



## **A Study of the Art of Seduction in *Richard III*: A Baudrillardian Analysis of Shakespeare's Master Simulator**

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### **Abstract**

Shakespeare's eponymous character's movement in *Richard III* towards the peak of power passes through his art of simulation which is induced by seduction and annihilation. Richard's playacting skills in feigning innocence and brotherhood while hiding villainy along with his persuasive oratory in dismantling others' suspicions, ultimately leading to numerous murders on his behalf, entangle him in a labyrinth of a hyperreal state of being, in a Baudrillardian sense, from which no escape is possible. Richard III is seduced into a vertiginous power struggle which is but an essential form of reversibility that leads him to his own ruin. In this regard, this paper tries to study Richard III, as a character, in light of the concept of "simulacrum" in Baudrillard's philosophy to show how he becomes the victim of a self-made loop which leads to his downfall. This study encourages similar investigations to discover hidden layers of meaning in Shakespeare's tragedies, the ones including villains as their protagonists.

*Keywords:* Baudrillard, Richard III, seduction, Shakespeare, simulacrum

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## Introduction

When we talk about monarchy, it is simultaneously about both the position as well as the personality of the monarch. A monarch, Platonic or Machiavellian, might have become one either through heritage or despotism, the former mostly imposing his / her personality upon the kingdom in advance through his / her presence in the royal line and the latter acting like a chameleon as the conditions change. However, the problem is when the nominee of the latter kind, through his / her tyranny and treachery, rises up to power and establishes a kingdom of lies where the fact is sacrificed to the fiction, and as Shakespeare has put it in his similar story, *Macbeth*, "fair is foul and foul is fair" (1993, I. i, 11).

The fellow who is capable of despotism succumbs in essence to what Jean Baudrillard terms "simulacrum" and "seduction". "Simulacrum" for Baudrillard typically takes the problems of "falsity and untruth" into consideration (Pawlett, 2010b, p. 196), while "seduction" refers to the constant deferment of meaning, truth or the signified, through "the infinite and involuted games of appearances and illusions" (Gilloch, 2010, p. 55). In case of pursuing power through conspiracy, for example, the despot makes his best to engage himself and those involved in his despotism in constant deferment of his immoral intentions or in a despotic maze from which there is no escape. In this regard, through a complicated world of simulacra and false images, the despot tries "seduction", or, to speak for Butler (2010), the "reversibility or exchangeability of power" based on which the dominator cannot be separated from the dominated (p. 78). Notwithstanding, the different forms of power, including seduction, are considered to be imaginary, seduction being merely only the ability to "dissimulate," thus entangling the despot in a kind of "void" (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 54) or a chasm of power. For Baudrillard, power systems are involved in a sequence of illusions from which escape is impossible; hence, illusion is imaginary, that is, it is something that not only originates from imagination but affects imagination also. It is in this regard that Baudrillard, making sense of the etymology of *ludere*, holds that, "*Il- ludere* is ... to put oneself into play," for which humans "have to create the rules of the illusion" (Baudrillard & Noailles, 2007, p. 44). To escape from a seductive void can only be achieved through a self-annihilation. As he explains elsewhere, "the internal logic of the sign" has already inherent in itself the "repressive and reductive strategies" of systems of power (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 163). Due to this fact, using the same logic to act against it can cause "implosive outcomes", like what happened before, during and after witness 9/11 (Lane, 2010, p. 46). In this sense, a highly powered system with different means of control is, in Baudrillard's philosophy has been built upon a certain association of life and death, having defined death as "the absolute termination of life" (Pawlett, 2010a, p. 46). Baudrillard, thus, holds that living along this power structure cannot shut it down; instead, it is only through death, "an immediate death" that the subject can terminate the system (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 40).

