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**"THUS CONSCIENCE DOES MAKE COWARDS OF US  
ALL": THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOLILOQUIES IN  
SHAKESPEARE**

**PORTO ALEGRE**

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**"THUS CONSCIENCE DOES MAKE COWARDS OF US  
ALL": THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOLILOQUIES IN  
SHAKESPEARE**

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**PORTO ALEGRE**

**2015**

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**"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all": the construction of soliloquies in Shakespeare**

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6. Mal.

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*"We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our  
little life is rounded with a sleep"*

**Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Act IV, Scene 1)**

## RESUMO

Esta dissertação analisa a construção dos solilóquios em três das principais tragédias de Shakespeare, a saber, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* e *Othello*, e sua relação com a formação da consciência na construção da identidade do indivíduo, um conceito que ocorre a partir do início da Idade Moderna. A pesquisa se apoia na teoria psicanalítica freudiana e na análise da linguagem e do discurso elaborada por Foucault. Os solilóquios correspondem ao diálogo que as personagens travam consigo mesmas em momentos quando somente a plateia, ou o leitor, podem escutá-los ou lê-los. Diferentemente do monólogo – que passa pelo crivo da razão, por ser dirigido a um ou mais interlocutores em cena – o solilóquio é mais espirituoso, flui mais livremente e expressa a fala interior e os pensamentos e sentimentos mais profundos das personagens. No solilóquio inexistem o processo de censura ou a necessidade de corresponder às expectativas de outrem. Ele prende a atenção do público e pressupõe a sua convivência para com os argumentos apresentados. Minha hipótese é que no drama Shakespeariano os solilóquios têm a função de acomodar o indivíduo com a sua própria consciência, num tempo em que este não consegue mais se ver como membro de uma comunidade, que pensa e age publicamente, como ocorria na antiguidade, ou de acordo com os preceitos religiosos e morais rigorosos da Idade Média. Apresento este trabalho como um estudo sobre o momento histórico e estético em que o indivíduo moderno passa a se constituir conceitualmente. Os principais temas de fundo na dissertação são a questão da justiça e da ética frente à desgraça; e a questão do mal e de como lidar com ele. A discussão será feita a partir do questionamento das dicotomias e dos estereótipos que operam nessas três tragédias Shakespearianas. A linguagem e o conteúdo dos solilóquios serão analisados sob um enfoque filosófico e psicanalítico.

**PALAVRAS CHAVES:** 1. Literatura Inglesa; 2. Shakespeare; 3. Solilóquios; 4. Psicanálise 5. Linguagem; 6. Mal.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at analysing the appearance and construction of soliloquies in three major Shakespearean tragedies, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*. The focus of the research lies on the relationship involving the plays and the concept of individual identity that originates at the dawn of the Modern Age. The research is grounded on Freudian psychoanalytical theory and on the analysis of language and discourse proposed by Michel Foucault. Soliloquies correspond to the inner dialogue that characters have with themselves when no one else is present and only the audience, or the reader, can hear or read them. Differently from the monologue, which is always addressed to one or more people present at the scene, soliloquies are usually witty, and express the inner speech and deepest thoughts and feelings of a character. This happens because with soliloquies there is no process of censorship, or the need to correspond to the expectation of other characters. My hypothesis is that soliloquies originate in and are related to the need of individuals to express themselves according to their own conscience, not only as members of a community who act and think publicly, as was the case in ancient times, or according to the religious precepts and strict moral codes of the Middle Ages. I hope that this work can contribute to illustrate the moment in which the concept of individuality starts to be put to use. Some of the themes discussed in the thesis address the questions of justice and ethics in face of disgrace, the origin of evil and how it is addressed. The themes are dealt with in the analysis of the dichotomies and stereotypes that operate in those Shakespearean tragedies. The language and content of the soliloquies will be analysed through a philosophical and psychoanalytical approach.

**KEY-WORDS:** 1. English Literature; 2. Shakespeare; 3. Soliloquies; 4. Psychoanalysis; 5. Language; 6. Evil.

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## INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a town in the countryside of England. He attended the grammar school in his hometown, where he had his Latin and English classes. Still young, Shakespeare moved to London, where he worked as an actor and a writer, becoming eventually the most famous playwright of all times. The reasons for his well-deserved recognition are many. Shakespeare contributed so many new words to the dictionary and to the grammar of his time that the English language was never the same again (McDONALD, 2001). So he did with the form and structure of the English play. There is so much to explore in William Shakespeare's fictional world, that countless critics have been writing about it along the last four centuries. And so do I, now, in my Master's Thesis, which will concentrate on one specific point: the use and function of soliloquies in Shakespeare's plays, predominantly in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*. The reason why I concentrate on this point when so many other fronts of research are available is that the impact of the soliloquies was the thing that most impressed me when I first read Shakespeare's plays. I believe this is one of the reasons why so many different people – in different places and in different times – respond so easily to his writings. His plays can be attended, read and interpreted by a simple as well as a more scholarly or culturally developed public, since his gigs and tirades appeal to different groups in a subliminally different way. His writings open up to more than one possible reading, in fact they usually offer a range of potential interpretations and a hue of different meanings. This was the case even with Shakespeare's original audience, in the turn of the 16th into 17th century in England. Provided they could pay for the entrance, the Shakespearean audience would include all sorts of social groups and classes of his time – literates, semi-literates and illiterates of practically any age or gender. Although in different ways, Shakespeare's different publics have always been affected by his plays – and by the soliloquies in his plays.

Some of Shakespeare's plays take place in foreign places, such as *Hamlet*, set in Denmark; or in a different time, such as *Macbeth*, set in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, it has always been understood that things were to be taken according to the rules and patterns of Elizabethan England. Shakespeare writes in Early Modern English, at the beginning of the Modern Age. And he draws on metaphors, puns and humour in a way that follows the tradition of his time, and yet adds to that. His use of soliloquies has points in common with the practice of other Elizabethan authors such as Kyd, Peele, Greene and Marlowe, who, according to Wolfgang Clemen, use set speeches which correspond to an elaborate rhetoric, – and yet, Shakespeare does that in a way that is more profound and intellectually more refined. (CLEMEN, 2011)

My original question is why Shakespeare's soliloquies are so impressive, and the hypothesis I raise is that they represent a new approach to reasoning, if we keep in mind that they are created at the dawn of the Modern Age. Other authors, previous or contemporary to Shakespeare, did not elaborate so much on them, or did not plunge so deep into the secrets of the characters' minds, or simply did not use any. My hypothesis is that, by using soliloquies, he breaks away from prior periods such as the classical times of Greek tragedies, and even from the moral and ethical codes of the Middle Ages, thus presenting an internalized individual more interested in thinking critically, and in being faithful to his or her own conscience, rather than being worried about what one is supposed to do in a certain context, or how one is socially expected to act. Through soliloquies, Shakespeare's characters come to terms with their inner ghosts and conflicts. Each of the plays that will be analysed has peculiar soliloquies which open up to distinct readings and interpretations.

When different characters, such as Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Hamlet, or Iago, for example, speak to themselves while addressing only and directly the audience, they express their innermost feelings and thoughts in a dire way that they would never dare to disclose in the presence of other characters in the play. This allows the reader or spectator to have an insight or glimpse into their state of mind as well as their way of thinking and it can also establish a complicity between the character and the audience. It is as though they were released from outward moral pressures and social expectations and finally able to think freely so as to tell themselves about what is on their own minds, state their points and disclose their exact personality.

In this sense, the main argument of this thesis, which has just been set out, runs counter to some of James Hirsch's claims, in the book *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*. He states that "soliloquies do not provide direct access to the innermost thought or the deepest motivation of a character". (HIRSH, 2003, p. 348) I believe the relevance of this study lies in the parallel between the process that these characters go through and the processes undergone by people in general. Although soliloquies in the theatre – especially in plays as sophisticated as Shakespeare's – are dressed in the most beautiful language, they reflect a state of mind which might even be non-verbal, or pre-verbal, such as it happens in dreams. Soliloquies reflect a state so intimate, that the individual does not need to ponder about what is proper or not to think or do. When one talks to oneself and no one is present, one only needs to be faithful to one's own self. Whether the reasoning is ethical, as in Hamlet's case, divided, as in Lady Macbeth's, or unscrupulous, as in the case of Iago, is ultimately irrelevant. Soliloquies seem to represent an intermediate state between the caution expected in social life and the symbolic realm of dreams through which meanings pass, where connotations are neither moral nor immoral, the realm where what is relevant to us once again comes to the fore.

By scrutinizing the interior thought of the characters in Shakespeare's plays we become aware of what happens within the innermost meanders of the human mind, and explore the conflicts of individuals who, oftentimes, are faced with difficult situations in which they are divided between what and how society or the community expects them to do and act, which could be called normative behaviour, and what their (and by extension our) own conscience senses to be the most appropriate way of acting in different situations and contexts.

Sigmund Freud contributes to this thesis in two stances, as a critic, through his writings about Shakespeare; and as a theorist, through the use made of his notions of the Uncanny (*unheimlich*) and the Double. Both concepts can be associated with the dichotomist format of Modern Western Civilization and the cleavage between the inner and the outer aspects of the human psyche, which also relate, in Freud, to the stances of the id and superego; and, in Shakespeare, to the different uses of language presented in the soliloquies and in the other kinds of speech (such as the monologues or the dialogues). Freud has done much to explore the relationship between language and consciousness. After him, this study was carried even further by his disciple Jacques

Lacan, whose ideas on Desire and Extimacy will help us in the analysis of the soliloquies.

The time Shakespeare wrote his plays and sonnets was a turning point in the history of England, and in the world as well. In 1485 King Richard III (also immortalized as one of the Bard's great villains in the homonymous play) was defeated. This fact put an end to the Wars of the Roses, and triggered the start of the Tudor Dynasty, which is associated, in England, with the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Age. The 15th century in England was also marked by another fit of the Black Death. During the Tudor Era (1485-1603) the population and the economy started to grow again. (cf. HILL, 1975, FUNCK, 2012 & POSTAN, 1975)

The country expanded and gradually turned from rural and feudal into an urbanized and commercial system. The exportation of woollen products to continental Europe meant a notable economic improvement. As the population increased, low pay substituted for the previous higher wages and abundance of land. With the appreciation of the price of wool, the nobility started to enclose the common lands (land enclosure), depriving the poor from the lands they traditionally used to plant and raise animals for their own use. This enlarged poverty and provoked the migration of poorer people into the bigger cities, mostly into London.

Henry VIII, who reigned from 1509 to 1547, was one of the greatest Tudor monarchs. He broke with the Catholic Church, and one of the consequences of this Reformation in the Church was the dissolution of the monasteries and the appropriation of the land by the Crown, which thus became richer. During the reign of his daughter Elizabeth I (1558-1603) England became a colonial power, conquering territories even in the New World. The defeat of the Spanish *Invincible Armada* is often taken as the mark of the beginning of England's maritime supremacy. It is also during the reign of Elizabeth I that England becomes officially a Protestant country, and, as such, was influenced by a whole set of new philosophical and artistic ideas coming from the Continent. In this sense, the Tudor court played an important role in a kind of cultural renaissance that was taking place in Europe and that may have influenced artists like Shakespeare. Most of his plays reflect his relation with the Court. *Macbeth*, for instance, was presented for the first time in 1606, three years after James I succeeded Elizabeth I on the English throne, in the presence of King Christian of Denmark and James VI, who

at the time was the king of Scotland. The idea was to please the new monarch. *Macbeth* is, therefore, a *pièce d'occasion*, written for the accession of James, who also believed in witches and witchcraft. In the same line, the reason for the creation of most of the plays is clarified when they are placed in the context of the life of the court, both during the times of Queen Elizabeth I and of King James I.

As Professor Volcato states in his PhD thesis *Piling up Logs in a Brave New World: Brazilian Invisibility Abroad and the Genesis of Shakespeare's The Tempest*,

Shakespeare could apparently please King James with a play like *Macbeth*, which is set in King James's homeland and where Shakespeare explores some of the king's favourite topics in a sensational story which involves the virtuous Banquo, one of the King's legendary ancestors. In the Scottish tragedy, Macbeth reigns with a barren sceptre, whereas Banquo's line stretches to the Stuarts down to King James and beyond. (VOLCATO, 2007, p. 35)

Although Shakespeare draws on historical facts to write most of his plays (*Macbeth* is only one instance of that), and has political reasons to do that, there is much freedom in the way history is incorporated into his fiction. In the case of *Macbeth*, the major source of research and inspiration is Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, published in 1577. Other plays are based on Celtic and Scandinavian legends, such as *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, or Greek and Roman history. He also rewrote stories by other authors, a practice that, in his time, was considered a kind of homage, rather than theft of intellectual property, as is the case nowadays.

After this short incursion into Shakespeare's time, I would like now to present the structure of this thesis. The work is divided into four sections, or chapters. In the first one we consider the plays through the lenses of Freudian thought, so as to highlight how important the new psychological depths his characters bring into Literature has been. Section Two considers the question of Evil in Shakespeare, and the crisis in morals and ethics that took place in his time – which (like ours) is a time of changing paradigms. Although there are references to the three plays mentioned as the corpus, the analysis falls predominantly on *Macbeth* in the first two chapters. Section Three leads the discussion into *Hamlet* and the problem of human inadaptability to certain concepts. Section Four centres on Iago's soliloquies and what they represent in terms of strategies to justify what is unjustifiable. In the Conclusion I comment about the place of

Shakespeare in the world canon, and ratify my theory about the function of the soliloquies in Shakespearean drama.

The choice of the corpus of the thesis, and the order of presentation (*Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*), are personal and intuitive. Several other plays by Shakespeare could equally have been chosen, but these are the three to which I respond more intensely as a reader. Other plays are also mentioned, occasionally, to illustrate specific traits and usages. As to the critical and theoretical support, and the historical background, they come as an instrumental aid to illustrate the change of paradigms which I believe is reflected in Shakespeare's production. I will not divide or classify the soliloquies structurally into different groups and categories. Rather, the aim is to open the scope on the phenomenon of the rise of individual conscience, establishing connections to Shakespeare's time, and to a certain extent also to the contemporary period we live in now.

# 1 SOME CHARACTERS IN *MACBETH* AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE DOUBLE

For those who appreciate reading Shakespearean tragedies or seeing them performed on stage, or in a film, entering the universe of a play like *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (in this thesis referred to simply as *Macbeth*) is like entering a dark cave. Sentiments of fear, guilt, envy, superstition and inaptitude to accept one's own hierarchical position in society hover over our heads tormenting us like ancient feelings and primal drives,

The play spreads out from our interest in the hero; and the hero is here a criminal, or rather a man obsessed by his relation to those criminal tendencies that are so universal that we best describe them by speaking of 'evil'. The play is a discovery or anatomy of evil. Of all Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth* is the one most obsessively concerned with evil. (HUNTER, 1974, p. 7)

Although evil is a *modus operandi* throughout the whole play, Shakespeare appears to have placed it and the hero's action, as Irving Ribner suggests, "on a wider canvas" (RIBNER, 1971, p. 139). Almost every character seems to encompass his or her self and *alter ego* in the same person or through another character, who works as a foil or shadow. Thus, besides being the other half of his wife in roles that alternate, Macbeth is shadowed by the less ambitious Macduff, the Thane of Fife, who is a father and husband and acts as a foil to him, as well as Banquo, who is a general and his peer, and also a father, but does not succumb to evil. Both of them haunt Macbeth in different ways to the point that the first loses his whole family at the behest of the tyrant, whereas the latter is killed by Macbeth's murderers, while his son Fleance, whose name ironically suggests the act of fleeing, manages to escape the scene of the crime alive.

Lady Macbeth is also foiled by Macduff's wife, the nurturing and down-to-earth mother who recognizes, moments before her and her son's death, that,

Whither should I fly?  
I have done no harm. But I remember now  
I am in this earthly world, where to do harm  
Is often laudable, to do good sometime  
Accounted dangerous folly. (*Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 2)

This short soliloquy, by a minor character, in the form of a quick insight, reflects the reality of *Macbeth*, where virtually no one manages to escape unscathed. It expresses with a justified paranoia what it feels like to live under constant pressure and fear and, at the same time, probes into the inversion of values present throughout the play. In this sense, the refrain "fair is foul and foul is fair" exclaimed in chorus by the weird sisters in the first scene of the first act can be understood as referring to good being evil and evil being good, meaning that the line between these two concepts is blurred in the play and, therefore, they are both intermingled and confused.

And yet both Macbeth and his wife, the two main characters, also contain their other side in themselves, as mentioned above, which is expressed before, during and after the main assassination in the play: the assassination of Duncan, the King of Scotland, who is also a symbol of paternal authority. The woman who tells her husband to "look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't" and "to screw your courage to the sticking place. And we'll not fail" (*Macbeth*, Act 1, Sc. 7) is the same who remarks that "my hands are of your colour, but I shame to wear a heart so white" (*Macbeth*, Act 2, Sc. 2) after the king's assassination, and who realizes in her soliloquies during sleepwalking that "the Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?", (*Macbeth*, Act 5, Sc. 1) a clear allusion, produced by her distorted conscience, to her foil's demise, Lady Macduff. Once again, good and evil seem to run hand in hand.

Macbeth, on the other hand, who faltered before the assassination, is able to experience consciously the implications of their crime, although he becomes more and more of a tyrant as the play unfolds. Contrary to his wife, who gradually becomes mentally ill and ends up committing suicide, Macbeth dies stoically fighting against Macduff, even though he knows he has been damned for life as a man. Therefore, it is



reasonable to argue about *Macbeth* that "as a crime-does-not-pay story it is less concerned with the uncovering of the crime to others than with the uncovering of the criminal to *himself*." (HUNTER, 1974, p. 7) One of the many masterly portrayals of this grim and horrible atmosphere of decadence and incipient decomposition is presented in the iconic 1948 black-and-white feature film *Macbeth* by Orson Welles, who also plays the main role of Macbeth, with Jeanette Nolan as his queen, Lady Macbeth. The themes of power and treason are well explored in this film. Taking into account the short soliloquy mentioned before produced by Lady Macduff and Lady Macbeth's speech, one can infer that there is a certain female psychological disposition in *Macbeth* that is able to plumb the depths of evil and its nefarious consequences more accurately than the masculine rational calculation, also present in the play.

