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## **A Villain in Every Tongue: Richard III's Bodily Stigma in Polish Translations of Shakespeare's Play**

### **1. Introduction**

At the end of William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the eponymous character begins to repent of the many murders he has ordered and committed. "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues, / And every tongue brings in a several tale, / And every tale condemns me for a villain" [5.3.205-207], he bemoans. Such a condemning tale is brought by probably every translation of the play, in every tongue,<sup>1</sup> although the translations may vary in precisely why they condemn Richard. The key issue is how they approach his alleged ugliness (or perhaps disability?) and its link to his amorality; namely, if the former is supposed to reflect or rather affect the latter. With this question in mind, I would like to discuss the relationship between Richard's appearance and actions in nine Polish translations of the play, referring to Erving Goffman's theory of stigma, models of disability, as well as ableist tropes tying deformity to depravity.

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<sup>1</sup> The same cannot be said about the play's comic book adaptations, as shown by Marina Gerzic [2020].

The material I analyse consists of nine published<sup>2</sup> Polish renditions of *Richard III* (publication year in parentheses), written by:

- Jan Komierowski (1858),
- Józef Paszkowski (1859),
- Józef Szujski (1887),
- Leon Ulrich (1895),
- Roman Brandstaetter (1952),
- Jerzy S. Sito (1971),
- Maciej Słomczyński (1984),
- Stanisław Barańczak (1996),
- Ryszard Długolecki (2020).<sup>3</sup>

Firstly, I examine the insults hurled at Richard in the Polish texts, using Lady Anne's disgust-filled name-calling as an example. Secondly, I look at how Richard's self-presentation is rendered into Polish, including the faults he sees in himself and the reasons he gives for becoming a villain, when he treats his physique as a 'narrative prosthesis' [cf. Mitchell and Snyder 2011, see below]. This analysis reveals various interpretations of Richard's body and character, which mirror the society's evolving perception of people it considers 'abnormal'.

## 2. Richard III, stigma and translation

The condemning tale in question concerns the rise and fall of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who then became King Richard III. This historical monarch was defeated by the future Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor Dynasty, the house that continued to rule more than a century later when Shakespeare wrote his history play (first performed in 1594). To strengthen the Tudors' claim to the throne, their supporters villainised Richard, portraying him as a cruel, inept, deformed ruler. Most importantly, in Thomas More's chronicle, Shakespeare's source, the king was described as an ugly hunchback with a limp and a withered arm. As Siobhan Keenan notes, More was the first to underline "Richard's deformity, positing a link between his allegedly twisted body and his unnatural

<sup>2</sup> In the afterword to Słomczyński's translation, Juliusz Kydryński mentions an unpublished translation by Władysław Tarnawski [Kydryński 1984: 221] and Czesław Jastrzębiec-Kozłowski's version is lost [Cetera-Włodarczyk and Pożar 2024: 332-333].

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the translators, see [Cetera-Włodarczyk and Kosim 2019; Cetera-Włodarczyk, Godlewski *et al.* 2024].

wickedness and corruption” [2017: 25]. One could say that his mien was supposed to prove his meanness, as the propaganda was based on the idea that a person’s physical appearance reflects their morality.<sup>4</sup>

Speaking in present-day terms, this thinking is a mark of the moral model of disability, in which disability supposedly provides “meaning about the person’s or [their] family’s character, deeds, thoughts, and karma” [Olkin 2022]. This idea persists to this day, as the contemporary efforts to defend Richard’s memory demonstrated by treating his body as evidence. When it was discovered in 2011 under a car park and research showed that the king only had scoliosis, disproving the portrayal in More’s chronicle and Shakespeare’s play, some enthusiasts greeted the results with joy, as if, as Allison Hobgood remarks, “one might finally uncover Richard’s ‘real’ nature by scrutinizing the truths of his ‘real’ body” [2015: 24].

These observations attest to the perseverance of deformity-related stigma, a situation in which, as Goffman defines it, society discredits an individual on the basis of their attributes, reducing them “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” [1965: 3]. The sociologist underlines that the attribute itself does not cause stigmatisation: it is the society that ascribes meaning to it and rejects its bearer. This process frequently leads to stereotypes, bringing more abstract associations – such as the view that a ‘deformed’ king is unfit to rule England. The lack of acceptance from others affects the identity of the stigmatised person, who can experience self-hate, internalise this view of themselves and use stigma for ‘secondary gains’ [Goffman 1965: 10], a behaviour that is displayed by Richard. As David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder [2011] argue, the protagonist’s deformity functions as a ‘narrative prosthesis’ in the play – a tool that he himself employs, particularly for rhetorical reasons – as well as a symbol interpreted in a myriad of ways. Goffman’s theory led to the development of the social model of disability, in which it is “believed to result from a mismatch between the disabled person and the environment (both physical and social). It is this environment that creates the handicaps and barriers, not the disability” [Olkin 2022].

Stigma is therefore a socio-cultural construct, one that a translator de- and then reconstructs, using the linguistic tools and cultural materials at hand. Their decisions affect the depiction of a stigmatised individual, as

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<sup>4</sup> In the modern era, some even tried to transform this conviction into science, as Michael Torrey [2000] demonstrates.

shown, for instance, in Eva Spišiaková's [2024] study of two 20<sup>th</sup>-century Slovak translations of *Richard III*, in which she demonstrates how socio-political circumstances (such as pre-war eugenic discourse, the aftermath of World War II, the cult of Jan Žižka and communist policies) could have influenced the translators' depiction of the duke in his opening soliloquy. As she herself notes [Spišiaková 2021, 2024], disability remains unexplored in Translation Studies and there exists a 'communication gap' [Spišiaková 2024: 8] between this field and disability studies, despite many shared areas of interest. She remarks that, for example, "Shakespeare's original text of *Richard III* will always be perceived as the ideal norm against which its translations, no matter how skilfully done, can never compare" [Spišiaková 2024: 8], which for her resembles the normative gaze on disability. Similarly to Spišiaková, I try to bridge this gap and use retranslations<sup>5</sup> of the play to comment on attitudes to bodily difference. Due to their number, I am unable to discuss the specific socio-political context of each translation, and thus focus on the texts themselves. I also examine how other characters perceive Richard via the insults they hurl at him.

