greets the fair soil of England with mingled smiles and tears; and from that point on, his talk is full of "rainy eyes" (III.ii.146) and of making "foul weather with despised tears" (III.iii.161). He counsels York,

Uncle, give me your hands: nay, dry your eyes;
Tears show their love, but want their remedies.

(III.iii.202-203)

In the garden scene the Queen, rejecting her lady's offer to sing, sadly tells her:

There are many more references to tears and weeping in Titus Andronicus, but the obvious inferiority of the poetry and the crudity of characterization make their presence far less remarkable.
'Tis well that thou hast cause;
But thou shouldst please me better wouldst thou weep.

Lady: I could weep, madam, would it do you good.
Queen: And I could sing, would weeping do me good,
And never borrow any tear of thee.

(I.iii.19–23)

And echoing that dialogue, the gardener, at the close of the scene, looks after her and says:

Here did she fall a tear; here in this place
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace.
Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen,
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.

(I.iii.104–107)

The theme reaches a climax in the deposition scene, in which the agonized King, handing his crown to Bolingbroke, sees himself as the lower of the two buckets in Fortune's well:

... full of tears am I,
Drinking my griefs, whilst you mount up on high.

(iv.i.188–189)

And a few lines later he merges the almost ubiquitous motif of tears with another constant theme of the play: "With mine own tears I wash away my balm" (iv.i.207). Of the frequent association of the anointing of kings, blood, and the act of washing, I shall speak a little later.

Professor Van Doren, in his sensitive essay on Richard II, eloquently stresses the importance of the word tongue in the play.15 Tongue, he says, is the key word of the piece. I should prefer to give that distinction to earth; but there is no denying the effectiveness of Shakespeare's tireless repetition of the idea of speech, not only by the single word tongue but also by such allied words as mouth, speech, and word. A few minutes' study of Bartlett's Concordance will show that Richard II is unique in this insistence upon the concept of speech; that the word tongue occurs here oftener than in any other play is but one indication.

This group of associated words heavily underscores two leading ideas in the play. In the first place, it draws constant attention to the propensity for verbalizing (as Shakespeare would not have called it!) which is Richard's fatal weakness. He cannot bring himself to live in a world of hard actuality; the universe to him is real only as it is presented in packages of fine words. Aumerle tries almost roughly to recall him from his weaving of sweet, melancholy sounds to a realization of the crucial situat-

15 Shakespeare, pp. 85–87.
tion confronting him, but he rouses himself only momentarily and then relapses into a complacent enjoyment of the sound of his own tongue. It is of this trait that we are constantly reminded as all the characters regularly use periphrases when they must speak of what they or others have said. By making the physical act of speech, the sheer fact of language, so conspicuous, they call attention to its illusory nature—to the vast difference between what the semanticists call the intensional and extensional universes. That words are mere conventional sounds moulded by the tongue, and reality is something else again, is constantly on the minds of all the characters. The initial dispute between Mowbray and Bolingbroke is “the bitter clamour of two eager tongues” (i.i.49); Mowbray threatens to cram his antagonist’s lie “through the false passage of thy throat” (i.i.125); and later, in a fine cadenza, he conceives of his eternal banishment in terms of the engaoling of his tongue, whose “use is to me no more/ Than an unstringed viol or a harp,” and concludes:

What is thy sentence [then] but speechless death,  
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?  
(t.iii.161–162, 172–173)

Bolingbroke, for his part, marvels over the power of a single word to change the lives of men:

How long a time lies in one little word!  
Four lagging winters and four wanton springs  
End in a word: such is the breath of kings.  
(t.iii.213–215)

Gaunt too is preoccupied with tongues and speech; and when Aumerle returns from his farewell with Bolingbroke, from tears the image theme swiftly turns to tongues:

Richard: What said our cousin when you parted with him?  
Aumerle: “Farewell!”  
And, for my heart disdained that my tongue  
Should so profane the word, that taught me craft  
To counterfeit oppression of such grief  
That words seem’d buried in my sorrow’s grave.  
Marry, would the word “farewell” have length’ned hours  
And added years to his short banishment,  
He should have had a volume of farewells.  
(t.iv.10–18)

And we have but reached the end of Act i; the remainder of the play is equally preoccupied with the unsubstantiality of human language.16

16 Another way in which Shakespeare adds to the constant tragic sense of unsubstantial-
But the unremitting stress laid upon tongues and words in this play serves another important end: it reminds us that Richard’s fall is due not only to his preference for his own words rather than for deeds, but also to his blind predilection for comfortable flattery rather than sound advice. Words not only hypnotize, suspend the sense of reality: they can sting and corrupt. And so the tongues of Richard II symbolize also the honeyed but poisonous speech of the sycophants who surround him. “No,” replies York to Gaunt’s suggestion that his dying words might yet undeaf Richard’s ear,

it is stopp’d with other flattering sounds,
As praises, of whose taste the wise are found,
Lascivious metres, to whose venom sound
The open ear of youth doth always listen.