Slotkin (2007) claims that Shakespeare's *Ricard III* owes its reputation to a world in which "foul is fair, and fair is largely absent" (p. 25). In this sense, Shakespeare's play is, in light of Baudrillard, a play about the simulacrum of authoritarianism and how a megalomania rises to concretize the object of his desire,

the kinship of England. With regard to this fact, *Richard III* also makes use of certain metatheatrical techniques, mostly employed by Richard himself in propagating his cause. Thus, Shakespeare seems to have introduced a master simulator of seductive powers where power games and truth mongering are concerned with the state of the world. Therefore, a Baudrillardian analysis of Richard III's personal motivations, political causes, megalomania, seductive arts, and ultimate death can help with the interpretation of Shakespeare's philosophy of life and power systems in this play.

### Literature Review

In so far as Baudrillard's concept of "simulacrum" already has its manifestation in the world of drama, some plays of Shakespeare have benefited from such critical readings. As one specific case in point, Kencki (2014) appropriates Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum to serve as a critical theory for theatre and drama. He argues that theatre, as an event or something that happens, combining "spectacularity, causal performativity and simulation" succumbs to the Baudrillardian model of a simulated reality. Kencki then analyses Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to argue that its meta-theatrical feature, "located at the interpretational mezzanine of sorts," shows its complete meaning with the help of the process of staging. Such reading of *The Tempest* specially emphasizes the presence of simulacra in its world as the characters try to free themselves from appearances (p. 36). Muzaffar (2020) also analyzes some of Shakespeare's plays in light of Baudrillard's "simulation" to investigate the problem of appearance versus reality. In this light, such plays as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* present the audience with characters who "denature reality" by disguising themselves for certain advantages throughout their adventures (p. 57). It can be argued that Shakespeare's main characters, as shown in some of his comedies, try their hands at simulacra within the diegetic level of the plays before other characters simultaneously as they perform meta-theatrically before the audience. This is true with Richard III as a character, even though critics have not been prone to investigate it in *Richard III*. Nonetheless, there are studies that have provided added incentive for the present research. For example, Moulton's Article (1996) examines "some of the fault lines that existed in the practice and gender ideology of masculinity in early modern patriarchy" (p. 251). Looking at power within a framework of gender relations, this Article attempts to show that Richard III's characterization serves "a critique and an ambivalent celebration of excessive and unruly masculinity" to highlight the inarticulateness of the concept of masculinity in early Renaissance (p. 255). However, the term "seduction" in Moulton's essay has been employed in a context of sex and sexuality, or, in general, as sexual power rather than in the Baudrillardian sense of the term to mean the seduction to power, a power that aims at dominating reality by means of simulation, that intend to dominate reality by hyperreality. This being said, one should be on guard against generalizations, because even the very act of sex can be a means of empowerment, an articulation of power. Moulton interestingly argues that Richard tries to degrade "the discourses of erotic pleasure" by giving priority to his desire for power. While seducing Lady Anne, he masterfully uses a "language of affection, sexual desire,

and physical obsession,” which he hates as it is a sign of unmanly weakness, for his own political objectives. When he offers Anne his sword, as a symbol of manliness, he performs some “gender reversal,” as he gives her the chance of exercising “phallic power” which he initially thinks she is powerless to accept. Anne gives up as she withdraws her political fight with Richard via “a discourse of erotic seduction” which, despite giving some illusory power over Richard and his weakness as a suitor, essentially makes her “feminine and passive” before Richard as “masculine and active” (p. 267). The power struggle between Anne and Richard portrays itself in the form of a sexual duel in which Richard is victorious because of his ability to distort reality by being able to be deceptive.

Day (1991) has shown another aspect of deceptiveness and distortion of reality by focusing on the illusiveness of the identity and the practicality of showmanship on the part of the protagonist. “Richard III,” writes Day, “is self-consciously theatrical,” calling for the audience to detect and question its corollary “metaphor of acting and illusion” (p. 149). In Day's reading, Richard's wooing scenes and encounters with other characters are marked with equivocation, the definitive quality of his personality. It is only when he has to face himself that he cannot be deceptive, no matter how much he tries. It is seen in his final soliloquy, “a self-examination,” in which Richard is both the prosecutor and defender, no longer being able to deceive himself (p. 155).

It is only an encounter with oneself, as Richard III's action gives evidence to it, that deceit does not come handy. Otherwise, it is a means to attain power especially when the various fabricated identities that you produce have buyers out there. This and other similar studies, despite their emphasis on Shakespeare's character's willingness, fall short of referring to the role that the Baudrillardian simulacrum plays. Hence, this study shows how *Richard III* hosts simulacrum to play an essential role in the construction of power.

