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Looking for Richard: A comprehensive study of the tradition of the Vice

Jelige: Now is the winter of our discontent

Introduction

William Shakespeare's *Richard III* is a problematic play that reflects the questions of the early-modern period. The figure of Richard incorporates the medieval tradition of the morality Vice, but in Shakespeare's play the Vice has a totally new understanding: the struggles of Richard represents the concerns of authorship, subjectivity, identity, and the problem of representation. These questions are also important for the post-modern subject. For several reasons it seems that Shakespeare's plays echo the epistemological concerns of the post-modern period. The main reason for this parallelism is that the early and post-modern eras can be understood as transitory periods. This transition means that the narratives of an earlier world view is shaking which creates a situation where the access to knowledge and identity is problematic. This creates an epistemological crisis in the mind of the early and post-modern subject which is expressed through multi-medial art forms such as, the early-modern theatre or films.

The aim of this paper is to give a post-modern understanding of *Richard III* and the tradition of the Vice. In order to fulfil this task I will analyse Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*. In the post-modern there is a trend of filming Shakespeare's plays which allows us to give an understanding of Shakespeare that tells something about ourselves. I choose the movie of Al Pacino amongst the several film adaptations of *Richard III* because I think that in Al Pacino's movie the figure of Richard is opened to various interpretations. On the one hand, Richard is opened to the past traditions in which his figure is rooted, on the other hand, the figure of Richard is a text enabling various interpretations and possibilities for self-reflexion. From this perspective, Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* is both traditional and unconventional, and therefore a perfect material for a post-modern investigation.

Literature Review

In his book, Weimann (1987) provides an understanding of the Elizabethan theatre and the plays of Shakespeare from the perspective of the popular tradition. The book is a detailed description of various theatrical traditions that were characteristic in the Elizabethan era. His findings are important in my study because the tradition of the Vice incorporates elements of earlier folk traditions, and Shakespeare uses these traditions to create a new, early-modern understanding of the Vice.

The study of Kiss (2010) provides an insight to the epistemological concerns of the early-modern and post-modern period with the help of the methods of poststructuralist

semiotics and iconology. The study reveals parallelisms between early and post-modern concerns such as the problem of identity, subjectivity, authority, representation, language. For my research this study gives a theoretical background to understand the questions that arise in Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*.

In the book of Bakhtin (1994) there is a section which argues that the medieval traditions of theatrical entertainment included a carnivalesque kind of aspect. Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque nature of medieval traditions helps to understand the ambivalent nature of Richard and the tradition of the Vice. Several elements such as, the carnival laughter or the carnivalesque grotesque body are incorporated into the tradition of the morality Vice, which tradition was later the basis for Shakespeare to create the figure of Richard.

The book of Davies (1994) investigates the problematic relationship between Shakespeare's plays and their film adaptations. The book investigates the problem of translating the verbal language of the Shakespearean theatre into a visual language of the cinema with the preservation of the essence of the original play; the differences between theatrical and cinematic space, and within this space, the relationship between the audience and the stage/screen.

The article of Manheim (1997) is a summary of the film adaptations of Shakespeare's history plays. In his article there is a significant note on the choric function of Richard which establishes the relationship between the audience and Richard inviting the audience to look into and share Richard's perspective. The article also points to the fact that Richard has a comic figure, which supports Bakhtin's theory and the carnivalesque nature of Richard as a Vice.

The article of Matuska (2007) reveals the meta-theatrical nature of involvement. Involvement is term which describes any meta-theatrical element that creates a relationship between the play and the audience and makes the audience think that they are observing a theatrical performance which is very similar to the real world. In this meta-theatrical context there is a possibility for self-reflexion in order to understand the boundaries between reality and fiction. The article tries to give an answer to the question whether film adaptations can use the technique of involvement so that the audience will have the chance for self-reflexion.

The article of Streitmann (2007) draws the attention to the fact that in the 20th century the film adaptations of Shakespeare dramas become extremely popular. The post-modern especially likes to combine and experiment with the elements of several traditions. The post-modern film adaptations of Shakespeare's dramas are traditional yet unconventional. This unconventional attitude is characteristic of Al Pacino's film. In this unconventional context a

new understanding of Richard III can emerge which reflects the post-modern subject's mentality.

