

# “An honest tale speeds best being plainly told”: Art, Truth and Rhetorical Supremacy in *Richard III*

“Dürüst bir hikaye en hızlı yalın bir dille aktarılır”\*:  
*Shakespeare’in Kral III. Richard Adlı Oyununda Retorik ve Doğruluk*

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## Abstract

The relationship between ‘rhetoric’ and ‘truth’ has long been questioned and discussed, especially by ancient philosophers or instructors of rhetoric such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. Since rhetoric is associated with persuasive speech and is available to the service of both good and evil, the general tendency has been to foreground its power and emphasize that the goal of rhetoric should be to seek the truth. In the second wooing scene of Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, King Richard –after having ordered the murder of her two sons- asks Queen Elizabeth to be “eloquent” on his behalf while persuading her daughter Young Elizabeth to marry him. To this, she replies “An honest tale speeds best being plainly told” emphasizing not only that ‘truth’ does not need

## Öz

‘Retorik’ ve ‘doğruluk’ arasındaki ilişki her zaman -özellikle de Plato, Aristoteles, Cicero ve Quintilian gibi antik filozoflar veya retorik eğitmenleri tarafından- sorgulanan bir konu olmuştur. Bunun en önemli nedeni ikna etmek için önemli bir araç olan retorik’in iyi veya kötüyü ayırt etmeden herkesin hizmetinde olmasıdır. Genelde retorik’in gücü ortaya koyulurken amacının da gerçeği aramak olması gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır. Shakespeare’in *III. Richard* adlı tarihi oyununda Kral Richard -kraliçenin iki oğlu emriyle öldürülmesinin ardından- Kraliçe Elizabeth’den kızı Genç Elizabeth’i kendisiyle evlenmesi için onu söz sanatıyla ikna etmesini istediğinde, Kraliçe onunla alay eder: “Dürüst bir hikaye en hızlı yalın bir dille aktarılır”. Bu söz ile hem retorikte

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eloquence but also the danger of rhetoric. In this English history play that has been constructed on dialogue rather than action, rhetorical skill is equivalent to power. Even though almost all of the characters employ a rhetorical style up to a certain point, they do not even come close to the effect produced by Queen Margaret, Richard, and Richmond. Although they all make extensive use of all types of rhetoric ('deliberative', 'judicial', and 'demonstrative'), it seems that Queen Margaret represents the past, Richard the present and Richmond the future. Queen Margaret commands the 'heavens' to bring forth violence upon her enemies through her rhetorical power while Richard uses his rhetorical competence to remove his opponents and gain the English throne. It is only Richmond, however, who combines rhetorical skill with 'truth' to gain the throne and restore order in England. In this respect, the aim of this study is to foreground the importance of the balance between 'truth' and 'rhetoric' in gaining supremacy in Richard III.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric, Truth, Richard III, Queen Margaret, Richard, Richmond.

doğruluğun önemine hem de ne kadar tehlikeli bir sanat olduğuna vurgu yapılır. Fiziki eylemden çok diyalog üzerine kurulmuş olan oyunda karakterlerin retorik kullanımındaki ustalığı, sahip oldukları güce eşdeğerdir. Oyundaki tüm karakterlerin her ne kadar belli bir ölçüde retorik kullandıkları görülse de, yarattıkları etki Kraliçe Margaret, Richard ve Richmond ile mukayese edilemez. Bu üç karakter üstünlük sağlamak için retorik kullanmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda Kraliçe Margaret, retorik gücüyle 'göklere' seslenmek suretiyle düşmanlarını lanetleyip adeta sonlarını hazırlarken, Richard aynı suretle muhaliflerini tek tek yok ederek İngiliz tahtına geçer. Fakat oyunun sonunda ortaya çıkan Richmond -Margaret ve Richard'dan farklı olarak- retoriğin gücünü 'doğruluk' ile birleştirerek tahtın sahibi ve İngiltere'ye tekrar düzen getiren kişi olmayı başarır. III. Richard'daki retorik kullanımı üzerine odaklanan bu çalışmada Kraliçe Margaret, Richard ve Richmond'un hitabetleri üzerinden 'retorik' ve 'doğruluk' arasında kurdukları denge incelenecektir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Retorik, Doğruluk, III. Richard, Kraliçe Margaret, Richard, Richmond.