In order to understand better the psychological disposition of the two main characters in this play, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, we should bear in mind the emergence of the double in this play. The concept of the double or doppelganger, which corresponds to the ghostly counterpart of a living person or a kind of alter ego, was originally formulated by Freud in his article "The Uncanny" (1919) in which he analyses *The Sandman*, a short story written by E.T.A. Hoffmann, and its relevance to psychoanalysis. In this sense, the double can be inside the characters, as well as outside them. The notions of interiority (or inwardness) and exteriority are present in the work of Shakespeare and might have contributed or even paved the way to the more contemporary concepts of objectivity and subjectivity explored by psychoanalysis, linguistics and ethnology. The difference between the term *inwardness* and the modern concept of subjectivity is elaborated by Professor Carlos Ludwig in his PhD thesis *Mimesis of Inwardness in Shakespeare's Drama: The Merchant of Venice*:

Face to such subtleties of modern conception of subjectivity, the term *inwardness* seems to be more feasible to Shakespeare's drama, because it corresponds to the English Renaissance notion of inwardness. Our modern concept of subjectivity is a term which entered in the English lexicon just later on in the late 18th century. Although some could argue that inwardness is merely a synonym for subjectivity, it seems rather specific to the age, because the emergence of discussions and writings about it demonstrate a concern of defining and grasping it with Renaissance epochal frameworks. Its conception was evident and defined only in the opposition between inwardness and outwardness: inwardness was said to be true and sincere, whereas

outwardness was not always able to express the inward space and dimensions of the self. Thus, outwardness or appearances of the self could be invented and pretended. However, it is not the result of language and rational construction, but a historical, cultural, social and even institutional construct of the age, which presumed to perceive the individual's inward feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Inwardness is the perception of the inner-self from outside to an imagined inside, perceived in the bodily traits and gestures, whereas subjectivity is the rhetorical construct of imaginable inner feelings in poetry and philosophy, in an opposite movement from the inside to the outside. (LUDWIG, 2014, p. 10-11)

As regards the distinction between the objective and the subjective nature of the characters and the transition from the page to the stage, British actress Harriet Walter argues in an interview that,

The difficulty is to, um, to sustain a balance between the objective nature of the characters that the narrator is describing and the subjective, which as soon as you dramatize something and give actors the role, they become subjects of their own story, rather than objects of the writer's eye and, um, that's the main difference when you dramatize something as opposed to when you read it, because you have a private transaction with the writer where you're sort of caught in and come and look at this, whereas when you have to embody the character, you have to believe in her and care about her and make an apology for her, however badly behaved she is. (WALTER, 2014, digital text)

In this interview, Walter is talking about her role as Fanny Ferrars Dashwood, in the 1995 film adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, where, at least in the book, there is a formal narrator. We can extend her line of thought to Shakespeare's characters and how they are performed on stage or in the cinema. In this case, their objective nature is created by the author, without the use of a narrator, and conveyed to the audience or the reader in a more subjective way through their speech and acts (performed or not by an actor), as well as what appears in the *dramatis personae*.

Shakespearean characters who are villains or simply evil may lead the audience or the reader to identify or not with them through their speech and acts (and a possible performance). However, the readers and spectators may also, at a later point, reconsider their initial reactions and experience a turnaround of feelings. However, at a deeper

level, we are led to sympathize, at different times in our lives and according to our changing moods, with some of Shakespearean evil characters. It is probable that most people have already felt as powerful as the weird sisters in *Macbeth*, who play like children with human destiny, as they joke about "a pilot's thumb, Wracked as homeward he did come"; or greedy as ambitious people such as Macbeth and his wife, who order to kill others or at least wish them dead according to passing whims and disposition. It is even possible to identify sometimes with someone as dreadful as Iago, who is committed to killing someone he unconsciously admires out of irrational hatred and jealousy. Be that as it may, evil is a recurring theme in Shakespearean tragedies, as it presents itself differently through distinct characters in particular contexts.

In light of this, the following remark by Harriet Walter, in the same interview, about playing evil characters in general, and the public's reaction to them, is relevant here,

People always say it must be such fun playing horrible people, I don't really like playing horrible people, I mean, um, If they are funny there's a great pleasure to be had, but it can get a bit comfortable for the audience to know, oh, this person is a villain I'm going to dismiss them and laugh at them and (pause) I prefer to tread a slightly more ambiguous line, where the audience kind of begin to identify with you and think oh, maybe I do that, and then suddenly you turn round and become very unpleasant, and they have to face perhaps that in their own nature rather than constantly stand outside and laugh at it. (WALTER, 2014, digital text)

Although it is often easy to pinpoint evil in others, and sometimes even to identify with it, evil is not always a simple thing to deal with. It can interfere with people's zone of comfort, forcing them to reconsider what they usually take for granted. Therefore, once it is spotted in others, or in ourselves, evil can assume rather frightening proportions. Distressing and painful though it is: if put into practice inadvertently or on purpose, it can hurt others and lead to broken hearts, a heavy conscience, or just quick retorts that may counterbalance it and avoid degenerating into bitter revenge.

In much the same way as evil has the power to nudge people out of their comfort zone, the alternative as well as the street theatre practiced in different venues, in Brazil and elsewhere, can have a similar effect on people. It may, for those accustomed to the

theatre of European origin, cause at the same time fascination and a certain feeling of distrust or uneasiness. Nevertheless, all these different types of theatre have the power to produce ineffable moments and lead to subtle reflections, even if through different means.

## 1.1. The Psychoanalytical Relevance of Shakespearean Tragedies

Analyzing the influence of Shakespeare in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Rosenfield argues that,

The Shakespearean drama brings into play lands and kingdoms devastated by voracious ambitious, nevertheless never recognized in their original root: the desire to be loved by the heroes. The blindness and denial of this loving demand make legitimate desires degenerate into indifference, repugnance, hatred and madness, bastardized expressions of originating aspirations. (ROSENFELD, 1996, p. 89) (Translation mine)

The passage triggers some questions. The first one, there certainly is a focus on love here, but what kind of love exactly? The focus lies on misplaced loved, since the demand for love is not by the heroes themselves, but by the other characters who want to be loved by them, and/or as they are loved. The second question is to which plays this theory applies to. Since the theme of that statement is hatred, madness, indifference, it follows that it best applies to tragedies. I believe that both *Macbeth* and *Othello* fit the example perfectly. The desire to be loved by Duncan, the king, and Othello, the general, by both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and Iago, respectively, is not corresponded in the way they expected. Thus, the denial of their loving demand degenerates into bitter feelings which can be taken as nothing more than manifestations of frustrated or unrequited love. Another question is, what does it mean, psychoanalytically speaking, to love and not be loved? – when our desire, as Lacan puts it, is the desire of the Other?

The answer to this last question, I believe, requires a whole detour. So as to manage that, I will briefly refer to some aspects of the plot of *Macbeth* and then proceed to the comment of some of its themes.

The setting of the story involves mainly Scotland, and also some parts of England, in a distant past (the 11th century). The plot concerns a brave general, Macbeth, who is the *Thane* (Lord) of Glamis. After hearing the prophecies from three witches, in a blasted heath, that he will eventually become also Thane of Cawdor and king of Scotland, he becomes obsessed with the idea. After having being granted the title of Thane of Cawdor by Duncan, the king of Scotland, Macbeth writes to his wife and tells her everything. Subsequently, the king announces that he is going to spend a night in their castle. Instigated by his ambitious wife to assassinate the monarch so as to materialize the prophecy of the witches, Macbeth hesitates at first, but ends up giving in to his wife's appeals. Separate, none of them would have managed to kill the king. Macbeth would lack the drive, and Lady Macbeth would lack the nerve. But together they manage to commit the dreadful deed, and the king dies, which generates an atmosphere of hysteria among those around. Macbeth is crowned king and his wife becomes queen. From then on, the couple start ordering the murder of all those they consider a threat. Consequently, numerous people die. Neither of them seems to enjoy their new condition. On the contrary, Lady Macbeth loses her mental sanity and ends up committing suicide, while Macbeth is haunted by his own consciousness, does not feel pleasure in anything, to the point of even seeming sort of relieved when he realizes he will lose his final battle and die. After Macbeth's death the political order is restored, and the throne of Scotland is returned to Duncan's eldest son, Malcolm.

*Macbeth* is, of all Shakespearean plays, the one which has always fascinated me the most and given me more pleasure in reading. It is one of his most psychological plays, along with *Hamlet*, since it not only transcends the immediacy of things and everyday life but also reflects, through written language and conceptual references, about the essence of life and about being human. In this sense, this play transcends the stamp of its age and geography, doing justice to what Freud calls, in his essay about *Macbeth*, "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-analytic Work" (1916):

The powerful effect which the tragedy has upon the spectator. The dramatist can indeed, during the representation, overwhelm us by his art and paralyse our powers of reflection; but he cannot prevent us from attempting subsequently to grasp its effect by studying its psychological mechanism. (FREUD, 1997, p. 164)

As regards the text of the play, scholars argue as to what percentage of it has actually been written by William Shakespeare, and how much has been sown by the editors of the First Folio, since many parts of the play may have been lost. For the sake of this thesis, however, I am taking the traditional text of *Macbeth* at face value. In his research to write the text, Shakespeare went to the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, published in 1577. The plot of *Macbeth* is more or less based on the historical Macbeth, who introduced the Feudal system in Scotland, and ruled over the country from 1040 to 1057. Macbeth succeeded King Duncan I, whom he killed in combat, and was also killed, and succeeded, by his stepson Lullach. Although the play is based on historical facts, we must keep in mind that the ethics of the two contexts is completely different. It was perfectly acceptable, in the wild reality of 11<sup>th</sup> century warrior-like Scotland, to kill and to be killed in combat while fighting for the throne. In this sense, the historical Macbeth cannot be blamed for the immoral and cowardly actions of the fictional Macbeth, who acts against the codes of Elizabethan court.

It is also interesting to consider the fact that roughly five decades separate Shakespeare's play from its historical prototype; and roughly 400 years separate the creation of the play from us, its contemporary readers. In this sense, *Macbeth* lies halfway between the time of the original Celtic high kings – whose code of behaviour preceded the Western, European, Judeo-Christian ethical code – and our time, which in a way ends and questions the cycle of this very code. This intermediate position offers much to be discussed in terms of what is right, or wrong, or good, or evil. Although the historical Macbeth spoke a different Scottish Gaelic language, he is likely to have also learned some (Old) English, so as to interact with the neighbouring country. Shakespeare, writing his text in Early Modern English, recedes half a millennium and brings the story into a more modern scenario where tormenting issues could be addressed more easily. Conversely, although Elizabethan England seems so fresh when compared to Medieval Scotland, contemporaries to Shakespeare still cherished some ancient superstitions, which caused them to fall prey to the appeal of characters such as

the three weird sisters. In her book *A Feitiçaria na Europa Moderna*, Laura de Souza e Mello argues that, although magical practices have existed in Europe since antiquity, witch hunts and the concept of witchcraft are actually a phenomenon of the Modern Age, the latter being centred on the notion of heresy through a pact with the Devil. Souza e Mello points out that "it is estimated that 20,000 people were burnt in Modern Europe, the different regions knowing outbreaks of varying intensity in different moments. The persecution focused basically on women. ... In general terms, the apex of this repression would range between 1560 and 1630." (SOUZA E MELLO, 1987, p. 30) Thus, by creating the three Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare is projecting into the Middle Ages a phenomenon of his own era. Let alone the fact that this tripartite image of femininity is an ancient recurrent archetype present in practically all civilizations, from the Gorgons to the Fates (Moirai), the Sirens and the Graces (Charities), among others.

As to the word *thane*, – Macbeth owns the titles of Thane of Glamis and Thane of Cawdor – this term opens up to more than one meaning. On the one hand, it is a token of power. The thane is equivalent to a Baron or an Earl, if we consider the aristocratic system of peerage. On the other hand, it also represents a bond of submission: the thane must submit to the high king as the Baron and the Earl must submit to the king. After the meeting with the weird sisters, this bond of servitude no longer seems to suit Macbeth and his ambitious mate. They consciously covet the crown, which would confer them greater power – which they end up accomplishing, by arbitrary and violent means. And we also have the set of psychological – more subtle and even unconscious reasons why human beings crave for power – that are so well developed when Freud reads *Macbeth* (this reading will be dealt with in due time); and that also echo other primitive archetypes, like the need to kill the king, which takes us back to Zeus and Chronos, in the Greco-Roman tradition, but can be accessed in all sorts of mythologies. This archetype possibly reaches back to the times of the jungle, when a senile leader – no longer able to assert his power or his wits – would be put down by the whole group. This would cause a younger male to fight for power – not only for himself, and to be able to do things his way – but also for the preservation of the group.

It seems as though this drive for power – which might have been appropriate and pertinent at a certain point in history – got corrupted in more advanced stages. In the

course of history (as in the course of other Shakespeare's plays, such as for instance *Julius Caesar*) the fight for power and the killing of kings was progressively more and more fired by the need to soothe some emotional or psychological necessities. And politics became a space for the trade of vanity and assertion of egos. Talking about power and politics in Al Pacino's 1996 film *Looking for Richard*, Vanessa Redgrave makes the following statement,

In the midst of these noble concepts, these treaties and these diplomatic pacts, [Richard III] was saying the truth beneath all this is absolutely the opposite. The truth is that those in power have total contempt for everything they promised, everything they pledge, and that's really what Shakespeare's great play is about. (*Looking for Richard*, 1996)

As much as in *Richard III*, also in *Macbeth* the themes of power and politics serve mainly as a support so that the protagonist can overcome their sense of insecurity and inferiority. Human aspirations and primal feelings pulsate and pound so vigorously that they burst the purely political level. As for the historical element, it is manipulated and twisted for private ends, often even unknown by the protagonist. The underlying themes which abound in *Macbeth* and eventually come to the surface are not directly related to politics, giving it a wider range of different meanings and possible readings. Reducing it only to the political or historical level would be very limiting, like trying to fit it into a fixed framework.

According to Holinshed (1577), the historical Macbeth has never been a biological father, despite having raised his wife's son. The paternity of the fictional Macbeth over Lady Macbeth's child or children is an open field of discussion. Sigmund Freud, in his classical essay on *Macbeth* called "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-analytic Work" (1919), blends the two Macbeths and creates a reading in which the protagonist is but the surrogate father to his wife's descendant(s). Based on the sexually diminishing implications in words addressed by Lady Macbeth to her husband, Freud creates a reading of the play grounded on Macbeth's feelings of discontentment at the fact that his infertility has placed him in a delicate position in the opinion of his wife, in a state of impotence towards the decrees of life and nature. Duncan, as a king, represents in many ways the ancestral father figure. If Macbeth kills Duncan, and takes



his position, not only he gains the position of the father, but he also opens the way so that Lady Macbeth's children may succeed him afterwards. This is a way, symbolically, to become the concrete/material father to her children, and to rise into a prominent position in her eyes. In Freud's reading, thus, Macbeth does not seek the throne to obtain political power, and rule the kingdom in his own way. He does what he does because he needs to win the respect and admiration of his wife. This view is corroborated by the fact that Macbeth does not take any pleasure from the fact that he has become the king. On the contrary, he seemed to be more contented when he was a warrior.

When Macbeth meets the witches, they prophesy that he would become king, but would beget no kings; whereas Banquo, his friend, would generate a lineage of kings. In fact, if we move from fiction into history, and from the play into the life of its author, Shakespeare (as mentioned before) writes Macbeth to King James, who is both King James I of England and King James IV of Scotland. And one of King James's ancestors, who lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, was called Banquo. This kind of homage hidden in the text so as to please his patrons was a frequent thing not only in Shakespeare's work, but in the works of artists who have been supported by the aristocracy, at all times.

Macbeth's feelings of personal disillusionment and frustration regarding this prophecy concerning Banquo is expressed in the following soliloquy, which sounds more like a daydream:

They hailed him father to a line of kings.  
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown  
And put a barren sceptre in my grip,  
Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. (*Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. 1)

Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, who displays such a dominant personality in the beginning, is described by Freud as "an example of a person who collapses on reaching success, after striving for it with single-minded energy..." (FREUD, 1997, p. 159). For one thing, she seems to associate the fight for power with a masculine notion. When she decides that she will do whatever might be necessary so that Macbeth becomes king – even if the price to pay is to kill a person who is her king, her relative,

and a guest in her house – she spontaneously sacrifices her womanliness for that cause. As the soliloquy below reveals, Lady Macbeth cannot conceive the possibility that remaining a woman and reaching power (which she interprets as cruelty) could be two non-exclusive things:

Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty. (*Macbeth*, Act I, Sc. 3)

The implicit dichotomies of feminine and masculine, strong and weak, healthy and pathological and the tension between sex and power are perceptible here. Not only is Lady Macbeth the dominant character before the criminal act, but also Shakespeare seems to be playing through her in an unprecedented way with a range of stereotypes that we, and his public at the time, usually take for granted. She is a woman with male attributes just as her husband lacks the virility that he longs for. Not by chance, one can identify a whole gradient of gender attributes and potential roles being played by these two characters, in what seems to be a dance of the soul between feminine and masculine forces and gender attributed roles. Therefore, Freud's remark, referring to a Shakespearean study by Ludwig Jekels, becomes relevant here,

Shakespeare often splits a character up into two personages, which, taken separately, are not completely understandable and do not become so until they are brought together once more into a unit. This might be so with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. (FREUD, 1997, p. 165)

This Freudian line of thought is shared by other theorists, such as Janet Adelman, who argues in her article "'Born of Woman': Fantasies of Maternal Power in *Macbeth*" that this play produces extremely confusing and disturbed images of masculinity and femininity. This disturbance is present in the figures of Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and the witches, and seems to Adelman to be both the cause and consequence of Duncan's assassination, who would be an androgynous and ideal father, i.e., with both masculine and feminine attributes. In her words,

Duncan combines in himself the attributes of both father and mother: he is the centre of authority, the source of lineage and honour, the giver of name and gift; but he is also the source of all nurturance, planting the children to his throne and making them grow. (ADELMAN, 1987, p. 94)

The aftermath of their murderous act is reflected differently in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. According to Maynard Mack, the discourse of Lady Macbeth during her sleepwalking can be called *umbrella speech*, since more than one consciousness can take cover under them. He points out that this is a common characteristic in Shakespearean dramaturgy. Such discourses reflect "not simply mental disintegration, but a strong sense of a fragmented moral order." (MACK, 1986, p. 208) Unlike other characters, like Iago or the weird sisters, Lady Macbeth is burdened by remorse for her actions and is an example of a consciousness torn between notions of good and evil, even after choosing one of the sides. This is exemplified in this remark by Freud, who is perhaps considering the fact that Lady Macbeth swears to trade her womanliness for power,

I believe Lady Macbeth's illness, the transformation of her callousness into penitence, could be explained directly as a reaction to her childlessness, by which she is convinced of her impotence against the decrees of nature, and at the same time reminded that it is through her own fault if her crime has been robbed of the better part of its fruits. (FREUD, 1997, p. 163)

Macbeth, on the other hand, is only able to speak openly about the chances he has missed at the end of the play,

I have lived long enough: my way of life  
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf;  
And that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath  
Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not. –  
(*Macbeth*, Act V, Sc. 3)

Nevertheless, Macbeth is by no means oblivious to the fact that, had he chosen a different path for his life, things might have been different, at least for him. However painful this realization in the form of an afterthought might be, it presents us with a regretful mind still torn between good and bad principles or, rather, in a more psychoanalytical plan, between life and death drives. What his mind can conceive so easily at the end of the play, his will has not proved able to put into practice. The frame to the aforementioned soliloquy shows us Macbeth calling for his servant, Seyton – a name that is homophonous to the word Satan. As plays have been made to be seen and heard rather than read, it sounds as though Macbeth is having a private conversation with Satan.

