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The Subjectivity in Ruling: Looking at Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare's *Richard II*

Shakespeare's plays offer an artificial representation of reality, delighting audience members from the conception of Shakespeare's first plays (c. 1580), to the scholars and readers past the sixteenth-century and into the twenty-first-century. In the historical study of Shakespeare's theatre, Phyllis Rankin's *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles*, Rankin relates the importance of performance to reality: "*Historia* was still 'story,' and the term *history*, like the modern French word *histoire*, could mean either 'history' or 'story'" (18). Shakespeare's theatrics are based on historical moments and historical figures, yet Shakespeare does not claim to be a historian, in the sense that the playwright means to relay facts on specific people, dates, or events. Rankin adds, Shakespeare's plays were problematic for his contemporaries, but were, and still are, a focus in "political, religious, and philosophical anxieties" (22). Shakespeare's characters are based on historical moments and figures, capturing a realistic representation of human characteristics, customs, values, mores, and norms. The language present in the playwright's imitation of reality centers on an exploration through the human condition. Shakespeare's plays become more representative in the observation of truth, more so than fact. That is to say, to fully understand Elizabethan culture, audiences should begin with the work of Shakespeare, to gain an understanding of the historical context, but only if the intention of the audience is to dissect a literary perspective of the human experience growing out of the setting in which the playwright is transporting the audience to. Literature

works to impart insight on the human condition—be it the way of living in a specific time or place, expectations in an individual’s role, ethical standards, moral constructs, social constructs, or generally speaking, a multitude of human principles. In addition to understanding Elizabethan culture from a Shakespearean text, audiences should also give the same attention to the time and place in which the playwright is writing from. Shakespeare exists in Elizabethan culture, and the history that makes-up and blossoms the Elizabethan era. Shakespeare’s text transcends cultural epochs, remaining in the canon because of his accurate portrayal of human life, but listeners and readers of Shakespeare should be taking into consideration the environment that is creating the playwright, which is influencing the situations that he is exploring in his texts. Shakespeare’s language helps in perceiving a perspective on Elizabethan culture, just as much as the historical figures and events that occur in the era help in perceiving a full understanding of Queen Elizabeth’s kingdom and rule. To reinforce the importance of Shakespeare’s language in the discourse of art representing reality, I bring scholar of sixteenth-century language, Jane Donawerth, into the conversation:

To Elizabethans, language was itself mimetic, and in its invention society as a whole had taken the first step for the playwright who wished to hold the mirror up to nature. They further observed that a society is only as excellent as its language, and a man, only as good as his word (7).

Donawerth is not privileging Shakespeare’s language and plays in her collection of essays *Shakespeare and the Sixteenth-Century Language*, but is drawing from Shakespearian texts and primary sources to gain an understanding of the linguistic dynamism of the Elizabethan age. Shakespeare as a resource only becomes so because of his great popularity in the sixteenth-century and beyond. In utilizing Shakespeare’s text to understand Elizabethan culture, I will be

examining the power dynamics between Richard II from Shakespeare's *Richard II*, and Queen Elizabeth. In doing so, I will convey the difficulties that Shakespeare's titular character experiences as a ruler, and the similarities Queen Elizabeth shares with Shakespeare's Richard II, to understand the complexities of monarchical ruling, as well as the subjective acceptance in what makes a good ruler.

To begin, I will first examine the influences, cultural customs, and values of language in the Elizabethan era, transmitting to my audience both the value and power in the oral and written word. Taking a quick glance back at Jane Donawerth's scholarly study on sixteenth-century language, Donawerth records the Elizabethan acceptance of Ben Johnson's concept of language: "three terms recur: nature, reason, and custom. They define not only conceptions of language, but also of what a man is" (5). Donawerth's scholarly studies find that Elizabethan culture accepts Johnson's notion of language, internalizing the cultural belief that the ability and rhetoric of language is a distinct characteristic of a person's essence, meaning it is valid to judge a person's character based on their linguistic aptitude in Elizabethan culture. When looking at the writings of the educator Sir Thomas Elyot of 1490, whose value in language forward into the Elizabethan era, Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor* claims, children need to be taught, "as soon as they can speak," the "sweet allurings" of English and Latin, since language "instills in [children] sweet manners and virtuous customs" (16). People of noble birth receive an extensive education; specifically, in rhetoric, finding the training to be extensive and purposeful in the making of rulers with precise orations. Elyot goes on to say, language is a sign of intelligence, and it is of keen importance that noblemen begin studying early: "specially in noblemen, that they may sooner attain to wisdom" (17). Elyot advises, a nobleman's son should begin to learn

Latin from a “infancy,” producing the ability to pronounce “pure and elegant Latin” (18).

