RAFAEL CAMPOS OLIVEN

THE ARCHEOLOGY OF EVIL:
A READING OF THREE VILLAINS IN SHAKESPEARE

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THE ARCHEOLOGY OF EVIL:
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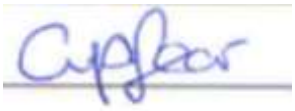

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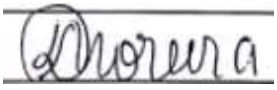

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"The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones."

Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (Act III, Scene 2)

RESUMO

O teatro de William Shakespeare se edifica na transição entre os padrões constitutivos do feudalismo e os da modernidade, quando novos conceitos – como os de privacidade, individualismo e subjetividade – provocam mudanças na percepção do que é considerado certo ou errado. Esses conflitos transparecem na estrutura das peças, na criação das personagens e nas ideias que elas representam. O objetivo do presente trabalho é analisar como se configura a questão do Mal no drama shakespeariano, para verificar em que medida ele reflete a transformação de valores observável na sociedade elisabetana, e também para inferir em que medida pode ter contribuído para os desdobramentos éticos e estéticos que vieram a seguir. O corpus de aplicação da pesquisa consiste em três peças: as tragédias *Macbeth* e *Otelo* e o drama histórico *Ricardo III*, das quais são analisados três vilões notáveis, Lady Macbeth, Iago e Ricardo III. Em Lady Macbeth o Mal é tratado como um meio de realizar sua ambição ao adquirir poder para o marido. Em Iago o Mal se manifesta como o efeito da inveja e do ressentimento por ter sido preterido em sua aspiração profissional; e em Ricardo III o Mal é analisável através do conceito freudiano de *Verdrängung*, isto é, recalque, e manifestando-se como algo mais político e cruel. A minha hipótese é de que o Mal é um fenômeno tanto psicológico quanto social que sempre esteve presente em diferentes culturas e civilizações, mas que se expressa de formas distintas em diferentes contextos socioculturais e históricos, podendo ser atribuído a várias causas e analisado sob mais de uma perspectiva. Como apoio para as discussões utilizarei conceitos teóricos e leituras sobre Shakespeare apresentados por Freud, Maus e Charney. Acredito que os três vilões aqui analisados nos atraem e nos afetam tanto porque refletem sentimentos humanos que são atemporais. Ao término do trabalho, espero que as análises aqui desenvolvidas contribuam para o estado atual das discussões sobre a mudança de mentalidade quanto a certos conceitos, em diferentes momentos e grupos sociais. Uma questão central desta tese é que, ao fazer o que dificilmente ousaríamos fazer na vida real enquanto seres humanos, os vilões shakespearianos nos atraem tanto na medida em que eles nos afetam, e às vezes chocam, exatamente lá onde algo foi reprimido por nós. Para isso, é necessário salientar a transição da Idade Média para a Idade Moderna, assim como as diferentes mentalidades dessas duas épocas.

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

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's theatre is built on the transition between the constitutive patterns of feudalism and modernity, when new concepts– such as privacy, individualism and subjectivity– provoke changes in the perception of what is considered right and wrong. These conflicts are reflected in the structure of the plays, the creation of the characters and in the ideas that they represent. The aim of this work is to analyze how the issue of Evil configures itself in the Shakespearean drama, to verify to which extent it reflects the transformation of values observable in Elizabethan society, and also to infer to which degree it may have contributed to the ethical and aesthetical developments that came next. The application corpus of the research consists of three plays: the tragedies *Macbeth* and *Othello* and the historical drama *Richard III*, of which three notable villains are analyzed, Lady Macbeth, Iago and Richard III. In Lady Macbeth Evil is treated as a means of accomplishing her ambition by acquiring power to her husband. In Iago Evil manifests itself as the effect of envy and resentment for having been passed over in his professional aspiration; and in Richard III evil is analysable through the Freudian concept of *Verdrängung*, i.e., repression, and manifesting itself as something more political and cruel. My hypothesis is that Evil is a psychological and social phenomenon that has always been present in different cultures and civilizations, but that expresses itself through distinct forms in different historical and sociocultural contexts, and that can be attributed to various causes and analyzed through more than one perspective. As a support to the discussions I will use theoretical concepts and readings about Shakespeare presented by Freud, Maus and Charney. I believe the three villains analyzed attract and affect us so strongly because they reflect human feelings which are timeless. At the end of this work, I hope that the analysis here developed will contribute to the current state of discussion about the change of mentality regarding certain concepts, in different moments and social groups. A central question in this thesis is that, by doing what we would hardly ever dare doing in real life as human beings, the Shakespearean villains attract us so much insofar as they affect, and sometimes shock us, exactly there where something was repressed by us. For this purpose, it is necessary to highlight the transition from the Middle Ages into the Modern Age and the different mentalities of these two periods.

KEYWORDS: 1. English Literature. 2. Shakespeare. 3. Evil. 4. Villains. 5. Language. 6. Psychoanalysis.

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INTRODUCTION

I have always been fascinated by reading the text of those who write differently, mixing incongruous elements, making unusual associations, creating little sparks that are food for thought and making what would have originally seemed farfetched and outlandish acquire sense. Therefore, I have tried to emulate this style, as naturally as possible, by creating my own style of writing which, at some point in this thesis, will be perceived by the reader. Likewise, I have always been mesmerised by the theme of evil and its ramifications, such as where it comes from, what prompts it, what are its consequences, why do some people resort to it and so on. But why am I stating that?

I wonder up to what point analyzing Shakespeare nowadays suits itself to this kind of writing, in which different elements and tools of analysis are brought in and put together, to decipher disparate elements and apparently meaningless material. In other words, it raises the question of whether we can analyze and write about Shakespeare through a contemporary approach, bearing in mind that we live in a postmodern society. This method of analysis seems to me to be able to connect, compare and contrast two distinct eras: the modern age, which is the time when Shakespeare wrote his plays and sonnets and the contemporary era, which is the time we live in. I must state straightaway that I strongly believe this is possible, and I am also fully aware that other people have already attempted it successfully.

As we feel that the world has changed nowadays, being easier to describe some changes even in terms of decades rather than centuries, the world in Shakespeare's time had also changed, and significantly. Many of the ideas and concepts developed at that time percolated into our era and still permeate the way we understand and see the world nowadays. The concept of individuality, for example, is still currently present and very widespread in various Western societies.

Nevertheless, there are also many cultures and societies which, even up to now, completely disregard the habits and practices of other cultures or, conversely, are thoroughly misunderstood by them. To put it in a different way, the things one culture considers meaningful and significant, constituting a symbolic mode of thought, another culture might simply deem meaningless or absurd, causing so much conflict and misunderstanding in the world. In this sense, individual and cultural traits might be perceptible only with the approach of the Other, or what Freud calls *das Unheimliche*, the things that do not percolate well, causing a feeling of uncanniness or eeriness.

Whenever this happens, the culture or individual who has not been well understood not only has to produce meaning but constantly justify its practices in order to be comprehended and respected. As Foucault puts it in his introduction to *The Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les Choses* in the original), "the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*". (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. xv)

My hypothesis is that in order to analyze the phenomenon of evil, we have to understand the economy of love (real love, false love, unwelcome love, mother's love, father's love) and how this impacts on each individual. Lady Macbeth, for example, and even her husband could be read as being emblematic of what I consider to be a deficiency in the bestowal of love or sufferers from the lack of something. The "love" conferred to its subjects by the all-powerful male figure may degenerate into what Lacan calls the foreclosure of the name of the father. This kind of love may not materialize or can be taken as a false note that provokes more grudges and spites and is, in vain, attempted to be compensated by the female figure who may turn out to be a failure and therefore unable to give clear directions. As Rosenfield puts it,

> The Lacanian concepts "Name of the Father" and "Forclusion of the Name of the Father" make it possible to situate the subject in relation to alterity − of the father as a third term that mediates the exit of the subject from the specular and fusional unity of the mother. The formulation "Name of the Father" takes into consideration the fact that it does not necessarily have to do with a real father, of the person of the father really present, but of a principle inscribed in the "discourse" of the mother or of a substitutive person who occupies the place of the primordial referent of the subject-to-become. (K. ROSENFIELD, 1989, p. 52) (Translation mine)[1]

Is not this one of the knots or twists of the soul, leading into the hypothesis that evil frequently derives from the denial of love, forming the individual who sees herself or himself entitled to steal, violate and ultimately kill as a compensation mechanism? As Shakespeare writes in one of his most famous sonnets about love:

> Let me not to the marriage of true minds
> Admit impediments. Love is not love

[1] Os conceitos lacanianos "Nome do Pai" e "Forclusão do Nome do pai" permitem situar o sujeito em relação à alteridade − a do pai enquanto terceiro termo que medeia a saída do sujeito da unidade especular e fusional com a mãe. A formulação "Nome do Pai" leva em consideração o fato de que não se trata necessariamente de um pai real, da pessoa do pai realmente presente, mas de um princípio inscrito no "discurso" da mãe ou de uma pessoa substitutiva que ocupe o lugar do referente primordial do sujeito-por-vir.

> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove:
> O no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
> It is the star to every wandering bark,
> Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
> Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
> If this be error and upon me prov'd,
> I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd. (SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet 116)

Love which is love is an ever present virtue which persists until someone dies. It acts like a lighthouse which guides and confers meaning to people's lives. Misplaced or badly absorbed love, however, lingers like a festering wound, corroding the soul and at times leading an individual into madness, spite and indifference towards others. These feelings and mental states, which frequently amount to an almost irreplaceable gap in the soul or lacunae, could be interpreted as a reaction to the denial of this natural human demand. Thus, since we are dealing with water, understood here as a metaphor to emotions, and its floating anxieties and fears, as well as a view from a certain perspective, I here state that this is supposed to be a free flowing thesis which deals with different elements that are submerged or ready to surface. In other words, it is flexible in its associations and follows its own internal logic in various passages. Besides, every now and then metaphor will be used. Since one of the causes of evil is understood here as a compensatory mechanism to the denial of love, it is important to outline in this thesis a psychological theory and comprehension of evil which takes into account its magnitude and overall depth. Moreover, the text zigzags quite a lot since it is dealing with complex things which cannot always be contained within a linear narrative.

The guiding question of this research is why the notions of good and evil and right and wrong change as mentalities evolve through different eras, albeit more slowly than these latter. I understand by archeology of evil doing a similar work to what an archeologist does when studying past human life and history as evidenced by relics and the remains left by ancient people. In the case of this thesis, however, it is an archeology of the mind, i.e., of the unconscious structure and different mindsets that shift and form themselves through different centuries. I also intend to address the question of extimacy and desire and the vertigo of history, rather than dealing with purely material things and habits as revealed by the traditional archeology of concrete things.

A more general objective of this thesis is to probe up to what extent some Shakespearean tragedies open up to a purely psychoanalytic or aesthetic reading. This

approach discards many complicated references and the paraphernalia that a more historical study would entail. In this sense, it avoids a strict historical framing that might end up outweighing and freezing more universal and relevant questions. Instead, it focuses on the plays as aesthetic constructs and the psychological and residual effect they have on people. That does not mean, however, that history is not an important element for literature and literary theory.

I will also attempt to trace implicit links between the appearance of the concept of individuality and the contemporary concept of subject, passing through different centuries and philosophical doctrines. Another objective is to analyze the implicit chaining or cryptic message contained in specific uses of language which is therefore not overtly manifested in it or at first sight perceivable by others. This use of language follows a similar pattern to the phenomenon of dreaming and is very present in Shakespeare's plays.

Lady Macbeth, Iago and Richard III, the three villains that will be analyzed in this thesis, are all ultra individualistic characters who do not care about other people and give vent to their id as if they were capricious and mean children who had no superego at all. They are the embodiment of both evil and individuality and, although they are not real people, they could correspond to anyone who dared or felt entitled to act in such a malevolent way. Besides, Lady Macbeth and Iago both exert a fascination on us which is peculiar to them, whereas Richard III has a more political edge. On the other hand, Lady Macbeth and Richard III have noble titles bordering, and ultimately achieving, royal status. In plain words, none of the three could care less about what they do or the wellbeing of others.

It is also worth taking into consideration here the fact that the Letters Course of UFRGS has formed various translators of Shakespeare, from Beatriz Viégas-Faria and Élvio Antônio Funck to Lawrence Flores Pereira, Gentil Saraiva Junior and José Francisco Botelho, all of whom have contributed to the promotion and diffusion of Shakespeare's work in Brazil for those who can only read this author in the Portuguese language.

In a department with a solid trunk of Shakespearean studies, from Jose Carlos Marques Volcato's *Piling Up Logs in a Brave New World : Brazilian Invisibility Abroad and the Genesis of Shakespeare's The Tempest* and Carlos Roberto Ludwig's *Mimesis of Inwardness in Shakespeare's Drama: The Merchant of Venice*, to Rafael Carvalho Meirele's *The Hermeneutics of Symbolical Imagery in Shakespeare's Sonnets* and Paulo José Hauser Brody's *King Lear: Dramatic Literature as a Time Machine*, including my

own Master's Dissertation *'Thus Conscience does Make Cowards of Us All: The Construction of Soliloquies in Shakespeare*, among other studies, pursuing to write once more about Shakespeare means knowing how to use the right ingredients and adding new hues and shades of color to it, from carmine to deep green, vermilion, azure, turquoise and bright yellow, thus offering pleasant and perhaps amusing moments for the reader, rather than focusing on strictly technical topics, lest one may end up presenting her or him a purely theoretical framework.

If we consider that almost all types of research have an unconscious motivation, one wonders why I should, among so many other subjects, choose to write about this one. It is sometimes difficult to admit that we might have an affectionate relationship with knowledge, especially when this type of knowledge deals with and corresponds to something painful and laborious. It is a little bit like being attracted to something uncanny and macabre or a venomous animal which generates fascination and repulsion at the same time. Moreover, writing about evil is like putting your finger on a problem or wound: it touches raw nerves and rekindles sore spots. As if all this were not enough, we have no guarantee of being able to cure or soothe them and even run the risk of aggravating them in the end, and yet maybe that is where the beauty of it lies. Therefore, we should be aware that speaking and writing about evil means making an attempt to face it as it is, which is never an easy task since it is a difficult matter and thorny issue.

Regarding the time Shakespeare lived, it was an epoch of moral crisis, in which one era had ended and a new one had just begun. It marks the then recently accomplished transition in England from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, with its new ways of thinking and conceiving the world. Whereas evil was still in some aspects related to religion and partly understood as the embodiment of the devil and the downfall of mankind in the Modern Age, nowadays it is perceived as something more diffuse, fragmented and difficult to define.

While in the Middle Ages there was a strong emphasis on the community and the power of the Catholic Church was very strong and widespread and in the modern era individuality was beginning to find its way in people's mindsets, in the contemporary era we have achieved such a degree of individuality and it holds sway so intensely, that it led famous Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman to argue that,

> There is a point somewhere down the slope, now perhaps passed, at which people find it very hard to conceive of any benefit they could derive from joining forces: of any improvement which could come from managing a part of their resources jointly, rather than individually. (BAUMAN, 1996, p. 20)

Another important aspect in the analysis of evil and if one wishes to avoid being and offering it as something too technical, is that it involves a wide range of other feelings going from fear to rage, remorse and regret, guilt and raw or embittered feelings, all of which must be taken into account. It is not rare for people to go back to the past, rummage unsolved problems and feelings with other people, just to be able then to have a more neutral attitude of moving on and deleting or forgetting the supposed or real perpetrator of evil from one's own life. In this sense, revenge resonates as a strong word.

Nevertheless, similar to Prospero's capsular laboratory of magic, evil and good − be it in a real or symbolic way − can be measured, instilled and indirectly inoculated into others. In this case, it follows the doctrine, already present in the use of magic in the Middle Ages, that one person could do harm to another person. Moreover, if evil can be delimited and measured it is because it needs a container. In other words, it can at times be as difficult to define as a liquid given that the notions of good and evil can vary a lot from time to time or an era to another. The difference between the reader or theatergoer at Shakespeare's time and the contemporary one should always be borne in mind, as well as the fact that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed taking into account both the elite and the common people of his epoch.

My hypothesis is that evil in the three Shakespearean villains that will be analyzed in this thesis represent not only a lack of love and other good feelings and life bestowals, but it also stands for a new way of thinking and an unconscious structure that started molding itself in the Modern Age and is related to the question of individuality that started in that era. Likewise, our own era and Western geography is still profoundly permeated by ideas and concepts elaborated in Europe's Modern Age, including the Elizabethan period, Illuminism and other philosophical doctrines.

Contrary to Borges "The Circular Ruins" anonymous main character, whose whereabouts is somewhere in Southeast Asia, and whose "Zen language has not been contaminated by Greek and where leprosy is infrequent" we know these things far too well and they are part of our civilization and historical background, whether we like it or not, even though our world has already opened up to new ways of thinking and seeing the universe and reality.

It is important to highlight that my Doctorate thesis is a sequence of my Master's dissertation. Therefore, it is related to and partly emanates from the latter, which dwelt on

the construction of soliloquies[2] in three Shakespearean tragedies: *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello* and the themes related to it. The soliloquies analyzed there corresponded, respectively, to four characters in those plays, namely, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Hamlet and Iago. Hence, some ideas exposed in my dissertation will be incorporated and developed more deeply in this thesis.

The theme I chose to develop is the question of evil in Shakespeare which has to do with the concept of individuality among other things. The corpus of my research is formed by *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Richard III*, although other Shakespearean plays may also be addressed. In *Othello* evil will be analyzed as being perpetrated for evil's sake by Iago, whereas in *Macbeth* evil will be examined as a more instrumental thing which is used to achieve power by ambitious people like Lady Macbeth and Macbeth.

In *Richard III* evil will be analyzed in the context of a game of chess that is contained in a more formal and political context that converses in many aspects with the time we are living in nowadays. This play resembles in many ways the 'political' American movies in which there are many different characters and one has to know very well what each of them stands for and how they all relate with each other in order to understand well the plot. In this sense, it is the opposite of some intimist, usually French movies, where the plot is very simple and unembellished gestures, conversations and gazes acquire a greater dimension and almost metaphysical meaning.

In *Hamlet*, which is offered in this thesis as an extra, evil will be analyzed as it manifests itself outside of one individual and Hamlet's struggle to deal with it and overcome it. Finally, the discourse of the witches in *Macbeth* will also be taken into consideration as regards its relationship with ethical values carefully erected and maintained by Western European civilization.

I decided to study evil because, although it is a difficult concept to define, it is a central theme in different cultures, so much so that innumerable thinkers have already poured themselves over it. However, a conceptual analysis of evil as well as one which focuses on specific actions, which may indicate good or bad intentions, might not suffice here. Not only that, but a quest for its origins, the *Unde Malum* (*Where does evil come from?)* the French philosopher and thinker Ricoeur refers to, is also necessary. In other words, one should also strive to understand this phenomenon through a pragmatic and

[2] Soliloquies correspond to the moment a character speaks to himself/herself or to the audience when no one else is present in the scene and only the reader, or the audience, can read or listen to them. Therefore, some soliloquies represent an inner monologue while others are addressed to the audience. In Shakespeare's plays, soliloquies express the conscience of a character and are related to the idea of individuality, a concept that emerges in the Modern Age.

hermeneutical approach, taking into account its manifestations and possible origins, and not just as a theoretical concept.

My analysis stands midway between English literary critic Lionel Charles Knights' point of view that "the only profitable approach to Shakespeare is a consideration of his plays as dramatic poems, of his use of language to obtain a total complex emotional response" (KNIGHTS, 1933, p. 10-11) and the 18th century criticism that considers him as a creator who invents characters that are and ought to be interpreted as if they were real people. I suggest here instead that Shakespeare creates characters who leave a mark on us precisely because they can correspond to any actual human being, i.e., who have the potential to be any real person.

Since I will analyze language and discourse, and how it relates to and is reflected mainly in *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Richard III*, I am going to use the theory of language and discourse formulated by Foucault *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* for that purpose. The following inquiry about language and discourse will serve as a guiding line in this thesis and will be addressed further on in its development,

> ... at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the law of discourse having been detached from representation, the being of language became, as it were, fragmented; but they became inevitable when, with Nietzsche, and Mallarmé, thought was brought back, and violently so, towards language itself, towards its unique and difficult being. The whole curiosity of our thought now resides in the question: What is language, how can we find a way round it in order to make it appear in itself, in all its plenitude? In a sense, this question takes up from those other questions that, in the nineteenth century, were concerned with life or labour. (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 306)

Moreover, the use of psychoanalytic theory elaborated by Freud and Lacan concerning the use of language and its relation to the unconscious will be examined and explored. The purpose of this is to analyze unconscious structures and the phenomenon of evil expressed through and reflected by language and actions. Finally, political science, gender studies and feminism will be used through authors who have incorporated these theories and used them within the text analysis of the plays and not as a reference to a particular author who uses it in a more detached way.

1 EVIL BEFORE THEN

Evil has been present in practically every culture, society or civilization, be it represented as an external threat or thing or inherent to it and its members. In the latter case it follows a ghostly form, i.e., it is represented and reveals itself as something potentially dangerous that can affect or be incorporated by any individual or group of individuals and therefore cause damage to the other people within a community. Nevertheless, as a topic it is overlooked by nothing less than one of the tenets and pillar of our civilization: classical Greek philosophy. Therefore, this theme had to be dealt with and analyzed by the mythology and literature of that time and geographical space. This means that evil then was treated within a tradition that thought about it and could only ask this question from within itself, and not by examining it from the outside. It is in this context that the following remark by Miller is pertinent here,

> Drama through the ages — from the Greeks' *Oedipus Rex* to the morality plays of the Middle Ages — centers on an exploration of the human condition. In antiquity, religious celebrations to honor the gods and appeal for their favor gradually give birth to Greek theater, and these early plays, most of which are tragedies, focus on man's suffering. What starts as the impact of fate on the life of man becomes, by the Middle Ages, a religious spectacle centered on evil's impact on man. The Church of the Middle Ages frames the battle as a conflict of vice and virtue through stories in the life of Christ. Centuries later playwright William Shakespeare utilizes this classic structure, but goes much further to develop the concept of evil. The villains in Shakespeare's plays are not simply the forces against which the protagonist struggles. What makes Shakespeare's work so attractive and pertinent beyond his time period is the fact that he delves into the deep truths of humanity that echo through every generation, and such is the case with his exploration of villainy. Through the villains in his plays, Shakespeare explores the causes and costs of evil. (MILLER, 2015, p.2)

Another bulwark of our civilization, the Judeo-Christian doctrine was also able to ask this question of what is evil and where it comes from by analyzing it, like the Greeks, from within itself and not with the lenses or the magnifying glass of a researcher who tries to examine it from the outside. The beginning of the Book of Genesis in the Bible is a creation myth that seeks to explain the origin of the universe and deal with different themes ranging from the presence of evil in this world, where it comes from and how it should be dealt with, to feelings such as envy, human curiosity and the belief in and fear of God. This is probably what led Paul Ricoeur, in his book *The Symbolism of Evil*, to state that,

> The first function of the myths of evil is to embrace mankind as a whole in one ideal history. By means of a time that represents all times, "man" is manifested as a concrete universal; Adam signifies man. "In" Adam, says Saint Paul, we have all sinned. Thus experience escapes its singularity; it is transmuted in its own "archetype." Through the figure of the hero, the ancestor, the Titan, the first man the demigod, experience is put on the track of existential structures: one can now *say* man, existence, human being, because in the myth the human type is recapitulated, summed up. The universality of man, manifested through the myths, gets its concrete character from the *movement* which is introduced into human experience by narration; in recounting the *Beginning* and the *End* of fault, the myth confers upon this experience an orientation, a character, a tension. Experience is no longer reduced to a present experience; this present was only an instantaneous cross-section in an evolution stretching from an origin to a fulfillment, from a "Genesis" to an "Apocalypse." Thanks to the myth, experience is traversed by the essential history of the perdition and the salvation of man. (RICOEUR, 1967, p. 162-163)

Following this tradition, it appears that, after the creation of the world and before the expulsion of Adam and Eve by God from Paradise, things did not have a proper name. This being the case, how could they identify and differentiate what is good from evil? Likewise, how could they be held accountable for anything if they did not know about causality and just acted according to their own needs? We might also consider that language then had not yet reached the level of accuracy it possesses nowadays, according to the logic of the story, making it difficult for human beings to name things.

Aware of Adam and Eve's naiveté concerning more complex matters by an animal instinct, and of their unawareness of its evil intentions, the serpent instigates them, through its malevolent advice, to eat the apple which was the only thing that had been forbidden to them by God to do in Paradise. Also known as the fruit of knowledge, it represents the natural will that human beings have to know things and which at the same time differentiates them from other animals. Adam and Eve, probably already curious about it before the contact with the serpent, decide to try it.

Nonetheless or for that very same reason, the serpent introduces a principle of reality and the hard fact that, as human beings, we are the only species that becomes and is aware through language that one day we will die and therefore have to come to terms with this harsh reality. We are also the only species that has to work in order to subsist, something that did not exist before the fall from Paradise. With its eyes split apart and its bifurcated tongue, the serpent, the epitome and embodiment of evil *par excellence* in the animal kingdom and probably the most feared and execrated animal in the zoo, more so than beasts such as the lion and the tiger, for example, was probably laughing on the inside with its sinuous movements and lethal instinct. After all, it is an evil animal and it manipulated them into perdition through its evil intentions. Let us consider

here that what differentiates animals from human beings is not so much that perhaps both can think (in different ways) but the fact that only the latter are able to reason.

However, the snake also stands for lust and the male organ in psychoanalytical terms. As American Shakespearean, literary historian and author Stephen Greenblatt states about the blossoming of sexuality in Saint Augustine when he was an adolescent and this part of the Bible, the Genesis,

> How weird it is, Augustine thought, that we cannot simply command this crucial part of the body. We become aroused, and the arousal is within us − it is in this sense fully ours − and yet it is not within the executive power of our will. The stiffening of the penis or its refusal to stiffen depends on the vagaries of a libido that seems to be a law unto itself. It was characteristic of Augustine and indeed of his whole age to think about sex in male terms, but he was certain that women must have some equivalent experience to male sexual arousal. This is why in Genesis, in the wake of the first transgression, the woman as well as the man felt shame and covered herself. "It was not a visible movement the woman covered, when, in the same members, she sensed something hidden but comparable to what the man sensed, and they blushed at the mutual attraction." (GREENBLATT, 2017, p. 115)

Is not evil something that belongs to a binary subdivision in contrast to good, which has already been divided from the all too good or the image of the perfect world created by God? Is it not also something as perverse and cruel as the fact that human beings are born already one sex or another, on top of which there will be all the gender expectations imposed and demanded by society? It is not by chance that the German word used to define the sex of a person is formed by the prefix *ge*, which usually has a negative character, plus the word *schlecht*, which means bad in that language, thus forming the word *Geschlecht.* It is as if our very own existence was already crooked from birth, or since the womb, itself. This coming of age and sexual awakening, which can be at the same time pleasant and cause feelings of uneasiness, is what leads the same author to argue that,

> Augustine's obsessive engagement with the story of Adam and Eve spoke to something in his life. What he discovered − or, more truthfully, invented − about sex in Paradise proved to him that humans were not originally meant to feel whatever it was that he experienced as an adolescent in Thagaste. It proved to him that he was not meant to feel the impulses that drew him to the fleshpots of Carthage. Above all it proved to him that he, at least in the redeemed state for which he longed, was not meant to feel what he had felt again and again with his mistress, the mother of his only child; the woman he loved for thirteen years (a period as long as the one during which he struggled to write the book on the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*); the one he sent away at his mother's behest; the one who declared that she would never be with another man, as he would never be with another woman; the one whose separation felt to him, he wrote, like something ripped from his side (*avulsa a latere meo*). (IDEM, 2017, p. 119)

In our time and in the world in general, pleasure can be derived, and is usually associated with, pro-life impulses like dating, sex, eating and socializing with friends. Nevertheless, in the case of the combination between Saint Augustine and sex it comes infiltrated with all the embarrassment and guilt of a long-lived Catholic Christian tradition which marked an individual from a different historical period. Pleasure can, however, also be extracted from painful experiences and macabre scenes, as long as they are projected into others, such as in a play or when it happens to other people we do not like nor care about, thus forming the concept of the *Schadenfreude*, something that will be dealt with further on. It is in this context or backdrop of pleasure, pain, unpleasantness and sexuality in the adult world that Freud argues, writing about tragedy and the pleasure principle, that,

> We might also bear in mind that the form of play and imitation practiced by adults, which in contradiction to that of children is directed to an audience, does not spare its spectators the most painful of experiences, for instance in the performance of tragedies, and yet may none the less be regarded by them as something supremely enjoyable. This encourages us in the conviction that even under the dominion of the pleasure principle there are ways and means enough for turning what is essentially unpleasurable into something to be remembered and to be processed in the psyche. (FREUD, 2003, p.55)

Why does watching a tragedy being performed and evil acts being done in a delimited context, which is not real, exert such a fascination on us still nowadays? Why do we say some human beings are evil and that others are not and what is the driving force that makes them act in a vile way and commit evil criminal acts? Besides, why do so many of us rejoice at sitting comfortably in our sofas and watching the banality of evil[3] nowadays as portrayed by the news, be it online or on TV? Is it because we end up projecting our death drive into something more distant that we think does not necessarily belong to us and therefore may not burden our conscience? Writing about evil and how it is perceived by some classical philosophers, Rosenfield argues that,

> In a similar way to Kant, to whom he refers explicitly, Schelling characterizes evil as originating in man, in the sense that it comes from an act of liberty and not from human passions and emotions, sensitively conditioned. However, in a different formulation from that of Kant, evil is set out in terms

[3] I use the term 'banality of evil' here as a common sense term and not directly related to the term coined by Hannah Arendt in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.

> that go beyond the free *human* act, extending to the whole of nature. (D. ROSENFIELD, 1988, p. 83) (Translation mine)[4]

It is therefore important to bear in mind the difference between evil caused by natural causes, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, fires, floods and earthquakes, evil caused by animals which kill other animals or human beings and evil stemming from human beings and done to other human beings, animals or even nature. As American philosopher Susan Neiman points out in her book *Evil in Modern Thought*: *an Alternative History of Philosophy*, evil can be divided by natural and moral evil and it is a theme or concept whose perception by human beings varies a lot throughout different centuries and eras and can never be completely delimited or pinned down by only one theory. According to her,

> Since I do not think an intrinsic property of evil can be defined, I am, rather, concerned with tracing what evil does to us. If designating something as evil is a way of marking the fact that it shatters our trust in the world, it's that effect, more than the cause, which I want to examine. It should follow that I have even less intention of solving the problem of evil than I do of defining evil itself. My interest is, rather, to explore what changes in our understanding of the problem of evil reveal about changes in our understanding of ourselves, and of our place in the world. I proceed on the increasingly shared assumption that examining the history of philosophy can be a way of engaging in philosophy itself. (NEIMAN, 2015, p.9-10)

I do, however, strive in this thesis to understand some of the causes or origins of evil. Therefore, being difficult to define, evil can be caused by accidental, individual or social causes and on purpose or involuntarily. On both cases, it may cause damage and resentment from those affected by it, although we should consider that when evil is done on purpose it implies an intention. Therefore, one question that could guide us in this research is what is the driving force, or to put it more simply, the cause behind the evil intentions and acts perpetrated by Shakespeare's villains and human beings in general. Can we attribute them to only one or various causes? I believe the latter is the case.

If evil can be analyzed and felt backwards, in a search for its source(s), aggravating factors and process of formation in the past, it can also be examined forwards by analyzing its consequences and the impact it has on a person or population and how they start perceiving the world differently thenceforth. Both the November 1,

[4] De uma forma próxima a Kant, a quem ele se refere explicitamente, Schelling caracteriza o mal como sendo originário no homem, no sentido em que ele provém de um ato de liberdade e não das paixões ou emoções humanas, condicionadas sensivelmente. Mas, numa formulação diferente da de Kant, o mal é enunciado em termos que vão além do ato *humano* livre, ampliando-se ao conjunto da natureza.

