
“KNOW THY SELF”
“NOTHING TO EXCESS”

maxims of greek tragedy.

KING RICHARD II

Needs must I like it well: I weep for joy
To stand upon my kingdom once again.

Dear earth, **I do salute thee with my hand,**

Though rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs:

As a long-parted mother with her child

Plays fondly with her tears and smiles in meeting,

So, weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth,

And do thee favours with my royal hands.

Feed not thy sovereign's foe, my gentle earth,

Nor with thy sweets comfort his ravenous sense;

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.

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.

Richard either kisses the ground, or raises a handful of sand.

Like other characters, here Richard treats the soil as a character, however in Richard's mind it is the child and he is the mother, placing himself above the nation.

Richard asks the land, and creatures of England to help defend him against Bolingbroke

Shakespeare expects the other actors / audience to react with amusement - he is asking us to ridicule Richard as a hated figure in order for the sympathy he will evoke later to be more dramatic.

KING RICHARD II

Discomfortable cousin! know'st thou not

That **when the searching eye of heaven is hid,**
Behind the globe, that lights the lower world,
Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen

In murders and in outrage, boldly here;

But when from under this terrestrial ball

He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines

And darts his light through every guilty hole,

Then murders, treasons and detested sins,

The cloak of night being pluck'd from off their backs,

Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves?

So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke,

Who all this while hath **revell'd in the night**

Whilst we were wandering with the antipodes,

Shall see us rising in our throne, the east,

His treasons will sit blushing in his face,

Not able to endure the sight of day,

But self-affrighted tremble at his sin.

Not all the water in the rough rude sea

Can wash the **balm off from an anointed king;**

The breath of worldly men cannot depose

The deputy elected by the Lord:

For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd

To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,

God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay

A glorious angel: then, if angels fight,

Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.

Enter EARL OF SALISBURY

Welcome, my lord how far off lies your **power?**

Aumerle's news is uncomfortable, it is not really an insult against Amerle.

The eye of heaven is the sun, Richard is suggesting that criminals creep out and commit crimes undercover of darkness.

Likewise Bolingbroke has raised his insurgency undercover of the kings absence.

Richard goes on to say the sun will return (the terrestrial ball in the metaphor is the earth, the 'he' the sun) light up the 'guilty holes' and leaves the criminals 'trembling at themselves' in other words shamed by their own guilt.

Richard continues the image, suggesting he is the sun, who has been 'wandering in the antipodes' (strictly speaking people who live on the other side of the world - their feet are opposite ours -) here Richard is using it in place of Ireland, hence rising in the East.

Richard then suggests that the mere sight of him will make Bolingbroke realise his crimes and 'tremble at his sin'.

Balm - an oil placed on the monarch's skin during their coronation.

One extended image, stretched over 18 lines. Two sentences with an average length of 68.5 words. 6 words with three syllables, 3 with 4 and one five syllabic word.

DUKE OF AUMERLE

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

KING RICHARD II

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?
All souls that will be safe fly from my side,
For time hath set a blot upon my pride.

A sextain (the final 6 lines
from a Shakespearian
sonnet)

Follows the rhyme scheme
A, B, A, B, C, C.

DUKE OF AUMERLE

Comfort, my liege; remember who you are.

KING RICHARD II

I had forgot myself; am I not king?

Awake, thou coward majesty! thou sleepest.

Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?

Arm, arm, my name! a puny subject strikes

At thy great glory. Look not to the ground,

Ye favourites of a king: are we not **high**?

High be our thoughts: I know my uncle York

Hath power enough to serve our turn. But who comes here?

Enter SIR STEPHEN SCROOP

SIR STEPHEN SCROOP

More health and happiness betide my liege

Than can my care-tuned tongue deliver him!

KING RICHARD II

Mine ear is open and my heart prepared;

The worst is worldly loss thou canst unfold.

Say, is my kingdom lost? why, 'twas my **care**

And what loss is it to be rid of **care**?

Strives Bolingbroke to be as great as we?

Greater he shall not be; if he serve God,

We'll serve Him too and be his fellow so:

Revolt our subjects? that we cannot mend;

They break their faith to God as well as us:

Cry woe, destruction, ruin and decay:

The worst is **death**, and **Death** will have his day.

Richard plays with the double meaning of words
Arm- he addresses his own arm; **arm** - give weapons to
(usually understood metaphorically, and often as Richard
writes on the sand). **high** - High in position (Royal);
High - ambitious in their thoughts they can overcome
Bolingbroke. **care** - firstly something to be looked after,
second meaning **care** - *burden*, Richard suggests
(*unconvincingly*) he released to be rid of his kingdom. **death**
- suggests (*again unconvincingly*) he does not fear dying;
Death - the grim reaper, Richard prophesies that the current
events will lead to a great loss of life.

KING RICHARD II

Too well, too well thou tell'st a tale so ill.
Where is the Earl of Wiltshire? where is Bagot?
What is become of Bushy? where is Green?
That they have let the dangerous enemy
Measure our confines with such peaceful steps?
If we prevail, **their heads shall pay for it:**
I warrant they have made peace with Bolingbroke.

Dramatic Irony: irony that is inherent in speeches or a situation of a drama and is understood by the audience but not grasped by the characters in the play. Here Richard fails to realise that Bushy and Green would be difficult to behead.



SIR STEPHEN SCROOP

Peace have they made with him indeed, my lord.