## 1. Introduction: Rhetoric and Truth in Philosophy

The term ‘rhetoric’, coming from the Greek word ‘rhetör’ meaning speaker in the assembly, refers to a repertoire of means of persuasion ranging from the “figurative language and formal organization of a text” to the modes of persuasion used by the speaker (Kahn, 1994: 5). Since rhetoric is associated with persuasive speech and is available to the service of both good and evil, the relationship between ‘rhetoric’ and ‘truth’ has long been questioned and discussed, especially by ancient philosophers or instructors of rhetoric such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian<sup>1</sup>. The general tendency has been to foreground its power and emphasize that the goal of rhetoric should be only the ‘right’ and the ‘true’, because it is a powerful instrument that has no regard for truth. In “The Encomium of Helen”, Gorgias explains the effect of rhetoric on ‘souls’<sup>2</sup>:

That persuasion, when added to speech,  
can impress the soul as it wishes,  
one may learn  
first from the utterances of the astronomers  
who, substituting opinion for opinion,  
taking away one but creating another,  
make what is incredible and unclear  
seem **true**<sup>4</sup> to the eyes of opinion;  
and second, compelling contests in words,  
in which a single speech,  
written with art, but not spoken with **truth**,  
may charm and persuade a large multitude;  
and third, the struggles of philosophic arguments,  
in which swiftness of thought is also shown  
making belief in an opinion easily changed. (81)

- 1 See Also. Abbott, D. P. (2014). “‘Eloquence is Power’ Hobbes on the Use and Abuse of Rhetoric”. *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 32 (4), 386-411.
- 2 Güzel Közker sates that theatre brings forth a psychosocial dimension to dramatic texts through linguistic interaction and dialogue. See. Güzel Köşker, N. H. (2012). “Sahnedeki Yitim: Vahşi Batı”. *Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 52 (2). 58-59.
- 3 All the words or phrases in bold are my emphasis.

In *Philebus*, Plato indicates that rhetoric “enslaves everything in voluntary, unconstrained submission to itself” (1982: 133). Aristotle in *Treatise on Rhetoric* discusses the knowledge of rhetoric and warns that a person “unfairly availing himself of such powers of speaking, may be, in a very high degree, injurious” (1995: 9). Again in Plato’s *Gorgias*, Gorgias resembles rhetoric to boxing, wrestling or armed combat, and stressing that rhetoric is a powerful art that must be used with caution (1960: 34-5). Furthermore, Socrates questions the character and sincerity of rhetoricians by pointing out that “[...] he who would be a skilful rhetorician has no need of truth” (Plato, 1993: 85). In *Symposium and Phaedrus*<sup>4</sup>, the personified rhetoric defends herself against accusations by claiming that she never advocated falsehood:

Perhaps, however, rhetoric has been getting too roughly handled by us, and she might answer: what amazing nonsense is this! As if I forced any man to learn to speak in ignorance of the truth! Whatever my advice may be worth, I should have told him to arrive at the **truth** first, and then come to me. At the same time I boldly assert that mere knowledge of the **truth** will not give you the art of persuasion. (Plato, 1993:74)

Aristotle emphasizes that rhetoric is useful because “truth and justice are in their nature stronger than their opposites; so that if decisions be made, not in conformity to the rules of propriety, it must have been that they have been got the better of, through fault of the advocates themselves” (1995: 7)<sup>5</sup>. So, as pointed out by Socrates, one must seek truth first and then find the rhetorical means to discuss or present it. Thus, the rhetorician must always make a choice: “Now as logic and rhetoric are in their own indifferent to truth or falsehood, it must require an act of choice in either case to select the former or the latter [...]” (ibid., 1995: 10).

In “The Rhetoric of Rhetoric”, Peter Munz points out in there has been a revival in the interest in rhetoric in recent decades:

4 Also See. Wemer, D. (2010). “Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato’s “Phaedrus”. *Greece & Rome, Second Series*, 57 (1), 21-46.

5 Also See. Rorty, A. (2011). “Aristotle on the Virtues of Rhetoric”. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 64 (4), 715-733.

One of the remarkable features of the second half of our century is the revival of an interest in rhetoric, always alleged to be the art of persuasion not by **truth** or reason or any other authority but by a number of irrational, psychologically effective, devices, which an earlier more rational age might have dismissed as irrelevant tricks. (1990: 121)

In “Letting Rhetoric Be: On Rhetoric and Rhetoricity” Lundberg has humorously states that “Indeed, the death and subsequent rebirth of rhetoric have been declared countless times, and debates surrounding the nature and character of rhetoric— from antiquity through the renaissance and even into the modern day— seem to continue almost interminably.” (Lundberg, 2013: 247) This interest has also reflected on the study of Shakespearean plays such as Joel B. Altman’s *The Improbability of “Othello”: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood* and Scott F. Crider’s *With What Persuasion: An Essay on Shakespeare and the Ethics of Rhetoric* (Harris, 2011: 469). In this respect, the aim of this study is to trace the use of rhetoric by three characters in *Richard III* (1593), which comes across as the most dependent on a rhetorical style among Shakespeare’s plays (Hammond, 2016: 114). In this English history play, which has been constructed on dialogue rather than physical action, the battles for supremacy take place verbally on the stage. Although almost all of the characters in the play employ a rhetorical style due to the tendency of using blank verse in English Renaissance drama, Queen Margaret, Richard and Richmond are singled out as having an extensive ability for rhetoric. Their style, however, is different. While Queen Margaret ‘summons’ violence on her enemies by calling out to the heavens, Richard is calculating while removing the obstacles to the English throne. It is only Richmond, however, who combines rhetorical skill with ‘truth’ to gain the throne and restore order in England.