### 3. Lady Anne's disgust-filled insults

*Richard III* is particularly rich in insults, with Richard being the primary author [Price 2002: 142] and probably the most common object of them. The invectives frequently involve the devil and animals [Price 2002: 141], especially hogs as well as spiders and toads, which at that time were considered particularly disgusting [Swenson 2020]. While animalistic insults abound in Shakespeare's canon, Michael Price calculates that Richard is associated with spiders and toads more than any other character [2002: 144]; this finding is significant as people with disabilities in general are often compared to animals [see Taylor 2017]. Price also discovers that "much of the verbal violence [in the play] originate[s] from female characters" [2002: 147]. While they have plenty of reasons to despise Richard, it is telling that their abuse merges his despicable actions with his 'ugliness', as exemplified by the insults hurled at Richard by Lady Anne, who calls him a "fou[l] toad" [1.2.161] and a "lump of foul deformity" [1.2.57], among others. Michael Torrey observes that the latter shows that

<sup>5</sup> The analysis of Polish retranslations of Shakespeare's plays has a rich history, see e.g. [Budrewicz 2020].

for Anne, Richard's "deformity is a clear sign that he is odious and wicked" [2000: 123]. Anne is repulsed, but one cannot say whether it is because of his body or his depravity; indeed, she might be referring to both.

This ambiguity presumably arises from the nature of disgust. Bradley Irish [2023a] argues that this emotion originated to help humans survive by avoiding dangers, such as the bacteria present in rotten food or dirt. It then evolved to cover a variety of things – not only life-threatening – attaining a pseudo-moral character: one can feel it towards actions or even other humans and oneself. Unfortunately, it can lead to stigmatisation and "play a central role in disability prejudice, as the ostensibly abnormal bodies and behaviours of disabled people are mistakenly identified as dangerous by an observer's disgust system" [Irish 2023b]. The scholar argues that Shakespeare frequently links "a character's non-conforming body with moral compromise", of which Richard, "whose evil is explicitly linked to his disgusting physical disability," is "a classic example" [2023b].

As a result, the same English words expressing disgust, for instance 'vile', can be used to talk about someone's body and behaviour, and they become particularly meaningful in a case such as this. Some examples are presented in Table 1, which contains the first five names Anne calls Richard directly when the two argue in Act I Scene II as well as their Polish translations, indicated by the translators' initials.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1. Translations of Lady Anne's selected insults**

S.T. insult translator	dreadful minister of hell	foul devil	lump of foul deformity	villain	defused infection of a man
J.K.	straszny zesłańcze piekielny <i>dreadful</i> <i>hell-sent</i>	obrzydły szatanie <i>abhorrent</i> <i>satan</i>	potworny gadzie <i>monstrous</i> <i>reptile</i>	łotrze <i>villain</i>	zatruta piano w powłoce mężczyzny <i>poisonous</i> <i>foam in</i> <i>man's coil</i>

<sup>6</sup> I have provided approximate back-translations, in which every word from the ST is given a different equivalent to mark the variety of the lexemes chosen by the Polish translators. For the sake of clarity, archaisms are translated using modern equivalents.

J.P.	straszny posłanniku piekieł <i>dreadful envoy of hell</i>	diable <i>devil</i>	bryło obmierzłej szpetności <i>lump of repellent hideousness</i>	poczwaro <sup>7</sup> <i>monstrosity</i>	zarazo w postaci człowieka <i>contagion in human form</i>
J. S.	straszliwy sługo piekła <i>horrific servant of hell</i>	podły szatanie <i>wicked satan</i>	potworze! czarcie niesłychany monster! <i>unheard-of fiend</i>	podły <i>wicked</i>	mężczyzny potworze <i>monster of a man</i>
L.U.	piekła hydny wykonawco <i>revolting executor of hell</i>	szpetny dyable <i>hideous devil</i>	zbiørze szpetnych niekształtno- ści [sic!] <i>set of hide- ous shapeles- snesses</i>	nędzniku <i>wretch</i>	zgnilizny ludzkiej hyd- ny zbiørze <i>revolting set of human rottenness</i>
R.B.	potworny wysłanniku piekieł <i>monstrous delegate of hell</i>	diable <i>devil</i>	wstrętna i niekształtna bryło <i>disgusting and shape- less lump</i>	łotrze <i>villain</i>	człowiecza zgnilizno <i>human rottenness</i>
J.S.S.	sługo piekieł ... szatanie <i>servant of hell ... satan</i>	duchu nieczysty <i>unclean spirit</i>	pokraczna, plugawa istoto <i>freaky, foul creature</i>	łotrze <i>villain</i>	niewydarzo- na zarazo, która się mienisz człowiekiem <i>misbegotten contagion that calls yourself human</i>

<sup>7</sup> Poczwara signifies a hideous, repellent creature, a monster.