### **Method**

“Simulacrum,” from the Latin *simulare* or to “make like” (Winer & Simpson, 1989), usually connotes falsity and untruth whenever the reality of a concept or object is under question. However, Baudrillard makes sense of this term not as falsity but as that which “hides the truth's non-existence” (1990, p. 35). Pawlett believes that this aspect of simulacrum is “true” in so far as it is something that hides something else (2010b, p. 196). Baudrillard holds, specifically in *Seduction* (1990), that truth has no basis beyond simulacra games – as ideas and words play hide-and-seek – and thus “truths” are entangled in “seduction”. Pawlett thus makes sense of “simulacrum” as “the sudden diverting of signs into a play of appearance and disappearance” (2010b, p. 196). In this regard, linguistic signs, that is, the words we speak and articulate, can be seduced into a chain of simulacra, always escaping the origin to highlight their non-existence.

Baudrillard delineates the four stages of simulacrum in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). The first stage is when the image of concern reflects “a profound reality.” In this stage, which is a Platonic stage, we know that the reality is still there but the image is on a second sphere of being. Then the image “masks and denatures”

the reality; in other words, the image somehow tries to establish its being independent from the reality behind it, as if the reality did not exist at all. Next, the image covers "the absence" of reality, which veils even the vacuum where reality once existed. Finally, in the state of "simulation," the image has no association with any kind of reality: "it is its own pure simulacrum," or a being onto itself (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6). These stages are in fact the behavior of the image which is born as a dependent being and ends up as an independent one with no roots to hold unto.

For Baudrillard, the "media age" now is governed by a "pure simulacrum," as human beings have submerged in a world of media that constantly exposes them to images that have come to replace reality. So Baudrillard remarks that "It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real" (1994, pp. 12–13). When "simulacra" as such become the "real," there is nothing more real than the simulacra as they hide the "fundamental absence of the real" (Pawlett, 2010b, p. 198). However, as Baudrillard argues in *Impossible Exchange* (1999), the contemporary computer-generated or digital images are different from simulacrum, because they lead us into a state of absolute abstraction, that is, into virtual localities. Digital technology is actually "a substitute for the world," a substitute from which reality, the simulacra, and even humans are vanishing while their disappearance is only "our fascination" (Pawlett, 2010b, p. 198). Maybe the digital age of human beings is their conscious attempt at disappearing themselves instead of being unconsciously submerged in it.

However, Baudrillard's argument on simulacra is not specific to the modern and postmodern conditions. So, man's concern with a false image of himself or the world has always been there to the extent that even Plato's image of the corporeal world is a degraded form of the Ideal world. Yet, Baudrillard highlights the fact that the modern man has seduced himself into the play of signs and so has lost the real. For example, Shakespeare's famous lines in *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (2005, 2.7.139-140) is a case in point here if read in line with the fact that human beings only come onto the scene of life to take roles and then to die and vanish. Yet, it can be argued that the sense of life is more strongly felt by Shakespeare's character Richard III who is his master simulator and seducer.

## Discussion

### Richard's Network of Simulacrum and Seduction

Throughout his life and royal authority, Richard represents the transfer of the sign from the world of the real to that of the simulacrum. In his real world, he initially suffers from a kind of self-degradation which he cannot overcome through piety and perseverance. The first act of the play sketches a man's personal features which do not fit a prince of noble blood but a man dying in the gutter. Richard's physical nature puts him in a state of paralysis: "Cheated of Feature by dissembling Nature, / Deform'd, un-finish'd," having "no delight to pass away the time" (2005, 1.1.119-25). His real body initially determines for him the range of his actions in the real world. In the courtly atmosphere of the time, a deformed and seemingly impotent man like Richard, Duke of Gloucester has no place in the royal line and

even at the court. He is "not shap'd for sportive trickes," flirting with women, "Nor made to court an amorous Looking-glasse." He is "Rudely stamp't" by nature and lacks "love's majesty" before courtly women (1.1.14-16). He considers himself so ugly and "deformed" that even dogs bark at him when he stops near them. So, his lack of self-esteem plays on Elizabethan ideas about the outward appearance and inner harmony, because, as Slotkin argues, a person's "physical appearance" reflects his / her personality (2007, p. 5). This is to say that if a person is innately evil, he / she is born deformed as its verification. Ergo, it can be argued that a physically deformed and ugly person like Richard III is handicapped by God because of his villainy.