In *Treatise on Rhetoric*, Aristotle argues that there are three kinds of rhetoric, ‘deliberative’, ‘judicial’, and ‘demonstrative’ (or ‘epideictic’). The business of ‘deliberative’ rhetoric is partly exhortation to persuade and partly dissuasion on what is either expedient (advisable) or inexpedient (unadvisable), and adopts the future tense because it is directed towards things to come. ‘Judicial’ rhetoric concerns itself with accusation and defence. Its object is justice and injustice and it employs the past tense, for it is on the subject of actions already done (Aristotle, 1995: 262). The third kind of rhetoric, which is ‘demonstrative’ concerns itself

with praise and blame with the goal of honouring or disgracing and uses the present tense as it refers to the qualities generally accepted as either praiseworthy or despicable (Aristotle, 1995: 24-29). Although they all make extensive use of these three types of rhetoric, it seems that Queen Margaret mainly represents the past, Richard the present and Richmond the future.

## **2. Rhetoric and Poetic Justice: Queen Margaret**

The first character to be analysed in terms of rhetorical competence is Queen Margaret, wife of the deceased King Henry, who stands out as a kind of Nemesis with the rhetorical power to avenge past wrongdoings. According to Engin Uzmen, Queen Margaret acts as the conscience of the people who have done evil deeds, and continuously reminds them of the murders that they have committed and the miserable destiny awaiting them (1973: 203). In this sense she represents the past and mainly uses judicial oratory. Her rhetoric is so effective that everyone who is subjected to her curses experience a horrible end. According to Brooke, she is Richard's only match: "[the] relationship between rhetoric and reality could not be more plainly stated; that the words are put in Margaret's mouth confirms her as the only antagonist comparable to Richard himself" (1999: 167).

Queen Margaret first appears in 1.3 in which Richard aims at creating hostility between the older nobility and Queen Elizabeth<sup>6</sup> by accusing her of influencing the King Edward into promoting her allies and imprisoning Clarence and Lord Hastings. Queen Margaret first listens to them unobserved, expressing her hatred towards them for their role in the ruin of House through the use of asides. She indicates that Queen Elizabeth's "honour, state and seat" (1.3.112) belongs to her while cursing Richard: "[Aside] Out, devil! [...] Thou kill'dst my husband Henry in the Tower,/And Edward, my poor son, at Tewkesbury" (1.3.118-120); "A murd'rous villain" (1.3.136); "Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave this world/Thou cacodemon: there thy kingdom is" (1.3.143-4). Queen Margaret soon loses her patience and joins the discussion.

Queen Margaret addresses the nobility as "pirates" who have pillaged her "goods", her husband King Henry, son Edward and her kingdom. According to her "[t]his sorrow that

6 See Meyer, A. M. (2013). "Richard III's" Forelives: Rewriting Elizabeth(s) in Tudor Historiography. In *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 26, 156-183.

I have by right is yours;/And all the pleasures you usurp are mine.” (1.3.158-173). At that moment, Richard reminds the nobility of her past misconduct -the mistreatment of his father Richard and the murder of his brother Rutland in her hands- emphasizing that her downfall was caused by the curse his father laid on her. To this, Margaret declares that if the heavens took note of such curses, then it should definitely hear hers. At that moment, she transforms to an agent of divine judgement, who has been sent to punish everyone verbally for their crimes:

Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses:  
Though not by war, by surfeit die your King,  
As ours by murder, to make him a king.  
Edward thy son, that now is Prince of Wales,  
For Edward my son, that was the Prince of Wales,  
Die in his youth, by like untimely violence.  
Thyself, a queen, for me that was a queen,  
Outlive thy glory, like my wretched self:  
Long may'st thou live to wail thy children's death,  
And see another, as I see thee now,  
Deck'd in thy rights as thou art stall'd in mine;  
Long die thy happy before thy death,  
And after many lengthen'd hours of grief,  
Die neither mother, wife, nor England's Queen. (1.3.196-209)

Her prayer for evil turns out to be more horrifying than the actual deed of physical violence. She starts with Queen Elizabeth, who has acquired everything that previously belonged to her. She prays that she she might die neither a “wife”, “mother” or “queen”. Her wish for the death of her sons by “untimely violence” is especially disturbing. She continues by cursing Lord Rivers, Lord Dorset and Lord Hastings, who stood by when her son Edward was “stabbed with bloody daggers”: “God, I pay Him,/That none of you may live his natural age,/But by some unlooked accident cut off!” (1.3.209-213), and completes her list with Richard. She indicates that “If heaven have any grievous plague in store” exceeding those

that she wishes for him, let them wait until his “sins” are “ripe” and then hurl down their “indignation” on him (1.3.216-220). She warns them of impending evil: “The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul;/Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou liv’st,/And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends”, hoping for Richard not to get any sleep unless “some tormenting dream/Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils.” (1.3.222-7). Margaret then reproaches Richard with his wickedness through the use of ‘anaphora’ (Thou):

