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TEXTUAL INDICATORS OF CHARACTER IN SHAKESPEARE'S *RICHARD III*

William Shakespeare is renowned in English and world literature for his masterfully crafted characters. In this paper we will explore all textual indicators of characterization in William Shakespeare's play *Richard III*, used for the construction of Richard's character, based on the method proposed by the classical narratology theorist Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in her study *Narrative Fiction* (1983). Rimmon-Kenan emphasizes that within a story, a character is a construct that the reader assembles based on various indicators scattered throughout the text and, when necessary, by drawing inferences about traits based on those indicators. Our goal is to examine the applicability of this method to the construction of the character of king Richard III, in order to determine whether the proposed 20th century theory of characterization in prose can be effectively applied to Shakespearean 16th century drama.

Keywords: characterization, textual indicators of character, Richard III, Shakespeare, Renaissance play

1. Introduction

1.1. William Shakespeare's Richard III

Talking about literature is very much intertwined with talking about characters. Some of them are solely literary figures and some of them are also historical personalities. According to Kaličanin, "all of Shakespeare's historical plays represent a link between fact and fiction, history and imagination"² (2017: 43).

It is understood that Shakespeare based his *Richard III* almost entirely on the version written by Thomas More, titled *The History of King Richard III* (1557). Shakespeare adopted More's depiction of king Richard's dreadfulness. More's version of Richard is, in addition to being a criminal, "an unparalleled actor who perfected the political skill of manipulation" (KOSTIĆ 2014: 1). Particular emphasis is placed on the character's deformity, both physical and mental.

As noted by Kostić, "*Richard III* brings forth a new art of characterization and represents the first dramatic character in English literature who was imagined and realized as a complete psychological being, determined not only by self-presentation and the comments of other characters, but also by more refined dramatic means, such as an individualized way of expression, thought and reactions to external events." (1994: 177)

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² All quotes taken from books or papers that are not written in English are translated by this author.

1.2. Richard III as a real historical figure

Richard III was King of England from June 26th 1483 until his death in 1485, and was the last king of the Plantagenet dynasty. On the topic of Richard III's reign, Hasberg Zirak-Schmidt writes the following: "To the Elizabethan public, there was no monarch in recent history with such a dark reputation as Richard III: usurpation, tyranny, fratricide, and even incest were among his many alleged crimes, and a legacy of cunning dissimulation and cynical Machiavellianism had clung to him since his early biographers' descriptions of him" (2018: 21).

The aforementioned deformity presents a compelling aspect of Shakespeare's character of the king. It was commonly accepted until recently that Shakespeare made up Richard's physical deformity in order to reflect the deformity of his mind—it is, as per Kostić, the "embodiment" of his mental deformity (2015: 1). However, "when Richard's body was uncovered in 2012, a very pronounced curve in the spine was visible. As well as this, evidence of idiopathic adolescent onset scoliosis could be seen in many of the individual vertebrae. Contemporary descriptions of the king describe him as having 'unequal shoulders, the right higher and the left lower'. This is comparable with the presence of right-sided scoliosis" (le.ac.uk). There is, however, no evidence of him having a withered arm.

2. Methodological approach

We will expose in very short terms the method of character synthesis as presented by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in chapter five of her book *Narrative Fiction* (RIMMON-KENAN, 1991: 59-71). She stated about her study that "one species of narrative will be the subject of this book: the species called 'narrative fiction', whether in the form of novel, short story or narrative poem" (RIMMON-KENAN 1991: 1). Taking that into account, the aim of this paper will be to examine whether her method can be effectively applied to drama as well, and precisely to a Shakespearean 16th century play. According to Kostić Pahnoglu this method of characterization "is appropriate for characters that don't differ a lot from the real persons" (2024:15), and Richard III, even with Shakespeare's alterations, was a real person.

Marčetić points out that "each narrative situation provides the writer with certain advantages and at the same time sets before him some limitations" (2003: 76). Rimmon-Kenan emphasizes that within the narrative, the character is a construct assembled by the reader, based on various indicators scattered throughout the text and, when necessary, by drawing conclusions about traits from those indicators. There are two main types of textual character indicators: direct definition and indirect presentation.

