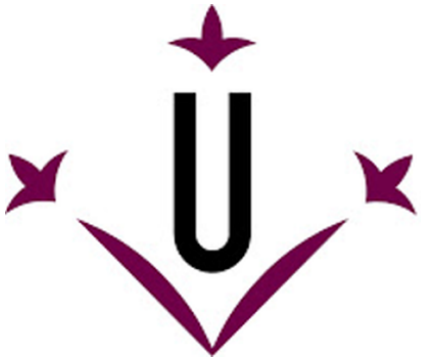

Universitat de Lleida
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UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

A METHOD IN THEIR MADNESS:
A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE'S CONSTRUCTION OF EVIL

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The real madness probably is not another thing that the wisdom itself that, tired of discovering the shames of the world, has taken the intelligent resolution to become mad.

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)

Abstract

Elizabethan dramatists, foremost amongst them William Shakespeare, thoroughly explored the theme of evil in their plays, as its reach was extremely extensive and completely impregnated the Elizabethan conception of the human being. Centuries later, psychoanalytic theory has bestowed the possibility to tackle the problematic nature of Shakespeare's characters' "psyche" and offer solutions to puzzles that have vexed readers across the ages. The purpose of this dissertation is to study the representation of evil in Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre through the particular analysis of two of his most emblematic villains, namely, Richard III and Macbeth. The present-day conception of evil presented in Dr Michael H. Stone's *The Anatomy of Evil* (2017) lies at the very core of this dissertation. Together with it, the psychoanalytic theories produced by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, amongst others, have been employed to carry out the analysis of the aforementioned Shakespearean villains. Ultimately, the research has shown that all conclusions reached through a study of Shakespearean character creations will necessarily lead to a better understanding of the human mind. All in all, through its combination of Stone's theory and psychoanalytic approaches to Shakespeare, this project will hopefully contribute to future studies addressing the evil nature of other villains in and outside the Shakespearean universe.

Keywords: Shakespeare, psychoanalysis, evil, Richard III, Macbeth, Elizabethan drama.

Els dramaturgs isabelins, i William Shakespeare principalment, van explorar a fons el tema del mal en les seves obres, ja que el seu abast era extremadament extens i impregnava completament la concepció isabelina de l'ésser humà. Segles després, la teoria del psicoanàlisi ha fet possible abordar la problemàtica de la "psique" dels personatges de Shakespeare i oferir solucions als trencaclosques que han inquietat els lectors al llarg de segles. L'objectiu central del present TFG és estudiar la representació del mal en l'obra dramàtica de Shakespeare mitjançant l'estudi particular de dos dels seus personatges malvats més emblemàtics: Ricard III i Macbeth. La visió contemporània del mal presentada a *The Anatomy of Evil* (2017) del Dr. Michael H. Stone, que es troba en el nucli fonamental d'aquest treball, ha estat emprada juntament amb les teories psicoanalítiques de Sigmund Freud i Jacques Lacan, entre d'altres, per realitzar l'anàlisi dels esmentats personatges malvats shakespearians. En última instància, la recerca demostra que tot estudi de personatges shakespearians condueix necessàriament a una millor comprensió de la ment humana. A través de la seva combinació de la teoria de Stone i estudis psicoanalítics de l'obra de Shakespeare, aquest projecte pot contribuir a futurs estudis que tractin la naturalesa d'altres personatges malvats dins i fora de l'univers shakespearià.

Paraules clau: Shakespeare, psicoanàlisi, mal, Ricard III, Macbeth, teatre isabelí.

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To my family, whose ears are sore from hearing me babbling about Shakespeare for months on end. You are a constant reminder of how good people can be.

And to my dearest friend Alba, whose endless support has kept me going in the bleakest of times.

You are all very much loved.

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Introduction

Descending into Hell: Shakespeare and the Representation of Evil

The battle between good and evil has arguably been one of the most recurring topics in the history of literature. Poets, dramatists and novelists across time and space have mustered all their genius to explore the nature of such a clash, attempting to reach, to a greater or lesser extent, the same objective: to explore the very nature of the human being. If the alluring forces of evil have appealed greatly to readers of every age and every land is primarily because its forbidden nature has always managed to rise in them a deep feeling of fascination. Indeed, the theme of evil, which has long been a favourite subject in Elizabethan[1] drama, has also been one of the most studied topics by critics across the ages. A close exploration of evil bestowed dramatists a unique opportunity to expand the barriers of the known and delve into their characters' fictional minds, permitting their imagination to create characters with a sense of psychological depth that had previously been uncharted. It may come as no surprise that William Shakespeare, who was a master of such practice, thoroughly explored the engrossing nature of evil by means of some of his most famous character creations.

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[1] Throughout this dissertation, I will subscribe to E.M.W. Tillyard's conception of the word *Elizabethan*, which he uses with great laxity, meaning "anything within the compass of the English Renaissance, anything between the ages of Henry VIII and Charles I akin to the main trends of Elizabethan thought" (1943: vii).

If Shakespeare's works have transcended the test of time is partly because the dramatic universe of his characters has continued to resonate with the world of his readers. Shakespeare is indeed an expert of the so-called 'character effect,' and, in fact, he is believed to have started it. As Harold Bloom argues, Shakespeare "invented the human as we continue to know it" (1998: xviii), imbuing his characters with a level of reality deep enough to make his readers feel totally engaged in their stories, hence, the 'character effect.' At an academic/theoretical level, this idea has been brought to the extreme in psychoanalytic studies of Shakespeare's characters in an attempt to better comprehend his construction of evil. For this reason, amongst the various approaches that analyse Shakespeare from a contemporary perspective, psychoanalysis has proved to be extremely useful for a consideration of evil in his plays.