(I.i.17–20)

The venom to which York refers and the snake which produces it form another theme of the imagery of this play. The snake-venom motif closely links the idea of the garden on the one hand (for what grossly untended garden would be without its snakes?) and the idea of the tongue on the other. All three meet in the latter part of Richard’s speech in III. ii:

But let thy spiders, that suck up thy venom,
And heavy-gaited toads lie in their way,
Doing annoyance to the treacherous feet
Which with usurping steps do trample thee
Yield stinging nettles to mine enemies;
And when they from thy bosom pluck a flower,
Guard it, I pray thee, with a lurking adder
Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch
Throw death upon thy sovereign’s enemies.

(III.ii.14–22)

And the double association occurs again in the garden scene, when the Queen demands of the gardener,

Thou, old Adam’s likeness, set to dress this garden,
How dares thy harsh rude tongue sound this unpleasing news?
What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested thee
To make a second fall of cursed man?

(III.iv.73–76)

ity in this play—the confusion of appearance and reality—is the repeated use of the adjective hollow, especially in connection with death: “our hollow parting” (I.ii.9), the “hollow womb” of the grave (II.i.83), “the hollow eyes of death” (II.i.270), a grave set in “the hollow ground” (III.ii.140), “the hollow crown” in which Death keeps his court (III.ii.160).
Mowbray elsewhere speaks of “slander’s venom’d spear” (i.i.171), and to Richard, the flatterers who have deserted him are, naturally enough, “villains, vipers, damn’d without redemption!/ . . . Snakes, in my heart-blood warm’d, that sting my heart!” (iii.ii.129–131).

Although England’s sorry state is most often figured in the references to the untended garden and the snakes that infest it, the situation is emphasized time and again by at least four other recurrent themes, some of which refer as well to the personal guilt of Richard. One such theme—anticipating a similar motif in Hamlet—involves repeated references to physical illness and injury. Richard in seeking to smooth over the quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke says:

Let’s purge this choler without letting blood.  
This we prescribe, though no physician;  
Deep malice makes too deep incision.  
(i.i.153–155)

There are repeated allusions to the swelling caused by infection. Richard in the same scene speaks of “the swelling difference of your settled hate” (i.i.201), and much later, after he has been deposed, he predicts to Northumberland that

The time shall not be many hours of age  
More than it is, ere foul sin gathering head  
Shall break into corruption.  
(v.i.57–59)

Thus too there are vivid mentions of the remedy for such festering:

Fell Sorrow’s tooth doth never rankle more  
Than when he bites, but lanceth not the sore.  
(i.iii.302–303)

This fest’red joint cut off, the rest rest sound.  
(v.iii.85)

Plague, pestilence, and infection are words frequently in the mouths of the characters of this play. Aumerle, during the furious gage-casting of iv.i, cries, “May my hands rot off” if he does not seize Percy’s gage (iv.i.49); and elsewhere York, speaking to the unhappy Queen, says of the King,

Now comes the sick hour that his surfeit made;  
Now shall he try his friends that flatter’d him.  
(ii.ii.84–85)

Indeed, the imagery which deals with bodily injury directly associates the wretchedness of the monarch and his country with the tongues of
the sycophants. A verbal juxtaposition of tongue and wound occurs early in the plays: "Ere my tongue/ Shall wound my honour with such feeble wrong" (1.1.190–191). Gaunt carries the association one step farther when he explicitly connects Richard's and England's illness with the presence of gross flatterers in the King's retinue:

Thy death-bed is no lesser than thy land
Wherein thou liest in reputation sick;
And thou, too careless patient as thou art,
Commit'st thy anointed body to the cure
Of those physicians that first wounded thee.
A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown,
Whose compass is no bigger than thy head.