M.S.	straszliwy wysłanniku piekła <i>horrific dele- gate of hell</i>	plugawy diabie <i>foul devil</i>	plugawy kaleko <i>foul cripple</i>	łotrze <i>villain</i>	strzępie zgnilizny człowieczej <i>scrap of human rottenness</i>
S.B.	wysłanniku piekieł <i>delegate of hell</i>	plugawy diabie <i>foul devil</i>	zlepku szpetnych ułomności <i>cluster of hideous defects</i>	-	mieszanka jadu naj- wstrętniejsza <i>the most dis- gusting blend of venom</i>
R.D.	upiorny sługo sił piekielnych <i>ghastly servant of infernal forces</i>	diabie <i>devil</i>	bryło wstrętnych kształtów <i>lump of disgusting shapes</i>	łotrze <i>villain</i>	ludzka zarazo <i>human contagion</i>

These translations are quite varied, but all convey the polysemous disgust. It is achieved mostly through adjectives; for instance, in Komierowski's version, Anne finds Richard 'dreadful' (*straszny*), 'disgusting' (*obrzydły*) and 'monstrous' (*potworny*), whereas in Ulrich's text, she twice repeats that the duke is 'hideous' (*szpetny*) and 'revolting' (*hydny*). It is also worth noting that sometimes translators eliminate or add the element of 'foulness'. Such is the case for Paszkowski, who translates 'foul devil' as 'devil' (*diabie*) – eliminating it – but then 'villain' as 'monstrosity' (*poczwaro*) – now adding it. On the whole, this component is retained in all versions to a similar extent, which attests to its translatability.

The biggest differences occur in the renditions of "lump of foul deformity" and "defused infection of a man". In the case of the latter, the translations mostly invoke contagion (Paszkowski, Sito, Długołęcki) and rottenness (Ulrich, Brandstaetter and Słomczyński). These are common sources of disgust, just like 'poisonous foam' and 'venom' (*zatruta piana* and *jad* in Komierowski's and Barańczak's texts), which cause a similar fear-driven repulsion and are thus also avoided by humans. In the case of "lump of foul deformity", most translators (Paszkowski, Ulrich, Brandstaetter, Barańczak

and Długołęcki) more or less recreate the image of an ugly lump. The others preserve the insulting intent but with different imagery. For example, in Szujski's version, Richard is once again called a 'monster' (*potworze*) and a 'devil' (*czarcie*), who is also a repulsive creature, often imagined as ugly as well as wicked. In Komierowski's translation, Richard is called a 'reptile': another source of almost universal disgust.

Finally, one should point out that in Słomczyński's text, Anne calls Richard a 'cripple' (*kaleko*) and in Barańczak's, she uses the word 'defects' (*ułomności*). Such words introduce a more modern, health-related perspective on Richard's body, which is no longer seen only in the blend of aesthetic and ethical terms. This vocabulary invokes the medical model of disability, which was introduced in the Enlightenment and became prominent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in which "disability is perceived as an impairment in a body system or function that is inherently pathological" [Olkin 2022]. The word *kaleka* carries stigma, presenting Richard as someone lacking, worse than others, and here it is unequivocally meant as an insult. It demonstrates Anne's repulsion, only this time perhaps mixed with pity, as it reduces a person with disabilities to a one-dimensional, miserable character.

That being said, in the comparison of Anne's words in English and in Polish, unlike in most such analyses, it is not the differences and modifications that are most interesting but the similarities and invariants, because of what their presence implies. Firstly, there is the widespread polysemy that the insults in all ten versions contain ('villain' being the only exception), which merges amorality with ugliness and arises from the nature of disgust. Secondly, despite the general view of disability having transformed since Shakespeare's times [cf. Wilson 2017], especially with the development of the medical, social and other models, it remains a source of insult in both languages. Consequently, with the exception of the medical perspective being introduced in Barańczak's and Słomczyński's translations, the representation of Richard's villainy and ugliness in the eyes of others hardly changes in the Polish texts.

#### 4. Richard's self-presentation

Let us now discuss how Richard presents (and perhaps sees) himself as well as how he is presented (and perhaps seen) by the Polish translators. Just like Anne, he links his appearance with wickedness, albeit



rhetorically rather than linguistically, as can be observed in the following fragment from his opening soliloquy [1.1.14-31]:

- [14] But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
- [15] Nor made to court an amorous looking glass;
- [16] I, that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
- [17] To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
- [18] I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
- [19] Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
- [20] Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
- [21] Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
- [22] And that so lamely and unfashionable
- [23] That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—
- [24] Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
- [25] Have no delight to pass away the time,
- [26] Unless to see my shadow in the sun
- [27] And descant on mine own deformity.
- [28] And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
- [29] To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
- [30] I am determinèd to prove a villain
- [31] And hate the idle pleasures of these days.

#### 4.1. *The translations of “I am determinèd to prove a villain”*

Richard is Shakespeare's only protagonist to open their own play [Smith 2019]. In a long soliloquy [1.1.1-42], he tells the audience about the political situation, himself and his ambitions. Using a false dichotomy, the duke argues that since he “cannot prove a lover”, he is “determinèd to prove a villain”. In a truly Shakespearean fashion, this ‘key line’ [Keenan 2017: 28], to which I would like to pay special attention, is ambiguous. Richard may be talking either about his determination to pursue his own goals or about deterministic outside forces that leave him no choice. This ambiguity is absent from most Polish translations, where Richard himself decides to be a villain (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Translations and back-translations of “I am determined to prove a villain”**

J.K.	Postanowiłem zamienić się w łotra	<i>I have decided to turn into a villain</i>
J.P.	Postanowiłem zostać infamisem <sup>8</sup>	<i>I have decided to become a knave</i>
J.S.	<b>jako zbrodniarz czas ten długi spłoszę</b>	<b><i>as a criminal, I will put this long time to flight</i></b>
L.U.	Postanowiłem na łotra się zmienić	<i>I have decided to turn into a villain</i>
R.B.	postanowiłem zostać w ową porę Łotrem	<i>I have decided to become now A villain</i>
J.S.S.	<b>będę chociaż łotrem</b>	<b><i>if nothing else, I will be a villain</i></b>
M.S.	Postanowiłem okazać się łotrem	<i>I have decided to turn out to be a villain</i>
S.B.	Postanowiłem zostać nikczemnikiem	<i>I have decided to become a scoundrel</i>
R.D.	<b>jestem stworzony, bym zło uosabiał</b>	<b><i>I am made to personify evil</i></b>