1755 earthquake which destroyed Lisbon during the Enlightenment, known as the Great Lisbon Earthquake, killing thousands of people in a few minutes precisely in the morning of All Saints' Day when churches were full of believers, as well as the horrific atrocities committed in Auschwitz during World War II, shattered people's lives and shocked humanity and their beliefs, producing ensuing effects. As Neiman points out about the Holocaust,

> Auschwitz was conceptually devastating because it revealed a possibility in human nature that we hoped not to see. For the conditions in Germany should have led not to highly developed forms of barbarity but to genuine civilization. All philosophical discussions of it insist on this point. Since many authors of those discussions were German Jews, some critics have tried to dismiss their work by suggesting that their efforts were moved by perverse and tragic need to vindicate the culture they could not abandon. Such dismissals are not just ad hominem but odd. Whatever culture those thinkers belonged to, they all belonged to the human race—and all accepted some version of universalist principles. Vindicating Germany by implicating humankind would not have offered any solace. The assumption that insisting on the utter uniqueness of Nazism was somehow equivalent to taking Nazism seriously is an assumption that was never adequately argued but nonetheless dominated much twentieth-century discourse outside philosophy. But those philosophers who addressed the subject argued that what was terrifying were the ways in which Auschwitz threatened and implicated a larger portion of humanity than had been threatened and implicated before. (NEIMAN, 2015, p. 254-255)

While the first incident was caused by a natural disaster that wreaked havoc on a city and its population and made them reconsider their theological worldview and convictions, the second one, caused by moral depravation disguised by theories of racial purity and superiority as well as obedience to higher orders, left the world flabbergasted at the extent of evilness, destruction and cruelty human conduct and technology could attain. This is one of the reasons that led the same author to conclude, further on in her book, about the bureaucrats involved in the Nazi regime who claimed they were only following higher orders and were unaware of what was really going on, that "Auschwitz embodied evil that confuted two centuries of modern assumptions about intention." (IDEM, 2015, p. 271) Whether they were compliant with a system that deep inside they knew was taking other people's lives, making them therefore despicable human beings, or were utterly unaware of what they were really doing, is a delicate question that is still up for debate nowadays and may cause a lot of resentment for those who were directly or indirectly implicated in all this.

1.1 Evil then and now

What is our take on evil and how it affects us nowadays? What was its understanding in Shakespeare's time? From new policies implemented by governments to economic transactions and multinational decisions, we feel that evil nowadays might be diluted into a network of operations which affect, and at the same time, evade us. In this sense, our happiness may boil down to a positive bank account statement and the certainty of being able to make ends meet at the end of the month, as well as our imagistic projection and implicit sexual display in a postmodern society where people are expected to be and look young.

In Shakespeare's time, however, there was not this Hollywood fast-paced reality where we feel, at times, as if we were in a film where reality corresponded to a cinematographic movement with different takes. Nonetheless, the entering and departing of characters from different scenes, which make them worth our most cosmopolitan dreams, was already present in Shakespeare's plays, as if trying to establish a connection with a different geographical space, time and era that the author sensed and presaged but would never live to experience. It is possible that, if Shakespeare lived nowadays, he would be working for the film industry or writing soap operas for television, which leads us to the next point. Delaying a bit the question of evil, can we make his characters shake off their accumulated dust from centuries of theatrical and social conventions and spring back to life in a different scenario without compromising their usual dance and allure?

Speaking of the role of God as a male who wants to penetrate us, American psychiatrist Scott Peck states that,

> I shall, however, break with tradition and use the neuter for Satan. While I know Satan to be lustful to penetrate us, I have not the least experienced this desire as sexual or creative − only hateful and destructive. It is hard to determine the sex of a snake. (PECK, 1998, p. 12)

In spite of their dreadful deeds, Shakespearean villains are so enticing that we are shocked with the realization that we empathize with them, to the point of sharing the suffering of Lady Macbeth in her vain attempts to restore a symbolic order. After all, we vicariously identified with her way of thinking before, during, and after the king's assassination. However, at some point in *Othello* we repel Iago's reasoning and actions for being too much of a villain.

It is possible that Shakespeare's villains have such a great impact on us because they affect us right there where we end up repressing feelings and thoughts that we all have but somehow feel guilty or ashamed to display to others. In other words, they do

what we would not dare to do for several reasons: the conscience or superego of not harming others inadvertently or on purpose, the pressure to live up to the expectation of others to show a good conduct, the fear of being punished and so on.

Delicate terrains like tripping up others, the infamous Brazilian *rasteira*, a term used in Brazil to describe the use of our foot to make people fall, and metaphorically harm someone on purpose, in order to have access to scarce resources are also debatable. While some find it disgusting, others see it as a natural behavior, and even a funny game, where a large number of people are fighting for the same thing or when one person wants to one-upmanship another. In light of this, it is not uncommon to hear people say that everyone has something of the snake.

As regards the source of evil, Peck states that "an individual's evil can almost always be traced to some extent to his or her childhood circumstances, the sins of the parents and the nature of their heredity. Yet evil is always also a choice one has made − indeed, a whole series of choices." (PECK, 1998: 126) We should follow his line of thought when he argues that,

> If evil is an illness, it should then become an object for research like any other mental illness, be it schizophrenia or neurasthenia. It is the central proposition of this book that the phenomenon of evil can and should be subjected to scientific scrutiny. We can and should move from our present state of ignorance and helplessness toward a true psychology of evil. (PECK, 1998, p.127)

Going back to the question of God brought up by Peck, ought we not to conceive it nowadays as a Ghost in the machine, who works inside the system and is acknowledged every time things go right, but questioned when things go wrong or there is too much human suffering involved? Is not that its proper place in contemporary times, rather than being considered and treated like an omnipresent and omniscient punishing spirit as it used to be in the past? Therefore, while in the modern era evil was related to an ethical code in contemporary times it is, to a certain extent, related to a general feeling of paranoia, of which psychoanalysis has a lot to do in dealing with the problem.

Similar to Shakespeare's time, we also live in a time of moral crisis, dilemmas and uncertainties if compared, for example, to the Early Middle Ages in Europe, when things were more stable and revolved around a feudal system and the widespread unquestionable belief in God. It is difficult to predict what lies in store for us in the future and to describe how we feel in the present. Nowadays, we know that just through global warming, among so many other harmful things taking place, we may end up bequeathing

to future generations as our terrible legacy something similar to, and as bad as, the end of the world.

Our liquid society, to quote a term coined by Bauman, has all the benefits, though not for everyone, conquered by technology and the infrastructure it created. From painkillers, to general anesthesia, electricity and potable water we also slide to more slippery terrains like virtual reality, social media and similar apps, as well as the unstable realm of the vague use of language and messages and globalization. Moreover, evil deeds nowadays are portrayed and have reached such a degree of banality in the news and the press in general that we are almost completely anesthetized in relation to it.

By enacting and dealing with recurring patterns such as frustrated desires and unfulfilled hopes framed as remote remembrances, Shakespeare's plays possess a residual and poetical effect similar to distant and blurred memories or striking dreams, all of which are at the same time revealing, evasive, fleeting and sometimes painful. Not surprisingly, by "mixing memory and desire" (ELIOT, 1999, p. 23), among other things, his plays lend themselves so well to underpinning and illustrating psychoanalytical theories, mainly Freudian ones. Moreover, similar to Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, perhaps a subordinate idea in Shakespeare's work, is that what matters to us in our lives is not so much what we have lived as how we have lived it, i.e., the way we experience and remember reality and what scenes and events have drawn our attention or were just dreamed up and devised by ourselves and therefore marked us significantly.

Let us focus more on a different time frame now in order to better understand Shakespeare's time. Professor of English and Early Modern Literature Michael Neill, in his article "Money Man", addresses the different motivations that ended up leading Shakespeare to abdicate acting and focus on his career as a playwright, creating ever more well-crafted and sophisticated tragedies. Convolution in this case was used as a means to devise a new form of drama which would be able to convey strong images, the impasse of action and the meanders of a complex plot.

In his book *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* American poet and academic Theodore Spencer brings in the character of Niccolò Machiavelli, a Florentine politician, diplomat and writer who lived from 1469 to 1527 and is considered the father of modern political theory. He is best known for his book *The Prince*, written in 1513. The work is addressed to Lorenzo de Medici, the ruler of the Florentine Republic. In it, Machiavelli advises Medici on how he should behave in order to maintain political power. He believed that rulers should strike a balance between seeking the love of their subjects

and inspiring fear on them. If the ruler is too kind, the people might become unruly; if he is too harsh, they might rebel. Machiavelli preferred fear over love, writing that “Since love and fear can hardly co-exist, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved”. Since he recommended that the Prince should act ruthlessly and use deceit and inspire fear, Machiavellianism ended up being known as a political theory that believes that any means is legitimate to maintain political power. But, this vision of Machiavelli is obviously limited. More than a shrewd adviser, Machiavel was a man of the Italian Renaissance. His ideas collided with the mentality of the Middle Ages and foreshadowed a new era in which the bourgeoise was rising and nation-states were being build. As such, he was less interested in values of the past and more involved in helping to build a viable State.

But the term “Machiavellian” remained and is used until today in common sense language as a derogatory term meaning shrewdness and ruthlessness. By the 16th century the term Machiavel was already being used in English as an epithet of crookedness. In Elizabethan theatre, it denoted an incorrigible schemer driven by greed and ambition. Shakespeare brought in the term in *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* when one of the characters of the play asks rhetorically “Am I politic? Am I subtle? Am I a Machiavel?” and then answers indignantly “No!”.

Following the same line of thought, Spencer states that "he had admirably used the sixteenth-century beliefs about man's nature as a mine for metaphor, as a means of describing character, and as a means of defining values by which character and action could be understood". (SPENCER, 1974, p. 93) According to that author, in *Hamlet* Shakespeare had a different view of what a play could contain, and in it and in other subsequent tragedies "the characters and events become larger than the characters of the 1590's; they make more reverberations in our minds; they take on a symbolic and universal meaning". (SPENCER, 1974, p. 94) He concludes on this matter that,

> ... in *Hamlet* Shakespeare for the first time used to the full the conflict between the two views of man's nature which was so deeply felt in his age. On one side the picture of man as he should be − it was bright, orderly and optimistic. On the other was the picture of man as he is − it was full of darkness and chaos. (SPENCER, 1974, p. 94)

In this context, commenting on Machiavelli's ideas that all man are bad and morally ill and that, when founding a state and giving it laws, a governor must resort to force because the end justifies the means, Spencer states that,

> It was because Machiavelli based his instructions on views like this that he so outraged sixteenth-century sensibilities. Not realizing that he had, after all, a desirable end in view − the unification of Italy − and perverting his views and character into a figure of diabolic significance, the later sixteenth-century regarded him with mixed feelings of fascination and horror. (SPENCER, 1974, p.43)

Spencer argues that Machiavelli's ideas subverted the morals and ideals, as well as the hierarchy and the order of the cosmos and of created beings, with which the sixteenth-century Elizabethan society had been raised to believe and act accordingly. His atheist view contradicted the religious mentality of that epoch which still had some remnants and vestiges from the Middle Ages. Further on, the author concludes that,

> The sixteenth-century attacks on Machiavelli were in fact a defense, sometimes in hysterical terms, of the traditional dogma, and the hysteria may be taken as an indication that, below the surface, men realized − with a fascinated conviction which they were afraid to admit − that the ideas of Machiavelli might after all be true. (SPENCER, 1974, p. 45)

Although for the analysis of Shakespeare's plays evil is best understood within the historical and literary context in which it finds itself, rather than just as a formal concept, we shall attempt, in the next chapter, to delimit the concept of evil within a philosophical framework.

1.2. The Philosophy of Evil

This chapter draws from and expands the discussion initiated in my Master's Dissertation about the relationship between philosophy and its approach to the question of evil. This debate was developed in the chapter "Evil from the Standpoint of Philosophical Ethics" (OLIVEN, 2015, p. 46-48) and some of the philosophers dealt with there were Aristotle, Abbagnano and Kant, besides the thinker and literary critic Barbara Heliodora.

Following Freud's line of thought about human instinct, XX century French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan points at the difficulty or almost impossibility, somewhere between philosophical and psychoanalytical, in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, of determining whether the human being, although he actually uses the term man, is essentially good or bad. According to him,

> Evil is in the material. However, evil can also be elsewhere. The question is still open, and is certainly an indispensible pivot to understanding what happened historically in what refers to the moral thought around the question of evil. Evil can not only be in the works, not only in this execrable material ... Evil can be in the Thing. ... that towards which the Freudian thought leads us consists of putting the problem of what is in the core of the functioning of the pleasure principle, i.e., one beyond this pleasure principle, and very probably what, another day, I called a profound good or bad will. Of course, all kinds of traps and fascinations offer themselves to your thought, such as the question of knowing if man, as they say − as if it were so simple to define man − is in essence good or bad. But that is not the point, the point is the whole. What matters is the fact that man models this signifier and introduces it into the world − in other words, to know what he does modeling the signifier in the image of the Thing, while this is characterized by the fact that it is impossible for us to imagine it for us. That is where the problem of sublimation falls in. (LACAN, 2008, p. 152) (Translation mine)[5]

Much has been written and researched up to now about the brain, its functions and imagination, as well as society, culture, repression and genetics. All of these things point to the complexity of human beings. The question raised and refuted by Lacan as an impossibility is therefore not answered there by him and it is up to the reader to reach her or his own conclusions about the human being and whether they may have an essence or not. In a modern context, with the support of psychoanalysis, philosophy and other theories, one might argue that the human instinct is never totally free of a certain dose of aggressiveness which can be channeled or not in a positive way and that, when it is repressed too much, may lead to symptoms of neuroses, psychosis or even depression. Thus, we should bear in mind this question and see how it ties in with the analysis of the three Shakespearean villains that will be analyzed in this thesis, throughout this work.

According to Austrian-American moral philosopher Paul Edwards, in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* "the problem of evil concerns the contradiction, or apparent contradiction, between the reality of evil on the one hand, and religious beliefs in the goodness and power of God or the Ultimate on the other". (EDWARDS, 1967, p. 136) In religious terms there is a difference between evil and sin. Whereas all sins are evil, not all evil is a sin. A lion preys and kills various types of animals, just like so many other

[5] O mal está na matéria. Mas o mal pode também estar alhures. A questão permanece aberta, e é certamente um pivô indispensável para compreender o que aconteceu historicamente no que se refere ao pensamento moral em torno do problema do mal. O mal pode estar não apenas nas obras, não apenas nessa execrável matéria (...) o mal pode estar na Coisa. (...) aquilo para que o pensamento freudiano nos dirige consiste em nos colocar o problema do que há no âmago do funcionamento do princípio do prazer, ou seja, um para além desse princípio do prazer, e muito provavelmente o que, outro dia, chamei de uma profunda boa ou má vontade. Evidentemente, todos os tipos de armadilhas e de fascinações se oferecem ao pensamento de vocês, como a questão de saber se o homem, como dizem − como se fosse tão simples definir o homem −, é no fundo bom ou mal. Mas não se trata disso, trata-se do conjunto. Trata-se do fato de o homem modelar esse significante e introduzi-lo no mundo − em outros termos, de saber o que faz modelando o significante à imagem da Coisa, enquanto que esta se caracteriza pelo fato de que nos é impossível imaginarmo-la para nós. É aí que se situa o problema da sublimação.

creatures: tigers, snakes and scorpions, for example. Their action of killing can be considered evil, but they did not choose to act like that because it is in their nature. In other words, they were simply made this way, i.e., they were already born like that. Nonetheless, one wonders, if God is believed to exist, why it created such fearsome lovely creatures (cf. "The Tyger", by William Blake). As Saint Augustine (354-430 AD) argues, in the 13th chapter, of Book 4, of his *The City of Gods*, entitled 'Concerning those who assert that only rational animals are parts of the one God',

> But if they contend that only rational animals, such as men, are parts of God, I do not really see how, if the whole world is God, they can separate beasts from being parts of Him. But what need is there of striving about that? Concerning the rational animal himself,—that is, man,—what more unhappy belief can be entertained than that a part of God is whipped when a boy is whipped? And who, unless he is quite mad, could bear the thought that parts of God can become lascivious, iniquitous, impious, and altogether damnable? In brief, why is God angry at those who do not worship Him, since these offenders are parts of Himself? (AUGUSTINE, 2014, p. 152)

As regards sins, they are all considered evil from a religious standpoint, since they are made by humans and are therefore subordinated to a choice. Catholic theology shows more mercifulness towards offenders, while the Protestant religion believes that there is only redemption through a complete and blind faith and devotion to God, similar to Kant's moral imperatives. Catholic religion preaches that in order to believe in God and act in a good way, both God and good actions have to make sense to people through an understanding that leads to their acceptance.

Although at first attracted by Manichaeism, a doctrine which asserts the absolute dualism of good and evil through the distinction between light or spirit and darkness or matter, Saint Augustine ends up opposing the Manichaean conception of evil as something independent and parallel to good. According to his argument, evil can be analyzed as the privation, corruption, or perversion of something good, rather than being considered as having an independent reality. Augustine's line of thought, concerning the conception of Evil as privation, is that it is dependent on good because it does not have any independent existence. According to him, in *The City of God*, "when the will abandons what is above itself, and turns to what is lower, it becomes evil — not because that is evil to which it turns, but because the turning itself is wicked". (AUGUSTINE, 2014, p. 489) In his aesthetic conception of Evil, exposed in *Confessions*, what seems to be evil, when seen alone or in a limited context, can be considered a necessary element or part of a universe that, considered in its totality, is consistently good,

> To thee there is no such thing as evil, and even in thy whole creation taken as a whole, there is not; because there is nothing from beyond it that can burst in and destroy the order which thou hast appointed for it. But in the parts of creation, some things, because they do not harmonize with others, are considered evil. Yet those same things harmonize with others and are good, and in themselves are good. (AUGUSTINE, 1955, p. 89)

This way of thinking is similar to Kant's point of view elaborated in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. A quote from my Master's dissertation about Kant's philosophy states that he 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. (OLIVEN, 2015, p. 46)

The different types of evil in the literature of theodicy[6] are divided into four: (1) moral evil or sin which has its origin in human beings and angels, (2) the mental agony of suffering and the physical feeling of pain which can be caused by sin or by (3) natural evil (tsunamis, hurricanes, and so on) and (4) the metaphysical evil which corresponds to the imperfection, randomness and finite existence of all living things. The main question which underlies theodicy and the philosophical conception of evil is the following ""Why has an infinitely powerful and good God permitted moral evil in his universe?" and "Why has an infinitely powerful and good God permitted pain and suffering in his universe?"" (EDWARDS, 1967, p. 136)

One must also bear in mind the difference between the Catholic Church and the Protestant Anglican Church in England after the Reformation carried out by Henry VIII. In the first case evil is more commonly perceived as related to Satan and the fear of falling victim to it, whereas in the second case evil is more related to the notion of individual and his or her choices in life. Just as soliloquies represent a subliminal state between consciousness and the realm of dreams, so does evil positions itself in a unique way in the threshold of different eras and distinct periods within the same era, reflecting the

[6] Theodicy is a term commonly used in an attempt to address the question of why a good, omnipotent and omniscient God allows the manifestation of evil and human suffering in the world. The term "theodicy" was first coined in 1710 by German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Leibniz in his work *Théodicée*. He argued, using the two Augustinian themes of the privative and aesthetic conception of evil, that ours is the best of all possible universes.

lines of continuity and disruptions between various historical periods and how we perceive them.

As regards the creation of spirits and ghosts in plays such as *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* and other literary works and how they are perceived by the audience or reader, Freud suggests by arguing in his essay "The 'Uncanny'" that,

> The creative writer can also choose a setting which though less imaginary than the world of fairy tales, does yet differ from the real world by admitting superior spiritual beings such as daemonic spirits or ghosts of the dead. So long as they remain within their setting of poetic reality, such figures lose any uncanniness which they might possess. The souls in Dante's *Inferno*, or the supernatural apparitions in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or *Julius Caesar*, may be gloomy and terrible enough, but they are no more really uncanny than Homer's jovial world of gods. We adapt our judgement to the imaginary reality imposed on us by the writer, and regard souls, spirits and ghosts as though their existence had the same validity as our own has in material reality. In this case too we avoid all trace of the uncanny. (FREUD, 1997, p. 227)

Similar to the way Evil works, the snake, one of the most feared and execrated animals, opens up space for different interpretations. Seen from afar, it may just seem like a hysterical, inoffensive and insignificant animal, trying to fight the grip of a cat or other creature. At a closer look, it can acquire more fearful dimensions as it may threaten to attack a bigger animal or human being. And at a very close view, it may loom and reign dreadfully, as it relentlessly and lethally pursues a mouse or another smaller creature. From its body movements and something in its genetic composition, to the production of venom and its ability to drive others away, leading to its chronic loneliness and lack of alliances, all these factors question a purely rational and philosophical approach of Evil. They therefore invite us to a more psychological outlook on this theme which will be the topic of the next chapter.

1.3. Transitions and the *Disiecti Membra* from the Past

In the Middle Ages certain ideas and concepts that solidified and became more vivid in the Modern Age, especially in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, were still somehow vague and loose. The phenomenon of witchcraft, for example, started in the Modern Age. In medieval times there were only sorcerers or, rather, the belief that they existed and practiced sorcery and the Catholic Church was not as serious about them as it was in relation to witches during Inquisition, when they were persecuted and killed. Whereas in the Middle Ages people were faced with less changes given that good came

from God and evil came from the Devil as something imposed from outside, with Heaven and Hell exerting similar strengths in people's minds, when Shakespeare and his contemporaries wrote their plays beliefs about good and evil were changing.

In the Renaissance, a more psychological approach to good and evil came to the fore. Human beings were now held accountable for their actions and the evil and good that they did to others originated in them rather than from outside agents. Not only that, but also the fact that evil characters such as Iago and Richard III, however mean they are, could be any real person as the people in the audience. Besides that, the ambiguity of human beings came into play reflected in characters who could be good and evil at the same time, mixing one thing with the other by blurring the distinction between the two and breaking away from the more caricatured characters of medieval drama.

In this sense, one can notice the difference between the actual Shakespeare's plays and tragedies, targeted mainly to an adult public and the adapted versions with the plays written as stories to be read to children. In the latter case, the distinction between good and evil has to be clear-cut in order not to confound the children's minds and make them understand well the difference between these two concepts. In the former case, the author knew that good and evil many times come shuffled and that ambiguity and ambivalence are common characteristics of human beings.

It is precisely because of the scientific progress that takes place in Shakespeare's time, that there is an increase in superstition in his era. The more people made discoveries, the more they realized how little they knew about the world and therefore created the need for a scapegoat to punish and relieve their conscience. As I have already pointed out in my Master's dissertation,

> 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. "...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*, for example, Shakespeare is projecting into the Middle Ages a phenomenon of his own era (OLIVEN, 2015, p.23) Similarly, the belief in heaven and hell appears to have become more intense and crystallised in Elizabethan times, if compared to the Middle Ages, when they seemed to be blended with each other, at times in an allegorical and carnival-like way (cf. certain

Bosch's paintings which depict both of them). Elizabethan society was very superstitious and the belief in ghosts is very common in this period, even more than in medieval times. All these things are probably related to a new kind of rationality that was emerging due to the new discoveries about the world and science that were taking place then.

Writing about the role of magic in early Christianity and the Greco-Roman world, American medievalist and author Richard Kieckhefer argues that "[f]or the Christians, magic was reprehensible because it was the work of demons. These were evil spirits, ultimately subject to God, but they paraded as gods and received veneration. (KIECKHEFER, 2000, p. 37) For him,

> The Church not only preached against magic but also passed ecclesiastical legislation against it. The decrees (or "canons") of regional assemblies (or "synods") eventually became the basis for the church's "canon law," which even in its early forms condemned magic. In 306 a synod in the Spanish town of Elvira proclaimed that people who had killed others by sorcery (*maleficium*) should not be allowed to receive communion on their deathbeds, because such deeds could not be accomplished without "idolatry," which is to say the invocation of evil spirits....From the early fourth century, the Church had far greater influence because the emperors themselves were mostly Christian and subject to persuasion by the clergy. In earlier centuries Roman law had punished magic only when it was used to inflict harm. The laws of the Roman Republic had threatened severe punishment, possibly even death, for those who used magic to arouse storms, to steal crops, or to summon the deceased (IDEM, 2000, p. 41)

In this sense, Hamlet's rebuke of Horatio's reaction to the Ghost, who speaks from below, that "O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!" (*Hamlet*, Act I, Sc.5) is quite relevant here. He admonishes him by exclaiming that "And therefore as a stranger give it welcome. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." (*Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 5) According to Rosenfield, Horatio preoccupies himself in a very Catholic way about the nature of the Ghost which for him should have either a demoniacal or divine form. Hamlet, on the other hand, "treats the ghost, moreover, in a very profane way − as something "soft", placing it thus outside the categories of the Christian faith, of Horatio's belief (*your* philosophy)". (K. ROSENFIELD, 1989, p. 63) (Translation mine). As she puts it:

> This mental hiatus and tragic conflict conjure in filigree the disagreement of the friends Horatio and Hamlet, whose friendship is many times a dialogue of the deaf which unites and separates the still theological universe of Horatio from Hamlet's world, traversed by doubts and suspicions in relation

> to the legitimacy of the principles which preside the divine and human governments. (IDEM, 1989, p. 63) (Translation mine)[7]

The more human beings learned in the Modern Ages, the more they realized they knew very little. Their old beliefs simply came apart face to so many new discoveries, some of which were the consequence of navigation, such as the discovery that the world was round. Other discoveries, such as the fact that the earth was not the centre of the universe and rotated around the sun was discovered by Copernicus and the fact that the earth rotated around itself, was made by Galileo (*E pur si muove*).

Another interesting aspect about that era is the idea that the womb was a dangerous place. The verb *to woo* someone, in the sense of seeking someone's favours or trying to seduce another person, dates back to Old English from the verbs *wōgian* (transitive) and *āwōgian* (intransitive) and is almost a homophone to the modern word womb which was already used by Shakespeare when he wrote in the beginning of Early Modern English. The meaning of the noun *woe* as great suffering and misfortune or things that cause them also dates back to Old English, when the exclamation *wā* was used as a natural utterance of bewailing. In the Elizabethan period, it became very strongly associated with the idea that the womb could be cursed from within or without and is therefore very present in plays such as *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Richard III*, as well as *Othello*. This thought still finds some resonance in our era, especially when someone says that another person is a son of a bitch.

That said, the pregnant womb contains the growing foetus or unborn baby who is unconscious about what is going on in the outside world at a certain time or space and what she or he will be in for after being born. The child to come is thus intellectually unaware − and maybe only partially conscious through sensory means − of what is happening in the world and what are the expectations projected on him or her by their parents and family. This future human being will therefore be a subject, albeit without knowing it, of future projections and will only get acquainted with the real world, when she or he has finally been brought to light, i.e., is born.

Reworking and twisting a bit Lacan's concept of the Real as a psychic register or dimension different from the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the future child will come across in life through language or visual stimuli what is difficult, if not impossible, to represent or know for sure: death itself or even disturbing scenes difficult to digest or

[7] Este hiato mental e este conflito trágico fazem aparecer em filigrana o desencontro dos amigos Hamlet e Horácio, cuja amizade é muitas vezes um diálogo de surdos que liga e separa o universo ainda teológico de Horácio do mundo de Hamlet, atravessado por dúvidas e suspeitas em relação à legitimidade dos princípios que presidem os governos divino e humano.

elaborate, pointing to the fact that reality is in itself something contingent and abstract. Strong words being uttered by people who are important to the child, someone who uses language to hurt or humiliate another person or group of people, scenes of violence, extreme conditions of poverty or wealth and even a sex scene, these are all things that have to be dealt with and, like a shining signifier, do not necessarily refer to a meaning symbolically signified, even if they may be explained. Nevertheless, some people may only focus their gaze on positive things, annoying as this may be for those who cannot do it.

However, should not we instead be more analytical and consider that the psychological input a person receives in life, as well as her or his genetic constitution, will make them more resistant and prepared or susceptible and vulnerable to deal with the blows and adversities of life, thus making them focus on, and eventually attract, more positive or negative things for themselves?

Let us focus now on the groups of individuals in that era. One important component of this time is that England's population was divided between two religions: Catholicism and Protestantism, since Henry VIII had broken up with the Catholic Church and created the Anglican Church. It was therefore difficult for people to decide and know which faith to follow, and one had to bear in mind the possible implications of every decision. American literary critic Katherine Eisaman Maus argues, in her book *Being and Having in Shakespeare*, that

> The Reformers put an end to the selling of indulgencies, the purchasing of masses, the veneration of relics, and other practices that seem to them to muddle the difference between spirit and matter, worship and property transactions. In early modern England, the fraught, sometimes violent conflicts between Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans suggest not an innocent or blithe conflation of subjects with objects or persons with things, but a serious religious and ethical conundrum for many of Shakespeare's contemporaries. (MAUS, 2013: 9)

However, it is not so much the discoveries of English political philosopher Hobbes (1588-1679) and Italian philosopher and political scientist Machiavelli (1469-1527) which indeed greatly shocked the Elizabethan mentality, but old human aspirations that the Church had hitherto managed to keep under control and that then emerged in the form of individual whims and evil conducts represented by villains and other characters who reinvent themselves through self-fashioning and the impersonation of different personas.

In this context, *Hamlet* is the epitome of, and therefore marks symbolically, the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Age in Europe which

corresponds to the time Shakespeare wrote. If on one hand in the Middle Ages there was a greater emphasis on the collectiveness, on the other hand in the Modern Age there is the emergence of the concept of individual, which is very well represented in this play.

In *Hamlet* the first word is *who*: who is the source of evil, with an emphasis on the individual level. In this sense, it is different from Macbeth which starts with *when*, denoting that evil is a more ambiguous thing there. In *Hamlet* there is a strong emphasis on conscience (your uncle killed your father and married your mother, therefore you have to avenge your father and re-establish the symbolic order). There is also a turning away from other more soap opera styled plays of the 1590's, inasmuch as things acquire here a more universal, metaphorical and symbolic dimension.

According to Russian novelist Ivan Turgueniev, in his article "Hamlet and Don Quixote", although the first edition of these works appeared in the same year, in the beginning of the XVII century, a small imprecision corrected by the editor's footnote of his article, the first being in 1603 and the second in 1605, the two characters of the homonymous books present stark differences in personality and stand for diametrically opposed things. The first one represents: "Above all, analysis and egoism and, therefore, disbelief. He lives completely for himself, is selfish, but not even an egotist can believe in himself; we can only believe in what is outside and above us." (TURGUENIEV, 2019, p. 171) (Translation mine).[8] Quixote, on the other hand, represents,

> Faith in something eternal, unshakeable, faith in truth. In one word, in the truth situated outside each individual, but that is conceded to him by means of service and sacrifice. Faith that is accessible to him with the constancy of service and power of sacrifice. Quixote is full of devotion to the ideal, for which he is ready to submit all sorts of privation and sacrifice life. He values his life inasmuch as it may serve as a means of incarnation of the ideal, of the establishment of truth and justice on earth. (IDEM, 2019, p. 169-170) (Translation mine)[9]

It is easy to see how Hamlet stands more for the prototype of the young individualistic Anglo-Saxon man, either the successful and well-off type or the melancholic student, or still the paranoid and obsessive one. As if he were pleading with us: do not pass me your cold, do not give me your sweets, stay away from me with your influencing ideas or if you carry a contagious disease.

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[8] Acima de tudo, análise e egoísmo e, portanto, descrença. Ele vive completamente para si, é egoísta, mas nem mesmo um egoísta pode acreditar em si; só podemos acreditar no que está fora e acima de nós.