It is needless to say that Shakespeare has become one of the most studied authors of all time, if not the writer whose works have widely been examined from all possible perspectives (Bloom, 1998; Cerezo, 2005; Cunningham, 1997; Harris, 2009). Therefore, finding a new line of research previously unexplored seems to be a rather difficult endeavour. However, although considerable research has been devoted to discerning the intricacies of the Bard's villains, (Bradley, 1971; Brown, 2015; Faber, 1970; Singh, 1978) rather less attention has been paid to reading these fictive characters as if they were living persons. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the representation of evil in Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre through the particular analysis of two of his most emblematic villains, namely, Richard III and Macbeth. What this study will hopefully contribute to the already broad body of research on Shakespeare and to psychoanalytical approaches to evil in general is an analysis of said characters under the light of the present-day look at evil presented in Dr Michael H. Stone's *The Anatomy of Evil* (2017). As will be shown, Stone's categorization of evil can complement extant psychoanalytic examinations of Shakespearean characters by offering precious insight into the nature of the criminals' actions and personality. Even though Aaron the Moor, Iago or Lady Macbeth could have easily been introduced in this study, due to space restrictions, I have decided to confine myself to the analysis of two villains only. I have selected Richard III mainly because it is one of Shakespeare's first explorations of evil, and, therefore, it establishes perfect contraposition to one of his last examinations of the subject: Macbeth.

I personally believe that any discussion of any literary work is, at best, incomplete or, at worst, incorrect, if one does not take into account the historical and cultural context

in which it has been produced. For this reason, I shall commence my study by commenting on the Elizabethan conception of madness in order to understand the source from which the sixteenth-century vision of evil springs. The connection between madness and evil will lead to a consideration of the archetype of the villain, which is central to this dissertation. In a different section, I am going to establish the utter importance that psychoanalytic theory holds for the study of evil within a contemporary framework. In order to do so, I will examine the main psychoanalytic theories used by some of the most influential scholars to approach Shakespeare and I shall select some of the works that have proposed psychoanalytic readings of the Bard's plays in hopes of better comprehending their value and usefulness when it comes to the study of the Shakespearean villain. As an addition to such an approach, I shall concentrate on the conception of evil that Stone presents in his study *The Anatomy of Evil* (2017). Finally, alongside Stone's theory, I will use, in a more general way, the psychoanalytic perspective to conduct the analysis of the corresponding case studies following Stone's approach to the interpretation of evil.

Chapter One

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1849, English poet R.H. Horne proposed the following interpretation regarding the conception of madness as understood in modern times:

> Madness is profoundly melancholy, heart-breaking, hopeless; and it is ferocious, terrific, exalted with monstrous hopes: madness may be most gentle and consistent, or it may be most violent and variable, alternating between appalling curses and the tenderest tears; it is often depressed beneath despair —yet far more commonly uplifted, and it generally ascends the highest heaven (or descends to the lowest hell) of "invention," according to the quality of its powers. […] It is isolated, solitary, incapable of combination to aid or to be aided; it drifts alone upon its own surging waves —a wreck on its own mental sea (1849: 589).

In *Madness and Civilization* (1988), a seminal study on the evolution of madness throughout the ages, Michel Foucault proposes that madness comes when the rationale behind a person's actions distances from the "rational sequence of causes" (1988, xi). In other words, madness comes when one's actions do not go in line with the socially accepted collective imaginary of the time in which they are produced. In our own modern experience, madness —commonly referred to as insanity— is confined within mental illness. However, in the Renaissance period, "man's dispute with madness was a dramatic debate in which he confronted the secret powers of the world" (Foucault, 1988: xiii). Exploring the origins of the Elizabethan conception of madness is thus key to understand the source from which evil springs. Those who dared to enter the realms of the unknown ran the risk of being regarded as mad, for religion alone could provide answers for the true secrets of the world. Foucault argues that, in order to understand the nature of madness, one has to previously acknowledge the so-called 'Reason-Madness nexus.' He

defends that "reason and non-reason are inexplicably involved, inseparable at the moment when they do not yet exist, and existing for each other, in relation to each other, in the exchange which separates them" (1988: x). The madman exists because it stands as a contraposition of the "sane" or "reasonable" man. Therefore, madness is devoid of reason since, if reason equals sanity, non-reason equals madness. Such conception is, thus, social in nature.

Madness was, indeed, social, in the Elizabethan world. The following section aims at understanding how madness was conceived in Shakespeare's time. It will attempt to comprehend which was the concept of madness that might have influenced Shakespeare in the creation of his characters. With these initial objectives in mind, I deem necessary to firstly focus on the Elizabethan conception of the human being as well as the perception of 'order' that prevailed at the time, as presented in E.M.W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943). Such conception affected both understandings of the human being as well as the idea of social configuration. With the Elizabethan idea of order as a backdrop, I shall examine the interpretations of madness conceived in that era, for which the works of Fred Edwords (2008), Richard Hooker (1867), Hope Javier (2014), Lacy B. Smith (1973) and Rowena N. Wilks (1949) will be key.

Madness in Shakespeare's Time: Social Constructions of Evil

In *The Elizabethan World* (1973), Smith claims that, "as the medieval world slowly dissolved in the fifteenth century, Europe fell prey to barbarism, sacrilege, and selfishness, in which people's inhumanity knew no limits and all men made appeal to the sharp ends of their swords" (1973: 15). Religious unity had disintegrated and, spiritually, the Christian world was in chaos. This period of great turmoil and religious instability gave way to the rise of a new current of thought that provided people with a new lens though which to see the world: humanism. As Tillyard contends, the Elizabethan Age is thought by many as a period in which religious enthusiasm was sufficiently dormant to allow this new current of thought to be introduced in the people's imaginary, affecting their conception of the human being, their social distribution and their literature (1943: 1). Furthermore, this new change of scope was reinforced by Queen Elizabeth's educational policies (which promoted the study of history, law, ancient and modern languages and literature), together with Walter Raleigh's and Francis Drake's voyages of

discovery, and the utter curiosity of Elizabethan society in a period in which scientific discoveries radically changed the conception of the human being. Hamlet's words on man have been taken to summarize quite accurately this humanist mindset:

> What a piece of work is man: how noble in reason; how infinite in faculty; in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an Angel; in apprehension how like a god; the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals (*Hamlet,* II. ii. 312-317).