While the elimination of ambiguity may be a conscious decision, it is more probable that the translators have not detected the double meaning, which is not easy to render into Polish. Three translations stand out (marked in bold). In Szujski's version, the duke merely announces: “as a criminal, I will put this long time to flight” (*jako zbrodniarz czas ten długi spłoszę*). In Sito's translation, he sighs with resignation: “if nothing else, I will be a villain” (*będę chociaż łotrem*). Although in neither does he indicate what pushes him towards evil, it seems to be his own decision. Długołęcki is the only one to recreate the ambiguity. “I am made to personify evil” (*jestem stworzony, bym zło uosabiał*), his Richard says. The phrase *być do czegoś stworzonym* is an idiomatic equivalent of ‘to be cut out for something’, but literally it can be read as ‘to have been created for something’. Thus, the duke might be either boasting of his abilities to do evil or presenting himself as a passive object. Moreover, he does not say he is made to be a villain, but to ‘personify’ evil. It means either that he brags about being a prime example of evil or that he knows others consider

<sup>8</sup> This peculiar choice was probably dictated by rhyme: *Nie mogąc przeto zostać adonisem / ... / Postanowiłem zostać infamisem* (“Unable therefore to become an Adonis / ... / I have decided to become a knave”).

his appearance proof of evil, and since his body makes him quite literally embody evil, this is what he will do. What is clear is that Długołęcki has noticed the ambiguity, perhaps because he benefitted from the best access to contemporary criticism of the play.

Nonetheless, the rendition of this verse does not on its own determine how the readers will perceive Richard. Therefore, at least a brief comment is due on the above fragment of the soliloquy. Although the Polish translations are quite varied, they can be divided into two groups based on the time of publication and thus will be discussed in chronological order. In the analysis, I focus on the presentation of Richard's body as well as the stylistic and rhetorical devices that are crucial for the reaction Richard may provoke in the audience. While quoting the Polish versions, I indicate the number(s) of the respective verse(s) in the original. The full text of the discussed translation fragments can be found in Appendix 1.

#### 4.2. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century translations of the soliloquy

Firstly, in Komierowski's version, the duke appears especially cruel towards himself, lamenting his self-perceived ugliness so eloquently that this fragment is two verses longer than the original. He claims to be "openly branded with a heavy stigma" (*twardém jawnie oznaczony piętnem* [16]), and endeavours to prove it by a very concrete description of his body. Richard mentions his face: (*oszukany... na rysach twarzy*, "cheated ... on face features" [19]) as well as his posture, twice, (*w krasnej mierze podcięty człowieka*, "miscut from the handsome human measure" [18], *potworny i zbrakły / W postawie*, "monstrous and deficient / In posture" [20]) and repeats that he is 'lame' (*kulawy*) [22] and that he 'limps' (*chromam*) [23]. All of his deficiencies are thus emphasised. Interestingly, in the conclusion, Richard does not argue that he 'cannot' prove a lover, as he does in other versions, only that it would be 'difficult' (*trudno przedziernąć się w gacha* [28]), which underscores that he is the one making the decision.

Paszkowski's description conveys almost the same message, but it is less specific (the only concrete feature mentioned is the limp) and far less brutal. It accentuates Richard's lack of grace – partially due to heaviness (an added element) – and manners, which might be read as another reason why the duke will be far from an ideal king. Richard calls himself "rough-hewn, too heavy, too stiff" (*z gruba kuty, za ciężki, za sztywny* [16]), "a boor in terms of all the courtly manners" (*prostack pod względem*

wszelkich dwornych manier [18]) and “shapeless, coarse” (*niekształtny, nieokrzesany* [20]) – a translation of “deformed, unfinished” that is far from Komierowski’s “monstrous and deficient / In posture”.

A translation that is much closer to Komierowski’s is the one by Szujski, who also creates an image of extreme hideousness, although a more condensed one, as he uses two lines fewer than the original. “I scare the lovers’ mirrors” (*przestraszam kochanków zwierciadła* [15]), Richard claims here, and mentions his face (*upośledzony w rysach od natury*, “disadvantaged in features by nature” [19]) and hump (*pokrzywiony, zgięty w kształt widziadła*, “gnarled, bent in the shape of a phantasm” [18]), for which this character is “commonly-known”, although it is not mentioned in this fragment. Szujski also employs rhymes and expressive punctuation (exclamation marks and suspension points), which emphasise Richard’s violent emotions. In this respect, Szujski differs from the other 19<sup>th</sup>-century translators, who recreate Shakespeare’s one long sentence.

Ulrich’s description is milder. Richard is slightly ironic at first, saying he is “not made ... to admire [his] face in the mirror” (*nie stworzony ... / Do podziwiania twarzy mej w zwierciadle* [14-15]). Nevertheless, he also discusses his ‘monstrousness’ (*potworność*) at length and calls himself ‘hideous’ (*szpetny* [20]) and ‘fractured’ (*połamany* [22]). The translator employs a double anaphora, repeating the phrase ‘But I’ (*Lecz ja* [14, 16, 18]) and then ‘I’ (*Ja* [22], [24]) at the beginning of five verses. The first-person pronoun, which is often omitted in Polish because the verb conjugation makes it redundant, is thus accentuated. This measure emphasises Richard’s solitude: he is alone and unlike anyone else at the court. Furthermore, he keeps returning to the same point, himself – as though he literally could not escape from the ‘I’, from his own self, which is precisely the source of his lament. The sad tone thus created can perhaps make readers more empathetic towards the character.