**Thou** elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog,  
**Thou** that wast seal’d in thy nativity  
The slave of Nature, and the son of hell;  
**Thou** slander of thy heavy mother’s womb,  
**Thou** loathed issue of thy father’s loins,  
**Thou** rag of honour, thou detested– (1.3.228-233)

Richard, however, denies what is really affirmed while Buckingham pleads to her to stop cursing in the name of charity but she protests that they have dealt “uncharitably” with her and “butcher’d” all her hopes (1.3.274-7). She exempts Buckingham -whose garments have not been stained with Margaret’s family “blood” (1.3.280-4)- from her curses, but he sides with the crowd by claiming that curses do not go beyond the lips of those that utter it (1.3.285-6). To this, Margaret advises him to be aware of Richard: “the yonder dog!/  
Look when he fawns, he bites; and when he bites/His venom tooth will rankle to death.” (1.3.289-291). Buckingham, however, does not believe her, and she warns them that all her curses will come true and she will be claimed a “prophetess” (1.3.301).

The rhetoric employed by Queen Margaret in Act 1.3 continues its effect all through the play. Her utterances illustrate the power of words, which become more horrifying when her ‘prophesies’ are realized later in the play one by one. King Edward dies from grief (2.2), Rivers-Grey-Vaughan are executed at Pomprey (“Grey: Now Margaret’s curse is fallen upon our heads,” 3.3.14), Hasting is executed (“Hasting: O Margaret, Margaret, now thy heavy curse/Is lighted on poor Hastings’ wretched head! 3.4.92-3), Lady Anne replaces Elizabeth as the queen of England and the two princes -Edward and York- are murdered in the Tower (Act 5, and Buckingham is executed (“[...]Margaret’s curse falls heavy on my neck: /‘When he,’ quoth she, ‘shall split thy heart with sorrow,/Remember Margaret



was a prophetess.” 5.1.25-7). Queen Margaret reappears briefly after the death of Queen Elizabeth’s sons in order to “watch the waning of” her “enemies” (4.4.4):

Bear with me: I am hungry for revenge,  
And now I cloy me with beholding it.  
Thy Edward he is dead, that kill’d my Edward;  
Thy other Edward is dead, to quit my Edward;  
Young York, he is but boot, because both they  
Match’d not the high perfection of my loss.  
Thy Clarence he is dead, that stabb’d my Edward;  
And the beholders of this frantic play,  
Th’adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey,  
Untimely smother’d in their dusky graves.  
Richard yet lives, hell’s black intelligencer,  
[...]  
Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,  
That I may live and say, ‘That dog is dead.’ (4.4.61-78)

She approaches Queen Elizabeth to remind her of all that she has lost: “Where is thy husband now? Where be thy brothers?/Where are thy two sons? Wherein dost thou joy?/Who sues and kneels and says, ‘God save the Queen?’” (4.4.92-4). The rhetoric employed by Queen Margaret is so devastating and effective that Queen Elizabeth asks her to teach her how to curse her own enemies. Margaret instructs her as follows:

Forbear to sleep the nights, and fast the days;  
Compare dead happiness with living woe;  
Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were  
And he that slew them fouler than he is:  
Bettering thy loss makes the bad-causer worse;  
Revolving this will teach thee how to curse. (4.4.118-123)

Margaret claims that Queen Elizabeth's "woes" will make her curses as "sharp" and piercing as hers and departs.

Queen Margaret –who represents the past- functions as a Nemesis to punish those who have played a role in the fall of the House of Lancaster. Although Queen Margaret does not appear much in the play, her rhetorical power portrayed in Act 1.3 continues to effect the action in the play, and every time someone is to be executed or punished, they remember that Queen Margaret was truly a 'prophets'.

### **3. Falsehood in Rhetoric: Richard, the Duke of Gloucester**

The second character to be analysed regarding his rhetorical ability is Richard, the Duke of Gloucester, whose rhetoric is used solely to deceive, manipulate and harm others. As early as *Henry VI, Part 3* (1591), the Duke of Gloucester (Richard) claims that he will play "orator as well as Nestor" and deceive with such mastery that he will surpass Machiavelli's discourses to "pluck down" the English crown (3.2.188-95)<sup>7</sup>. This proves to be true. In relation to Richard's rhetorical tactics, McDonald has commented that we are both attracted and repelled by Richard on the basis of what he says, because he does not commit any sort of violence himself:

[For Richard] words speak louder than actions. At no point in the text is he shown killing anyone; others carry out his mischief for him, and they do so because Richard tells them or asks them or promises them something to do it. Richard gets what he wants with words, and his gift for language is almost unparalleled, as the very first lines of the play attest.

