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Women and Tragedy in *Richard III*: The Strategy of Female Language

by

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Richard III presents the issues of gender, sexuality and power in "a rhetorical symphony"[1] played by the protagonist, Richard, and female characters with their *verbal* instruments. The maestro is Shakespeare. Shakespeare's power as an artist, seen in his mastery of words and verse, is found in both the male and female language of *Richard III*. Marilyn L. Williamson suggests how male-female conflict over power is dramatized rhetorically and structurally in the play:

> The conflict with the strong women in the tetralogy culminates in *Richard III*, where Gloucester is a profound misogynist who spends much of his verbal brilliance in debate with women and whose dramatic career is structured by two great wooing scenes.... (42)

It is generally agreed that as the history plays present a male world and male conflicts, almost all the female characters are marginalized and have no voice; "The protagonists of Shakespeare's history plays, conceived both as subjects and as writers of history, were inevitably male".[2] Yet, Shakespeare's first tetralogy is different from his other history plays in its presentation of women. Female characters such as Joan La Pucelle and Margaret of Anjou, who are given a voice by Shakespeare, are powerful and strong.

In *Richard III*, women's voices which challenge the male-dominant historical world, depend on language as their strategy to wield female power. In the play, this gender conflict brings about a tragic consequence which is implied in Richard's words; "...When men are ruled by/women" (I.i. 62-63).[3] At the same time, these words indicate Richard's assumption of male domination over female power. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare goes beyond the historical into a gender conflict which has a tragic dimension.

Mark Eccles introduces *Richard III* as the tragedy of a man, a family and a nation (xxviii). In this respect, although it comes as no surprise that female characters are given the role of wife, mother, and queen, they cannot be simply defined by the respective role-models of marriage, family and nation. Moreover, the category of women in tragedy has long been confined to polarized stereotypes—from passive victims such as Ophelia and Desdemona, to a series of strong women, including Margaret in Shakespeare's first historical tetralogy. However, women in *Richard III* are not confined to these stereotypes. Even Margaret who is revealed as a strong and powerful woman might, in a sense, be seen as a powerless victim in a male-dominated historical world.

By shifting male conflicts to the dynamics of a male-female struggle, *Richard III* provides us with a renewed perspective of "women and tragedy." Shakespeare's fascination with "the problematic relationship between the power and powerlessness of the monarch" (McElroy 145) had already been shown in his early career he wrote *Richard III*. Thus, it is possible that Shakespeare's strong concern with the relationships between power and powerlessness led him to see male-female relationship in terms of the relative power that adheres to the categories of man and woman.

In Williamson's analysis, civil war set in "neighbor against neighbor" or "father against son" is the most terrifying form of all human conflicts. Such a conflict

英語第二研究室

frequently is caused by a man's great desire to exert his power over a nation or people. In addition, Williamson suggests that in writing the history of the Wars of the Roses, it seemed to be easier for Shakespeare and his contemporary chroniclers to displace much of the opprobrium for the conflicts on a series of women in order to diminish the horror of the civil war (41). Yet, why is a male-female conflict less terrifying? It is because women do not have weapons to fight with men. In *Richard III* it is with words that women arm themselves to preserve their power.[4]

How, then, can women be involved in a gender conflict by using words? If the play can be interpreted as a tragedy, how do women find powerful ways of expressing their own message of this tragedy? These questions can be asked about the strategy of female language. In this essay, I will take a close look at Richard's verbal interchange with female characters such as Ann, Elizabeth, and Margaret. Through examining how these women use the language, I will also explore the relationship between women and tragedy.

Juliet Dusinberre initiated the argument of the relationship between Shakespeare's plays and Renaissance "patriarchal" culture from the perspective of a liberal-feminist. In her observation of Shakespeare's women, female characters are unquestionably controlled by the male ideal of womanhood. She states:

> Tragedy is supposed to deal with the isolation of the human spirit, and one of the reasons for the Elizabethan and Jacobean preoccupation with heroine is that that isolation is more terrible in a being conditioned to dependence on men. (93)

Therefore, she assumes that dramatists employed such a preoccupation and explored women's conditions under Renaissance "patriarchal" society. In particular, a woman's isolation in a male-dominant historical world is supposed to be a tragic experience, because the powerlessness of women necessarily becomes the object of male power as seen in the example of Anne and Elizabeth in the woong scenes of *Richard III.*