"In the first case, the trait is named using an adjective (he is good-hearted), an abstract noun (his goodness knew no bounds), another kind of noun (she was a real bitch), or part of speech (he loves only himself)" (RIMMON-KENAN 1991: 59-60). In the second case, the traits are not named, but are shown and exemplified in various ways, leaving it up to the reader to infer the implied qualities.

Naming a character's traits cannot always be considered direct definition; "it only counts as such if it comes from the most authoritative voice in the text" (RIMMON-KE-

NAN 1991: 60). Usually, this kind of definition is provided by the narrator, and any other kind of definition generally carries less or no weight. In plays there is no typical narrator as in fiction, and we would like to examine if and how that fact influences direct definition.

Indirect presentation occurs when, instead of being mentioned, a trait is shown and exemplified in different ways. Traits can be implied by both one-time actions and habitual behaviour. Actions performed only once tend to evoke the character's dynamic aspect, which is often tied to a turning point in the narrative. Habitual behaviour tends to reveal the unchanging or static aspect of the character. Although the first type of action does not reflect consistent qualities, it often reveals something qualitatively more important than the numerous habits that make up a character's routine.

Both single and habitual actions can be grouped into three categories: acts of commission—something the character does; acts of omission—something the character should do but doesn't; and contemplated acts—an unrealized plan or intention of the character.

A character's speech, whether understood as dialogue or thought, can indicate one or more traits, through either content or form. What one character says about others can characterize not only the character being talked about, but also the one doing the talking. "The form and style of speech are common means of characterization in texts where characters' language is individualized and distinguished from that of the narrator" (RIMMON-KENAN 1991: 64). Style can suggest origin, place of residence, social class, or profession, and besides the social aspect of the character, it can also point to individual traits.

When it comes to speech as a textual indicator, it should be noted that, according to Blake, "we should hesitate to interpret the meanings of Shakespeare's words too rigorously because they may have been chosen for quite different reasons: the stylistic level appropriate to the context and the effect of the sound pattern. Equally he may have been less worried than we are by word-substitution made by actors and editors provided the sound-pattern and rhythm were maintained" (BLAKE 1983: 48). However, words do have an undeniable influence on the construction of character, especially when the character traits that are represented through those words are confirmed through other indicators. After all, according to Mercier, "speech and stagecraft create a dramatic reality" (2019: 206).

Regarding physical appearance, one should distinguish between features over which the character has no influence, such as height (or, in Richard's case, his inborn spine deformity), and those that are at least partially under their control, such as hairstyle and clothing. Sometimes, physical description speaks for itself; other times, the narrator explicitly connects it to a particular trait. Such explanations could be considered disguised definitions rather than indirect characterization. This also applies when a non-visual quality is attributed to external appearance instead of to the character as a whole.

The character's physical environment (room, house, street, city), as well as the people surrounding them (family, social class), are also used as metonymies that suggest character traits.

In the next chapter the method of characterisation outlined above will be applied

to the construction of the character of Richard III as Shakespeare's character.

3. Textual indicators of the character of Richard III

3.1. Direct definition

As a play, this text offers no direct definition in the typical sense. There is no omniscient narrator who states facts about the characters by utilizing certain adjectives or phrases. However, it could be said that in that case speech could be taken as a form of direct definition. When it comes to plays, the chorus is usually considered the most authoritative voice, i.e. the voice that could provide direct definition. However, what is peculiar about this play is the fact that Richard himself performs the function of the chorus. In a rather innovative way, the opening of the play is Richard's soliloquy in which he presents his wishes and plans, as well as the main traits of his character, to the audience. In fact, Richard's role as both the chorus and the main character of the play is so important and all-encompassing that the play has been referred to as a "one-man play" (PUHALO, 1972: 103).