(McDonald,1996 :199)

Even though he is successful in gaining the crown in the third act by removing the obstacles in his way, he is not able to maintain his power because his action, as well as his orations, lacks truth. The reason of his rhetorical failure later on in the play might be explained by Richard Marback's "A Meditation on Vulnerability in Rhetoric":

<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare, W. (1914). "Henry VI, Part 3", *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Ed. W. J. Craig, London: Pordes, 609-644.

The moment of awareness of rhetoric as the possibility of persuasion generates with it a suspicion of rhetoric as the dangerous capacity for unduly influencing others. The pejorative designation” mere” rhetoric that denotes suspicion of undue influence urges dismissing rhetoric for its infelicities and insincerities. This is not the kind of attempt at influence so inadequate or insincere it is easily identified by an audience as coercive or manipulative and so as unpersuasive.

(Marback, 2010: 1)

Richard’s fight for rhetorical supremacy begins at the very start of the play, where he establishes a close relationship with the audience -the first target of his rhetoric. His opening soliloquy provides a historical background to the War of the Roses and establish himself within this new order. Although the war has ended with the victory of the Yorks and the accession Edward IV, Richard feels isolated in this peaceful atmosphere. His description of himself as lacking proper proportions, being hunchbacked, ugly, and born prematurely, together with the mention of the dogs barking upon his appearance is directed at evoking pity in the audience and justifying his future action: “And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover/To entertain these fair well-spoken days,/I am determined to prove a villain” (1.1.22-30)<sup>8</sup>.

After taking the audience to his confidence, he moves on to his plans. His first plot is to eliminate his elder brother (George) Clarence, which he has set in motion through a prophesy that ‘G’, one of the heirs to the throne, shall be King Edward’s murderer. On seeing Clarence being taken to the tower, he plays the part of a ‘concerned’ brother claiming that Edward is being influenced by Queen Elizabeth, that they are “not safe” (1.1.70), and giving assurance that he will either help Clarence gain back his liberty “or else lie” in his place (1.1.115). But following Clarence’s departure, Richard reveals his hypocrisy: “Go, tread the path that thou shalt ne’er return/Simple plain Clarence, I do love thee so/That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,” (1.1.119-120). He later sends two murderers to kill Clarence in the tower despite King Edward’s reversal of the order.

In addition to getting rid of Clarence, Richard also wants to marry Lady Anne –Lancastrian and widow of Edward, the Prince of Wales- in order to divert any kind of sympathy for the

8 For a study of the soliloquies in *Richard III*, see. Clemen, W. (1987). *Shakespeare’s Soliloquies*, Tr. Charity Scott Stokes, London and New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 15-23.

Lancastrian cause. This comes across as a great rhetorical challenge because he is a York, deformed and has caused the death of both her husband and father-in-law King Henry. For this, he approaches Lady Anne in the presence of King Henry's corpse. The majority of the scene takes place in the form of an extended 'stichomythia' –dialogue in which two characters speak alternate lines of verse- between Richard and Anne. Despite Anne's multiple references to Richard as the "devil" who has made people miserable through his past crimes and her claim that Henry's lifeless corpse is bleeding afresh in the presence of his murderer (1.2.55-61), he reminds her of Christian charity: "Sweet saint, for charity be not so curst" (1.2.49), "Lady, you know no rules of charity,/Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses." (1.2.68-69). In order to appear penitent, he even accepts having killed her husband. He agrees that her husband was "gentle, mild, and virtuous", positive qualities that made him "fitter" to be with "the King of heaven" rather than on earth. On being told that he is "unfit" for any place but hell, Richard diverts her attention away from his crimes by claiming that he is also fit for her "bed-chamber" (1.2.106-114). He appeals to her as a lover, claiming that it was her beauty that provoked him to take action and give her a "better husband [himself]" (1.2.143). To his claim that her "eyes" "infected" him, Lady Anne wishes that they were "basilisks" that would strike him dead. Richard agrees that death would be better than living hell on earth with "salt tears" drawn from his eyes (1.2.157). Richard uses "salt tears" to illustrate that the House of Lancaster –represented by Queen Margaret, King Henry and her husband Edward- are also guilty of past crimes and that he did not feel more miserable even when his brother Rutland was killed or when her "warlike" father told him of the death of his own father. Both of these took place under Lancastrian rule and in Shakespeare's first three plays of the tetralogy on the War of the Roses -*Henry VI, Part 1, Part 2* and *Part 3*. His intentional reference to the violence he has endured in the hands of the Lancastrians is aimed at gaining her sympathy. Thus, it was Anne who planted the seed of sorrow in his heart (1.2.168-174), if her "revengeful heart" cannot forgive him, she might as well take his life with the sword he places in her hands (1.2.177-182):

Nay, do not pause, for I did kill King Henry–

But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me.

Nay, now dispatch: 'twas I that stabb'd young Edward–

But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on. (1.2.183-6)

As a result of Richard's brilliantly played out act and his emphasis on her beauty, her guard falls and the mood changes to his advantage:

*Anne:* I would I knew thy heart.

*Richard:* 'Tis figured in my tongue.

*Anne:* I fear me both are false.