[9] Fé em algo eterno, inabalável, fé na verdade. Em uma palavra, na verdade situada fora de cada indivíduo, mas que lhe é concedida mediante serviço e sacrifício. Fé que lhe é acessível com a constância do serviço e do poder do sacrifício. Quixote está pleno de devoção ao ideal, pelo qual se prontifica a se submeter a toda sorte de privações e a sacrificar a vida. Ele valoriza a sua vida na medida em que ela pode servir como meio de encarnação do ideal, do estabelecimento da verdade e da justiça na terra.

Let us now move on to an important villain in that play, although not the main focus of this thesis: Claudius, the usurping king of Denmark. One of the most silent killers in Shakespearean tragedies, there is a certain formal construction of evil represented by him, which manifests itself through a thread or chaining. It is not evident at first sight for the reader or audience that he is an evil man and thus it has to be proved throughout the play. Similar to the effect of a slow poison, his evil conduct manifests itself gradually and has to be inferred throughout the play. Evil in *Hamlet* is often intercepted by good actions, which makes it more difficult to pinpoint and tackle it immediately. In the end, it is only solved through a sort of collective death that spares few people. As American English Professor Lloyd Cline Sears puts it,

> Indeed, the pessimism of *Hamlet*, as we shall see, has quite a different flavor from this pious and religious doom of a wicked world. It is far more basic, penetrating, questioning. But after all is said, pessimism of whatever brand or degree is intrinsically related and has fundamentally the same origin − an emotional or logical reaction to the phenomenon of evil; and it relates the particular wrong to the universe as a whole. The crime or injustice becomes an essential part of the world in which it occurs. (SEARS, 1974, p. 41)

Inasmuch as there is a transition from the notion of person, community and collectiveness in the Middle Ages to the concept of individuality and society in the Modern Age, *Hamlet* precedes the more contemporary concept of subject explored by psychoanalysis and linguistics and present in the work of Freud and later coined by Lacan. It is therefore pertinent to analyze this transition of the concept of individuality to the more liquid and contemporary idea of subject and postmodern society by bearing in mind the realm of dreams, different kinds of language (language *stricto sensu*, cinema, modern art), and the discovery of the unconscious.

Hamlet's legendary soliloquy "to be or not to be" represents this well in the passage "to die, to sleep − to sleep, perchance to dream: ay there is the rub, for in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause." (*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 1) The fact that we speak through fissures and chinks, i.e., dreams, lapses and jokes, as well as our body language, points towards the processes which escape from our conscious control and somehow give us away. Similarly, the fact that we are exposed to a wide range of different environments and spaces, sometimes in a short period of time such as a day, for example, shows the rather patchy and at times schizophrenic reality we live in nowadays.

In fact, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, probably the two most philosophical Shakespearean plays alongside *King Lear*, elaborate and act out to the highest degree the phantasmatic movement of dreams, the realm where what has been repressed or badly dealt with during our "rational" journey through the day − or simply the phase we are going through, wishes or unsolved problems from the past − return or pop up like swift reflexes and images endowed with encrypted meaning. What our conscience seeks to veil as a self-defence mechanism, dreams, jokes and slips partly bring to light or to the surface content from our unconscious.

Shakespeare’s aficionados frequently ask themselves whether *Hamlet* is a tragedy or a revenge play. In a psychoanalytical reading it is a play of procrastination, since Hamlet thinks too much because he must be sure before he acts. Hamlet was raised to be a king and he ends up becoming a revenge machine which has to kill his father figure, i.e., his uncle, something that goes back to ancestral times.

Another important thing is that Hamlet's soliloquies correspond to his conscience and dilacerations as an individual. We observe him struggle with his own mind and dilemmas as we ask ourselves whether he is talking out loud or conferring to the audience. His mother, Gertrude, is also on a razor's edge. She tries to appease him, but to no avail as she fails to become the figure of the idealized father, since she cannot confer him any tranquillity and a solid determination in life. Therefore, she is torn between her new husband and his demands and her son and his expectations from her.

Speaking of the father's function as a role model to the boy-child and in *Hamlet*, Shakespearean scholar, literary critic, and professor of English Janet Adelman argues that what he "ultimately protects against is the dangerous female powers of the night" (ADELMAN, 1992, p. 30). According to this reasoning,

> The boy-child masters his fear of these powers partly through identification with his father, the paternal power who has initially helped him to achieve separation from his mother; but if his father fails him − if the father himself seems subject to her − than that protective identification fails. This is exactly the psychological situation at the beginning of *Hamlet*, where Hamlet's father has become unavailable to him, not only through the fact of his death but through the complex vulnerability that his death demonstrates. The father cannot protect his son; and his disappearance in effect throws Hamlet into the domain of the engulfing mother, awakening all the fears incident to the primary mother-child bond. Here as in Shakespeare's later plays, the loss of the father turns out in fact to mean the psychic domination of the mother: in the end, it is the specter of his mother, not his uncle-father, who paralyzes his will. The Queen, the Queen is to blame. (ADELMAN, 1992, p. 30)

As can be inferred from this quote, similar to the work of all great masters, Shakespeare makes use of subplots which reveal the inner work of the characters and the plot itself. In *Macbeth*, the inner work of the characters is even more elaborate and vivid, as we shall examine further on.

1.4. Shakespeare's Time

Writing about the time Shakespeare lived in and wrote his plays, as well as the impact they had on the local population of England, Barbara Heliodora argues that,

> Shakespeare was born in a privileged period for the theatre. The Renaissance, which arrived late in England, the then recent discoveries of the Orient and the Americas and everything that was happening in science and technology would transform themselves into unrest and curiosities, and for the theatre fit the role of satisfying them. The theatre, indeed, for the Elizabethan, was the magic box where one could not only see beautiful spectacles but also a little bit of everything. With a generous dose of imagination, there was still information about places, facts and strange phenomena in which the fantastic, the almost miraculous and the malevolent abounded. And with the advantage of many having in the title "The true history of...". (HELIODORA, 2019, p. 280)[10]

When Shakespeare wrote his plays and sonnets the history of England, as well as the world, was going through a decisive moment. King Richard III (also immortalized in the homonymous play as one of the Bard's great villains) was defeated in 1485 in Bosworth Field. This battle put an end to the Wars of the Roses, and gave rise to the Tudor Dynasty which in England is associated with the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Age. In the 15th century a new outbreak of the Black Death ravaged England killing many people. During the Tudor Era (1485-1603) there was an increase in the population and the economy expanded again. (cf. HILL, 1975 & POSTAN, 1975)

The country grew and slowly turned from rural and feudal into an urbanized and commercial system. The exportation of woollen products to continental Europe meant a remarkable economic improvement. As the population increased, low pay substituted for the previous higher wages and abundance of land. With the valorisation of the price of

[10] Shakespeare nasceu em um período privilegiado para o teatro. A Renascença, que chega tarde à Inglaterra, as então recentes descobertas do Oriente e das Américas e tudo o que estava acontecendo na ciência e na tecnologia se transformaram em inquietações e curiosidades, e ao teatro coube o papel de satisfazê-las. O teatro, aliás, para o elisabetano, era a caixa mágica onde se podiam não só ver lindos espetáculos mas um pouco de cada coisa. Com fartas doses de imaginação, tinham-se ainda informações a respeito de lugares, fatos e fenômenos estranhos em que o fantástico, o quase miraculoso e o malévolo pululavam. E com a vantagem de muitas terem no título "A verdadeira história de...".

wool, the nobility started to enclose the common lands (land enclosure), depriving the poor from the lands they traditionally used to raise animals and plant for their own use. This increased poverty and provoked the migration of more destitute people into the bigger cities, mostly into London. As English historian Christopher Hill puts it,

> World trade was increasing in the sixteenth century, thanks to the discovery of America and of the sea route to the Far East. Use of the mariner's compass, improved astronomy and navigational mathematics contributed to the expansion of long-distance trade. But even more important, in the short run, was increasing demand in Europe itself from the prospering upper and middle classes. English cloth exports expanded rapidly in the earlier part of the century to meet this demand. Although the boom was checked by a collapse of the export market around 1550, and the ensuing crisis was aggravated by the debasement of the coinage, ultimately new markets were found (e.g. in Russia) for cloth exports. (HILL, 1975, p. 72)

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 his Reformation 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. The defeat of the Spanish 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 became 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 influenced artists like Shakespeare. As English writer and composer Anthony Burgess puts it about Shakespeare moving to London,

> Will had come to this English capital at the right time. The trouble with Spain was not yet over, but a small nation had demonstrated how determination, patriotism and the fire of individual enterprise could break the strength of a great empire. The confidence of the capital, which was the confidence of England, required its articulation in a popular art-form which Will, a man of the people, was best qualified, when he had learned the knacks of the trade, to purvey. Drama was no longer a commodity to beguile the boredom of a country town, the little occasional treat of Stratford's Guildhall. It was an aspect of the great world. (BURGESS, 1972, p. 83)

The majority of his plays reflect his relation with the Court, *Macbeth* being one of the main ones in this regard. It was presented for the first time in 1606, three years after James I succeeded Elizabeth I on the English throne, in the presence of that king and

King Christian of Denmark. If the idea was to please James I then, that is because at the time Shakespeare wrote his plays anything, from faux pas to serious slips, could cost his life as an author. Beheadings under the allegation of treason in the Tower of London, although not so common, nevertheless did take place. *Macbeth* was thus commissioned and written for the accession of James I, who not only believed in witches and witchcraft but also considered himself a connoisseur on this matter. Along the same lines, the motive for the creation of most of his plays become clear when they are situated in the context of the life of the court, both during the times of Queen Elizabeth I and of her successor King James I.

Another important datum about that time concerns the rate of infant mortality and general health conditions that prevailed then. Writing about the rate of birth mortality in England in Shakespeare's time, McNeil pointed out that in "17th century England, one-third of all children died before age 15. Today, thanks largely to those vaccines, less than 1 percent of English children do". (NcNEIL, 2018, p. 1) When Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, for example, he had already lost his son Hamnet, who died when he was only 11 years old to the bubonic plague, and this certainly was one of the driving forces which compelled him to write this play. In an interview to *The New York Times* in 2018, Steven Pinker argues that people nowadays are better off than they were before the start of Enlightenment in the 17th century. In the same interview he states that he has "stumbled across data showing that violence had declined over the course of history. The homicide rate in England was 50 times higher in the 14th century than it is today". (PINKER, 2018, p.1)

Shakespeare wrote at the beginning of the Modern Age, an era filled with changes and turning points. This period starts with the great maritime discoveries, the beginning of scientific revolutions, the Protestant Reform and the rise of the bourgeoisie. It is within this context that the question of Evil became more intense and manifested itself in a different way from prior periods and the modern concept of individuality appears.

As Brody states in his Master's dissertation *King Lear: Dramatic Literature as a Time Machine*,

> Shakespeare's audience possibly did not have a clear picture of their own historical moment, but in one way or another they must have perceived theirs was an age of transition. Being historically and geographically detached from that context, we know such transition was characterized by a clash between the remaining forces of the feudal nobility - where the monarchy rooted -, and the Renaissance ones (both the emerging bourgeoisie and the section of the English nobility allied to it, which were paving the way for a full-fledged capitalism). Thus, Shakespeare's times are

> not clear-cut ones: like any other age, they have both features of the past and of the future. The difference is that in those times the contradictions abounded and did not point up to a clear future. (BRODY, 2006, p. 125-6)

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 the Modern Age.

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 experiences 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 and subject of finitude, among others. In this sense, the concept of individual stands half-way through the more fixed and solid categories of previous times and the rather liquid concept of subject still present nowadays. Studying the historical and aesthetic moment in which the concept of individuality starts to be put to use helps to understand better a new approach to the question of evil in the Modern Age, as well as its new forms of manifestation, and the conditions which led to the emergence of the concept of subject and its cultural, social and political relevance nowadays.

Writing about madness, subjectivity and imagination, Italian anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo states that,

> Since Foucault wrote *The History of Madness* in the mode of an archaeology of silence, much has happened in the field of mental health, as well as in the practices, technologies, and debates surrounding subjectivity, the body, the psyche, the brain, and the imagination, to reinforce his portrayal of the becoming unthinkable of an experience – an experience that, as such, had once summoned questions of truth, politics, ethics, life, and death. And yet in the contemporary world and in the context of global capitalism and its crises, the stage and voices of madness come to the fore again, and well beyond the protocols of public health and psychopharmacology; beyond, as well, Foucault's own historical framing. (PANDOLFO, 2018, p. 5)

Madness is a recurrent theme in Shakespeare's work and is present in plays such as *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, among others. Comparing how it was perceived at that time, the sixteenth century, and nowadays, Foucault summarizes it, in his subsequent book *The Order of Things*, by stating that,

> And precisely when this language emerges in all its nudity, yet at the same time eludes all signification as if it were a vast and empty despotic system ... then we recognize madness in its present form, madness as it is posited in

> the modern experience, as its truth and its alterity. In this figure, which is at once empirical and yet foreign to (and in) all that we can experience, our consciousness no longer finds − as it did in the sixteenth century − the trace of another world; it no longer observes the wandering of a straying reason; it sees welling up that which is, perilously, nearest to us − as if, suddenly, the very hollowness of our existence is outlined in relief; the finitude upon the basis of which we are, and think, and know, is suddenly there before us: an existence at once real and impossible, thought that we cannot think, an object for our knowledge that always eludes it. This is why psychoanalysis finds in that madness *par excellence* − which psychiatrists term schizophrenia − its intimate, its most invincible torture: for given in this form of madness, in an absolutely manifest and absolutely withdrawn form, are the forms of finitude towards which it usually advances unceasingly (and interminably) from the starting point of that which is voluntarily-involuntarily offered to it in the patient's language. So psychoanalysis 'recognizes itself' when it is confronted with these very psychoses which nevertheless (or rather, for that very reason) it has scarcely any means of reaching: as if the psychosis were displaying in a savage illumination, and offering in a mode not too distant but just too close, that towards which analysis must make its laborious way. (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 375)

In order to better understand Shakespearean plays, we should take some sociological, historical and philosophical aspects into account, as a support to the analysis of the tragedies and their symbolism. Shakespeare's time marks a turning point in the history of England and Europe in general. The new philosophical, sociological and scientific ideas that started circulating in England 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 Age. In this sense, it represents the emergence of the concept of the individuality and his/her subjective needs, desires and condition.

With the weakening 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. From Henry VIII onwards, the king is no longer seen as "a peer among peers", i.e., as one of the feudal lords that they agree to be their king. He starts being considered a monarch by divine right. In other words, the king becomes much more powerful and stronger than the previous kings. Henry VIII manages to be the political and religious leader of England inasmuch as he becomes the head of the Anglican Church that he created.

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 volleyball match being described or narrated while its very rules are changing. The Middle Age was coming to its end and the Modern Age was just beginning, with the Age of Discovery and European mercantilism. As American Professor of English and Comparative Literature James S. 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 Catholic 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 conducts were then represented in characters such as, for example, Richard III, Iago, Claudius and Edmund.

It is in this context of transition and ambivalence towards some values of the Middle Ages, which still subsisted but no longer made sense in Elizabethan society, that American scholar and professor of the Renaissance Bernard Spivak, writing about Machiavelli, states,

> The Elizabethans really understood him well enough, and indeed their traditional values within their transitional age taught them to apprehend the evil before they were actually aware of the man who later lent it his name. On their stage the Machiavellian villain, through his egoism, his ruthless energy unhampered by pious restraints, his deliberate disavowal of any law higher than his own appetite, his penetrating and cynical awareness of the animal impulses composing man's lower nature, enacts the thrust of the new *realism* against the traditional Christian sanctities applicable to the life of this world. Legitimacy, order, honor, loyalty, love, and the stable community of human creatures under God are the easy obstacles his purposes surmount because the pieties and simplicities of *honest* men render them defenseless against his *policy*. It is a rare villain in the drama of that time who is not in some degree a Machiavel; for villainy in general, as the Elizabethans viewed and staged it, is rooted in an irreligious principle, to which the Florentine, from the same view, contributed not so much an origin as an affirmation, not so much a manifesto as a guidebook. The age was aware of Machiavellianism before it was aware of Machiavelli. (SPIVACK, 1958, pp. 375-376)

My Master's dissertation, *"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all": the construction of soliloquies in Shakespeare* (OLIVEN, 2015), analyzed soliloquies in three main Shakespearean tragedies: *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*. It focused on how this dramatic device in those three plays reflects and addresses, from different angles, specific issues and themes ranging from the formation of conscience in distinct characters, the question of justice in face of disgrace, and a certain psychic configuration in the characters where different values held by a community or the society of that time are questioned and put at stake.

It also dealt with the similarities between the construction of soliloquies and the natural process of dreaming. In this case, meaning in these phenomena is created through the condensation of key images and elements that are interrelated and which would be meaningless by themselves. However, whereas dreams are private to a person or character, i.e., they are not meant to be shared by others, having therefore a lesser degree of censorship in their elaboration, soliloquies are accessible to the audience or the reader, though not to the other characters. For that reason, they can create a feeling of complicity between the character and the audience or reader or, in linguistic and psychoanalytical terms, between the subject and object of speech. It is important to remember that there are soliloquies which are addressed to the audience, such as Iago's, and others which correspond to unspoken thoughts, such as those of Hamlet and Macbeth.

My research followed an associative axis to link certain ideas and lines of thought, relying on philosophy, psychoanalysis and discourse analysis so as to investigate the aesthetic constructs analyzed, *Macbeth, Hamlet* and *Othello*. It found out, among other things, that there is a contrast between the medieval tradition which is still visible in the moral code of some characters in those plays and the values expressed through the soliloquies.

1.5. Evil and the Individual in Shakespeare

It is pertinent to bear in mind the break in life perspective that takes place in European Modern Age from prior historical periods. In the Middle Ages in Europe, for example, there were strict moral codes and religious precepts as well as a strong emphasis on the collectivity. It was also a time when the power of the Catholic Church was at its height and it controlled much of the access to knowledge since it was the only religious authority in Europe. In Ancient times, particularly in Greece, there was a

classical conception of man as the measure of all things and as a rational and political human being which was fostered by philosophy. Besides, one was expected to think and act more in accordance with the community, i.e., as a public person, as it is manifested through its tragedies. Modern tragedy (and the Shakespearean one) functions differently from the classical Greek tragedy. Writing about the formal independence of the individual particularities in modern tragedies, Hegel states that,

> The character appears, in its particular aspect, as a particular character who tends to persevere in its particularity, and this, by virtue of what it has of accidental and fortuitous, does not allow itself to be delimited directly by the concept. An individuality thus reduced to itself could not have intentions nor conceive ends capable of connecting it to a general *pathos*; all it possesses, does and accomplishes, it exhausts it itself directly, without reflection, in its nature that is what it is, that does not rely on any superior principle and that does not search what justifies it in a substantial element but always, imperturbably, lies on itself, in a stability that allows it to affirm itself in a positive way as well as conduct it to perdition. Such independence is only possible where the extra-divine, the particular human, assumes a preponderant role. Thus, are, above all, the characters described by Shakespeare, who force our admiration mainly by their unshakeable firmness and unilaterality. (HEGEL, 1996, p. 631)

Hegel argues that Shakespeare's characters are free artificers of themselves which is equivalent to saying that they are able to reinvent themselves through self-fashioning and even incorporate new personas. A statement 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. Moreover, Hegel points out in the same book quoted above that, contrary to what some romantic critics had already stated about Lady Macbeth having a benevolent or good aura, she is in fact an evil and pernicious woman.

As already pointed out in my Master's dissertation, but worth mentioning again, the concept of individuality preceded and possibly paved the way to the more contemporary notion of subject studied by psychoanalysis, ethnology and linguistics. This concept was explored by Freud and later coined by Jacques Lacan. It is therefore interesting to bear in mind the more fluid and contemporary concept of subject by following the line of thought Pandolfo, when she uses 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, p. 4-5)

How is the question of evil to be dealt with in the work of Shakespeare? Let us initially consider the example of *King Lear*. When King Lear is dividing his kingdom among his three daughters, Goneril and Regan, the older ones, express their love for him by using void words which mask their interests in the share they might receive. As soon as they get what they wanted, the treatment towards their father changes completely. Thus, the use of social skills reflected on the mastery of certain social codes in specific situations turns out to be a clearly false conduct, so much so that from then on they treat their father increasingly worse. Cordelia, on the other hand, like a child who is embarrassed in the presence of adults, is unable to tell a white lie to her father in the speech scene in the first act of the play, thus losing a precious opportunity to counter her sisters' bad deeds throughout the play.

This brings to the surface the question of the social roles individuals perform. It is through the opposition of a false speech that Cordelia expresses her true love for her father and, in a more indirect way, hints at the fact that he is already an old man who is less likely to recognize the falsity of his two elder daughters towards him. (FREUD, 1997) In this sense, for American folklorist Alan Dundes "...*King Lear* and its folktale source concerns a girl's inability to express her (sexual) love for her father" (DUNDES, 1980, p.218). He also argues that,

> One very important point is that in the folktale the central figure is the daughter-heroine. In fairy tales, the protagonists are almost always sons or daughters, not parents. This means that in the underlying source of *King Lear*, the central figure is the analogue to Cordelia. It follows that Shakespeare's emphasis upon Lear − one must keep in mind that Cordelia is technically absent for the bulk of the action of the play − is a critical literary change from the folklore source. (DUNDES, 1980, p.214)

Following a different line than the more psychoanalytic and philosophical approach taken here, i.e., a more Marxist one, Brody argues that,

> While doing the close reading, I had the feeling that *King Lear* feels like a time machine, it transports us to-and-fro through the centuries. I arrived to the conclusion that this was necessary precisely to show the class conflict between the decaying feudal nobility and the ascending bourgeoisie - that is,

> between the ruling class of the Middle Ages, and the social class that would be the future ruling class from a certain moment of the Modern Age on. This conflict presented different aspects along the centuries and it ended up changing completely the organization of the state in England, and more than that, it changed the English society itself in profound and irreversible ways. What King Lear does in a way is synthesize a story that took centuries: the story of the class struggle between the feudal nobility and the bourgeoisie. It is a symbolic condensation of the history of England, and, because of this, Shakespeare needed to put side by side elements from different historical ages, the famous anachronisms of the Elizabethan/Jacobean theatre. (BRODY, 2006, p.14)

However subtle and sophisticated Greek tragedy and medieval literature might have been, the false conduct present in Shakespearean tragedies mentioned above is not present in the same way in the works of previous periods or his contemporaries. With all its new subtle forms of representation, it stands for the idea of individuality and is still present nowadays as performed in theatres and explored by the film industry. Oedipus, for example, does not represent more than what he is, nor does Antigone or Creon, even if they might have vested interests. Whether Goneril and Regan's conduct represents evil in itself in the same way as the behavior of characters such as Iago and Richard III, for example, is questionable. Nevertheless, their conduct in relation to their father is nothing but a façade in the beginning of the play and, as they gain power over him, they feel ever more justified to treat him badly and turn him into an impotent old man.

It is therefore interesting to trace the implicit links and passage from the appearance of the concept of individuality in the Modern Age to the emergence of the contemporary concept of subject. If we understand human beings as subjects we have to take into account that they are intertwined with and eventually overcome by discourse and the exposure to various kinds of stimuli, ideologies and environments, sometimes within a short period of time. Moreover, without the notion of individuality it is very possible that the concept of subject and subjectivity would have never surfaced.

The implicit chaining or cryptic message contained in specific uses of language is not perceivable by others at first sight because it is not overtly manifested in it. This use of language follows a similar pattern to the phenomenon of dreaming or may just as well correspond to the crypt through which children are affected and sometimes ultimately framed by their parents' outlook on life.

As to the vertigo of history, it can be represented and metaphorically correspond to a chasm on the earth that may separate eras and ways of thinking when there is not a continuous process or evolution between one historical period and the other. This chasm corresponds to an abyss that is sometimes produced quickly and that, in a similar way to

nature, ends up trapping people. They cannot overcome it by symbolically passing from one period to the other due to this vast opening or because their mentality does not allow them to. This causes a feeling of dizziness and impotence for those who fall into this category, similar to the fear of heights.

Up to what point do linguistics, psychoanalysis and ethnology dissolve the modern idea of the individual by showing that we are intercepted by language, the unconscious as well as collective memories which pass cryptically from generation to generation? And up to what point is evil still a considerably neglected subject in literature and Greek philosophy? Evil is certainly understood differently nowadays than it was at Shakespeare's time and, although it is a very vast theme, it could be delimited by a cut-out. Even simple questions such as why are snakes considered evil and lions not, if both end up killing, spring to mind. The answer probably has to do with the poison and a certain way of trapping others. Likewise, why is there an uproar when a human being kills a lion, and I am not stating here that there should not be, but not when someone puts an end to an ophidian such as a snake or scorpion? Is it maybe because we unconsciously think that certain animals and by extension human beings are entitled to kill, or rather because we suppose there are nobler ways of killing or also the fact that we might consider some animals and people superior to others as well as less lethal and noxious?

A quote from an interview I have already used in my Master's dissertation about the difference between on the page and on the stage feelings, by British actress Harriet Walter, is equally relevant here in a different context,

> 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, 2015, digital text)

Thus by taking us out of our comfort zone, some actors' performances can produce all kinds of malaise and faltering on us. It can show us being evil by recapitulation or reflex, or the potential to be and act so, and not just evil applied to a theory or studied and analyzed as it presents itself in other people or characters.

Nevertheless, the main focus of this thesis in on characters especially since some readers may not have access to live performances.

There is a tendency to separate good from evil. Evil, however, should be understood as part of human nature. Shakespeare's work is wonderful in that sense because his characters are genuinely human, i.e., they usually contain both good and bad aspects in themselves except, of course, some of the villains. This is different from regular fiction and Brazilian soap operas, where characters usually not only lack substance but are also frequently either good or bad. Hence, they are neither so psychologically profound, multifaceted and interesting as characters in elaborated and in-depth tragedies, nor do they lend themselves so easily to psychoanalytical interpretation. In this sense, Shakespeare's tragedies are similar to ancient Greek tragedies, in which characters are neither good nor bad, but simply ambiguous and ambivalent.

Situated and contextualized now in our contemporary era, bearing in mind the influence of psychoanalysis and other discoveries about the brain and our psyche, French historian and psychoanalyst Elisabeth Roudinesco argues that,

> No matter whether the perverse are sublime because they turn to art, creation or mysticism, or abject because they surrender to their murderous impulses, they are part of us and part of our humanity because they exhibit something that we always conceal: our own negativity and our dark side. (ROUDINESCO, 2009, p. 5)

This negativity, as well as the emergence of the double and the phantasm in a psychoanalytical sense, may assist us to analyze the question of evil in Shakespeare's time with the new tools of analysis we possess nowadays. Thus, our era can help in the process of shedding light upon a phenomenon that, with the mark of individuality imprinted to it, started in one era before ours: the Modern Age.

1.6. Language and Thought

The question of language is also an important issue to be analyzed when having the question of Evil in mind. On one hand, there is the language we use every day to communicate and get our messages across. Although it is both valid and representative, it can also work as a façade through which we hide ourselves and conceal deeper feelings we are not always willing to share with others. It is a language of consciousness. On the other hand, there is also a language that works as an internal system but which is often stronger than the previous one. This language, as Lacan has already pointed out,

speaks through us: it is the language of the unconscious or rather the unconscious understood as a language. (LACAN, 1973) This language has the power to break through and predetermine our everyday language, making feelings, drives and wishes overwhelm and undermine the simple utterance of words. In this sense, it is relevant to bear in mind Foucault's definition of language as elaborated in his book *The Archeology of Knowledge*:

> Language always seems to be inhabited by the other, the elsewhere, the distant; it is hollowed by absence. Is it not the locus in which something other than itself appears, does not its own existence seem to be dissipated in this function? But if one wishes to describe the enunciative level, one must consider that existence itself; question language, not in the direction to which it refers, but in the dimension that gives it; ignore its power to designate, to name, to show, to reveal, to be the place of meaning or truth, and, instead, turn one's attention to the moment -which is at once solidified, caught up in the play of the 'signifier' and the 'signified' - that determines its unique and limited existence. (FOUCAULT, 1972, p.118)

Foucault's *The Archeology of Knowledge* deals with the discursive formations and interdiscursive configurations which mould and therefore create the possibility of existence of specific kinds of knowledge. In this context, there is the discourse on madness which makes it possible and at the same time varies in different periods of history, as well as the discourses of other constructed objects of study. The book also analyzes how certain fields of knowledge, such as science, medicine and grammar, were able to exist and acquire a form as such. It centers around the notion of discourse, discursive practice and formation, statement and knowledge, as well as some unconscious practices which help mould our civilization.

Speaking about language in a metaphorical way and trying to avoid being naive about it is like realizing that at some point you may think you are playing chess while you yourself is one of the chess pieces being played upon or find yourself swimming in a pool trying to grasp an object or understand something without realizing that you are being watched by someone else, be it the linguist, the ethnologist or the psychoanalyst.

Another important factor, as regards the presence of evil and death in Shakespearean plays, is well elucidated in an interview with Heliodora. When asked to talk about Macbeth, Richard III and the existence of Evil, considering her knowledge of Shakespeare, Heliodora answers that,

> For Shakespeare evil is a permanent fact and, mainly in the tragedies, he shows actions in which we can perceive how man faces evil. What happens

> when man sees himself faced with evil, which is present in a more or less intense form, in all the plays. Like death is present in practically all the plays, even the comedies. The threat of death is in *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*... Likewise, there are comic characters in the tragedies and serious characters in the comedies, because in life everything is mixed. Therefore, we can state that he is always conscious of the whole panorama around him. (HELIODORA, 2015, digital text) (Translation mine)

In the same interview, Heliodora argues that although Shakespeare condemns evil acts such as Macbeth's and other characters he is not moralizing them and that the development of the plays is always produced by a relationship between cause and effect. This means that for every action there are consequences. This leads us to another point related to this. It becomes evident that evil never goes unpunished in Shakespearean plays, unless when it belongs to the supernatural as is the case with the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*. Other than that, Iago, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Claudius, Richard III and even Othello and Hamlet must account for their deeds, even if this means paying for them with their own lives. Given that evil is therefore treated and solved in such a straightforward way by the author, it becomes somehow evident that what is more intriguing, fascinating and obscure relates to its causes, i.e., what generates it or underlies the actions of these villains and other characters.

Freud has dealt extensively with Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's motives for acting badly. He relates their behavior to repressed libidinous processes, which end up spilling over to their actions and afterwards leading to strong repentance, as well as the feeling of having been unjustly treated and seeking compensation for it. He also argues that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are two parts of the same thing and cannot be understood separately. (cf. FREUD, 1997, pp. 151-166) and (OLIVEN, 2015, pp. 25-29)

Roudinesco wrote very wisely about the question of evil and perversion in her book *Our Dark Side*. According to her, what differentiates Freud from his predecessors is the way he deals with what was until then considered by others as uncivilized. As she puts it,

> Freud never read much Sade but, without realizing it, he shared Sade's idea that human life was characterized not so much by an inspiration to the good and virtue, as by a permanent quest for the enjoyment of evil: the death drive, the desire for cruelty, a love of hatred, and an aspiration to unhappiness and suffering. Being a thinker of the dark Enlightenment and not of the Counter-Enlightenment, he rehabilitated the idea that perversion is an essential part of civilization to the extent that it is society's accursed share and our own dark side. But rather than grounding evil in the natural world order or seeing man's animal nature as the sign of an inferiority that can never be overcome, he prefers to argue that access to culture is the only

> thing that can save humanity from its own self-destructive drives. (ROUDINESCO, 2009, pp.70-71)

Freud's way of reasoning, which metaphorically speaking corresponds to plunging in our dark side with a hope of returning to the surface through culture and civilization and sometimes even as a better person, is opposed to Iago's, who is more similar to Sade and takes a very pessimistically pragmatic outlook on life. Since his diving into human nature presupposes a satisfaction in destruction through the annihilation of others while offering no possibility of return or the promise of a way out, it can be easily associated with the death drive or the unbound urge, a topic that Freud has already dealt with.