The first male-female conflict is in the wooing scene with Lady Anne (I.ii.). Critics once regarded this scene "as no more than a brilliant bout of verbal fencing" (29). The "fencing," which is an art or sport that needs strategy, symbolizes the male-female conflict. In the first wooing scene, Richard offers to lend Anne the "sharp pointed sword" (I.ii. 174) which if she "please to hide in" (I.ii. 175) his "true breast /And let the soul forth that adoreth" (I.ii. 175-176) her, and says, " I lay it naked to the deadly stroke / And humbly beg the death upon my knee" (I.ii. 177-178). Then he confesses that he killed King Henry, yet it was Anne's "beauty" and "heavenly face" that drove him to do so. He presses her for an answer, "Take up the sword again, or take up me" (I.ii. 183).

While Anne attempts to get a hold of his false reality, saying, "I would I knew thy heart" (I.ii. 192), Richard makes an impression on her with his remarkable love rhetoric, " 'Tis figured in my tongue" (I.ii. 193). After Richard confesses his decision to marry Warwick's youngest daughter to Hastings, he offers his life to Anne as a mourner. This second scene of Act I opens with Anne's hatred for the person who murdered her father-in-law and develops into her curse against Richard in the wooing scene. There is an exchange of their rhetoric through the "keen encounter" of their "wits." It is not Richard but Anne who takes the lead; to take the initiative from the opposite opponent is an intellectual strategy in the game of "fencing." This scene thus illuminates Anne's use of language as strategy in confronting Richard's rhetoric, in addition to illuminating his characterization.

"As long as Anne employed the language of vehemence," says Dolores M. Burton, "she enjoyed a real advantage over Gloucester [Richard]" (70). Anne's vehement language is seen in these words, "O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death! / O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death!" (I.ii.62-64). Her words express her hatred and anger, yet her strategy is in calling on invisible power. Burton discusses that:

> The emotions Anne expresses have some moral force. Invocations of unseen powers elevate her discourse to a supra-human plane, but when she descends from that realm to the rational world of human justice and judicial inquiry, her language inevitably changes from apostrophe to invective, from curse to insult, from solemn to strident.... (70)

Anne, therefore, actively curses the person responsible

for her grief, at the same time wishing that her curse extend to his future family; "If ever he have child, abortive be it,...If ever he have wife, let her be made / More miserable by the life of him / Than I am made by my young lord and thee!" (I.ii. 21, 26-8). These words are ironical, because, like Iago and Edmund, Richard is one of the "solitary individualists who hate love and also, incidentally, demean women" (Kahn 42). While the tragic heroes finally recognize the values of human bonds, Richard does not value even the bond of family. Conversely, these words reflect Anne's personal and emotional involvement with her family. The strategy of female language is used not only to defend herself but also to protect the "bond" of family from tragic experiences.

Anne's language serves to express the confusion brought on by Richard's wooing. The more she shows her hatred, the more he vows love. While Anne denounces him, "thou lump of foul deformity," (I.ii. 57) or calls him "villain" or "devil," he characterizes her as an "angel" or "divine perfection of a woman" (I.ii. 75-76). Identifying oneself through words is a significant strategy for both a psychological attack and defense, because it affects subtly, yet effectively, one's mentality.

Richard's wooing words repeatedly express the feminine beauty of Anne's physical appearance; "Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine" (I.ii. 149) or "But now thy beauty is proposed my fee, / My proud heart sues, and prompts my tongue to speak" (I.ii. 169-70). Richard cannot help admitting that it is Anne's power of beauty that prompts his vows of love. Richard's attitude towards women is shown in these words which well demonstrate that he sees them not in terms of their humanity but only as objects, or media, for obtaining his goal. Williamson observes that "Richard himself wants power, because he sees women as powerful, he must master them, not for desire, but for control" (53). The strategy of female language resists such a gender-based view. Even though women's values are measured by men through their sexuality, female power cannot be easily destroyed as long as women manipulate.

On the other hand, Richard's rhetoric is mainly employed to change reality for Richard's convenience. Burton points out, "To dramatize that power [Gloucester's amazing power over people and event], Shakespeare in the first three scenes depicts Gloucester as a master of all those forms of persuasive discourse recognized by classical rhetoric—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic..." (55). Richard is a master of rhetoric which allows him to gain his power as well as to manipulate his "persuasive power." Therefore, female characters are required to have a good command of their language to elude Richard's "persuasive power."