At the very beginning of the play, during his soliloquy, Richard provides the audience with information about himself. His words make it clear that he has quite a negative view of himself. He refers to himself as "not shaped for sportive tricks, nor made to court an amorous looking glass", as well as "subtle, false, and treacherous" and "curtailed of this fair proportion, cheated of feature by dissembling nature, deformed, unfinished, sent before my time into this breathing world scarce half made up, and that so lamely and unfashionable that dogs bark at me as I halt by them". He states that he is "determined to prove a villain" and that he has laid plots. (SHAKESPEARE, 2011: 9-11) Richard III is, in fact, "perhaps the most famous 'Villain' in the entire history of English theatre" (SPIROPOULOU 2024: 6).

His statement about being a villain can be understood in two distinct ways, which would indicate different things about his character.

The first interpretation indicates that Richard's character and his future are pre-determined by fate. It strips him of choice and free will, meaning that his being born deformed was a signal from nature or God of what his path in life would be. From that point of view, his deformity is what inherently makes him villainous.

The second way of interpreting his statement shifts the focus to the word "prove". It emphasises that it is Richard's choice to become a villain. His mindset could be understood as a wish to take revenge on nature for having created him deformed, and it indicates a conscious effort to commit acts of villainy. He is, according to Akhtar, presented as "provoked and aggravated by burning desires to triumph over his bodily disadvantages" (2017: 96), and is trying to "compensate for his physical drawback" (DINIĆ, 2023: 8).

The combination of these two interpretations of the king's words leaves the reader with the impression that Richard is presented, as per Hasberg Zirak-Schmidt, as "morally determined by his deformity, yet paradoxically free enough to choose evil" (2018: 25).

"Regarding 'villain', for example, it is strange that the villain of the story is not only the protagonist but also the unquestionable monopolist of the reader's sympathy" (CALVILLO 2017: 142). The fact that Richard familiarises the audience with his plans makes the audience root for him and feel like an accomplice. It is interesting to note

that, according to Hopkins, “we must not assume that we are being given direct access to a character’s thoughts” (2024: 2) during soliloquies, as the character is supposed to speak those words aloud and is, therefore, performing. However, keeping in mind that, as Keenan notes, Richard “invites the audience to be complicit in his plans” (2017: 28), it is safe to assume, for the purposes of this paper, that the audience is not being lied to and that the king is truly speaking his mind. Furthermore, “the same soliloquy also exemplifies a trait that Richard displays throughout the play which is his capacity for self-critique. Indeed, he is arguably his own harshest critic in the world of the play” (KEENAN 2017: 29).

Therefore, Richard’s monologues and moments when he is alone on stage could be considered a form of direct definition. His soliloquy after his proposal to Lady Anne, where he refers to himself as “me, whose all not equals Edward’s moiety? On me, that halts and am misshapen thus?” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 39), could serve as another example of Richard, the most authoritative voice in the play, directly stating facts about himself.

3.2. Indirect presentation

3.2.1. Speech

In addition to Richard’s own words, there are numerous instances throughout the play of other characters talking down to him.

When Richard is trying to woo Lady Anne, she calls him various names. The things she refers to him as include “fiend”, “dreadful minister of hell”, “foul devil”, “villain”, “defused infection of a man”, “fouler than heart can think”, “devilish slave”, “unfit for any place but hell”, “cause and most accursed effect [of timeless deaths]”, “homicide”, “foul toad”, “dissembler” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 23-35).

Similarly, in scene three of act one, Queen Margaret refers to Richard as “devil”, “a murderous villain”, “cacodemon”. (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 49-51) Additionally, she calls him “dog”, “the troubler of the poor world’s peace”, “thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog, thou that wast sealed 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—”. (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 57) In the same scene, when talking to Buckingham about Richard, she tells him that “when he fawns, he bites; and when he bites, his venom tooth will rankle to the death. Have not to do with him. Beware of him. Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him, and all their ministers attend on him”. (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 63) Finally, in act four, scene four, in a conversation with Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess, she refers to him as “a hellhound”, “excellent grand tyrant of the Earth”, “foul defacer of God’s handiwork”, “carnal cur”, “hell’s black intelligencer”. (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 223-225)