It is in this sense that Pandolfo argues, writing about the ambivalence of the human drive and our predicament in relation to life, evil, actions and human finitude that,

> It is in Freud's later works that the ambivalent quality of the drive (at once life and death) and its fatal trajectory were most closely explored, in relation to violence and self-annihilation, and the ambiguous remedy of identification, as an almost theological wrestling with the problem of evil, and in light of a question: What does it mean to be the subject, or more precisely the "host" of the drive? And to become capable of withstanding its life, wrestling with its violence, torment, and pleasures? In the conclusion of his "Thoughts for the Times: On War and Death," written in 1915, "in the confusion of wartime in which we are caught" and still relevant in the wartime of today, after pondering the disillusionment of a war that had disclosed the unthinkable cruelty at the heart of what appeared as civility, Freud made an urgent call for that wrestling, and for coming to terms with the agency of the drive. It was not just a condemnation of the ravages of war, but a call to realize that we are directly concerned, whether we are at home or at the front, because of the implication of our desire. "*Si vis vitamin para mortem,*" he elliptically admonished at the end of his essay; "if you want to endure life, prepare yourself for death." "Could you bear the life that you have," echoed Lacan in one of his lectures, "if you didn't have faith in the limit of death?" (PANDOLFO, 2018, p.5)

It is precisely because human beings are caught up between life and death drives and, by extension, with the ability and free will to do good or evil, plus our human instincts and the unconscious, both of which might bias our actions outside our faculty of reason, among other things, that we are such a unique and special species in the world.

2. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF *MACBETH*

> Let us notice, however, one peculiarity of dream-life which comes to light in this study of the effects of stimuli. Dreams do not simply reproduce the stimulus; they work it over, they make allusions to it, they include it in some context, they replace it by something else. This is a side of the dream-work which is bound to interest us since it may perhaps bring us nearer to the

> essence of dreams. When a person constructs something as a result of a stimulus, the stimulus need not on that account exhaust the whole of the work. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for instance, was a *pièce d'occasion* composed to celebrate the accession of the king who first united the crowns of the three kingdoms. But does this immediate historical occasion cover the content of the tragedy? Does it explain its greatnesses and its enigmas? It may be that the external and internal stimuli, too, impinging on the sleeper, are only the instigators of the dream and will accordingly betray nothing to us of its essence. (FREUD, 1999, p.40)

Macbeth is a grim and terrifying play and at the same time points to the complexity of human beings. The fact that we have in ourselves both good and bad, strong and weak and healthy and pathological sides oftentimes mixed together is exemplified by the witches' speech in the first scene of the first act. 'Fair is foul and foul is fair' and 'when the battle is lost and won' clearly alludes to that aspect of human nature which can also be evinced through the unmastered realm of dreams. It is through the natural process of dreaming that not only meanings pass but also contraries come together and contradictions can take place naturally. Therefore, dreams are one way of expressing our more often than not conflictive and mixed feelings and ambivalences, symbolized through the interplay of a few signifiers. It is also a means of distilling our moral indebtedness to others or dealing with feelings of anger and disgust when we feel we have been targeted during the day.

The symbolic dichotomy between darkness and colourfulness of this play is probably what led Bradley to state that,

> Darkness, we may even say blackness, broods over this tragedy. It is remarkable that almost all the scenes which at once recur to memory take place either at night or in some dark spot. The vision of the dagger, the murder of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth, all come in night-scenes. The Witches dance in the thick air of a storm, or, 'black and midnight hags', receive Macbeth in a cavern. The blackness of night is to the hero a thing of fear, even of horror; and that which he feels becomes the spirit of the play....The failure of nature in Lady Macbeth is marked by her fear of darkness; 'she has light by her continually'. And in the one phrase of fear that escapes her lips even in sleep, it is of the darkness of the place of torment that she speaks. The atmosphere of Macbeth, however, is not that of unrelieved blackness. On the contrary, as compared with King Lear and its cold dim gloom, Macbeth leaves a decided impression of colour; it is really the impression of a black night broken by flashes of light and colour, sometimes vivid and even glaring. (BRADLEY, 1986, p. 279-280)

It is important to bear in mind that this play also questions the Manichean religious philosophy which opposes good to evil and has profoundly shaped Western mentality

and its religious doctrines. Therefore, by placing itself and speaking from within a European context and tradition, it is able to dispute and question it. At the same time as it does that, it ends up evoking, even if involuntarily, the Eastern tradition of seeing the world as a constellation of factors and causal relationships that transcend these rather fixed and opposing categories. As Greenblatt puts it in his introductory article "Macbeth" to the homonymous play "... Macbeth is a tragedy of meltings, category confusions, and liminal states". (GREENBLATT, 1997, p. 2560)

Another important thing about this play is gender relations. As Harriet Walter puts it in an interview,

> ...there is a great liberation in playing the Shakespearean roles that are, you know, that weren't written for women because, you know, I can't think of many instances, if any, where the female roles in Shakespeare are not there principally to reflect the men, or in relation to the men, and to play parts where your kind of preoccupation is how to run the country, how to win a war, how to defeat your enemy, how to, you know, philosophical questions about, you know, men's position in the universe, those don't get given to women in Shakespeare's plays, so it is wonderfully liberating to do that... (WALTER, 2015, digital text)

Although Macbeth turns from good to evil throughout the drama, influenced by the power of his wife and the three witches, Lady Macbeth is evil from the very outset until almost the end of the play, when she goes crazy and repents her evil acts before committing suicide. If she were to be summed up by a few words in relation to her evilness, it would be ambition and the search for power to her husband, as well as serving as a constituent part in the construction, questioning and analysis of gender roles. One feels that in Macbeth "fair is foul and foul is fair" plays with the ambiguity of language and our mixed feelings and diffuse sentiments that go beyond language itself, transcending it from within.

Although English Professor Maurice Charney does not devote a chapter to Lady Macbeth in his book *Shakespeare's Villains*, his ideas about her counterpart and partner in crime are very illuminating,

> Macbeth as villain has some superficial resemblances to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, in his ruthless pursuit of the crown, but Macbeth has none of the jocularity and histrionic quality that Richard inherits from the Vice figure of the morality plays. Macbeth is Shakespeare's most developed experiment in the protagonist as villain-hero. Shylock and Claudius are sympathetic in individual speeches and soliloquies, but Macbeth seems to be sympathetic throughout the play because he is so acutely aware of the horrors of his crimes. His conscience always bothers him, even at the very end of the play when he is fallen into a deep despair. (CHARNEY, 2013, p. 71)

Why is this play, along with other Shakespearean tragedies, so interesting, if not fascinating, and still widely read and enacted nowadays? The answer probably lies on the fact that it works extremely well with unconscious structures and layers that, in a similar way, also affect us in our everyday life. Ranging from unseen rapports between different people to human curiosity, envy and resentments, these plans frequently stay hidden underneath our routines and habits, as well as our vigilant consciousness, threatening to come afloat. That is one of the reasons we can identify so easily with his plays even 400 years after they have been written, through their almost timeless qualities.

Similar to the ocean, which precedes and will overcome us after we die, this play contains distant and veiled memories ready to emerge or be brought ashore at any time. They lie there, counterbalanced and contrasted by the fiercely distant and constant shine of the stars, signalling the ephemeral and intermediary position of human beings in this world. As Thomas de Quincey writes at the end of 'On The Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth',

> O mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers; like frost and snow, rain and dew, hail-storm and thunder, which are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert − but that, the farther we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident! (DE QUINCEY, 1949, p. 1095)

What are these unconscious plans then? The way we relate to other people, exemplified through the interplay of the characters in the play, is one of them. Another one has to do with human projections. Let us think about the example of the witches. They can be interpreted as a masculine projection on women which shows the fear some men have of them, very strong at the time Shakespeare wrote and still nowadays. The inner works of this play are also related to conscious as well as subconscious plans. As regards the evil nature of the witches and their symbolic and real role in the play, Greenblatt states that,

> Yet though the play has deeply implicated the witches in Macbeth's monstrous assault on the fabric of civilized life, there is no gesture toward punishing them, no sign that the victors are even aware of their existence. This omission is the more striking if we recall that at the time Shakespeare

> wrote his play, the authorities in England and Scotland were bringing women to trial on charges of witchcraft and executing them. The theatrical power of *Macbeth* seems bound up with its refusal to resolve the questions raised by the witches. At once marginal and central to the play, they are only briefly and intermittently onstage, but they are still suggestively present when we cannot see them, when the threats they embody are absorbed in the ordinary relations of everyday life. ... If the closing moments of the play invite us to recoil from this black hole − after all, the tyrant is killed and his severed head held up for all to see − they also invite us to recoil from too confident and simple a celebration of the triumph of grace. For somewhere beyond the immediate circle of order restored, the witches are dancing around the cauldron, and, the play seems to imply, the cauldron is in every one of us". (GREENBLATT, 2016, p. 1473 & 1475)

Evil in *Macbeth* amounts to human resentments, envy, unbridled ambition and badly solved feelings. It disrupts what should be a well-balanced order of things because this kind of order is, like History itself, always contingent and at times vertiginous. It cannot please everyone and is, therefore, always subject to disruptions and outbreaks.

Life, language, evil and death. Could we consider the latter an alternate state of consciousness which human beings can only attempt to explain or try to grasp? It appears that we are in an intermediary position between biological death or before life and psychical death or beyond life, our existence being an in-between these two edges which we cannot fully grasp. According to this logic, life could be considered a *Barzakh*, i.e., an Arabic word derived from Persian used to designate, in an Islamic tradition, an obstacle, barrier or separation, an intermediate state which positions our lives in and as a line or isthmus which separates this world and the after world.

Notwithstanding such sophisticated conception of life and the endeavour to have some understanding about death, if we follow a more straightforward fashion,

> Ought we not to remind ourselves − we who believe ourselves bound to a finitude which belongs only to us, and which opens up the truth of the world by means of our cognition − ought we not to remind ourselves that we are bound to the back of a tiger? (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 322)

Writing about death and grotesque scenes in Shakespeare's tragedies and referring to a particular scene in *Hamlet* in which the ghost disappears from the stage but remains speaking from below the stage about the problems that plague the court in Denmark and the reversal of this motif when the clowns or gravediggers reveal this underworld on the stage while preparing the tomb of Ophelia, Frye argues that,

> The more conservative humanist critics, of whom I spoke earlier, consider this episode gross. It has to do with a grotesque scene that Shakespeare occasionally inserts in a tragedy. Other examples of this are the scene of the

> porter who answers the knocks at the gate, in *Macbeth*, and the scene of the *clown* that arrives with the basket with figs and the serpent, in *Anthony and Cleopatra*. The word "grotesque" is associated to the word "grotto" − a cave or opening in the ground − and is usually linked with the ironic aspect of death, i.e., death as the decomposition of the body in other elements. These grotesque scenes that involve death became especially popular in the Middle Ages, when it appeared in literature a form known as *danse macabre*, in which the figure of death came to take a great variety of social types, from the king to the beggar. The popularity of *danse macabre* was based on the fact that death is the only impartial figure and genuinely democratic in a society irremediably unjust. In fact, this is all we can see from a God that we judge impartial in relation to all. (FRYE, 1999, p.122)

Death, in this sense, appears as a remedy to the social chagrins and the afflictions of life, and something contingent that has to be played upon, dealt with and finally accepted in life itself. The next chapter will deal with different matters and aspects of life in *Macbeth* and their symbolism in and outside the play.

2.1. The Economy of Affection in *Macbeth*

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's assassination of the king Duncan is an 'escape ahead', i.e., something that they try in order to conceal, on a more subconscious level and move, their own problems and shortcomings. As if they were pushing forward their emotional difficulties in an attempt to get rid of them which, in the end, has the opposite effect of just making things worse.

What prompts this escape ahead, however, seems to belong to the economy of love and affection. The last homonymous version of *Macbeth*, directed by Justin Kurzel and released in 2015, shows this very clearly and in good medieval tradition when the king Duncan, interpreted by David Thewlis, positions one of his sons seated on a chair on top of a table as the legitimate heir to the throne of Scotland, thus humiliating Macbeth, interpreted by Michael Fassbender, at his own party in a very overt, albeit perhaps unconscious, manner. These feelings which are difficult to swallow and end up being repressed when they should have been solved, are sometimes projected forward in an attempt to forget and heal the wounds that hurt us deeply or are too painful to deal with.

In *Macbeth*, the economy of love, i.e., how much love is allotted to everyone and how it is allotted, in an implicit exchange of matter (semen, blood and other fluids) as well as feelings, can be quite illuminating. This is because it relates directly to our lives and how we deal with love and affection, pointing to the fact that any kind of exchange can be rewarding (intelligent thoughts, presents, sex, etc.) as well as unwelcome (bad

influences, indoctrination or even sweets when we want to avoid them). The fact that these things may end up affecting us points to certain fears we have of contamination. Moreover, when we talk about feelings and their consequences we should ask ourselves what is implicit in them and what they ultimately entail. Just as life itself is a modus operandi regarding behavior, social codes and language so is evil a modus operandi in *Macbeth*. As Greenblatt argues,

> For more than any other of Shakespeare's villains, more than the homicidal Richard III, the treacherous Claudius in *Hamlet*, and the cold-hearted Iago in *Othello*, Macbeth is fully aware of the wickedness of his deeds and is tormented by his awareness. Endowed with a clear-eyed grasp of the difference between good and evil, he chooses evil, even though the choice horrifies and sickens him. (GREENBLATT, 1997, p. 2557)

In a lecture entitled 'The Primordial Evil: Our Daily Pride' (Translation mine) Leandro Karnal states that "vanity is condemned in the Greek tradition for being a *hybris* and is condemned in the Judeo-Christian tradition for being a lack of attention to the Creator". (KARNAL, 2016, digital text) (Translation mine) According to him, vanity nowadays is everywhere and is no longer considered a vice or defect but rather a virtue. When Flaubert created Madame Bovary he was trying to put himself in a woman's position and think like her. What about Shakespeare when he created Lady Macbeth? The author was probably attempting to complexify certain issues by creating a woman that has both feminine and masculine attributes, pointing to the fact that a similar process may also occur with us as human beings. Do not our affections at times work like a pendulum, oscillating between masculine and feminine forces and drives? Is not our personality also composed of weak and strong aspects, as well as healthy and pathological sides? Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth shares the idea (contemporary to her time) that femininity and wish for power cannot go together. She goes to the point of making a bargain with the forces of nature, by declaring that she is ready to be “unsexed” so that she may be queen.

It is also worth remarking that Lady Macbeth is similar to Dostoievski's Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. Although his reasons for killing are different from hers, he kills an unprincipled and greedy pawnbroker for her money and to prove that he is an extraordinary man, he also slowly ends up becoming crazy and giving himself away. Therefore, he is akin to Lady Macbeth who is tormented by the weight of her conscience and remorse for her crime until she leaves the scene by committing suicide. Even though she is not a poor and brilliant student like him, both consider themselves intelligent and are even arrogant to the point of not being clever enough to realize that a

crime almost never compensates. Whereas Raskolnikov is punished by the system, Lady Macbeth punishes herself by ending her own life.

The following way of reasoning of Raskolnikov about his crime and how he sees it, after his sister Dunia rebukes him for having shed blood, is pertinent here when he exclaims that,

> That they do not stop shedding and continue shedding and in this world have always been shedding like a waterfall, that they shed it as champagne, for which one is crowned in the capitol and after that they call the crowned person the benefactor of humanity. Look attentively and try to see! I myself wanted the good of people and would do hundreds and thousands of good things instead of this foolishness, that not even a foolishness is, but simply a clumsiness, given that all this idea was not so foolish as it seems now, after the failure... (After the failure everything seems foolish!) With this foolishness I only wanted to put myself in an independent condition, take the first step, get resources, and afterwards everything would be repaired by the relatively incommensurable utility of the act. Yet I could not stand even the first step, because I am a rascal! That is what everything is all about! And even so I will not see things with your vision: if I had achieved it I would be crowned, but now I head towards the trap! (DOSTOIEVSKI, 2016, p. 258) (Translation mine from English into Portuguese)

Another important aspect is that Lady Macbeth also overthrows what is taken as the natural order of things by alluding to kill her own infant while breastfeeding, which in the context of the play is not clear if it is a real or an imaginary one, i.e., if she had a child or not. She also kills Duncan, the king, in her own house, thus subverting the laws of hosting and respect for a monarch, who is superior in the social hierarchy supposedly by merit and achievement.

The question of whether Lady Macbeth and Macbeth had children or not in the play is also worth dwelling on. Like Richard III, there was the real historical Macbeth and the fictional one. According to *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, the historical Macbeth introduced feudalism in Scotland and was a general who was a warrior and clan chief at the time. He assassinated the previous king and did not have any biological children, despite having raised his wife's son. However, whether the fictional Macbeth was the father of Lady Macbeth's supposed child or children is a debate still open to discussion. Poetical license, therefore, allows an author like Shakespeare to play with these nuances to the utmost degree by placing them in an overshadowed looking glass that reflects and condenses history within a few days and hours. The question of whether Lady Macbeth and Macbeth had children in the play is insoluble to Freud. As he states, in his classical essay on *Macbeth* called “Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-analytic Work” (1919),

> In Holinshed's *Chronicle* (1577), from which Shakespeare took the plot of *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth is only once mentioned as the ambitious wife who instigates her husband to murder in order that she may herself become queen. There is no mention of her subsequent fate and of the development of her character. On the other hand, it would seem that the change of Macbeth's character into a bloodthirsty tyrant is ascribed to the same motives as we have suggested here. For in Holinshed *ten years* pass between the murder of Duncan, through which Macbeth becomes king, and his further misdeeds; and in these ten years he is shown as a stern and just ruler. It is not until after this lapse of time that the change begins in him, under the influence of the tormenting fear that the prophecy to Banquo may be fulfilled just as the prophecy of his own destiny has been. Only then does he contrive the murder of Banquo, and, as in Shakespeare, is driven from one crime into another. It is not expressively stated in Holinshed that it was his childlessness which urged him to these courses, but enough time and room is given for that plausible motive. Not so in Shakespeare. Events crowd upon us in the tragedy with breathless haste so that, to judge by the statements made by the characters in it, the course of its action covers about *one week*. (FREUD, 1997, p. 163-164)

In *Macbeth*, after the witches have symbolically breastfed Macbeth with their poisonous milk and achieved full effect from it, they vanish for good. This signals not only that their services with him from then on are ended, but also that they no longer are engaged in a symbolic dialogue with him. This emblematic conversation corresponds to an exchange of affections that had taken place between them throughout the play until act 4 scene 1, when the witches disappear forever after their magic ritual in their cottage.

Is it possible to consider Lady Macbeth also as a kind of witch or is she, through a feminist reading, a strong woman instead of an evil one, given that her husband is so weak and hesitating? According to Coe,

> *Macbeth* is the first play we have considered in which more than one villain has a prominent part. Since Macbeth is characterized as a good man at the beginning of the play, Shakespeare's problem is to present him as sorely tempted by the forces of evil (the witches), by the fate that brings Duncan to spend the night as his guest, and, most of all, by his wife. Certainly audiences in this or any other age would understand that a man's ambition − lawful or unlawful − might be shared or even stimulated by his wife. She lives for him and for his success. So what could be more plausible than characterizing Lady Macbeth as spurring on her husband's ambition, ignoble though it was? We do not have to believe that Lady Macbeth is actually as unwomanly or as fiendish as some of her outbursts suggest. We can understand those speeches as the goadings of a wife determined to advance her husband at whatever cost to herself or to him. (COE, 1957, p. 30)

Writing about *Macbeth* for me is like entering Sei Shonagon's[11] list of things that make the hearts beat faster and perhaps also the list of elegant things. Something in the way evil is approached and dealt with in this play has always intrigued me. It ranges from the fine treatment of the fact that evil can be so fascinating as to end up instigating some sort of identification, to the way it can be performed in an almost cutesy manner (*A little water clears us of this deed*: *How easy is it, then!*), although this play is usually staged, either in the theatre or in the cinema, in a rather macabre and grim way. Having said this, the following remark by De Quincey in his essay On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*, can be quite elucidating:

> The murderers, and the murder must be insulated − cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs − locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested − laid asleep − tranced − racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is, that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced: the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them. (DE QUINCEY, 1949, p. 1095)

Although people are ultimately aware that life is eventually short-circuited by death itself, or what lies beyond the death principle, making it something precious between two modes of non-being, evil can be seen, from a certain perspective, as a blot in existence, a phenomenon that may be overcome or even short-circuited by life itself.

Macbeth starts half-way through life and death drives (thunder, rain, lightening), slowly drawing to a scenario of destruction and insidious decadence, and it ends up with some sort of order restored, a promise of life again, even if for a short period of time and a limited geographical space. Evil in this play may therefore be taken as an end in itself, something that starts and ends without many supports. Nevertheless, if the economy of love[12] had taken and followed a different path, it might not have originated or at least have been used in a different form or for other purpose

2.2. How many children had Lady Macbeth?

[11] Sei Shonagon was a Japanese writer, poet and court lady who lived in the X and XI century in Japan during the Heian Period. She is the author of *The Pillow Book,* a book in which she describes court life and makes lists of things.

[12] I use the term 'economy of love' here as my own concept, and not in reference to a specific author.

Writing about the analysis of character in Shakespearean studies, Knights states that "The intensive study of Shakespeare's characters was not fully developed until the second half of the eighteenth century...But in the second half of the century character study became one of the main objects of Shakespeare's criticism." (KNIGHTS, 1933, p. 18) According to him,

> *Macbeth* is a statement of evil. I use the word "statement" (unsatisfactory as it is) in order to stress those qualities which are "non-dramatic", if drama is defined according to the canons of William Archer or Dr. Bradley. It also happens to be poetry, which means the apprehension of the whole can only be obtained from a lively attention to the parts, whether they have an immediate bearing on the main action or "illustrate character", or not. Two main themes, which can only be separated for the purpose of analysis, are blended in the play − the themes of the reversal of values and of unnatural disorder. And closely related to each is a third theme, that of the deceitful appearance, and consequent doubt, uncertainty and confusion. All this is obscured by false assumptions about the category "drama"; *Macbeth* has greater affinity with *The Waste Land* than with *The Doll's House*. (KNIGTHS, 1933, p. 34)

Knights argues that 18th century criticism of Shakespeare tended to consider the characters in his plays as if they corresponded to real people or could be read as such. According to this author, we should study the work of Shakespeare purely as poetry, even when analyzing his plays, and realize that characters are just characters that do not correspond to and cannot be treated as if they were flesh and blood people. Notwithstanding the quality of the argumentation of his work, the present thesis counters his position. By emphasizing that Shakespeare's characters can and should be read and interpreted as characters who are fictionalized representations of human beings and who, throughout the centuries, have acquired a similar status to that of real people, it asks itself the following question: is Shakespeare not conferring them their own symbolic life by fictionalizing them? The fundamental point of this thesis is that Shakespeare's characters present and possess a human substrate and foundation. After all, what are characters if not fictionalized representations of human beings? His characters in the plays become real inasmuch as they could correspond to any human being. Shakespeare, therefore, aligns fiction with reality. Once again, life imitates art. Who never felt a desire for power, jealousy or revolt for having been disdained, such as Lady Macbeth, Iago and Richard III respectively? Besides, if fiction were so distant and dissociate from reality, why then was there censure and book burning in different historical periods? If books were only paper, they would not cause so much

preoccupation to authoritarian rulers and their censors. As Mário Vargas Llosa states in his article "Lie and Truth in Fiction", published in the *New York Times Book Review*,

> If novels are true or false is so important for certain people as the fact of being good or bad, and many readers, consciously or unconsciously, link the two things. ... In fact, novels lie − they cannot do otherwise − but this is only part of the story. The other is that, through lie, they express a curious truth that can only be conveyed in a veiled and hidden way, disguising itself with what is not. ... Will this mean that a novel is synonymous with unreality? That the introspective pirates of Conrad, the languid aristocrats of Proust, the anonymous tormented little men of Kafka and the erudite metaphysical characters of Borges interest us or touch us because they have nothing to do with us and because it is impossible to identify their experiences with ours? Not at all. We must proceed cautiously because this road − of truth and falsity in the realm of fiction − is riddled with traps and any attractive oasis is, casually, a mirage. ... Romances are not written to recount life, but to transform it, adding something to it. (Translation mine) (LLOSA, 1984, p.1)

Likewise, Gramsci, writing about the first half of last century, questioned himself, from a Marxist perspective of the nation state and more-or-less 300 years after Shakespeare, in *Literature and National Life*, why Italy, unlike France, for example, did not have a national popular literature or Italian writers and thinkers who could articulate well this relationship between the people, culture and national awareness. According to him,

> The *Criticism* confounds several types of problem: of the no diffusion among the people of the so-called artistic literature and of the inexistence in Italy of a "popular" literature, the reason why newspapers are "forced" to supply themselves abroad. ...The *Criticism* does not even pose itself such problems; it cannot draw the "realistic" conclusions from the fact that, if the novels of a hundred years ago please, this means that the taste and ideology of the people are precisely those of a hundred years ago. ...What does it mean that the Italian people read preferentially foreign authors? It means that it *suffers* the intellectual and moral hegemony of the foreign intellectuals, that it feels more attached to the foreign intellectuals than the "patricians", i.e., that it does not exist in the country an intellectual and moral national block, neither hierarchical nor (even less) equalitarian. (GRAMSCI, 1978, p. 104-106)

Let us focus now on the play itself. *Macbeth*, also known as the Scottish play, starts with feminine voices. Although they correspond to the witches' foreshadowing of the play, they are by no means sweet voices of comfort or gentle reproach. They stand, as Hunter argued, midway between threat and ritual (HUNTER, 1974). At the time Shakespeare wrote his plays, full-grown big men would play the role of the witches who, in the play, have beards and young men, usually in their puberty, would play the role of

Lady Macbeth, for instance. Just like in the Kabuki theatre in Japan still nowadays, only men were allowed to perform in plays in England at Shakespeare's time. The witches' lines in the first and third scenes of the first act not only lull and cradle the reader into the play, its atmosphere and roller coaster effect, but also in a very indirect way question the feminine and masculine registers and why they matter so much for some people, as if in an attempt to turn them upside down. Throughout the plot, those voices continue to hold sway in the characters of the witches, Lady Macbeth and rightly desperate wives such as Lady Macduff herself.

Those voices are instigating and they arouse some sort of curiosity, especially the witches'. On the other hand, similar to the strong effect of a powerfully stimulating narcotic, they fill up like a shining balloon, only to end up bursting and bumping into thorny issues like fertility and death itself, potentially depressing aftermath effects. These terrains touch each of us personally and are dealt with distinctly according to our psychological background. They can also be partially or totally ignored, which may just as well be more often the case, for those who do not appreciate the play so much or decide to focus instead on other matters.

It is also important to bear in mind that the witches' discourse in the opening scene of *Macbeth*, while evoking the elements and forces of nature and working as a foreshadowing of what is to come and be dealt with throughout the play, is also a strong conveyor of states of mind, confusion and strong images, all of which could be translated as psychological depth. It not only starts at the end of a meeting, "Where shall we three meet again?", thus instigating our imagination and curiosity and pointing to the fact that in the play, and in our lives as well, there is always a pre-text − our name, surname, the expectations that are projected on us −, but it also introduces strange creatures such as the Graymalking, places like the heath and paddock and odd words such as the hurly-burly, a little bit like the 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' Borges refers to and Foucault mentions in his preface to *The Order of Things*. As Knights puts it,

> It is worth remarking that "Hurley-burley" implies more than "the tumult of sedition or insurrection." Both it and "when the Battaile's lost, and wonne" suggest the kind of metaphysical pitch-and-toss which is about to be played with good and evil. At the same time we hear the undertone of uncertainty: the scene opens with a question, and the second line suggests a region where the elements are disintegrated as they never are in nature; thunder and lightning are disjointed, and offered as alternatives. We should notice also that the scene expresses the same rhythm as the play as a whole: the general crystallizes into the immediate particular ("Where the place?" − "Upon the Heath." − "There to meet with Macbeth.") and then dissolves again into the general presentment of hideous gloom. All is done with the greatest speed, economy and precision. (KNIGHTS, 1933, p. 35)

This chapter, while drawing its title from Knights homonymous book, seeks to subvert the question *How many children had Lady Macbeth?* in its semantic elements through a different reading. How many children actually had Lady Macbeth, and were able to play with and act out the subtle divisions that separate and unite feminine and masculine, subverting the tyrannical conventions that solidify it in completely separate categories, thus creating an evil environment for anyone who dares transit in-between?

Is not our personality composed of masculine and feminine aspects and traits like the Chinese philosophy of yin and yang, and are they not interdependent and complementary in order to produce a healthy disposition? By placing evil in a single-minded woman with a masculine resolution, the author not only complexifies and plays with these attributes but also questions and blurs the millenary traditions that insist on defining and subsequently placing, separating and solidifying these attributes into static and strategic categories. Not being a conformist or accepting the values of the average man, Shakespeare is able to break and shatter "the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography" (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. xv), in this case the thought that bears the stamp of his age and his geography, as well as preceding and paving the way to subsequent philosophies and ways of seeing the world. Moreover, was Shakespeare, as a male writer, capable of creating feminine sensibility as, for example, the Brontë sisters were?

The lure of Lady Macbeth resides partially on the fact that she alone, like a unisex perfume or a strange dream, seems to be able to blend the categories of feminine and masculine into one and the same thing: she quickly subverts the dumb show of gender recognition by assuming masculine attributes while keeping some feminine traits and lethally pursuing her objectives, although being a woman things did look more flowery at first. She has, as De Quincey argues, the tiger's spirit which is not so awake in her husband, and are tigers not fascinating creatures in their own right? They are very individualistic, lonely hunters, less charismatic but also less arrogant than lions and just as dangerous, strong and malign as the latter. We watch felines move elegantly and unconcerned come rain or shine, be it in the zoo or in the wild, without giving out golden stars of satisfaction as if they also revealed a trace of our personality as well.

I would go one step further and argue that Lady Macbeth is a mixture of the snake and the tiger. Therefore, she is really sexuality in a negative way. Her aggressiveness is misplaced or badly channeled into negative things. She exchanges sex for power and her milk for gall which raises yet another question: if snakes are evil but also in

psychoanalytical terms represent sexuality, just as a tiger or lion may represent what we do with our aggressiveness, cannot we argue that our sexual instinct if not bad, is or might at least be somehow selfish? Do not we strive for pleasure without necessarily taking into consideration other people's feelings just as the baby's id seeks pleasure without taking others into account? As Bradley puts it,

> ... in certain respects *Macbeth* recalls *Hamlet* rather than *Othello* and *King Lear*. In the heroes of both plays the passage from thought to a critical resolution and action is difficult, and excites the keenest interest. In neither play, as in *Othello* and *King Lear*, is painful pathos one of the main effects. Evil, again, though it shows in *Macbeth* a prodigious energy, is not the icy or stony inhumanity of Iago or Goneril; and, as in *Hamlet*, it is pursued by remorse. Finally, Shakespeare no longer restricts the action to purely human agencies, as in the two preceding tragedies; portents once more fill the heavens, ghosts rise from their graves, an unearthly light flickers about the head of the doomed man. The special popularity of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* is due in part to some of these common characteristics, notably to the fascination of the supernatural, the absence of the spectacle of extreme undeserved suffering, the absence of characters which horrify and repel and yet are destitute of grandeur. The reader who looks unwillingly at Iago gazes at Lady Macbeth in awe, because though she is dreadful she is also sublime. The whole tragedy is sublime. (BRADLEY, 1986, p. 277)

Lady Macbeth is in some ways similar to the character Nagiko, starred by Vivan Wu in Peter Greenaway's movie *The Pillow Book*, who is so deeply impressed by her father's ritual of painting on her face and body Japanese greetings on her childhood birthdays that she goes on, in her adult life, looking for lovers who are good calligraphers or simply good lovers. As she puts it in the film,

> In remembrance of my father, and in memory of Sei Shonagon, I was determined to take lovers who would remind me of the pleasures of calligraphy. I could not be sure which was more important: an indifferent calligrapher who was a good lover or an excellent lover who was a poor calligrapher. (*The Pillow Book*, 1996)

Similar to Nagiko, who is sexually aggressive and daring in her quest for lovers who, consciously or unconsciously for her, will remind her of her father, Lady Macbeth does not conform to her gender roles, attributions and expectations by acting the way she feels like and not obeying pre-determined guidelines, thus subverting what was expected from her as a woman and from women in general at the time the play takes place and when Shakespeare wrote it.