Interestingly, Elyot adds:

the nurses and other women about him, if it is possible, to do the same; or at the leastways, that they speak none English but that which is clean, polite, perfectly and articulately pronounced, omitting no letter or syllable, as foolish women often times do of a wantonness, whereby divers noblemen and gentlemen’s children (as I do at this day know) have attained corrupt and foul pronunciation (18).

Elyot’s direction for masters, or educators, in the acculturation of both Latin and English takes cautious steps in securing a child is making the correct pronunciations between both languages, going so far as to limit the child’s interaction with who the educator deems “foolish.” The maturation of a nobleman’s son’s character begins with the learning of language, and the fostering of a child’s speech includes the insurance of the correct pronunciation of English and Latin words, making certain that the pronunciation of English and Latin words are not dissolved by an outsider’s tongue. Language being the root of character and value demonstrates the perception of a good ruler. The eloquence behind speaking in any language shares association with wisdom, discipline, and virtuous character; that is, the summation of a good ruler.

Interestingly, Elyot excludes women in his methodization of teaching young, noble children the eloquence of speech. I do understand that Elyot is speaking from a patriarchal standpoint, where he does not consider women important enough to teach, yet does that doom women into characteristics relating to vice? Elyot advises young noblemen to stop being around the care of women at the age of seven because Elyot considers women “wantonness,” or in other terms, “self-indulgent,” “lewd,” or “undisciplined.” The character of women is static to the perception of the ‘wantonness,’ who does not have the privilege of learning the eloquence of language.

Before arriving to the conversation of Queen Elizabeth's inauguration in 1533, I need to ask how it is a woman like herself learned the oratory skills that Elyot excludes for women, even noblewomen, as I interpret from the absence of the nobleman's daughters and wives. This leads to a point I will make later, but Queen Elizabeth's capacity to adopt, learn, and articulate the dominion of language later in her life is extraordinary given the circumstances of the patriarchal standpoint she is existing and ruling in. Queen Elizabeth proves herself more than capable of performing the role of ruler, especially when looking at the documentation transcriptions of two of her most famous speeches, her speech at Tilbury ("Tilbury Speech") and her speech at the House of Commons ("Golden Speech"). Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor* places a significant value in the acquisition of language. Elyot's methodization of teaching children how to speak and write both English and Latin is appropriate for the understanding of building linguistic versatility, and for comprehending the rigor behind the cultivation of language in nobleman's sons, during the Elizabethan age. The reason for the rigor behind the cultivation of language is clear in the purpose of building a nobleman's son's character into a virtuous one.

In support of Elyot's methodization of linguistic versatility and potency, which reinforces the significance of language in the Elizabethan era, as well as attesting to the virtuous character of the nobleman's son, is Roger Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* (1570). Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* depicts the vigorous training in teaching a nobleman's son Latin and English. Ascham follows the same purpose as Elyot, but with a slight differentiation in his methodization, yet maintaining the purpose of privileging the power of language, so the characteristics in a nobleman's son cultivates a great and virtuous leader. To begin looking at Ascham's *The Schoolmaster*, the first unique aspect of Ascham's technique is focusing his students on translating Latin texts into English, and then English texts into Latin, repeating the process in a

cyclical fashion (14). Ascham specifies that he keeps his students writing, and not speaking, so students do not gain the mobility in speaking freely; that is, Ascham believes a clever student is one who thinks before he speaks (15). Ascham's method finds its grounding from Horace's *Arte Poetica*, where Horace states: "that wheresoever knowledge doth accompany wit, there best utterance doth always await upon the tongue" (17-18). Ascham's sensible teachings counsel students to think before they speak, making students aware of both their actions and words, taking caution in the words the students use in representing themselves. Elyot and Ascham share similarities in the teachings of language, as well as the beliefs that the Elizabethan culture associates with language, giving great importance in the learning of proper communication.