*Richard:* Then never was man **true**. (1.2.196-9)

Lady Anne's remarks portray the general view concerning the falsity of rhetoric and her distrust of Richard's words, but, nevertheless, she wears his ring expressing her joy in seeing him "so penitent" (1.2.224). This scene is a spectacle of persuasion, brilliantly played out by Richard as he also comments: "Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?/Was ever woman in this humour won?" (1.2.232-3). Following his performance, Richard immediately switches to direct speech to reveal that he will "have her", but "will not keep her long." (1.2.234)

Having guaranteed her hand, Richard then moves on to cause hostility between the older nobility and the new advanced kindred of Queen Elizabeth, Clarence is murdered by two Murderers sent by Richard, and King Edward IV –who had reversed the order that was disregarded by Richard- follows Clarence soon after (2.2). After everyone leaves in Act I.3, Richard praises himself for persuading everyone that it was "the Queen and her allies/ That stir the King against the Duke my [his] brother" and then comments on his religious hypocrisy:

But then I sigh, and, with a piece of Scripture,  
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:  
And thus I clothe my naked villainy  
With odd old ends stol'n forth of Holy Writ,  
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil. (1.3.334-8)

After getting rid of Clarence and Edward, his next target becomes the young princes.

In order to remove Young Edward and Young Richard, Richard first sends Lord Rivers, Lord Grey and Sir Thomas Vaughan –who have gone to fetch Young Edward from Ludlow

to London for his coronation- to the Castle of Pomfret as prisoners and has them executed. He manipulates the Archbishop of York to persuade Queen Elizabeth and Young Richard to break their sanctuary to unite the two brothers. As Lord Protector, he sends them to the tower as 'a safety precaution' till the coronation. He orders the execution of Lord Hasting -who is determined to make Edward the next king- by accusing him of siding with Queen Elizabeth and Mistress Shore against him. In order to justify the executions, he and Buckingham convince the Lord Mayor that there was a plot against their lives. Richard claims that he loved Hastings so much that he took him "for the plainest harmless creature/ That breath'd upon the earth a Christian;" (3.5.25-6) and did not recognize that he was a traitor because "So smooth he daub'd his vice with show of virtue" (3.5.24-29).

One last obstacle that needs to be taken up is the two princes' claims to the throne. To persuade the assembled citizens, he sends his 'partner in crime' Buckingham, who promises to use his oratory skills: "Doubt not, my lord: I'll play the orator/As if the golden fee for which I plead/Were for myself; [...]" (3.5.94-5). Although Buckingham cannot create the desired effect on the audience during the assembly by talking about King Edward and his children's 'bastardry', Richard's "discipline in war", "wisdom in peace", "bounty", "virtue" and "fair humility"(3.7.5-22), the Lord Mayor comes to persuade Richard to accept the English crown in 3.7.

In Act 3.7, Richard employs visual religious images and religious rhetoric. On their arrival, Lord Major and Buckingham are told that Richard does not wish to be disturbed in prayer, but after a while Richard enters between two Bishops holding a prayer book, "[t]rue ornaments to know a holy man." (3.7.98). He asks their pardon for deferring them " in the service of my [his] God-" but does not waste any time in asking them their pleasure. Buckingham uses this opportunity to forward their proposal. He accuses Richard of leaving the "throne majestic" that belongs to his "ancestors" to the "corruption of a blemish'd stock; [King Edward's children]" and England is personified as a trapped woman seeking her "proper limbs" (3.7.116-135). Richard thanks them warmly for their faithful love but appears to reject their proposal by indicating that the "royal tree [Edward] hath left us royal fruit [his son, the prince]," (3.7.166), praying that "God defend" that he should take away what "fortune of his stars" bestowed on the prince (3.7.170-2). Buckingham argues that Young Edward is a 'bastard' because he is not from "Edward's wife", since Edward IV was first "contract[ed] to Lady Lucy" and then to the sister of the King of France. He claims

that Queen Elizabeth, “mother to a many sons”, seduced Edward and got Young Edward whom our manners call the Prince in an “unlawful bed” (3.7.175-190). After his elaborate presentation of the case, Buckingham implores Richard to “draw forth” his “noble ancestry” from “the corruption of abusing times/Unto a lineal, true-derived course” (3.7.197-9).

Buckingham’s arguments coupled with Richard’s ‘holy’ appearance and assumed humility turn out to be highly impressive. As a result, the Mayor supported by Catesby, tries to persuade Richard into accepting the crown (3.7.200-2). Although Richard appears to withdraw from accepting such a ‘responsibility’ because he is “unfit for state and majesty.” (3.7.204). At this point, the Mayor and Buckingham start to leave and Catesby implores him to accept the crown and Richard, no longer able to reject their pleas, accepts their proposal: “[...] I am not made of stones,/But penetrable to your kind entreaties,/Albeit against my conscience and my soul.” (3.7.223-5) In the third act, Richard proves to be a great rhetorician, and as a result, he is crowned as the king of England. Richard, through political campaigning, is able to create the impression that the he is urged to take the position of king due to official solicitation and public acclamation. However, because Richard’s rhetoric lacks truth, he is not able to maintain his power.