Is not Lady Macbeth, through a feminist reading, a strong woman married to a man who does not know what to do? She is a tough woman who almost appears to be good at the beginning of the play if compared to the ambivalence and malaise of

Macbeth, who is surrounded by a miasma. Besides, is not precisely this miasma upon which the witches operate on him thus displaying a truly wicked spirit? Is that not also similar to depression which seldom has a definite cause? If Lady Macbeth shows a strong side of her personality at the beginning of the play, her husband is a man with little or no principles at all, who is easily led by feminine voices.

Written some time before *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* paves the way and stands at the threshold to the more subjective exploration of evil and the individual confronted with difficult choices, as well as the exploration of millenary distinctions of gender roles found in *Macbeth*. In these two characters, Lady Macbeth and her husband, Shakespeare plays to an utmost degree the construction, characterization and expectations of gender roles of his time which are still present nowadays. The commonsense sentences one may hear at a party, for example, such as "he is so ugly, but he is a man of character" or "he is not easily led by the pressure of women" are easily subverted by an average man who is spurred by his wife's ambition and the lure of the witches' discourse. As the play evolves, we notice him do anything to achieve and maintain his goal, which is to become the king, aided by his wife. The things he does, the way he does them, one could argue, are not very becoming of a man of his status, if we are to rely on a certain construction and expectation of his gender role, and yet this play is so alluring because we do not always identify and conform to what is commonly associated with our gender.

Going back to our main focus, as Islam points out about Lady Macbeth in his article "Nature of Evil in *Macbeth*",

> But it is true that Lady Macbeth is not naturally deprived of consciousness (any more than Satan was). There is in her some trace of human feelings which accounts for her later failure. Her human feelings which lay way inside her, dormant, sometimes come out and make her weak. The labour she wields to subdue her husband’s resistance is also to subdue her own resistance to evil. (ISLAM, 2010-2011, p.189)

Another aspect of this woman that can also be alluring and thought provoking is that she commits evil acts intertwined by a nonchalant and almost cute attitude which covers and conceals a lot of blood that has been or is yet to be shed. It is important to bear in mind that, like the snake she alludes to and is present in the Genesis, she is the one who induces her husband to commit, and later become, her accomplice in crime. In Lady Macbeth, and Macbeth as well, the author presents us two minds torn with repentance after perpetrating a crime and indecision before committing it, probably because both have conflicting elements such as child and adult features, as well as

masculine and feminine, weak and strong, healthy and pathological sides. Following this line of thought, further on Islam argues that,

> Evil engulfs everything and everyone, even a strong woman like Lady Macbeth. At the start of the play, Lady Macbeth seems to have a very strong character - almost stronger than Macbeth's - but by the end she is reduced to being afraid of the dark. At the beginning she is Macbeth's "dearest partner of greatness" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I.V.11-12), but at the end she is his "fiend-like queen" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*. V.IX.35). She has a lust for power, and it is her goading that leads Macbeth to seize the throne of Scotland by murdering Duncan. Lady Macbeth is unable, however, to confront the evil she has unleashed and is driven mad. She is often seen as a symbol of evil like the witches, but at the end she falls victim to evil just like her husband. (IDEM, 2010-2011, p. 189-190)

Lady Macbeth seems to possess a cultural capital that both Iago and Richard III lack and at the same time are conscious of it. She is soft-spoken, sinuous in her movements and actions and even charming in her sleepwalking scene. She corresponds to Cassio and Desdemona in *Othello* in terms of refinement, even though she can be brusque at times when she tells her husband what to do without further ado. Her evilness is elegant and black as the night, although the context of the play does not allow her to be street smart as in contemporary times or give more details about her life. As Tom Hiddleston states,

> 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)

Lady Macbeth's paroxysm during her sleepwalking scene, when she is already crazy and speaking out her thoughts, is quite relevant here. No longer passing judgment in her sleazy ways she utters, among other things, that 'The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?' (*Macbeth*, Act V, Sc. 1) The Thane of Fife is Macduff and his wife is Lady Macduff who, by this time, has already been assassinated along with her son in the play by Macbeth's assassins. Not only does she stand for the nurturing mother who cares for her children but also for a less ambitious character who acts as a foil to Lady Macbeth. Macduff, who had deserted his wife in the aftermath of the regicide, assassinates Macbeth at the end of the play because, contrary to the prophesy of the witches that Macbeth would not be killed by anyone who had been born of a woman, he was born of cesarean as he was '...from his mother's womb untimely ripped'. (*Macbeth*,

Act V, Sc. 8) Therefore, Lady Macbeth is curious and carried away by her own conscience and subconscious forebodings to wonder what ultimately became of her peer, just as we sometimes do regarding other people who regulate or differentiate a bit from us regarding age, social status and gender and we have not seen for some time. As Islam argues about the sleepwalking scene,

> Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene is a splendid demonstration of the fatal workings of evil upon a human mind. The sleepwalking shows that the murders weigh heavily upon her mind and allow her no rest, even in her sleep. Her conscience has become a source of torment to her, and she is afraid of darkness. (ISLAM, 2010-2011, p. 190)

Different from characters such as Madame Bovary or Anna Karienina, both protagonists of the homonymous books by Flaubert and Tolstoi, Lady Macbeth is emblematic of evil like a flash of light or lightning and in a rather cosmopolitan way, since she is there without many, if any, props or common references one could allude to. Although in the two previous books evil is not really at stake, we know too little about Lady Macbeth's life and background if compared with those two other characters mentioned. No small talk or lighting up a cigarette in *Macbeth*, no slow flow heat of the narrative, since it is a play, but just the quick sliding of action, some cinematographic takes and turns and the feeling that more urgent matters pressure there. Moreover, there is no extramarital relationships in *Macbeth*, even though the theme of betrayal and deception pervades the play at a deeper level, or running into debts and references to a provincial background or of a specific aristocratic class. However, all those three characters have something in common: they end up taking their own lives.

As if that were not enough, Lady Macbeth is emblematic of the empty house syndrome, when a dinner, party or gathering is over and we remember and recapitulate how much of that was social convention and representation or just genuine affection and reciprocal love. Were we in our natural element or just acting out what other people expect us to be like? Did we feel beholden to others, were there vested interests, awkward moments, or was it just real, albeit possibly twisted love, mixing again memory and desire? How much of our relationships with other people are real and how often do we end up wearing a mask and not displaying our real feelings? Likewise, how often, metaphorically speaking, do we try to wear clothes that are too large for us, like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth trying to be king and queen and not having the stature and emotional structure for this.

Biological and social psychology oftentimes find themselves on strife. Are we a blank page onto which our history is written upon or do we come with a genetic make-up that predisposes us to react and absorb experience and reality in different ways, according to each individual's genetic code and predisposition and what she or he will come across in life, thus forming our ego? Should we accept Freud's theory that five percent of us is genetic and ninety-five percent cultural? As Corso and Corso puts it,

> A son comes to the world with a series of genetic characteristics, soon he will be invested with a work of personalization on the part of the parents, who will make of him their legitimate young one. This is so because we have language and, different from the animals, we receive a name and a subjective content when we are born. (CORSO & CORSO, 2011, p. 214)

Evil leaves us naked, wondering how much of us is representation and exposing ourselves to our very own wounds, forebodings and unresolved problems. Analyzing and writing about evil will never provide us with the bird's view from the top of a mountain. Rather, it corresponds to a dive into the depths of the human soul, which may easily prove to be very contradictory or even illogical. It acts out the very twists and turns of the soul and its multiple facets and patterns, possible reactions to the violence and contingencies of the world itself. In the end, we might be confronted with the terrifying sea snake, albeit having consciously or unconsciously tried as hard as possible to avoid it, because, after all, it is just evil in its pure form, rather than come across the beautiful shoal of fish we had so willingly hoped for.

All those things in mind, some of the questions which arise are whether moral standards are applicable to everyone and how much of art and literature reach us unconsciously rather than rationally. Art and literature usually deal with incongruous elements: dysfunctional families, impossible or unrequited love, unbridled ambitions. If we add cinema to the list of art and literature, taking into account good and well elaborated films, we can say that these three fields or categories can be, and usually are, good conveyors of images. As Hunter states about *Macbeth*,

> ... as a crime-does-not-pay story it is less concerned with the uncovering of the criminal *to himself*. 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 Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth* is the one most obsessively concerned with evil. (HUNTER, 1974, p. 7)

A good example of an excellent cinematographic production is the movie *Lady Macbeth*, released in 2016 and directed by William Oldroyd. Although some critics and even the director and the main actress claim that it has nothing to do with Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, I totally disagree. I believe it is a mixture of *Wuthering Heights* and *Macbeth* itself. In the movie one can notice, with an alert mind, all the micro and macro violence and damages that an established order, in this case a patriarchic one, can cause in an unwary individual. The main protagonist of the film, who bears an homophonous name in relation to the main character of *Wuthering Heights*, Katherine is sold into marriage to a cold, unyielding and ruthless family who expect her to attend the mass and provide sex to her master. She quickly subverts the game when her husband sets off on a trip by dating a servant of the family and killing her father-in-law and her husband when he returns. She then continues her evil spree and ruins the lives of many others. Although in Shakespeare Lady Macbeth ends up repenting her crimes and going crazy and ultimately killing herself, in that film the protagonist is not really punished and the film ends with her seated on a couch, all dressed up, and staring at us, albeit alone in the house.

One can argue that some European movies, and Brazilian and oriental ones as well to a certain extent and from a different perspective, have played out to a maximum degree the comings and goings, agreements and disagreements and crossings and intersections of the soul. In this context, movies finish in awkward circumstances and locations, such as in cafés or on the streets, and not rarely in the middle of unsolved situations, leaving things in the air and making concepts such as good and evil sound almost irrelevant and superfluous. Similarly, Beckett's plays, by acting out longings, cravings and desires which are too pressing and almost primordial to human beings, is able to transcend the categories of good and evil by enacting even more primitive feelings while at the same time portraying the absurdity of life and its frightening finitude.

Contrary to the approach with which Shakespeare deals with evil, in which its perpetrators must be punished, usually with death, and with a few exceptions, and evil has to be partially or totally eradicated, in the movie mentioned before evil follows a flawless script and shines with aesthetic beauty. No good guys trying to save an awkward situation or condescending people, no escape for small creatures trapped by the serpent which reigns freely and lethally.

Katherine's sinuous and feminine movements portray a protagonist who never plays the victim but also has no remorse for others. She kills and has intercourse with her lover like someone who knows no boundaries. In this sense, one might be led to

identify more easily, enthusiastically and intellectually with her, but perhaps less excitedly and terrified than if it were a man who did the same things.

2.3. Treason, Treachery or Betrayal?

The theme of treason pervades *Macbeth* from beginning to end. Although the three words of the title of this chapter all amount to the same translation in Portuguese, *traição*, we should try to differentiate between their resonance and meanings. High treason, for example, corresponds to the crime or offense of trying to overthrow the government of one's country, especially by attempting to assassinate the sovereign or of assisting its enemies in war. Treachery, in its turn, refers to the violation of allegiance or trust of another person. Betrayal, on the other hand, can be understood as being unfaithful to or intentionally revealing to others a shared secret.

These three words do overlap with each other and often can be and are used to refer to the same things, although I take treason to be more akin to deception, i.e., the act of deceiving someone and not corresponding to her or his expectations and needs. In this sense, here it is a question of differentiating a shade of, say, different kinds of blue or blue and green when both colors intersect or overlap and which may go unnoticed by some or be quickly recognized by others.

When the practical dad or mom gives a simple answer to a complicated question or tries to put the inquisitive children to bed by saying it is time to sleep, some of them may be left wanting and expecting more. Light and at the same time deep is the sleep of those who do not over think. However, and this theme is present in the four most famous Shakespearean tragedies, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*, the theme of treason and deception starts in childhood, for some men, when they are expelled from their mother's body, betrayed by them a second time when, after having read them a book for children, they go to their bedroom and have sex with their father and, finally, when they have to turn to their mothers for help in adulthood, thus feeling and being dependent upon them and unable to lead what some may deem a normal life.

Writing about the dependence that a baby has upon a woman and how this resonates in some Shakespearean tragedies, American author and poetess Sprengnether points out that,

> If it is birth itself, the condition of owing one's life to a woman and the ambivalence attending an awareness of dependence on women in general, which structures much of Lear's relation to his daughters, *Macbeth* may be

> read in terms of a systematic attempt on the part of the hero to deny such an awareness. The world constructed by Macbeth attempts to deny not only the values of trust and hospitality, perceived as essentially feminine, but to eradicate femininity itself. Macbeth reads power in terms of a masculine mystique that has no room for maternal values, as if the conscious exclusion of these values would eliminate all conditions of dependence, making him in effect invulnerable. To be born of a woman, as he reads the witches' prophecy, is to be mortal. Macbeth's program of violence, involving murder and pillage in his kingdom and the repression of anything resembling compassion or remorse within, is designed, like Coriolianus's desperate militarism, to make him author of himself. (SPRENGNETHER, 1986, p. 253-4)

Therefore, one can notice a subtle difference between a wife or husband sexually betrayed by her or his partner, who is seeing another person, terrible as it is, and the relationship between two people, one of which relies more on the other, who may end up not corresponding to her or his expectations. This can happen between children and their parents, spouses, lovers or even friends, affecting more a certain unconscious structure from an early age or rekindling wounds in adulthood. The famous cold shoulder: few things sting so much as indifference or being deleted from someone's life, and yet it is a more-or-less common thing. Besides, however affectionate a relationship between an infant and his or her mother may be or have been, psychology has already pointed out that this relationship frames the child's perception of the world. Nevertheless, this may sound a bit like sugar water in a world where broader themes focusing on more humanitarian and pressing causes such as social inclusion, fight against hunger, racism and feminism are at stake. It is in this context that Sprengnether concludes,

> Macbeth's relentless pursuit of power masks his insecurities, his anxieties, and ultimately his impotence. *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 defense against femininity leads to his destruction. Macbeth's attempt to avoid the perception of Lear that "we cry that we are come / to this great stage of fools" (IV.v.i.182-83), that the human infant is radically defenseless and dependent on the nurturance of a woman, gradually empties his life of meaning, leading to his perception of it as "a tale / Told by an idiot... / Signifying nothing" (V.v.26-28). 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. (IDEM, 1986, p. 254)

Greenblatt concurs with Sprengnether's argument when he states that:

> The real instigator of the murder plot is not Macbeth but, rather, his wife. She anticipates resistance, for she knows her husband well and fears that he lacks key elements of the tyrannical personality. His nature is "too full o' th'

> milk of human kindness" (I.5.I5) to do what has to be done. It is she who comes up with plans for what she calls "This night's great business" (I.5.66); she who instructs her husband how to comport himself; she who plies the royal bedroom attendants with drink. Macbeth remains full of doubt and hesitation. After all, Duncan is the king; and Macbeth, his host, "should against his murderer shut the door,/ Not bear the knife myself" (I.7.15-16). ...Lady Macbeth's gibes about her husband's manhood − his ability to be the same in act as he is in desire − bring up to the surface a recurrent implication in Shakespearean tyranny. The tyrant, *Macbeth* and other plays suggest, is driven by a range of sexual anxieties: a compulsive need to prove his manhood, dread of impotence, a nagging apprehension that he will not be found sufficiently attractive or powerful, a fear of failure. Hence the penchant for bullying, the vicious misogyny, and the explosive violence. Hence, too, the vulnerability to taunts, especially those bearing a latent or explicit sexual charge. From the moment the Weird Sisters greeted him, Macbeth has been the embodiment of ambivalence, but his wife ruthlessly insists that he has irrevocably committed himself and cannot now back away. (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 98 & 99)

This feeling of frailty felt by Macbeth in relation to women is analogous to what happens to Lady Macbeth, i.e., the transformation she imposes on herself to unsex her before committing the crime of assassinating the king, whom she finds very similar to her father while he is sleeping, thus making her hesitate to perpetrate the crime. Moreover, when Macbeth starts feeling like a man is precisely the same time she is hanging her boots on sexual matters. Once again we see in those two characters a complexification of the categories of feminine and masculine and Shakespeare's cleverness, even if unwittingly, in creating them.

Lady Macbeth, who kept her cool and was the most resolute in the couple's relationship in the beginning, teeters at the prospect of actually committing murder when she states that "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done' t" (*Macbeth*, Act II, Sc. 2) and further on remarking that "My hands are of your color, but I shame to wear a heart so white" (IDEM, Act II, Sc. 2). If we associate daggers and knives with implicit sexual penetration and orgasmic pleasure in murderous acts, we may understand this uneasy rapport between a powerful man and a woman seeking power for her and her husband. The film version of *Macbeth*, directed by Polanski, deals with this question by showing Macbeth ultimately committing the assassination of the king in his bed. The king, interpreted by Nicholas Selby, already an elderly man, receives Macbeth under the sheets with some surprise. Macbeth pulls the sheets in order to thrust the dagger in his chest and kill him. His greying hair and his rather rough face matched with his now bare chest could be interpreted as emanating some sort of masculinity difficult to match by the cowardly Macbeth or his wife. Therefore, I believe it deals very well with this tense

"sexual" encounter between two males made explicit by the cinema, one of whom is vying for the other's position in society.

Only the witches, in Polanski's reading of Shakespeare in his film version of *Macbeth*, display their sexuality more freely by performing naked the magic ritual around the cauldron, making jokes about Macbeth which are also present in the original play and at the moment one of them lifts her skirt up and shows her intimate parts when Macbeth starts posing them too many questions. As Knights argues,

> The murder of Banquo, like the murder of Duncan, is presented in its aspect as a violation of natural continuity and natural order. Macbeth will "cancell and teare to pieces that great Bond" which keeps him pale. "Bond" has a more than general significance. The line is clearly associated with Lady Macbeth's "But in them, Natures Coppie's not eterne," and the full force of the words is only brought out if we remember that when Shakespeare wrote them, copyholders formed numerically the largest land-holding class in England whose appeal was always to "immemorial antiquity" and "times beyond the memory of man." The Macbeth-Banquo opposition is emphasized when we learn that Banquo's line will "stretch out to the cracke of Doome" (Act IV, Scene I, 117). Macbeth is cut off from the natural sequence, "He has no children" (Act IV, Scene III, 217), he is a "Monster" (Act V, Scene VII, 54). Macbeth's isolation is fully brought out in the last Act. (KNIGHTS, 1933, p. 45)

This argument put forward by Knights corroborates and reinforces the idea of imbalance, unnaturalness, disorder and disruption arising from the theme of the play and the development of its plot. This overturning of values is similar to the overturning of gender roles when a man or a woman decides to cross-dress or assume traits usually associated with the opposite gender or when children pretend to be and act out roles of the opposite gender.

3. IAGO'S EVIL INDIVIDUALISM

One of the most dreadful and at the same time fascinating Shakespearean villains is Iago. Contrary to Richard III, who finds in his deformity the perfect excuse for an unscrupulous conduct which works as a compensatory mechanism and does not take others into account, Iago produces his own venom without a more palpable external reason, apart from his paranoia, which could at least be a little instructive as to why he acts in such an evil way. If we were to define Iago in a few words which summarize him, they would be envy, resentment and a certain eeriness that evades common understanding.

Why then did Shakespeare, as an author, create characters such as Iago, the Weird Sisters or Lady Macbeth? The first and most obvious answer that comes to mind is that, as a writer, he needed to earn a living, was serious about it and an efficient way to do so, in the world of theatre, was to create strong characters. Unlike other writers who finished their lives destitute and only became famous after death, Shakespeare made all the arrangements and necessary effort not to end up in this situation. So far, so good. Adjacent to this idea, however, is that, similar to strong dreams that keep nagging at us or stay at the back of our minds until they are elucidated, these characters mark us in different ways and produce a lasting and ensuing effect. They also do what we may have unconsciously wished to do at certain times, but would never or rarely dare to. In the specific case of Iago, we can also take him as an alert that, in life, we may come across evil people who, as practical jokers or not, may do us some harm: a red light for both audiences and readers to stay alert and not trust everyone.

Nevertheless, evil flows like a snake swimming in deep uncharted waters. It neither has a definite purpose nor a visible cause. How can one be original when so much has been said and written about Shakespeare, and also on the topic of evil in his plays and characters, without repeating oneself or sounding dull? I believe that, perhaps, "all" has been said and written about this subject, but not by everybody. The way something is analyzed, narrated or explained by a different person may always offer a new or different dimension and perspective to the subject, as well as a contribution. In other words, the way things are said is as important as, and an essential part of, what is said.

In this sense, working with Shakespeare's studies nowadays seems to me less similar to the act of translating than interpreting. It feels rather like entering the competitive, restrictive and hyper world of interpreters, who have to transpose meanings

and ideas − in Shakespeare's case, from an era to another, albeit not in real time − without compromising the original source language / corpus / idea, but at the same time condensing, reinventing and reorganizing it a little for a different scenario and worldview, bearing in mind that something is always lost or left out in the process. Different time zones, distinct societies. It also means starting from a lower position and tentatively trying to make alliances, for fear someone may be working, with something relevant to say, while another person is at home out of work.

But let us get started with Iago. This villain, like so many other Shakespearean villains, symbolizes the beginning of individualism, which is something that starts in the Modern Era, and precedes the subjectivism of the Contemporary Era. A more-or-less silent killer like Claudius, Iago does not seem to have a real motive for being evil and acting the way he does, thus causing others a certain state of bewilderment and shock. The seeking of a motive for acting in an evil way is Iago's very motive. (cf. RAATZSCH, 2009) According to this author, Iago's deeds cannot be justified, but they can nevertheless be defended, since there is a logic to it. According to Bradley,

> To the thinking mind the divorce of unusual intellect from goodness is a thing to startle; and Shakespeare clearly felt it so. The combination of unusual intellect with extreme evil is more than startling, it is frightful. It is rare; but it exists; and Shakespeare represented it in Iago. But the alliance of evil like Iago's with *supreme* intellect is an impossible fiction; and Shakespeare's fictions were truth. (BRADLEY, 1986, p.194)

Among all of Shakespeare's villains, Iago is probably the one most concerned with destruction for destruction's sake and the annihilation of others. This makes him similar to the death drive principle elaborated by Freud, through the destruction he seeks of everything outside the self or ego:

> If there is any reason why Iago is called "Iago" (and not "Othello," "Cassio," or whatever else), it could be because of the resemblance between the word "Iago" and the word "ego." For just the word "ego" is connected with the concept of egoism, contemplation of Iagos's actions, too, leads to a concept − the concept of Iago − which resembles the concept of egoism. (RAATZSCH, 2009, p.1)

More than just the death principle, or rather similar to it, Iago enjoys, in the sense of the *jouissance* or almost sexual pleasure, the destruction and annihilation of others. Iago's pleasure, in this sense, is fully consummated whenever he kills someone. Unlike sex, which strives for a life principle that may never be totally consummated because of the death drive itself, Iago uses all his vital energy scheming and finally managing to kill

others. Moreover, this destructive impulse is topped with an uncanny pride, of someone who has been able to subvert the established order of things without being caught out. As Sears argues,

> Out of Iago's self-interest grows also the second aspect of his evil nature. He must not only destroy all obstacles to his will, but he is proud of the cunning with which he devises the kind of destruction that will bring him the keenest delight. Cassio must feel the disgrace of losing the lieutenantship through his own fault. He can blame no one but himself. (SEARS, 1974, p. 206)

When Roderigo tells Iago that "I would not follow him then" (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 1) referring to Iago's military obligation to serve Othello as his subordinate, Iago exclaims in an almost prancing way that,

> O, sir, content you.
> I follow him to serve my turn upon him
> We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
> Cannot be truly followed. You shall mark
> Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
> That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
> Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
> For naught but provender; and when he is old,
> cashiered
> Whip me such honest knaves! Others there are
> Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,
> Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
> And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
> Do well thrive by them, and when they have lined
> their coats,
> Do themselves homage. These fellows have some
> soul;
> And such a one do I profess myself. For, sir,
> It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
> Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago.
> In following him, I follow but myself.
> Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
> But seeming so, for my peculiar end;
> For when my outward action doth demonstrate
> The native act and figure of my heart
> In complement extern, 'tis not long after
> But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
> For daws to peck at; I (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 1)

When further on in the play Roderigo asks Iago "What will I do, think'st thou?" (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3) because he is pondering committing suicide due to his unrequited love for Desdemona and the loss of some of his possessions, Iago does not hesitate in telling him "Why, go to bed and sleep." (IDEM, Act I, Sc. 3). Not only does Iago know by then that his first victim is a fainthearted character, making him regard giving him extra

pain and death as something natural and easy, as if he cared much for other people's lives, but also this sentence points out to all the times one cannot sleep because of torments or sheer excitement. Therefore, if pronounced slowly and with the right intonation by a good actor who makes use of performance choice it comes across as at least a bit ironic precisely when a person is hopeless about life, leading us to think about what makes us hold on to life or, in other words, feel ourselves alive and kicking.

What are the memories that cling? When do stories begin, where from, and when do they end? Should we rather consider them and our lives an ongoing process instead? When and where do stories intersect, converge or diverge and how does this affect them and us? Are we the masters of our lives or just a story telling a story? Are stories engrained in the very nature of language or do they belong to the realm of images and dreams? Cannot we compare our unconscious to a story trying to materialize and is not that the reason why we dream every night? Is it not something remarkable that some stories, habits and significant human happenings, traits and sayings percolate into some people, while in others it just passes by or is simply overlooked? In German there is a word that stands for a usually casual or accidental encounter, i.e., a *Begegnung*. As if we were constantly coming across or bumping into different people, cultures and ultimately our unconscious, which never gives a direct access to it by our own conscience, but has to go through an intermediary zone of dreams, jokes and slips, and frequently plays tricks on it.

The casual encounter between Iago and Roderigo at the opening of the play starts in what is presumably the middle of a dialogue and already signalizes Iago's methods and some of his hidden intentions. Writing about the construction of the characters in Shakespeare's dramaturgy Palfrey states that Iago, who he considers an elusive man,

> ...discovers his own substance via serendipitous cue-taking. It is his basic animating trait. We witness it in the self-dialogue of soliloquy; we see it still more in his dialogue with others. He catches whatever is floating upon the air, and this somehow becomes him. The play's very first speech establishes the terms: 'I take it much unkindly/That though, Iago, who hast had my purse/As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.' Iago has taken Roderigo's money, but his 'purse' is more than that. It is also Roderigo's brains and balls: the 'strings' Iago pulls are those of his marionette. Iago is the puppeteer behind the curtain, stealing the mind and animating the body. This kind of relationship recurs again and again. Iago moves in and out of those he encounters, drawing from them, combining with them, taking them hostage. Within moments, he is insinuated into another, who again becomes his agent. It is in this sense that Iago can be talked of as devilish. A power of invisible habitation makes him a kind of male succubus, feeding on his own sex. (PALFREY, 2011, p. 325)

The thin line of friendship between these two characters resides solely in Roderigo's purse, stolen by Iago. He assuages his first victim that he will keep it to give its contents as gifts for wooing Desdemona and making Roderigo capable of having her (sexually). Writing about Iago's words and imageries, Charney argues that "like many of Shakespeare's villains, Iago's talk is very sexual, although he doesn't seem to have any concept of love" (CHARNEY, 2013, p.xiv) and that "Iago's vocabulary is highly eroticized, mostly directed at Desdemona, and we remember that he is trying to convince not only Othello of Desdemona's whorishness but also Roderigo and Cassio" (IDEM, 2013, p.15). Going back to their frail relationship, Iago probably fooled Roderigo making him believe he found his purse lost by him when in fact he actually stole it or argued it was abandoned by thieves. However, nothing in the play makes this explicit and the audience or the readers have to infer that from the text. According to Charney,

> The first point to consider is Iago's absolute contempt for Roderigo, which echoes Sir Tobey's relation with Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night*. We hear again Sir Toby's constant reminder "Though hadst need send for more money" (2.4.182-83) in Iago's repeated refrain: "Put money in thy purse" (1.3.335), which occurs four more times in this same speech and is echoed in the first line of Iago's soliloquy: "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse" (374). Iago wants to be sure that the audience knows that Roderigo is not his friend and that his supposed support of Roderigo's wooing of Desdemona is done solely for monetary gain. Iago is eager to convince the audience of his absolute contempt for Roderigo and of his own superiority to such a fool. ...Part of Iago's disdain for everyone, especially his enemies, comes from his feeling of great superiority. (IDEM, 2013, p.1)

Iago's infinite enjoyment of destruction, and his not so veiled pride in it, reaches and touches a hidden chord on us, teaching us about the darker side of life and sending us back to our own not always well solved grudges and spites, not to mention our open wounds. That is one of the possible reasons which makes Brennan argue that "Shakespeare touches many times on an array of possible motives but they are only threads in the complex web of Iago's evil nature." (BRENNAN, 1988, p. 145) Whereas Lady Macbeth is evil for the sake of ambition and Richard III has a physical problem and uses evil as a means of achieving and maintaining political power, Iago is probably the most viper-like character in Shakespearean drama, making Lodovico exclaim "Where is that viper? Bring the villain forth" (*Othello*, Act V, Sc. 2) after Iago's scam is finally brought to light. Not even Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, but perhaps the Jew in *Oliver Twist*, and the possible exceptions of Richard III and Claudius to a lesser extent, manage to be as evil as Iago. Therefore, much as Iago may possess brightness as

mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, he is also a horrifying villain who sends us back to our primordial fears and obscure nooks and crannies. As Brennan explains,

> What makes Iago unbearable is his ability to combine two roles very familiar to an Elizabethan audience. He is very much like the intermediary, commentator friends, those blunt, honest figures who try to make the tragic heroes see the true nature of their situations – Enobarbus, Kent, Lear's Fool, Menenius Agrippa, Apemantus, Mercutio. He is a soldier, a rough diamond who is foul-mouthed, cynical, and has a low opinion of women. Because he admits his limitations he is trusted. The role of blunt soldier and honest friend conceals a descendant of the Vice-figure, a man who is an amoral rag-bag of confused motivations invested with a cynicism so profound that he must pervert or destroy any sign of virtue. (BRENNAN, 1988, p. 144)

Although Shakespearean villains have reasons they are not reasonable. In this sense, one could argue that nothing justifies being and acting in an evil way. Iago does not explain his reasons very well, i.e., why he does what he does. The following chapter will deal with the hitherto unknown reasons and motives for Iago being and acting in such an evil way from a different approach, since his goals and intentions are from the outset more easily recognizable and pinned down.

3.1. Iago's Reasons

If one is allowed to play with words and contradictions are welcomed as necessary elements of an argumentative process, bearing in mind a certain reference to meaning, it can be said that Iago does have his reasons. Are they superficial reasons hiding something he would not like to be conspicuous to others and himself? It could be so. What are his reasons then, and do they differ from his main driving force, if it is the case that there is one?

The question of evil already appears in classical Greek philosophy. In the dialogue *Protagoras*, written by Plato who lived from 428/427 to 348-347 B.C. in Athens, Socrates reflects on, among other things, whether virtue can be taught or not. Being or doing something wrong, he ponders, is not related to an essential evilness, an enjoyment, inclination or longing to do evil for its own sake, but because of sheer lack of knowledge. For him, having control over oneself equals wisdom, whereas surrendering to oneself is the same as being ignorant. This is resonated by Aristotle's opening phrase in *Nicomachean Ethics*, written in 350 B.C, in which he argues 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, 2019, p.1).