It is interesting to note that multiple characters refer to Richard as a hellish creature. In the aforementioned examples, Anne uses the expressions “dreadful minister of hell”, “foul devil”, “devilish slave”, and “unfit for any place but hell”, while Margaret also refers to him as “devil”, “hellhound”, and “hell’s black intelligencer”. The similarities in the ways that different characters perceive him could indicate a sense of objectivity in their words. Had only one character expressed their negative opinion of Richard, it could be attributed to their subjective view of him, but the plethora of characters that share these

views makes it more likely for their opinions to be the most objective version of the truth. As per Rimmon-Kenan (2006: 12), “by using the term “narrative”, it suggests the existence of competing “truths”, each carrying persuasion for the group upholding it”, which is why it is not possible to speak of an absolute truth, but only about the most common way that a character is perceived, which is thus the closest to a sense of the truth. Rimmon-Kenan (1996: 8) reinforces this idea by stating that “the presumption of the existence of a reality” has “come under fire”. In order to get a view of Richard’s character which would be as objective as possible, more examples of other characters’ negative opinions of Richard are provided below.

The Duchess, Richard’s mother, when talking to her grandson in the second scene of act two, says “he is my son, ay, and therein my shame”, and when they boy asks “think you my uncle did dissemble, grandam?” she replies positively (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 105). In act four, scene one, she says “o my accursèd womb, the bed of death! A cockatrice hast thou hatched to the world, whose unavoièd eye is murderous” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 201). In the fourth scene of act four she refers to him as “my damned son”, “wretch”, “thou toad” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 229-231). In the same scene, she gives insight into the impact that Richard has had on her life. “Thou cam’st on Earth to make the Earth my hell. A grievous burden was thy birth to me; Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy; Thy school days frightful, desp’rate, wild, and furious; Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous; Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody, more mild, but yet more harmful, kind in hatred. What comfortable hour canst thou name, that ever graced me with thy company?” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 233).

In scene four of act two, Queen Elizabeth, while talking about Richard’s plans, says the following: “Ay me! I see the ruin of my house. The tiger now hath seized the gentle hind. Insulting tyranny begins to jut Upon the innocent and aweless throne. Welcome, destruction, blood, and massacre. I see, as in a map, the end of all.” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 125) Furthermore, in act four, scene four, she refers to him as “that bottled spider, that foul bunch-backed toad” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 225), “villain-slave” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 231), and refers to his heart as “stone-hard” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 237).

In addition to being referred to as a creature of hell, Richard is also frequently compared to animals. Queen Elizabeth uses the words “tiger”, “spider”, and “toad” to describe Richard. The Duchess also calls her son a toad, and so does Lady Anne. Queen Margaret refers to him as a “dog”. This comparison could indicate that Richard lacks humanity and it highlights his monstrous nature. While it is possible that his physical deformity evokes such comparisons, it is more likely that these characters perceive his personality, mindset, and actions as animalistic, i.e. inhuman.

Furthermore, at the end of the fourth scene of the third act, Hastings refers to him as “bloody Richard”. (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 167). Similarly, in act four, scene three, Tyrrel refers to him as “the bloody king”. (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 217) In the words of Stanley at the beginning of the fifth scene of act four, Richard is “the most deadly boar”. (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 263)

Richmond, in the second scene of act five, refers to Richard as “the wretched, bloody, and usurping boar” and “that foul swine” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 269). In his oration to his soldiers in scene three of the final act, he calls the king “a bloody tyrant and a

homicide; one raised in blood, and one in blood established”, as well as “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” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 291). He also refers to Richard as “the bloody dog” in the fifth scene of the same act (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 301).

What can be concluded from the fact that the vast majority of characters in the play express negative opinions of and disdain towards Richard is that he truly comes across that way. He is collectively seen as a villain, which is even confirmed by his own words when describing himself, such as that he is “determined to prove a villain”. The combination of direct definition and indirect presentation, specifically speech as a method of indirect presentation, provides a rather objective view of Richard’s character.