Discussion

Since Shakespeare's Richard III is hard to understand without knowing the social context of Shakespeare my discussion is divided into three main parts. The first part is a historical overview of the tradition of the Vice with its folk/carnavalesque heritage, the second part is an analysis of Shakespeare's modern understanding of the Vice, and the third part is the analysis of Al Pacino's film adaptation.

The tradition of the Vice

If we want to talk about English Renaissance drama it is important to know that it has a strong and deeply rooted medieval heritage. Playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Thomas Kyd or Christopher Marlowe inherited these medieval traditions, in other words the peak of these medieval traditions was the life-work of these dramatists. This was something absolutely unique because in other countries, for example, in France or in Italy dramatists strictly followed the Aristotelian principles (among these principles there is decorum including the three unities: the unity of time, place, and action). Even Philip Sydney, who was greatly respected in England (and in Europe) because of his erudition, thought that the English plays were worthless because the plays did not observe decorum. This is of relevance because Philip Sydney provided the understanding of Renaissance in England. This paper cannot devote more space to mention more about Philip Sydney but what is important for us here is that he did not like English plays (the only exception for him was Gorboduc) because of the violation of the Aristotelian principles, but a decade after of his death a new generation of dramatists (Shakespeare and his contemporaries) appeared who were anti-Aristotelian (and therefore went against Philip Sydney) in a sense that they disregarded the Aristotelian unities and based their plays on these medieval traditions.

In this section, I would like to discuss some of the medieval traditions that were characteristic of the English middle-ages in order to create a basis for the analysis of the problematic nature of the Vice. I think without the analysis of the Vice it is impossible to understand the drama and the movie, and I would like to analyse the Vice from two perspectives: one is a moral or religious perspective, while the other is a more ancient, ritual and folkloristic perspective.

The Vice is an allegorical character in Christian morality plays. Basically, morality plays are demonstrative of a religious commitment; these plays had an educational function and an entertaining function at the same time. Instead of giving a detailed discussion of morality plays in this paper I only want to mention a few key elements of the genre. Morality plays are basically allegorical plays with allegorical characters in it. There is Everyman or Mankind who goes through the pilgrimage of life and in his way he meets allegorical characters like Vices and Virtues, Good and Bad Angels. A key element in morality plays is psychomachia which means the battle for Everyman's soul: in his pilgrimage Virtues show what is morally good and they battle with Vices who try to distract Everyman's attention from what is morally right. In morality plays Vices are always defeated and Everyman receives salvation. The Vice is an allegorical representation of the human being's susceptibility for sin (or the Seven Deadly Sins). What makes the Vice problematic is that the Vice is allegorical in nature and from the perspective of the morality plays the role of the Vice would be obvious but on stage the Vice has a different function which is rooted in a more ancient, ritual or folkloristic tradition. Robert Weimann (1987) calls this the 'nonallegorical heritage of the Vice'. This nonallegorical heritage comes from the earliest ritual performances in the history of mankind, which heritage later lost its sacred or ritual meaning and became a source of joy and laughter in carnivalesque folk traditions and in the tradition of morality plays and finally becomes a structural element and a source of criticism in Shakespeare's Richard III.

In his book, Weimann (1987) argues that dramatic performance grew out from ancient ritual performances. These rituals involved magic, performance and mimesis and the aim of the rituals was to deal with the problems of everyday life. When the community acted out certain elements and aspects of life in these magic rituals they gained control over them, in Weimann's words, they 'subjected them to the actors' power' (Weimann, 1987). In a ritual performance, the process of acting and the object which is acted out is inseparable. It is also important to know that in these ritual performances there was no clear distinction between the actors and the audience. For example, in a ritual where the community summoned a supernatural force or god (like in the Dionysian cult) Weimann claims that the community 'did not represent the mythic happening for a public, rather, in their possession they embodied or incarnated it'. Later as acting became more and more secularised and institutionalised the difference between actors and the audience became significant; possession turned into drama and embodiment turned into representation. As Weimann argues:

‘No longer archetypes to be embodied, scenes taken from myth became secular objects of sheer imitation and, finally, objects of parody and comic irreverence. At the heritage of ritual had become the material of dramatic convention.’