As demonstrated, each 19<sup>th</sup>-century translator presents a slightly different interpretation. Komierowski creates a particularly strong image of a character repulsed by his own body, Paszkowski focuses on Richard’s lack of social graces and makes him heavy (an element absent from the original, but also equated with unattractiveness and moral failure),<sup>9</sup> Szujski inflates the duke’s emotions, and Ulrich highlights Richard’s loneliness,

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps because Richard was originally played by Richard Burbage, known for being fat.

turning him into a more romantic and psychologically developed figure. Despite these dissimilarities, all the descriptions are congruent with More's:<sup>10</sup> Richard has a hideous face, a crooked posture and a limp (only Szujski does not mention it here). He is expressive and sometimes ironic, but quite brutal with himself. Altogether, the four oldest texts present Richard as someone ugly, who draws upon his ugliness to explain or excuse why he chooses evil, a decision that perhaps comes as no surprise to the audience, considering the 19<sup>th</sup>-century attitudes towards this issue.

### 4.3. The 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century translations of the soliloquy

The later translations are more varied. In Brandstaetter's version, Richard's words emanate more matter-of-factness and melancholy due to the division of the long sentence into five short ones and the lack of enjambment (favoured by Komierowski and Barańczak), which create an especially slow and calm rhythm.<sup>11</sup> His expressions are not as extreme as many others in previous translations. For example, the duke does not mention his face and says: "I am not of alluring build" (*nie posiadam ponętnej budowy* [18]), which compared with the previous versions sounds like an understatement. Furthermore, this is chronologically the last version in which Richard mentions that he limps, yet he is altogether more awkward than repulsive, particularly since – as in Paszkowski's text – the duke emphasises his lack of social charm. He talks about what he cannot do rather than what he is, claiming not to have the ability to "preen in a mirror" (*nie umiem mizdrzyć się w zwierciadle* [15]) or to "vaunt in front of a willowy nymph" (*nie umiem pysznić się przed zwiewną nimfą* [17]). Thus, the focus shifts from something innate to abilities which he could theoretically acquire. His words also contain a hidden boast, since Richard does not so much complain about his lack of beauty as brags about his lack of vanity, presenting himself as superior to the court, apparently criticising and rejecting those who have criticised and rejected him.

Sito's translation is, on the one hand, different from Brandstaetter's in that he divides the text into multiple irregular lines and employs expressive

<sup>10</sup> His chronicle is (extensively and uncritically) discussed in an introduction accompanying Ulrich's 1895 translation and the 1875 edition of Paszkowski's text, which suggests that More's version of events dominated at that time.

<sup>11</sup> All translators apart from Sito use 11-syllable meters (common in Polish translations of Shakespeare) which make the rhythm quite balanced.

punctuation, which creates a chaotic rhythm that is likely meant to suggest that Richard shares his private thoughts spontaneously as they come. On the other hand, the two versions are similar in that both contain mild, humorous expressions and a duplicitous, indirect boast about Richard's 'modesty'. The duke says he is "not seducing the love mirrors" (*nie uwodzący miłosnych zwierciadeł* [15]) and he "does not have the ability to plume" (*nie umiem puszyć się* [17]). Crucially, the reason he gives for becoming a villain is boredom, contending that he "has nothing to do" (*nie mam co robić* [25]) apart from "thinking / boring thoughts / about my impairment" (*snuć rozważania / nudne / o moim kalectwie* [27]). This rather trivial excuse for multiple murders recalls the popular conception of a psychopathic villain, doing evil without a cause, which probably does not endear Richard to the audience. One also sees that the word 'impairment' enters the scene as the equivalent of 'deformity', previously translated as 'undershape' (*niedokształt*) by Komierowski, 'hideousness' (*szpetność*) by Paszkowski, 'my gross shapes' (*kształty me rażące*) by Szujski, 'monstrousness' (*potworność*) by Ulrich and 'ugliness' (*brzydota*) by Brandstaetter, a list that shows the variety of the interpretations of Richard's body.

The same equivalent, *kalectwo*, evoking the medical perspective on disability, is used by Słomczyński, although his version is unlike his immediate predecessor's in many respects. First of all, the protagonist just laments his fate, making it more similar to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century translations. He does not, however, refer to any specific body part. As a result, no particular image forms in the reader's mind and the supposed lack of beauty becomes more subjective and abstract. He declares he is "made not for these frivolities / Or looking at love mirrors" (*stworzony nie dla tych igraszek / I spoglądania w miłosne zwierciadła* [14-15]), asserting throughout the speech that his problems, which leave him no choice but to 'turn out to be a villain', stem from being born a 'cripple', and not being bored, as was the case in Sito's version. Since having such a body is something the duke has no control over, the audience might be inclined to pity him. This reaction can be strengthened by the calm, resigned tone, the use of the word *kalectwo* ('impairment'), and the fact that here Richard cannot but 'sing thinly' (*śpiewać cienko*) – not just think – about it, which magnifies the pitiful image. As discussed in the context of Lady Anne's insults, such a representation of a person with disability – as a miserable, bitter 'cripple' – is reductive and condescending, but not uncommon.