This could a be a hint that Richard is beginning to face reality; he acknowledges that his flatterer's were just that

KING RICHARD II

O villains, vipers, damn'd without redemption!
Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man!
Snakes, in my heart-blood warm'd, that sting my heart!
Three **Judas**es, each one thrice worse than **Judas!**
Would they make peace? terrible hell make war
Upon their spotted souls for this offence!

Reference to an old fable where a man takes pity on a frozen snake and warms it in his coat, at his chest, only for the viper to slowly awake and bite him.



Judas - the traitor who betrayed Jesus, Richard clearly blames his former friends, though again shows his vanity as he compares himself to Jesus.



SIR STEPHEN SCROOP

Sweet love, I see, changing his property,
Turns to the sourest and most deadly hate:
Again uncurse their souls; **their peace is made**
With heads, and not with hands; those whom you curse
Have felt the worst of death's destroying wound
And lie full low, graved in the hollow ground.

They did not make a deal and shake on it, but resisted and were beheaded.



KING RICHARD II

No matter where; of comfort no man speak:

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;

How some have been deposed; some slain in war,

Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;

Some poison'd by their wives: some sleeping kill'd;

All murder'd: 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 fear'd and kill with looks,

Infusing him with self and vain conceit,

As if this flesh which walls about our life,

Were brass impregnable, and **humour'd** thus

Comes at the last and with a little pin

Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!

Cover your heads and mock not flesh and blood

With solemn reverence: throw away respect,

Tradition, form and ceremonious duty,

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?

Dust - the ground will be our paper, and the tears will be the ink to write our sad tale on the 'bosom' which recalls Yorks 'England's bosom'.

Richard admits he has nothing left - that his kingdom is lost, only his body which he can give to the ground, thus he has no need for a will. Deposed has two meanings - sacked and dead.

Idea that we are made by god from the earth or clay, our flesh on our bones is the paste or 'model' mimic of the soil that is transformed by god in to flesh.

Clear Contrast to how Richard is elsewhere in the play; on a throne, raised or standing. A very humble act for the vain king, a key point in turning the audiences sympathy. Places Richard closer to the commons, and to death.

'Rounds' - suggests it is attacking, or en-capturing; 'mortal temples' again humbling, Richard acknowledges he is mortal and like any man.

Hollow, suggest the crown is worthless, also echo's Scroop's phrase the 'hollow earth' which is a reference to the grave waiting to receive the coffin.

Richard pictures the Grim Reaper sitting on the throne, the crown providing the walls of the court.

The 'antic' is the court jester. 'his state' / 'his pomp', the his is the king, the jester in Death's court mocks the king who wares the crown on his head. Together, they allow the king the feelings of power - the fear and ability to 'kill with looks' (Richard dismisses these as passing things of little significance). They allow the king to become vain (Richard again veers very close to self knowledge) before his death.

Having 'humour'd' or played with the king, they destroy his world (extension of the 'hollow crown', 'Death's court' - here the 'castle wall' is the metaphor) and kill him.

Compare Richard's speech here with the great extended metaphors before. This emphasises his utter grief Richard is going through. 12 monosyllabic words enforce how humbling the situations, the absolute loneliness he feels, how as a character he is coming done. Still makes a pun on the word 'subjected'.

DUKE OF AUMERLE

My father hath a power; inquire of him
And learn to make a body of a limb.

KING RICHARD II

Thou chidest me well: proud Bolingbroke, I come
To change blows with thee for our day of doom.
This ague fit of fear is over-blown;
An easy task it is to win our own.
Say, Scroop, where lies our uncle with his power?
Speak sweetly, man, although thy looks be sour.

SIR STEPHEN SCROOP

Men judge by the complexion of the sky
The state and inclination of the day:
So may you by my dull and heavy eye,
My tongue hath but a heavier tale to say.
I play the torturer, by small and small
To lengthen out the worst that must be spoken:
Your uncle York is join'd with Bolingbroke,
And all your northern castles yielded up,
And all your southern gentlemen in arms
Upon his party.

KING RICHARD II

Thou hast said enough.
Beshrew thee, cousin, which didst lead me forth
To DUKE OF AUMERLE
Of that sweet way I was in to despair!
What say you now? what comfort have we now?
By heaven, I'll hate him everlastingly
That bids me be of comfort any more.
Go to Flint castle: there I'll pine away;
A king, woe's slave, shall kingly woe obey.
That power I have, discharge; and let them go
To ear the land that hath some hope to grow,
For I have none: let no man speak again
To alter this, for counsel is but vain.

DUKE OF AUMERLE

My liege, one word.

KING RICHARD II

He does me double wrong
That wounds me with the flatteries of his tongue.
Discharge my followers: let them hence away,
From **Richard's night to Bolingbroke's fair day.**
Exeunt

The scene ends with an inversion of Richard's Day and night metaphor, where before Richard was the sun exposing the sinners, now he is the night, and Bolingbroke is in the ascendancy.



ACT THREE SC.2 LINKS...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEkIthweizQ>

(Three examples of different actors, David William, Derek Jacobi and Richard Pasco, reciting the 'death of kings speech')

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D54T-nXPnkA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfVcqswZmDw>

(Performance of the scene from the Globe production with Mark Rylance as Richard)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhWgTSQdRmo&list=PLP4acChYOb8MYrZ3FQFWzGAUEoXqdH9X8>

(David Tennant's interpretation from the RSC production)