As for his wife, her life drive now only appears in a negative way, through penitence and remorse for the realization of the damage of their enterprise, as expressed through her broken speech during the sleepwalking scenes,

A soldier and afeard? – What need we fear who  
knows it, when none can call our power to account? –  
Yet who would have thought the old man to have  
had so much blood in him?  
[...]  
The Thane of Fife had a wife; where is she now?  
[...]  
I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot  
come out on 's grave. (*Macbeth*, Act V, Sc.1)

This is the very antithesis to the idea of a soliloquy: either because she is sleepwalking, or because she is losing her mind, Lady Macbeth cannot determine anymore what is private inner thought and what can be uttered in the presence of other people. The juxtaposition of conflicting elements is therefore an important aspect of the play, as mentioned by Hunter in his *Introduction* to the 1974 Penguin edition of *Macbeth*: "*Macbeth* is a play of stark disjunctions (murder amid feasting, the laughing Porter at the gate of hell, the whitest innocence beside the blackest treachery, femininity coupled with violence)..." (HUNTER, 1974, p. 41) This substratum, which defies a purely rational explanation, is probably what leads Susan Snyder, in her article "*Macbeth* A Modern Perspective" to conclude that the play offers "provocative questions and moral ambiguities." (SNYDER, 2009, p. 207)



## **2 THE QUESTION OF EVIL IN SHAKESPEARE**

The question of evil can be approached through different angles, and is tinged with different hues in different moments in time. We can think of evil as inherent or external to human nature at least since Biblical times, considering the interconnectivity between language, ethics and evil, from the stand point of religion or philosophical ethics. When applied to the study of Shakespearean drama, in the study of the various facets of evil in *Macbeth*, we can consider the code of morality shared by Shakespeare and his audience, or even address the subject through the standards of our own times. My hypothesis is that evil in Shakespeare works as a compensatory mechanism for possible or imaginary personal deprivations. Therefore, it is a kind of unconscious revenge on behalf of frustrated desires and repressed primary aspirations which function as a justification for a condemnable conduct. Moreover, evil is also a way of channelling into others a feeling of having been unjustly treated and of trying to subvert an original configuration that proved to be unhappy.

### **2.1. The Presence of Evil in Human Nature**

Ever since human beings have been situated (really and symbolically) in the world, we can evidence the presence of evil in human nature. One of the first literary manifestations in our culture concerns the narrative about the Fall, in *Genesis*, the first book of the Old Testament in the Bible. This passage is known by all who are minimally literate and narrates the divine creation of the first human beings who lived

on the Earth, namely, Adam and Eve. Through this description, human beings position themselves symbolically, in relation to the terms of a divine creation which has its rules about what is or is not permitted concerning human behaviour. After having created the world in six days and having rested on the seventh from the work done, God decided to create the first man, Adam, and from his rib the first woman, Eve. Both were entitled to live in Eden, where they had everything at hand's reach without having to work. One caveat only is made to them, which is not to eat the forbidden fruit or fruit of wisdom or knowledge. This passage of the Bible brings to surface certain aspects of human nature, such as curiosity and eagerness to learn. How are we supposed to conform ourselves with the access to all kinds of resource (material and physical), and at the same time be deprived of having access to knowledge? And how are we expected to be happy without being able to accomplish that which is most precious to us in life, in addition to distinguishing ourselves from other animals, and which elevates itself above mundane pleasures and gives us the feeling of completeness, crowning our existence?

A second aspect as important as the first is what makes us succumb, moved by originating desires, to certain appeals and temptations. The image of the serpent is pertinent because it evokes what we feel as uncanny in ourselves. The snake does not respect territories, breaks norms easily and provokes in others fascination and repulsion at the same time. However, or for those very same reasons, when it proposes that Eve taste the forbidden fruit (something that she had probably long coveted), and knowing what this would entail, it causes the disruption of the idyll which Eve and Adam were a part of. As a consequence, they are expelled from Paradise and, because they now have acquired knowledge and can distinguish between what is good and what is evil, they decide to cover themselves with clothes and Adam is commanded by God to eat bread from the sweat of his work. Notwithstanding that, the question of evil here is contained in the figure of an animal which is execrated and feared by all. Adam and Eve acted badly or wrongly in God's eyes and for that they are punished. However, this does not turn them into bad people, so they are not inflicted with a more severe punishment. From now on, they will only have to work in order to eat and survive. Gratifications will no longer be immediate. Besides, they are made aware of the fact that one day they will die.

The point of contact between all this and the present thesis about Shakespearean tragedies is that the Biblical text associates evil as a motivating force that has the power of pervading human beings, inscribing itself in their own essence. It is contained in the very nature of human beings in the form of primitive drives as envy, unbridled greed, unresolved desires and voracious ambitions that do not take others into account. It can also correspond to a potential in human beings that may, or not, be developed, differentiating itself from the way it is described in the Bible. Evil can be expressed not only in actions, but also through words. The power of language can be used to injure, hurt, embarrass and scare other people. Thus, language reveals evil through various forms and to various ends, regardless of whether they are used consciously or not.

French philosopher and thinker Paul Ricoeur put forward the question: "It is to the gnosis, in effect, that Western thought put the problem of evil, as a problematic totality: *Unde malum* (where does evil come from)?" (RICOEUR, 1988, p. 31). This will be a point of reference in the development of this research, when we consider defining and analysing evil from a discursive, psychoanalytical and philosophical perspective. The question of evil will be examined through its manifestations by means of people's language, discourse and action, as well as at its deepest roots understood as a search to fulfil symbolic gaps that psychoanalysis calls *lacunae*, which correspond to almost irreparable losses that can be elucidated through a psychoanalytical approach. A more conceptual and philosophical analysis, which "balances all the problem of evil in the sphere of the act, will and free will" (RICOEUR, 1988, p.32) will also be attempted.

## **2.2 Language, Ethics and Evil in Shakespearean Tragedies**

In order to understand the presence of evil in language and the discourse of human beings we should first strive to understand some functions of these two terms. Language is, in a way, and up to a certain point, a means of expressing our thoughts, feelings and desires. It also intermediates our relationship with reality and other people. In its intermediary relationship between people and reality, it ends up shaping reality (in



addition to just defining it) and influencing how we perceive it. Without language, reality would not be the same. However, language can also be a source of misunderstanding.

Freud argues and demonstrates that language not only serves to manifest thoughts and conscious desires, but is also a means of expressing, even against our vigilant attention, intimate thoughts and repressed desires that, frequently, we try to hide from others. These desires and thoughts come up through jokes, slips and involuntary sayings. Thus, for psychoanalysis, it is through language and dreams that we have access to people's unconscious. Whereas dreams are perceived and felt only by us, language serves as a means of communication between us and other people and even to report a dream and express more intimate thoughts that we share with only a few people.

In “Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-analytic Work”, Freud (1919) traces certain human conducts in their path from instinctive desires to neurotic symptoms. Based on the analysis of the clinical cases of some patients, he seeks to examine what makes certain people move from the desire (common to all human beings) to be considered and treated as an exception, i.e., as someone exceptional with rights and privileges that aren't applied to all, to people who actually act so as to put this into practice. He points that what makes certain people act this way goes back to real or imaginary injustices that they think or feel they have suffered. From there, Freud approaches the character of the Duke of Gloucester, in *Richard III*, the villain wronged both by nature and society, who finds in his deformation and lack of charm the ideal excuse for an unscrupulous conduct, which does not take others into account. His actions channel a revenge in relation to the evils he has suffered. Freud quotes a soliloquy that exemplifies this line of thought,

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,  
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,  
I am determined to prove a villain,  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (*Richard III*, Act I, Sc. 1)

Next, Freud argues that this character serves as a magnifying glass that amplifies feelings that we all have, but that most people are able to repress in deference to others and with an awareness of not doing evil unduly. The author outlines a theory of neurosis

as the frustration of libidinous desires, added to unresolved ideals of personality that are constituted in the instance of the *ego* and which end up repressing these desires.

A parenthesis here, to highlight that that passage corresponds to the end of a long soliloquy that opens the play. It serves as an epitome to a long rambling about Richard's grudges and ill intentions and what lies behind or is in the core of them. As Bart van Es puts it,

Like other pre-1594 plays, *Richard III* shows a marked willingness on the part of its author to draw wholesale on the rhetoric and scenic resources of existing drama. From Richard's opening soliloquy declaring his ill intentions to the catalogue of ghosts who taunt him on the eve of the battle of Bosworth Field, *Richard III* reveals the conspicuous influence of earlier writing: the plays of Seneca, Marlowe, Kyd; the Tudor moralities and the Elizabethan *Mirror for Magistrates*. It trades on those influences persistently in a way that is not found in the works produced in what I will call the 'company period'...These features tie the work to a contemporary body of drama, notably the writing of 'arch playwrighting poets' such as Kyd, Greene, Peele, and Marlowe. (VAN ES, 2013, p. 64)

The 'company period' plays, including *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Othello*, among others, had new elements and different approaches to drama not yet found in his predecessors and contemporaries. They attest even more to Shakespeare's singularity due to his then higher self-esteem and confidence as a playwright and company shareholder, which allowed him more freedom to write and direct his plays. End of the parenthesis.

Before using Lady Macbeth as an example of a person with a torn ego, who collapses after reaching her goal (which has already been mentioned in this thesis), Freud distinguishes between internal and external frustrations:

If the object in which the libido can find its satisfaction is withheld *in reality*, this is an external frustration. In itself it is inoperative, not pathogenic, until an internal frustration is joined to it. This latter must proceed from the ego, and must dispute the access by the libido to other objects, which it now seeks to get hold of. Only then does a conflict arise, and the possibility of a neurotic illness, i.e., of a substitutive satisfaction reached circuitously by way of the repressed

unconscious. Internal frustration is potentially present, therefore, in every case, only it does not come into operation until external, real frustration has prepared the ground for it. (FREUD, 1997, p. 158)

The symbolic lacks that operate in some Shakespearean tragedies – frustration, unrequited love, lack of beauty and power, impotence, infertility, among others – are cryptically inscribed in many of the main character's lines and call into question the very possibility of ethics, and what lays in the foundational basis of it, in the face of disgrace.

In order to exemplify this kind of reasoning – and receding a bit from a purely psychoanalytical approach – we will go through some of the main lines of the witches in *Macbeth* in the next subchapter, analysing their symbolic elements while bearing in mind Foucault's definition of discourse and language. It is important to note that the Weird Sisters play the role of symbolic narrators in this play, similar to the chorus and the oracle in Greek tragedy, since they foretell and foreshadow what is about to happen in the story.

Discourse, which has a social function and can only exist through language, should not be understood here as something that supports a political ideology defended by a group of people (social class) or social institution (political parties, government). It should be understood rather as the manifestation of unconscious desires that are projected towards an Other and that, at the same time, possess a social ideology. Foucault, in his formulations about discourse, always kept it associated with power relations and the effects that it can bring about. For example: the dominant discourse of a social class or political party that can determine what is acceptable or not in society.

Discourse battle and not discourse reflection... Discourse – the mere fact of speaking, of employing words, of using the words of others (even if it means returning them), words that the others understand and accept (and, possibly, return from their side) – this fact is in itself a force. Discourse is, with respect to the relation of forces, not merely a surface of inscription, but something that brings about effects. (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 123)

The power of the witches, established through their discourse, is, nonetheless, only indicative of potential actions. It does not have the means, or the claim, of imposing an ideology or way of thinking. Therefore, its power is not expressed through a normative discourse. Their discourse only suggests possibilities of action and points to certain tendencies and aspects of human nature. Moreover, it is the discourse of those who are on the fringes of society and also have an antisocial and indifferent vision regarding life, as we shall examine more closely further on.

Following this line of a more historical, philosophical and sociological approach to discourse, a passage from Foucault's *The Order of Discourse* further helps analyse the witches' discourse and way of living, by posing the following question,

On the other hand, if the discursive events must not be treated like homogeneous series, but discontinuous one in relation to the other, which status should we give this discontinuous? It doesn't have to do, of course, either with the succession of instants of time, or the plurality of the various thinking subjects; it has to do with caesuras that break the moment and scatter the subject in a plurality of possible positions and functions. (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 58)

The witches, thus, can be understood as discursive agents and subjects that play at the same time a social and symbolic role. They represent everything that is on the fringe of the society of that time and – like the tramps and clowns in *Waiting for Godot* – do not feel beholden to anyone and are free to speak their own mind and do what suits them in an open way.

Far from the life in the castles of the Middle Ages, oblivious to the masculine logic imprinted into the flow of wars (so common then and now) and indifferent in terms of psychological identity to the rise and fall of kings and queens, they stand for everything that is opposed to the monarchy and the rigid hierarchical structure of feudal society. Moreover, an informal definition of a witch is that of an irreverent woman who does not conform to certain types of formal conduct which prevailed mainly in medieval Europe, such as, for example, genuflection and contained sexual activity. Witches in certain parts of Europe were said to take part in promiscuous sexual orgies where they copulated with Satan, who was supposed to have an enormous and deformed sexual member. (SOUZA E MELLO, 1987)

Let us return to the question of language. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault states that,

Language seems always populated by the other, the absent, the distant, it is tormented by absence. Is it not the place of emergence of something other than itself and, in that role, doesn't its own existence seem to dissipate? Now, if we want to describe the enunciative level, one must take into account precisely this existence; interrogate language, not in the direction to which it refers, but the dimension that produces it, neglect the power it has to appoint, name, show and make appear, to be the place of meaning or truth and, instead, to hold the moment – soon solidified and involved in the game of the signifier – that determines its unique and limited existence. (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 126)

We should ask ourselves what the Other is in the witches' language and what is its primary driver. Their language and discourse are permeated by what we recognize as manifestations of evil expressed by helpless souls. The witches, understood from a psychoanalytical perspective, can be interpreted as beings seeking someone to whom to transfer their anguish, as well as their mental and psychological confusion. In this case, they succeed through the power of language, which is their instrument of magic and spell. Furthermore, they can also be seen as mediators of a discourse (the discourse of ambiguity and ambivalence) whose recipient is Macbeth. Therefore, he also is, without knowing it, the product of the discourse of these evil beings, his domineering wife and his unresolved ambition.

We should also understand these discursive manifestations as fragments or isolated points which belong to a certain historical-social configuration and that would probably assume different facets in a distinct historical, social and geographic context. We will dwell on the relevance and signification of the witches' discourse in more detail next.

## 2.3 *Macbeth* and the Various Aspects of Evil

*Macbeth* starts at the end of a meeting between three witches,

FIRST WITCH  
When shall we three meet again?  
In thunder, lightning, or rain?  
SECOND WITCH  
When the hurly-burly's done,  
When the battle is lost and won.  
THIRD WITCH  
That will be ere the set of sun.  
FIRST WITCH  
Where the place?  
SECOND WITCH  
Upon the heath.  
THIRD WITCH  
There to meet with Macbeth.  
FIRST WITCH  
I come, Graymalkin.  
SECOND WITCH  
Paddock calls.  
THIRD WITCH  
Anon.  
ALL  
Fair is foul, and foul is fair,  
Hover through the fog and filthy air. (*Macbeth*, Act I, Sc. 1)

This succinct prologue of the play sets the tone of *Macbeth*. It also plays with language conveying different shades of meaning in a subtle way. The passage "Fair is foul and foul is fair", uttered in chorus at the end of the witches' first appearance foreshadows much of what is to come and is worked throughout the play (crisis of values, indifference towards the other, ambiguity, ambivalence and relativism). Likewise, this discourse illustrates the ambiguous and paradoxical way of thinking and facing life of the witches. The fact that the play starts at the end of a meeting between

three witches seems to be a scenic effect the author chose to maintain the reader curious and attached to the text. The more attentive reader of Shakespeare might keep wondering, from the very beginning of the play, what these strange beings are up to and when they will make their next appearances.

The first witch's second question alludes to three natural elements: thunder, lightning and rain. The reference to these natural phenomena can also open up to possible interpretations. The first two elements usually foreshadow impending rain or a storm while the third one can have a positive or a negative effect. The positive effect is a creative one. Rain has the power to regenerate things by helping crops grow, watering gardens in a natural way, avoiding droughts and often cooling down the temperature. The negative effect is a destructive one, such as causing floods, ruining crops, destroying homes and ultimately killing people. Therefore, like the witches themselves, these are ambivalent and occult elements which human beings have almost no control over and which follow a similar process to our emotional discharges. Not only none of these elements excludes each other, as the witches' discourse seems to suggest, but they are also able to inspire awe and release a feeling of introspection and meditation in human beings.

The first and second lines of the second witch "When the hurly-burly's done, when the battle is lost and won" leads Stephen Orgel to argue that,

The unsettling quality of the witches goes beyond gender. Their language is paradoxical – fair is foul and foul is fair; when the battle is lost and won. One way of looking at this is to say that it constitutes no paradox at all: any battle that is lost has also been won, but by somebody else. The person who describes a battle as lost and won is either on both sides or on neither; what is fair for one side is bound to be foul for the other. The witches' riddles and prophecies mislead Macbeth, but in an important sense, these double-talking creatures are also telling the truth about the world of the play – that there are really no ethical standards in it, no right and wrong sides. (ORGEL, 2000, p. xxxiii)

The passage "when the battle is lost and won" could also be read as playing with the homophony present in English between the word won /wʌn/ and one /wʌn/ making it possible to interpret that the fight or battle in fact is one, i.e., an internal battle of the

individual with himself (his conflicts and ambivalences, moral dilemmas.). In this case, the individual is Macbeth.