A further look into Ascham's beliefs on teaching, looks at a student's capability for learning, using the Pedagogy of Socrates and Plato to relate the "seven plain notes to choose a good wit in a child for learning" (27). The "seven plain notes" test the "good wit in a child for learning," indicative of not only the child's capacity to learn, but also determining the child's principles. Basically, a good ruler shows themselves in their formative years, where a master decides which child is the best learner, signaling the most upstanding in learning and moral standards. Ascham makes note of "seven plain notes," but privileges the first two notes because the first two notes point to "special benefits of nature which nevertheless be well preserved and much increased by good order" (31). The first two points define the individual's "nature," or the character's inherent features, which help determine the individual's success in a specific role, especially the role of a ruler. The first of the seven notes is a child's "will to learn," and Ascham adds a characteristic that he finds relevant to the "will to learn: "a tongue not stammering or overhardly drawing forth words, but plain and ready to deliver the meaning of the mind; a voice not soft, weak, piping, womanish, but audible, strong, and manlike" (27-28). Ascham genders the

proficiency of speech, correlating the accomplishment of fluency with masculinity or manhood—as it is represented and understood in the Elizabethan era. Of course, this brings my question back from earlier, asking where Queen Elizabeth stands over her mastery of oration. To continue, Ascham's second plain note asks that a student be "good of memory," and "be quick in receiving, sure in keeping, and ready in delivering forth again" (29). Ascham's value in a child's "nature" of being, relies on his ability to learn quickly, uphold the strict gender-specific boundaries between masculinity and femininity, and hold a strong memory. Looking back at Jane Donawerth's note on Ben Johnson's idea of language, and finding a connection between the recurring themes of language, Elyot, Ascham, and Johnson all believe an individual's essence ("nature") can be assessed through language. The educators of noblemen's sons determine that the cultivation of a good nobleman, or good ruler, is the proper learning of language, speech, and writing, privileging the influence of speech in a patriarchal society. Shakespeare's *Richard II* is a representative text on how Shakespeare utilizes language to define the characters of his time, demonstrating the power of manipulation through the theatrics on the Shakespearean theatre. Queen Elizabeth is representative of the figure who breaks the phallic dominion over language, obtaining the power of rhetoric to equate herself—as best she could—to her male contemporaries. Moreover, in looking at Donawerth's notation on literary texts as a resource for understanding both the characters of Shakespeare's texts and the characters of Elizabethan's cultural era, Donawerth theorizes: "Because of his wealth of ideas, Shakespeare need not to take a particular stand on linguistic issues in his plays; his characters may speak for themselves, revealing their personalities in their ideas" (15). Donawerth's assessment takes Elyot's, Ascham's, and Johnson's speculation on the methodization and belief of language to be correct for the Elizabethan epoch, accepting that Elyot's and Ascham's epistemology of language is an

accurate assessor of a person's "being," or essence. Donawerth is also stating, a character will reveal their "truth" in their speech, so paying close attention to their oration will determine how the speaker views themselves as a ruler, as well as indicate if their perception of themselves is a fair assessment.

After determining the value Elizabethans hold for language, and the capacity language is able to communicate about the essence of a person, I can begin to look at the linguistic dynamism in the eponymous *Richard II*. For starters, the main critique Richard II confronts throughout the play is his indecisive behavior, which becomes problematic when Bolingbroke ridicules him for his indecisive behavior. After agreeing to allow Mowbray and Bolingbroke to a trial-by-combat, Richard changes his mind, deciding to banish the both Mowbray and Bolingbroke, leaving them with a final notice: "nor ever by advised purpose meet / to plot, contrive, or complot any ill / gainst us, our state, our subjects, or our land" (1.3.183-185). Richard foreshadows his own demise when saying "nor ever by advised purpose meet / to plot," since Bolingbroke devises the scheme that overthrows Richard II, placing Bolingbroke himself on the throne as Henry IV. The "nature" of Richard's language reveals his fate, yet Richard's insecurities get in the way of his ability to rule with caution. To continue, when Bolingbroke is no longer in the jurisdiction of Richard's kingdom, Richard asks Aumerle for Bolingbroke's last words: "what store of parting tears were shed" (1.4.5). Aumerle relates Bolingbroke's silence, yet Richard asks Aumerle again: "what said our cousin when you parted with him?" (1.4.10). The repetition of the same question demonstrates Richard's own insecurities, seeking validation for his decisions from his confidants, ensuring for himself that he is making the right decisions. Bolingbroke being unbothered by the situation terrifies Richard, since in hindsight, the audience knows Bolingbroke invades England, overthrowing Richard, forcing Richard to revisit the day

when he didn't take the opportunity in executing both Mowbray and Bolingbroke. Richard's repetition of the same question indicates a distrust in his own ability to delegate and rule. In the first opening act of *Richard II*, Shakespeare illustrates a character with hesitant linguistic features, displaying a character who turns on his initial decisions, and refuses to think with his mind before speaking, alluding to Ascham's advice from Horace. Richard reveals doubts in himself, reflecting the doubts he and others have for Richard as a monarch. Shakespeare's Richard does not contend as a good ruler, basing the assessment on the first opening act, which represents Richard as a character of doubt, insecurity, and inaction.

