

Act Two Sc.1 A Key turning point in the play

John of Gaunt and York (we discover how they view Richard's court and their differing opinion on whether Richard will take their advice).

Gaunt's praise for England (the contrast of inspire and expire, the prophets eye, Richard dismissing all this as an age's privilege'). His list of 15 or more images for England, how God has made it special and safe, and how it breeds 'happy men' and is a 'womb of kings' who are 'wont to conquer others'. Gaunt then turns this into rage against Richard who has turned the 'eden or blessed plot' (both heavenly gardens) in to a 'tenement or pelting farm.'

Enter Richard - Gaunt already in rage turns to sarcasm and 'mocks his name to flatter thee' and attack on both how low Richard is bringing the great men of the realm, and how Richard only listens to flattery (as he lives in an unreal bubble). Gaunt then attacks Richard - "I see thee ill" and compares himself to the last king 'had I thy grandsire with a prophets eye seen how his son's sons should destroy his son' he accuses Richard of the murder of Woodstock. Then returning to 'landlord of England art thou'.

Analysis: Gaunt makes the claim in this scene for there being a higher authority than the king - the land of England, the cliffs that serve it as a wall, the blessed plot, the nation it's self is above the king. It is Richard's disrespect for the land, his view that it is only there as a cash-cow; in his own words from the previous scene: "We are inforced to farm our royal realm". That rouses the great anger in Gaunt and perhaps the audience.

Richard snaps back:

*Darest with thy frozen admonition
Make pale our cheek, chasing the royal blood
With fury from his native residence.
Now, by my seat's right royal majesty,
Wert thou not brother to great Edward's son,
This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head
Should run thy head from thy unreverent shoulders.*

Reminding his uncle that he has the 'royal blood' and he has the 'right royal majesty' who perhaps should have Gaunt beheaded for what he has just said.

Gaunt is taken from the stage where he quickly dies, though it's worth noting that 'his tongue is now a stringless instrument' - Northumberland noting that Gaunt can no longer verbally cancel this 'unstaid youth' and perhaps suggesting it is time for another (York) or for others to take yet more dramatic means.

Richard spends no time grieving (a platitude about "The ripest fruit first falls") before moving on to his true intention; funding his Irish wars - "Towards our assistance we

do seize to us / The plate, corn, revenues and moveables, / Whereof our uncle Gaunt did stand possess'd”.

This all leaves York conflicted (in much the same position as Gaunt was in Act One Sc2). How should he proceed knowing Richard is acting unwisely, but restricted by how he can dress the king. He points out the central fault in Richard's action - he is disrupting the natural order of inheritance ('take from Time / His charters and customary rights' - Where the 'his' is not Bolingbroke, but the personification of Time and order). Richard's reply is another example of his childish flippancy (perhaps the best in the play): "Think what you will, we seize into our hands / His plate, his goods, his money and his lands." He has not only refused to listen but increased what he will confiscate, with the 'lands' he has taken what Bolingbroke may have hoped to pass on to his children.

Then After a brief warning from York foreshadowing trouble for Richard, Richard returns to his his instructions for the wars, chiefly placing York as regent while he is away.

Analysis: It is a little unclear why Richard has done this. Perhaps it is a sound political move from Richard; York who could prove troublesome and like Gaunt may look to call him out is now bound to Ricard and his cause (he's been bought off with a position of power). However Richard, in the play, is not characterised by his sound political judgments, perhaps it was because with all the others of that generation dead there was no one else to turn to.

The scene finishes with then conspiratorial trio of Northumberland, Willoughby and Ross on stage discussing that state of the nation - how the 'most degenerate king!' has surrounded himself with 'flatterers' and will turn against them; 'the king severely prosecute / 'Gainst us, our lives, our children, and our heirs' if they are suspected to be siding against him.

Analysis: Richard departs the play as a detested character. The opening Act's crackle of electricity as all the anger and hatred that went (mainly) unsaid has broken in to the thunderstorm of Gaunt's speech. It is made very clear that Richard is betraying all his father and grandfather have worked for, and even England it's self. The blame is focused clearly on Richard's immaturity with money and his indulgence of his flatterers. His petulance is again on display, and his callous lack of grief for his family.

By the end of this scened the plot of the play is driven forward - Bolingbroke is returning a clear hero and villain are taking shape. Richard has made his fatal mistake, breaking the codes of inheritance which he owes for his kingship. But what does Bolingbroke want - we all know he becomes Henry the IV - has he thought of this yet?