After Richard becomes the king of England, he becomes over paranoid and his rhetorical power begins to decline with his sanity. In order to secure his position, Richard ends his partnership with Buckingham, hires Tyrrell to murder his two nephews, and fails miserably in persuading Queen Elizabeth to woo Young Elizabeth on his behalf. When he asks Queen Elizabeth to be ‘eloquent’ –and important element in rhetoric- to this end, the former queen mocks him:

*King Richard:* Be eloquent in my behalf to her.

*Elizabeth:* An honest tale speeds best being plainly told.

*King Richard:* Then plainly to her tell my loving tale.

*Elizabeth:* Plain and not honest is too harsh a style.

(4.4, 357-360)

Although Queen Elizabeth appears to submit to his demand, she secretly promises her daughter in marriage to Richmond. He gradually loses all the support that he has attained throughout Act I-III and is finally defeated in Act 5.

#### **4. Truth and Rhetoric: Richmond**

The third and final character that will be considered in terms of his rhetorical effect is Richmond, who does not appear as a character until the fifth act just before the Battle of Bosworth. In the play, Richmond –who is flawless- acts as a deus ex machine and represents the future of England. Of course, it should also be kept in mind that he is the actual Queen Elizabeth's grandfather, who established the Tudor dynasty. So, it should come as no surprise that he has been drawn so 'flawless'.

Richmond presents himself as the minister of God charged with eliminating the homicide Richard and restoring order in England. This aspect is also supported in Act 5.3, in which the ghosts of Richard's victims such as Prince Edward [son of Henry VI], Henry VI, Clarence, Rivers, Grey and Vaughan, Hastings, the two young princes, Lady Anne and Buckingham visit Richmond and Richard in their sleep the night before the Battle of Bosworth. They wish Richmond success while cursing Richard and telling him to "despair and die" (5.3.121-173).

Both Richmond and King Richard present a 'war' oration to their armies in order to motivate them Before the Battle of Bosworth Field. In Machiavelli's *The Arte of War*, Fabrizio states that "it is necessary that a general should be an orator as well as a soldier; for if he does not know how to address himself to the whole army, he will sometimes find that it no easy task to mold it [the army] to his purposes." (1965: 128). In such an oration, leaders should aim to "dispel their [soldiers] fears, inflame their courage, confirm their resolution, point out the snares laid for them, promise them rewards, inform them of danger and the way to escape it;" and the general may "rebuke, entreat, threaten, praise, reproach, or fill them with hopes" in this respect (1965: 128)

Richmond and Richard both believe that they are the superior side, and use 'amplification' to highlight their confidence in their victory. They both begin their address with insults directed at insulting the opponent and end with emphasis on religious imagery. In Machiavelli's *The Arte of War* it is stated that religion "greatly contributes to making them do their duty in ancient times; for upon any default, they were threatened not only with human punishments, but the vengeance of the gods. (Machiavelli, 1965: 128).

Richmond, starts by reminding his soldiers that "God, and our [their] good cause" and the "prayers of holy saints and wronged souls," fight on their side (5.3. 238-241). He claims that



even those fighting beside Richard, “A bloody tyrant and a homicide” (5.3. 244- 246) would prefer that they should win the battle. Richmond amplifies Richard’s character by referring to his “bloody” deeds in order to abuse his character:

One rais’d in blood, and one in blood establish’d;  
One that made means to come by what he hath,  
And slaughter’d those that were the means to help him;  
A base foul stone, made precious by the foil  
Of England’s chair, where he is falsely set;  
One that hath ever been God’s enemy. (5.3. 248-253)

With lines 247-252, Richmond draws a portrait of Richard as a tyrant “raised” and “establish’d” in blood, one who has “slaughter’d” those that helped him, and a God’s enemy “falsely” “set” on the English throne. Richmond uses the image of Richard as “God’s enemy” to support his following statement. He indicates that anyone fighting against Richard will, naturally, become God’s soldiers:

Then, **if you** fight against God’s enemy,  
God will, in justice, ward **you** as his soldiers;  
**If you** do sweat to put a tyrant down,  
**You** sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain;  
**If you** do fight against your country’s foes,  
**Your** country’s fat shall pay your pains the hire;  
**If you** do fight in safeguard of your wives,  
**Your** wives shall welcome home the conquerors;  
**If you** do free your children from the sword,  
**Your** children’s children quits in it your age. (5.3. 254-263)

The rhetorical figure ‘anaphora’, repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive verses, is used in the “if you” and “you”/“your” pattern create a cause and effect chain, of

actions and their rewards. This also illustrates that Richmond employs the future tense in his speech. By structuring his speech on the rewards awaiting them in their country, from their wives and children if they choose to “fight against God’s enemies” and eliminate a “tyrant” and fight against their “country’s foes,” Richmond’s last remarks to his soldier establish Richmond as God’s scourge on Richard:

Then, in the name of God and all these rights,  
Advance your standards, draw your willing swords!  
For me, the ransom of my bold attempt  
Shall be this cold corpse on the earth’s cold face;  
But if I thrive, the gain of my attempt  
The least of you shall share his part thereof.  
Sound, drums, and trumpets, boldly and cheerfully!  
God, and Saint George! Richmond and victory!