The witches' way of thinking could yet convey, in a sweeping statement, a studied subversion of some values and principles carefully erected and maintained by Western European civilization understood here as a whole. This could be exemplified by the contrast between a way of framing the world by a more paternalistic society, symbolized by king Duncan, and the view of those who stand at the fringes of society, namely, the witches. This is possibly one of the reasons that makes Stephen Orgel also state that,

Duncan certainly stands out looking like a good king: the rhetoric of his monarchy is full of claims about its sacredness, the deference that is due to it, how it is part of a natural hierarchy descending from God, how the king is divinely anointed, and so forth. But in fact none of this is borne out by the play. Duncan's rule is utterly chaotic, and maintaining it depends on constant warfare – the battle that opens the play, after all, is not an invasion, but a rebellion. Duncan's rule has never commanded the deference it claims for itself – deference is not natural to it. In upsetting that sense of the deference Macbeth feels he owes to Duncan, perhaps the witches are releasing into the play something the play both overtly denies and implicitly articulates: that there is no basis whatever for the values asserted on Duncan's behalf; that the primary characteristic of his rule, perhaps of any rule in the world of the play, is not order but rebellion. (ORGEL, 2000, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv)

Moreover, the location where the witches usually meet is the heath. Highlighted from the outset of the play, it could be taken as a place that stands for ambiguity and where moral dilemmas end up being dissolved by primal feelings and drives. It is also there that values in general are questioned and where dangers and the unknown lurk. As if we were watching a movement downwards from upright behaviours, the pomp of royalty or even the symbolic haughtiness of felines, who usually owe satisfaction to no one, to the more anti-social environment of the precarious and lethal underworld of reptiles, snakes and scorpions, where bonds and relationships risk no longer being retrieved.

Not by chance, the third apparition evoked by the witches during their magic ritual mocks the concept of royalty by alluding to the king of the animals, the lion, and



at the same time displaying it like a card without value, i.e., as a merely void symbol that represents exactly the opposite of what Macbeth stands for and how he should feel,

### THIRD APPARITION

Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care  
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are;  
Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until  
Great Birnan Wood to high Dunsinane Hill  
Shall come against him. (*Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 1)

*Macbeth* is a play which contains a high number of questions. At the opening, for instance, we have two consecutive questions followed by a third one in a few compressed lines. Far-fetched though this interpretation may seem at first, it is as if the origin or essence of things were being probed more deeply by the worldview of a child. Contrary to the more pragmatic approach adults usually have towards life, this view inquires for reasons, explanations and a more profound and philosophical understanding of things, the world or simply what is going on. This can best be exemplified in the following dialogue between the wife of Macduff and her son shortly before their assassination,

WIFE: Sirrah, your father's dead.  
And what will you do now? How will you live?  
SON: As birds do, mother.  
WIFE: What, with worms and flies?  
SON: With what I get, I mean, and so do they.  
WIFE: Poor bird, thou'dst not fear  
The net nor lime, the pitfall nor the gin!  
SON: Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.  
My father is not dead, for all your saying.  
MOTHER: Yes, he is dead. How wilt thou do for a father?  
SON: Nay, how will you do for a husband?  
WIFE: Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.  
SON: Then you'll buy'em to sell again.  
WIFE: Thou speak'st with all thy wit,  
And yet, i'faith, with wit enough for thee.  
SON: Was my father a traitor, mother?  
WIFE: Ay, that he was.  
SON: What is a traitor?  
WIFE: Why, one that swears and lies.  
SON: And be all traitors that do so?  
WIFE: **Every one that does so is a traitor,  
And must be hanged.**

SON: And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?  
WIFE: **Every one.**  
SON: Who must hang them?  
WFE: Why, the honest men. (*Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 2. Emphasis mine.)

This terrifying dialogue between mother and son plays with the double meaning of the word lie. This pun, also present in *Hamlet* and *Othello* in different contexts and sometimes with distinct meanings as shall be examined later on, points there to swearing chastity and then lying. In this case, it means not being chaste by not following marriage vows or having sexual relationships and, thus, betraying a certain view of chastity held by the Church or those who see it as a rather weak religious doctrine.

This fallacious reasoning, however, can best be attributed to someone like Lady Macbeth trying to pass judgment. Why then is it said by a simple, down-to-earth mother? It seems that the wife of Macduff is only repeating what is a general disposition or *pathos* in the play, similar to when Roderigo exclaims "I have no great devotion to the deed, And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons. 'Tis but a man gone. Forth my sword! He dies!" (*Othello*, Act V, Sc. 1) Roderigo's "'Tis but a man gone' is pure Iagonism, just as the wife of Macduff referring to a supposed kind of treason is not her original and genuine way of thinking. It is possible that this is done just trying to call attention to the fact that human beings can be vulnerable to the point of being misguided and manipulated by other people's way of thinking.

The lines in bold correspond to a subterfuge used by Orson Welles in his film *Macbeth*, in which instead of having the mother say those lines he makes Lady Macbeth suddenly appear in tight medieval clothing, saying them *in lieu of* the mother. This effect, which makes the scene even more terrifying, finds echoes in Freud's "The Uncanny" (1919), in which an analysis of E.T.A Hoffman's *The Sandman* proves, among other things, that there are good and bad images of paternal figures, and probably, by extension, of maternal ones as well, in a child's psyche. It is worth reminding that while in Catholicism and Judaism men are supposed to marry and remain faithful to only one woman, in certain religions like Islamism and Buddhism, for example, polygamy is perfectly acceptable, as long as the husband can provide for each of his wives.

Let us now return to the witches. They make their second apparition on the third scene of the first act, talking to each other again and then making their prophecies in the heath to Banquo and Macbeth, both generals and thanes. They address Macbeth first and prophesize:

FIRST WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter! (*Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 1)

As everything suggests, for some real or supernatural reason, the witches know that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor, because the person who held this title betrayed Duncan, the king. The latter says that the former is to be killed and that Macbeth will succeed him as the new Thane of Cawdor. The dramatic irony here is that Macbeth will also prove to be a traitor. As for him becoming king, this is just a prophecy that could or not materialize depending on Macbeth and his wife's attitudes.

The witches, however, say neither how he will become king nor the price he will have to pay for that. As Susan Snyder puts it, "The Weird Sisters present nouns rather than verbs. They put titles on Macbeth without telling what actions he must carry out to attain those titles. It is Lady Macbeth who supplies the verbs." (SNYDER, 2009, p. 199) As regards Macbeth's feelings about becoming king, "... surely one way to read his fear is that the word "king" touches a buried nerve of desire." (SNYDER, 2009, p. 198). Moreover, Macbeth is so obsessed by the anatomy of evil that he ends up succumbing to the witches' discourse because he sees himself mirrored in it. In other words, it is through a process of identification that he is able to recognize in their speech some characteristics that he already possessed in an embryonic state.

As for his peer Banquo, they predict that he will beget kings, though he be none. Their lines to Banquo play both with masculinity and happiness, as well as heredity,

FIRST WITCH

Lesser than Macbeth and greater.

SECOND WITCH

Not so happy, yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH

Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo! (*Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 1)

In a few words they seem to say everything that is essential to these two men. Although they salute both Macbeth and Banquo, the difference lies in the way they salute them: Banquo won't have the pomp of royalty, but he will be a progenitor of kings, while Macbeth will ascend to the throne without leaving descendants. The other in their discourse seems to contain the very question of masculinity and its power of procreation. From then on, we witness Macbeth act in an ever more omnipotent fashion (killing and ordering others to kill for the sake of ambition) and, for his own personal grief and dismay, stricken with impotence, unable to form a true family, with descendants, loyal friends and a wife who respects and admires him. Lady Macbeth, on the contrary, dominates and controls him with her thoughts, threats and ambition. From the moment Macbeth and his wife kill the monarch, who is a host in Dunsinane Castle, their home, everything starts to go astray. After the monarch's assassination, Macbeth becomes increasingly dependent on the witches' prophecies, who turn a cold shoulder on him and even reach the point of symbolically transforming him into one of the worst substances, namely, that which is expelled from beneath,

SECOND WITCH

By the pricking of my thumbs,

Something wicked this way comes.

Open, locks,

Whoever knocks.

*Enter Macbeth (Macbeth, Act 4, Sc. 1)*

Macbeth seeks them in their dark cave, where they practice their ritual. One of the prophecies they make there, that Macbeth shall not fear anyone who is born from a woman, turns out more to the end of the play to be flawed and therefore fatal to him. Macduff, whose whole family was assassinated by command of the tyrant king Macbeth, fights against him and ends up killing him. However, before the assassination, he warns him that he was born by Caesarean, thus technically not born from a woman.

Macbeth, feeling betrayed, perceives the slyness and trickery of the witches and their half truths which operate through equivocation. Even so, he fights until the end and is beheaded by Macduff.

In light of the unfolding of the story, the following remark makes a lot of sense,

In tragedies where right and wrong are rendered problematic, the dramatic focus is likely to be on the complications of choice. *Macbeth*, on the contrary, is preoccupied less with the protagonist's initial choice of a relatively unambiguous wrong action than with the moral decline that follows. (SNYDER, 2009, p. 202)

Modern tragedy (and the Shakespearean one) functions differently from classical Greek tragedy. According to Hegel, what differentiates one from the other is that

The heroes of ancient classical tragedy encounter situations in which, if they firmly decide in favour of the one ethical pathos, that alone suits their finished character, and they must necessarily come into conflict with the equally justified ethical power [*gleichberechtigt*] that confronts them. Modern characters, on the other hand, stand in a wealth of more accidental circumstances, within which one could act this way or that, so that the conflict is, though occasioned by external preconditions, still essentially grounded in the character. The new individuals, in their passions, obey their own nature... simply because they are what they are. Greek heroes also act in accordance with individuality, but in ancient tragedy such individuality is necessarily... a self-contained ethical pathos... In modern tragedy, however, the character in its peculiarity decides in accordance with subjective desires... such that congruity of character with outward ethical aim no longer constitutes an essential basis of tragic beauty... (HEGEL, 1927, pp. 567-8)

Hegel points in the direction of the modern concept of subjectivity when referring to modern characters and their autonomy to act according to their will instead of any existing or pre-existing system. It would also be interesting to probe how much of this reasoning gives ground for the contemporary concept of the individual as a subject intercepted by language, the unconscious and collective memories.

Drawing from what we have examined, it can be verified that the various facets of evil in *Macbeth* present themselves in different ways and do not have a single core that would refer, for example, to only one character in the play. In order to understand better these facets it is important to resort to some philosophical theories regarding evil, ethics and free will.

## **2.4 Evil from the Standpoint of Philosophical Ethics**

Since Aristotle (384-322 B.C), Philosophy addresses ethical themes such as justice, happiness, action and intent and the notion of good. (ARISTOTLE, 2009) In *Nicomachean Ethics*, a treaty about philosophy and ethics, Aristotle states that: "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim" (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p. 1) Further on he adds that,

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p. 1)

However bright and refined Aristotle's logic may be, as indeed it proves to be throughout the book, it somehow allows to pass unnoticed more subtle and psychological considerations about evil. If we are to follow Aristotle's line of thought rigorously, how can we understand that someone who does or wishes evil can be, at the same time, aiming at any good or even at chief good? We can interpret that those who act in a deliberately evil way (heinous murderers, corrupt politicians) act aiming at a good. However, not in the sense of a good action that aims at a common good, but rather that which they consider that must be done, having as an end their own well-being or momentary satisfaction.

In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) – a Prussian philosopher imbued in the ideas of the Enlightenment – argues that we cannot know the things in themselves, but only as they appear to us, due to our way of experiencing them. Kant denominates as transcendental objects or *noumenon* the things in themselves and his philosophy is therefore called transcendental idealism. He also agrees with the subjectivist theory, judging that good and evil cannot be determined independently of man's faculty of desiring, which means they are not reality or unreality in themselves. (KANT, 1999)

Drawing a parallel with Kant's ideas, we cannot know evil, from a philosophical point of view, as a thing in itself or *noumenon*, but only as that which appears to us. According to this logic, we can perceive evil through its manifestations, i.e., as one or more phenomena that we can recognize through a series of actions practiced by a certain person, or group of people. Therefore, the idea of evil – understood as essence or thing in itself – is inaccessible to us, because it exists only through one or more agents. Thus, according to this logic, we can only experience it through its manifestations and effects.

However sharp this line of thought may also be, it does not account for the total complexity of the question of evil. Abbagnano argues about the metaphysical concept of evil that it consists of considering it as the *nonbeing* in relation to being, which is equated by him to Good, or as a duality of being, i.e., as a dissension or internal conflict of the being itself. (ABBAGNANO, 2007) Bearing this in mind, we come to the following statement, in "Introduction to *Macbeth*":

What Shakespeare investigates in *Macbeth* is precisely what happens to a highly gifted individual when one of his attributes, ambition, which until then made him a brave warrior who served well the homeland and the king, becomes the dominant and destroys all the scale of values of the good citizen, allowing his potential to serve the interests of Evil. (HELIODORA, 1995, p. 180) (Translation mine)

Drawing a parallel with psychoanalytical theory, the person who commits evil actions is not always aware of what he or she is doing, nor of the damage that it can cause (for themselves and others) in the medium and long run. They usually see, mirrored in their own actions, the channelling of deprivations and frustrations and even

losses which have neither been elaborated nor overcome. However, from a philosophical as well as psychoanalytical point of view, the good they aim at is never fully materialized. In vain they search for satisfaction, because it cannot be attained through this type of action. Instead, a painful process of destruction and self-destruction begins, which ends up affecting, in *Macbeth* as well as in other Shakespearean tragedies, both the social body and the destiny of the protagonists.

In the philosophical approach, evil appears as the unfolding of the nonbeing infiltrated in the being of things (the search for contentment, actions that in fact aim at some good and authentic conducts). It comes up as a negativity, an imbalance or counter flow that subverts and goes against what is considered the natural flow or stable order of things. Is not this same negativity or ambivalence, however, that which, according to psychoanalysis, always remains lurking as an element or, rather, a potentially dangerous ghost in human relationships?

## **2.5 Evil Understood through Different Angles**

We have seen that evil as a phenomenon can be analysed and understood in various aspects and through different approaches. In examining evil, it is important to scrutinize it through the different angles that complement one another: they range from philosophical concepts to a psychoanalytical approach, going through discourse analysis and the presence of evil in human nature. It is important to bear in mind that none of these approaches superimposes itself or becomes more explanatory. On the contrary, they complement one another and help analyse the issue through different angles.

Evil, in *Macbeth*, can be taken as emerging mainly from badly solved or elaborated personal deprivations and frustrations, which end up serving as a pretext for a malevolent conduct, which seeks to compensate disappointments (be it the lack of children, impotence towards the contingencies of life, ...) through subterfuges and personal escapes. Therefore, it arises as a contraposition to an original personal reality



which proved unfortunate and is used by one or more individuals as an attempt to subvert this configuration. Evil should also be understood as encompassing various realities and is, oftentimes, the consequence or ramification of feelings such as envy, unsolved affective needs, a psychological disorder or simply a propensity to act badly. One learns, above all, that to understand what it means to be human one should take into account the fact that bad acts and thoughts have always existed in humanity, and that this aspect of human nature cannot be forgotten or underestimated. Nor can it be eradicated or totally mastered. At best, it may be controlled.

It is not by chance that the witches in *Macbeth* never die, or cease to exist. Although they vanish in Act IV, scene 1, the reader knows they are still out there, as a principle of evil. This is made explicit in Roman Polanski's 1971 film version of *Macbeth* in which at the end of the movie the Weird Sisters are still practicing their magic ritual in their cottage and can be felt, but not seen, by Duncan's youngest son and his horse. One way of interpreting this scene, is that Donalbain wants something from them and, therefore, evil persists because the fight for power at any cost continues, which is a constant historical vision in Shakespeare. Another way of putting that is that one should come to terms with evil's existence and learn to deal with it, recognizing that these feelings also exist inside ourselves.

It would be interesting here to draw to a close with the last speech of the witches in *Macbeth*, after their magic ritual has been performed and before they vanish for good in the play – which mirrors in Macbeth in an implicit and indirect way, through their magic and maliciousness, all the highs and lows of his life,

FIRST WITCH:

Ay, sir, all this is so. But why  
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?  
Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites  
And show the best of our delights.  
I'll charm the air to give a sound,  
While you perform your antic round,  
That this great king may kindly say  
Our duties did his welcome pay.

*Music. The witches dance; and vanish*  
(*Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 1)

I would like to close this chapter with a quote by Sprengnether, which summarizes some of the main points in *Macbeth*, which range between the question of masculinity, power and fertility, having as a backdrop the theme of femininity,

The irony of *Macbeth*, of course, is that in his attempt to make himself wholly "masculine", uncontaminated, so to speak, by the womb, he destroys all source of value: honour, trust, and, to his dismay, fertility itself. It is his deep personal anguish that he is childless. The values associated with women and children, which he considers unmanly, come to be perceived as the source of greatest strength. It is procreation, in this play, rather than violence, which confers power. "The seeds of Banquo kings" (III.i.70) To kill a child or to imagine such an act, as Lady Macbeth does in expressing contempt for her husband's vacillations, is to betray not only the bonds of human society, but to betray one's deepest self. To reject the conditions of weakness and the dependence is to make oneself weak and dependent. Macbeth's relentless pursuit of power masks his insecurities, his anxieties, and ultimately his impotence. (SPRENGNETHER, 1986, p. 254)

Sprengnether rounds off her line of thought analysing some dichotomies between the social constructs of femininity and masculinity presented in the play,

*Macbeth*, more clearly than any of the other tragedies, with the possible exception of *Coriolanus*, enacts the paradox of power in which the hero's equation of masculinity with violence as a denial or defence against femininity leads to his destruction. Macbeth's attempt to avoid the perception...that the human infant is radically defenceless and dependent on the nurturance of a woman, gradually empties his life of meaning...Of all the tragic heroes, moreover, Macbeth is the most isolated in his death, alienated from himself, his countrymen, his queen. He has become what he most feared, the plaything of powerful feminine forces, betrayed by the "instruments of darkness," the three witches. (SPRENGNETHER, 1986, p. 254)

As for the witches, they work through a symbolic *modus operandi*. At the same time real and unreal, beings that could have existed or not; i.e., they might operate as a projection onto others, that could only be achieved and told through poetic form. Like our unconscious, which only exists in an unknown place and also works in a "magical" way, they hover over our heads through their magic, ritualism, occult powers and

threesome nature. Not surprisingly, we have this well-known saying in Spanish which goes: *'Yo no creo en brujas, pero que las hay, las hay'*, which could be roughly translated into English as 'I don't believe in witches, but they surely exist' or 'I don't believe in witches, but that they fly...they fly'.