Barańczak's translation is similarly devoid of specifics, but the image it creates is quite different. Here, Richard is particularly witty, for example affirming he is "crooked like a badly minted coin" (*krzywy jak źle wybita moneta* [16]), as well as cruelly matter-of-fact, saying that "the bodily hideousness / Does not give the right to these frivolities, / Indeed, to glimpse into a mirror with admiration" (*cielesna szpetota / Nie daje prawa do owych igraszek, / Ba, do zerknięcia z podziwem w zwierciadło*) [14-15]). Contrary to Słomczyński's translation, the self-depreciation, which dominates this rendition and indicates that Richard does not take himself too seriously, makes him a sympathetic rather than a pathetic character. It appears that this description – with no specific features named, no lamentations and no critique of the court – is not meant to elicit repulsion or pity in the audience, but laughter shared with the character, at his own expense.<sup>12</sup> The relationship-building is strengthened by Richard's conversational tone. He uses the exclamation *Ba* ('indeed') and syntax characteristic of spontaneous oral utterances: *przez tę oszustkę, Naturę* ("by this fraud, Nature" [19]). What is more, similarly to Brandstaetter and Sito, Barańczak uses mild, colloquial expressions such as *ledwie / Na pół sklecony, i to tak koślawo* ("barely / Half-cobbled together, and so wonkily" [22]), instead of grandiose, dramatic vocabulary found in other translations, e.g. Słomczyński's rendition of the same verse: *tak nieforemnie i nędznie* ("so formlessly and wretchedly").

<sup>12</sup> This version on the whole invites the readers to feel empathy towards Richard, which is evident when the Duchess of York criticises and curses her son. Having enumerated his real and imagined crimes (e.g. his painful birth), she asks Richard: "What comfortable hour canst thou name, / That ever graced me with thy company?" [4.4.180-181], to which he replies: "Faith, none but Humfrey Hower, that called your Grace / To breakfast once, forth of my company" [4.4.182-184]. Evidently, the mother did not like to spend time with her child, as he was well aware. In Barańczak's translation of these verses, this sentiment is more explicit, with Richard saying: "in my company / You couldn't swallow a bite of food, so / Nauseous were you with disgust" (*w moim towarzystwie / Nie mogłaś przełknąć kęsa strawy, tak cię / Mdlilo ze wstrętu*). A reader cannot but strongly empathise with a child who felt, day in and day out, that his mother could not look at him just because he was born significantly different from others. Barańczak thus places great emphasis on young Richard's suffering as a stigmatised individual, rejected by those closest to him. Consequently, the readers might assume that his mother's rejection contributed to his self-hate expressed in the soliloquy. The other Polish versions either omit these verses or translate them without accentuating the mother's disgust.

Finally, unlike his direct predecessor, Długołęcki tones down Richard's humour and self-deprecation as well as his ugliness. There is nothing grotesque about the image Długołęcki creates. The only two truly strong statements about Richard's appearance are these: the protagonist mentions being 'deformed' (*zdeformowany* [20]) and "hideous in [his] deformities" (*szpetny w moich zniekształceniach* [22]). The style is elegant, almost euphemistic in comparison to others, with Richard claiming, for instance, to be "deprived ... of the proportions of the body and the smoothness of features" (*pozbawiony ... proporcji ciała i gładkości rysów* [18-19]). Moreover, contrary to Sito, Słomczyński and Barańczak, Długołęcki never uses words such as *kaleka* ('cripple'), nowadays considered an ableist slur. Since the discovery of the real Richard III's body is a subject of both texts accompanying the translation and since the numerous footnotes indicate the importance of history over fiction, this reluctance might stem from trying to conform to these findings and being historically, as well as politically, correct. These considerations apparently take precedence over what Shakespeare knew (and presumably intended to convey) when he wrote this play.

## 5. Conclusions

The stigma imposed on Shakespeare's Richard III continues to be easily recognisable: contemporary readers are not surprised that he feels and is rejected by society because of his 'deformed' body. This stigmatisation, supposed to discredit the real king *post-mortem*, was perpetuated by Shakespeare, who, however, created a complex character, whose motives are open to interpretation, even if Richard continually raises repulsion in himself and others. It is evident in the insults directed at him, for instance by Lady Anne, which simultaneously target his wickedness and 'ugliness', making the two inseparable. Since English continues to employ the same words to condemn both, it is the language itself, in a way, that determines Richard to be proven a villain: if he looks like a monster (in society's eyes), he has to be one. The same polysemy exists in Polish and is used by all translators, who create a variety of epithets and repulsion-inspiring imagery to depict how Anne sees Richard.

Nevertheless, whereas in Anne's eyes, Richard's ugly exterior clearly reflects his ugly interior, the duke blames his body, and the way it limits him – socially, rather than physically – for his actions. The Polish



translators do not take clear sides in regard to this matter, yet they differ in their approach. In the opening soliloquy, the first four translators seem to underline Richard's ugliness, as if they accepted his self-description at face value and expected such a hideous-looking person to be corrupt. Ulrich's translation serves as a bridge between the two centuries, because it highlights the duke's feelings of isolation and the 20<sup>th</sup>-century translations deepen the duke's psychological portrayal in various ways.

In the five newest retranslations, subjectivity gradually replaces concrete references to Richard's body parts, and irony and understatements reign. This may stem from the fact that most 19<sup>th</sup>-century translations were written to be read from the page, whereas the later translators might have held higher expectations of seeing their texts performed on stage, in which case the viewers would see the actor, making any description unnecessary, or even unwelcome, for Richard may have no visible disabilities.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the translators – not only Długolecki – might have been influenced by researchers who had found sources indicating that Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III was inaccurate, which was confirmed by the discovery of his skeleton in 2011. Another cause might have been the cultural changes due to which people are more likely to recognise that beauty and ugliness are not objective, as well as to be more interested in the psychological causes of evil, recognising it pertains not only to exceptionally marked persons, but even to the most ordinary, and, thus, to perceive disability differently.

