

**A205: Culture and Belief in Europe 1450 – 1600**  
**A205/21: Richard II: Politics, Patriotism and Authority**

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**Contributor(s) in clip:**  
**David Giles**  
**Jeremy Irons**  
**Narrator: Andrew Sachs**

**Clip transcript: A205 Patriotism**

**Andrew Sachs**

In some sense it could be said that the real hero of Richard II is England. Patriotism is an important aspect of the play. It's a theme that can be brought out at various points and through various characters.

**Jeremy Irons**

I think that the deep abiding love for England is something that, that was very important to Shakespeare and very important to Richard. How much the historical Richard loved it I'm not sure, but I mean we have the Gaunt speech, great love of the country, this jewel set in the silvered sea, or whatever it is, and I think it went further with Richard because not only was the country his and the nettles and adders, that was his garden if you like, this Eden, this demi paradise, but the sun was his image, I mean the image he constantly said 'I am the sun' I mean 'I dazzle like the sun'. There is - and God who he saw as being there or wherever, was the man who placed him in that position, so he was just part of that whole, that whole world – an integral part and I think that gave him great grounding and great strength.

**David Giles**

I think that when Richard comes back from Ireland and kisses the ground that, that it is in a way a marvellously easy patriotic gesture. I think he means it at the time but that he, that it is much more Richard the actor and Richard the poet than Richard the patriot who is, who is speaking at that moment. I really do think that Richard means it at that moment but I wouldn't say it was a great patriotic gesture.

**Extract: Richard II, 1978, BBC, Act III Scene 2 Lines 4 – 26**

**Contributor(s):**  
**Derek Jacobi**  
**Charles Keating**

**Aumerle**

How brooks your grace the air  
After your late tossing on the breaking sea?

**Richard**

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' hooves.

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.

### **David Giles**

I don't really think that either Bolingbroke or Richard are particular patriots. I think the patriot in the play is John of Gaunt. And Shakespeare makes this very clear by the anthology ridden speech which is so difficult to get past but which is a wonderful piece of writing. I think Richard is - thinks about England far too much as his own sort of plaything to be really a patriot and I don't think, I think Bolingbroke is full of self-interest and that the, the interest – the interesting thing is that Gaunt is the true patriot in the play.

**Extract: Richard II, 1978, BBC, Act II Scene 1 Lines 40 - 67**

**Contributor(s): John Gielgud**

### **Gaunt**

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle.  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise.  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war.  
This happy breed of men, this little world.  
This precious stone set in the silver sea  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or as a moat defensive to one house  
Against the envy of less happier lands.  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,  
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings  
Feared by their breed and famous by their birth,  
Renowned for their deeds as far from home  
For Christian service and true chivalry  
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry  
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son.  
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land.  
Dear for her reputation through the world.  
Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it.  
Like to a tenement or pelting farm.  
England, bound in with the triumphant sea  
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege  
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame.  
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds.  
That England that was wont to conquer others  
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.  
Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,  
How happy then were my ensuing death!