Richard himself, however, actually argues that someone who is physically unusual will be treated unfairly by society which causes them to develop an inferiority complex. So, can it be suggested that Richard will have his revenge against his people by paving his way to the throne through tyranny? He suffers from the challenge of the world of images representative of the courtly manners of the time, images such as gallantry and gentlemanly discipline that have defaced the true essence of humanity for the sake of appearance. In Act I, Scene iii, Duke of Gloucester says:

Because I cannot flatter, and look fair,  
Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,  
...  
I must be held a rancorous Enemy. (2005, 1.3.52-55)

Richard, who cannot prove himself a perfect courtly lover, is eventually prone to prove a perfect villain to cover his physical distortion with a veil of power. As he puts it a little earlier in the play: "since I cannot prove a lover ... I am determined to prove a villain" (2005, 1.28-31).

Richard disrupts moral and aesthetic norms by victoriously announcing his "malevolence" and "taking narcissistic pride in his ugliness" (Stolkein, 2007, p. 5). Dustagheer similarly argues that Shakespeare's character "plays a variety of roles to hide his true evil intentions and manipulate events and people to his advantage" (2009, p. 56). Eventually, Richard says, I "seem a saint, when most I play the evil" (2005, 1.3.337). In fact, his obsession with evil is both out of knowledge and desire; in other words, Richard knows that he is evil-minded and evil-faced at the same time. Slotkin theorizes that the character of Richard III paradoxically symbolizes Renaissance controversies about "the epistemological value of appearances for determining moral truths." In this regard, Richard's deformity, taken by others as a representation of his sinfulness, is an epitome of "the union of outer appearances and inner truths." Meanwhile, Richard's fake benevolence demonstrates "the deceitful disjunction between external shows and internal nature" (2007, pp. 6-7). Purcell (2018) maintains that "metatheatricality" as such is an essential nature in some of Shakespeare's plays (p. 19), and Dustagheer highlights the theatrical aspect of Richard's behavior to hold that Shakespeare's drama "is metatheatrical, constantly drawing attention to itself as a piece of theatre, frequently controlled by Richard" (2009, p. 56). Richard's asides play the main role here because by addressing the audience he tries to get their sympathy in his evil intentions. Richmond sees the

"compulsive interest" of the modern audience in "the megalomaniac delights of Richard's sadism" as a sign of a dominant mental pathology, "an epidemic obsession with violent assertion of the male self" (1999, pp. 7–8). Such beliefs reflect critics' tendency, since the early Renaissance, to make connections between the charm of representing evil and the "deceptiveness of the representation" or the audiences' moral / psychological flaw (p. 6). Whatever the appeal for Shakespeare's audience may be, Richard's deformity is "an aesthetic attribute" symbolizing his dark side simultaneously as it "artfully crafts" his "false appearance of goodness" (Slotkin, 2007, p. 10). It is to say that Richard paradoxically makes his best to deface his ugliness to prove to the world, in a seductive way, that he is better than his appearance. He is proud of such stuff, maybe as a defense mechanism against his ugliness: "I clothe my naked villainy / With old odd ends stol'n out of holy writ, / And seem a saint when most I play the devil" (2005, 1.3.336-38). As a result, he achieves "the complete dissimulation" of all things that betray him and his desires; in other words, Richard's false sainthood completely covers his demonism (Rossiter, 1999, p. 140).