On the other hand, there are instances, albeit few, of other characters speaking positively to or about Richard. One such example is the beginning of the fourth scene of act five, when Catesby says “the King enacts more wonders than a man, daring an opposite to every danger. His horse is slain, and all on foot he fights, seeking for Richmond in the throat of death” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 299). Additionally, in act three, scene seven, Buckingham reports to Richard that he told the people “your lineaments, being the right idea of your father, both in your form and nobleness of mind; laid open all your victories in Scotland, your discipline in war, wisdom in peace, your bounty, virtue, fair humility; indeed, left nothing fitting for your purpose untouched or slightly handled in discourse” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 177). He also refers to him as “famous Plantagenet, most gracious prince” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 183). Moreover, he tells Richard that the citizens are his “very worshipful and loving friends” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 187). Finally, he says that “we know your tenderness of heart and gentle, kind, effeminate remorse, which we have noted in you to your kindred and equally indeed to all estates” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 191). These instances of indirect presentation make us question the objectivity of the previously mentioned instances of other character’s speaking negatively of Richard. However, as positive opinions of the king are incomparably rarer, and usually expressed by his allies, it seems appropriate to conclude that the view that the majority of characters, including Richard himself, express, is the one objectively closer to the truth.

There are very few instances of Richard speaking badly of himself in conversation with others, which cannot be considered direct definition, as they are a part of dialogue. In act three, scene four, he says “look how I am bewitched! Behold mine arm is like a blasted sapling withered up” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 163). Such scenes should be taken as indirect presentation through speech.

In addition to speaking badly of himself, Richard also insults other characters. In the third scene of act one, he calls Queen Margaret “thou hateful, withered hag” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 57). In the same scene, he refers to her as a “foul, wrinkled witch” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 53). In act four, scene four, he refers to Queen Elizabeth as a “relenting fool and shallow, changing woman” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 253). In the second scene of act four he refers to his nephews as “bastards” and wishes them dead (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 207). Finally, in the third scene of the first act, he explicitly tells other characters “a plague upon you all!” (SHAKESPEARE, 2011: 45). These are examples of indirect presentation through speech, which allows us to see Richard’s true colours, that he is neither a kind nor a polite person, as these examples present a contrast to the scenes where he is feigning

politeness.

According to Daiches (1969: 250), Richard's "psychology is far from simple". Hence, the king's dream sequence in act five, scene three, is rather interesting, as it can be understood as his subconscious mind sending him a message, meaning that what the ghosts of the people he killed say in his dream actually signifies his own opinion of himself, his actions, and his future. As the dream is the product of the dreamer's mind, all speech from the dream should be attributed to the dreamer, who is in this case Richard. All of the ghosts wish for Richard to "despair and die", and some of them wish to "sit heavy on [Richard's] soul tomorrow". The ghosts of the two princes say "Let us be lead within thy bosom, Richard, and weigh thee down to ruin, shame, and death. Thy nephews' souls bid thee despair and die". Hastings' ghost wishes for the king to "bloody and guilty, guiltily awake, and in a bloody battle end thy days", and the ghost of Buckingham tells him to "despairing, yield thy breath" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 281-285). It is questionable whether this should be considered direct definition or indirect presentation. However, as what is said in the dream is not presented as fact, but expresses traits that we infer Richard subconsciously believes he possesses, it would be more appropriate to classify it as indirect presentation through the means of speech.

The dream sequence is not the only scene related to the king's conscience. The same scene later on shows Richard saying the following: "O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!" and "Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself? Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good That I myself have done unto myself? O, no. Alas, I rather hate myself for hateful deeds committed by myself. I am a villain. Yet I lie; I am not. Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 287). "The incoherent, broken language, with each phrase opposing the previous one, reflects Richard's shattered confidence", as noted by Kostić (2014: 6). In this case, the speech would be classified as direct definition, as it is directly stated to the audience by Richard, the most authoritative voice in the play.

3.2.2. Action

The scenes which exemplify Richard's lies and deceits seem innumerable. On the one hand, they are examples of indirect presentation through speech in the play. On the other hand, the act of lying represents indirect presentation through habitual actions.