### 3 *HAMLET* AND HUMAN PREDICAMENT

Although *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* overlap in several aspects, *Hamlet* is even more philosophical. Not only is it twice the size of *Macbeth*, but its thematic dimension and approach are able to reach deeper layers of signification, through a more formal elaboration. Through its appreciation of the human being and the constant tension between life and death, one is confronted with themes such as one's own conscience, the predicament of action, incest, revenge, dreams and moral dilemmas that are borderline with psychological torments and personal dramas.

*The Tragedy of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark* (in this thesis referred to simply as *Hamlet*) has its plotline taken from previous sources, which reach back to *Amleth*, written by Saxo Grammaticus in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and telling about a story concerning the times of Old Viking Denmark. In spite of that, as it usually happened with Shakespeare, there was a tacit understanding among the audience that things should be taken according to the social conventions of Elizabethan times.

In *1599: A year in the life of William Shakespeare*, James Shapiro states that,

There are many ways of being original. Inventing a plot from scratch is one of them and never held much appeal for Shakespeare. Aside from the soliloquies, much of Shakespeare's creativity went into the play's verbal texture. In writing *Hamlet* Shakespeare found himself using and inventing more words than he had ever done before. His vocabulary, even when compared to those of other great dramatists, was already exceptional. The roughly 4,000 lines in the play ended up requiring nearly the same number of different words (for comparison's sake, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* each use only about half that number). (SHAPIRO, 2010, p. 320)

As regards the plot, the play starts with the already perceived presence of the ghost of King Hamlet, the father. Alien and innocuous to all the other characters who try to approach it through speech, it discloses itself only to his son Hamlet in Act 1, scene 5, summoning him to revenge his unnatural murder (through poison, by his brother Claudius, who is now just married to Queen Gertrude, the ghost's widow and Hamlet's mother). Claudius is now through his marriage to the Queen, the new king of Denmark.

The ghost in *Hamlet* plays a role that is equivalent to the role of the witches in *Macbeth*. Technically, by being presented in the first act of the play, it helps in grasping and keeping the attention of the audience. Psychologically, ghost and witches stand for things which are not only uncertain and supernatural, but also tormenting and deviating. Both agents in these plays serve to question the *status quo* or what lies underneath the order of things, and which is usually taken for granted as an unquestionable fact by many. Thus, through a certain perspective, they set the tone of these plays and foreshadow much of what is to come and to be developed throughout the plot. Hamlet's father's ghost also reflects and corresponds, in a symbolical way, to Hamlet's internal ghosts. In Elizabethan times people were superstitious, and respected ghosts and witches as belonging to the realm of magic. BENNET & ROYLE refer to a list of 13 uncanny things, one of them being,

Ghosts. In some ways, perhaps, this is the uncanny *par excellence*. The notion of the ghost unsettles all distinctions between being alive and being dead, the real and the unreal, the familiar and the unfamiliar. A ghost is the very embodiment of strange repetition or recurrence: it is a revenant, it *comes back*. (BENNET & ROYLE, 2009, p. 39)

However, unlike *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* focuses on one individual faced with evil when a range of possible actions can be pursued. Hamlet does not surrender to evil like Macbeth and his wife, even though he is a white-livered character in many aspects who is torn between the demands of his father's ghost and his own thoughts and conscience in relation to taking action. In *Hamlet*, we are faced with an individual's quest to understand evil and battle against it without having to give in to it. In this

sense, it is important to take into account that, according to Irving Ribner, in "The Pattern of Growth: *Hamlet*", in his attempt to understand and confront evil, Hamlet ends up conforming to the Christian precepts of a moral order. Nevertheless, he also states that in his complexity Hamlet stands for all men" (RIBNER, 1971, p. 82) and concludes that "to view Hamlet as merely the case study of an individual is to belittle the genius of Shakespeare and to slight his artistry". (RIBNER, 1971, p. 90)

Hamlet's legendary soliloquy in Act 3, scene 1 opens up to various considerations,

To be or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep –  
No more – and by a sleep to say we end  
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to! 'Tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep –  
To sleep – perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life:  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time  
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn,  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will.  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment,  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action. (*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 1)

The first consideration is the very nature of dreaming and its relationship to our life, unconscious desires and conflicts and subconscious forebodings. The fact that we do not have any conscious control over our dreams "To sleep – perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub, For in that sleep of death what dreams may come When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause." points to all the processes (whether internal or external) that somehow contradict our conscious will and creep into our rational decisions. The things which happen, so to speak, in spite of our control and awareness. It is therefore through dreaming that we have a nonphysical *locus* or the possibility of a symbolic world where mixed feelings and contraries can come together and contradictions are able to subvert formal logic.

Moreover, our sensory and intuitive knowledge, as opposed to our rational knowledge, oftentimes contradicts our conscious calculation and discursive understanding and is most apparent in dreams and subconscious premonitions. It is therefore through the act of dreaming, and a certain spontaneous use of language, that we can create a bridge between our unconscious conflicts and desires and our vigilant awareness. This consideration also leads us to the question of the overlapping between fantasy and the phantasm, both of which can take us to a framework of phantasmagoria capable of diverting ourselves from the straightforward path we usually want to trace or follow to achieve our goals.

It would be interesting to resume here the more fluid and contemporary concept of subject by following the line of thought of Pandolfo, when she states that,

*Subject:* I use the term in the sense of the always implicated and transactional "I" of psychoanalysis and linguistics, and not as an autonomous and self-mastering subject of consciousness, or as an interiority that would be the private space of individual perception. It is a subject inscribed in a network of symbolic debts, and defined in relation to that Other Scene Freud and Lacan call the unconscious; a subject that speaks through the unmastered realms of dreaming, the *lapsus* or the joke, and manifests itself fugitively – an opening of shutters that immediately close up. (PANDOLFO, 1998: 4-5)

The well-known fact that Hamlet is, among other things, contemplating suicide and its consequences in this passage, also raises some questions. Hamlet is aware that the consequence of suicide is that the person who commits it will no longer be there to

experience reality and feel the good things that life could offer, as well as the fact that any action taken always has a consequence. Therefore, he starts this soliloquy with "To be or not to be: that is the question" and concludes, more to the end, that "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all", overlaying "the pale cast of thought" over "the name of action". To be or not to be, in this case, could also be interpreted as to act or not to act, doing what his father's ghost demands of him, i.e., to exact revenge by killing his uncle Claudius, as well as to live or not to live.

However, Hamlet is well aware that to be is not always the easiest decision. It certainly is the best choice to relieve his conscience regarding his father's demands and the fact that, as the play unfolds, everything points to Claudius as actually being the culprit and an evil and manipulative man. Also, Gertrude's connivance to Claudius and his crime becomes a strong possibility as the plot unravels. Nevertheless, once Hamlet makes the decision to be, he is faced with all kinds of difficulties and obstacles. Subterfuges and shortcuts just make things more difficult for him and end up messing up his predicament and difficult position in the play even more.

Firstly, Hamlet ends up accidentally killing Polonius, while the old man is eavesdropping behind the curtain on the conversation he is having. Secondly, he is also indirectly responsible for Ophelia's suicide in the river and, subsequently, for Laertes' suffering for having lost both his father and his sister in a suspicious manner.

Braunmuller argues about Laertes' attempts to warn Ophelia against Hamlet, that "by joining sexuality with politics father and brother point us to one of the play's most important though sometimes overlooked concerns: succession to the throne." (BRAUNMULLER, 2001, p. xlv) He also argues that "just as political demands trap Hamlet, so political and patriarchal constraints control Ophelia's choices and set her on the path to frustration, madness and suicide". (BRAUNMULLER, 2001, p. xliii) It is well-known by the context of the play that, whether willingly or unwillingly, Ophelia ends up being used by Claudius and Polonius as a decoy for Hamlet. Braunmuller also argues that, being a royal figure, Hamlet is not free to follow his personal desires because he risks public disaster, i.e., ruining his public image. Inversely, he argues, every royal figure's personal desire is also a political stance.



All the aspects above mentioned end up reflecting on the construction of soliloquies in *Hamlet*, where one feels the burden of a conscience trying to deal with difficult deadlocks concerning taking action in complicated situations, and its possible consequences. In this sense, the following passage by Shapiro from the chapter "Essays and soliloquies" contributes in that,

The sense of inwardness that Shakespeare creates by allowing us to hear a character as intelligent as Hamlet wrestle with his thoughts is something that no dramatist had yet achieved. He had written memorable soliloquies from early on in his career, but powerful as these were, even they fall far short of the intense self-awareness we find in Hamlet's. (SHAPIRO, 2010, p. 328)

The same author also points out that Hamlet's mind is devastated by conflicts that he cannot solve and that "maybe the great secret of the soliloquies is not their inwardness so much as their outwardness, their essay-like capacity to draw us into an intimate relationship with the speaker and to see the world through his eyes." (SHAPIRO, 2010, p. 334) Therefore, inasmuch as *Macbeth* elaborates on the twists and turns of the soul enacted by a number of key characters and through the use of soliloquies and private dialogues to get things off one's chest, *Hamlet* plays out to a maximum degree the risks and benefits of over thinking, epitomized by one character, as something diametrically opposed to rash actions and acting without thinking, which also happens in the play.

The question of how the author deals with and solves the problem of evil in the play will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

### **3.1. Life, Death and Sexuality in *Hamlet***

Act 5 scene 1 takes place in a graveyard and illustrates, through Hamlet's conversation with Horatio and the gravediggers, a single individual's attempt to come to terms with death and our finite existence. Hamlet's rather theoretical approach to

death: "To what base uses may we return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bunghole?" (*Hamlet*, Act 5, Sc. 1) is contrasted by Horatio's more realistic and down-to-earth response: "'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so." (*Hamlet*, Act 5, Sc. 1) Likewise, Hamlet's seriousness concerning death and his genuine surprise at seeing the gravedigger singing in the grave makes him exclaim: "Has this fellow no feeling of his business? 'A sings in gravemaking." (*Hamlet*, Act 5, Sc. 1) and prompts the following dialogue,

HAMLET: Whose grave's this, sirrah?  
CLOWN: Mine, sir.  
HAMLET: I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in't.  
CLOWN: You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours. For my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.  
HAMLET: Thou dost lie in't, to be in it and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick, therefore thou liest.  
CLOWN: 'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away again from me to you. (*Hamlet*, Act 5, Sc. 1)

Thus, Hamlet's seriousness and offense at being played about by the gravedigger is eclipsed by a more joking and pragmatic view of death held by someone, according to Horatio, whose "Custom has made it in him a property of easiness." (*Hamlet*, Act 5, Sc. 1) This dialogue also contains a pun on the double sense of the word lie in that context, which can either mean to tell an untruth or to lie on the floor alive or dead.

Other important issues that come to the surface in the first scene of Act 5 are exemplified in the following dialogue,

HAMLET: ... How long hast thou been a gravemaker?  
CLOWN: Of all the days i' th' year, I came to't that day that our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.  
HAMLET: How long is that since?  
CLOWN: Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was that very day that young Hamlet was born – he that is mad, and sent into England.  
HAMLET: Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?  
CLOWN: Why, because 'a mad. 'A shall recover his wits there; or, if 'a do not, 'tis no great matter there.  
HAMLET: Why?  
CLOWN: 'Twill not be seen in him there. There

the men are as mad as he.  
HAMLET: How came he mad?  
CLOWN: Very strangely, they say.  
HAMLET: How strangely?  
CLOWN: Faith, e'en with losing his wits.  
HAMLET: Upon what ground?  
CLOWN: Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton  
here, man and boy, thirty years.  
(*Hamlet*, Act 5, Sc. 1)

That exchange puts together the questions of madness, unconscious material and implicit sexuality. The gravedigger speaks to Hamlet about Hamlet without knowing that he is actually speaking to Hamlet. Therefore, he feels comfortable to express his inner thoughts and the information he has about Hamlet freely and forthrightly. Hamlet, on the other hand, is acutely aware that he is being talked about, as well as of the clown's unawareness about whom he is speaking to. Instead of detaining the clown, Hamlet questions and prods him, eliciting his answers and demanding him to elucidate them.

What is it, then, that is both cryptically inscribed in the clown's words and symbolized by the references to England and Denmark? According to the gravedigger, Hamlet was sent to England because he had lost his wits, i.e., had become mad, which in fact is what more-or-less happens in the play. One possible interpretation of the use of the word wits in this passage is that it refers to both his critical ability to reason and also, through a double reading, to his courage or ability to deal with his problems in a manly way. In other words, the latter sense of the word wits can be interpreted as referring to his balls or sexual organ.

Since England is an island isolated from the rest of the European Continent by water, it could be interpreted as being used there to stand for a place of refuge where the "men are as mad as he", i.e., where madness and sexuality are not put at stake or even perceived properly by others. Meaning that for those who have gone mad, like Hamlet and Lady Macbeth, for example, England can be read as a country symbolically longed for, although it is always threatened by more "tumultuous" countries like Denmark or Scotland. Also, the fact that Hamlet was sent to England enabled him to see and analyse the situation in Denmark from outside and return more mature.

Moreover, England stands symbolically for everything that is insular in a person or character and therefore can only be reached through water, i.e., through indirect ways and an emotional approach in a free interpretation. At the same time, being the epicentre of a foggy island in the northern hemisphere of the globe, it preserves a mystical if not magical halo, both in real as well as in symbolic terms. Just as its real location and geography may have an influence on the way it comes to be perceived, the Elizabethan historical period with, among other things, the pillaging in the seas by corsairs encouraged by the Crown behind the scenes may have shaped consciously or unconsciously (and from a certain perspective) the way England and English people in general relate to the rest of the world.

The last part of the dialogue between Hamlet and the gravedigger concentrates in an unconscious experience that is brought to Hamlet's mind by a skull that serves as a reminder of mortality,

CLOWN: Here's a skull that hath lien you in the earth  
three and twenty years.

HAMLET: Whose was it?

CLOWN: A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do  
you think it was?

HAMLET: Nay, I know not.

CLOWN: A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'A  
poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once.

This same skull, sir, was, sir, Yorick's skull,  
the King's jester.

HAMLET: This?

CLOWN: E'en that.

HAMLET: Let me see. [*Takes the skull*] Alas, poor  
Yorick! I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest,  
of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a  
thousand times. And now how abhorred in my imagination  
it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have  
kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now?  
Your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment that  
were wont to set the table in a roar? Not one now to mock  
your own grinning? Quite chapfall'n? Now get you to  
my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick,  
to this favor she must come. (*Hamlet, Act 5, Sc. 1*)

At the end of this dialogue one realizes that “young Hamlet” is thirty years old at the time this conversation is taking place. It also becomes evident that he has gathered and processed enough experience throughout life, and lately through suffering, thus

becoming more mature than he was at the beginning of the play. Likewise, it becomes somehow evident that life and death are not completely distinct things, as well as the fact that one wouldn't exist or make sense without the other. Rather, they walk hand in hand from the beginning of our existence and cannot be completely set apart.

*Hamlet* deals with the philosophical implications of death and the fact that as human beings we are the only animals aware of the fact that we will die. The empirical and painful consequences of dying are therefore aggravated by the knowledge that one day we and our lives will cease to exist forever. This element of philosophical speculation and dread is less present in *Macbeth*, for example, which is also a philosophical but nevertheless more diffuse play. There, death appears rather as a game of chance from which people may or may not survive, without measuring and weighing so much its consequences and the fear that it entails on the individual level. It is also a play where death is felt more collectively and the action usually happens at night, with nefarious consequences which stem from dubious motives and obscure driving forces. *Hamlet*, in its turn, confronts death with the clarity and high definition of the day even if the question of the day after or what comes after death still remains obscure and enigmatic because it is impossible for anyone to know it. However, between life and death lies a whole realm of dreams, conflicts, sexuality and the unknown, all of which sometimes are difficult to fathom.

One can also infer from that passage that Yorick, the king's jester whose skull Hamlet takes in his hands, was part of his *milieu* and upbringing and died when Hamlet was seven years old. Therefore, he was probably too young to realize or register consciously the jester's absence or departure from the scene. Nevertheless, Yorick remained there somewhere in his unconscious, as a childhood memory of an adjacent person who left his mark on him and was finally reactivated by a reminder.

The point that Hamlet is reviewing and adding up his life on the scene in the cemetery at the churchyard, after he has just returned to Denmark from England, where he escaped being murdered by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on orders of Claudius, is also mentioned by Barbara Heliodora in her book *Falando de Shakespeare*. In the same book, the author argues that,

living far from the parameters of the dominant class, emotionally disengaged, the two gravediggers see the happenings with rawness and penetrating objectivity. This same meridian objectivity manifests itself in the dialogue that Hamlet holds with both and with Horatio, on his first scene after the return. Although, unfortunately, Hamlet holds for some instants the skull of Yorick and this gesture has captured the imagination of generations as a symbol of the protagonist's fixation with death, the truth is that on the scene with the gravediggers Hamlet reacquired the balance that he would have had, say, before the death of his father; and everything that he says about death is about the human condition, not about his individual death. (HELIODORA, 2009, p. 112) (Translation mine)

Heliadora goes on saying that that scene is used to introduce, or rather bridge, Ophelia's burial, which is taking place in the same cemetery, and in which "all the philosophical position of Hamlet vanishes before the death of Ophelia, whom he had effaced from his memory in order to accomplish his task". (HELIODORA, 2009, p. 112) (Translation mine). Thus, Hamlet's philosophical speculation about death is finally counterbalanced by the simple feeling of missing someone important who is no longer alive.

### **3.2 The Problem of Human Inadaptability to Certain Contexts**

In an analysis about the relationship involving linguistics, psychoanalysis and ethnology, Michel Foucault makes the following statement,

at any given instant, the structure proper to individual experience finds a certain number of possible choices (and of excluded possibilities) in the systems of the society; inversely, at each of their points of choice the social structures encounter a certain number of possible individuals (and others who are not) – just as the linear structure of language always produces a possible choice between several words or several phonemes at any given moment (but excludes all others). (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 380)

This line of thought exemplifies what goes on with Hamlet. Not only does he not seem to fit in Denmark any more than he might have in the past, he is also like a word which has lost or changed its meaning and does not belong in its original language any longer. In other words, an individual who cannot fit into the society he once belonged to. Nevertheless, he must return to his homeland, where his problems stem from, and past memories still haunt him, and where he is waited for. This famous dialogue between Hamlet, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz elucidates what Hamlet felt about Denmark before being sent to England,

HAMLET: ... What have you, my good friends, deserved  
at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?  
GUILDENSTERN: Prison, my lord?  
HAMLET: Denmark's a prison.  
ROSENCRANTZ: Then is the world one.  
HAMLET: A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards,  
and dungeons, Denmark's being o' th' worst.  
ROSENCRANTZ: We think not so, my lord.  
HAMLET: Why, then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either  
good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.  
ROSENCRANTZ: Why then your ambition makes it one. 'Tis too  
narrow for your mind.  
HAMLET: O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count  
myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.  
(*Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 2)

The fact that things are neither bad nor good in themselves, but only in relation to a person's judgement, is exemplified by "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so". Likewise, the concept of evil, as already analysed, does not exist independently nor can be completely apprehended in its intrinsic form. It only materializes through a person and can be noticed through his or her actions. As for space, it appears as a subjective form of perception that varies from person to person. Thus, it can be defined, according to the last sentence of this dialogue, as something intimately personal and relative, but nevertheless indispensable for any kind of experience.