From this viewpoint, the second wooing scene should be examined; that is, how does female language counter Richard's rhetoric of persuasion? Richard offers his life to Queen Elizabeth's daughter; "Then know that from my soul I love / thy daughter" (IV.iv. 256). In her reply, Elizabeth twists the meaning of his intent; "That thou dost love my daughter / from thy soul. / So from thy soul's love didst love her brothers, / And from my heart's love I do thank thee for it"(IV.iv. 259-260). Ironically enough, in his first wooing scene with Lady Anne, Richard twists the meaning of Anne's words so that everything goes as he had planned. However, in this scene, Elizabeth's rhetorical skills are very effective.[5]

According to I. G. Dash, in this Elizabeth's verbal victory, she not only wins against Richard, but also learns the significance of female language as well as female power:

> To an extent, then, Elizabeth has triumphed. She has begun to understand the meaning of power and the necessity for choosing one's language with care, for restraining one's words, refraining from cursing. She has learned that she must function alone, leading, not leaning. (205)

On the other hand, Stephen L. Tanner discusses how problematic the interpretation of this scene is by referring to Louis E. Dollarhide's view of the scene as "a climax gesture"[6]; he sees in it the hero's change. This is because Richard shows momentarily his greatness just before his verbal debate with Elizabeth. Yet it must be noted that he becomes fearful and uneasy after it. In this respect, female language is inevitably linked to the hero's rise and fall by affecting a shift in the hero's characterization.

Unlike the Richard in the first wooing scene, he no longer seems to have enough confidence to win Elizabeth's daughter. His uneasiness shows in his remark,

"Be not too hasty to confound my meaning. / I mean..." (IV.iv. 262). Mystifying meanings is one strategy of verbal combat used by female characters in fighting with Richard. Although Derby reports that, "...the Queen hath heartily consented / He should espouse Elizabeth her daughter" (IV.v. 7-8), Elizabeth tries to avoid giving Richard her explicit consent; she does not definitely say "no" to him. As in Anne's reply, though Elizabeth's words are direct, the meaning of her answer seems to be ambiguous and can be taken either way.

Elizabeth consciously avoids an immediate reply; "I go. Write to me very shortly,/ And you shall understand from me her mind" (IV.iv. 428-429). Tanner points out:

> She doesn't seriously argue with him and refuse his suit because to do so would be to give it a dignity of which it is totally unworthy.... Richard's comment after Elizabeth's departure is quite different in tone from his comment after successfully wooing Anne. On that occasion he rather gloatingly says "Was ever woman in this humor woo'd? / Was ever woman in this humour won?" When Elizabeth leaves he exclaims "Relenting fool, and shallow changing woman!" This remark shows his contempt for her and his confidence that the daughter shall be his.(472)

Richard's confidence in winning the word game is overwhelmed by the strategy of Elizabeth's rhetoric in which Tanner finds "mockery", "heavy irony" and "sarcasm." In addition to this, losing human dignity is a problem fundamentally related to human existence. For the hero, it has a tragic aspect.

Tanner concludes his argument by saying that the wooing scene of Elizabeth is not "a second climax" but rather " 'a modulation' of the first which gracefully alters the direction of Richard's rise to his fall" (472). However, rather than seeing it as "a modulation" of the first wooing scene, in my observation both scenes basically provide the play with tragic vision. The hero's tragedy starts with accepting the illusion of his rhetorical winning over female power as a reality. At the very end of the wooing scene with Lady Anne, Richard believes that he has won her and says:

> I do mistake my person all this while.
> Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
> Myself to be a marv'lous proper man.
> I'll be at charges for a looking glass...
> (I.ii. 252-255)

What Richard mistakes is not his "deformity", but rather the strategy of female language. His evil as a villain is much more reinforced by successfully winning Anne; "But the plain devil and dissembling looks, / And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!" (I.ii. 236-37). Consequently, on becoming king, his inferiority complex of "deformity" is changed into a seeming confidence. At this point, the path to tragedy is opened by Richard himself.