In act one, scene one, Richard, after stating many untruths, such as "we speak no treason", and that his opinion of the king is very positive, even dares to ask "can you deny all this" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 15). In the same scene, he tells Clarence "Your imprisonment shall not be long. I will deliver you or else lie for you", which is a blatant lie, as he is plotting Clarence's death (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 17). In the third scene of act one he tries to convince everyone that he can't be a villain by saying "Because I cannot flatter and look fair, smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog, duck with French nods and apish courtesy, I must be held a rancorous enemy. Cannot a plain man live and think no harm, but thus his simple truth must be abused with silken, sly, insinuating Jacks?" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 45).

These scenes exemplify Richard's Machiavellian tendencies, shown through the fact that he does not shy away from using any means necessary, especially lies, to achieve his goal. The amount of times he resorts to lying classifies it as habitual action. According

to Kostić (2014: 5), Richard “portrays his outward show of morality as a well-rehearsed act necessary in order to attain his political goals”. Many additional lies are shown below.

For instance, in the second scene of the second act he tries to present himself as respectful to the duchess by saying “Madam my mother, I do cry you mercy; I did not see your Grace. Humbly on my knee I crave your blessing” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 111). However, in act four, scene four, when his mother pleads that he let her speak, Richard replies “Do then, but I’ll not hear” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 231). This is a direct refutation of his previous statement, as it shows that he has no respect for his mother, and is far from humble.

Moreover, Richard acts deceitful towards Buckingham in act four, scene three, when he goes back on his word and does not reward Buckingham for his loyalty, saying “I am not in the giving vein today” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 215). Additionally, in the opening scene of act three, he tells the young prince “If I may counsel you, some day or two Your Highness shall repose you at the Tower; Then where you please and shall be thought most fit for your best health and recreation” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 133), stirring him in the direction of his plans and making the first step towards having the prince imprisoned in the tower. Upon receiving news of Hastings’ death, Richard proclaims: “So dear I loved the man that I must weep. I took him for the plainest harmless creature That breathed upon the Earth a Christian; Made him my book, wherein my soul recorded the history of all her secret thoughts” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 169), even though he is the one who plotted his death.

When he is asked to ascend to the throne in the final scene of act three, he pretends not to want it by saying “Yet so much is my poverty of spirit, so mighty and so many my defects, that I would rather hide me from my greatness, being a bark to brook no mighty sea, than in my greatness covet to be hid and in the vapor of my glory smothered”, (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 187) as well as “Alas, why would you heap this care on me? I am unfit for state and majesty. I do beseech you, take it not amiss; I cannot, nor I will not, yield to you” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 191). He, once again, fakes humility, while denying having a desire to sit on the throne, although that was the aim of all his plans.

During his proposal to Lady Anne in act one, scene two, he hides his true intentions and tries to trick her through flattery. His only desire is to use her for his own benefit, but he pretends to be in love with her. He calls her “sweet saint” and “divine perfection of a woman”, and tells her: “Your beauty was the cause of that effect— Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep to undertake the death of all the world, So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom”. He adds: “I never sued to friend, nor enemy; My tongue could never learn sweet smoothing word. But now thy beauty is proposed my fee, my proud heart sues and prompts my tongue to speak”, as well as “Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger; Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart. Wear both of them, for both of them are thine”. When Anne wishes she “knew [his] heart”, he replies “tis figured in my tongue” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 23-37), even though he has been lying the entire time.

Quite similarly to lying, Richard also occasionally tries to manipulate other people into acting in a way that would be beneficial or favourable for him, as it happens in the fourth scene of the fourth act, when he urges Queen Elizabeth to “plead what I will be, not what I have been; not my deserts, but what I will deserve” (SHAKESPEARE 2011:

251), and thus ignore all his wrongdoings.

In addition to exemplifying habitual action, Richard's lies showcase his acting abilities. His lies would not work were he not so convincing. Therefore, this kind of habitual action proves that he is a master manipulator. According to Karanović, "the best evidence of the success of Richard's hypocrisy and manipulation" (2021: 30) is the fact that Clarence cannot fathom that it is Richard who wants him dead. On the topic of manipulation, specifically in relation to speech, Macias-Borrego noted that "speech acts—encompassing not just spoken words, but also the surrounding context—are crucial for understanding Richard's ability to deceive, manipulate, and persuade" (2025: 1), and those speech acts showcase the king's, "rhetorical dexterity" (REFSKOU 2021:122).