Man starts to be centre to all human experience. Even though the Elizabethan picture was still solidly theocentric in many aspects (Tillyard, 1943: 16), it did start to look at man through a more humanistic lens. Indeed, placing man at the centre of all human experience appears to be strictly linked to the importance of the established set of laws and norms. In the Elizabethan conception of the world, law becomes the main instrument of social organization. Despite the advances that the humanist thought brought about to the collective worldview, society was very much ruled by the traditional and religious interpretations of good and evil. Both the Laws of God and the laws of men had to be followed for a person to be considered 'good' and 'sane.' When someone fell out of the norm, either of divine or human nature, they entered the realms of the unknown, the uncharted, and, therefore, the forbidden. Such behaviours were thus associated with madness, and could not be permitted. Here resides precisely the main focus of attention of this section: to explore the nature of this madness as connected with the deviation of moral or social norms.

For the Elizabethans, madness (and, therefore, the absence of goodness) was directly related to a decompensation of the individual's 'internal order.' According to Javier, this idea had been inherited from the ancient Greek philosophers and the so-called 'theory of humours,' according to which the human body consisted of four major fluids —or humours— that had to be maintained in equilibrium in order to promote good well-being (2014: 72). For the lack of a most convincing alternative explanation, this theory remained uncontested for centuries, up until the end of the Renaissance, when the advances in medicine regarded it obsolete. However, such belief was still ingrained in the collective imaginary of the Elizabethan people, who remained under the great influence of this and many other aspects inherited from the medieval period which, at the same time, were originated, in large part, in Ancient Greece. The disruption of the body's 'internal order' and the fatal consequences that such a disruption could have appears to be directly linked to the severe action that was taken against those who provoked such a

disorder in the established organization. Those led by a great unbalance of their 'bodily humours,' mostly caused by a mismanagement of their passions were, therefore, regarded as 'mad.'

It may come as no surprise, thus, that Elizabethan dramatists, foremost amongst them William Shakespeare, thoroughly explored the theme of madness in their plays, as its reach was extremely extensive and completely impregnated the Elizabethan conception of the human being. They resorted to it in the construction of their tragedies and comedies to either praise or mock their characters' wits, and also to increase the emotion of their plotlines. In light comedies, as Wilks defends, mad people often furnished the trivial underplots or offered coarse jests and songs for low entertainment and tended to increase absurdity (1949: 1). With regard to tragedies, the mask of madness offered the dramatists the possibility to expand the barriers of the known and explore the uncharted territories of the mind of their characters. In this regard, Shakespeare's capacity to endow his creations with an intricate mind of their own makes him one of the main representatives of Renaissance humanism.

From 'Vice' to 'Villain': The Medieval Legacy in Shakespeare's 'Evil' Characters

Now that the concept of madness has been defined and located within the Elizabethan framework, it is the moment to consider how the Elizabethan notion of madness is closely connected with that of 'evil.' In the Elizabethan era, and under the prevailing influence of the theory of humours, evil actions were still linked to an excess of yellow bile (the fluid ascribed to the choleric temperament), which was thought to accentuate a person's worst innermost passions (i.e. aggression, violence and impulsiveness). Coherent with this view, Elizabethan dramatists regularly crafted characters imbued with traits similar to these, which the audience identified as 'villains.'

If the ancient theory of humours continues to have an important role in Shakespeare's creations of villain characters, the legacy of the medieval morality plays is another determinant factor. In *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (1958), literary critic Bernard Spivack defends that Shakespeare's major villains represent a clear development from the Vice figure of the morality plays. He argues that Shakespeare was highly acquainted with the plot and characters of these allegorical pieces. Indeed, one of the main features of morality plays was to explore the everlasting fight between good and

evil —or vice and virtue— for the control of man's soul (Spivack, 1958: 63). Spivack defends that, even though the main elements of such plays (i.e. plot and motifs) mutated significantly through the ages, Shakespeare's villains are still very much influenced by the Vice figure that typically appears in many of them (1958: 254). The Vice figure worked primarily against the protagonist's attachment to Virtue and, therefore, its main objective within the plot was to mislead the main character's righteous course (Spivack, 1958: 170). Spivack, thus, uses this very idea to construct his theory of villainy and argue that the Shakespearean villain is, at large, a mere development of such figure. However, Shakespeare does imbue —at least partially— his villains with a psychological complexity creating, in this way, a highly humanized version of the Vice (1958: 170). In her study of Shakespearean villains, Erin K. Miller argues that "Shakespeare explores the extent to which evil brings about the downfall of a character" (2015: 8) and demonstrates a significant evolution of the conception of evil over time. Beginning with the one-dimensional Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* and ending with the multi-layered Macbeth, he gradually depicts his antagonists becoming more and more consciously aware of their inner battle between good and evil (Miller, 2015: 8). One way or another, as Amusa claims, Shakespeare manages to delve into the uncharted pools of his villains' minds to extract nothing but the truth of all human existence (2015: 5).

Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory: A Contemporary Perspective

Amongst the many theories that analyse Shakespeare's works from a present-day perspective, psychoanalytic theory is especially useful for a consideration of evil. In fact, as literary critic Carolyn E. Brown argues, by tackling the problematic nature of Shakespeare's characters' "psyche," the psychoanalytic lens has greatly helped to offer solutions to puzzles that have vexed readers for centuries (2015: 3). "What has become clear," Brown proposes, "is the helpfulness of psychoanalytic theory in uncovering what characters themselves cannot admit into their own consciousness" (2015: 4). Taking into account that psychoanalysis constitutes one of the largest bodies of criticism produced on Shakespeare and encompasses an extensive list of specialized terminology, it can be a daunting field to try to discern. This section will examine the two main psychoanalytic theories produced by arguably the most influential scholars on the subject, namely, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, and it will introduce some of the authors that have

used this critical approach to Shakespeare in hopes of better comprehending its value and usefulness when it comes to the study of his villain characters.

First and foremost, it is imperative to acknowledge Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud as a seminal figure in the origins of psychological approaches to Shakespeare (Brown, 2015: 11). Regarded as the progenitor of psychoanalytic theory, Freud produced a vast amount of material in which he introduced his own theories regarding his conception of the human mind. According to Norman N. Holland, his discovery of the 'unconscious' at the end of the nineteenth century bid fair to be the defining factor in the intellectual life of the twentieth (1960: 163). Indeed, his influence was such that almost (if not all) literary critics that tackled Shakespeare throughout the first and part of the second half of the twentieth century based their theories on Freud's. However, as Holland points out, it is important to bear in mind that Freud was a psychiatrist, not a critic, and his remarks about Shakespeare, like all his literary comments, were only incidental to his main study: the human mind (1960: 163), which he understands as to be divided into three parts—

> […] the 'conscious' (the mental functioning, including the memory, that we can contemplate and discuss from a rational viewpoint); the 'preconscious' (memory that can come into consciousness when necessary); and the 'unconscious' (thoughts, memories, desires and feelings —often inappropriate or undesirable— that are not a part of the conscious mind and influence us without our knowledge) (Brown, 2015: 12).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (2010), Freud sees the pre-conscious as a screen lying between the unconscious and conscious systems. He proposes that the unconscious can only reach consciousness via the pre-conscious system and is, therefore, the main domain of psychotherapeutic work (Summers & Tudor, 2018: 64). However, psychoanalytic critics have long shown that their most intriguing concern is not the pre-conscious, but the inscrutable unconscious. Freud declares that, if brought to consciousness, the unconscious can provide precious insight into the hidden motivations behind all human actions and, therefore, the chief aim of psychoanalysis must be to facilitate this process (1922: 163). Brown argues that some of Shakespeare's ambiguous characters explain their behaviour through conscious motives, but their explanations are often contradictory and inadequate. Such contradiction has compelled critics to suspect there might be unconscious motivations concealed behind their actions and, thus, they have devoted much of their attention to uncovering this very conflict between consciousness and

repressed impulses (2015: 12). Furthermore, Freud also divides the human personality into three agencies or "provinces," namely, id, ego and superego:

> The id represents the biological foundations of personality; it is the reservoir of basic instinctual "libidinal[2]" drives which motivate the organism to seek pleasure. The ego is in charge of regulating libidinal impulses so that satisfaction accords with the demands of reality. It is the centre of reason and has at its command a range of defensive stratagems that can repress or transform the expression of forbidden drives. The superego bids the psychic apparatus to pursue idealistic goals and perfection; it is the source of moral censorship and of conscience (Lapsley & Stey, 2011: 1).

Psychoanalysis has principally focused on the conflict that arrays from the combination of these three agencies, especially the ego's struggle to control the impulses of the id. Psychoanalytic critics have shown their special interest in Shakespearean characters when forbidden drives threaten to come to the surface and overpower the ego (Brown, 2015: 13). When such conflicts occur, Freud defends, the mind can resort to specific defence mechanisms to help the ego manage the battles between itself and the other two elements. One of these defence mechanisms is the so-called process of 'sublimation.' Since its coinage in 1905, the initial definition that Freud attributed to the term has slightly varied.

Moreover, Freud advances another theory of personality development that complements the former. This theory, which focuses on people's psychosexual development, centres on the particular effects that the sexual drive has on the individual's psyche (Stevenson, 1996). It illustrates the evolution of personality through childhood, which he divides into five stages: oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital. At certain stages in the developmental process, Freud argues, a particular part of the body, the so-called erogenous zone, is especially sensitive to sexual stimulation. The id seeks pleasure in those zones to fulfil the needs and demands that the child has in each stage, who centres his libido on behaviour affecting the primary erogenous zone of his age (Stevenson, 1996). If these needs are not met, frustration occurs and the child is reluctant to progress and move onto the next stage. When such thing happens, the child's libido is locked permanently into that particular stage and results in a 'fixation.' For instance, a fixation that can occur during the child's phallic phase —one for which Freud is most famously known— is the one resulting in the Oedipus complex. Basing its theory on the legend of King Oedipus in Sophocles' drama that bears the same name, the Oedipus complex