Indeed, it appears that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the interpretation of Richard's body slightly changes – it becomes disabled rather than ugly, and negative disability-related terms are used. This coincides with a broad shift from the moral to the medical and later social model of disability that are less likely to equate appearance with morality. These models do not necessarily always lead to a good representation of disability in fiction, as they can be twisted into the 'bitter disabled' stereotype or the disfigured villain trope, which many 20<sup>th</sup>-century film adaptations of *Richard III* propagate [see e.g. Mitchell and Snyder 2011]. This cliché, in which a villain takes revenge on the society that has rejected them, adds a pseudopsychological explanation

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<sup>13</sup> Such was the case in Grzegorz Wiśniewski's 2012 production, as discussed by Marek Kałużyński [2016], who played Richard.

to the association between villainy and deformity. While no analysed translation openly supports this interpretation, they may play into it.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly, the differences may stem from the translators varying in how they interpret and use the ‘narrative prosthesis’ that is Richard’s body. Since a soliloquy is simultaneously a private and performative act, in the one discussed above, Richard might be sharing his honest thoughts and/or manipulating his audience. Consequently, every Polish version of the speech results from a combination of multiple perspectives and goals of multiple (real as well as fictional and implied) subjects. And thus, for example, the pitiful image created by Słomczyński might originate from (1) how he sees Richard (most likely influenced by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century attitudes towards disability), (2) how he thinks the audience will see Richard, (3) how he thinks Shakespeare presents Richard, (4) how he thinks Richard sees himself or (5) how he thinks Richard wants to present himself (i.e. aware of people’s preconceptions, the duke manipulates them). In this way, every translation also “hath a thousand several tongues” within it, each of which condemns Richard for a villain, albeit in its own words.

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<sup>14</sup> The available reviews of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century stagings of *Richard III* in Polish theatres do not provide sufficient insight into how these adaptations interpret the stigma of the duke’s disability and present its impact on his psyche, although some reviewers mention his “vicious body and crippled sensitivity” (*nikczemne ciało i kaleka wrażliwość*) [Haponiuk 1994], treating disability as a metaphor.

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## Appendix 1: The Polish translations of the discussed fragment of Richard’s opening soliloquy

### Komierowski:

Lecz ja, – niezdarny do uciesznych pustot,  
Ni zalecanek w miłosném zwierciadle,  
Ja, twardém jawnie oznaczony piętnem,  
I z majestatu odarty miłości,  
By się nadstawiać hożo-pląsym Nimfom;  
Ja, w krasnej mierze podcięty człowieka,  
I oszukany podejściem natury  
Na rysach twarzy; potworny i zbrakły  
W postawie; na świat wysłany przed czasem  
Po tchnienie życia; ledwie w pół dostały,  
I tak kulawy i nieskładny, że mnie  
Psy oszczekują gdy chromam przed niemi;  
W czasie swobodą kołysanym senną,  
Ja nie znam uciech, aby spłoszyć chwile,  
Jak z moim cieniem gonić się po słońcu,  
I takt bić piosnce własnym niedokształtem.  
Tak więc, gdy trudno przedziernąć się w gacha,  
I dnie okradać słodko-dźwięcznym słówkiem,  
Postanowiłem zamienić się w łotra,  
I wraz ohydzić te pustotyienne.

**Paszkowski:**

Ale ja, niestworzony do igraszek,  
Ni do palenia kadzideł miłosnych,  
Ja z gruba kuty, za ciężki, za sztywny  
Do czupurzenia się przed lekką nimfą,  
Prostak pod względem wszelkich dwornych manier,  
Upośledzony z natury, niekształtny,  
Nieokrzesany, zesłany przed czasem  
W ten świat oddechu, i to tak koszlawo  
I nieudatnie, że psy ujadają,  
Gdy sztykutając mimo nich przechodzę;  
Ja w ten piskliwy czas pokoju nie mam  
Innej uciechy, którąbym czas zabił,  
Jak chyba śledzić własny cień w słońcu,  
I rozpatrywać szpetność mej postaci.  
Nie mogąc przeto zostać adonisem,  
By godnie spędzić ten ciąg dni różanych,  
Postanowiłem zostać infamisem  
I do tych marnych pustot się nie mieszać.

**Szujski:**

Lecz ja nie zrodzon do igraszki takiej,  
Ja, co przestraszam kochanków zwierciadła,  
Com zbyt obrany z wdzięczności wszelakiej,  
By mi lubieżna nimfa w uścisk padła:  
Ja pokrzywiony, zgięty w kształt widziadła,  
Upośledzony w rysach od natury,  
Że psy szczekają, gdy mnie ujrzy który...  
Ona nie dla mnie ta zabawy chwila!  
Dla mnie zabawą – patrzeć jako słońce  
Postać mą straszną na ziemię przechyla,  
I pisze na niej kształty me rażące.  
Więc, gdy nie mogę jak kochanek czuły  
Dni tych snuć zwolna, by się pięknie snuły,  
To jako zbrodniarz czas ten długi spłoszę,  
I znienawidzę ich marne rozkosze.

**Ulrich:**

Lecz ja, do skocznych nie stworzony tańców,  
Do podziwiania twarzy mej w zwierciadle,  
Lecz ja, miłości pozbawiony wdzięków  
Abym przed lekką pawieć się mógł nimfą,  
Lecz ja, odarty z pięknych ciała kształtów,  
Przez złą naturę okradziony z wdzięków,  
Szpetny, zaledwo napół wyciosany,  
Na dzieńne światło wyrosły przed czasem,  
Ja, tak kulawy i tak połamany,  
Że na mój widok psy nawet szczekają,  
Ja w tych pokoju świegotliwych czasach,  
Nie mam rozkoszy innej ni rozrywki,  
Jak się mojemu przyglądać cieniowi  
I szydzić z mojej własnej potworności.  
Gdy więc nie mogę, jak tkliwy kochanek  
W tych dniach uciechy, godzin moich spędzać,  
Postanowiłem na łotra się zmienić,  
Dni tych rozkosze nienawiścią zatruć.