The above summary showed how dramatic convention developed from ritual performance and it is important to be aware of the fact that some elements of these rituals survived in the middle ages, although they lost their original meaning; they can be found in the seasonal and carnivalesque folk traditions and in the tradition of the fool.

Within the discussion of folk tradition I would like to focus on the tradition of the fool which is a special and interesting agent in seasonal and folk festivities. In his book, Bakhtin (1994) explains the fool and folk festivities in the following manner:

‘...with the participation of giants, dwarfs, monsters and trained animals. A carnival atmosphere reigned on days when mysteries and farces were produced. This atmosphere also pervaded such agricultural feasts as the harvesting of grapes which was celebrated also in the city. Civil and social ceremonies and rituals took on a comic aspect as clowns and fools, constant participants in these festivals, mimicked serious rituals such as the tribute rendered to the victors at tournaments, the transfer of feudal rights, or the initiation of a king. Minor occasions were also marked by comic protocol, as for instance the election of a king and queen to preside at a banquet ‘for laughter’s sake’ (roi pour rire)’.

The fool is an archetypal agent: he has ritualistic attributes, for example, the club which represents a phallus and therefore it is a symbol of fertility; in his book, Weimann mentions other attributes that can be connected to some kind of a fertility ritual, for example, the calf’s hide, the cock’s feather, the antlers, horns, donkey’s ears, and the fox tail. These attributes no longer preserved fully their original ritual meaning and became a source of comedy and parody. In my discussion, I would like to highlight the social function of the fool in folk festivities and plays. The fool is an agent of involvement that establishes a relationship between the audience and the play. With the help of the fool, folk plays become inclusive and interactive because the fool breaks through the boundaries of actor-audience relationship. In my opinion, there is a parallelism between the fool and Hermes: both Hermes and the fool have a mediatory role, both of them have a similar attribute, namely, the rod which can be the symbol of fertility in the hand of the fool or the symbol of writing and poetry in the hand of Hermes (Hermes was a many sided god, he was not only the messenger of the Olympian gods but also the patron of poets and orators). It is important to mention that the fool had lost its ritual role but gained a social role in medieval folk plays: the fool became the organiser of the

play by addressing the audience and asking them space for a play and maintained a close contact with the audience during the whole play.

There is another element that is closely connected to the fool. This is what calls 'topsy-turvydom'. Topsy-turvydom means inversion or turning things upside down, which is, I think, a typical characteristic feature of carnivalesque folk festivities. Folk festivities and plays involved masks, music, joy, laughter; the conventional order of things became inverted, people elected somebody from the community to be the conductor of the festival (for example a mock king). Weimann argues that the aim of this topsy-turvydom was to create the illusion of an ancient golden age where everybody used to be equal.

In morality plays the social function of the fool continues to live in the Vice. It is important to mention again that the aim of morality plays was education and at the same time entertainment. I think it is logical that the pagan ritual attributes of the fool will be associated with devilish and demonic ideas in a Christian context. Every pagan element of the fool, like the horn or the tail, will be the attributes of Satan and his agents (the Vice). This makes the Vice in morality plays problematic: the audience knows that the Vice is the allegory of sin but at the same time the audience is aware of the 'foolish' or entertaining role of the Vice. For example, in *Everyman*, which was the most popular morality play in the late fifteenth century, Mischief was not just the main Vice but also a great entertainer who communicated with the audience and commented on the play with an ironic sense of humour. In early-modern dramas such as in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the agent of Lucifer, Mephistopheles, also proves to be a great entertainer. When Faustus becomes desperate and wants to give up his experiments with sorcery his servant Mephistopheles appears and arranges Faustus a small festivity in which the Seven Deadly Sins appear and entertain Faustus. In *Jacke Jugeler*, I think the entertaining and organising function of the Vice is obvious. For me Jacke Jugeler does not seem to be an evil character (although he has a mocking and ridiculing personality) he is a good entertainer who creates a relationship with the audience. I do not intend to analyse how the Vice functions in details in these plays because my paper is not about a comparative discussion of these dramas. Instead, I aimed to illustrate with examples that the social and entertaining function is a significant element in the tradition of the Vice.