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[2] *Libidinal.* Related to 'libido'; the psychic and emotional energy associated with instinctual biological drives, especially the sex drive. (Stevenson, D. B. (1993). *Freud's Psychosexual Stages of Development*. Retrieved Mar. 7, 2020 from http://www.victorianweb.org/science/freud/develop.html)

denotes the emotions and ideas that the mind keeps repressed in the unconscious which concentrates upon a boy's desire to sexually possess his mother (Liu, 2011: 1420). Freud puts forward the idea that "the chief part in the mental lives of all children who later become psychoneurotic is played by their parents" and that "being in love with the one parent and hating the other are among the essential constituents of the stock of psychical impulses" (Feud, 2010: 278). He argues that a discrete sexual identity is formed during the boy's phallic phase, when young boys wish to have all their mother's love. Thus, jealousy causes them to resent and even unconsciously wish for the death of their fathers, who they view as direct rivals for the love of their mother and, therefore, want to replace them (Ahmed, 2012: 60). However, children fear that their father will retaliate, a phobia which results in castration anxieties. In order to resolve their complex, they must suppress the unacceptable impulses of the id by identifying themselves with their father, whom they have to see as a source of moral supremacy until their mature years, when they can transfer their desire for the mother onto a substitute outside of the family. If the repression is successful, the superego will dominate the ego later in life and avoid any feeling of conscious or unconscious guilt (Brown, 2015: 14). All in all, Freud understands the Oedipus complex and the rest of his psychosexual development theory as key to defending his idea regarding the importance that childhood experiences have to the formation of personality and the indelible impression that infancy has on adult behaviour (Brown, 2015: 14). It may come as no surprise, thus, that Freud stands as a paramount representative within the field of psychoanalysis and that all his work regarding the human mind has laid the foundations upon which many of the future theories produced on this area stand.

Another seminal figure in the field of psychoanalysis is French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan, who revised Freud's paradigms to formulate a new means of understanding the human subject. Lacan's work is deeply concerned with the process of human identification that occurs in the life of every child and makes significantly useful additions to our understanding of ourselves. To exemplify his own theory of psychosexual development, he proposes that the human mind is constituted of three orders —the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real— and, equally as Freud, follows the male model. Given the fact that illustrating the whole theory of identification would be a most arduous endeavour, I am solely going to focus on his concept of the 'mirror stage.' Lacan posits that every infant is introduced into the Imaginary order through the so-called mirror stage.

By seeing his reflection in the mirror, literally or figuratively, the child first develops a sense of the self. Before this stage, the child does not think of himself as an individual but rather simply exists as a unified and undefined subject (Lacan, 2006: 43), creating an erroneous sense of authenticity. This sense of reality is lost when, beholding himself in the mirror, the child understands himself as having an identity and, therefore, his imaginary identification splits into a conscious self and an unconscious perception of the self. Then, he starts to identify himself with the mother (or 'the Other'), whom he sees in the mirror as part of himself and associates his desires with hers (Brown, 2015: 31). When the father figure enters the picture, the child is no longer allowed to establish this relationship with the mother and is thus free to form an identity of his own, introducing him into the Symbolic order. The birth of the subject coincides with the child's entrance into language (which is a key factor for him to build his own self) and the final loss of the object that causes desire, that is, the mother. However, if the entrance to the Symbolic order is blocked, he will not be able to become his own subject, and psychosis is the result (Lacan, 2006: 46). The literary critics that have explored the application of Lacanian theory into the study of Shakespeare highlight a turning away from character study to a closer reading of the text *per se*, and offer a novel approach to the psychological significance of language (Brown, 2015: 8). Indeed, rather than concentrating on characters' interior minds, they apply Lacan's theory to delineate the external factors that impact the building of their identity, namely, social class, gender or race.

Having introduced the two main representatives that established the foundations of psychoanalytic approaches to Shakespeare, the following lines are aimed at presenting some of the scholars that, from the 1970s onwards, have offered their own critical reading of Shakespearean characters. In 1970, M. D. Faber publishes *The Design Within: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Shakespeare*, constituting the very first anthology devoted exclusively to psychoanalytic readings of Shakespeare. In it, Faber includes previous essays written by other literary critics, such as Hanns Sachs and Martin Wangh, in order to support his own thesis that psychoanalytic criticism is the only method able to unlock the mysteries of Shakespeare's characters' motivations (Brown, 2015: 24). Sachs's essay on *Measure for Measure* (in Faber, 1970), for instance, offers a psychological explanation —deeply rooted in Freudian theory— behind the behavioural decisions of the antagonist Angelo, and refutes the typical incriminating reading of the character conceived as merely evil 'by nature.' Likewise, Wangh explores one of Shakespeare's most obscure and

enigmatic characters: Iago, who has long been looked at from different perspectives in an attempt to elucidate the genuine reasons behind his puzzling actions, all of which seem to be strikingly inconclusive (1970: 158). Wangh too aligns himself with Freud's claim to dive into the characters' unconscious in order to understand the main source of all 'unnatural behaviour.' He argues that Iago has reached a high level of paranoia and is afflicted with delusional jealousy, which Freud defends is "what is left of a homosexuality that has run its course […] as an attempt at defence against an unduly strong homosexual impulse" (1922: 223). Thus, the Moor perceives Desdemona as his rival and consequently wills to destroy her. Through these readings, Sachs and Wangh ultimately reinforce Faber's claim: only through psychoanalysis can we begin to comprehend the intricate motivations of Shakespearean characters.

The body of psychoanalytic research on Shakespeare thrived in the 1980s, with Freud still wielding significant influence on the scholarship of the period. Even though Lacanian theory also started to be seen as an invaluable resource for major theorists, who centred their studies on the psychological significance that language has in the development of a character's identity, many psychoanalysts relied primarily on Freud and continued to concentrate on some of the standard topics, such as oedipal relations, especially between fathers and sons (Brown, 2015: 41). David Sundelson, for instance, advocates for the importance of the father figure in his book *Shakespeare's Restorations of the Father* (1983), in which he defends the crucial role fathers have as authoritarian males within what he calls "the Shakespearean pattern" (1983: 5). Using Freudian concepts, he stresses the importance of such pattern within the patriarchal structure that frames Shakespeare's history plays, and claims that Shakespeare viewed the mother as a necessarily sacrificing figure and the father as one dominant and strong in order to preserve stability and repel the perilous influence of dangerous women from the family. As Brown argues, presenting Shakespeare as an apparent apologist for a paternalistic belief system, Sundelson illustrates that a psychoanalytic approach can be useful in proving Shakespeare's discussion of oppressive female characters, which foreshadows the concern of later psychoanalytic feminist scholars (2015: 43). Additionally, literary critic and psychoanalyst Meredith Anne Skura contributed several essays and studies to the Shakespearean body of research, focusing specifically on *Cymbeline, Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest* —being the latter her most noteworthy study. Her work was very much committed to putting forward the idea that psychoanalysis should move away