If both philosophers argue that nobody intends evil voluntarily or what they consider as being evil, how can we understand Iago's actions as aiming at some good, when they only aim at and seek destruction? Is not this villain, therefore, according to both Greek philosophers' logic, Shakespeare's most intriguing, sinister and eerie villain? Acting in an evil way for both philosophers is not part of human nature which can only serve to corroborate this view. Besides, Iago's evil feats are means and ends in themselves. They are a means of achieving what he wants but, at the same time, an end to his overflow of evilness, since they are only there to give pleasure and satisfaction to himself with the suffering and pain of others, and secondarily to achieve something which is very similar to destruction.

Plato and Aristotle can be seen as having an optimistic view of human nature. However, the course of history and psychoanalysis have shown us that human beings also have destructive impulses related to the death drive. How else could we explain wars, atrocities, the holocaust and other extremely evil events?

Bearing all those things in mind and going back to the individual level, Iago haunts us to the bones to the present day. He alone represents evil in *Othello* in a very similar way that the Weird Sisters represent it in *Macbeth*. These characters stand for a kind of evil or wickedness that is proud of the damages it creates in a detached and cool way and that can never be completely eradicated, even after the plays end. They point to the fact that evil has always existed in different cultures and societies, be it depicted or materialized from internal or external sources, and that it is something we have to deal with and learn to accept as a constant possibility or a potential ghost even within ourselves. Not by chance, Iago exclaims to Roderigo that "Thou know'st we work by wit, and not by witchcraft; and wit depends on dilatory time." (*Othello*, Act II, Sc. 3)

An exploration about the relationship between Iago and the death drive elaborated by Freud is pertinent here,

> 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. (OLIVEN, 2015, p. 81)

Iago bears all the prejudices of the Middle Ages which still resonate in our own era and that are only now, at times tentatively at others in a straightforward way, endeavored to be tackled by certain segments of society. He is a man who simply cannot stand that the Moor, a man who climbed to that high position coming from the outside of that milieu, has a higher rank than him and a wife he considers superior to his. He treats his victims with disdain, tries to conceal his hatred of Othello by acting in a cordial way towards him while trying adamantly to harm him in a deeper way. He also treats and refers to Desdemona and his wife, Emilia, as whores and Bianca, the real prostitute in the play, as nothing less than rubbish.

Charney argues, in his book *Shakespeare's Villains*, that "Iago is Shakespeare's archetypical villain, who defines the parameters of what it means to be a villain". (CHARNEY, 2013, p.1) According to the same author, "Iago is ruthless and sociopathic in his utter disregard for human life. Like most of Shakespeare's villains, he is a killer and only interested in his own success − his "gain" − even if it involves the deaths of Roderigo and Cassio." (IDEM, 2013, p.2) Charney goes on to argue that Iago's mistrusts and misgivings, for example, that Othello and Cassio are cuckolding him with his wife, Emilia, are totally unfounded, therefore only figments of his imagination. Nevertheless, he makes himself and others believe the random and sheer creations of his mind. As Brennan puts it,

> Shakespeare chose to make Iago's 'honesty' a central focus of the play. This allows him to develop scenic structures around the ensign's hair-raising, juggling act of conducting interactions with a variety of victims who turn to him for advice and who, between them, innocently perform the tragedy that his monstrous imagination improvises. (BRENNAN, 1988, p. 145)

Whereas Richard III is depicted as a very ugly person, Iago has no conspicuous reason for acting so viciously. Neither deformed, nor so unjustly treated by society, one could be led to think that he has a "mental deformation" which impels him to act in such a way. Is he a human, not so human, a subhuman or simply a practical joker who plays with other people's lives mercilessly?

It appears that the three last options could be applied to Iago and that, at the same time, he represents an evil and destructive force that defies a purely rational explanation. His very much skewed libidinous approach to life and human beings, which always tends to see the worst side of them, corresponds to a pain that we also experience as human beings. Trifle things as being passed over for promotions, love affairs and even the feeling of not belonging to a group or not having been invited for a party can easily trigger embittered and proud reactions on us which not only conceal resentments but may also be channelled against others as a destructive mechanism. As Charney argues,

> We began with Iago as Shakespeare's archetypal villain because he is so diabolically clever and such a wonderful actor. As he tells the poor dupe Roderigo, "Though know'st we work by wit, and not by witchcraft" (2.3.372). This is a key statement in Iago's practice. "Wit" had a much wider range of meanings in Shakespeare's time than in ours. Its basic meaning is probably intelligence. Iago is quick, and he is much more an improviser than a determined and careful plotter. He picks up bits and pieces of information and suddenly sees where they can be useful. He knows that the handkerchief should be counted among "Trifles light as air" (3.3.319), but he sees to his own surprise how important it is to Othello. The handkerchief doesn't enter into his plotting until well into the play, and it has a fortuitous quality, since Emilia accidentally finds it. The truth of the matter is that Iago doesn't need the handkerchief. He could easily have driven Othello to a kind of murderous madness with something else. Like the Vice figure, Iago has an element of sport or game in all of his proceedings, as there is in many of the villains we will discuss. Iago wants to make sure the audience knows that Roderigo is not his friend or boon companion. He is his "fool", a "snipe" (a proverbially foolish and easily caught bird), from whom he takes money and jewels to further his supposed suit to Desdemona, all of which is done for Iago's "sport and profit" (1.3.377). These words are spoken in Iago's first soliloquy, very early in the play and well before his action against Othello even begins. This is chilling but also predictive. (CHARNEY, 2013, p.1)

Iago is more emblematic of evil than other villains insofar as his evilness seems to defy a purely rational logic. One wonders if he is doing damage to his victims by impairing and mauling them for more unconscious reasons or primal drives. Compared to Lady Macbeth and Richard III, Iago is more moved by hatred than them. It is a hatred that does not, however, have a very definite cause. It is just there and it is channelled against the other characters in the play, as if life itself was in debt with him for no apparent reasons and this reflected in his actions. As Raatzsch puts it,

> At this point it should be clear that we are dealing with the *concept* of Iago and not with Iago as an individual. Earlier I briefly considered Bloom's idea of seeking Iago's motivation in the prehistory of the play as far as it can be reconstructed from hints in the text. That approach may be ethically relevant, where the evaluation of a person, in contrast to the evaluation of an action,

> is at issue. The reason for this is that we sometimes distinguish between people in terms of behaviour patterns that are either typical or untypical of them, and to know what kind of behaviour is typical of them means to know something about their history. This distinction preserves the essential continuity of action and person, by binding a person's character essentially to what he habitually does. However, the distinction should not be indiscriminate but should differentially reflect the particular circumstances in which different actions were performed. In other words, the behaviour of a person can be classified according to the matrix "rule– exception." To establish what is the rule and what the exception, one must know a sufficiently large variety of different actions he performed in identical circumstances. The difficulty is to avoid running ahead of the evidence and precipitously construing a certain sort of actions as exhibiting some preconceived pattern when the existence of any such pattern is precisely as yet unclear. But this does not mean that it is never possible to recognize any patterns. (RAATZSCH, 2009, p. 81)

Iago's coolness and conniving personality set him apart from other Shakespearean villains because his victims not only are stumbling stones or obstacles for him, but are also targeted due to his frustrations and resentments. His contempt for them leads him to think that they not only have to be killed but also humiliated by losing their reputation through drinking and brawling like Cassio, or being treated like trash as Roderigo or simply duped as Othello. It is therefore fair to say that Iago is an improvised plotter and a practical joker, someone who feels,

> …the dread of contempt habitual to those who encourage in themselves and have their keenest pleasure in the feeling and expression of contempt for others. His high self-opinion – and how a wicked man employs his real feelings as well as assumes those most alien from his own, as instruments of his purpose." (COLERIDGE, 1986, p. 187-188)

Iago despises humanity and is always likening people to animals by reducing them to instinctive beings incapable of thinking for themselves. He despises the spontaneous display of emotions by others, preferring instead to vent his anger and air his opinions through soliloquies and asides, or put into practice his evil plans and schemes. As Charney puts it,

> The most disturbing aspect of Iago's plan − but to call it a plan is not quite right since it is all invented on the spot − is how much contempt he feels for his victims because they are so gullible. Of course, they are so credulous because they are so honest and virtuous. (CHARNEY, 2013, p.5)

If Iago, as many authors have already remarked, seeks to poison others with his images, which are often laden with sexual metaphors and innuendos of betrayals, Othello has a different personality and perspective on life. It is interesting to compare them. According to Clemen,

> Othello and Iago have entirely different attitudes towards their images. Iago is consciously looking for those which best suit his purpose. With Othello, however, the images rise naturally out of his emotions. They come to him easily and unconsciously whenever he is talking. He is a character endowed with a rich imagination; it is part of his very nature to use imagery. Iago, on the contrary, is not a person with an imaginative mind; his attitudes towards the world is rational and speculative. We find fewer images in his language than in Othello's. (CLEMEN, 1977, pp.120-121)

I would like to argue that Iago's main driving force is the lack of something. This lack could be the lack of beauty, that he attributes to Cassio, when he states that "If Cassio do remain, He hath a daily beauty in his life, That makes me ugly." (*Othello*, Act V, Sc. 1), as well as his consciously elaborated envy of Othello, and ultimately, his lack of sexual appetite and accomplishment, as exemplified by his disdain for his wife,

> IAGO: How now? What do you here alone?
> EMILIA: Do not you chide; I have a thing for you.
> IAGO: You have a thing for me? It is a common thing −
> EMILIA: Ha?
> IAGO: To have a foolish wife. (*Othello*, Act III, Sc. 3)

These lacks and envies can also be felt by real people like ourselves in places such as the work environment, for example, or when love and sex are at stake and rejections are not uncommon. It corresponds, therefore, to the common feelings of envy and jealousy, as well as the sensation of being deprived of something or having been badly treated by others. These lacks or gaps are very present in Iago as well as Richard III, and are used by them to justify an evil conduct that does not take others into consideration.

Not surprisingly, Iago exclaims, after Roderigo confides to him of his intention to commit suicide by drowning, that "Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon." (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3) This reduction of humans to an animalistic domain is echoed by the witches during their magic ritual when the second witch says "Cool it with a baboon's blood. Then the charm is firm and good." (*Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 1). It therefore does away with all the humanistic views of human beings with their subtle categories and hierarchy of values constructed through centuries of supposed historical development. Nevertheless, it is possible that this vision is also shared by most human beings, if only through glimpses which can eventually be overcome by other overlapping feelings.

Compared to *Richard III*, we can perceive in *Othello*, as well as in *Hamlet*, a shift from a more Middle Age mentality to a more individualistic vision of the world corresponding to the Modern Era. In other words,

> In Iago we see evil as deception and as a direct challenge to the order and harmony of the universe. Iago's superficial brilliance and self-control is the 'reason' of Renaissance scepticism which in Shakespeare's day was challenging the great vision of harmony, order and degree which Christian humanism carried over from the Middle Ages and which was most notably embodied in the writings of Richard Hooker. (RIBNER, 1971, p.96)

If Iago were to stand for one word only, it would be poison and the process of its elaboration. Therefore, Iago is the mixture of a snake and the soldier, since he does not give a damn about his victims and he stalks and preys on them just like a remorseless serpent or a soldier at war who is anesthetized and indifferent to his victims, whoever they may be.

3.2. Iago's Poison

Art and literature have often endeavored to enter the domain of exploring, deciphering and enlightening the hidden passages and pathways similar to the way the meanders of our mind work. Are Iago, Richard III and Lady Macbeth archetypal models of the unconscious of the modern age? Do they stand for what that era had already been representing through its ways of reflecting the forms it was creating, and which were to enlighten our own era and a new way of thinking and seeing the world that is a fusion of a certain degree of individualism and self-fashioning? We should therefore ask ourselves what are the signifying elements that produce and constitute these characters. Not so much looking into towards what and where they point at that concerns me here as investigating their constituent elements and how they are formed. In other words, what is phantasmagorical in them and where do these things appear or come to the surface?

In this sense, it is pertinent to draw a comparison with the gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, published in 1886 during the Victorian era and written by Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson. In it we see both sides of the human being: on one hand, a side which strives for life drives and cooperation with cultural norms as a means of functioning well in society and having a decent life, even if it means repressing some more instinctive feelings. On the other hand, one which strives for primal drives like destruction and gratuitous aggressiveness and violence, as well as a return to an inorganic state which corresponds to the death drive. As the narrator of the novella puts it,

> The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll, was of a different order. His terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person; but he loathed the necessity, he loathed the despondency into which Jekyll was now fallen, and he resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded. Hence the ape-like tricks that he would play me, scrawling in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books, burning the letters and destroying the portrait of my father; and indeed, had it not been for his fear of death, he would long ago have ruined himself in order to involve me in the ruin. But his love of life is wonderful; I go further: I, who freeze and sicken at the mere thought of him, when I recall the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pity him. (STEVENSON, 2003, p.69)

Although in our modern lexicon we have various positive definitions for the term culture, for Freud it was also associated with some sort of repression or a price we pay to have access to certain things and live harmoniously with other people in a community or in society. This leads to the question of whether primal drives such as aggressiveness or the death drive are tangent with or overlap the question of evil.

A famous dialogue between Othello and Iago, when the latter is trying to empoison the former with his images and subtle choice of words, exemplifies well how Iago's poison works and how he utilizes it to inoculate his victims and achieve his own ends. The conversation goes like this,

> IAGO: Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady,
> Know of your love?
> OTHELLO: He did, from first to last. Why dost thou ask?
> IAGO: But for a satisfaction of my thought,
> No further harm.
> OTHELLO: Why of thy thought?
> IAGO: I did not think he had been acquainted with her.
> OTHELLO: O, yes, and went between us very oft.
> IAGO: Indeed?
> OTHELLO: Indeed? Ay, indeed! Discern'st thou aught in that?
> Is he not honest?
> IAGO: Honest, my lord?
> OTHELLO: Honest? Ay, honest.
> IAGO: My lord, for aught I know.
> OTHELLO: What dost thou think?
> IAGO: Think, my lord?
> By heaven, thou echoest me,
> As if there were some monster in thy thought
> Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something.
> I heard thee say even now, thou lik'st not that,
> When Cassio left my wife. What didst not like?
> And when I told thee he was of my counsel
> Of my whole course of wooing, thou cried'st "Indeed?"
> And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
> As if though then hadst shut up in thy brain
> Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,
> Show me thy thought.
> IAGO: My lord, you know I love you.
> OTHELLO: I think thou dost;

> And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty
> And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,
> Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more;
> For such things in a false disloyal knave
> Are tricks of custom; but in a man that's just
> They're close dilations, working from the heart
> That passion cannot rule.
> IAGO: For Michael Cassio,
> I dare be sworn, I think that he is honest.
> OTHELLO: I think so too.
> IAGO: Men should be what they seem;
> Or those that be not, would they might seem none!
> OTHELLO: Certain, men should be what they seem.
> IAGO: Why then I think Cassio's an honest man.
> (*Othello*, Act III, Sc. 3)

Iago never tells Othello anything bluntly, in part because he fears him and also in order not to get caught. He is, therefore, very clever and subtle in his use of words by only making suggestions and allusions which must be deciphered by his interlocutor. Although Iago is false like a snake, the form he uses his poison is more similar to that of a scorpion, which can control the amount of venom injected to kill or subdue its prey. According to a passage in the *Encyclopaedia*,

> The most interesting feature of a scorpion is of course its poison. Probably because of their poisonous qualities, scorpions were known and feared already in ancient times. Observations on the effect of their poison have been made many times in the past, but scientifically correct data are only few and comparatively recent. …The poison of *Buthus australis* of North Africa contains some 20% to 25% of a substance which becomes solid on drying. This substance seems to be neither of protein nor lipid nature, retains its virulence for a long time in the dry state, but is destroyed when boiled for half an hour. The amount of poison produced by the glands of a scorpion depends largely upon the size of the specimen. The symptoms caused by scorpion poison of the less virulent type consist mostly in sudden sharp pain followed by numbness of the limb and local swelling. The symptoms pass within an hour or two. There is no more danger to man from this type of poison than there is from the sting of a wasp or a hornet. …Not so with species whose poison is neuro-toxic. Here the symptoms resemble poisoning with strychnine. The sting produces a sharp pain, followed by numbness of the limb; speech becomes difficult, discharge of saliva is copious, the patient becomes restless; breathing is hard and death is not uncommon. (PETRUNKEVITCH, 1964, p. 136)

Although Iago's source of poison, unlike these two ophidians mentioned before, is unlimited, it is again, more similar to a scorpion in its constituent parts. According to that article in the encyclopedia, studies revealed that a scorpion's poison has elements which were devised to kill an insect instantly or destroy the brain cells of primates, for example, being less general than that of a snake. Likewise, Iago has many cards and aces up his sleeve and he uses them depending on whom he is dealing with. Here I use the term

cards as a metaphor for his words, practical jokes and orchestrations, as well as his murders. Moreover, when Iago manages to throw Othello into a trance by making false accusations about Cassio and Desdemona, his poison is quite neuro-toxic and produces similar effects to the neuro-toxic venom of certain scorpions mentioned above.

The kinship between humans and animals and their sometimes troublesome relationship throughout History is discussed by Roudinesco, in her book *Our Dark Side: A History of Perversion*, when she states that,

> It is therefore not surprising that the creationists are so critical of the great figure of Darwin, who demonstrated that men are descended from the apes, or that behaviourists' *bête noir* should be Freud. Freud is Darwin's heir and describes man as a subject who is decentred but aware of the humiliation that forces him to share his fate with the animals. They are his brothers, but they belong to a different species and he has always both loved and tortured them. Eventually, we will have to accept that there are similarities between the two species and resist all the temptations of an ill-conceived ethology: 'Man…alone can with certainty be ranked as a moral being…The moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals' (Darwin 2004:135, 151). (ROUDINESCO, 2009, p. 128-129)

Going back to the dialogue above mentioned it is full of words that, chosen by Iago in that particular context, end up blurring and making things hazy for any attempt at having a more rational thought by Othello. According to Simon Palfrey, an English scholar who specializes in Shakespeare and Renaissance literature, in his book *Doing Shakespeare*, the keywords there,

> 'know', 'thought', 'think', 'indeed', 'honest', 'discern'st', 'shown', 'seem', 'be', all press upon the same space: one where subject and object try (and fail) to settle into clarity and distinctiveness. Each of the words equivocates between thought and fact, or conception and birth. Iago forces us to ponder exactly what claims are made by each word: so, to 'think' is and is not to know; to 'see' is and is not to witness; to 'seem' is and is not to 'be'; 'indeed' is and is not to execute. Othello tries desperately to adjudicate what might be from what is, but he is trapped in Iago's web of paradox (for example, the logical impossibility of '*Show* me thy *thought*'). In thematic terms, the subject of the repetitions is the quicksand of any knowledge dependent upon nothing but inference: and what knowledge, in the end, is not? The repetition thus harps upon the play's central tragic chord: the impossibility of knowing what is or has been, or of knowing another, or, finally, of knowing one's self. (PALFREY, 2011, p. 61)

This kind of equivocation is very similar to that the witches use to deceive Macbeth, through the use of words, sentences and images that can always be read and interpreted in more than one way. However, unlike Capitu in Machado de Assis' *Dom Casmurro*, whom we never know whether she betrayed Bentinho, the old and embittered narrator of the book, with Escobar, Desdemona never betrays Othello in the play and the alert reader or spectator are aware of it. She is therefore as pure as possible, except that

she is not a virgin anymore, and stands for a life principle. She does, however, get trapped in Iago's scheme and suffers from his poison, once it has completely set in, through the hands of her husband, who ends up strangling her in their bed. Hence, Iago and Desdemona stand for two opposite sides of the same pole. They are similar to what Freud describes as the "battle of giants", between Eros and Death, or the life principle that includes pleasure and love and the death drive that involves hate and destruction and precedes life, overcoming it in the end. In this sense, life can be compared to a positive short-circuit preceded by death and which ends up being engulfed by it in its ocean.

Another aspect that contrasts Iago's cunning and detached personality with that of his various victims in the play is well exemplified in the following commentary by Charney,

> Othello is so vulnerable because he is "of a free and open nature", all the things that Iago is not – he prides himself on his wariness and his subtlety. He is always on his guard and untrusting, which is why he considers himself much shrewder than his opponents. Othello's trusting nature leads to his undoing, but this is also true of Roderigo, Cassio, Desdemona, Emilia, and probably all the other characters in the play. Iago is almost officially sealed as "honest Iago," an adjective that is repeated almost a dozen times without any irony, except for the audience. (CHARNEY, 2013, p. 5)

It is this coolness that makes Iago comparable to coldblooded animals like serpents and venomous lizards, and that made Samuel Taylor Coleridge argue, about the friendship between Iago and Roderigo, his first victim in the play, that "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)

One point of tension in the play is whether Othello has cuckolded Iago with his wife, Emilia, or if it is just a figment of the villain's imagination. Iago harbors a love for Desdemona which he seems to have difficulties concealing to himself, and which he is not very proud of. The following soliloquy by Iago elucidates well this question:

> 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,
> And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
> A most dear husband. Now I do love her too;
> Not out of absolute lust, 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.
> (*Othello*, Act II, Sc. 1)

Is Iago just being paranoid or is it possible that Othello has indeed done that to him? This is something the audience or the readers of the play never really find out. According to Charney "this soliloquy provides an excellent example of how Iago's mind works: his thinking is loose and associative, and he makes many random assumptions that are never followed up. They are energetic and emotional, but also empty." (CHARNEY, 2013, p. 8)

The question of whether we are responsible for our actions or not is well exemplified by the already quoted German philosopher Richard Raatzsch, in his book *The Apologetics of Evil: the Case of Iago*, when he exposes a fallacy by arguing that,

> We are responsible for our actions if we are able to act differently. (If we are not able to act differently, this does not free us of all responsibility for our unscrupulous actions. In some cases we may not think it is exactly right that the agent is responsible for acting unscrupulously – he may have no choice, given who he is. Rather, the proper charge is that the agent is an unscrupulous person. At this point, there is a transition from unscrupulousness as a property of actions to unscrupulousness as a property of a person.) Nevertheless, if we persist in acting unscrupulously, we may become incapable of doing anything else, and we may be left with no conscience. Once we have seen that such a transformation is possible, there is nothing to prevent us from realizing that one person can always have been what another has only become through change. This again could give us the idea that it is always possible to ignore the *genesis* of a person and concentrate instead on his *being*. If we consider this in isolation, it seems that we could never be responsible for our actions. Since a person's actions spring from his being, he can be responsible for his actions only as far as he is responsible for his being, that is, for being the person he is. But that is something for which we cannot in general be responsible, because in order to be responsible we would have had to choose to be the person we are. (RAATZSCH, 2009, p. 82)

The duality between being and acting is a familiar theme in philosophy. Those who argue that you may be born evil do not take into consideration that if you are already come to the world like that you have no choice and therefore are not responsible for your acts. This may apply to animals, but those who studied psychology or literature, and philosophy as well, or anyone devoted to thinking, is or may be aware that things are more complex than that. Our actions also imply circumstances, motivations, values, free will and other factors and the likes of Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze would be good to corroborate that.

3.3. Schadenfreude, Egoism and Compassion

In a passage of his first book *When Bad Things Happen to Other People*, Professor John Portmann argues that,

> We do not choose the moral standards of the communities into which we are born. Communal moral standards resemble various systems of domination. It is not difficult to understand how someone might suffer underneath the weight of social or moral rules. To the extent that we can be said to live in a heterosexual society, for example, gay people must wrestle with the judgment of non-gay people. Similarly, women must make their way in a man's world, despite there being more women than men in the world. Non-Christians must accommodate what they think a Christian society expects. A non-Christian in particular may suffer as a result of the distance between what Christianity expects of good persons and how he or she sees him- or herself. And we cannot take as a given that white, heterosexual, Christian men who have followed all the rules of society into which they were born do not suffer beneath the weight of these rules. So many societal pressures are always in effect, and social experiences vary widely. (PORTMANN, 2000, p. 66)

One debate between Kant and Schopenhauer was whether we are in fact one third Schadenfreude or malice, one third egoism or the desire of one's own wellbeing only and one third compassion or the state of putting oneself in someone else's shoes by showing sympathy for others, fellow feeling and benevolence. That raises the question of whether we have a negative balance of feelings as human beings after all or if we should rather be more thorough and demand a current account statement of our souls and compare it with other people's statements in different parts of our lives.

It is worth remarking here that Schadenfreude is a term borrowed from the German language that has already been incorporated into English. Therefore it needs not a direct translation into the latter, although it can be explained, and it may or may not be known by English native speakers and those familiar with the language, since it first appeared in the English language in 1852. Thus, it is as though this word which encapsulates and enshrines a concept is able to lead one into a lake or realm of different meanings and nuances, consolidating certain feelings that might have otherwise been missed out or gone unnoticed.

Comparing the rather theoretical view of philosophers, who often dissociate thoughts from feelings, and the more pragmatic view of human nature held by psychoanalysts in general, Portmann points out further on in his book that,

> A committed Christian, Kant had maintained over a century before Freud that we have a duty to share in the suffering of others. Kant urges us to view

> as our neighbors all persons, not just family, friends, or those living in proximity to us. The idea that it is morally objectionable to favor our family and friends over others has bothered many philosophers. Carol Gilligan, for example, claimed to hear in women's "different voice" the capacity for affiliation, not a generic love of humanity. Freud objected as much to the idea that we should regard every person as our neighbor as he did to the idea that we should (or could) love strangers and even enemies. A rule that commands us to love might instead impel us to resent, or even hate. (IDEM, 2000, p. 67-68)

Iago and Richard III are characters deprived of any good feelings. They are quintessential examples of people without compassion and a mixture of Schadenfreude and egoism, whereas Lady Macbeth is more sheer egoism. She is able to show remorse for her acts and her direct and indirect victims, such as king Duncan and the Thane of Fife's wife, Lady Macduff, respectively. Iago and Richard III are comparable to those who may, for example, find pleasure in seeing someone break a leg or die in front of them. Lady Macbeth, in turn, may find pleasure in the idea of murder, or murder itself in a very detached way when it comes to eliminating someone who is an obstacle or a stumbling block to her aims and goals.

In this sense the lady is more secretive and may be comparable to someone who would not dare say out loud that she wishes someone would die in front of her but may nevertheless rejoice at the knowledge that someone she did not like has already died. Not just that, but coldly check when everybody has left the scene that that was the case. She is therefore, as I have already pointed out before, a bit like the snake or the tiger in the sense that she is more coldblooded as I see her.

Iago and Richard III, on the other hand, have more opponents and are more similar to those brazen and inconvenient people who might loudly and clearly crack a joke they would like to see someone die in front of them when a person is not feeling well at a party or other social event, not caring about who may hear it and forgetting they said that soon afterwards.

Iago in particular is a real practical joker, i.e., someone who may pull a chair when someone else is going to sit down or do other similar things. He does not care a bit about other people's lives, but neither does Richard III who is not different from Iago in this respect. In this sense, it makes a lot of sense when Portmann states that,

> Schopenhauer explains that the pains and suffering of others are for malice and cruelty an end in themselves, and their attainment is the pleasure of *Schadenfreude*. For this reason, malice and cruelty constitute a greater degree (as opposed to a different kind) of moral depravity than does envy. Schopenhauer concludes that just as *Schadenfreude* is only theoretical cruelty, so cruelty is *Schadenfreude* put into practice; the diseased

> disposition prone to *Schadenfreude* will become manifest as cruelty as soon as an opportunity presents itself. (IDEM, 2000, p. 85)

Let us therefore consider now the case of children. It is a well-known fact that there is a tendency among them to be cruel with those who have a lot of problems or are undergoing a difficult phase. As if the very appearance of the problem itself instinctively impelled them to go for the jugular vein. This is especially true in more competitive and affluent environments as well as among those who are more destitute. It is as if their id reigned freely, giving impetus to their own fears that they may or could otherwise become the victims themselves. In this sense, we can say that adults are more contained and that teenagers stand half way through, if only at times.

As regards the insertion of these concepts in the realm of literature Portmann points out,

> That *Schadenfreude* is often disguised, qualified, or denied explains in part why it rarely shows itself. Gossip and laughter may indicate *Schadenfreude*, but *Schadenfreude* does not always end in gossip or laughter − for people may repress their laughter out of fear that others will perceive their enjoyment as evil. In this respect *Schadenfreude* resembles envy, jealousy, malice and hatred. Of course, such repression is not always rational; more often than not, as Nietzsche's theory of *ressentiment* explains, this is a matter of instinct. For this reason we should not experience *Schadenfreude* in ways which are readily identifiable, even to themselves. Dorrit Cohn has remarked, "Modern novelists who know their Freud, therefore, would be the last to resort to direct quotation in order to express their characters' unconscious processes." We should not expect literary sources in either English or German to report on the prevalence of *Schadenfreude*. (IDEM, 2000, p.182)

Can we learn to deal with our Schadenfreude and that of others, break our egoism and show and feel real compassion when it is needed, or does this come naturally just for some of us? Are we able to avoid the vertigo of different historical periods and mentalities and how we position and feel in relation to them? Do not many of us rejoice at the partial or total disgrace of those we envy too much or have a strong animosity? Do not some people, be it individually or as a group, also just think about the wellbeing of themselves and their kin, sad and scary as this may be, especially for the 21st century worldview and mentality? And yet, is not egoism one of the driving forces of capitalism and an essential part of our sexuality once and when it is finally put into practice? In any case, we who live in contemporary western societies and come from older generations may feel that we are at times walking in a minefield filled with dos and dont's, until they are incorporated and assimilated as something natural that belongs to a new reality and worldview.

We should therefore be aware of these characteristics in ourselves and in others and learn to deal with them, either by addressing them, avoiding or confronting those who are too noxious to do us any good or by trying to channel these feelings into rather positive things, such as sports, learning how to play an instrument, a healthy competitive spirit and so on.

As regards the question of what to do with those who commit crimes, Portmann argues that “Nietzsche holds contempt for the ideas of social justice which underlie and justify corporal punishment” (PORTMANN, 2000, p.133) and that the same philosopher “believes that punishment has evolved in such a way that we pretend what we do to criminals in courts has nothing to do with what we used to do to criminals on torture racks. He blames human pettiness for the legal institution of punishment.” (IDEM, 2000, p.133) However, he realizes that “a century after Nietzsche we have not looked away from punishment. Nor does it seem we will anytime soon, as punishment still lies at the heart of various systems of justice in Western nations.” (IDEM, 2000, p.134)

4. RICHARD III'S NEW HUE OF EVIL

Writing about art and literature in ancient Greece, Nietzsche states, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that,

> We shall have gained much for the science of aesthetics when we have come to realize, not just through logical insight but also with the certainty of something directly apprehended (*Anschauung*), that the continuous evolution of art is bound up with the duality of the *Apolline* and the *Dionysiac* in much the same way as reproduction depends on there being two sexes which co-exist in a state of perpetual conflict interrupted only occasionally by periods of reconciliation. We have borrowed these names from the Greeks who reveal the profound mysteries of their view of art to those with insight, not in concepts, admittedly, but through the penetratingly vivid figures of their gods. (NIETZSCHE, 2007, p. 14)

Art and literature can be taken, in a psychoanalytical sense, as the manifestation of a symptom or the attempt to appease it through the elaboration of its very own various phantasmagorical elements. It is up to the literary critic to try to deconstruct a text and elaborate on its constitutive fragments. Whereas different forms of art such as painting, sculptures and music can be taken on their own terms and may sometimes be mute to interpretation, with the advantages and disadvantages that this entails, literary texts usually lend themselves for some sort of formal scrutiny and explanation and usually touch different chords of our souls.