(II.i.95-101)

And Richard himself completes the circuit between the tongue-wound association and his personal grief: "He does me double wrong/ That wounds me with the flatteries of his tongue" (III.ii.215–216).

Again, the evil that besets England is frequently symbolized as a dark blot upon fair parchment—an image which occurs oftener in this play than in any other. The suggestion for the image undoubtedly came from contemplation of the deeds and leases by which the king had farmed out the royal demesnes; as John of Gaunt said, England "is now bound in with shame,/ With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds" (II.i.63–64). The image recurs several times. "No, Bolingbroke," says Mowbray in I.iii, "if ever I were traitor,/ My name be blotted from the book of life" (I.iii.201–202). Richard sighs through blanched lips, "Time hath set a blot upon my pride" (III.ii.81) and later speaks of the record of Northumberland's offenses as including

one heinous article,
Containing the deposing of a king
And cracking the strong warrant of an oath,
Mark'd with a blot, damn'd in the book of heaven.

(rv.i.233–236)

Carlisle and Aumerle in a duet harmonize the image with the two other motifs of gardening and generation:

Carlisle: The woe's to come; the children yet unborn
        Shall feel this day as sharp to them as thorn.

Aumerle: You holy clergymen, is there no plot
        To rid the realm of this pernicious blot?

(rv.i.322–325)

Aumerle's conspiracy which stems from this conversation is itself spoken of by Bolingbroke in Aumerle's own terms: "Thy abundant goodness
shall excuse/ This deadly blot in thy digressing son” (v. iii. 65–66). The vividness of the image is increased by the presence elsewhere of allusions to books and writing: “He should have had a volume of farewells” (i.iv.18); “The purple testament of bleeding war” (III.iii.94);

Let’s talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;  
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes  
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth  
(III.ii.145–147)

(an interesting example of double association of imagery—tears, earth-grave, and writing); and in the deposition scene, when Richard calls for a mirror:

I’ll read enough,  
When I do see the very book indeed  
Where all my sins are writ, and that’s myself.  
(iv.i.273–275)

The blot image has a very direct relationship with another class of figures by which Shakespeare symbolizes guilt or evil: that of a stain which must be washed away. This image is most commonly associated with Macbeth, because of the extraordinary vividness with which it is used there. But the theme is much more insistent in Richard II. Twice it is associated, as in Macbeth, with blood:

Yet, to wash your blood  
From off my hands, here in the view of men  
I will unfold some causes of your deaths.  
(III.i.5–7)

I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land,  
To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.  
(v.vi.49–50)

Elsewhere the association is with the story of the crucifixion, in a repetition of which Richard fancies he is the sufferer:

Nay, all of you that stand and look upon me  
Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,  
Though some of you with Pilate wash your hands  
Showing an outward pity; yet you Pilates  
Have here deliver’d me to my sour cross,  
And water cannot wash away your sin.  
(iv.i.237–242)

But in this play the absolution of guilt requires not merely the symbolic cleansing of bloody hands; it entails the washing-off of the sacred oint-
ment of royalty—the ultimate expiation of kingly sin. The full measure of Richard’s fall is epitomized in two further occurrences of the metaphor, the first spoken when he is in the full flush of arrogant confidence, the second when nemesis has overtaken him:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.
(III.ii.54–55)

With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hands I give away my crown.
(iv.i.207–208)

Whatever the exact context of the image of washing, one suggestion certainly is present whenever it appears: a suggestion of momentous change—the deposition of a monarch, the cleansing of a guilt-laden soul.

But the most unusual of all the symbols of unpleasantness which occur in Richard II is the use of the adjective sour, together with the repeated contrast of sweetness and sourness. A reader of the play understandably passes over the frequent use of sweet as a conventional epithet used both of persons and of things. But the word, however commonplace the specific phrases in which it occurs, has a role in the poetic design which decidedly is not commonplace, for it acts as a foil for the very unaccustomed use of its antonym. There is nothing less remarkable in Shakespeare than such phrases as “sweet Richard,” “your sweet majesty,” “sweet York, sweet husband,” even such passages as this:

And yet your fair discourse hath been as sugar,
Making the hard way sweet and delectable.
(ii.iii.6–7)

But what is remarkable is the manner in which, in this play alone, mention of sweet so often invites mention of sour: “Things sweet to taste prove in digestion sour” (i.iii.236); “Speak sweetly, man, although thy looks be sour” (iii.ii.193); “how sour sweet music is!” (v.v.42);

Sweet love, I see, changing his property,
Turns to the sourest and most deadly hate.
(iii.ii.135–136)

In addition to this repeated collocation of sweet and sour, the text of Richard II is notable for a persistent use, unmatched in any other play, of sour alone, as an adjective or verb:

Not Gloucester’s death, nor Hereford’s banishment
Not Gaunt’s rebukes, nor England’s private wrongs,
Symphonic Imagery in "Richard II"

Have ever made me sour my patient cheek.