Richard's wickedness is both diegetic and hypo-diegetic. On the diegetic level, he plans to be a villain to reach his ends, while on the hypo-diegetic level, although he plays out a "saint" for others, he is the incarnation of "the evil" himself. He also plays extra-diegetically in planning the course of the play; that is, in his asides, to fulfill this metatheatrical role, he makes it more appealing to the audience. In a Baudrillardian sense, Richard escapes the real to enter the un-real through his excursions into sainthood and falsity; he comes to make a saint out of the devil, to make what he is not. From the eye of Dustagheer, Richard's simulation is full, for he maintains that "Richard proves to be a master of simulating emotions – he feigns love for Lady Anne, genuine concern for his brother Clarence, as well as playful affection with his two doomed nephews" (2009, p. 56). So, Anne is easily deceived by his "dissembling looks" (2005, 1.2.222), for Richard associates himself with the image of "Shadow in the sun" (1.1.26), a passing "Shadow" (1.2.263), which befits a dark and treacherous character who hides his evil intentions. Thus, it is understandable why Dustagheer should conclude that "Richard is the ultimate shadow-actor, who morphs into a variety of characters" (2009, p. 57). He woos Anne and praises her beauty while in his coronation he essentially takes her only as a tool. He even pretends humiliation before her: "Take up the sword again, or take up me" (2005, 1.2.183). He then works with Buckingham to facilitate his coronation. When Buckingham ensures him that Richard can dupe the citizens, he does so by appearing with two bishops in prayer; when Lord Mayor arrives, he pretends that he is not after the throne, that he unwillingly accepts it.

Richard basically acts like the devil through his self-conscious theatrically. He constantly tries to dupe others to believe that he is what he shows while he is actually a devil in disguise. His case manifests the challenge of detecting the good side of people when one's appearance might stand for one's "inner truths" at certain times while he / she may "deceptively conceal them" at other times (Slotkin, 2007, p. 25). This means that Richard enchants his victims via his misdeeds and thus "implicates" them in his crimes (p. 12). Therefore, his attraction has its roots in his



monstrosity and ugliness in so far as the play presents them as “aesthetic objects capable of arousing erotic desire” (p. 7). In this sense, Shakespeare’s character is the incarnation of what Baudrillard defines as “seduction”. Here it should be noted that although many critics have mistaken seduction for a temptation or a desirous activity, for Baudrillard it is something in line with simulation.

Doel theorizes that, from Baudrillard’s viewpoint, being seduced is being “drawn towards something that constantly eludes us,” being lost on the surface; it is a state offering “neither stability nor balance nor security” (2010, p. 186). In this sense, seduction not only leads images away from the right path but also makes them “curve in on themselves, spiraling towards the non-sense whence they came” (p. 187). Seduction is like a labyrinth of which the beginning and the ending have disappeared; it is a game of appearance and disappearance *ad infinitum*: “a circular and reversible process of challenge” (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 55). Yet, for Baudrillard seduction resembles “a double spiral”: it is like “a spiral swerving towards a sphere of the sign, the simulacrum and simulation” simultaneously as it looks like “a spiral of the reversibility of all signs in the shadow of seduction and death” (1988, p. 79). As in this binary structure the two spirals are constantly “displaced and misplaced” against each other (Smith, 2010, p. 187), they are destined to lead to one another forever, without touching one another. As Baudrillard observes in different occasions, this “mad obsession with the real” (2007, p. 38), this desire “to exhaust all the possibilities” (1996, p. 48), is fatal: “Obscenity begins when there is no more spectacle, ... no more theatre, no more illusion, when everything becomes immediately transparent” (Smith, 2010, p. 188). For Baudrillard, every appearance in the world can be subverted or inverted but not reversed; seduction in this regard is that “reversible form” (1990, p. 21). Accordingly, unless the mesmerizing vertigo of appearance and disappearance is active, seduction is unstoppable. As Baudrillard holds, seduction has the shape of “an uninterrupted ritual exchange” in which the seducer and the seduced continuously endanger each other in a never-ending game which has no winner (p. 22). In this sense, Shakespeare’s *Richard III* begins with a fundamental challenge to his companions as well as his audience. Crippled and stuck in a distorted image of courtliness, Richard the hero acts saintly, although with covert villainy, through a challenge for power. He not only generates a seductive maze in which he becomes a lost actor but also goes on with his seductive methods through the simulated reality he has built, exhausting himself and his method by killing others to satisfy his thirst for blood. His death is the manifestation of Baudrillardian “reversibility” or fortune’s wheel overturned (Coulter, 2010, p. 181), and the abysmal vertigo of seduction. Richard’s vertigo of seduction even entangles Lady Anne who succumbs to his seduction, although she knows about his evil intentions. So, in a Baudrillardian sense of seduction, no limitation exists against “the challenge to love more than one is loved, or to be always more seduced—if not death” (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 22). Wooing Anne, Richard manipulates her not only by showing her a false image of himself as a justified murderer but also by teaching her how to kill this murderer if she has the reason to do so. In Act I Scene ii, when Anne is mourning the death of Henry IV, her father-in-law, over his corpse, while reminding the death of Edward as well, she expresses her grudge against “the selfsame hand that made these wounds” in their bodies (2005, 1.2.11), and curses