from reaching complex and far-fetched conclusions and instead be used to make literature more accessible and work in favour of the reader's own psychological growth. When exploring *The Tempest*, she pitted psychoanalysis against the postcolonial reading —two disciplines that had not been previously regarded as compatible (Skura, 1989: 42)— with the intention of asserting that the relationship between Prospero and Caliban is better understood when seen through the lens of psychoanalysis, as she posits that both of them profess an irrational —therefore, unconscious— anger towards the 'Other,' on whom each of them projects his unacceptable drives and desires (1989: 64).

In the 1990s, the corpus of psychoanalytic publications on Shakespeare experienced a significant change of scope. Literary scholars started to be more interested in literary theory and expanded the psychoanalytic scope to one less reductive, relying less on ego-centred readings and focusing more on broader issues, such as social roles, identity formation and sexuality (Brown, 2015: 49). The figure of the woman —especially the mother— starts to take a central place on the critical discussion, relegating the view of the father figure as pivotal in Freudian theory to a second place, and starts to look at a growing link between psychoanalysis and feminism. In 1992, Janet Adelman writes *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, 'Hamlet' to 'The Tempest,'* considered to be one of the seminal studies on feminist psychoanalysis of the decade. Amongst other particular topics, Adelman explores the construction of the masculine identity within Shakespeare's plays (as the title reads, from *Hamlet* onwards). Claiming that fathers are presented as weak and unable to protect their sons from the wicked mother, she addresses the boy's necessity to build his "masculine selfhood" by detaching himself from the mother's femaleness (Brown, 2015: 72). On the other hand, the issue of sexuality is presented in Valerie Traub's *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (1992), which examines "the pleasures and anxieties occasioned by homoerotic desire" (1992: 3) as well as male anxieties brought about by their being threatened by female sexuality. She ventures to claim that men's anxiety makes them only trust women when they are no longer alive, coining the term "fetishization of the dead" (1992: 28).

In the early twenty-first century, the feminist approach starts to be seen as intrinsically related in the field of psychoanalysis. Moreover, some critics also start to incorporate other disciplines in their psychoanalytic studies, such as cultural materialism or deconstruction, and pay special attention to new historical perspectives. James W.

Stone further develops the topic of "gendered subjectivity" in his book *Crossing Gender in Shakespeare: Feminist Psychoanalysis and the Difference Within* (2010). In it, following Lacanian procedures, he pays special attention to how language is used to construct gender in Shakespeare's works, directing a critique against the belief that "man is the principle of sameness-unto-itself (self-identity), devoid of any connection to women" (2010: 1), and asserts that men's persistence to understand themselves as unconnected to the feminine ultimately proves to be pointless. For instance, Stone's analysis of *King Richard II* applies Freud's conception of the prefix 'un' associated with repression and, therefore, with the feminine, to assert that the downfall of the king is brought by his adopting feminine behaviours as seen through his use of terms like 'unking,' 'unborn' or 'undo.' He defends that since Richard is not able to repress the "lyrical and feminine voice within himself" (2010: 18), a trait socially conceived as intolerable for a king, he is inevitably condemned to failure. As Brown argues, the problem of assessing Shakespeare's attitudes towards women and men's relations to them has become a central concern of feminist psychoanalytic criticism of Shakespeare (2015: 50).

Michael H. Stone's Conception of Evil: A Present-day Look at Villainy

As the previous section has hopefully illustrated, the implementation of psychoanalytic theory in the study of Shakespeare has provided solid and tangible proof of the utter importance this approach has when it comes to understanding characters' actions and motivations. Therefore, it can be accepted that psychoanalysis has become the key to uncovering Shakespeare's intricacies, especially when it comes to interpreting complex and often tormented characters like his villains. Moreover, it has exhibited how psychoanalytic approaches to Shakespeare have significantly changed over time, going from an ego-centred Freudian outlook to a vastly rich and diversified discipline encompassing numerous critical perspectives, which will undoubtedly continue flourishing. At this point, it is worth mentioning that all the body of research presented previously in this chapter has laid the foundations upon which this last section stands. The following lines will fully concentrate on the conception of evil as presented in one of the central works for this study, namely, Dr Michael H. Stone's *The Anatomy of Evil* (2017).

Initially, Stone validates the notion that religion has played a powerful role in shaping our ideas about evil, but claims that the understanding of evil that religion has offered, which he regards as "maddeningly vague" (2017: 15), is of little use when approached from a field like psychoanalysis, whose chief purpose is to discern the intricacies of the human mind taking a scientific stance. Therefore, since he is reluctant to rely upon works of religious and philosophical nature for his definition, he aims at providing "a new way of defining evil taking it outside the realm of religion and philosophy and re-examining it in the light of everyday speech" (2017: 37). Consequently, Stone draws his attention to the so-called 'moral' evils, those that we humans initiate and for which we alone are responsible. From the very beginning, he discards any possible assumption that one can be "born evil" in the grounds of not having found any case that could validate such hypothesis in the annals of crime nor the biographies of despots (2017: 12). Therefore, he accepts that evil is *not* inherent to the human mind, but rather is created and developed through the course of one's life, allowing for psychoanalysis to track and determine the reasons of such deviant acts.