In taking *Richard II*, and inspecting the play from Derrick Higginbotham's perspective on Gender and Queer Theory, Higginbotham reveals why Richard II is not a good ruler because of the societal restraints and expectations he does mold himself into. Along with Higginbotham's thesis, the ambivalence of Richard is evident even in the quotations Higginbotham shares. Higginbotham's "The Construction of a King: Waste, Effeminacy, and Queerness in Shakespeare's *Richard II*" considers first an analysis on gender performance in Richard's speech. For instance, after Richard returns home from his war campaign in Ireland, Richard performance a feminine role in the use of his metaphor (64). Higginbotham quotes from the following passage:

RICHARD 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 favor with my royal hands (3.2.7-11).

Higginbotham notices the effeminacy that manifests in Richard's role as a "mother," while making England Richard's "child." In connecting back to the "nature" of language and

Donawerth's last assessment of Shakespeare's characters speaking for themselves, Richard is admitting to his cross-over with gender-specific roles. To further explain, if he is a by-product of a patriarchal society, where he is expected to fill a role under a set of "manly" characteristics—as masculinity is understood in the perception of Elizabethan culture, then he is failing in his performance of the role, and is even admitting to it. Not only is the metaphor an admission to failure, but so is the grief he is detailing from his decision in leaving England to fight a war in Ireland, which he is not able to afford. In addition to Higginbotham's analysis of Richard's performance of gender, Higginbotham also notes in the same act, but prior scene, Bolingbroke's murder of Richard's confidants as a queer relationship (68). Higginbotham is referring to the following passage, where Bolingbroke is executing Bushy and Greene:

BOLINGBROKE You have in a manner with your sinful hours  
 Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him,  
 Broke the possession of a royal bed,  
 And stained the beauty of a fair queen's cheeks  
 With tears drawn from her eyes with your foul wrongs.  
 Myself a prince by fortune of my birth (3.1.11-15).

Higginbotham's analysis focuses on the ambiguity in "divorce betwixt his queen and him," opening up avenues of interpretation, which can likely be communicating a homoerotic relationship between Richard and his confidants (68). Higginbotham makes his claim with the help of Queer Theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedwick, who proposes an open definition for queerness:

one way to define queer is as 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps,  
 dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent

elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality are made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically' (68).

The gap in Richard's relationship with his wife is the literal "divorce," which Bolingbroke makes mention of before executing Bushy and Greene. Richard's homoerotic relationship with his men is demonstrative in the interest Richard shows in them over his own wife. Additionally, both Higginbotham's analysis and Bolingbroke's insult-to-injury rely on the fact that Richard is childless and without an heir, whereas Bolingbroke fathers Prince Hal, who is a potential successor to the throne Bolingbroke usurps. During Bolingbroke's commentary on Richard being childless, the audience typically makes a connection between Richard II and Queen Elizabeth, pairing the fact that both figures are childless and without an heir. Even more subtly, both figures cross gender-specific boundaries, which results in either their success or failure as monarchs. Richard proves himself to be a bad ruler because of his inability to perform into the role, as he lacks an heir to his throne, and loses against Bolingbroke's army. Richard's most obvious fault is in his language, where he remains indecisive over his requests and demands, and in the insecurities hiding in his questions.

In conversation with Shakespeare's *Richard II* is the documentation of Queen Elizabeth's linguistic dynamism, which helps determine Queen Elizabeth's capacity as a ruler. Queen Elizabeth makes the connection between herself and Shakespeare's Richard. In Katherine Eisaman Maus's introduction to Shakespeare's *Richard II*, "Richard the Second," Maus includes the historical moment when the Earl of Sussex rebels against Queen Elizabeth, and pays Shakespeare to write the script for *Richard II*, which for Earl of Sussex symbolizes the "deposition of a monarch" (886). Queen Elizabeth's response to Lord Chamberlain's Men, the acting company who Shakespeare was registered with, was: "I am Richard II; know ye not

that?” (886). Except, I argue comparing Queen Elizabeth to Shakespeare’s Richard is an unfair assessment, mainly because Queen Elizabeth’s speeches determine her a strong, formidable ruler, who follows the grammatical and syntactic teachings of both Elyot and Ascham.