**Brandstaetter:**

Lecz ja nie jestem do zabaw stworzony  
Ani nie umiem mizdrzyć się w zwierciadle.  
Z grubsza ciosany, pozbawiony wdzięków,  
Nie umiem pysznić się przed zwiewną nimfą  
I nie posiadam ponętej budowy.  
Natura moja oszukała ciało,  
Jestem niekształtny, brzydki i pokraczny.  
Na ziemię westchnień przedwcześnie przyszedłem,  
Koślawy, wstrętny, że aż psy szczekają,  
Gdy kuszykając, obok nich przechodzę.  
W ten czas ośpały jedną mam przyjemność,  
Która mi służy do zabicia czasu:  
Za własnym cieniem podejrzliwie śledzę  
I moją własną roztrząsam brzydotę.  
Oto dłaczego, nie mogąc korzystać  
Jako kochanek z pięknych dni pokoju,

Postanowiłem zostać w ową porę  
Łotrem – i wrogiem marnych przyjemności.

**Sito:**

Lecz ja –  
niezdolny do wdzięcznych podrygów,  
nie uwodzący miłosnych zwierciadeł,  
nieokrzesany,  
ja –  
który nie umiem puszyć się  
i zabiegać o wdzięki ulotnych pięknych nimf –  
odarty z ludzkich kształtów przez chytrą naturę,  
pozbawiony rozsądnych proporcji,  
ja –  
nie dorobiony,  
wysłany przed moim czasem w ten świat dyszących,  
zaledwie skończony w połowie,  
a tak pokracznie,  
koślawo,  
niemodnie,  
że na mój widok psy wyją, gdy stanę...  
Cóż,  
ja w tych czasach piskliwych  
pokoju  
nie mam co robić;  
chyba cień mój własny śledzić na słońcu  
i snuć rozważania  
nudne  
o moim kalectwie!  
Skoro więc nie mogę zostać  
kochankiem –  
skoro nie mogę cieszyć się urodą tych dni wyszczekanych,  
będę chociaż łotrem...  
I znienawidzę te chwile beztroskiej zabawy!



**Słomczyński:**

Lecz ja, stworzony nie dla tych igraszek  
I spoglądania w miłosne zwierciadła;  
Ja, mą brzydotą tak napiętnowany  
I z majestatu miłości wyzuty,  
Bym nie mógł łączyć się do płoczej nimfy;  
Ja, pozbawiony urody cielesnej,  
Odarty z wdzięku przez zdradę Natury;  
Ja, zniekształcony, niepełny, zesłany  
Przedwcześnie na świat, na pół wykonany,  
Tak nieforemnie i nędznie, że wszystkie  
Psy ujadają, gdy stanę w pobliżu –  
Cóż, ja w tych słabych, pokojowych czasach  
Nie umiem miło spędzać czasu; mogę  
Jedynie własny cień oglądać w słońcu  
I śpiewać cienko o moim kalectwie.  
Więc, że nie mogę na modłę kochanków  
Spędzać dni pięknych i godnych pochwały,  
Postanowiłem okazać się łotrem  
I próżną radość dni tych znienawidzić[.]

**Barańczak:**

Lecz ja, któremu cielesna szpetota  
Nie daje prawa do owych igraszek,  
Ba, do zerknięcia z podziwem w zwierciadło;  
Ja, krzywy jak źle wybita moneta,  
Niezdolny olśnić swą miłością żadnej  
Z płochych nimf, które tu się przechadzają:  
Ja, z harmonijnych proporcji i wdzięku  
Odarty przez tę oszustkę, Naturę,  
Zdeformowany i nie dokończony,  
Wysłany w ludzki świat przedwcześnie, ledwie  
Na pół sklecony, i to tak koślawo,  
Że na mój widok ujadają psy –  
Ja w tych łagodnych jak tony fujarki  
Czasach pokoju jedną mam rozrywkę:  
Cień swój oglądam w słońcu i na temat  
Własnej ohydy układam wariacje.

Skoro nie mogę grać roli kochanka  
I tych dni pięknych wypełniać miłością –  
Postanowiłem zostać nikczemnikiem  
I w pustkę błogich dni sączyć nienawiść.

### Długolęcki:

A ja, żyjący nie dla tych amorów,  
Czy podziwiania własnej twarzy w lustrze,  
Ja, zbyt toporny, szorstki, by się wdzięczyc  
Do nimfy, pełnej lubieżności w ruchach;  
Ja, pozbawiony przez zdradną Naturę  
Proporcji ciała i gładkości rysów,  
Zdeformowany, posłany przed czasem  
Do świata żywych, choć nań niegotowy,  
I aż tak szpetny w moich zniekształceniach,  
Że psy szczekają na mnie, gdy się zbliżam;  
Ja, kiedy cicho tyka czas pokoju,  
Nie znam rozrywek dla zabicia czasu  
Innych, jak tylko widok mego cienia,  
Bym mógł opiewać jego linie krzywe.

### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how nine Polish translations of William Shakespeare's play *Richard III* present the protagonist's stigmatised body and the relationship between his supposed ugliness and villainy. Firstly, I analyse the linguistic link between depravity and 'deformity' in the insults directed at Richard by Lady Anne and compare the imagery that the translators employ to convey her disgust. Secondly, I examine Richard's soliloquy, in which he uses his body to justify his ruthless pursuit of power. A change over time can be observed in the translators' depiction of Richard: while the 19<sup>th</sup>-century texts emphasise his 'ugliness', the later ones appear to focus on his psychology, as if more critical of the idea that ugliness determines him to be a villain.

**KEYWORDS:** *Richard III*, stigma in translation, translation and disability, Shakespeare in translation, disabled villain trope