At all times Stone is aware of the restrictions that providing a working definition of such a concept entail. He argues that "because a community is an organic entity that grows, changes, and evolves over time, prevailing opinions about what is or is not evil are subject to modifications from one geographic setting and from one historical period to another" (2017: 15), leaving *murder* as perhaps the closest we can come to establishing a universal wrong. As a prelude to offering his definition, Stone puts forward the idea that, in order to consider an action 'evil,' the perpetrator must have a knowledge of death and a conscious awareness that his or her action might bring about the death of the victim, or that the victim might suffer intensely and experience agony due to his/her action (2017: 19). An evil action, thus, entails the exclusively human qualities of malice, awareness of suffering and/or the finality of life, and a lack of shame or guilt. Taking this idea into account, Stone submits a definition that, to his understanding, captures the essence of what people in everyday life —the final arbiters of what is meant by evil— see and experience before they spontaneously intone this dreaded word:

> 'Evil' is a word we apply to *situations* or *specific acts* that have the quality of horrifying or shocking whoever witnesses or hears about these acts. […] 'Evil,' in other words, is reserved for acts that are breathtakingly awful: breath-taking because the degree of violence, suffering, or humiliation imposed so greatly exceeds what would be needed to express one's irritation or animosity or to subdue the victim. […] To be categorized as evil, there must be a flagrant

> deviation from the standards of acceptable behaviour within the community of the particular culture and time period (2017: 21).

Stone claims that usually, though not always, evil acts are those preceded by intention or premeditation, meaning that there is usually malice aforethought (2017: 21). Regarding the perpetrator, he differentiates two categories: the clearly sane and the mentally ill. When judging the actions of the former group, that is, individuals who can differentiate right from wrong and who are completely devoid of human sentiments, he is inclined to regard both the *person* and the *action* as evil (2017: 343). On the other hand, in the case of the mentally ill (referring to those who suffer from a psychiatric condition that grossly impairs their sense of reality (2017: 34)), their *acts* will be considered evil but they themselves not. Furthermore, Stone claims that *all* perpetrators have, in varying degrees, a personality disorder of some sort, namely, narcissistic, anti-social, psychopathic, sadistic, explosive, schizoid, or various combinations of several of these (2017: 205), and they show an evident lack of empathy, compassion, fairness and self-control. Additionally, in order to offer a more concise definition and try to get down to the very essence of evil, Stone provides a list of some crimes and acts that are to be regarded as such (2017: 287):

- Rape of a stranger.
- Serial sexual murder.
- Serial murder of patients in a hospital.
- Mass murder.
- Kidnap and/or torture, especially of a child.
- Murder with malice aforethought.
- Mutilation of the body, especially of a live victim.
- Horrific crime with mutilation by a mentally ill person.
- Jealousy murders of a spectacular (hence unusual) sort.
- Certain revenge-inspired acts even in the absence of violence.

After having presented his conception of evil and explored it in detail, Stone proceeds to introduce the cornerstone of his study, the so-called ‘scale of evil.’ When accounting for the importance of breaking up the concept of evil into different categories, he argues that “some violent crimes and some forms of cruelty are simply worse than others” (2017: 37). If all the individual cases that are labelled as ‘evil’ are merely grouped

together, it becomes harder to discover the origins of the different varieties of such behaviours (2017: 38), which, ultimately, is precisely what psychoanalysis is aimed at.

Killing in Self-Defense or Justified Homicide	
Category 1.	Justifiable homicide
Impulsive Murders in Persons without Psychopathic Features	
Category 2.	Jealous lovers, egocentric, immature people, committing crimes of passion
Category 3.	Willing companions of killers, impulse-ridden; some antisocial trait
Category 4.	Killing in self-defense, but extremely provocative toward the victim
Category 5.	Traumatized, desperate persons who kill relatives or others, yet have remorse
Category 6.	Impetuous, hotheaded murderers, yet without marked psychopathic traits
Persons with a Few or No Psychopathic Traits; Murders of a More Severe Type	
Category 7.	Highly narcissistic persons, some with a psychotic core, who murder loved ones
Category 8.	Murders sparked by smoldering rage—resulting sometimes in mass murder
Psychopathic Features Marked; Murders Show Malice Aforethought	
Category 9.	Jealous lovers with strong psychopathic traits or full-blown psychopathy
Category 10.	Killers of people "in the way" (including witnesses); extreme egocentricity
Category 11.	Fully psychopathic killers of people "in the way"
Category 12.	Power-hungry psychopaths who murder when "cornered"
Category 13.	Inadequate, rageful psychopaths; some committing multiple murders
Category 14.	Ruthlessly self-centered psychopathic schemers
Spree or Multiple Murders; Psychopathy Is Apparent	
Category 15.	Psychopathic, cold-blooded, spree or multiple murderers
Category 16.	Psychopathic persons committing multiple vicious acts (including murder)
Serial Killers, Torturers, Sadists	
Category 17.	Sexually perverse serial killers; killing is to hide evidence; no torture
Category 18.	Torture-murderers, though the torture element is not prolonged
Category 19.	Psychopaths driven to terrorism, subjugation, rape, etc. short of murder
Category 20.	Torture-murderers but in persons with distinct psychosis (such as schizophrenia)
Category 21.	Psychopaths committing extreme torture but not known to have killed
Category 22.	Psychopathic torture-murderers with torture as their primary motive. The motive need not always be sexual.

Figure 1 The Scale of Evil. Taken from Stone, M. H. (2017). *The Anatomy of Evil*. Guilford: Prometheus Books, p. 46.