Richard whose "ugly and unnatural" state (1.2.23) has turned "the happy earth" into hell (1.2.52). Richard, who is now the master of simulation and seduction, replies but mercifully to begin a soothing process that ultimately extinguishes Anne's fire. "Lady, you know no Rules of Charity, / Which renders good for bad, Blessings for curses," Richard initially replies (1.2.69-70). Anne calls him a "devil" who tells the truth (1.2.74), and is addressed as an angel who is "so angry" (1.2.75). Richard mockingly justifies killing Henry VI by announcing that the dead good king is better to be with God than this hellish earth: "Let him [Henry VI] thank me, that holpe to send him thither: / For he was fitter for that place than earth" (1.2.112-13). Anne wants Richard in hell while he wants her in his own "bedchamber" (1.2.109-110), against which she wishes him to be dead. Richard tries to change the course of the exchange of these curses and courtly words by asking Anne to "leave this keene encounter of our wittes, / And fall something into a slower method" (1.2.122-23). According to Slotkin, Richard takes the exchange as "a deliberately constructed display of wit", suggested by "method" in his line, and thus consciously decides to change it. His emphasis is on the form than the content of their dialogue, which makes his concern "theatrically motivated" (2007, p. 15). It is to say that Richard is playing with his prey, here Anne, before exposing her to his evil deeds, just like a beast in nature before killing its hunt. However, seducing Anne is not for leading her to the "bed-chamber"; it is not more than a bonus for Richard after having her under his full authority; in fact he seduces Anne away from his regicide to a nightly adventure to win the lady: "Your beauty was the cause of that effect: ... To undertake the death of all the world" (2005, 1.2.128-130). However, Anne wishes to take revenge against him while he considers it "unnatural" to take revenge against someone who loves her (1.2.131-32). Richard even considers himself as "a better husband" (1.2.136), keeping up with his flirting despite Anne's insults. Accordingly, Lobo's observation indicates that Richard's desire to seduce Anne is more than sexually motivated. Lobo states that seduction can also involve sex but it is never the target of seduction so far as "the game of seduction" is endless unless one or more players pass away (2013, p. 161). So, Richard's death is the only possibility of terminating his seduction.

Richard seems to be playing a director on the stage, instructing Anne how to take a role, here a murderer, to psychologically submerge her in an unreal world where his wickedness is a blessing. He puts the idea of revenge in her mind, on the spot, by offering his "sharp-pointed sword" to her, teaching her how to use it, not letting her premeditate her favorite kind of revenge, as if teaching a child how to use a toy sword, belittling her revengeful mind (2005, 1.2.174-80). Anne is not going to take the sword but it is Richard who helps her with it by encouraging her to do so. It seems that Richard as a senior actor in the Renaissance drama is helping a junior actor with his / her performance, as Orgel (1996) and McMillin (2004) argue. Besides, Orgel and McMillin believe that Richard's action here has sexual connotations as he seduces Anne into submission before him. Richard thus produces "the spectacle of a villain who has mesmerized his victim" so masterfully that he can equip her with the weapon to defeat him, and even persuade her meanwhile to do so, believing that she will take no action. With his art of seduction and mastery of simulation, Richard presents himself as "an artist" whose creations are meant not