After the second wooing scene, there is a brief verbal conflict between Richard and Elizabeth. Elizabeth obviously criticizes Richard for mistaking the matter. Besides, she rejects Richard's denouncement of Hastings' imprisonment:

> My lord, you do me shameful injury
> Falsely to draw me in these vile suspects.
> Richard. You may deny that you were not the mean
> Of my Lord Hastings' late imprisonment.
> Rivers. She may, my lord, for —.
> Richard. She may, Lord Rivers! Why, who knows not so?
> She may do more, sir, than denying that:
> She may help you to many fair preferments,
> And then deny her aiding hand therein
> And lay those honors on you high desert.
> What may she not? She may, ay, marry, may she!
> (I.iii. 86-97)

While Richard verbally attacks her, he is unconsciously fascinated with the power of her language; that is, female power. Interestingly enough, the words that she uses are related to her command of that power, for instance, "I never did *incense* his Majesty" (I.iii. 84), "An earnest *advocate* to plead for him" (I.iii. 86) and "By heaven, I will *acquaint* his Majesty" (I.iii. 104) [italics mine].

While Elizabeth articulates her lack of patience with Richard's "blunt upbraidings" and his "bitter scoffs", Queen Margaret enters quietly and starts to aggressively attack both Elizabeth and Richard. No matter how strong Margaret is, her power also stems from the strategy of female language. In Angela Pitt's words, "Margaret's words ring out with the terrible power and conviction

of one possessed" (156). Elizabeth finally admires Margaret's strategy as being "well skilled in curses" and asks to be taught how to curse. Margaret's curse plays a very important role in the sense that it unifies the female characters and invokes memory of a past tragedy.

Tanner refers to the general agreement among critics that, "Margaret, like a Greek chorus, is a unifying element and gives structural coherence to the play" (468). Pitt also equates her presence with her curse: "As play continues, although Margaret does not reappear until near the end of Act IV, her malign presence is constantly sensed as one by one her curses take effect" (156-57). The fate of most of characters, including Richard, depends on Margaret's curses and prophecies. In this sense, Margaret's words reflects her role as a *narrator* of tragedy before she voluntarily changes that role into a *witness* of tragedy. For instance, when Buckingham has to be led to execution, he says, "Thus Margaret's falls heavy on my neck: / 'When he,' quoth she, 'shall split thy heart with / sorrow, / Remember Margaret was a prophetess.'..." (V. i. 25-28). Before being led off, Hasting also exclaims, "O Margaret, Margaret, now thy heavy curse / Is lighted on poor Hastings' wrectched head!" (III. iv. 91).

Despite entering the scene silently and speaking aside, Margaret cogently introduces Richard's villainy. She has a "special aura"[7] even though we cannot see her and it is largely determined by the strategy of female language. According to one of A. C. Bradley's definition of tragedy, "Shakespearean tragedy, as a rule, has a special tone or atmosphere of its own, quite perceptible, however difficult to describe" (278). Margaret's words provide the play with this special tone of tragedy, a tone which comes from her role which lies somewhere between a witch and a prophetess. Richard calls Margaret, "Foul wrinkled witch" (I. iii. 163), while she proclaims herself a prophetess.

As the play progresses, Margaret's prophecies become a reality. By narrating her own tragic story, she builds up the frame work of the play which will be different from Richard's plot. In the beginning of Act IV, iv, Margaret says that she has already witnessed a tragic prelude in the opening scene, so she turns her role into that of a witness, hoping that the following part will prove as "bitter, black, and tragical." As Richard's plot which had circumspectly been prepared in advance has been gradually rewritten by Margaret's words of cursing, she does not need to play the active role of witch or prophetess any more. Rather she just waits to see the seeds of her cursing flower into its tragic consequence.

C. L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler observe that "Her [Margaret's] asides, picking up and turning words and syntax, are like wit in moving attention to a latent stream of feeling, as Richard's asides so often do" (106). This is one strategy of female language as well. Margaret enters the third scene of Act I, as if to interfere with Elizabeth's words. Yet, when she enters, the timing actually intensifies Elizabeth's attack on Richard. Margaret picks up both Elizabeth's and Richard's words and changes them to a diametrically opposite meaning during her aside:

> Queen Elizabeth. Small joy have I in being England's Queen.
> Queen Margaret. [Aside] And less'ned be that small, God I beseech him!
> Thy honor, state, and seat in due to me.
> ....
> Richard. I am too childish-foolish for this world.
> Queen Margaret. [Aside] Hie thee to hell for shame and leave this world,
> Thou cacodemon! There thy kingdom is.
> (I. iii. 108-111, 141-144)

Although Margaret speaks in asides, she is not given soliloquies. By convention, "soliloquy" in tragedy is a direct means of self-revelation or of establishing the relationship with the audience for the tragic heroes. Instead of "soliloquy", Margaret has to have the strategy of appeal to her tragic experience, partly because female characters are not allowed to speak their inner mind or address the audience directly.