Another important aspect of human behaviour is that in our lives we go through different stages and play many different parts, as Jaques tells the Duke in exile in *As you*

*like it*: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players". (Act II, Sc. 7) This is pointed out in a more implicit and slightly twisted way in *Hamlet* in the following dialogue,

HAMLET: ... My lord, you played once i' th' university, you say?  
POLONIUS: That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.  
HAMLET: What did you enact?  
POLONIUS: I did enact Julius Cesar. I was killed i' th' Capitol;  
Brutus killed me.  
HAMLET: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.  
(*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2)

The passage seems to reiterate what Jaques tells the Duke. The University appears in this short dialogue as a place where one can play a part, both in a symbolic role as an artist and, in a more realistic way, as a person who plays a part in the search for knowledge, intellectual contribution, means of opening one's mind and, ultimately, improving his or her life and contributing socially.

Inasmuch as Shakespeare's style differs from other previous authors and periods, it is also important to bear in mind the notable differences that lie between him and important subsequent authors such as modern Irish playwright Samuel Beckett and realist Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis, for example. In the case of the former, the reader or spectator watches somewhere between impassive, moved and mesmerized as language crumbles to its very nothingness and words become void utterances and meaningless signifiers, both of which send us back to remote areas of intuition and understanding. Shakespeare's words, on the other hand, are full of meaning and impregnated with a range of possible nuances. Language, therefore, is not put at stake as it is used as a means of conveying distinct feelings and a multitude of psychological states.

In Machado de Assis, language operates through a scathing and at times veiled irony that functions as a means of denouncing the values and morals of his time and geography, i.e., the Rio de Janeiro society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as portraying the flimsy national identity of Brazilians. Issues such as slavery and adultery and one-sided values verging on *machismo* and racism, for example, are put at stake through the use of



language as a political stance that makes certain attitudes and values sound ludicrous and, at the same time, shows the gridlocks that individuals were faced with in a patriarchal repressive society. Shakespeare, in his turn, conforms to and takes advantage of the values and ethos of Elizabethan society, criticizing them only a little and in a very indirect way. He invents characters that serve as paradigms for certain human types, and his irony is more general as it unfolds almost in absentia of the heavy weight of social and political circumstances. Therefore, most of his characters transcend the social and political boundaries of his time and geography, and are artistic constructs in themselves, rather than serving a political function. They seem to belong more to the realm of dreams and imagination and are often difficult to fit into fixed categories or be pinned down precisely.

There are authors, such as James Joyce (and Shakespeare does that, in a more indirect way), who engage with history and elevate it to an aesthetic level rather than treating historical narrative content as the only possible way of thinking history. Therefore, they are not historians and they do not even rewrite history. Instead, they provide a new way of approaching and looking at it by transforming history and dealing with some of the main themes that affect and befall it. As Freud puts it,

Psychoanalysis throws a satisfactory light upon some of the problems concerning arts and artists; but others escape it entirely. In the exercising of an art it sees once again an activity intended to allay ungratified wishes – in the first place in the creative artist himself and subsequently in his audience or spectators. The motive forces of artists are the same conflicts which drive other people into neurosis and have encouraged society to construct its institutions. Whence it is that the artist derives his creative capacity is not a question for psychology. The artist's first aim is to set himself free and, by communicating his work to other people suffering from the same arrested desires, he offers them the same liberation. (FREUD, 2001, p. 187)

As for the difference between writer and author, it becomes evident and clear in Shakespeare. On one side there is the writer, busy with money matters, royalties, trade in theatres, shareholdings, debt collection; and, on the other side, the author, concentrated and absorbed in creating convoluted plots and intricate characters and giving wings to imagination. Nevertheless, these two sides of the same coin always worked hand in hand to successfully fulfil Shakespeare's dreams and ambitions. The

balance between aiming at box office success, acquiring a venerable prestige and comfortable economic situation and at the same time the effort to appease his internal ghosts through writing are quite evident in Shakespeare's legacy. All these things probably worked in a symbiotic way to accomplish his desired intent and ended up turning him not only into a famous and renowned playwright, but also into the greatest writer in the English language and a literary canon in the world. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge puts it in his *Commentaries* "Shakespeare never followed a novel because he found such and such an incident in it, but because he saw that the story, as he read it, contributed to enforce or to explain some great truth inherent in human nature". (COLERIDGE, 1963, p. 194)

### **3.3 *Hamlet's* Background and its Symbolism**

In order to understand better *Hamlet*, let us take some sociological, historical and philosophical aspects into account, as a support to the analysis of the play and its symbolism. *Hamlet* marks a turning point in the history of England and Europe in general. The new philosophical, sociological and scientific ideas that started circulating in the United Kingdom and the Continent, from Francis Bacon to Machiavelli, through Nicolas Copernicus and Thomas Hobbes, and the new capitalist means of production and social and political organization that were taking place then, mark a rupture from the society that was once ruled by the strong religious precepts and community values of the Middle Ages. In this sense, it represents the emergence of the concept of the individual and his/her subjective needs, desires and condition.

With the end of feudalism and all that it entailed, a new type of society was being formed, that conferred more freedom to individuals from way of thinking to social mobility. No more blind submission to the king as in other times, even though monarchs still held strong power. Hence, as new hierarchies were being formed the individuals started having more means of climbing up the social ladder, their place not necessarily being determined by birth as in feudal times.

Given that Shakespeare wrote his plays and sonnets when Britain and the rest of Europe were in this period of transition, it is as if we were watching a soccer match being described or narrated while its very rules are changing. The Middle Ages were over, the Modern era was just beginning, with the Age of Discovery, and European mercantilism. As Shapiro puts it about *Hamlet* and its symbolism,

What the Chamberlain's Men did to the wooden frame of the Theatre, Shakespeare did to the old play of Hamlet: he tore it from its familiar moorings, salvaged its structure and reassembled something new. By wrenching this increasingly outdated revenge play into the present, Shakespeare forced his contemporaries to experience what he felt and what his play registers so profoundly: the world had changed. Old certainties were gone, even if new ones had not yet taken hold. (SHAPIRO, 2010, p. 322)

With all these changes taking place, old human aspirations still remained the same. In a time when the limits and restraint previously imposed by a strict authoritarian power, represented by the Church and state, were not as efficient as they once proved to be, individual drives became more prominent. Easier ways to give vent to human whims and villainous actions were then represented in characters such as, for example, Richard III, Iago, Claudius and Edmund.

Hegel argues that Shakespeare's characters are free artificers of themselves, which is equivalent to saying that they are able to reinvent themselves and even incorporate new personas. A statements such as "I am not what I am" is uttered by Iago (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 1) whereas Lady Macbeth is able to play her feminine cards of fragility, receptiveness and apparent submission to others while provoking her husband into being the serpent under the innocent flower. It is possible to argue that, through the distinction between the group and the individual, plays such as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, as well as the use of elaborate soliloquies, might have contributed or even paved the way to the more contemporary and psychological notion of subject present in the work of Sigmund Freud and later further developed and coined as a concept by Jacques Lacan.

In certain Shakespearean contexts things are not exactly what they seem and they are often borderline with uncanny feelings that real people usually have when confronted with the virtual existence of evil, as something potentially able to manifest

itself in any human being. *Hamlet* focuses on the individual and his potentialities and limits. It raises the question of what it means to be and think as an individual in modern times, having to cope with the challenges and drawbacks people are usually confronted with in real life. Not surprisingly, *Hamlet* called Freud's attention, as much as *Oedipus Rex*, both of which have the theme of incest in common, the latter in an explicit manner while the former in an implicit one. In a passage from *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud argues that,

Another of the great creations of tragic poetry, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, has its roots in the same soil as *Oedipus Rex*. But the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind. In the *Oedipus* the child's wishful phantasy that underlies it is brought into the open and realized as it would be in a dream. In *Hamlet* it remains repressed; and – just in the case of a neurosis – we only learn of its existence from its inhibiting consequences. Strangely enough, the overwhelming effect produced by the more modern tragedy has turned out to be compatible with the fact that people have remained completely in the dark as to the hero's character. The play is built up on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result. (FREUD, 1980, p. 298)

As Marjorie Garber puts, "Freud mentions Goethe's belief that Hamlet's 'power of direct action is paralysed by an excessive development of his intellect' (in effect Goethe as Hamlet), and notes that in fact Hamlet is able to act efficiently with respect to many other rivals and dangers, just not in the killing of the king." (GARBER, 2008, p. 207) She points out that the reason for this, according to Freud, is that Hamlet sees mirrored in Claudius' actions the wishes in relation to his parents that he repressed as a child. Thus, the wish that he had to get rid of his father and take his place with his mother is materialized by his uncle. This is enough to shock and paralyze him, just in the same way that almost any person would feel when confronted by someone else who did freely and without feeling guilt what the first person would only accept as an unconscious wish. In this sense, Claudius works like a mirror in which Hamlet sees amplified and projected all that he considers to be his own negative or bad aspects and that should, therefore, and according to his logic, remain concealed and repressed.

Basing her ideas on different quotes by Freud, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce, Marjorie Garber, in her article "Hamlet: The Matter of Character", sees the ghost in *Hamlet* as an *alter ego* to Shakespeare, who lost his young son Hamnet and was haunted by the tragedy. Garber argues that the creation of the figure of a ghost might provoke a sense of identification and function as a way to relieve the author's pain. Moreover, in the beginning of the play the ghost can only be perceived in a negative way, i.e., through other characters, thus resembling a symptom or a kind of *malaise*.

### **3.4. How Evil is Dealt with and Solved in *Hamlet***

Although *Hamlet's* plot is considerably complex and thoroughly developed, the way evil is dealt with and solved in the play is rather simple and straightforward. As in most Shakespearean tragedies, the number of casualties involving the main characters is considerably high: Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Polonius, Laertes and Ophelia die, be it through poisoning, manslaughter, fighting or suicide.

Unlike *Macbeth*, however, where evil can at best be encircled, in *Hamlet* evil ends with itself: it is its own destructive agent. The witches, who planted the seeds of evil, remain alive in the first play, still practicing their magical and circular ritual somewhere, whereas in *Hamlet*, Claudius, the man who committed the unnatural crime of assassinating the King, his own brother, and who manipulated others behind the scene and tried to kill Hamlet through Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, dies in the fighting scene between Hamlet and Laertes. This happens in the last scene of the last act of the play, and he dies through his own poison, i.e., by being stabbed by Hamlet with the sword he empoisoned to kill his nephew and by being forced by Hamlet to drink from the poisoned cup after Gertrude had drunk it and passed away. According to the ancient ways, the natural state of order is restored, the ghost is finally allowed to rest, and peace is restored into the country. According to the modern ways everyone is dead, no one survived to reign, and the kingdom has to be surrendered to Fortinbras.

In this play, death appears as a remedy for human afflictions and desperation, including our fear of death and of not being able to succeed in our endeavours. Contrary to *Macbeth*, where evil is a more diffuse thing that infiltrates human relationships and acts as a mould, i.e., as a deteriorating element that has no single core and proves to be irreversible, in *Hamlet* evil is easier for the reader and audience to pinpoint because it has only one source that spreads to others: Claudius. Once identified, it can then be encircled and finally eliminated, even if this leads Marcellus, who plays the role of an officer, to exclaim to Hamlet's friend, Horatio, after both try to approach the Ghost of Hamlet's father, that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (*Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 4).

Although Hamlet expects evil to manifest itself transparently and in its totality and true form, it is so layered and intercepted by manifestations of good will (whether real or not) that it becomes difficult for him to distinguish where it comes from and pin it down, thus making his actions more vulnerable and susceptible of error. A parallel with our lives could easily be traced here. However, once evil in *Hamlet* is finally spotted, it can then be addressed, tackled, solved and finally completely eliminated, even though this whole process is complicated and traumatic. Nevertheless, Hamlet's conflicts and internal dramas, as well as evil itself, can only be successfully resolved in the play through a sort of collective death.

Marjorie Garber, writing about the psychoanalytic reading and reception of literature in this and the last century, states:

In the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there have been at least three kinds of psychoanalytic readings associated with literature: a psychoanalysis of the author (Shakespeare's symptoms), a psychoanalysis of the character (Hamlet's symptoms), and a psychoanalysis of the text (the symptoms exhibited by Hamlet the play, like the splitting of characters into good father and bad father, or the linguistic symptoms like repetition, metaphor, or other figures of speech). In this last kind of reading the play is like a dream, an imaginative work made of signs and symbols, available for interpretation. It is really only this last kind of work that escapes from "character criticism" in the old speculative style, and moves toward an understanding of the text multiplicities, the way it can be read and performed at different times in different ways, each persuasive. The business of the literary critic is not diagnosis but interpretation. (GARBER, 2008, p. 209)

In psychoanalytical terms, we could say that evil in *Hamlet* appears as a concept in a framework. It corresponds to something that can pervade or intercept our lives and must, therefore, be dealt with in an adult way. Hamlet, the character, appears hesitant in the beginning because he knows that evil, in his case, is not something that can be easily traced and pinned down from the outset, nor can it be addressed and solved without a great effort. Instead, it must be questioned, probed, identified, analysed and then finally addressed and tackled. It would be unfair to condemn Hamlet for the time he takes to achieve his revenge. He is merely all too aware of and analytical about the possible implications of any taking of action in the predicament in which he finds himself. In other words, he had a very difficult task ahead of him.

## 4 *OTHELLO AND THE INVISIBLE CRIMES*

*The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (here referred to by the shortened form, *Othello*) is based on the story “Un Capitano Moro” (A Moorish Captain), written in 1565 by Giovanni Battista Giraldi (Cinzio). Shakespeare’s adaptation opens with a reference to a concealed crime, an allusion to dreaming, and a pun on whoring cryptically inscribed in a few lines by the two characters who play a puppet relationship in the play, Roderigo, the gulled man, and Iago, the villain. Readers of Shakespeare are grateful to literary critics for having often done the work of deciphering these and other lines and thus paving the path for a rather smooth reading of the play. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge points out, “the very three first lines happily state the nature and foundation of the friendship – the purse – as well as the contrast of Roderigo's intemperance of mind with Iago's coolness, the coolness of a preconceiving experimenter.” (COLERIDGE, 1986, p. 187)

It is not exactly clear by the context of the play how Iago, who had stolen Roderigo's purse and lied to him that he had found it left somewhere by some thieves, duped him into believing such nonsense. As the play unfolds we are informed, through Roderigo's words, that Iago keeps him in suspense by promising to give Desdemona the jewels that were in his purse and that he intended to give her as a proposal of love. A sheer lie that Roderigo is not strong enough to confront directly. Nothing, however, points explicitly to how this process of duping and deception is carried out by the villain, and Shakespeare seems to have preferred to use the art of *chiaroscuro* here, letting the reader fill in the gaps of the plot with his or her own imagination.



Through this quick glimpse at some aspects of the play, the keen mind becomes aware that it deals with some subjects not yet present in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, and which are almost taboo in our culture. Although the main theme of *Othello* is love and jealousy as a symptom, the motifs of sexual commerce, greed for money, robbery and love relationships scrutinized from different angles, as well as wounded pride and the allusion to a certain subtraction and confusion through the process of dreaming that all human beings are inevitably confronted with invite the reader to a rich and more profound appreciation of the play.

By the same token, if kings, queens and ghosts abound in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, in *Othello* they are inexistent. Not only is it a less philosophical play than the former ones, with a more prosaic and matter-of-fact approach to life, but it also eradicates certain types of phantasmagoria present in other Shakespearean plays. The life in castles, the magnificence and pomp of royalty and the questionable status of ghosts and witches are replaced by everyday questions that people are more likely to come across in life.

After having stolen Roderigo's purse and keeping him at bay by making him believe it was not his fault, thus maintaining him as an ace to be used later, Iago perpetrates his second offence. With the help of Roderigo, keeping his identity preserved, he arouses Desdemona's father at night with threatening innuendos about the loving relationship between his daughter and Othello, the Moor of Venice. Brabantio, a respectable Senator who lives in Venice, is thus awoken in the middle of the night by the shouts of Roderigo and Iago. Besides containing racist language designed to frighten him, Iago's speech has a strong sexual appeal that works through metaphors,

IAGO: Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have courses for cousins, and gennets for germans.

BRABANTIO: What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO: I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are making the beast with two backs.  
(*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 1)

In her article " 'I wooed Thee With My Sword': Shakespeare's Tragic Paradigms", Madelon Gohlke Sprengnether gets into a layer of Shakespeare's mind and unconscious reasoning by this simple finding: "Throughout Shakespeare's tragedies the image of heterosexual union involves the threat of mutual or self-inflicted violence" (SPRENGNETHER, 1986, p. 257) This statement can be easily verified in Iago's words above. It also leads one to wonder why Shakespeare often tends to put sexual language and imagery in the mouth of villains like Iago, wicked people such as the Weird Sisters and Lady Macbeth or disturbed ones like Hamlet.

Brabantio's reaction to Iago's words about robbing "What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice; My house is not a grange" (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 1) is also worth considering and corroborates the following statement,

The movement of the play is from Venice to Cyprus, from *The City* to the outpost, from organized society to a condition much closer to raw nature, and from collective life to the life of the individual. This movement is a characteristic pattern in Shakespeare's plays, both comedies and tragedies: in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the lovers and players go from the civilized, daylight world of Athens to the irrational, magical wood outside Athens and the primal powers of life represented by the elves and fairies; Lear moves from his palace and secure identity to the savage world of the heath where all values and all identities come into question; and everyone in *The Tempest* is shipwrecked at some time on Prospero's magic island, where life seen from a new perspective assumes strange and fantastic shapes. At the other end of the journey there is always some kind of return to *The City*, to the palace and to old relationships, but the nature of this return differs widely in Shakespeare's plays. In *Othello* the movement at the end of the play is back toward Venice, the Turk defeated; but Desdemona, Othello, Emilia, and Roderigo do not return. Their deaths are the price paid for the return. (KERNAN, 1986, p. xxvii)

The core of what lies behind the plot and its consequences is only made visible in a state of disorder. Once order is finally restored, it is no longer what it used to be and there is always some kind of loss. This movement from order to disorder is also visible in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, although in *Othello* it is more striking, gradual and visual and therefore also more elaborate.