only to satisfy the audience but also to “manipulate the other characters” (Stolkein, 2007, p. 15). Furthering his seduction of Anne, Richard wants her not to “pause” as he is the murderer of King Henry and young Edward, her beauty being the mere cause (2005, 1.2.181-84). Anne drops the sword, despite telling Richard that his tongue and heart are both “false” (1.2.197). For Anne, Richard is a “lump of foul deformity” (1.2.58), and he has a “hell-govern’d arm” that kills everyone he touches (1.2.68). However, she succumbs to his will; Anne is won, finally, and when she exits, Richard concludes, in a lengthy aside, that he has been able to win Anne despite her “hate, / ... curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes” (1.2.235-236). This concluding aside leads us back to the beginning of Act I, Scene i, where Richard expresses his evil intentions due to his deformed nature. In so far as Richard is metatheatrical and constantly reminds himself and the audience of his evil intentions, he has created a double spiral of seduction from which there is no escape.

The scene of “Richard’s seduction,” different from a typical scene of “courtly love poetry,” is not sincere (Slotkin, 2007, p. 16). This is because Richard highlights his sins so often that his seductive language cannot be attributed to a benevolent lover trying to win a lady out of pure love and affection. He even tries to seduce others not via the beauty of his form but “a narcissistic erotics of deformity” as he takes pleasure in thinking about his deformed body (p. 18). Even when Elizabeth reminds Richard that he killed her children (2005, 4.4.341), Richard’s reply is disturbing enough: “But in your daughter’s womb I bury them, ... to your recomforture” (4.4.342-45). Richard’s sophistry or, seducing Elizabeth into believing in the disappearance of his murders, actually works when she succumbs to his wish: “Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?” (4.4.346), to which Richard replies: “be a happy mother by the deed” (4.4.347). Although an important feature of seduction for Baudrillard is its overt “spatial inflection” than its “sexual reference” (Doel, 2010, p. 186), the concept of seducing still carries a gender-biased connotation. According to Lobo’s proposition, which can be regarded as the undertone of seduction in Baudrillard’s philosophy, Richard seduces others and others let themselves be seduced by Richard. Lobo states that there is no necessity for seduction to happen when a man is approaching a woman, but seduction emerges when masculinity in an individual seduces femininity in another individual, as the latter keeps on game playing, allowing them to “be seduced” (2013, pp. 159-160).

On this account, there is no end to Richard’s seductive methods of simulating reality with falsehood except his death. In other words, the reversibility of the double spiral which is circling over and over to repeat and intensify itself must be stopped. However, Smith (2010) argues that “reversibility” points to a kind of “poetic justice” (p. 181), while Baudrillard maintains that it is not destructible but “the fundamental rule” (2005, p. 41). So, it turns out that there is no “determinism” being active here as Baudrillard considers “reversibility” an “absolute weapon” against determination (2008, p. 82). In Baudrillard’s belief, systems have internally a sort of inherent capability to “undermine themselves” through their function (Smith, 2010, p. 182). For example, our attempts at overprotecting ourselves create such a condition in which we become “eminently vulnerable” (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 38). In Baudrillard’s “Manichean dualism”, evil is as powerful as good, but

attempting to do good, humans create the possibility of reversion as well. Reversibility is somehow a semi-spiritual entity that ensures that every system will be overturned (Baudrillard, 2005), which happens "at their apogee" (Smith, 2010, p. 182). When Margaret laments the murder of her spouse and son, Henry VI and Prince Edward, Richard reminds her that they were the murderers of his father and brother, the Duke of York and the Earl of Rutland. The Yorkists curse the murder of the young Earl of Rutland but "this only foreshadows Richard's infanticide of the young princes." This fact that the dead and the living have identical names and titles "serves to enhance this complex and confused succession of blame, revenge, and bloodshed" (Dustagheer, 2009, p. 54), which points to the reversibility of Richard's seductive world. As Margaret tells the queen:

I had an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;  
I had a [Harry], till a Richard kill'd him;  
Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;  
Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard kill'd him; (2005, 4.3.40-43).