(II.i.165–166, 169)

"I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace" (III.iv.105: this in significant collocation with the motif of tears, as the next is joined with the motif of washing)—"yet you Pilates/ Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross" (IV.i.240–1);

The grand conspirator, Abbot of Westminster,
With clog of conscience and sour melancholy
Hath yielded up his body to the grave.

(V.vi.19–21)

The occurrence of sour thus lends unmistakable irony to every occurrence of sweet, however unimportant the latter may be in itself. Even at a distance of a few lines, mention of one quality seems to invite mention of the other, as if Shakespeare could never forget that the sour is as frequent in life as the sweet:

Duchess: The word is short, but not so short as sweet;
No word like "pardon" for kings' mouths so meet.

York: Speak it in French, King; say "Pardonne moi."

Duchess: Dost thou teach pardon pardon to destroy?
Ah, my sour husband, my hard-hearted lord,
That set'st the word itself against the word!

(V.viii.117–122)

This contrapuntal use of sweet and sour is one of the most revealing instances of the artistry by which the poetry of Richard II is unified.17

17 The sweet-sour contrast occurs five times in Richard II; no more than twice in any other play.—Compare a similar juxtaposition in three of the sonnets:

Such civil war is in my love and hate
That I an accessory needs must be
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me. (No. 35)

O absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove
Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave
To entertain the time with thoughts of love. (No. 39)

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds. (No. 94)

It is interesting to note that in the same two groups of sonnets in which the sweet-sour collocation occurs can be found another word whose use is noteworthy in Richard II:

And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven (No. 28)

So shall those blots that do with me remain,
Without thy help by me be borne alone. (No. 36)

But what's so blessed-fair that fears no blot? (No. 92)

Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot (No. 95)
Two more image themes, one of major importance, the other less conspicuous, remain to be mentioned. For one of them, we must return to the Tree of Jesse passage (I.ii.10–22) quoted above. This passage is the fountainhead of one of the chief themes of the play—the idea of legitimate succession, of hereditary kingship. We have already noticed how, largely as a result of this early elaborate metaphor, the close identification of the word blood with the idea of family descent deepens the symbolic significance of that word as it recurs through the play. In addition, as Miss Spurgeon has pointed out, in Richard II there are many other cognate images derived from the ideas of birth and generation, and of inheritance from father to son. The Tree of Jesse metaphor (whose importance Miss Spurgeon failed to note) is followed in the next scene by one involving the symbol of earth and thus suggesting the vital relationship between generation and patriotism:

Then, England's ground, farewell; sweet soil, adieu;  
My mother, and my nurse, that bears me yet!  

(I.iii.306–307)

In John of Gaunt's dying speech, earth and generation again appear, significantly, in conjunction:

This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,  
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings.  

(II.i.50–51)

In her scene with Bagot and Bushy, the Queen dwells constantly on the idea of birth:

Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,  
Is coming towards me.  

* * * * *  
Conceit is still deriv'd  
From some forefather grief; mine is not so,  
For nothing hath begot my something grief,  

* * * * *  
So, Green, thou art the midwife to my woe,  
And Bolingbroke my sorrow's dismal heir.  
Now hath my soul brought forth her prodigy,

If we accept the hypothesis that at a given period in his life Shakespeare habitually thought of certain abstract ideas in terms of particular metaphors, there is a good case for dating these sonnets at the time of Richard II. Conventional though the sweet-sour and blot ideas may be, it is plain that Shakespeare had them constantly in mind when writing Richard II; they are a hallmark of the style of the play. Their occurrence in these sonnets is possibly significant.