Shakespeare tries to show not only how Richard justified what he had done in the past, but also shows that tragedy can be seen from two different angles, that is, a negative one from Margaret's stance, but from Richard's stance a very positive one. Margaret's curse depends on her tragic experiences, which is shown in her words, "This sorrow that I have, by right is yours, / And all the pleasures you usurp are mine" (I. iii. 171-172). Margaret's words might be effective in destroying Richard, yet her strategy is necessary to reconstruct

Richard's tragic plot.

On the other hand, Richard claims that Margaret's tragic situation is not his responsibility but rather the result of his father's curse upon her. Richard says, "Plot have I laid" (I. i. 32), determining to be a villain. He plots his "deep intent" to be a king and for this "secret close intent", marrying Anne and wooing Elizabeth's daughter are absolutely necessary to make it easier to establish his perfect kingdom. Richard's rhetoric is , therefore, used only for the purpose of establishing his kingdom with a passion for perfect power. Even his love rhetoric is employed for the final triumph of his kingdom. It is no more than an effacement of obstacles. In fact, Richard could efface his visible enemies by killing them. That is, Richard kills the husbands or sons of female characters, however, he cannot efface both women and the invisible enemies in his mind. Richard needs power from women.

Although once Richard achieves his goal to be a king, in his mind, he cannot help admitting the fact that he has no ability to control his political power. As a result, it is reflected in his manipulation of the power of words. Obviously in Act IV, iv, he has no confidence in his rhetoric. Thus in wooing Elizabeth's daughter, he has to ask her mother, "Be eloquent in my behalf to her" (IV. iv. 357) and with her advice he changes his rhetoric, "Then plainly to her tell my loving tale" (IV. iv. 359). The more the language of women gains power, the more Richard's rhetoric loses its power to control his plot. Accordingly, the hero's rhetoric results in constructing a tragic vision. In contrast, female language serves to intensify, and then deconstruct it.

As we have seen, it is not to be denied that Richard's plot is deconstructed by the language of women and reconstructed by it as a strategy. Nicholas Brooke emphasizes Margaret's curse, ...a divine agent is outside Margaret's vision. Her role is not in fact mere prophecy: it is cursing. The ironic function of the curse-fulfilled, but evil-has already been demonstrated with Anne: it is Richard who opens the sequence here" (69). The ironic function in Margaret's curse is seen in her words:

> Did York's dread curse prevail so much with
> heaven
> That Henry's death, my lovely Edward's death,
> Their kingdom's loss, my woeful banishment,
> Should all but answer for that peevish brat?
> Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
> Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick
> curses! (I. iii. 190-195)

As Brooke observes, "She has already re-established the formal patterning of speech which Richard used with Anne in I. ii; ..." (70). That is, Margaret adopts Richard's speech pattern into her strategy.

However, it is not only Margaret, but also Anne and Elizabeth who adopt Richard's rhetoric. The abrupt change in Richard's words shows one of the major characteristics of his rhetoric: "I'll have her; but I will not keep her long" (I. ii. 229). This is a striking example of the *duality* in his rhetoric which is mirrored in Anne's words. When Richard asks her to wear a ring as a token of love, she says, "To take is not to give" (I. ii. 202). In the wooing scene, both Anne and Elizabeth suddenly change their negative replies, yet their words shows double-meaning:

> Anne. With all my heart; and much it joys me too
> To see you are become so penitent.
> Tressel and Barkley, go along with me.
> Richard. Bid me farewell.
> Anne. 'Tis more than you deserve;
> But since you teach me how to flatter you,
> Imagine I have said farewell already.
> (I. ii. 219-222)

Ironically enough, Anne reveals that she has discovered the *duality* of Richard's rhetoric.