What are the different elements that strike us in relation to Richard III if we compare him, for example, with someone as eerie and malignant as Iago? Richard III appears to be a more formal kind of perverse, with his own reasons adapted for the time he was created and staged. He is also more ruthless, political and repressed (*recalcado* in Portuguese, a word rich in images but difficult to translate into English without losing some of its vivid connotations) than Iago, since he is physically deformed and envies his brother, King Edward IV. The German word *Verdrängung* was used by Freud to refer to repression and repressed people in general. The prefix *ver* in German symbolizes a deviation from a normal course and is similar to the prefix *mis* in English. Thus, the verb *wechsel* in German, which means to change, acquires the meaning of to confound when the prefix ver is added to it, forming the word *verwechsel*. Other examples include *führen*, to lead and the word *verführen*, to seduce and *fahren*, to travel and *verfahren* to get lost, as well as *sagen*, to say, and *versagen* to deny and *sprechen*, to speak and *versprechen*, to promise. In English we have the verb take and mistake, lead and mislead, understand and misunderstand and in Portuguese *verter* and *perverter*. The

verb drängen in German means to press, force or urge/insist. Therefore, this could give us a clue as to one of the origins of evil as understood by a psychoanalytical perspective: misplaced energy or a subversion of force in the sense of movement which ends up going in and to the wrong direction.

Many centuries and decades after Shakespeare's time, we tend to include handicapped people and be more generous towards them than at the time *Richard III* was written. No longer a justifiable excuse to turn to evil or a reasonable motive to be frowned upon by society nowadays, things did look different at Shakespeare's time though. In medieval times and also in the Modern Era evil was still associated, among other things, with ugliness and deformity. Some examples of this in literature are *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* written by Victor Hugo and published in 1831 and *Beauty and the Beast*, a book based on a 16th century romance novel which was written by French novelist Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve and published in 1740. As Greenblatt puts it,

> Shakespeare does not repudiate his culture's belief that bodily deformity signified moral deformity; he allows his audience to credit the notion that a higher power, whether nature or God, has provided a visible sign of the villain's wickedness. Richard's physical deformity is a kind of preternatural portent or emblem of his viciousness. But, against the dominant current of his culture, Shakespeare insists that the inverse is also true: Richard's deformity − or, rather, his society's reaction to his deformity − is the root condition of his psychopatology. There is nothing automatic in this condition; certainly, no suggestion that all people with twisted spines become cunning murderers. Shakespeare does, however, suggest that a child unloved by his mother, ridiculed by his peers, and forced to regard himself as a monster will develop certain compensatory psychological strategies, some of them both destructive and self-destructive. (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 56-57)

Nevertheless, or for those very same reasons, Richard III, who should be taken as a product of his era, resorts to evil and is a perverse character who feels superior and runs roughshod over others. As Greenblatt declares,

> Manipulating the insecurities, factional rivalries, and ambitions of everyone around him, Shakespeare's Richard is a consummate portrait of what sixteenth-century Englishmen termed a "machiavel": that is, a person who acts on the immortal advice allegedly offered by the Florentine humanist Niccolò Machiavelli in *The Prince* (written in 1513, first printed in 1532). According to the period's lurid and grossly distorted account of this advice, Machiavelli had counseled princes to lie, cheat and murder under the cover of hypocritical professions of virtue and piety. (GREENBLATT, 1997, p. 508)

Is there or can there be beauty in evil? Is it normal or healthy to be fascinated by it, expecting increasing manifestations of this phenomenon in art or, even worse, in

everyday life? In other words, why are we so captivated by it to the point that nowadays it has turned into a banality in the news and the press? One possible answer is that we are attracted to, and at the same time repelled by the abject, as I have already suggested in the introduction. Therefore, if evil is fictionalized it can be fascinating to look at, especially because we can observe it as something outside of ourselves and thus do not need to feel any feelings of guilt, shame, fear or repulsion of our own selves. As the American literary critic Harold Bloom points out about Richard's character and how it is portrayed in *Richard III* and in a particularly successful movie production of it,

> Richard's zest, his antic glee in his own diabolism, ought to be infectious, unlike Iago's superior gusto, which authentically awes and frightens us. The best stage Richard I've seen, Ian McKellen, was perhaps too powerful in the part, rendering the comic villain as though he had been transformed into a blend of Iago and Macbeth. But Shakespeare's Richard is still overtly Marlovian, a master of persuasive language rather than a profound psychologist or a criminal visionary. This Richard has no inwardness, and when Shakespeare attempts to imbue him with an anxious inner self, on the eve of his fatal battle, the result is poetic bathos and dramatic disaster. Starting up out of bad dreams, Richard suddenly does not seem to be Richard, and Shakespeare scarcely knows how to represent the change. (BLOOM, 1998, p. 66)

What parallels can be traced between Richard III and Iago? In which aspects do they diverge? Contrary to Iago but alike Lady Macbeth and her husband, Richard III ends up being haunted by his actions, albeit only at the end of the play. This manifests itself in the form of ghost images of people directly or indirectly killed by him which come up to him during his sleep. If we consider that Iago, as a villain, has none of this because he is faced with no remorse or is never haunted by his actions whatsoever, we could go back to him and say that he is the real viper which kills and has a killing device that allows for no regret. Moreover, unlike Iago Richard III can be considered a tyrant, like Macbeth, although the latter had not originally coveted it and Richard III had always looked forward to becoming one.

However, Richard III is almost as sneaky and snaky as Iago and does not lag far behind him. They both resort to a poker face, although Richard is the typical shameless character who manages to win the heart of those who despised him at first, such as Lady Anne, whereas Iago is a real practical joker. Nevertheless, his actions likely proceed from different sources and point at and shine in distinct directions providing opportunities for other kinds of interpretation. Richard III can be compared, as has already been pointed out, to great statesmen and their Machiavellian actions and way of governing a nation or state. Even if Iago might be as evil as Richard, he is certainly stealthier and

sends us back to our darker nooks and crannies, as well as a certain insurmountable pain experienced in the act of living which transforms him into a subhuman. However, he does not assassinate his kin like Richard III, who sends his brother and two nephews to the Tower of London to be executed, probably because this is a subject which did not come up in the play. Moreover, the list of homicides committed by this villain in the play is much higher than Iago's in *Othello*.

Another important aspect of them is that both characters can have a comic effect, although Iago tends to be more terrifying and sinister, partly because he is more decanted in his evil actions and attitudes than Richard. Iago stands on his own two feet as regard evilness without the props of political ambition but on the grounds of something more latent: jealousy and envy. It is worth bearing in mind here that Shakespeare's villains are all immoral and unscrupulous and that in their negative morality they disregard any kind of ethics. They are, therefore, unethical in their actions and principles and, as has already been pointed out, they are also able to reinvent themselves through different kinds of artifices and self-fashioning.

It is interesting to notice that in his article "Shakespeare Explains the 2016 Election" published in The New York Times in October 9, 2016, Greenblatt draws a parallel between the historical drama *Richard III* and Donald Trump's 2016 election for the presidency of the United States. The comparison between a perverse fictional character who is a statesman and a real one is relevant here. It seems to me that the majority of the electorate who voted for Trump could not distinguish between what might have been bad for them at the time and what is evil in itself and especially to govern a nation. As Greenblatt explains about the situation prior to Trump's election,

> Shakespeare's words have an uncanny ability to reach out beyond their original time and place and to speak directly to us. We have long looked to him, in times of perplexity and risk, for the most fundamental human truths. So it is now. Do not think it cannot happen, and do not stay silent or waste your vote. (GREENBLATT, 2016, p. 7)

Comparing *Macbeth* to *Richard III* and the current plight of the United States, this author also argues in the same article that,

> Unlike "Macbeth" (which introduced into the English language the word "assassination"), "Richard III" does not depict a violent seizure of power. Instead there is the soliciting of popular votes, complete with a fraudulent display of religious piety, the slandering of opponents and a grossly exaggerated threat to national security. (GREENBLATT, 2016, p. 7)

As mentioned before, Richard III and Iago have a comic effect on audiences and the reader partly because of the feeling of complicity these two villains have the ability to bring about in the audience or the reader. This is achieved through the use of asides and soliloquies addressed to them about what they are planning or about to do, which is never something good in their cases. Whoever is the receptor and therefore potentially receptive to their evilness may feel divided and ambivalent towards them and what is going on. This ambivalence we have towards evil is probably one of the things that makes us humans after all.

This comic effect is also achieved and enhanced by another aspect: the character of unpredictability of these villains. As Bart van Es puts is,

> The fact that Shakespeare's characters cannot be tied down to a single function is a potential problem not only for what Johnson calls their 'moral purpose', but also (probably more important from a modern perspective) for their comic effectiveness on the stage. The great comic creations of writers other than Shakespeare are often said to be funny precisely *because* they are so predictable. (Van Es, 2016, p. 82)

The feeling of ambivalence coupled with unpredictability is what ends up appearing or popping up, when what remains of our day and our 'rational' journey through it, is decanted and filtered through our unconscious apparatus through the indomitable realm of the dreams. The apparently straightforward paths we try to follow when we are conscious of things and awake, as well as our conflictive elements, are what constitute the very node or stone in the shoe which is always calling us to reconsider our actions and principles.

In the case of the villains, the total awareness of their actions and their consequences is fully achieved only when it is too late. Besides, the conscience of wrongdoing only applies to Richard III at the very end of the play and to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth somewhere in the middle. Iago never regrets his deeds or feels sorry for his victims.

4.1. The Greatest Seducer

Opening up the chapter "Madness in Great Ones" in his book *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*, Greenblatt states that,

> Richard III and Macbeth are criminals who come to power by killing the legitimate rulers who stand in their way. But Shakespeare was also

> interested in a more insidious problem, that posed by those who begin as legitimate rulers and are then drawn by their mental and emotional instability toward tyrannical behavior. The horror they inflict on their subjects and, ultimately, on themselves are the consequences of psychological degeneration. They may have thoughtful counselors and friends, people with a healthy instinct for self-preservation and a concern for their nation. But it is extremely difficult for such people to counter madness-induced tyranny, both because it is unanticipated and because their long-term loyalty and trust have inculcated habits of obedience. (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 113)

In *Richard III* we witness a game of chess and subtleties that Richard III resorts to in order to achieve full power and become a sovereign. As referred to in the previous chapter, in this play evil is contained in a formal structure within a specific and historical mould of stipulated dimensions. Contrary to Iago and Lady Macbeth who, like capricious children, internally and externally refuse to follow rules by throwing the dice in the air and playing their own game, thus making evil reign even more freely in their cases, Richard commits evil acts with clearer causes and objectives. This is what led Greenblatt to affirm that,

> Richard's villainy is readily apparent to almost everyone. There is no deep secret about his cynicism, cruelty, and treacherousness, no glimpse of anything redeemable in him, and no reason to believe that he could ever govern the country effectively. The question the play explores, then, is how such a person actually attained the English throne. The achievement, Shakespeare suggests, depended on a fatal conjunction of diverse but equally self-destructive responses from those around him. Together these responses amount to a whole country's collective failure. (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 66)

Richard III is, after and above all, the greatest seducer. Far from being a handsome character, he is a male star who not only has not been favored by nature but also wronged by society. Nonetheless, he manages to win women's hearts and men's favors by his good use of turn of phrase and political strategy. He is also, by his own right, a hunter and stalker who shows no remorse for even sending his brother and two nephews to the Tower to be assassinated. Would Iago and Lady Macbeth be kind and compassionate towards a kin, let us say, a brother or a sister for example? Who knows? One wonders, just maybe. We know for a fact that in relation to her real or imaginary child Lady Macbeth is ambiguous and would have killed it had she just sworn to do it.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare wanted the fictional Richard III to be that way, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth that other way and there was never a historical Iago, although many real malignant Iagos could have existed, even if with a different name. The cinematic production of *Richard III* starring Lawrence Olivier as the protagonist is a

very happy and successful attempt at portraying this character with all its evil hues and at the same time comic effect. Were it not for the fact that it is based on the work of a famous writer with a good worldwide reputation, and were it to take a step further concerning acting and overacting, it would probably be one of those movies mothers insist on turning off the TV because of the display of a callous psychopath, while children turn it on again looking at each other and laughing comfortably on a sofa or armchair. After all, they are just crime perpetrators with exaggerated mannerisms inducing to easy laughter.

And yet, in part and from a certain angle, that is what Richard III is all about and is one of the things that springs to mind when we think about him. By inscribing this character within a certain formal structure and removing the mists and dreamlike qualities more present in *Macbeth* and *Othello*, he loses a bit the feminine appeal of Lady Macbeth, the eeriness of Iago and the childish peevishness of the witches. He is nevertheless a (sex) predator who kills other people mercilessly just as well.

In Shakespeare feelings exist but are oftentimes revealed and showed off in an oblique way. In this sense, we usually cry over concrete things, for example, when a dear person passes away, when something bad happens to the ones we love or ourselves as well as over afterthought and vague memories. Do we not only laugh when someone tells a good joke but also when an awkward situation is produced or a person looks like or speaks in a funny way?

As already pointed out in my Master's dissertation, referring to power and politics in Al Pacino's 1996 film *Looking for Richard*, Vanessa Redgrave argues that,

> 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)

Drawing now more to the psychological side of it, both Richard III and Iago operate a certain kind of terror that only those who are subhuman are able to produce. These characters break up with social conventions and what is considered a decent life in society or a community, inducing to serious crimes and harms. They kidnap the zone of pleasure, thinking and natural wellbeing to introduce a perversion or twisting of moral values and subtle distinctions of right and wrong, good and evil. In other words, they operate a transgression. As Greenblatt argues,

> Dominating others serves to shore up lonely Richard's damaged self-image, to ward off the pain of rejection, to keep him upright. It is for him as if his body were constantly mocking itself, as well as being mocked by others. Physically unbalanced, his body, he says, is "like to a chaos" (3 *Henry VI* 3.2.161). Exercising power, particularly the kind of power that throws people off balance, reduces his own sense of chaotic disproportionateness, or so at least he hopes. It is not simply a matter of commanding people to do what he wants them to do, though that is agreeable; it is also peculiar pleasure of making them tremble or totter or fall. (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 58-59)

The terror Richard III and Iago inflict on others is the very horror they feel inside themselves. It is by inoculating in others what was originally inoculated in them, be it by nature itself or society, in other words, the feeling of having been unjustly treated, that they are capable of partly relieving themselves by terrorizing, indirectly raping and ultimately killing others. A little similar to children who are insecure and start making their parents feel the same apprehensions or, which is worse, the terror a nation may cause another through the pointless intimidation, raping and killing of innocent civilians, through a display of sheer cruelty and a gradual aesthetic of evil.

A passage in *Richard III* from the Duke of Gloucester's worldwide famous opening soliloquy in the homonymous play shows that he feels he has been unjustly treated both by society and nature. He is, therefore, determined to use this as an excuse for his unscrupulous behavior,

> 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)

I would like to quote here a passage about Freud on this subject from my Master's dissertation to elucidate this aspect of villainy from a particular standpoint of view,

> 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. (OLIVEN, 2015, p. 33)

The passage in which the Duke of Gloucester says that given that he cannot become a lover he will turn into a villain is further echoed by Iago when, just before Roderigo and Cassio almost kill each other in a feud set up by the villain, he exclaims,

> I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense,
> And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio,
> Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
> Every way makes my gain. Live Roderigo,
> He calls me to a restitution large
> Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him
> As gifts to Desdemona.
> It must not be. If Cassio do remain,
> He hath a daily beauty in his life
> That makes me ugly; (*Othello*, Act V, Sc. 1)

Cassio's life or existence is seen by Iago as his own ugliness, although the former never did anything significant to displease the villain. On the contrary, he is nice to him throughout the play and considers him as his confidant and almost a friend. Richard III and Macbeth, on the other hand, suffer from a psychosis which involves themselves as well as other people. As Nuttall puts it,

> Richard, then, is a complex figure. His self-consciousness leads him into convulsive introspection, and introspection as we saw leads to a splitting of identity. This division creates in its turn a wholly internal field of conflicting forces. We saw how Richard III, left alone, became two, "I and I" (V.iii. 183, Quarto). Shakespeare now pushes the idea further, joining it to his first essay on comedic identity in *A Comedy of Errors*. ...Richard needs to double himself, as was done so happily at the level of plot in *The Comedy of Errors*, in order to see himself. Or, rather, to watch himself. For Richard is enjoying this. (NUTTALL, 2007, p. 144-145)

This issue ties in with *Richard III* because of the strength of discourse and its ability to mould people and make them repeat and reproduce existing social structures of power and perceiving the world. Richard III is a great statesman and he knows it and uses his political and eloquence power to manipulate people in his favor and for his own ends, not caring a little for the wellbeing of others. On the contrary, harming them as much as possible even to the point of death and humiliation, in a sheer display of cruelty with vestiges from the Middle Ages, since this play takes place at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era.

The first part of the opening soliloquy in *Richard III* mentioned before plays with language at the same time as it introduces historical register in a subtle way, through the use of puns, innuendos and analogies,

> Now is the winter of our discontent

> Made glorious summer by this son of York;
> And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
> In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
> Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
> Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
> Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
> Our dreadful marches to delightful measures. (*Richard III*, Act I, Sc. 1)

As the English Scholar at Oxford University Simon Palfrey comments about this opening soliloquy in his book *Doing Shakespeare*,

> The opening speech of *Richard III* is one of Shakespeare's most famous soliloquies: or certainly its opening line is. It is a good example of Shakespeare's early soliloquies. It declares the speaker's 'character type', reveals his attitude and plans for action, and does so as a consummate exercise in *rhetoric*. This means that every turn of phrase and shift of rhythm is a gift to the eager audience. The speech is not a clear window onto Gloucester's thoughts. We are supposed to identify it as rhetoric. The manners of the speech itself, quite as much as its overt message, are the things that hold meaning – that is, humour, personality, dissidence, and menace. He knows that we know that he knows his address is deeply studied and artful: that it draws upon the stock tropes of oratory, and that it imitates the very popular recent plays of Marlowe, Kyd, and Shakespeare himself (in the *Henry VI* trilogy). (PALFREY, 2011, p. 258)

Let us therefore focus on the question of language in broad terms from a certain perspective. What is the difference between conscious or vigilant language, or rather language itself, as used in everyday speech and what is said *sotto voce* or is implicit when we speak? Therefore, these latter easily lead us to the subconscious apprehension we get from different modulations and tones of voice. Why do we almost always know when a person says 'I will call you' whether she or he will in fact call us or not? What is said through language or in spite of it, and actually corresponds to a wide range of feelings and different registers, being quickly processed and assimilated by our unconscious and subconscious forebodings, but nevertheless not rarely vehemently denied by our conscience, this thin crust that we sometimes use in vain to protect us against an ocean of feelings and troubles. As Hamlet himself puts it in his famous soliloquy,

> 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? (*Hamlet*, Act 3, Sc. 1)

Evil and goodness are not necessarily binary things as many would like others to believe and as we are exposed to in some soap operas or in clear-cut cases such as Nazism or the Japanese invasion of China. On the contrary, it is a problematic theme which involves a range of issues and exposes ourselves to our very fragments, shortcomings, and different facets, as well as our repressed feelings, sending us to the 'ambiguous line' Harriet Walter refers to.

4.2. The Artistry in *Richard III*

From Sei Shōnagon's vertical and imagistic *The Pillow Book* to Jorge Luis Borges' spiral and fabulous short stories, passing through Samuel Beckett's fragmentary and rhapsodic work to Shakespeare's linear plays, literature has been exploring the meanders and limits of artistic expression and its ability to convey distinct kinds of mood, feelings and ambiance through different aesthetic effects and the use of language.

Evil in Shakespeare's plays appears as if it were contained in a framed painting with slight movements ready to be interpreted, deciphered or simply appreciated. In this case, each tragic play would correspond to a distinctive painting or constellation that overlaps with his other tragedies, forming a wider whole which reflects each of its constitutive parts.

One could bear in mind that there is, and there has probably always been, evil in the world, and with it the always urging question of where it comes from and what fuels it. It is also worth considering that evil does not necessarily correspond to evilness, such as in the statement 'his evilness was latent', but is a more general thing that encompasses it. If there is evil being perpetrated, there is also a receptor to it. No wonder revenge is such a strong word. Therefore, although it is possible to completely relativize the concept of gender, by arguing that it is just a cultural production based on anatomical differences, we might also take into account, commonplace as it may seem, that there is a more feminine as well as a more masculine reception and way of dealing with evil and how it is perpetrated and to life in general. Here we could draw from psychoanalysis and how a child represents her or himself in and for the world and in relation to her or his parents, as well as the conscious and unconscious social representations that everything related to femininity is more passive and sensitive and masculinity more active and thick-skinned.

Writing about the role of property in Elizabethan times, Maus points out that "a great deal of early modern drama, Shakespeare's included, deals with astonishing,

emotionally charged, eventfully compressed, and, therefore, wildly unusual situations". (MAUS, 2013, p.14) She goes on to state that, "because of the cornucopian richness of the Shakespearean text, it is probably possible for an ingenious interpreter to find traces of an engagement with property issues in a wide swathe of his plays" (IDEM, 2013, pp.14-15) and that his "imagined worlds, while taking early modern regimes of property as a point of departure, freely invent, simplify, and exaggerate particular features of those regimes, in what might be called a "poetics of property"". (IDEM, 2013, p. 15)

What is then the relationship between good and evil, gender roles and property issues above mentioned? It seems that all of them are permeated by the question of language. Good and evil can only acquire a symbolic existence by means of a definition, through language, of a certain kind of perception of a specific action or set of actions. Anchoring its discourse in an anatomical difference between the sexes, the construction of gender roles and identification is strongly based on verbal, body and visual language. It starts from the very moment a child states that he or she is a boy or a girl, what is therefore associated with that identification (conduct, values, clothes, etc) and is socially incentivised throughout one's life. As regards property issues, things belong or not to a person by means of a written and oral language register that allows one to own things and identify with them.

The property issue brings to the surface the very nature of human language and its relationship with people, things and the real. Is language a material thing? Where does it come from? What is its real nature and how much does it affect our understanding of things and perception of the world? Ought we to take illicit substances in an attempt to momentarily dissociate words from things and think about our limited experience in and of the world and other people through the use of language? What are the consequences of speaking and understanding more than one language? Is not through language since an early age, and much later through our body, that we learn and have to deal with our own finitude, and if we add to it art and dreams, the forms of expression of our thought? Finally, is not also through language, tricks, irony, physical strength or turning a cold shoulder that we defend ourselves at the moment evil is perpetrated against us or years later in the form of bitter revenge?

Writing about how gender and its relations are perceived nowadays, Rosenfield argues that,

> It is with a modern paganism that Clarisse and Musil precipitate their heroines directly into the material, animal and vegetal alterity. It is no longer the controlled imagination that finds symbols for the identification with a certain quality of animals, distancing itself from animality as such; the artists from the first half of the 20th century start to put themselves in the animal and

> as an animal, parasitize its alterity, usurping it in a non-symbolic gesture or, at least, not totally symbolic. The paintings of Klee − *Horse and Man*, *The Approximate Man*, *Pernicious Vegetable Things*, among others − clearly show this fight against anthropomorphism that sets as a standard the human subject and his values. In its place, hybrid creatures suspended among animal, vegetable, mineral, between dream and phantasm, alienating folly and conscious reflection arise. All this imagination creates links which allow for a more gracious and free transit between the genders, freeing itself from the rigid traditional standards that limit the masculine and feminine to stereotyped roles. (K. ROSENFIELD, 2018, p. 164-165) (Translation mine)[13]

When thinking about gender and its relation to the time we live in and how it is still perceived nowadays, we should bear in mind the more or less 300 years that separate Shakespeare from more recent writers such as Samuel Beckett, Clarice Lispector and Robert Musil, while also taking into account those slightly previous authors such as The Brontës, Jane Austen, Machado de Assis, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Kafka and Dostoievski.

It appears that language can open up our perception of the world, just as it may reduce it by means of a few confining categories. It is well-known that English has fewer words to refer to snow, such as sleet and snow, than the Inuit language, in which there are various terms to refer to it, such as *aput* for snow on the ground, *qana* for falling snow, *piqsirpoq* for drifting snow and *qimuqsuq* for a snowdrift. Conversely, in Tupi-Guarani the word *hovy* is used to refer to a single colour which encompassed both blue and green. A similar or identical process happens in various other languages, especially in old times but with some remaining traces up to this day and age. Japanese and Chinese, for example, still use the words *ao*/*aoi* and *qīng*, respectively, both represented by the same kanji, i.e., ideogram, to refer to blue or green depending on the situation. Inversely, nowadays an increasing number of people refuse to be simply classified as female or male, preferring instead to be denominated by the pronoun they or a classification that indicates that they associate now with one gender and then with another, as well as other nomenclatures.

Likewise, just as the seeds of the Modern Age still permeate the way we act and perceive the world nowadays so did the seeds of individualism that started to grow in

[13] É com um paganismo moderno que Clarice e Musil precipitam suas heroínas diretamente na alteridade material, animal, vegetal. Não é mais a imaginação controlada que encontra símbolos para a identificação com certa qualidade dos animais, distanciando-se da animalidade como tal; os artistas da primeira metade do século XX começam a se colocar no animal e com o animal, parasitar sua alteridade, usurpando-a num gesto não simbólico ou, pelo menos, não totalmente simbólico. Os quadros de Klee − *Cavalo e Homem, O Homem Aproximado*, *Perniciosas Coisas Vegetais*, entre outros − mostram claramente essa luta contra o antropomorfismo que coloca como padrão o sujeito humano e seus valores. No seu lugar, surgem criaturas híbridas suspensas entre animal, vegetal, mineral, entre sonho e fantasma, loucura alienante e reflexão consciente. Todo esse imaginário cria elos que permitem transitar com mais graça e liberdade entre os gêneros, libertando-se dos rígidos padrões tradicionais que limitam o masculino e o feminino a papéis estereotipados.

England since the Tudor period. Protestantism is often associated with individualism, autonomy and engaging in the secular world. In his classical book *Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism,* published in the beginning of last century, the German sociologist Max Weber argued that in Northern Europe capitalism evolved from the Protestant (mainly Calvinist) ethic (WEBER, 1970). This is a perspective in which the individual is responsible before God for their acts. According to this ethic the role of people in earth is to praise the Ethics of God. This was done through hard work. Becoming rich could hence be interpreted as pleasing the Lord and meaning that one was chosen for salvation. But money was not meant to be squandered but reinvested in business. An ethic of individualism, hard-work and perseverance are traits of countries that were strongly influenced by Protestantism. This applies not only to North European countries but also to the United States where the ideology of individualism and the value of work are very strong.

In this context, Hill argues about class ideology that "In all sorts of ways protestant theology appealed to the individualism of the middle class. The abolition of mediating saints and a mediating priesthood set individual consciences face to face with God." (HILL, 1975, p. 40) He then goes on to state that,

> The medieval doctrine of purgatory conceived of society (the church) as a single community. The merits of individual Christians (including those of dead saints as well as those of living monks performing their highly specialized social tasks) were paid into an ecclesiastical bank from which, through the mediating priesthood, they could be drawn upon by individual Christians if they did penance. Protestantism popularized the idea of the individual spiritual balance sheet, the profit-and-loss book-keeping of diaries. This presupposes an atomic society of individuals fighting for their own salvation, no longer a community working out its salvation, as it cultivated its fields, in common. The phrase 'the individual' in its modern sense dates from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. We can see the new spirit in a number of spheres − in the emphasis of Puritans and dramatists on the right to choose one's matrimonial partner, which proved so liberating for women, in more realistic portraiture and sculpture, resulting from post-Reformation secular patronage of the arts: Holbein, the first painter of genius to work in England, came over in 1527. (HILL, 1975, p.40-41)

We must bear in mind that *Richard III* marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era, as well as the way Shakespeare deals with and solves the problem of evil in this world. This is done in a very simple way: evil people are responsible for their deeds and must be held accountable and punished, usually by death. Whether this death is inflicted on them by other characters or the judicial system or is consummated as a suicide is indifferent. However, supernatural entities like witches

and spirits, such as the mischievous Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Weird Sisters in Macbeth may reign eternally, since they represent forces that go beyond the human will. As Garber puts it about the time Richard III was written and its relevance still nowadays,

> Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Richard III* is an eloquent testament to the power of fiction-making for two reasons, one dating to his time, the other to ours: first, because of the rewriting of history by historians in the early modern period; and second, because the history of this period many people know today is derived, in fact, from the plays of Shakespeare. The facts modern audiences know about Richard are the fictions invented by politicians and courtiers. Shakespeare wrote and performed his plays in the time of Queen Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry VIII and the granddaughter of Henry VII, otherwise known as Henry Tudor, the Earl of Richmond. It was in the interest of the Tudors to delegitimize Richard's claim to the throne and to describe him as an unfit and unworthy king–since his claim was actually stronger than that of Henry VII. So historians attached to the Tudor court had a political job to do. The character of Richard III was rewritten by historians like Sir Thomas More into the literal embodiment of evil, his misshapen body (not attested by other historical sources) used as a visual metaphor for his twisted mind. (GARBER, 2009, p.109)

This distinction between fiction and reality and how it reverberates throughout the centuries by impacting on our imagination and producing lasting effects is further corroborated by Greenblatt when he argues that,

> In Shakespeare's play, Richard's horse is killed beneath him–"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" (5.4.7), he repeatedly shouts–and, failing to get a new mount, he ranges on foot across the battlefield, looking to meet his enemy Richmond. When they finally encounter one another, they engage in single combat, and Richard is killed. "The day is ours," Richmond declares. "The bloody dog is dead" (5.5.2). In historical reality, as the bones that unexpectedly surfaced in the construction site bore witness, Richard's end took a somewhat different form. The base of Richard's skull had been shattered by a violent blow, probably from a halberd, that particularly gruesome two-handed pole weapon favored by late medieval soldiers. The king had thus presumably been killed from behind, and his bones show signs of what are called "humiliation injuries," that is, stab wounds through the buttocks and elsewhere that the victors must have inflicted on his corpse in a frenzy of loathing. But perhaps the most interesting piece of evidence brought to light after more than five hundred years is the spine, curved in a startling *S*. The physical deformation vividly conjured up the figure who actually accounted for the worldwide press coverage–not the relatively minor historical Richard but the unforgettable tyrant Shakespeare created and unleashed onto the London stage. (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 94-95)

Thus, if we are to consider the creation of characters in Shakespeare's drama we should bear in mind that this is a very complex matter that should be taken into account. It involves a whole lot of elaboration and deliberation by the author himself, who might

not even have been a hundred percent conscious of what he or she was doing when they created them. As Palfrey puts it very wisely,

> As we have seen, there are different ways of approaching character. One way is to approach the character as a textual or dramatic construct. The character is in no sense real. It is a network of signs, dictated by the limitations and conventions of Shakespeare's medium. Characters are collections of dialogue, bearing relationships to various types and genres, animated by their place in particular plots. But not only does Shakespeare (inevitably) construct them out of the materials of drama: these characters construct *themselves* out of such materials. Specific dramatic machinery takes the place of psychology, motivation, and self-image. Inwardness gets built up from an often accidental collection of such techniques. Any individuality is not simply given and present in any single speech or act. It is inferred from this patchwork of effects; it is found in what is not present as much as in what is present. (PALFREY, 2011, p. 321-322)

It is probably by following this line of thought and having all these components in mind, while comparing Richard III to Iago, what makes Charney ponder that "in any case, Richard offers a model for the Shakespearean villain, and many of his characteristics can be seen in Iago and other later villains." (CHARNEY, 2013, p. 29)

4.3. Richard III's Motives

Richard III is far more Machiavellian than Iago, since for him the ends, which are related to power and politics, justify the means, whatever they may be. As Charney argues about him, "like Iago, Richard insists that he is an ordinary man, who protests strongly against the very politic devices and subtle stratagems that he himself uses." (CHARNEY, 2013, p. 39) It is not given to the readers or the audiences to know if Iago would kill a brother or a nephew, as Richard III does, or if he would be fond of them like animals and humans usually are with their offspring and kinships.