The Duchess of York, also present in this scene, quickly reminds Margaret that she had her own Richard as well whom Richard III killed (4. 4. 44). Richard's numerous murders, according to this cycle, end in his own murder, and so it can be said that his thirst for power merely satisfies itself with his own blood. This is also in accordance with the curses Margaret puts on other characters and the play of fate that is mostly observable in the play. Thus, as each one of Margaret's curses is realized, "it seems that a tragic inevitability is at work in the narrative of the play" (Dustagheer, 2009, p. 55). This fact highlights the motif of "death" in the play: death of kings, death of princess, death of lords, death of innocent heirs, death of a system of monarchy.

Accordingly, it can be proposed that death acts cyclically in Shakespeare's play; it follows the principles of social determinism which finally ends due to the "reversibility" principle in Baudrillard. In this light, in Baudrillard's philosophy, systems equipped with power and control are based on a particular association of death and life, one which divides and puts them against each other them, presenting death as the ultimate point in life (Smith, 2010, p. 46). In the play, the death of others serves Richard's tyrannical survival whereas Richard's death is the only solution for others' biological survival. According to Lobo, Baudrillard considers seduction "a game or challenge" in which not only the seducer but also the seduced can feel the produced vertigo (2013, p. 162). Thus, it seems that Baudrillard tries to refashion Hegel's dialectic of the master-slave, claiming that the former "confiscates" the latter's death while maintaining "the right to risk his own," and so the structure of power in Shakespeare's drama is no other than "a structure of death" (1993, p. 40), for Richard comes to confiscate others' lives. Baudrillard mentions that "the cycle of seduction" cannot be closed; it means that seducing someone can happen to seduce someone else whose seduction serves to please the first seducer (1990, p. 81). Richard even orders the death of children who are heirs to the throne. However, his own life is directed towards death, both as a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of his tyranny anticipated in the plays' prophesies. It is noteworthy that Richard's megalomania gradually becomes "a general desire for villainy" (Slotkin,

2007, p. 12). It is, therefore, not surprising that he may be entangled in his villainous labyrinth, the only escape from which is his own death.

Richard III's life, tyranny, and death highlights the fact that Shakespeare did have "a philosophy of life," as Bundy argues (1924, p. 516), and many great critics admit of Shakespeare's use of "certain philosophical ideas" (p. 517). However, this is not to suggest that Shakespeare knew about the technical terms of "simulacra" and "seduction" in their Baudrillardian sense, but that the philosophy of his life covered certain existential concerns about the nature of truth and power systems in his time.

### **Conclusion**

In so far as simulacrum defies the origin when it develops an existence of its own, it signifies what it is not and thus destructs the path toward the original source. In other words, perverting reality and pretending to be the real, simulacrum metamorphoses the real into a seductive system of deferred meanings. Thus, what Baudrillard means by *seduction* is the vertiginous world of simulacra in which the boundary between appearance and reality is blurred, with no fulfillment of the ultimate meaning. As far as this seductive maze is thirsty for turning the real into the simulacrum, there is no end for it but its death so that the endless cycle can be terminated.

The title character of Shakespeare's play, the treacherous, murderous, tyrant, and detested King Richard the Third, deserves death and lacks any nobility of character. Moreover, he endlessly fights with his ugly face and posture, which block his megalomania and love of power within a system that only cares for appearance. Thus, for the fulfillment of his obsession with power, he succumbs to an adverse mechanism of villainy and murder under the cover of benevolence. Such evil play-acting, through the metatheatricality of the play itself, turns the important Richard III to the master simulator who fulfills his evil intentions through treachery and villainy while he is helped by others who take his vice for virtue and encourage him to pursue his plans. Richard's art of seduction, just like a spiral swallowing every object of desire, is too mesmerizing for himself and others to be stopped. As Shakespeare's master simulator, he is a despot whose world of simulacra, in its last phase, has not only wiped its origin altogether but also has annihilated the vacuum, replacing it in an endless void, in its seduction, with no satisfaction except death and annihilation. By merging the foul with the fair, Richard becomes the knot of the loop he has created. There is no end to stop the loop of seduction, in a Baudrillardian sense, except through untying the knot, that is Richard's own death.

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