Richard does not seem willing to give up even when all hope seems lost, before his death. In act five, scene four, he yells "a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 299), meaning that he does not regret his actions and is willing to keep fighting for what he believes he deserves—the throne. He, in fact, seems to have known his fate in advance, as he, in scene three of act four, says "a bard of Ireland told me once I should not live long after I saw Richmond" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 213), but that premonition did not stop him from trying to execute his plans. These instances of indirect presentation through single actions exemplify the king's determination and strong will, as well as his ambition, which is "a cold guiding idea that hovers over its chosen ones, ruins some, rewards others" (PAVLOVIĆ 1990: 38) and is ultimately the cause of the king's demise.

There are other instances of single actions performed by Richard. One of those can be inferred from his speech during his wooing of Lady Anne, when he mentions "Edward, her lord, whom I some three months since stabbed in my angry mood at Tewkesbury?" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 39). Based on Richard's behaviour throughout the play, it is unusual for him to act impulsively, as can be concluded that he did in this instance. Other than that, there is but one example of the king being physically violent in the play. Richard normally verbally insults people and threatens them, while he has others commit the acts that he plans, such as murder. However, there is an instance in scene four of act four of the king being physically violent. Messengers keep arriving one after the other and bringing him bad news. When the third messenger arrives, Richard snaps and "strieth him", saying "there, take thou that till thou bring better news" (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 259). This could indicate that he acts impulsively under pressure, when certain events are not unfolding in accordance with his plans. It is possible that the king "loses some of his evil genius and his conduct becomes sloppier as he loses control of the events" (MILADINOVIĆ 2018: 17).

When left alone on the stage, Richard reveals his true plans to the audience. In the first scene of the opening act, he says the following: "He cannot live, I hope, and must not die Till George be packed with post-horse up to heaven. I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence with lies well steeled with weighty arguments, and, if I fail not in my deep intent, Clarence hath not another day to live; Which done, God take King Edward to His mercy, and leave the world for me to bustle in. For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter. What though I killed her husband and her father? The readiest way to make the wench amends Is to become her husband and her father; The which will I, not all

so much for love as for another secret close intent by marrying her which I must reach unto. But yet I run before my horse to market. Clarence still breathes; Edward still lives and reigns. When they are gone, then must I count my gains” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 19). In the third scene of the same act, Richard says “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” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 67). When those words are spoken, they could be classified not as speech, but as contemplated actions. However, taking into account the fact that Richard is “a man of action” (MONTGOMERY 2012: 51) and goes through with his plans, those actions become commissions—completed actions that reveal certain character traits (in this case, his Machiavellian mindset).

3.2.3. External appearance

As for Richard’s physical appearance, other than references to his deformity which are seen in speech, there are two instances of parenthetical description. Namely, in act three, scene five, Richard appears “in rotten armour, marvelous ill-favoured” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 167), while at the beginning of act four, scene two, it is stated that he is “in pomp” (SHAKESPEARE 2011: 205). These few descriptions serve as an example of indirect presentation through the means of appearance. As for the king’s deformity, its significance is explained through speech, especially during Richard’s first soliloquy, where the effect it has had on his life and his future plans is depicted. It “influences his inward disposition” and could even symbolize “a disordered world, torn apart by the destructive civil war” (KOSTIĆ 2014: 2).

4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to examine whether and to what extent Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan’s narratology theory, which relates to characterization in prose fiction, can be applied to a play in general, and specifically to William Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. At first glance, it seems that a play, written mostly as dialogue, without the presence of a chorus, cannot be considered an adequate piece of writing for the application of this theory. However, upon further inspection, through meticulous reading and the identification of various types of textual indicators, we have come to a surprising conclusion. The lack of the presence of a chorus, or a narrator, did not prove crucial for identifying other textual indicators of character that exist in a prose text which can also be found in a play.

As for direct definition, it is represented to a smaller extent than indirect presentation, but that is often the case in prose fiction as well. As the main character, Richard takes on the role of the chorus in this play, and thus direct definition is present.