Additionally, Queen Elizabeth navigates the patriarchal dominion over language, obtaining a strong reputation as a master orator, using language to balance out the power imbalance between herself as a woman and the men she is ruling. In thinking about Queen Elizabeth’s first speech, after the Spanish Armada invades English territory, and Queen Elizabeth prepares her army for retaliation in 1588, Queen Elizabeth speaks with a strong will:

I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field (Queen Elizabeth, 1588).

The “Tilbury Speech,” as it is referred to as today, signifies the linguistics dualism Queen Elizabeth demonstrates throughout her entire political career. She is able to fault herself as a woman, claiming she is “weak” and “feeble,” playing into the gender performance her body presents, but then undermines the her own body, and states: “I have the heart and stomach of a king,” which is suggesting Queen Elizabeth’s ability to cross gender-specific boundaries. In an interesting twist, Queen Elizabeth is supporting the patriarchal order in which she is governing in, as she engenders the male persona, “stomach of a king, and of a king of England;” and, is also subverting the patriarchal stance that Elyot and Ascham support when their texts are absent of women’s education when Queen Elizabeth, as a woman, stands at the feet of soldiers, and carries

dominion over language. Queen Elizabeth's fulfillment of duty is reminiscent of Plutarch of Chaeronea's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, in which the scene is moving into Theseus's decision to lead his people into war: "Theseus who would not live idly at home and do nothing, but desirous therewithal to gratify the people, went his way to fight with the bull of Marathon, the which did great mischiefs to the inhabitants of the country" (19). Queen Elizabeth's duty as a ruler forces her into the face of the battle, where she refuses to surrender against the Spanish, and offers encouragement for her soliders: "[rewarding] of every one of your virtues in the field" (Queen Elizabeth, 1988). Theseus's narrative reinforces the moral value Elizabethans hold over duty; particularly, duty in defending one's nation. After seeing the influence Queen Elizabeth makes in her speech, it is unjust to claim a parallel between Shakespeare's Richard and Queen Elizabeth, and to clarify even further the vast distinction in the two, here is Richard's final scene, depicting Richard's surrender:

RICHARD A king of beasts indeed—if aught but beasts,  
 I had been still a happy king of men.  
 Good sometime Queen, prepare thee hence for France.  
 Think I am dead, and that even here thou tak'st,  
 As from my deathbed, my last living leave.  
 In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire  
 With good old folks, and let them tell three tales  
 Of woeful ages long ago betide;  
 And ere thou bid good night, to quit their grief,  
 Tell thou the lamentable fall of me (5.1.35-44).

Richard's language indicates his own resignation to life: "think I am dead," "my deathbed," and "last living leave." Richard's absence of will is a recurring motif throughout *Richard II*, since Richard's first mistake in letting Bolingbroke live, as well as his inability to follow on with his duty, illustrative in Plutarch's narration of Theseus. Even in the midst of defeat, a ruler, or leader, needs to fulfill their duty, and put themselves on the front line of battle, and be prepared to die like the men who laid their lives for the king. Queen Elizabeth governs her agency, choosing to orate her speech with diligence and force, refusing to lean into Richard's "lamentable fall." Queen Elizabeth continues to prove to be the complete opposite of Richard II, making Earl of Sussex's parallel between the two a false and unjust comparison.

In conversation with Higginbotham's "The Construction of a King: Waste, Effeminacy, and Queerness in Shakespeare's *Richard II*," Queen Elizabeth's speech in the House of Commons demonstrates an inverse consequence that occurs with Higginbotham's analysis of *Richard II*. To specify, Higginbotham's analysis of the eponymous *Richard II* reveals the failure in Richard's ruling due to the effeminate and queer characteristics Richard embodies and acts on. Yet, when Queen Elizabeth performs into masculinity, the House of Commons and people in attendance praise Queen Elizabeth's excellent speech. For instance, Queen Elizabeth begins her speech with, "I do assure you that there is no prince that loves his subjects better, or whose love can countervail our love." Queen Elizabeth speaks herself into comparison of the "prince," "[assuring]" her audience that no other ruler loves their subjects as she does. Instead of comparing herself to a queen, stating "I do assure you that there is no [queen] that loves [her] subjects better [...]," Queen Elizabeth measures herself to the masculine noun, signaling Kosofsky Sedwick's "gaps," and "dissonance and resonance." The Queen's speech contains a gap in the ambiguity of the mention of the masculine noun, where she is either stating that she as