Richard the Vice

After the brief discussion of the problematic nature of the Vice I would like to continue with the analysis of Richard. I think that the figure of Richard is a fusion of earlier

medieval traditions: we can hear the echoes and voices from the earlier morality Vice tradition yet the figure of Richard is something absolutely unique.

I would like to start my discussion with the analysis of Richard's body. The chronicles depicted Richard as a lame, hunchbacked king with a stiff arm and I think Shakespeare used Richard's body to create a carnivalesque figure for his play. I think this carnivalesque attribute of Richard connects the play to earlier folk traditions: in the topsy-turvy world of (pagan) folk festivities and plays there was an elected leader who was called the mock king or the Lord of Misrule. The mock king was the conductor and organiser of these folk festivities which, as Bakhtin pointed out, contained the element of laughter; I think the mock king had a social function which was similar to the social function of the fool. I think that for a mock king people used to choose a person who had a natural topsy-turvy character, for example a midget or a freak. Of course the historical Richard was not a hunchback, on the contrary, he was quite handsome, but his figure was blackened by the Tudor monarchs with the help of chronicle writers. I think that Shakespeare used the descriptions of Richard for his own benefit: he created a king who had this carnivalesque nature and therefore he created a legitimate leader for his play who organises everything. It is important to know that this social function which was characteristic of the fool or the mock king continues to live in the Vice of medieval morality plays, and I think in a way the figure of the folk fool and the figure of the morality Vice cannot be separated: fools have certain 'devilish' characteristic features while Vices have certain 'foolish' characteristic features; the two characters share the same social function in different (religious or folk/pagan) contexts. These traditions are melted into the figure of Richard but Shakespeare uses the elements of these traditions (the social function of the fool/Vice, topsy-turvydom, psychomachia, salvation, sin) in a modern way.

Richard is the main organising power in the play: as a Vice he fulfils his social function in the space of the theatre. He creates the relationship between the play and the audience by initiating the audience into his plan. He is an ironic figure, he comments the play all the time, he is a good entertainer. It is important to mention that his ironic attitude has a double function: on the one hand, it is to entertain the audience, on the other it is to shed light upon the fact that the world he lives in (which is the world of the royal court) is imperfect. With his ironic attitude he creates a critical distance between the world of the royal court and himself. In my opinion the deformed body of Richard also helps him to create this critical distance. I think that Richard's body is also a source of a double function. It is a carnevalesque/folk element and also a source of creating a critical position by recognising that Richard is not like the others (this recognition is depicted in Richard's opening monologue):

‘But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamped, and want love’s majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am 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’ (Act I, Scene 1, 14-23)

With his critical position he creates not just the distance but gives the audience a critical attitude towards the whole play. In this sense Richard gets closer to the audience his presence fills the theatre and his way of looking at things will be the basis of the audience’s shared attitude towards the created world on the stage. In my opinion this is a unique way of using the social function of the Vice and it mirrors Shakespeare’s modern understanding of this tradition.

In folk plays and in morality plays fools and Vices were the organisers and the conductors of the play. Their social function was to address the audience and ask for place for the play. Richard is also a good organiser: he is the organising power of the drama but this organising force is not only a social function but also a structural one. The figure of Richard is such a crucial element in the play that without his figure the whole play falls apart. Although in the folk tradition the fool’s role was to organise the drama the emphasis was on communal acting (like in the ancient ritual performances) in a carnivalesque and comical way. In morality plays the Vice inherited this role of the fool but the emphasis was on moral teaching, psychomachia, and salvation. The social functions of the fool and the morality Vice were subordinated to these factors. The case is different with Richard who not only organises the play, which is actually a cruel and evil play, but he also wants to occupy the highest position in the play. Earlier Vices, like Jacke Jugeler, did not want to be the authors of the play whereas Richard in his own drama wants to be the controller of everything. In morality plays the Vice was not psychologized, the Vice was only the allegory of sin. But in Shakespeare’s drama the Vice does have a personality, an identity, a name. Although in the figure of Richard the audience can sense the earlier echoes of the morality Vice and therefore accept Richard as an evil character, Richard as a Vice is secularised: Shakespeare’s Richard III is not about a moral teaching, it is not about the fight between good and evil, there is no question of human

salvation like in the morality plays. Richard as the organiser of the play is not subordinated to a moral teaching; in the play the focus is on Richard as the author of the play as the controller of events and the master of the universe. Authority is a vital question in Shakespeare's time but since Richard dies and falls out of the position where he can manage to control everything I think the question of authority has a pessimistic overtone. In my opinion the fall of Richard metaphorically signifies, on a general level, the fall of the proto-modern subject who cannot control the events and dilemmas of life (I will continue to discuss the problem of authority when I analyse the film of Al Pacino).