The history of England is full of these examples, from Henry VIIII, who had two of his wives executed (Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard) after he grew tired of them, to Queen Elizabeth I of England who had her cousin Mary I Queen of Scots assassinated for political reasons, even though she actually liked her. When it comes to power relations with politics involved, there seems to be a different logic to that of Iago, who seeks destruction for destruction's sake. As American Professor and author Marjorie Garber argues, in her book *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*,

> The appeal of Richard's character to the contemporary imagination has produced a number of timely comparisons with figures in political life in the past century. Thus, for example, W.H. Auden began his lecture on *Richard III* at the New School in 1946 by comparing Richard's opening soliloquy

> ("Now it is the winter of our discontent") to a speech by Adolf Hitler. During the presidency of Richard Nixon, analogies between one ill-fated Ricardian rule and the other were fairly commonplace. (GARBER, 2009, p.111)

Richard III is intent on achieving his goals, just like Iago and Lady Macbeth, and yet he has different reasons and methods of accomplishing them. He is by far the most political character if we compare him to Iago or Lady Macbeth and he also seems to be the cruellest among them concerning the people he chooses to be executed and the methods he uses to assassinate them. Arguing that Shakespeare deals with evil characters by not letting them get away with their evil deeds by inflicting on them their consequences, Miller points out another aspect of Shakespeare's drama,

> There is no question that, in every tragedy, Shakespeare explores the extent to which evil brings about the downfall of a character. However, a study of four of his plays demonstrates an evolution in his understanding of evil. Beginning with Titus Andronicus and ending with Macbeth, Shakespeare over time portrays his protagonists becoming more and more consciously aware of the inner battle between good and evil. Although echoes of the Vice figure and an outer corrupting force certainly exist throughout Shakespeare's career, his later plays display a hero far more perceptive of evil's influence upon him and much more conscious of the consequences of such evil. (MILLER, 2015, p. 9)

Richard III overlaps much more with Iago than he does with Lady Macbeth or Macbeth, for example. If he is conscious of the suffering and misery he causes on others, he does not show any remorse or regret about it throughout much of the play. Only at the end of it is his consciousness forced to address these issues by his deep unconscious guilt. Iago, on the other hand, does not even have to deal with these feelings, and in this sense they are a little different from each other. According to Charney,

> Richard is the one who sends his brother to the Tower and has him killed by paid assassins. Like many Shakespeare's villains, especially Iago and Edmund, Richard is a misogynist. That is part of his determination to act alone without any ties to others, especially to women. (CHARNEY, 2013, p.32)

His hatred of women is reflected in the way he courts them and sees them as mundane objects to achieve his goals. Professor Rebecca Ann Bach's following remark, in her chapter "Manliness Before Individualism: Masculinity, Effeminacy and Homoerotics in Shakespeare's History Plays", seems to corroborate that point of view when she ponders that,

> Shakespeare does not reject Holinshed's characterization of Richard as a promiscuous heterosexual king and, therefore, recharacterize him as promiscuous homosexual. Writing before those categories came into existence, Shakespeare characterizes him as man with promiscuous desire, a man out of control and womanly. (BACH, 2004, p. 234)

Richard III's cruelty and coldness makes him similar to the political leaders of the fascist and Nazi regimes and imperialist Japan which came to power in the early 20th century in Europe and Asia. From Adolf Hitler to Benito Mussolini and Hirohito, the world watched in panic, or turned a blind eye, to how some human beings regarded and treated others as disposable goods that could be used, abused and shot dead. This reading of the play is well elaborated by Richard Loncraine's 1995 film *Richard III* starring Ian McKellen as Richard III. The usurping rise to power and its maintenance through coercion, violence and intimidation is a motif there that appears in a subliminal way for some and a more-or-less clear way for others.

The standards of what is good and evil may vary considerably from time to time and different places. Evil depends on who is looking and from what point of view. The fact that the historical Macbeth assassinated the king Duncan in battle may not have been considered evil in the 11th century warrior-like Scotland, where it was perfectly acceptable to kill and be killed in combat while fighting for the throne. We must bear in mind that the ethics of these two contexts, a historical period and the play, is completely different. Therefore, we cannot blame the historical Macbeth for the cowardly and immoral actions of the fictional Macbeth, who acts against the codes of Elizabethan court. Likewise, a war criminal may be considered a war hero in his or her country, even though he or she may have looted, raped and injured or killed innocent civilians.

What is the subtext of our enunciations? How much is implicit in what we say, constituting the *sotto voce* of the enunciation level, i.e., what is behind or below our utterances? Language is a means of conveying affection through the expression of our emotions or the concealment of them. On the other hand, the nonuse of it is the very manifestation of indifference which does not correspond to either love or hate.

The continuum between humans and the animal kingdom in *Richard III*, which is also well explored in *Othello* and *Macbeth*, is possibly what led Charney to state that,

> There is a great deal of animal imagery for Richard as there is for many of Shakespeare's villains. It is a consistently negative imagery that allies the villain with the lowest forms of nature. Richard is linked with aggressive animals that bite, like the dog, the boar, the hedgehog, and the tiger; with venomous animals like the toad, the snake, the spider, and the lizard; and

> with mythical animals like the basilisk or cockatrice that kill merely by a look or by breathing on their victims. (CHARNEY, 2013, p.35)

The question of whether human beings can be considered animals, if they are unique beings endowed with super powers that totally differentiate them from the animal kingdom, setting each other many eons apart, or just animals with the power of reasoning and capable of very abstract feelings and thoughts depends on each person's point of view or a philosophical doctrine. Following this line of thought, Charney continues his argument about Richard III by pondering that,

> All of this negative imagery connects Richard's deformity with his diabolical and homicidal purposes. His misshapen body is an indication of his devilish origin. The animals link Richard with the forces of an aggressive and lacerating natural world. Despite his occasional professions of faith, Richard, like many of Shakespeare's villains, is an atheist and non-believer. Also, like many of Shakespeare's villains, Richard is an excellent actor – not only an actor but a comedian who delights in his villainy. I don't think that any of Shakespeare's villains, except for Macbeth, could be called tragic. They are busily engaged in role-playing, which is often joking and comic. (CHARNEY, 2013, p. 37)

Whether the actual Richard III was in fact a villain and really deformed is still a debatable question nowadays. Following this line of thought, and writing about the difference between real facts and the poetic licence authors have when they reinvent History by rewriting it in a different way, Garber ponders that,

> Still, Shakespeare's Richard is different both from the one-dimensional monster of the Tudor historians, and the splendid general and loving family man of the modern Ricardian revisionists. And it is Shakespeare's Richard who seems to have won the day: a charismatic villain, sexy, super-articulate, flirtatious and seductive with the audience as well as with the Lady Anne. Should we care whether his story is "true" or not? The debate about truth and fiction, truth and lying, truth and interpretation, is staged within the play– and indeed, within Richard's own soliloquies from the beginning of the play to the end. In this way Shakespeare can be seen to have *anticipated* the tension between fact and fiction that troubles modern-day commentators: it is that very tension that animates both Richard III and his play. (GARBER, 2009, p. 110)

Although *Othello* was the product of improving an original story by rewriting it, *Richard III* and *Macbeth* play with History and its recreation through literary imagination and artistic license to the most. In this scenario, fact and imagination blend with each other and reality becomes permeated with divagation, similar to the way our mind works by transforming anodic moments into memorable events. In this context, Charney argues, by comparing the two main protagonists of these two recreated tragedies, *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, as well as by analyzing Richard III's motives that,

> Richard, Duke of Gloucester (who later becomes King Richard III), is Shakespeare's most notable creation to date. He is featured in two plays, *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*, and he also appears in *2 Henry VI*. In his vaunting and ruthless ambition he resembles Marlowe's Tamburlaine of less than ten years earlier. Richard is preoccupied with his own deformity, as if this insures him of a special place among Shakespeare's protagonists. Albeit evil, he is a character of tremendous energy and imagination. Like Buckingham, he can "counterfeit the deep tragedian" (*Richard III* 3.5.5) and play whatever roles are necessary to accomplish his nefarious purposes. He is tricky and unpredictable, except that we know that he plans to murder everyone who stands in his way of becoming king. He definitely looks forward to Macbeth, who is a hero-villain in an entirely different mode but equally steeped in blood. (CHARNEY, 2013, p. 41)

This point of view is fully corroborated by Greenblatt in his book *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*, when he states that,

> Shakespeare's *Richard III* brilliantly develops the personality features of the aspiring tyrant already sketched in *Henry VI* trilogy: the limitless self-regard, the lawbreaking, the pleasure in inflicting pain, the compulsive desire to dominate. He is pathologically narcissistic and supremely arrogant. He has a grotesque sense of entitlement, never doubting that he can do whatever he chooses. He loves to bark orders and to watch underlings scurry to carry them out. He expects absolute loyalty, but he is incapable of gratitude. The feelings of others mean nothing to him. He has no natural grace, no sense of shared humanity, no decency. (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 53)

As we can infer from these passages above and other reflections conducted in this thesis, Richard III, Iago and Lady Macbeth are human insofar as we accept this term as encompassing all potentialities of the human soul, not just the one to do good. As History has shown us so effectively, human beings and by extension whole populations are capable of good deeds as well as very nefarious ones. We should therefore be very careful when using the term humane, since not all that belongs to the human sphere can always be considered good.

I would like to conclude this chapter with a quote by Stephen Greenblatt who, writing about *Richard III*, states that it "brilliantly sketches men and women making anxious calculations under unbearable pressure and taking fateful decisions, conditioned by emotional currents beyond their rational control. It is the power of great theater to bring these dilemmas to life." (GREENBLATT, 2018, p. 69)

CONCLUSION

Evil is like a scar in the face or the soul, a blotch in the history of humanity and a constant reminder that nobody is perfect. Therefore, it is a phenomenon that cannot and will never be completely eradicated or uprooted. It may at best be dealt with and controlled, taken as an example for future generations not to incur in the same mistakes or be more prepared to avoid them. Besides, it may cause traumas, wake-up calls and even shift a society out of gear if we consider colonialism as an evil thing or some sort of interference. Evil is, therefore, a vast and complex theme which is far from being elucidated or completely explained. It proves fairly elusive at times and, at best, may be analyzed as a phenomenon that, as it manifests itself through an individual or group of people in a specific time and geographical location, may open up to different interpretations.

Evil is usually shocking and can have more than one cause. It may stem from sheer envy, real or imaginary personal deprivations which might lead an individual to feel she or he is entitled to transgress the norms of society and do other people harm, be it physical or psychological or even a natural predisposition some people have to act in a malign way. It is also a blurred concept inasmuch as it may vary between one era and another and considering the fact that different cultures can have distinct ideas about it. It can nevertheless be delimited and verified, as well as studied and analyzed from inside or outside.

As the epigraph of this thesis says, through a quote from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the evil deeds that human beings do persists and lives after them, while the good they do is often buried with them. If we take some examples from history, such as Nazism, the atomic bomb and innumerable wars and massacres we end up realizing how much of this is true. All these things have harmful ensuing effects that mark humanity forever and demand from ourselves to rethink our position in society and the world. That does not mean that good actions do not have a positive effect on humankind, but their influence may take longer to set in and be truly perceived and appreciated.

Evil leaves scars and traumas that have to be dealt or simply lived with. Trauma studies argue that you never fully get over a trauma, but instead learn to live with it, dealing with its consequences. The consequence of good deeds are all the prolife actions that have managed to end slavery on a large scale, have been trying to put women and men on the same level, find the cure for diseases and remedy the problem

of world hunger and global warming, among so many other things. The fact that so many dissonant things have occurred in the last century and are still happening nowadays points at the clash or conflict between the life and death drives within the core of human beings and the question of desire and its externality, as well as post colonialism and the traumatic.

If we think about what was considered right and wrong in the XVI century compared to our own standards in the XXI century, many things have changed dramatically. Things changed a lot throughout the centuries, introducing new social formats and worldviews. Shakespeare writes at the turning of the Middle Ages into the Modern Era. If at that time prejudiced jokes about women and (ethnic) minorities, as well as handicapped people, were considered common currency, nowadays that is almost unconceivable in a respectful theatre or mainstream society. Women then, for example, were quickly associated with speaking trumpets that slid to the term strumpet, which means a female prostitute or disrespectful woman, and the homophony between queen and quean or prostitute was very prevalent in Elizabethan times. Besides, the Moor in *Othello* is compared to a Barbary horse who will cover Desdemona, the super subtle Venetian woman in Iago's words, potentially giving her father, Brabantio, nephews who will neigh to him and "courses for cousins, and gennets for germans [sic]." (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. 1)

In the Middle Ages deformed people like Richard III or handicapped ones were associated with evil and this thought was still prevalent in the Modern Era, whereas nowadays, as has already been pointed out, we tend to try to incorporate them in society and see them instead as people with special needs.

On the other hand, jokes or puns with sexual innuendos, so prevalent in Shakespeare's plays, are still considered adequate in certain contexts and to a certain degree, as long as they are not targeted at a specific group of people but may refer to sexuality in broad terms. Besides, the movie industry and the theatre in general have been eager to incorporate minorities in their cast in non subordinate roles as a way of breaking away from preconceived and prejudiced roles.

One important aspect of Shakespeare's plays and the time he lived in is that evil is treated in his tragedies as a clear-cut thing which is usually unambiguous and straightforward and represents a rupture in the symbolic order which must be restored. This is probably because people in Elizabethan times expected evil deeds to be easily identifiable and accounted for and the notions of good and bad were clearer then than they are nowadays. For instance, if you murder your brother and go to bed with his wife,

as is the case in *Hamlet*, that is enough for the spirit of the assassinated person to demand and expect revenge imparted from his son on the perpetrator of the crime, since the ghost of the deceived and deceased person can do nothing to vindicate itself by its own means. Another example is that, if you host a king in your castle, as is the case with Duncan and Macbeth and his wife, you are supposed to respect the laws of hospitability, even more with a monarch, and not assassinate the king in your own house. That is enough for the author of *Macbeth* to know that his audience expects him to hold a bad ending for this evil couple, one of which dies in a battle with someone whose life he helped to mess up and his wife not only goes mad but ends up committing suicide.

One exception to this approach to evil is Shakespeare's latest play, *The Tempest*. There, more abstruse concepts like lifespan, the oneiric, privilege, magic and Eurocentrism come to the fore to shed new light on what we usually consider right or wrong and good or bad. No clear villain there, but a white European man who, acting as an alter ego to the author himself, influences and manipulates others through his knowledge of the books and magic. The very tempest in the first scene, concocted by Prospero, puts at stake all the social hierarchies with which we are accustomed to orientate ourselves, since Alonso, the king of Naples, and all the nobles who accompany him, become equal to any mariner or even less than them, if the ship capsizes and they are not able to swim.

Shakespeare is still so successful nowadays because, since we live in a time where things are less clear and people sometimes do not know exactly what is good or bad or appropriate and inappropriate, we tend to expect or at least appreciate defined and elaborated examples of good and evil and how to deal with them. Evil deeds in Shakespeare rarely go unpunished and millennia of experience show that there are things that one had better not do, such as killing someone who belongs to your own group. Moreover, he insists on the power of absolutism and that one should not kill the king since he was chosen by God.

The three villains that were analyzed in this thesis are all iconic examples of evilness as seen from a certain perspective. They are all situated in the threshold of the Modern Era and the onset of a more individualistic society and worldview. They still haunt us to this day, and we cannot help identifying with them at times. It is possible that we have already felt as single-minded, selfish and cold as Lady Macbeth, wishing to eliminate someone who is or we see as being in our way. We may even have identified with someone as subhuman and dreadful as Iago, who does not consider himself as a (sexually) favored and privileged person and, after realizing that things do not look so

good for him, exclaims while speaking to Roderigo, who is cogitating committing suicide, that,

> If the balance of our lives had not
> one scale of reason to poise another
> of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures
> would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions.
> But we have reason to cool our raging motions,
> our carnal stings or unbitted lusts;
> whereof I take this, that you call love, to be a sect or scion."
> (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. iii)

We may also have sympathized sometime with Richard III, who sees himself as a disadvantaged person that has therefore the right to eliminate anyone who he sees as an obstacle to his relentless and cruel pursuit of power. His actions are used to channel a revenge against the evils he has suffered. As he puts it himself,

> 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)

In Lady Macbeth the question of evil, ambition and gender or femininity arises. Shakespeare shows very clearly in this case that evil hardly ever compensates, even if it is done with cunning and subtlety. Not only does Lady Macbeth commit suicide after becoming mentally deranged and having lived a miserable live, but also her husband is assassinated in combat by Macduff, whose wife and child he concocted to murder. That is simply what the author reserved for them. Nevertheless, the question of feeling somehow socially downgraded by Duncan, the real king, and his entourage and not being able to live up to what is expected of a king and queen by a community is also present. As if on cue the author was calling our attention by showing that some things one is not supposed to meddle with, such as killing a king or any person, but we should instead try to deal with one's problems in a different way. After all, being the Thane of Glamis and later the Thane of Cawdor at that time and having a castle such as Dunsinane castle was not exactly a bad thing, nor were they therefore necessarily in a very inferior or unequal social echelon. On the contrary, they could live their lives with a lot of comfort and status, albeit possibly without children. One Freudian reading of Macbeth is that he wants to impress his wife but is nevertheless in a level of incompetency and not at ease as a king, therefore symbolically wearing clothes larger than himself.

Another interesting topic related Lady Macbeth and feminist theory is the question of whether she would have been a different character, i.e., with a different personality, if she had been created by a woman and not a male author like Shakespeare. This is something that would probably not have crossed Shakespeare's mind at that time. Nevertheless, nowadays many may argue that Lady Macbeth could never represent a woman, since she was created by a man, who cannot, according to this theory, imagine what it is and feels like being a woman. However, I endorse K. Rosenfield's point of view when, comparing Robert Musil to Clarice Lispector, she states that,

> *Intimate Ties* is perhaps a relevant work nowadays, in which the conflicts of gender are intensified, polarizing the feminine *and* the masculine voices. In innumerable passages of the work of both authors, whose lives were separated by more than thirty years, a sisterly-and-fraternal tone reigns, an arrangement that confounds the voice of Musil with Clarice Lispector's, making the difference and identity of the respective authors unrecognizable, despite the great difference in style and conception of their works. The fact suggests that a man can, indeed, enter the feminine mind and vice-versa. The interest of Musil was not to scrutinize the feminine intimacy, but to find dimensions of existence where the challenges are the same for men and women. (ROSENFIELD, 2018, p. 153) (Translation mine)[14]

In the case of Iago, the question of evil is addressed as something more uncanny and with large doses of eeriness. Although Iago might have had some reasons to act in an evil way, at least through a quick analysis, he also seems to share with us a certain pain that we too experience as human beings and, therefore, he lingers in our imaginary. He has no physical problems like Richard III, nor is he vying for a lot of success and human projection through an ambitious soul as a character. He does not have any remorse for his deeds either, like Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and Richard III more to the end of the plays. Rather, in an anachronistic reading, he is analogous to the feelings we used to get from ads when they showed people in cloud nine and now we only seem to experience from potential neighbours or movie scenes projected on big screens, with implicit or explicit sexual scenes filled with pleasure, from which we are excluded. However, Shakespeare does not spare him either in the least. After his hideous crimes come to light, and Iago is not squeamish about blood like the Lady or her husband, since almost all the murders are planned and committed by himself without later regret, he is to

[14] *Uniões* talvez seja uma obra relevante na época atual, na qual os conflitos de gênero se acirram, polarizando as vozes femininas *e* as masculinas. Em inúmeras passagens das obras de ambos os autores, cujas vidas estavam separadas por mais de trinta anos, reina um tom sororal-e-fraterno: um acorde que confunde a voz de Musil com a de Clarice Lispector, tornando irreconhecíveis a diferença e a identidade dos respectivos autores, apesar das grandes diferenças de estilo e concepção de suas obras. O fato sugere que um homem pode, sim, entrar na mente feminina e vice-versa. O interesse de Musil não era devassar a intimidade feminina, mas encontrar dimensões da existência onde os desafios são os mesmos para homens e mulheres.

be taken back to Venice, tortured and killed. Once again, and through a more anachronistic interpretation, Shakespeare seems to be hinting at accepting that in any society, especially in a capitalist one like ours, there will be people who are far better off, and also far worse, than we are and that this is not a justifiable reason to eliminate them. By this I mean people who have children when we do not, who are richer, younger or more beautiful and attractive, as well as more sexually resolved or with far fewer problems than ours.

Iago stands for envy (of the other) and resentment, both of which are universal feelings easy for contemporary readers as well as those of Shakespeare's era to relate to. For him, "If Cassio do remain He hath a daily beauty in his life That makes me ugly" (*Othello*, Act V, Sc. 1) and he hates "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" (*IDEM*, Act I, Sc. 3). Concerning Desdemona "Blessed fig's-end! The wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed pudding!" (*IDEM*, Act II, Sc. 1) and finally, about Roderigo, he exclaims that "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse; For I mine own gained knowledge should profane If I would time expend with such snipe But for my sport and profit" (*IDEM*, Act I, Sc. 3).

Iago also has all the prejudices of the Middle Ages, since he does not accept the fact that Othello, who is a Moor and a foreigner, takes his place and has a superior rank as well as enjoys a better position in Venetian society than he does. Besides, he is married to Desdemona, whom Iago covets and considers superior and more beautiful than his wife, Emilia, who ends up serving as her maid. This just intensifies his envy and resentment towards Othello. Moreover, in times of war Iago exists and in times of peace nobody remembers him. However, Iago never changes or tries to change. He is only destructive and evil in the same way as Desdemona is always pro-life and good. They therefore represent two extremes of the same shaft on which all the other characters in the play transit.

As for Richard III, he is by far the most political character and even more gruesome than Iago, since he sends his own nephews to be killed in the Tower of London, besides many other people including other relatives. At the end of the play he is tormented by his actions, i.e., his murders, and dreams about each of his victims, many of whom blood relatives, who come to curse him in his dream. He dies in battle and is emblematic of the transition from the late Middle Ages to the early Modern Era.

Although there are controversies ranging whether to real Richard III was actually an evil man, Shakespeare decided to paint him in grim colours and turn him into a fictional villain. He also corresponds to the ancient belief, still present in Shakespeare's time, that deformity and ugliness went hand in hand with evilness, i.e., that being deformed and evil were synonyms. Luckily, our society at large does not share this mentality nowadays and we tend to be more inclusive with handicapped people in general.

Richard III is a political satire. The character Richard III is the stereotype of the modern corrupt politician. He not only assassinates but also cries in the burial or murders a character and then marries his widow. For example, he seduces and marries Lady Anne, whose husband Edward, Prince of Wales and late father-in-law King Henry VI he had murdered, and then arranges for Anne's death too once she is no longer advantageous to him. He has no scruples or limits and therefore extrapolates any era, because there will always be people like that.

Evil is, in its most neuralgic form, a scary thing especially when it is actually put into practice and passively observed and absorbed by others. Therefore, it is possible to talk about an aesthetic of evil. When practiced individually or collectively, like a slow poison or a fulminating blow, evil actions usually leave everyone baffled at first and only in a second moment looking for its cause, be it one or more. Thus, it can be argued that there are different causes to evil, as well as distinct intensities, hues and tonalities. Moreover, as long as human beings are human beings there are many things that will not change.

Shakespeare indirectly, but nevertheless consciously, focuses on the little acts of evil that people do everyday sometimes intercalated with signs of love. Our left-handed compliments or famous pricks with a pin that pop up almost unconsciously, intended to hurt and sometimes invigorate others and the inevitable regrets and remorse, leading or not to a phantasmagorical scenario which comes up in dreams and laborious memories. Sadly, the simple acts and situations of non-correspondence, at whatever level they may be, can backlash on the person responsible or cause serious grudges and disappointments for those who suffered it.

It is not uncommon in the cinema or in real life to watch someone commit something that is or appears to be evil or shocking towards another person, just to find out that it is some kind of tit for tat, i.e., a slight revenge or retaliation. The failure to observe this may bring about a misunderstanding of the whole picture by some people in the audience or bystanders of a scene, a bit like the process of dream interpretation in

which different elements have to be understood within their relationship with other signifiers and the patient's history and background. Likewise, when we attribute evil deeds to other people, sometimes we have slips of information in our discourse that are essential to understand why the other person acted in an evil way towards someone, for example.

Drawing from what we have analyzed in the previous chapters, evil in Shakespeare seems to stem, at least in one of its causes, from an endless reimbursement arising from the feelings of having been unjustly treated or favored by nature or society in a random way. Whether these feelings of injustice are well-founded or not is debatable, but the use of evil in one's actions, from an ethical point of view, is never justifiable. Nevertheless, the three villains analyzed in this thesis never question much their behavior and act like selfish and very individualistic people who could not care less about others.

Another cause of evil, as has already been pointed out before, is sheer individualism and human whims and caprices which do not take others into account. These human traits, which were more subdued in the Middle Ages because of the strong power of influence of the Catholic Church as an institution which controlled other people's lives and ensured a peaceful living within the structure of a community, come to the fore in the Modern Age and increases exceptionally in the Contemporary Era, in spite of its counterbalance in political correctness and actions which indeed strive to help others in need. Moreover, our contemporary times have all the sketchy and schizophrenic overtones of reality that were still lacking in the Modern Era.

Being good or evil is just a potentiality of every human being. Although some people are good just as far as what they wear or when appearances are at stake, there are others who are what they seem to be: good or evil. However, Shakespeare seems to make more complex this theme by showing that we are in most cases contradictory, exposing our shortcomings to the public as if putting the finger on a problem by touching our very own wounds. Moreover, surviving in a competitive world nowadays even requires being a little evil sometimes.

In this sense, the more phantasmagorical elaboration of dreams is able to counterbalance and partially dilute the theme of evil, or at least its experience, by acting out the very twists and turns of the human soul. Thus, by distilling what was done consciously or unconsciously during the day from us to others or the other way around, be it social slips or little acts of evil, we see at night looming up in front of us in a

disguised manner feelings of ambivalence, guilt or fear when we are the perpetrators of such deeds or anger if we are, or feel like we were, the receptors.

And yet evil is also a pervasive thing when it comes to the individual level. It can spread out like a disease or miasma and be as insidious as depression, making it in this case difficult to pinpoint its cause and at the same time offering one a rather bleak prognostic if people cannot counterbalance it with a stronger life drive or instinct that can be translated as an authentic *joie de vivre*.

Evil can be perceived nowadays as something as random as having a terminal illness, not being able to solve one's sexual life, having a bad professional career and so on. It is also very likely that in the Middle Ages and in Shakespeare's time these issues had not yet reached the level of consciousness that they have today. Drawing a parallel, these things are similar to the advances of medicine: the more breakthroughs and discoveries that are made, the more complex life becomes as well as our perception of reality. Moreover, the world and our perception of reality nowadays is full of connotations and multiple meanings. In Shakespeare's time, these things had not yet been played out to almost its maximum degree, even though his plays are full of puns and nuances. Reality then was less complex than nowadays and some discoveries were just being made. Besides, there were no psychoanalysis and things belonged more to the realm of denotation.

In a conscious or unconscious tradition, through the exploration of the realm of dreams and implicit sexuality in human relationships and dealing with a theme so widespread, sensitive and universal as evil, Shakespeare lays the ground and paves the way to the more hard core psychoanalytical theories and practice available for those who can experience it nowadays. Thus, by treating the isolated individual and trying to make her or him a better person to operate in society, psychoanalysis is or should be able to contribute and offer something: a person more purified from her or his "evilness" and shortcomings who can add value and give something back to a community.

Nevertheless, the feeling of *Hilflosigkeit* that Freud deals with, i.e., of helplessness and powerlessness felt by the individual in society faced with the inevitability of death and the contingency of life itself, was probably less strong in Shakespeare's time. People back then were not overwhelmed by the weight and irrationality of bureaucracy, possessed less access to destructive drugs but had not yet reached and developed anaesthesia, painkillers and antidepressants, as if our happiness depended on a very frail and thin equilibrium nowadays.

It is possible as well that from Shakespeare onwards we have been celebrating and always rebuilding a parallel idea to that of evil: cynicism itself or the ability of not saying what one thinks or saying exactly the opposite of what one believes in. If we consider art as a means of protest, what was this author protesting against? Possibly, the fact that the world is ruled by the work of contingency and that life is usually an unfair balance for many people.

And yet Shakespeare is also the author of the unexpected visits and reencounters, of the continually frustrated sexuality and the ghosts, our ghosts. These come rushing from past experiences, haunting and assailing us. Having no concrete location or clear reference (except from our unconscious), they are nevertheless always there, almost as real entities or things which need to be addressed, tackled and solved. As Sei Shonagon mentions in a passage about lists from *The Pillowbook*, I see him as the author of the "things that make the hearts beat faster", therefore dealing with those things which are dear and sometimes painful to us.

Like ancient languages and the clash between different cultures and rivers, as well as that which remains in the dark concerning our actions, the chiaroscuro or unconscious substrate I dealt with in my Master's dissertation, Shakespeare appears to retrieve something which was dormant in the past or yet (re)introduce a new way of thinking and acting that does not conform to social conventions or correspond to an apparent free will. This new way of being seems to pour a penchant for individualism and evilness, in which case, in many stances, it actually is (see Iago and Richard III), but also a tendency to act outside the status quo.

Not being attached to the strings of society and at the same time questioning and undermining its very foundation and those who, consciously or unconsciously, reinforce its structures that hold it into place and position (see Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, however mean they are), means shedding light at a new way of facing the individual and her or his needs to reinvent or at least mould themselves according to their own criteria and beliefs. This points to the fact that what at a certain time is considered good and bad may differ or be exactly the opposite at another time or geographical location, depending on what the layers and foundation of our civilization are.

The fact that animals do things in the open sometimes bordering cruelty and that human beings are covered with and have at their disposal layers of civilization that, as clothes, they can wear, makes them less susceptible to certain shocks or at least theoretically speaking more able to avoid them, although animals do not have to deal as

consciously as humans with feelings of loss, trauma and humiliation, let alone the helplessness already mentioned.

The middle ground between evil and good is our free will or the capacity to decide what actions we may take in different situations. Our ability to choose what is adequate in different contexts and the utility of our actions are two distinct things. In this sense, we may act having in mind only our own interests without necessarily causing others harm, although actions with an utility tend to be better and more complete. For utilitarianism our actions should not be in vain and their good is measured according to the pleasure they provide for an individual and by extension the collectivity.

In turn, acting according to a moral obligation or the Kantian categorical imperatives tends to stifle and plaster the individual and might hinder her or him to think what course of action is adequate to each situation. It is similar to people who have a superego which is too strong and tight, making it difficult for them to act in certain circumstances or to unwind and let loose their drives in a healthy way. Therefore, these imperatives are the contrary or averse of evil without corresponding to something necessarily good and sometimes returning to 'evil' itself: the unhappy and bitter individual who cannot operate well and enjoy what life in society may be able to offer them.

From Tarantino to Lars von Trier, passing through Almodóvar and Nagisa Oshima, we tend to expect more and more violent scenes, oftentimes mixed with sex or drugs as well as grotesque and farfetched things. Horror movies, for example, are macabre to say the least. From war films to X-rated ones and parodies of violence such as Kill Bill, our receptiveness mirrors the degree of perversity that evil has reached nowadays, projected on the big screen not to burden our conscience and to see it enhanced in a modern and respected medium.

The death drive or the unbound urge elaborated by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, published in 1920, two years before the publication of *The Waste Land* and in the aftermath of World War I and the armistice between two world wars has been elaborated and put into practice to such a high degree that even Shakespearean villains might have seemed almost innocuous, had he lived and written his plays in our era. No wonder cinematographic adaptations of tragedies such as *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Richard III* are so thrilling to audiences worldwide by bringing to light this aspect of Shakespeare's drama present in some villainous characters.

Shakespeare appears to touch every person's wounds, exposing and enlarging them in an elegant and lucid way, yet at the same time dwelling on the shortcomings, contradictions and comings and goings of the soul. Evil appears in his tragedies as a

predisposition certain human beings have and a combination of different factors and elements. There is a human propensity that spans and overpasses the centuries and Shakespeare deals with that so well that it is possible to transpose his work up to this day making him still relevant nowadays. That is one of the reasons we continue to read his plays and they still make sense to us.

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