And I, a gasping new-deliver’d mother,  
Have woe to woe, sorrow to sorrow join’d.  
(II.ii.10–11, 34–36, 62–66)

Richard’s last soliloquy begins with the same sort of elaborated conceit:

My brain I’ll prove the female to my soul,  
My soul the father; and these two beget  
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,  
And these same thoughts people this little world,  
In humours like the people of this world.  
For no thought is contented.  
(v.v.6–11)

And throughout the play, as Miss Spurgeon notes, “the idea of inheritance from father to son . . . increases the feeling of the inevitable and the foreordained, as also of the unlimited consequences of action.”

The word crown as the symbol of kingship is of course common throughout the history plays. In Richard II, however, the vividness of the image and the relevance of its symbolism to the grand theme of the play are heightened by several instances in which its metaphorical function goes beyond that of a simple, conventional metonymy:

A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown,  
Whose compass is no bigger than thy head;  
(III.i.100–101)

for within the hollow crown  
That rounds the mortal temples of a king  
Keeps Death his court,  
(III.ii.160–162)

But ere the crown he looks for live in peace,  
Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers’ sons  
Shall ill become the flower of England’s face,  
(III.iii.95–97)

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.  
(iv.i.184–187)

In addition, the actual image of the crown is made more splendid by the occurrence, in the play’s poetic fabric, of several images referring to jewels:

A jewel in a ten-times-barr’d-up chest  
Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast.  
(i.i.180–181)
Gaunt: The sullen passage of thy weary steps
Esteem as foil wherein thou art to set
The precious jewel of thy home return.

Bolingbroke: Nay, rather, every tedious stride I make
Will but remember me what a deal of world
I wander from the jewels that I love.

(I.iii.265–270)

And again: “I'll give my jewels for a set of beads” (III.iii.147), “This precious stone set in the silver sea” (II.i.46), and “Love to Richard/Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world” (v.v.65–66).

Keeping in mind the leading metaphors and verbal motifs which I have reviewed—earth-ground-land, blood, pallor, garden, sun, tears, tongue-speech-word, snake-venom, physical injury and illness, blot, washing, sweet-sour, generation, and jewel-crown—it is profitable to re-read the whole play, noting especially how widely the various themes are distributed, and how frequently their strands cross to form new images. There is no extended passage of the text which is not tied in with the rest of the play by the occurrence of one or more of the familiar symbols. However, the images are not scattered with uniform evenness. As in The Merchant of Venice, metaphorical language tends to be concentrated at the emotional climaxes of Richard II. At certain crucial points in the action, a large number of the unifying image-threads appear almost simultaneously, so that our minds are virtually flooded with many diverse yet closely related ideas. The first part of II.i (the prophecy of Gaunt) offers a good instance of this rapid cumulation of symbols and the resultant heightening of emotional effect. The whole passage should be read as Shakespeare wrote it; here I list simply the phrases that reveal the various image themes, omitting a number which glance obliquely at the themes but are not directly connected with them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>line</th>
<th>the tongues of dying men</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>words</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>the setting sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>As the last taste of sweets, is sweetest last</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Writ in remembrance</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>flattering sounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lascivious metres, to whose venom sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>limps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>The earth of majesty</td>
</tr>
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<td>44</td>
<td>infection</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>breed</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>This precious stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>less happier lands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Symphonic Imagery in "Richard II"

This earth
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings
breed . . . birth
land . . . land
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds
hollow womb
land
sick [followed by extended metaphor]
thy crown
thy land
thy grandsire . . . his son's son . . . his sons
this land . . . this land . . . landlord
ague
pale . . . blood
This tongue
blood
blood
To crop at once a too long withered flower
words
words
His tongue
The ripest fruit first falls
Which live like venom where no venom else

Thus in the first 157 lines of the scene we meet no less than twelve of the motifs of the play.