As has been mentioned before, the figure of the body is the source of identity in the play. Since Richard has a deformed, grotesque body it connects him to the folk tradition of the mock king (and Richard has a critical and ironic position of looking at things) on the other hand the body of Richard determines his identity:

‘...since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.’ (Act I, Scene 1, 29-31)

In my opinion the identity that is determined by Richard's hideous and grotesque body is not Richard's true identity although Richard consciously accepts it as his true identity. From the moment of accepting his identity Richard starts to fulfil his role as a manipulative and intriguing agent. This identity gives him a critical position and distance that distinguish him from the world of the royal court, which is corrupt and unintelligent because Richard can easily manipulate it, but is also a source of his identity crisis because Richard cannot maintain his position as the controller of events. After the visit of the ghosts in Act 5, Scene 3 Richard's personality collapses:

‘What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why-
Lest I revenge. 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.

Although Richard's identity collapses he manages to stand up and continue his role-playing, which I think is a sign of strong will-power. In my opinion this makes Richard's fall more pessimistic in the end of the play: if Richard who has a strong will-power and a powerful personality cannot maintain his position then who has the ability to become the author of events, persons, life?

The figure of Richard incorporates the element of topsy-turvydom which is the heritage of folk and morality traditions. Topsy-turvydom means basically the inversion of the world. In this sense Richard is a perfect topsy-turvy agent because he turns his world upside down with his manipulative personality, he occupies the highest position in the play. From this perspective Richard can be understood as a mock king in a folk play. What makes the situation different is that in medieval folk festivities and plays the aim of topsy-turvydom was to create an illusion of an ancient world where people used to be equal whereas in the world of Shakespeare's Richard III the element of topsy-turvydom is a means of criticising the world; in the context of Richard III it is the criticism of faith in a pure and legitimate monarch. When Richmond defeats Richard the world of the play becomes normal again but I think that the audience is not convinced that there is a possibility that the new monarch will be a pure and perfect ruler, because Richard with his topsy-turvy behaviour shows that the world of the royal court is corrupt and foolish.

In Richard III, Shakespeare combines the medieval traditions of folk and morality plays in such a unique way that he manages to create a powerful Vice who can enthrall his audience; the audience fears and admires Richard at the same time, the audience knows that he is clever but also evil and shows the foolishness of the world through a distorting mirror. After the fall of Richard, the topsy-turvy world becomes normal again but closure of the play do not grant a guarantee for the security of the future, and this problematic closure will be systematic in later plays by Shakespeare.

Al Pacino's Looking for Richard

What is especially noteworthy about *Looking for Richard* in my opinion is the way Al Pacino tries to give a post-modern understanding of Shakespeare's Richard III. It is interesting to observe how Richard and the tradition of the Vice continues to live in a post-modern context; what are those elements of the play that are in the focus of the interest of the

post-modern subject; whether there are elements of the play which are interesting not only for the post-modern subject but also for the proto-modern subject.

I would like to start my discussion with the analysis of the opening scene. In this scene Al Pacino enters the stage and comes face to face with Shakespeare who is sitting in the audience. As they look at each other there is a moment of self reflection. I think this is an important scene because it places the whole movie into a meta-perspective: the movie becomes a workplace, or as Kiss (2010) calls it, a laboratory in which questions of representation, authority, and identity can emerge as a material for discussion. In her article, Matuska (2007) investigates the question of involvement. In Matuska's definition involvement means those meta-theatrical techniques in the Elizabethan theatre that involve the audience into the play and make the audience aware of the fact that they are watching a play which is similar to the reality of the audience. There are several other techniques that make the play meta-dramatic, for example, a play within the play, a character who takes up a second personality, or a rite within the play. This makes the audience think about what is reality and what is illusion, In this sense, Al Pacino's movie is similar to the theatre of the Elizabethan period because both of them offer a meta-theatrical perspective in which epistemological problems of the early or post-modern subject can be investigated. Al Pacino's movie is an experiment for understanding Shakespeare's *Richard III* bringing it closer to the postmodern public and delivering an interpretation of the drama which tells something about ourselves.