In a more modern context, we could say that a similar process happens to patients in psychoanalysis, who must go through a long process of deconstructing certain apparent truths which they take for granted in order to analyse what lies behind and then, eventually, return to a more-or-less ordered psychological state with a different take on life.

#### 4.1 Iago's Soliloquies and Asides

Iago's soliloquies are divided into asides to the audience and soliloquies *per se*, both of which show his way of thinking and his evil side as a practical joker who plays with people's lives remorselessly. They range between manifestations of envy, contempt for others, money issues, dirty sexual jokes and intentions of exterminating other people, as we shall examine.

Iago's first soliloquy follows a conversation he has with Roderigo in which the latter manifests his weakness by telling him he is contemplating suicide by drowning. Iago discourages him from the deed by suggesting "seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her." (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3) This refers to Roderigo's desire to have Desdemona as a lover, which corresponds to an unrequited love. In the dialogue, Iago tells Roderigo to make money and proposes to him that "if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport." (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3). This refers to making Othello a cuckold by betraying him with Desdemona. Nevertheless, when Roderigo leaves the scene with his last exclamation that he will sell all his land, Iago produces the following soliloquy,

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;  
For I mine owned gained knowledge should profane  
If I would time spend with such snipe  
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,  
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets

H'as done my office. I know not if't be true,  
 But I, for mere suspicion in that kind  
 Will do, as if for surety. He holds me well;  
 The better shall my purpose work on him.  
 Cassio's a proper man. Let me see now;  
 To get his place and to plume up my will  
 In double knavery. How? How? Let's see.  
 After some time, to abuse Othello's ears  
 That he is too familiar with his wife.  
 He has a person and a smooth dispose  
 To be suspected – framed to make women false.  
 The Moor is of a free and open nature  
 That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;  
 And will as tenderly be led by th' nose  
 As asses are.  
 I have't! It is engendered! Hell and night  
 Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.  
 (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3)

The implicit pun with the words 'fool' and 'full', both nearly homophones with different spellings, is evident in this soliloquy. As everything suggests, when Roderigo's purse is full again, in a symbolic way that shall be examined, he will be ready to be Iago's fool, a victim easily exterminated by the villain, like a card off the deck. Without knowing it, Roderigo becomes Iago's purse from the moment he has stolen it. By having his purse, Iago can have vital information about his victim and, at the same time, pour his perverse logic into it in a symbolic way.

An analogy can be traced here between the action of pouring referred to above and the structure of the word 'unconscious' in English, i.e., the way it is formed and can be interpreted. The prefix UN, which has the function of a negative or opposite, can be taken as a recipient in this word because of the form of the letter U. Hence, in a similar manner to the way the structure of our unconscious is formed, significant layers of our experience can be poured like a liquid into a glass that will retain them.

Moreover, the fact that UN can also produce a completely different and unusual meaning in the word it is prefixing, such as, for example, a canny boy and an uncanny situation, could elicit one more interpretation about unconscious matter. In this sense, it points to the direction that unconscious and conscious material may run counter to each other, as two distinct languages that do not always communicate well with each other and, therefore, sometimes need temporizing and interpreting.

If Iago's relationship with Roderigo presupposes concealed and veiled thoughts, – since Iago can never display his true intentions and vested interests to others (although he is well aware of what he is doing) – and some implicit unconscious matter, given that Roderigo is not totally aware that he is being fooled, or simply does not want to acknowledge that consciously in favour of his own illusions, Iago's soliloquies, asides and dialogues with other people about general affairs are quite explicit and straightforward.

The second soliloquy is preceded by a dialogue between Iago and Desdemona, in which his caricatured side as a villain is exposed. The dialogue ends up with an aside to the audience by Iago after having been humiliated by Cassio in front of Desdemona and his wife, Emilia. This entertaining exchange of thoughts between Desdemona, the good character, and Iago, the bad one, was possibly devised to entertain an eager audience, as well as the construction of a certain disposition between the characters that make them almost fit to a puppet show,

DESDEMONA: O heavy ignorance. Thou praisest the worst best. But what praise couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed – one that in the authority of her merit did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself?

IAGO: She that was ever fair and never proud;  
Had tongue at will, and yet was never loud;  
Never lacked gold, and yet went never gay;  
Fled from her wish, and yet said "Now I may";  
She that being angered, her revenge being nigh,  
Bade her wrong stay, and her displeasure fly;  
She that in wisdom never was so frail  
To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail;  
She that could think, and nev'r disclose her mind;  
See suitors following, and not look behind:  
She was a wight (if ever such wights were) –

DESDEMONA: To do what?

IAGO: To suckle fools and chronicle small beer. (*Othello*, Act II, Sc. 1)

Iago's spite for women in general is evident in this passage, which is part of a more extensive dialogue, as well as his discrimination against people at large and

anyone who is not white, manifested through the pun on the homophones wight (person) and white (colour). The continuation of the dialogue goes,

DESDEMONA: O most lame and impotent conclusion.  
Do not learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy husband.  
How say you, Cassio? Is he not a most profane and liberal  
counsellor?

CASSIO: He speaks home, madam. You may relish him  
more in the soldier than in the scholar. [*Takes Desdemona's hand.*]

IAGO: [*Aside*] He takes her by the palm. Ay, well said, whisper!  
With as little a web as this I will ensnare as great a fly as Cassio.  
Ay, smile upon her, do! I will give thee in thine own courtship. –  
You say true; 'tis so, indeed! – if such tricks as these strip you out  
of your lieutenantancy, it had been better you had not kissed your three  
fingers so oft – which now again you are most apt to play the sir in.  
Very good! Well kissed! An excellent curtsy! 'Tis so, indeed. Yet  
again your fingers to your lips? Would they were clyster pipes for  
your sake! (*Othello*, Act II, Sc. 1)

In relation to soliloquies, asides are not only more compact and catchy, but also more practical and oriented to the audience. Soliloquies are deeper, because they condense thought in a few images and can have a similar form to the way dreams are made. Moreover, they can be as dense and rich as dreams are. If we take Prospero's words that "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep" (*The Tempest*, Act IV, Sc. 1) in their literal sense, it becomes clear why dreams and soliloquies have so much in common.

According to Prospero's interpretation dreams are made of people and, by extension, so are soliloquies. In a broader sense, people should be understood here as conveyors of emotion and as being capable of having an emotional impact on others. Also, both provide flashes of what is going on in our minds, or a particular character's mind. Asides, on the other hand, deal more directly with actions and are less uncertain and probative than soliloquies and dreams.

As for the relationship between Cassio and Desdemona, which can also be evinced in the dialogue previously examined, Tom Hiddleston, a British actor who

played Cassio in a staging of *Othello* at Donmar Warehouse, in the West End of London, states in an interview that,

For me, in a modern day context, it is as if Cassio and Desdemona went to the same school, or the same good university, or something, and Othello wasn't there and Iago wasn't there, but they've known each other for a long time, they're from the same class and they're from the same world, and so therefore they can be very free with each other in a way that isn't sexually dangerous. (HIDDLESTON, 2014, digital text)

On the same video, Tom Hiddleston is able to get inside Cassio's mind and the importance of one's reputation, by affirming that,

What's interesting about playing Cassio is that you discover his insecurities as you play him, and he seems to be this young alpha male on the page and he's got everything going for him, he has a daily beauty in his life that makes Iago ugly, but when you get inside him he has all these flaws and he's fallible and he's incomplete because he isn't yet where he wants to be in his life, he's clearly on a career trajectory and he can't take his drink and he loses his reputation and it's in that reputation scene where you discover what are the most important things to himself in his life, it is his reputation, and Shakespeare has tapped into this amazing concept, in humanity I think, that as human beings all we have is our reputation, and that's our legacy, and he loses it. (HIDDLESTON, 2014, digital text)

Bearing this in mind, it becomes easier to understand Iago's second soliloquy, at the end of the first scene of the second act, which reiterates and overlaps his first soliloquy in many aspects and is a natural continuation of his line of thought and stratagems. It introduces new elements and references, such as his feelings for Desdemona, his fear of Cassio and his decisions and intentions on how to act and put his revenge into practice,

That Cassio loves her, I do well believe't  
That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit  
The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,  
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,  
A most dear husband. Now I love her too;

Not out of absolute love, though peradventure  
 I stand accountant for as great a sin,  
 But partly led to diet my revenge,  
 For that I do suspect the lusty Moor  
 Hath leaped into my seat; the thought whereof  
 Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;  
 And nothing can or shall content my soul  
 Till I am evened with him, wife for wife.  
 Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor  
 At least into a jealousy so strong  
 That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do,  
 If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trace  
 For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,  
 I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,  
 Abuse him to the Moor in the right garb  
 (For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too),  
 Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me  
 For making him egregiously an ass  
 And practicing upon his peace and quiet,  
 Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused:  
 Knavery's plain face is never seen till used. (*Othello*, Act2, Sc. 1)

The soliloquy above attests to Iago's symbolic castration as a man, his repressed love for Desdemona (*Now I love her too; Not out of absolute love, though peradventure I stand accountant for as great a sin*), his unfounded suspicion that Othello has betrayed him with Emilia (*For that I do suspect the lusty Moor hath leaped into my seat*), his fear of Cassio (*For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too*) and his scorn for Roderigo (*this poor trash of Venice*). Consequently, Iago acknowledges he is willing to act as a grudging and spiteful person, who seeks revenge for the real and imaginary misfortunes he feels he has suffered.

The opening "Till I am evened with him, wife for wife" has two possible readings in my interpretation. For one thing, it can refer to his intention of incorporating feminine traits (wife for wife) to enforce his revenge against the Moor which, to a certain extent, is what he actually does. On the other hand, it can also allude to his determination to use his wife as a pawn to be moved towards Othello's wife, as he does when he bids Emilia to steal Desdemona's handkerchief. However, it is only on the third act that Iago's poison starts working more effectively.



## 4.2 Iago's Poison put into Practice, or Evil from Within

If *Macbeth* is a more nocturnal, grim and feminine play, where sexual relationships as well as murders are never fully seen or explicitly referred to, but remain somehow hidden and can sometimes only be felt in a rather metaphysical way, in *Othello* these issues are addressed, dealt with and tackled in a direct way, even though most of the action in this play happens at night. *Hamlet* stands halfway between these two plays as regards these matters. The end of *Othello's* second act finishes with the following aside by Iago,

Two things are to be done:  
My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress;  
I'll set her on;  
Myself awhile to draw the Moor apart  
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find  
Soliciting his wife. Ay, that's the way!  
Dull not device by coldness and delay. (*Othello*, Act II, Sc. 3)

As mentioned before, it is not until the third act that Iago starts orchestrating more practical measures to get avenged for what he feels he has unduly suffered. Also, it is only in Cyprus, where the social order is more flimsy and precarious, that his poison is truly put into practice. There, it starts having a more powerful, effective and devastating effect. It spreads to other characters, undermining their actions and good will,

In Venice, Iago's attempts to create civic chaos are frustrated by Othello's calm management of himself and the orderly legal proceedings of the Senate. In Cyprus, however, society is less secure – even as the island is more exposed to the Turks – and Othello alone is responsible for finding truth and maintaining order. Here Iago's poison begins to work, and he succeeds at once in manufacturing the riot that he failed to create in Venice. (KERNAN, 1986, p. xxix)

After having bid his wife, Emilia, to take Desdemona's handkerchief, and after she has stolen it and given it to him, Iago starts putting into practice the malignant plan

he had devised. He takes the handkerchief, which Othello had given Desdemona as a token of his love, and places it inside Cassio's bedroom. Cassio, described by the other characters as an honourable lieutenant, had taken Iago's position as Othello's officer and therefore is hated by Iago because of ranking matters and also for his attractive looks and for being a ladies' man. Iago produces the following speech, which ranges between an aside and a soliloquy, after his wife gives him the stolen handkerchief and leaves the scene,

I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin  
And let him find it. Trifles light as air  
Are to the jealous confirmations strong  
As proofs of Holy Writ. This may do something.  
The Moor already changes with my poison:  
Dangerous conceits are in their nature poisons,  
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,  
But, with a little, act upon the blood,  
Burn like the mines of sulfur. I did say so. (*Othello*, Act III, Sc. 3)

In his introduction to the 1986 Penguin edition of *Othello*, Alvin Kernan points out that Desdemona and Iago are the only characters who never change in the play. According to his interpretation, both correspond, respectively, to a life and an anti-life force that "seeks anarchy, death, and darkness." (KERNAN, 1986, p. xxx) This line of thought is similar to Freud's elaboration of the concepts of *Eros* and *Thanatos*, life and death drives, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. (FREUD, 1990) However, for Freud the death drive or instinct is not to be associated with evil, but rather a primal drive shared by all human beings who can sometimes use their aggressiveness destructively towards themselves or others and who have an internal side that strives to return to an inorganic state.

In *Othello*, the anti-life forces that centre in Iago seek the annihilation of others, and are preceded by very obscure and sinister causes. This villain is, after all, not so human. Not only does he not feel remorse for his wrongdoings and their consequences, but also there is neither a single cause nor a comprehensible or visibly rational aim for what he is doing. As Alvin Kernan puts it,

'Honest Iago' conceals beneath his exterior of the plain soldier and blunt, practical man of the world a diabolism so intense as to defy rational explanation – it must be taken like lust or pride as simply a given part of human nature, an anti-life spirit which seeks the destruction of everything outside the self. (KERNAN, 1986, pp. xxiii-xxiv)

Iago's evil is similar to the wickedness of the witches in *Macbeth*. It is evil for evil's sake. Neither does he show remorse or compassion for his victims. Evil here belongs more to the realm of peevishness, stubbornness and unwavering pride. Nor either does it conform to the use and mastery of certain social codes in a specific context with a view to achieve certain aims and privileges, like in the case of Lear's older daughters, Regan and Goneril, when King Lear's kingdom is being divided between his three daughters in *King Lear*.

Concerning the process of duping Othello into believing his wife to be unfaithful, through the theft of the handkerchief, it follows a similar logic to the middle voice present in certain archaic languages such as Sanskrit and Ancient Greek, and some modern languages as well. This voice, although inexistent in Modern English grammar, is equivalent to the progressive passive or passive present continuous. When we say that something *is being done*, for example, "The house is being built", we position the action somewhere between the active and the passive voice and take the focus off the doer. This grammatical structure could correspond, in a semantic interpretation, to the processes and feelings we sometimes have that something is happening or being done in spite of our vigilant awareness and rational knowledge. Moreover, the agent of the action, in this case, is neither present nor absent, but rather unknown.

Since the author is the one pulling the strings of the characters but the readers and spectators of the play know that Iago is the agent of the action, we are confronted with yet another use of the middle voice. This voice can also be defined as having a subject in a sentence who has characteristics of both the agent and patient of the action. In other words, this corresponds, in Modern English, to a sentence which has the reflexive pronoun in it. When we say "She washes herself", the subject *she* is both the agent and the patient or object of the action. Similarly, Iago, who is the agent of the action involving the whole process of duping Othello and leading him to assassinate his

wife, is also the patient of the action, since Iago does that not only for its own destructive end but also, ultimately, to indulge himself in doing it.

A similar intermediate state can be traced between the upright conduct and righteousness expected from God in the Bible, and the dark forces of evil practiced by the witches and other characters in *Macbeth*. In the first case, the clarity of the sun cannot be covered with a sieve by Adam and Eve and Cain's crime is almost immediately made clearly visible to others. In the case of the latter, fair becomes foul and foul becomes fair in a nearly total undermining of values and ethical codes shared by a community or group of people, as if being evil was an exotic charm that conferred power to some people over others, placing them above mundane matters.

Can not one argue, then, that the majority of people stand midway between these two polar positions? Do not most of us, in general terms, act at times in secretive and shady ways that not necessarily mean evil but, nevertheless, somehow conform to certain psychological dispositions or shortcomings, as well as individual or collective memories? Is not our unconscious (atomized or social), as Lacan has put it, a language that speaks through us? (LACAN, 1973)

At the end of *Othello*, Iago's poison proves to be very effective. As a language of devastation, it speaks through him and reaches its targets. Desdemona is killed by Othello, who commits suicide; Cassio is severely injured, Roderigo is dead, Emilia is killed by Iago, who is to return to Venice to be punished, probably put to death. Ironically, it is only at the end of the play that this villain, like a viper that had hitherto been acting unnoticed by the other characters, is unmasked, brought to light and finally captured.

### **4.3 Dialogues that Never quite Intersect**

At the end of the last scene of the fourth act, a peculiar dialogue between Iago's wife, Emilia, and Desdemona takes place. The latter is already conscious that death is

coming her way, but cannot understand why her husband acts so violently out of unfounded jealousy. Emilia is looking after her. The subject matter of this conversation revolves around adultery, more specifically, about the betrayal of husbands by their wives. However, instead of being an exchange of ideas between two interlocutors who end up finding a common denominator, it appears rather as an exposure of points of view that never connect or give in to each other. The dialogue goes as follows,

Desdemona: ... Dost thou in conscience think, tell me, Emilia  
That there be women do abuse their husbands  
In such gross kind?  
Emilia: There be some such, no question.  
Desdemona: Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?  
Emilia: Why, would not you?  
Desdemona: No, by this heavenly light!  
Emilia: Nor I neither by this heavenly light. I might do't as well  
i' th' dark.  
Desdemona: Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?  
Emilia: The world's a huge thing; it is a great price for a small  
vice.  
Desdemona: In troth, I think thou wouldst not.  
Emilia: In troth, I think I should; and undo't it when I had done.  
Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for  
measures of lawn, nor for gowns... but for the whole world?  
Why, who would not make her husband a cuckold to make  
him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for't.  
Desdemona: Beshrew me if I would do such a wrong for  
the whole world.  
Emilia: Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' th' world; and having  
the world for your labour, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and  
you might quickly make it right.  
Desdemona: I do not think there is any such woman.  
Emilia: Yes, a dozen; and as many to th' vantage as would  
store the world they played for. But I do think it is their  
husband's faults If wives do fall. (*Othello*, Act IV, Sc. 3)

Literary critics have extensively dwelt on this memorable dialogue and the significance of the three main women in *Othello*: Desdemona, Emilia and Bianca. Stanley Wells, the author of *Shakespeare, Sex and Love*, says that,

Shakespeare's portrayal of the women in the play shows a deliberate patterning of female attitudes to sex and to sexual morality. There are three women, and they occupy discrete levels along the scale. Cassio's mistress, Bianca (ironically, the name means 'white'), is described in the Folio list of characters, though not in the text itself, as a 'courtesan', a word which could mean anything from a courtier's mistress to a prostitute. ... She certainly occupies the lowest rank in the play's feminine hierarchy. Emilia comes higher up the scale, while not reaching the standards of morality and modesty enunciated by her mistress, who abhors even to speak the word 'whore' (4.2.166). (WELLS, 2012, p. 182)

Kernan argues about the three women in *Othello* and how they deal with love, that "the essential purity of Desdemona stands in contrast to the more "practical" view of chastity held by Emilia, and her view in turn is illuminated by the workaday view of sensuality held by the courtesan Bianca, who treats love, ordinarily, as a commodity" (Kernan, 1986: xxv) Another literary critic, Maynard Mack, states that "the alabaster innocence of Desdemona's world shines out beside the crumpled bedsitters of Emilia's – but the two languages never, essentially, commune – and, for this reason, the dialogue they hold can never be finally adjudicated." (MACK, 1986, pp. 203-4)

This kind of reasoning is similar to Foucault's concept of *heteroclite*, which can be found in his book *The Order of Things*, originally published in 1963. Its French title, *Les Mots et les Choses*, would be the equivalent, in a more literal translation into English, to *Words and Things*. According to this author,

There is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*; and that word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all. *Utopias* afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy

'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. xviii)

In the dialogue between Desdemona and Emilia it becomes clear that, as regards adultery, they belong to two completely distinct worlds. The line that divides light from shadow is the same line that divides their worlds, which never intermingle on this matter. It is as if they were trying to use different signifiers to name what should be the same thing and, once they have named and defined it, it becomes two altogether different things. When Emilia says "the world is a huge thing" the reader or spectator should take her words quite literally. At that time, for Shakespeare and England (probably in the big cities and more developed parts), the world was a big stage, as the Globe Theatre in London with its particular shape and architecture, and all men and women were the players.