Margaret believes her maledictions will "ascend the sky / And there awake God's gentle-sleeping peace" (I. iii. 286-87). She is confident in her language and Larry S. Champion speculates that Margaret's words of execration in Act I provides the philosophic perspective to the play:

> Her [Margaret's] comments, in addition, provide another means of foreshadowing and anticipating the action of the play. Not only does she prophesy king Richard's anguished fall, she also provides a virtual outline of the action of the drama. (35)

Margaret's language of cursing and prophesizing obviously leads to the strategy of other female characters'

revenge. Margaret prophecies not only Richard's tragic fall but also Elizabeth's fate, that is, that she would die as "neither mother, wife, nor England's counted queen!" (I. iii. 208). As she prophecies to Elizabeth in Act I, the day comes when Elizabeth asks Margaret to teach how to curse her enemies. In fact, Elizabeth asks her to make her dull words sharp enough to curse them (IV. iv.). It is no longer necessary for her to be the leader in cursing Richard at this point, but, rather, that she harmonizes with other female characters' curses.

As I have discussed before, the verbal conflict between Richard and female characters starts with the wooing scene of Lady Anne and moves to Margaret's curse. It then evolves into the curses of the three women as a climax and ends with the second wooing scene. Margaret's bitter curses dominate the whole play. The strategy of the women always goes back to Margaret's curse; without Margaret's curse, the other female characters' strategy would not develop. Viewed in this light, Margaret can be regarded as the center of that strategy of female language.

Marianne Novy's agrument of Shakespeare's female characters posits that in tragedies the relation between the hero and women can be compared to the one between the audience and the actor. "When Shakespeare's tragic women do act," says Novy, "the men find it difficult to cooperate or be audience. Thus, the tragic women are often confined to being audience for the hero, mediating the offstage audience's sympathy with their own, as Ophelia does for Hamlet, Desdemona for Othello, and even Lady Macbeth for Macbeth" (256-57). In other words, Ophelia, Desdemona, and Lady Macbeth have a sense of personal involvement and sympathy in the sense of their suffering with the hero.

For instance, Desdemona blames herself for Othello's unkindness and tries to share his pains as a ruler of state, as shown in her remark:

> I was, unhandsome warrior as I am,
> Arranging his unkindness with my soul;
> But now I find I had suborned the witness,
> And he's indicted falsely.
>
> (III. iv. 151-154)

This is mainly because Desdemona lacks the strategy of female language to be an actor in the same category as that of a tragic hero on the stage. Unlike Desdemona, *Richard III*'s female characters do not share the hero's inner conflicts and cannot stand to be just spectators to the tragedy of the male-dominated historical world. As Dympna Callghan argues, "It is a crucial aspect of the construction of the category of woman in tragedy that major characters are often absent, silent or dead" (71). The weapon of women is supposed to be words, yet silence is imposed upon them.

Richard's response to the female voice which is determined by their strategy is shown in these words; "Either be patient and entreat me fair, / Or with the clamorous report of war / Thus will I drown your exclamations" (IV. iv. 153-155). According to Miner, they are the "summary statement of Richard's policy with respect to women—they must be silenced" (57). Besides, Richard's rhetoric is used to create illusion for his villainy: First, Richard purposely makes up his mind to take the evil course as shown in his remark, "I am determined to prove a villain" (I. i. 30); second, Richard himself finds the strong connection between his rhetoric and his villainy:

> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain.
>
> (V. iii. 193-195)

As we have seen, female characters thus individually challenge his villainy by means of various style of strategical language such as cursing, prophesying, and mocking. It is this strategy which, in a way, leads the character to destruction. Women's each verbal attacks on Richard's rhetoric echo throughout the play and gradually result in harmony toward the end of the play:

> Queen Elizabeth. Poor heart, adieu! I pity thy complaining.
> Anne. No more than with my soul I mourn for yours.
>
> (IV. i. 87-88)

In Act IV, Anne, Elizabeth, and Margaret as a group share their pain and express their grief through their words. In addition to this, the Duchess of York encourages Elizabeth to articulate her "bitter words" to her "demned son", by saying...be not tongue-tied" (IV. iv. 132). They believe that the language of women is used

first to protect their reality from Richard's villainy and then to replace it:

> Duchess of York. Why should calamity be full of words?
> Queen Elizabeth. Windy attorneys to their client's woes,
> Airy succeeders of intestate joys,
> Poor breathing orators of miseries,
> Let them have scope! Though what they will impart
> Help nothing else, yet do they ease the heart.
> (IV. iv. 126-131)

The women of York join Margaret of Lancaster and curse Richard together; "Shakespeare offers a tentative glimpse at women supporting women, women relying on women, women bonding—even if in bitterness—with women" (Dash 192).[8] Champion also points out, "Along with the Duchess of York, the three women perform almost ritualistically the Erinyes' functions of scourger and sorrower, the dual role assigned them by Dante" (136). This dual role is reflected in their tragic experience which the women share and undergo together.