Action as an indicator of character is represented more so as commission (what the character does), than omission and contemplation. The specificity related to the credibility of this indicator is reflected in the fact that it is a history play, based on a real historical figure and on real historical events, therefore the credibility of most of the plot is historically verifiable. As actions are sometimes presented through speech in a play, the credibility of the words could be questioned if the play were entirely fictional. However, even in history plays, the author is undeniably allowed artistic freedom, and in this play we also come across actions that deviate from what historical sources claim. Keeping in mind that Shakespeare’s characters are, in the words of Harrison, “the genuine progeny

of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find” (1966: 18), it should be noted that the changes do not affect the credibility of the character. The interpreter of the work is given the freedom to conclude what reasons led the author to change some historical facts, i.e. not to mention or modify some actions that did happen, as well as to mention some about which there are no historical data. According to Rajala, “making subjectivity visible in analyses is not undesirable; it is indispensable” (2022: 280). Most scholars of this Shakespearean play believe that the motive is precisely the construction of the character of Richard III as Shakespeare wanted to portray him. The comparison with historical facts gives additional depth to the construction of character in this play, considering the fact that “human nature cannot be viewed outside of history, but should be understood as a series of historical modifications of some universal essence or spirit” (MARČETIĆ 2015: 188).

This is noticeable not only in action, but also in external appearance as an indicator. There are several studies on why Shakespeare’s Richard III is even more deformed than the historical Richard III. The conclusions mostly indicate that his physical deformities highlight his psychological deformity and moral failures. This is all the more likely when you consider that the latest findings have shown that Richard had no deformities other than scoliosis.

Speech as a textual indicator could at first glance be considered dominant, but a detailed analysis showed that it is not much more prevalent than other indicators. Nevertheless, even if our conclusion had been that speech is the dominant indicator, it would not necessarily mean that the reason is this text being a play. As Kostić Pahnoglu notes, “even in prose there are characters presented mainly through speech” (2012: 117). In the play, we see what Richard is saying and follow his train of thought. We also see what others say about him and follow their train of thought about him. There is a considerable emotional charge in speech as an indicator, which can reduce the credibility of what is said. However, if a mother or wife excessively harshly characterizes the murderer of her son or husband, the mere fact that she is talking about the murderer makes that emotional charge grounded and diminishes the potential inaccuracy or exaggeration of the statement.

Environment as a textual indicator is not widely represented. The environment is generally presented to little extent, and even when it is, it does not serve to further indicate the character of Richard.

Taking all of the information above into account, it can be concluded that the prose fiction textual indicators of character presented in Rimmon-Kenan’s *Narrative Fiction* can effectively be applied to Shakespeare’s play *Richard III*.

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TEKSTUALNI INDIKATORI KARAKTERA U ŠEKSPIROVOM RIČARDU III

Rezime

Cilj ovog rada bio je ispitivanje da li se i u kojoj meri naratološka teorija Šlomit Rimon-Kenan, koja se odnosi na sintezu likova u prozi, može primeniti generalno na dramski tekst, i konkretnije na renesansnu dramu – Šekspirovog *Ričarda III*. Na prvi pogled, mogao bi se steći utisak da se drama, napisana uglavnom kao dijalog, bez prisustva hora, ne može smatrati adekvatnim tekstom za primenu ove konkretne teorije. Međutim, daljim ispitivanjem, kroz detaljnu analizu različitih vrsta tekstualnih indikatora, došli smo do neočekivanog zaključka. Izostanak klasičnog naratora u dramskom tekstu nije se pokazao ključnim za zastupljenost tekstualnih indikatora karaktera koji postoje u proznom tekstu. Za sintezu lika Ričarda III korišćeni su i direktno definisanje i indirektno predstavljanje, a u sklopu indirektnog predstavljanja prisutni su radnja, govor i spoljašnji izgled. Time se primena tehnike karakterizacije Rimon-Kenanove pokazala potpuno opravdanom.

Ključne reči: karakterizacija, tekstualni indikatori karaktera, Ričard III, Šekspir, renesansna drama