Going back to the scene where Al Pacino and Shakespeare face each other I think the audience of the movie can sense a tension between them. In this scene, Al Pacino stands as Richard on stage, and Shakespeare as a viewer of Al Pacino's play, but the gaze of Shakespeare tells that their relationship is not equal, in other words, Shakespeare seems to be superior to Al Pacino: it seems that Shakespeare holds possession not only of his play but also of Al Pacino. In my opinion, the reason behind the tense atmosphere is Al Pacino's demand for authorship. The question of authorship is much-debated issue of critical thinking and it is an interpretive problem which was one of the main concerns of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, among others. In his essay, Roland Barthes (1977) argues that for centuries the presence of the author dominated the text and the way people interpreted the text. But Barthes also argues that the author is just an artificial construction in the reader's mind (from Foucault's perspective it is a function); the author is not in the text and with the 'death of the author', i.e., by shifting our attention from the authorial intention to the plurality of meaning potentials in the text, the reader will gain ground for interpretation. And in the movie there is

an attempt to interpret *Richard III* as a plural ‘writerly’ text without the presence of the author. In the movie there is an evening party where Al Pacino asks a few people to interpret Shakespeare’s plays. A lady connects Shakespeare’s works to the Talmudic tradition and combines it with Chinese feng shui, a gothic woman wants to put *Macbeth* into a rock’n roll context and so on. At the end Al Pacino is fed up with the whole situation and wants to leave the place. In my opinion, we can be innovative in staging, but there should be a reference to Shakespeare and to the era in which Shakespeare lived in order to understand his plays. I do not think that an interpretation should be about the genius of Shakespeare but his social context is still a necessary factor.

From this problem arises the question: How to connect Shakespeare to our world so that the contemporary audience can enjoy and understand his dramas? I think that Al Pacino solves this problem by continuing the tradition of the Vice, in other words, he starts to address the audience: on the one hand, he establishes contact with us, spectators of the movie by constantly talking “out of the movie” and addressing us, and, on the other, he interacts with people in the context of the movie production. From the perspective of Matuska’s article (2007), this is a technique of involvement that was characteristic of the early-modern theatre. In his book, Davies (1994) also argues that by direct addressing to the camera the actor can address the audience and establish a relationship with the audience. Davies illustrates this with Laurence Olivier’s *Richard III*, where Richard shares his perspective with the audience by addressing the camera directly. As Al Pacino takes a walk in Central Park he starts to communicate with people and asks them whether they want to see their performance, in other words, he asks space for a play. As he starts to communicate with people this whole *Richard III* project becomes a communal acting: people start to interact with the play, they reflect on it, express their feelings about it. Al Pacino even asks people to participate in the play; when he visits London and the place where the Globe used to stand he meets construction workers who are working on the project of rebuilding the Globe theatre. At the construction site, there is a child, who is the son of a local worker, and is playing a game when Al Pacino asks the parent whether her child can act in the movie (and he will play the young prince). I think what is happening in the movie is similar to the old medieval folk festivities: Shakespeare’s works become the basis for a myth to which people can go back and act it out. Myth-making is a typical human behaviour with which a community can understand itself. It is certain that the audience cannot understand the whole play of *Richard III* because of its language or its symbols but this is not a major obstacle because the emphasis is on the participation in a communal acting.

Praising the language of Shakespeare belongs to the act of myth-making. Several people in the movie thought that Shakespearian language has great depth. But I think this attitude towards Shakespeare's language also points to the problem of signification which is a characteristic phenomenon in today's philosophies of language. In the movie, one of the random New Yorkers mentioned that:

'If we think that words are things and have no feelings in words then we say things to each other that mean nothing. But if we felt what we said, we'd say less and mean more.'