a woman is a better ruler than a prince could be; or, she is comparing herself to the standards of the patriarchal privileging of men, and is engendering herself into the masculine noun for an equitable comparison. The dissonance is in the ambiguity, and in the audience's acceptance of the Queen situating herself into masculinity, where her body is still performing femininity, but her speech is referring to herself as masculine. The resonance, or the harmony, comes with the reassurance and influence of language, where the power of language equates the patriarchal dominion of power; thus, obtaining and manipulate language is to access patriarchal power. Queen Elizabeth crosses the boundaries of gender-specific roles, beginning with her comparison not to a feminine noun, but to a masculine noun, and claiming authority over her speech, reinforcing her own agency. Queen Elizabeth's success in accessing a masculine role shows Queen Elizabeth's own confidence in the role:

And as I am that person that still, yet under God, has delivered you, so I trust, by the almighty power of God, that I still shall be His instrument to preserve you from envy, peril, dishonor, shame, tyranny, and oppression, partly by means of your intended helps, which we take very acceptably, because it manifests the largeness of your loves and loyalties unto your sovereign. (Queen Elizabeth, 1601).

In saying, "I still shall be His instrument," Queen Elizabeth is accessing her authority from divine right, which is representative of an even larger patriarchal force, symbolizing her ultimate authority as ruler. Furthermore, if Elyot's, Ascham's, and Johnson's notion of language stands, accepting the "nature of language" to be characteristic of person's essence, then Queen Elizabeth is identifying her essence to "God," meaning her purpose and mission on earth is in the creation of her being from the divine rule. Queen Elizabeth's linguistic dynamism contends agency from

God, and her existence is not defined by what she makes of herself, but what she was made for, reinforcing her authority by those who follow Christianity and the divine right of rulers. Queen Elizabeth supports herself in her language, convincing herself that she is a proper ruler, and in turn, convincing a large number of people that she makes a good ruler for England.

To assess what makes a good ruler, I take the Elizabethan culture's value of language into consideration, inspecting the epistemology of Elyot and Ascham, as well as Jane Donawerth's sixteenth-century study of language, to explore the cultural discourse around the influence and power of language. I arrive to the conclusion that the Elizabethan era takes influence from Elyot's teachings of English and Latin to children, Ascham's "seven plain notes," and Ben Johnson's summation of recurring themes; specifically, the recurring theme of "nature," signifying the reveal of an individual's intrinsic "self" through the communication of speech and language. In contending that an individual speaks their "truth" through their means of communication, I use Shakespeare's *Richard II*, accepting that literature is an accurate representation of reality, and begin to dissect the language of Richard II, to attest that his own speech patterns reveal both to him and his audience members that he is not the representation of a good ruler. When looking at the historical figure Queen Elizabeth, the evidence in support of her reign as a representation of a good ruler is a lot more accurate, since she maintains linguistic dynamism throughout her orations. She also expresses linguistic duality, meaning that she is able to communicate more than one interpretation from only one speech. Queen Elizabeth's language is confident in her performance as a monarch, as she is able to convince herself of her role, and her audience members. After declaring language as an appropriate cultural material for assessing the power and influence speech has over an individual and the people they are speaking to, I examine Greek mythology, gaining insight of where moral obligations arrive from. To add on, I

also look at Shakespeare's Richard and Queen Elizabeth through both their transposition of gender, where they cross their gender-specific boundaries, challenging gender norms and constructions. I take gender into account of their ability to rule, mainly because of how their subjects may perceive them for the gender they decide to perform or shed. Furthermore, I look at both of Shakespeare's Richard and Queen Elizabeth from a Queer Theory perspective, opening an avenue in how to interpret the gaps between their lives, actions, and language. In taking into consideration that both Shakespeare's Richard and Queen Elizabeth do not have heirs to their thrones, I am intrigued by their deviation from the heteronormative, and how both figures do not conform to the expectation of birthing a successor. Overall, I believe Queen Elizabeth makes for a good ruler because of her ability to deconstruct gender-specific boundaries, cultivating a powerful hold on language, and being able to access agency over a monarchical institution governed by patriarchy. It is also evident that Queen Elizabeth performs her role as ruler far better than Richard from *Richard II*, who repeatedly tells the audience that he is not fit for ruling.

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