Early in the play, Margaret, who once experienced tragic pain and grief, as well as the honor of a queen, charges Elizabeth, "Thy honor, state, and seat is due to me" (I. iii. 111). She believes that even her sorrow is ancient and asks the Duchess of York to recognize this and allow her to sit *with* the women of York:

> And let my griefs frown on the upper hand.
> If sorrow can admit society,
> Tell o'er your woes again by viewing mine.
> I had an Edward, till a Richard killed him;
> I had a husband, till a Richard killed him.
> Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard killed him;
> Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard killed him.
> Duchess of York. I had a Richard too, and thou didst kill him;
> I had a Rutland too, thou holp'st to kill him.
> (IV. iv. 37-45)

Miner explains this scene; "The Duchess, catching the rhythm of Margaret's refrain, interrupts in order to wail a few lines of her own" (56). By rejecting some critics' view of language in this scene as "stiff, stilted and almost incomprehensible", Pitt presents her own view, seeing in it the end of the hostility between the houses of York and Lancaster; "The only language appropriate to the moments is plain, dignified and ritualized. The tone is sustained until Richard's entrance, by which time Margaret has made her final exit" (157). We can see it as the result of understanding female power and learning the strategy of female language from each other.

In Act IV, iv, Margaret's action of sitting with the women of York symbolizes the language of women's bonding. Margaret's words are resonant with the Duchess of York's words. In Shakespearean tragedy, women's actions are limited to correspond with women's roles which are confined to wife, mother and queen. The language of women, therefore, comes to function in a more significant role.

As Simone de Beauvoir terms the perception of women as "Other," female power has culturally and socially long projected this "Otherness" as the opposite to male power. In a male-dominated historical world, women's role should be surbodinate to men and women are seen as powerless or the objects of male desire. In this sense, there is no oppressor or oppressed in women's unity. It is not surprising that the strategy of female language is reflected in their unity of "Otherness."

Even though we can sense the gradual unity through their language, there is a strategy to advocate the tragic situation peculiar to an individual. Margaret, who is "hungry for revenge" and believes that she deserves "the title of most grief-striken", severely implies that the Duchess of York can be seen as a bearer of tragic vision. Miner explains this; "Margaret,however, regains voice, reminding the Duchess of York that it is her womb that has bred the cause of all their sorrows: 'From forth the kennel of thy womb has crept / A hellhound that doth hunt us all to death' (4.4.47-48)" (57). Margaret's words ironically proves that women's sexuality with respect to nature's reproduction and women's power as the origin of life brings about, in a way, spiritually and physically, women's pain in tragedy.

As Phyllis Rackin argues that, "In the first tetralogy the female characters fall neatly into groups, and their generic gender characteristic always transcend and subsume their individual identities" (216). However, we are reminded that women cannot transcend their individual tragic position by words. Although women can

share tragic grief, by being based on "their generic gender characteristic," their individual tragic experience is not necessarily monolistic. Margaret places her position as witness of "A dire induction" and hopes that "the consequence / Will prove as bitter, black, and tragical" (IV. iv. 5-6). The Duchess of York describes herself as "the mother of these griefs" and identifies with "Dead life, blind sight, poor mortal / living ghost, / Woe's scene, world's shame, grave's due by live / usurped, / Brief abstract and record of tedious days,..." (IV. iv. 26-28). As Elizabeth is called "poor shadow," or "painted queen" by Margaret, she declares, "...And make me die the thrall of Margaret's curse, / Nor mother, wife, nor England's counted queen" (IV. i. 45-46).