In another sort of harmonization, Shakespeare strikes a long chord containing a number of the image strains and then in the following minutes of the play echoes them separately. The "Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand" speech at the beginning of III.ii interweaves at least six themes which shortly are unravelled into individual strands. The idea of the garden which is the framework for the whole speech (6–26) recurs in the line "To ear the land that hath some hope to grow" (212). The repeated references to weeping in the initial speech ("I weep for joy" . . . "with her tears" . . . weeping") are echoed in "as if the world were all dissolv'd to tears" (108) and "rainy eyes" (146). Richard's "Nor with thy sweets comfort his ravenous sense" (13) is recalled in Scroop's "Sweet love . . . changing his property,/ Turns to the sourest and most deadly hate" (135–136) and in Richard's "speak sweetly, man, although thy looks be sour" (193) and "that sweet way I was in to despair" (205). The lurking adder and the venom which the spiders suck up (20, 14) find their sequel in Richard's later "vipers . . . snakes . . . that sting my heart" (129–131). The double tongue (21) is succeeded by "discomfort guides my tongue" (65), "my care-tun'd tongue" (92), the tongue that "hath but a heavier tale to say" (197), and the one whose flatteries wound the King
at the end of the scene (216). The initial reference to wounding ("though rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs," 7) is succeeded by "death's destroying wound" (139); and the same general motif of bodily hurt is carried out by "this ague fit of fear is over-blown" (190), which links the disease-theme to that of the garden. Finally, the frequent use of earth in Richard's first speech (6, 10, 12, 24) prepares the ear for the five-times-repeated occurrence of the idea (earth ... ground ... lands ... earth ... ground) in the "Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs" speech. This progressive analysis of the components of the original chord of images is accompanied by a succession of other images not included in the chord: an extended sun metaphor (36–50), a reference to washing (54–55), the most famous instance of the pallor-blood motif (76–81), two references to the crown (59, 115), and two allusions to writing (81, 146–147). And thus the mind is crowded with a richly overlapping series of images.

Another example of the close arraying of image patterns (without the initial chord) occurs in III.iii.85–100:

Yet know, my master, God omnipotent,
Is mustering in his clouds on our behalf
Armies of pestilence; and they shall strike
Your children yet unborn and unbegot,
That lift your vassal hands against my head
And threat the glory of my precious crown.
Tell Bolingbroke—for yon methinks he stands—
That every stride he makes upon my land
Is dangerous treason. He is come to open
The purple testament of bleeding war;
But ere the crown he looks for live in peace,
Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons
 Shall ill become the flower of England's face,
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace
To scarlet indignation, and bedew
Her pastures' grass with faithful English blood.

Curiously, the deposition scene, though it is rich enough in individual appearances of the familiar themes, does not mesh them so closely as one might expect.

A final aspect of the use of iterative imagery in Richard II is the manner in which a particularly important passage is prepared for by the interweaving into the poetry, long in advance, of inconspicuous but repeated hints of the imagery which is to dominate that passage. The method is exactly analogous to that by which in a symphony a melody appears, at first tentatively, indeed almost unnoticed, first in one choir of the orchestra, then another, until ultimately it comes to its reward as the theme of a climactic section. In such a manner is the audience prepared,
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although unconsciously, for Richard's last grandiose speech. One takes little note of the first timid appearance of a reference to beggary or bankruptcy in Bolingbroke's "Or with pale beggar-fear impeach my height" (i.1.189). But in the second act the motif recurs:

Be York the next that must be bankrupt so!
Though death be poor, it ends a mortal woe,

(ii.1.151-152)

and a hundred lines later the idea is repeated: "The king's grown bankrupt, like a broken man" (ii.1.257). The haunting dread of destitution, then, however obliquely alluded to, is a recurrent theme, and adds its small but perceptible share to the whole atmosphere of impending disaster. It forms the burden of two plaints by Richard midway in the play:

Let's choose executors and talk of wills;
And yet not so; for what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives and all are Bolingbroke's.

(iii.ii.148-151)

I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
My gorge us palace for a hermitage,
My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,
My figur'd goblets for a dish of wood,
My sceptre for a palmer's walking-staff,
My subjects for a pair of carved saints,
And my large kingdom for a little grave.

(iii.iii.147-153)

But the time is not ripe for the climactic utterance of this motif. It disappears, to return for a moment in a verbal hint in the deposition scene:

Let it command a mirror hither straight,
That it may show me what a face I have
Since it is bankrupt of his majesty.

(iv.i.265-267)

Being so great, I have no need to beg.

(iv.i.309)

The Duchess of York momentarily takes up the motif: "A beggar begs that never begg'd before" (v.iii.78), and Bolingbroke replies:

Our scene is alt'red from a serious thing,
And now chang'd to "The Beggar and the King."

(v.iii.79-80)

And now finally comes the climax toward which these fleeting references
have been pointing: a climax which illuminates the purpose and direction of the earlier talk about beggary and bankruptcy:

Thoughts tending to content flatter themselves
That they are not the first of fortune's slaves,
Nor shall not be the last; like silly beggars
Who, sitting in the stocks, refuge their shame,
That many have and others must sit there;
And in this thought they find a kind of ease,
Bearing their own misfortunes on the back
Of such as have before endur'd the like.
Thus play I in one person many people,
And none contented. Sometimes am I king;
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar;
And so I am. Then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king.