(5.3. 264-271)

In the lines above, Richmond is portrayed as a man with a noble cause standing up against King Richard, the ‘tyrant’. Richmond’s speech inspires his men, clarifies the values in question, and finally produces its intended result. Richmond attributes all his success to God, and indicates that his bold attempt will either end with his death or his victory, which will be shared with those around him. Through these lines, Richmond innovates God and their just cause, essential weapons in military oratory.

Placed after Richmond’s, Richard’s speech presents a clear contrast of the two and to highlight the disappearance of his rhetorical power. While Richmond’s oration involves reference to God and a just cause, Richard’s is commonplace and thus unimpressive. He begins by drawing a portrait of the French:

What shall I say, more than I have infer’d?  
Remember whom you are to cope withal:  
A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways;  
A scum of Bretons and base lackey peasants,

Whom their o'er-cloyed country vomits forth  
To desperate adventures and assur'd destruction.  
You sleeping safe, they bring to you unrest;  
You having lands, and bless'd with beauteous wives,  
They would restrain the one, distain the other. (5.3. 315-323)

He defines the French as “vagabonds”, “rascals”, “runaways”, “A scum of Bretons” and “base lackey peasants” whom their country “vomits forth” to a desperate “adventure” with assured “destruction”. Richard indicates that the reason the French are disturbing them in their “safe” sleep is because the English have lands and are “blessed” with “beauteous wives”. Then Richard continues with insulting their commander Richmond. He claims that the French are led by nothing but a “paltry fellow” kept in Britain at their cost, a “milksoy” who has been well-kept but can't endure the bad conditions such as the cold (5.3. 324-7). After reminding the soldiers about their past success against the French, he expresses that if they are to be conquered, let it be by real men:

If we be conquer'd, let men conquer us!  
And not these bastard Bretons, whom our fathers  
Have in their own land beaten, bobb'd, and thump'd,  
And in record left them the heirs of shame.  
Shall these enjoy our lands? Lie with our wives?  
Ravish our daughters? (5.3. 333-8)

And lastly, Richard asks them to fight as the “gentlemen” of England: “Fight, gentlemen of England! Fight, bold yeomen!” (5.3. 339). Richard's finally orders them to march and asks Saint George to inspire them with the “spleen of fiery dragons”. (5.3.348-352).

Richard's rhetoric does not seem to produce much effect since, as Richmond later expresses, his soldiers do not support Richard: “Richard except, those whom we fight against/Had rather have us win than him they follow.” (5.3.244-5) Thus, this oration -composed of insults, downward comparisons and base attributions- is a sign of Richard's downfall, as a rhetorician and the loss of his power as a king. According to Hassel prefers to only degrade

their enemy instead of motivating his soldiers (1987: 39). Compared to Richmond, Richard's speech lacks truth, sincerity and genuine confidence. Richard seems to become "pettier", "duller" and "base if bustling in his colloquialism, repetitive and unimaginative in his oratorical strategies (Hassel: 1987, 45). Richard's oration does not display the wit and audacity that was present in his earlier speeches in Act I-III. In this respect, it seems that Richmond's speech is put side by side with Richard's to portray Richmond's in a superior light, especially in terms of 'truth'.

### **Conclusion**

The most evident feature of English Renaissance drama has been a tendency towards richness of language in which the spoken word or rhetoric had to sustain almost all of the effect that needed to be made on the stage. The fight for supremacy in *Richard III* is mainly fought on stage verbally rather than any physical action. Although it is true that the characters in the play all employ rhetoric to a certain extent, they cannot match the effect produced through the orations of Queen Margaret, Richard and Richmond. Queen Margaret, who no longer has any position or power within the kingdom, uses rhetoric as the only instrument of revenge available to her. She functions as the voice of Nemesis, who calls to the heavens to punish those who have played a part in her misfortunes. All of the persons who are included in her rhetorical violence remember her when the curses are fulfilled and she is termed a "prophetess". On the other hand, Richard functions to show how dangerous and violent rhetoric can become in the hands of sophists. Richard exploits the frontiers of deception, and acts out multiple roles such as the reliable brother, passionate lover, offended friend, honest courtier, through an elaborate use of rhetoric in the Machiavellian sense. It is Richmond, however, who is able to combine rhetorical power with 'truth'. Richmond –representing the future of England and employing the future tense- produces a powerful rhetoric that becomes even more effective with his humble character and good cause. As a result, he is able to defeat Richard, marry Young Elizabeth and establish the Tudor dynasty.

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