

Reaching the end of the tragedy/history, just before Richard gets assassinated.

His last words: stage direction "Richard" (a far cry from 1, 1: "King Richard, with other Nobles and Attendants").

Alone in the Tower of London, talking to himself / the audience.

A soliloquy that functions as a **mise en abyme** = indeed, the character, alone on stage, develops an inner imaginative life where he sets out to people the world with thoughts, like a stage director peoples the stage with actors, all "shadows." In a very modern gesture, the empty stage could thus be construed as the replication of Richard's interiority, his brain, and just like the stage mirrors the world, the world also mirrors the stage. Art is no longer an escape but the reflexion of reality.

⇒ **To what extent does Richard's final soliloquy function as a house of mirrors, where art and reality collide to offer a poignant, tragic vision?**

Centripetal movement that leads to a centrifugal discourse on art and reality.

1. "This prison where I live" (2): the former king's predicament.

- Very limited setting and props: bare stage + numerous deictics to insist on it ("this" 2, "here" 4, "these vain weak nails" 19, "this hard world my ragged prison walls" 21) => pathos + spectacular reduction of the scope of a play that has been getting the audience to travel throughout Great Britain so far.
- Ghostly presence of some of the play's themes: "ambition" 18, "plot" 18, "pride" 22, "flatter" 23... / imperative form, but now a pathetic plea for the music to stop + no one to receive it: "Let it sound no more" (61), except for the audience that cannot respond.
- The king now a "fool" 60, a "beggar" 33 (ironic realisation of proleptic title 5, 3, 79 "The Beggar and the King"), even a "madman" 62.

2. Failing to escape through meta-phor, similes or theatre (= art).

- 1 soliloquy, and yet exploration of a multiplicity of themes and images in free verse.
- Multiplicity born out of unity = the king's "two bodies" becomes the king's multiple bodies => a whole family! A creative process = like a blacksmith ("Yet I'll hammer it out" 5), imagines his brain (old English = masculine *braegan*) as mother and soul (OE = "sowol", feminine) the father, because spiritual agent to the brain that receives it? A creative process evidenced by use of modal "will" 6 and by metrics => run-on line 7-8...
- Many similes in the soliloquy = 25 "like silly beggars," "or metaphors (meta-phor = to transfer, carry beyond), "Sometimes am I king" 32, "am nothing" 37, "time has made me his numbering clock" (50)... Creating multiplicity = a demiurgic attempt.
- Ventriloquy: cf direct speech, where his "scruples" are made to speak with "thoughts of things divine" (12).
- Linguistic games: 39-41 = polyptoton => no man who is nothing but a man (= all men, except for saints) can be contented with his condition => men are impatient, desiring creatures.
- A "dialogue" with another art form: "music" that interrupts the soliloquy, and line 41 + addresses the player "keep time" 42 in imperative form. => Antanaclasis on word "time", alternatively meaning clock's time, but also life or prison sentence (note etymology of this figure of speech: reflection against)
- But the audience ultimately cannot but observe Richard's failure to escape from his jail, be it physical and metaphysical...

3. **“Thus play I in one person many people”: Richard, the metatheatrical image of tragic humanity.**

- A deeply metatheatrical scene: cf deictics, allusion to the “eye” 17, the “plot” (18)...
- Richard: a stage director “peopling the world with humours” 9 - 10 (= characters), and then an actor 31-32...
- Metatheatrical that ultimately insists on the blurry boundary between art and reality: soliloquy itself is a paradoxical moment that takes the audience out of verisimilitude for a while + moments when breaks fourth wall (52) + no boundary between him and an object = complete reversibility (56-57).

=> a house of mirrors showing a very modern character all too aware of his plight, a plight that can actually be applied to humanity as a whole. Vision of entrapment that is reminiscent of Beckett's theatre (*Godot, Words and Music*)...