For Richard, as women represent the collective male fear of female power, their values should be destroyed. This can be explained by Coppelia Kahn's view of establishing masculine identity within a "patriarchal" society:

> Shakespeare's works reflect and voice a masculine anxiety about the uses of patriarchal power over women, specifically about men's control over women's sexuality, which arises from the disparity between men's social dominance and their peculiar emotional vulnerability to women.(12)

We can be fairly certain that it is Richard's contempt for Edward's disastrous marriage to Elizabeth Grey. It is possible that tragedy in *Richard III* has already begun with the gender conflict in Edward's marriage and developed from Richard's misogynist's views. As a result, Richard's male world tends to exclude female voices and there can never be a male-female balance. This is what Joyce Carol Oates acutely points out; " 'tragedy' issued from such one-sided development, in both the individual and in culture" (27).

The Duchess of York persists in speaking to Richard as a mother even when invoking a "most grievous curse." In this curse, she prophesies her son's tragic ending, "Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end; / Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend" (IV. iv. 195-196). According to Kahn, Shakespeare's male characters are confronted with the problem of the psychological relationship between mother and son. By differentiating their masculinity form the femininity of their mothers, men are supposed to learn a sexual identity with women through marriage.

Furthermore, it is possible to observe this process from a female perspective. This mother (woman)-son (man)-woman relationship forms a *circle*. However, it is not necessary for women to differentiate their sexual identity from the femininity of their mothers. As adults they have to confront masculinity, which is totally different from their sexuality, and unite their sexuality with it. Thus in this mother (woman)-daughter (woman)-man relationship, women never need to return to a original sexual identity with their mothers to establish their femininity. Their sexual development is *lineal*. The process of encountering different sexuality intensifies the tragic vision of gender conflict and leads women to tragic experiences in male-female power relationships.

Moreover, as we have seen, female language makes its contributions to a developing tragedy. Tragedies of life are tragedies of language. For women, at the same time, language serves as a protective weapon and by believing so, language transforms women's reality. From Richard's tragic plot women reconstruct a strategy to use. Female characters do not simply accept the conventional view of women-roles or the language of women. For women, female power as "Other" should be transformed into power which is the quintessence of their independence and sovereignty.

Female language in *Richard III* can be defined as a re-shaper of tragedy, and a strategy which is associated with women's choice within the game of power. We, therefore, conclude that Shakespeare presents female power differently in *Richard III*, by showing that women can be powerful as subjects, if they can successfully manipulate their power of words, in particular, first learn female power beyond their individual tragic situation and then channel it into their language as a strategy.

Notes

[1]A. P. Rossiter calls the play "a rhetorical symphony with five movements" (7), by using musical term; see Storey's explanation (1961:7).

[2]Phyllis Rackin defines the role of women in Shakespeare's history plays as follows, "The women who do appear are typically defined as opponents and

subverters of the historical and historigraphic enterprise, in short, as anti-historians" (207). See Rackin 1990: 207-222.

[3]Quotations from *Richard III* refer to the Signet edition by Mark Eccles (1988). All are noted parenthetically.

[4]Madonne M. Miner suggests that the female characters use words as weapons; see Miner 1988:57.

[5]Stephen L. Tanner emphasizes this, "...in the second debate it is Elizabeth who makes the puns and twists the meanings" (470).

[6]However, Tanner finally criticizes Dollarhide's conclusion that by simply omitting this scene with Elizabeth the decline of Richard is more effective; see Tanner 1974:468-472.

[7]See Barber and Wheeler 1986: 86-124.

[8]Madonne M. Miner also explores this unity of different parties and sees Act IV. iv. as the most moving example of a "women-aid-women scene."

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Women and Tragedy in *Richard III* : The Strategy of Female Language

『リチャード三世』における女性と悲劇－言語の戦略

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シェイクスピアの『リチャード三世』は歴史劇に分類される．歴史劇では，歴史上の戦いが主に扱われ男性中心の世界が描かれるため，女性は周縁に存在して＜声＞を与えられてはいない．一方『リチャード三世』を「悲劇」と解釈するならば，作品に悲劇性を生むものは男性間の葛藤というよりは，男性と女性間の葛藤ではないだろうか．『リチャード三世』において，男性と闘うための武器をもたない女性は，言語を戦略として用いることによって，女性の力を行使し，男性支配の歴史的世界に挑んでいるからである．このジェンダーの葛藤こそ「女性と悲劇」という問題に新たなる観点を提示するものである．本稿では，『リチャード三世』における女性登場人物たちが，リチャードのレトリックに対抗し，しかもリチャードのプロットから自らのプロットを再構築するために，戦略として用いる女性の言語を考察し，「女性と悲劇」の関係を探求した．