(v.v.23–35)

A similar process can be traced in the repetition of the word face, which, besides being obviously connected with the idea of Richard's personal comeliness, underscores the hovering sense the play contains of the illusory quality of life, of the deceptions that men accept as if they were reality. The word occurs casually, unremarkably, often without metaphorical intent; but its frequent appearance not only reinforces, however subtly, a dominant idea of the play, but also points toward a notable climax. “Mowbray's face” (i.i.195) . . . “Nor never look upon each other's face” (i.iii.185) . . . “the northeast wind/ Which then blew bitterly against our faces” (i.iv.6–7) . . . “His face thou hast, for even so look'd he” (i.i.176) . . . “Frighting her pale-fac'd villages with war” (ii.iii.94) . . . “The pale-fac'd moon looks bloody on the earth” (ii.iv.10) . . . “His treasons will sit blushing in his face” (iii.i.51) . . . “But now the blood of twenty thousand men/ Did triumph in my face” (iii.ii.76–77) . . .

Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons
Shall ill become the flower of England's face.

(iii.iii.96–97)

Meanwhile Bushy has introduced the corollary idea of shadow:

Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
Which shows like grief itself, but is not so

(ii.ii.14–15)

Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows
Of what it is not.

(ii.ii.23–24)
The related themes merge as, in retrospect, it is plain they were destined to do, in the deposition scene:

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?
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,
For there it is, crack’d in an hundred shivers.
Mark, silent king, the moral of this sport,
How soon my sorrow hath destroy’d my face.

Bolingbroke: The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy’d
The shadow of your face.

Richard: Say that again.
The shadow of my sorrow! Ha! let’s see.

And thus from beginning to end Richard II is, in a double sense of which Shakespeare would have approved, a play on words. As countless writers have affirmed, it is entirely fitting that this should be so. King Richard, a poet manqué, loved words more dearly than he did his kingdom, and his tragedy is made the more moving by the style, half rhetorical, half lyrical, in which it is told. Splendid words, colorful metaphors, pregnant poetic symbols in this drama possess their own peculiar irony.

But the language of Richard II, regarded from the viewpoint I have adopted in this paper, has another significance, entirely apart from its appropriateness to theme. It suggests the existence of a vital relationship between two leading characteristics of Shakespeare’s poetic style: the uncontrolled indulgence of verbal wit in the earlier plays and the use of great image-themes in the plays of his maturity. As I suggested in the beginning, word-play and iterative imagery are but two different manifestations of a single faculty in the creative imagination—an exceedingly well developed sense of association. In Richard II we see the crucial intermediate stage in the development, or perhaps more accurately the utilization, of Shakespeare’s singular associative gift. In such passages as John of Gaunt’s speech upon his name, we are reminded of the plays which preceded this from Shakespeare’s pen. But, except on certain occasions when they contribute to the characterization of the poet-king, the brief coruscations of verbal wit which marked the earlier plays are less evident than formerly. On the other hand, when we stand back and view the play as a whole, its separate movements bound so closely to-
gether by image themes, we are enabled to anticipate the future development of Shakespeare's art. The technique that is emerging in *Richard II* is the technique that eventually will have its part in producing the poetry of *Lear* and *Macbeth* and *Othello*. Here we have the method: the tricks of repetition, of cumulative emotional effect, of interweaving and reciprocal coloration. What is yet to come is the full mastery of the artistic possibilities of such a technique. True, thanks to its tightly interwoven imagery *Richard II* has a poetic unity that is unsurpassed in any of the great tragedies; so far as structure is concerned, Shakespeare has levied from iterative language about all the aid that it will give. The great improvement will come in another region. Taken individually, in *Richard II* Shakespeare's images lack the qualities which they will possess in the later plays. They are, many of them, too conventional for our tastes; they are marred by diffuseness; they bear too many lingering traces of Shakespeare's affection for words for words' sake. The ultimate condensation, the compression of a universe of meaning into a single bold metaphor, remains to be achieved. But in the best imagery of *Richard II*, especially in those passages which combine several themes into a richly complex pattern of meaning, we receive abundant assurance that Shakespeare will be equal to his task. The process of welding language and thought into a single entity is well begun.

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