Nowadays, we know that the world is an even bigger place, i.e., more populous and larger than people thought it really was at Shakespeare's time, which was still, in a way, a pre-scientific time. Therefore, one is led to think if the world hasn't, in a sense, turned into the *heteroclite* that Foucault mentions in his book, where similar things are named differently and distinct people, languages and cultures must coexist, negotiate and commune in order to live with each other peacefully and in harmony.

Dialogues such as the one analysed above, although different from soliloquies in form and content, do bear some similitude to them as regards an in-depth psychological approach and investigation. Although there are always at least two people involved in a dialogue, this one probes into a specific issue and is not merely an interaction or a public display for the audience or the other characters to see and hear. Therefore, both Desdemona and Emilia are able to go deeper and produce important opinions concerning a specific subject matter as they try to relax and, at the same time, address an issue that is important for them.

## **CONCLUSION: WHO OWNS SHAKESPEARE?**

This question opens up to correlated questions and subordinate ideas about art and literature. How much and up to what point can a work of art or literature be adapted and transformed without losing its "essence" or original halo and thus becoming distorted? Where do we draw the line on such matters? Is there an essence as regards a work of art or literature, for example, or are there only different possible interpretations? What is the significance and relevance of Shakespeare's work nowadays? Can his work be transposed and adapted to a more contemporary context? Is it possible to say that there is one truth in art and only a specific reading of a work of literature, or do we construe meaning as we read it? Is there something that prefigures in art? And if so, what is it?

One first simple and straightforward answer to the question about who owns Shakespeare would be to say that it is England. With its main sources of income being finance, tourism and education, with tuition fees nigh on £ 9,000 at undergraduate level being charged to British students who intend to pursue their academic studies there (the price is higher for foreign students), England lives from its past traditions in a modern context. This includes the royal family, culture, language and literature, and the conscience of once having been an empire, with a view to secure a somehow reasonable economic situation in a more-or-less overdrawn country in decline. Moreover, although their economy has long been beaten by that of the United States, their most important ex colony, England still has the supremacy of the English language, given that the vast majority of didactic English books are produced by British publishers, including Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Longman and Macmillan, among others.

However, rather than offering a direct answer to the questions I propose a series of divagations and detours. The work of Shakespeare definitely has a different meaning for a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century audience or reader than it did at his time. That is probably



why Donmar Warehouse's all-female production of *Henry IV* by Phyllida Lloyd in 2014 situated the play in a women's prison, thus challenging the idea of who owns Shakespeare.

Al Pacino's 1996 film *Looking for Richard* brings to the fore the question of the gap between the American and the British culture with a focus on *Richard III*. At some point in the film, the director asks 'As Americans, what is that... that thing that gets between us and Shakespeare? That makes some of our best actors just stop when it comes to Shakespeare?'. Renowned British actor John Gielgud is forthright and might even sound a bit pedantic when he answers 'Perhaps they do not go to picture galleries and read as much as we do, because I think it is the effect of how everyone looked and behaved that one got a sort of Elizabethan feeling of period.' (*Looking for Richard*, 1996), thus placing the gap between these two countries on an abyss between cultural backgrounds.

Vanessa Redgrave, another famous British actor, probes into the realms of the soul, understood by her as the cultural mastery of a specific register of language and intonation, in one of her testimonies, when she states that,

Shakespeare's poetry and his iambics floated and descended through the pentameter of the soul, if we like, the spirit of real, concrete people going through hell and sometimes moments of great achievement and joy. That's the pentameter you have to concentrate on and should you find that reality all the iambics will fall into place. (*Looking for Richard*, 1996)

The iambic pentameter that she refers to is a metrical line frequently used in poetic drama and traditional poetry that has been used since the times of Ancient Greece and Rome. The iamb is a metrical foot consisting of one short syllable followed by one long syllable or of one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable (as in *about*). In other words, it is a two-syllable verse foot type, whereas the pentameter is a line of verse consisting of five metrical feet. Iamb and pentameter are words of Greek origin. In Shakespeare, important characters often deliver their speeches in iambic pentameters, servants and simple people speak prose, and special creatures (such as faeries, ghosts and witches, for instance) use shorter (song-like) forms of verse.

Arguing about the significance of Shakespeare's language and how words were understood and used at his time and the different approach people have toward language in contemporary times, and the fact that this difference makes the lives of actors nowadays more difficult in general, Vanessa Redgrave says that,

The music, literally I mean the music and the thoughts and the concepts and the feelings have not been divorced from the words (pause) and in England, you've had centuries in which word has been totally divorced from truth, and that's a problem for us actors. (*Looking for Richard*, 1996)

Comparing the use of language in these two distinct eras, Vanessa Redgrave points to its more flexible and liquid use nowadays, in which words do not necessarily correspond to truth. In this case, words can sometimes be void of meaning or used only as a façade or informal register that should be interpreted between the lines or simply dismissed. As such, they oftentimes force interlocutors to try to understand what is being said *sotto voce* or beyond the literal meaning of words or ad readers, for example, to try to surpass the most apparent and superficial message in an advertisement.

According to her, in Shakespeare's time words were taken more literally in England, both in literature and in real life, and were used to express concepts, feelings and thoughts in a more precise fashion. In addition, words were not dissociated from truth as they currently are. Similarly, the more liberal and ambiguous use of language in an oral register sometimes made by Brazilians, with the frequent use of double meanings and certain implicit puns, can be contrasted with the more restrictive and literal use of language made by most Europeans and North-Americans nowadays.

The dichotomy between then and now and the Brazilian versus the European culture raises yet more questions. Is English Literature and the traditional European theatre and drama, with its formal structure and set of representations, a cultural import or imposition on a culture rather alien to it, like the Brazilian one? Are the English and Brazilian cultures up to a certain point deaf to each other or even somehow indifferent or hostile? It is not uncommon to come across those who consider English literature and theatre, as well as other European artistic manifestations, as an alien cultural imposition or an unnecessary veneer and refinement that do not add to our lives. There are also

those who see these cultural manifestations as something used to express and reinforce a sense of cultural superiority upon our culture by those who like or have more access to them. Hence, much as Shakespeare is a canon of world literature, it can also figure as an anti-canon in certain circles and also among other people.

I personally disagree with this point of view. If such were the case, cultures would not be able to engage in a dialogue and thus learn more from one another. Since every culture has its positive and negative aspects, an exchange between them, involving appropriation or adaptation, is always something good that should therefore be encouraged. In this sense, studying the work of a 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century white European male writer in Brazil in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should not be something taken as a ratification of an imperialistic view of the world. Without excluding the benefits of politically engaged approaches to literature, I believe that taking literature and art on their own terms is perhaps the best political position one can take. As with Shakespeare's characters, human beings are virtually the same in any place or any time. And literature and art have this healing characteristic of transcending differences and highlighting the aspects that head towards identity, rather than triggering the fear of otherness. Readers who have a favourite author in each different language and culture are less prone to fall into the traps of prejudice and xenophobic reasoning, because they establish an affectionate relationship and bond with their objects of study, which stems from having been struck by a specific work of art or literature. This feeling of enrapture, of being spellbound, triggers the will and determination to research and know more, leading to understanding rather than segregation. The relationship between the studied object and the person studying it is usually free of boundaries or pre-established categories.

Studying Shakespeare nowadays could mean connecting it to the reading practices of our time and context. This implies transforming and transposing it to a different reality, i.e., the contemporary one. Instead of being something fossilized and therefore archaic, studying and dealing with Shakespeare has proven that it is possible to re-enact his works in different ways, adapting them to the cinema, or computer games, allowing them to act in subliminal ways, transmitting lines and concepts from the plays in different contexts where the backdrop is not specifically Shakespeare's work. Hence, versatility to adapt Shakespeare to the contemporary reality, with its fast-paced rhythm and the advancement of technology, should not be frowned upon, provided that his work does not get completely twisted or lost in translation.

In his article "Money Man", Michael Neill addresses the different driving forces that gradually led Shakespeare to give up acting and concentrate on his career as a playwright, creating ever more elaborated and in-depth tragedies. Convolution, however, wasn't for its own sake, but rather used as a means to craft a new form of drama which would be able to convey psychological depth, the dilemma of action and the intricacies of a sophisticated plot. Drawing from Shapiro's *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* and Bart van Es's *Shakespeare in Company*, the author starts by arguing, quoting Shapiro's book, that The Globe was a theatre for playwrights and not actors in which,

Shakespeare would enjoy the professional security that allowed him to develop a new kind of audience, a 'regular, charmed clientele', for whom he could write 'increasingly complicated plays that dispensed with easy pleasures and made ... playgoers work harder than they had ever worked before'. (NEILL, 2014, p. 7)

Neill goes on to state that Shapiro's biographical book attempts to trace Shakespeare at work rather than Shakespeare in love, and that "Bart van Es's *Shakespeare in Company* sets out to trace Shakespeare's career through his relationships with the theatrical companies for which he wrote". (NEILL, 2014, p. 7) According to Neill, what prompted Shakespeare to write ever more sophisticated and psychologically profound plays with striking soliloquies was not a stroke of genius or a purely poetic flair inspired by contingencies. Rather, he was impelled by a competitive environment where he had to survive and stand out among his rivals. Ultimately, William Shakespeare was also prompted by the financial reward that living up to the expectations of his audience, readers and companies for a high standard of quality entailed. Neill affirms that "catering for the popular tastes of playhouse audiences was something he, like many of his playwright contemporaries, might well have regarded with disdain." (NEILL, 2014, p 7) and that "for Shakespeare – at least for as long as he followed the usual practice of offering his talents to any company willing to pay – playmaking was essentially jobbing work." (NEILL, 2014, p. 7).

According to Bart van Es, Shakespeare's control over casting allowed for the creation of the most remarkable new feature of his work in the company period, which

was the creation of psychological depth in his characters. He argues that this psychological depth can be evidenced not only in monologues and soliloquies but also in the animated interplay between characters. In this context, Neill states that

neither Webster nor the more prolific Middleton could match the range of Shakespeare's psychological invention. In the third phase of his career, when, as a housekeeper, his position in the Chamberlain's Men became more powerful, he was able to develop this talent in even more striking ways. (NEILL, 2014, p. 7)

Another important aspect of the company period was the creation of star parts around which his plots were ever more built. These roles included, among others, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Lear, Henry V, Coriolanus and Antony "with the result that Burbage was sometimes required to deliver more than a third of all the lines in a play." (NEILL, 2014, p. 8) For those who are not familiarized, Richard Burbage was a stage actor and theatre owner as well as the main star of Shakespeare's theatre company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which operated during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and became The King's Men in 1603, when King James I was enthroned and became the company's patron. Burbage performed on stage the title role of some of Shakespeare's most memorable characters, such as Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Richard III. According to Neill, referring to the transition from the character on the page to the performance on stage,

Van Es shows that Hamlet's claim to an inner reality that lies beyond the reach of 'outward show' is made plausible to the audience through a mastery of linguistic register: 'In making this claim ... Burbage needed to speak in a way that could be distinguished not just from the on-stage "tragedians of the city". ... but also from the word of his cold mother ... or the portentous ranting of Laertes.' (NEILL, 2014, p. 8)

Plays such as *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*, among others, formed "a succession of plays that interrogated the tormented inner state of their protagonists." (NEILL, 2014, p. 8) However, after Shakespeare finished his last tragedy, *Coriolanus*, in 1608, his writing took a different direction which culminated in his last play, *The Tempest*, believed to have been written in 1610-11. Here there is a shift to a more incantatory

style which overwhelms the concatenation of specific ideas, as well as a distancing from the world of theatre.

*The Tempest* ends with an epilogue by Prospero, in which it is implied that he has to abdicate from his magic, acquired through his books, and in which he asks the audience to judge and forgive him for some of his deeds. It would be difficult to substantiate here how much Prospero works as an *alter ego* to retiring Shakespeare. The white European man who tries and is partially able to control, manipulate, explore and exploit the elements and other people and beings through general knowledge, language and the magic he acquired from his literary sources eventually has to turn round and face his own limitations. In this sense, Prospero (whose name is analogous to successful) stands as opposed to Caliban (whose name is ironically an anagram of cannibal), the illiterate, deformed, primitive, raw inhabitant of the New World. Caliban, who has to learn to read, write and name things, ends up controlled and forced to see the world through the eyes and parameters of Prospero, a native of the Old World.

The blending of different themes such as sleep, dreams, death, magic and language makes some of Prospero's soliloquies sound as if Shakespeare was talking through him about himself to the world, such as in the famous lines "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep" (*The Tempest*, Act IV, Sc. 1). As Neill puts it at the end of his article, "even the nostalgic retrospect of Prospero's meditations on his 'so potent art' seems less a celebration of the act of writing than an expression of Shakespeare's continuing enchantment with the magic of theatre". (NEILL, 2014, p. 8).

The time has come to close the discussion raised in this thesis, which profited from the tools offered by the soliloquies so as to investigate the techniques used by William Shakespeare to plunge into the human soul and paint it according to his perception. The contrast between the interpretation of the code of values perceived through these soliloquies evinces how different our contemporary notions about what is good and what is evil are, from the Medieval tradition which is still visible in the moral code of the characters in the plays we analysed. The thesis followed an associative axis to link certain ideas and lines of thought, relying on philosophy, psychoanalysis and language so as to investigate the aesthetic constructs analysed, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*.

Considerable emphasis was given to the weight of emotive content and deciphering significant layers of meaning in soliloquies which open up to possible interpretations. Rather than focusing on a technical study, the thesis followed a similar approach to that of the interpretation of dreams. This means letting important material which apparently has nothing in common come to the surface, and then seek the nexus or causal connection there contained. The construction of soliloquies was analysed in some of its intrinsic elements and also as a springboard to other themes and as an element belonging to a broader spectrum of different hues of meaning leading to sensorial as well as intellectual knowledge. Some sections followed an associative axis rather than a logical sequence, a few of them even being placed randomly for its relevance now and then. Far from trying to neatly fit soliloquies into distinct categories or focusing only on their structural form, an attempt was made to analyse soliloquies as they present themselves to the reader, or the audience. This research found out that soliloquies usually appear in moments when thought becomes denser and different characters feel the need to have time off to think and ponder about particular dilemmas and difficult situations. It is in this sense that the idea that the construction of soliloquies follows a similar pattern to that of the formation of dreams has been emphasized. Meaning, both in soliloquies and in dreams, is created through the condensation of key images and elements that are interrelated and which would be meaningless in themselves. Soliloquies and dreams are also private to a person or character, i.e., they are not meant to be shared with others. As a consequence, there is a lesser degree of censorship in their elaboration.

Soliloquies correspond to moments of interiority in which characters feel free to think out loud and express their inner thoughts and deepest feelings, both of which correspond to their inner truth. Shakespeare might have devised his characters' moment to portray and show a process that real people also go through. This phenomenon also corresponds to a freedom that individuals give themselves in modernity, inasmuch as they break away from old paradigms and patterns, when people were meant to act more in accordance with the social group in which they were inserted. Also in Shakespeare's time, his use of soliloquies may have represented a turning point, a new way of thinking that reflected the greater degree of freedom people were already able to adopt.

This new way of thinking and behaving is related to the idea of the individual, which emerged in modern times. It also precedes and paves the path to new ways of

thinking and conceiving the individual in our contemporary time, when people are seen rather as subjects exposed to different kinds of experience not necessarily interconnected, i.e., which form part of a fragmented set of experiences. In this context, the subject can be understood in its plurality as the subject of language, subject of discourse, historical subject, body-subject.

Soliloquies are also a means of breaking away from the daily social representation people usually have to perform and an opportunity to get things off one's chest. Therefore, they convey momentous layers of meaning and represent an important change and turning point in the history of drama as they provide the audience or reader with important information about a specific character (his or her way of thinking, unveiled intentions and secret motives). Moreover, as a general rule Shakespeare's plays deal with oblique or repressed feelings that end up manifesting themselves in oblique ways through the use of soliloquies and other theatrical devices. In this sense, soliloquies are moments of interiority as well as exteriority inasmuch as the characters move inwards at the same time that they exteriorize their inner thoughts and feelings. When a soliloquy is well performed on stage or in a film, this blending of interiority with exteriority can produce an aesthetic effect that is thought-provoking and stimulating for a playgoer or spectator of a film. Even reading them out loud or acting them out can be an instigating experience bearing in mind elements of the English prosody.

Another important element that could be verified is that Shakespeare's plays also open up easily to a psychoanalytical or philosophical interpretation, as regards the elaboration of some conceptual questions. This made easy the task of observing the formation of conscience in some characters through the use of play on words, non-sayings, slips, ellipsis and puns, through which some truths about specific characters and the general disposition of the plays were able to come to the surface.



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