I think this is an important statement. In the post-modern era the problem of language and signification appears as a vital problem (in the Elizabethan era it was also a crucial question that appeared in the meta-dramatic perspectives of the theatre). It is a question whether we can express ourselves and describe an objective reality with language. We live in an information society where we encounter immense amounts of information in very short periods of time day after day. Because of the large amount of information we do not have time to comprehend and master the meaning of the words and therefore words have no depth and real value; we are not able to master language because words have several meanings in our multi-contextual world and language simply overflows or overrules us. The post-modern subject is lost because the post-modern subject is bombarded by information all the time and there is no time to contemplate on the meaning. In my opinion, this phenomenon causes an identity crisis in the post-modern subject's psyche because there is no solid meaning in the information society on which the post-modern subject can rely, in other words, we continuously depend on a web of interrelated texts, and the post-modern subject becomes a multi-textual discourse.

In my opinion the identity crisis of the post-modern subject is expressed in Al Pacino's movie by the rapid shift from one reality into the other. In the movie there is the reality of the play of Shakespeare and there is the reality of our world and for me it seems that Al Pacino is in the process of commuting between these two realities. The whole movie can be seen as an expression of Al Pacino's stream of consciousness. In this mental process there is an interesting interaction between Al Pacino and Richard. I think the two personalities can easily exchange with each other because both of them have a certain mischievous character mixed with a talent for entertaining. In the movie it is hard to identify the boundaries of Al Pacino's personality and it is hard to find where Richard's personality starts and vice versa. Richard can be understood as the alter ego of Al Pacino; Richard is like a second personality and as the movie goes on it becomes more and more problematic to tell the difference between

Richard and Al Pacino. This idea is strengthened by the swift shift of scenes throughout the whole movie where Al Pacino appears sometimes as an actor and sometimes as Richard. As the two worlds fuse into each other, the oscillation creates a schizophrenic atmosphere, which reaches its summit in the scene where Richard is visited by the ghosts in his dream. This is the moment of identity crisis which was understood by Al Pacino in the following way:

‘Richard is a man who cannot find love. A person who finally, in the last scenes, knows that he does not have his own humanity, that he’s lost it. He has let the pursuit of power totally corrupt him and is alienated from his own body and his own self.’

The pursuit of power, the struggle to occupy the position where Richard can be the controller of events, and individuals, creates a situation where Richard has to drift away from his real personality. Attila Kiss (2010) explained this in his book in the following manner:

‘Role-playing, which is aimed at the fulfilment of the task, becomes a testing of the subject’s ability to preserve an original, authentic identity. The fashioning of the new identity results in the assimilation, or the fusing together, of the earlier and the new, fake personalities, and by the end of the dramatic action the protagonist faces an identity crisis in which, retrospectively, even the reality of some initial, self-sufficient identity or self-presence becomes questionable.’

I would like to end my investigation with the analysis of those subconscious impressions that determine Richard’s motivations and ways of looking at things. In Shakespeare’s time the deformed and grotesque body signified the corruptness of the mind and therefore, for the early-modern subject it immediately explained Richard’s motivation. I think nowadays people could hardly believe this argument. One of the university professors that appear in the movie claims that the reason for Richard’s cruelty is oppressed sexual desire and in my opinion, it is reasonable to think that Richard’s deformed body could be an explanation for unsatisfied sexual needs. This unsatisfied desire could have deformed Richard’s personality. His sexual desire turned into hatred and anger that could have been satisfied in battle but Richard’s opening monologue explains that the War of the Roses is over: anger has turned into love but since Richard is ‘not shaped for sportive tricks nor made to court an amorous looking-glass’ the only thing that remains for him is discontentedness and envy. He is discontent because he is not like the others in the royal court and therefore starts to gratify his oppressed sexual desires by manipulating and ruin the royal court.

Conclusion

In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the tradition of the Vice lives in the figure of Richard that represents the ontological crisis of the proto-modern subject. After the analysis of Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* it is revealed that the figure of Richard mirrors a similar understanding in the post-modern period. Richard echoes the ontological crisis of the proto-modern subject in our post-modern world because the struggles and the questions of the proto-modern subject are similar to the struggles of the post-modern subject. Questioning the access to reality and identity are the main concerns of the proto and the post-modern subject. For these questions the proto and post-modern subject cannot find an adequate answer which reveals the pessimistic atmosphere of the proto and post-modern eras.

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