As seen in the scale (Figure 1), the terms *psychopathic traits* or *psychopath* are present in most of the descriptions of the categories from number 9 on. It is important to establish that, according to Stone, the term *psychopath* is reserved to "people who are socially irresponsible and who show no remorse for the offensive or, often enough, violent, things they habitually do. […] Taken together, they paint a picture of extreme egocentricity, or

'narcissism,' with ruthless disregard for the rights and feelings of others" (2017: 45-46). For the upcoming analysis of some of Shakespeare's most emblematic villains, this dissertation is going to draw on Stone's theory by paying particular attention to the following key ideas: (a) his assumption that evil in *not* inherent to the human mind, (b) the specificities that have to be met for a crime to be regarded as 'evil,' (c) his description of the perpetrator and the personality disorders attached to them, and (d) his own evaluation of the 'scale of evil.'

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt primarily with the theme of evil (and its original source, namely, madness) and its relationship with Shakespeare's works. Firstly, it has introduced madness and its connection with evil as seen through a historical perspective and, afterwards, it has examined the cultural and historical factors that underlie the characterization of Shakespearean villains. Secondly, it has established that, from a contemporary perspective, a psychoanalytic approach is key to understanding the motives and reasons that lurk behind the evil actions of a character, and has presented a chronological account of the main psychoanalytic theories which, to unveil those motivations, have been applied to analyses of Shakespearean characters from the 1970s onwards. Finally, it has looked at a present-day perception of the term 'evil' through Dr Michael H. Stone's comments on his understanding of the concept, and it has hinted at ways in which such conception could complement a psychoanalytic approach.

Before starting to analyse two of the most emblematic Shakespearean villains as dramatic constructions of the 'evil mind': namely, Richard III and Macbeth, it is necessary to briefly introduce the method that will be applied to their study. Firstly, each character is going to be duly evaluated by taking Stone's psychosocial prism as a point of departure, establishing, this way, a modern approach to the study of evil. Secondly, taking into account Stone's descriptions as regards the different types of profile that criminals may present, each of the 'villains' is going to be classified into their corresponding slot in the scholar's "scale of evil." Finally, psychoanalytic approaches to the characters that have been published to date shall be applied to the close readings of the characters in an attempt to discover the reasons behind their evil actions and thereby better understand the unconscious drives that propelled them. As a final remark, it is

worth mentioning that the maxim which Stone uses to defend that evil is *not* inherent to the human mind will be employed to justify the chief *raison d'être* of the present analysis. With these analyses, I will attempt to shed light into the study of these two evil figures and, hopefully, contribute to the better understanding of their actions' motives within the vast and extremely rich field of Shakespearean studies.

Chapter Two

RICHARD III

Introduction

Richard of Gloucester —afterwards King Richard III— is regarded by critics and audiences alike as one of the cruellest and bloodiest of Shakespeare's villains. Needless to say, the Richard in question does not correspond to the historical Richard who once wore the English crown, but to Shakespeare's interpretation of the historical figure. Because of this, one or two brief remarks are needed to contextualise the creation of the character. King Richard III was the last Yorkist king to ever sit on the English throne before the establishment of the Tudor dynasty. His defeat to Henry Tudor in the battle of Bosworth Field marked the end of the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485), which confronted the houses of York and Lancaster for thirty years, and established the beginning of the Tudor era. As previously mentioned in this dissertation, Shakespeare lived part of his life under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of the House of Tudor, and it is in this period when he produced the plays in which Richard takes a central place. His portrayal of the despotic king, utter antagonist to the Tudor dynasty, was thus meant to fulfil two purposes. Firstly, it was part of the Tudor propaganda machine that was used to clean the image of King Henry VII (Elrich, 1984: 35), who, as Meyer argues, he himself "died a miser and a tyrant" (2010: 23). Secondly, it had to show "the conclusion of God's plan for England, which was the restoration of peace and prosperity by the overthrow of the arch-villain, Richard III" (Singh, 1978: 19). At this stage, and before anything else, a brief note is needed to recall what has been argued in the previous chapter regarding the character of

the Vice in morality plays in relation to Shakespeare's villains. To construct his reinterpretation of Richard III, Shakespeare uses the Vice as a cultural mould on which he can create the 'Tudor' view of 'evil.' Both the medieval Vice and Richard III share the same core attributes in their embodying the allegorical representation of the Devil at work (Miller, 2015: 5). As Emma A. Sherr-Ziarko points out, Shakespeare himself makes this evident through Richard's words when he claims that "[I] seem a saint, when most I play the devil" (I. iii. 339), and when he directly references the Vice in the first scene of Act Three: "Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralize two meanings in one word" (82-83) (2011: 68). Shakespeare, thus, bases his villain in the Vice but endows him with a psychological background of which the Vice was devoid. These historical and cultural readings are to be regarded as a crucial part of Richard's character basis, and, therefore, cannot be overlooked when attempting to analyse a character with such characteristics.

In order to fulfil the main objectives of this dissertation, I will first consider Richard's characterization under the light of Stone's observations on the nature of evil. To do so, I shall look for specific evidence in the two texts in which he appears[3], namely, *King Henry VI part 3* and *King Richard III*.

Exploring Evil in Richard III

With regard to Richard's character conception, it could be argued that *King Henry VI part 3* works as a prelude to his later development in *King Richard III*. In other words, this play establishes his personality and sets the grounds for the plans he intends to carry out in *King Richard III.* Due to his many asides, the reader is able to know his mind in a most intimate fashion, allowing him to fully showcase his scheming nature and thereby making the audience accomplice to his evil intentions. From the very beginning, Richard is presented as a person gifted in words and with very persuasive skills —as clearly seen in Act I, Scene II, when he convinces his father to break his oath to King Henry VI and fight his way to the throne. In the first instance, he displays seemingly honest feelings towards his family, especially in his reaction to the death of his father and brother Edmund. When he learns of his father's death, he initially shows signs of sorrow, but soon turns it into

[3] A young Richard also appears in *King Henry VI part 2*. However, his part is so insignificant that no useful information can be drawn for the purpose of this analysis. Hence, his part in this play shall not be considered for the study.

rage; "I cannot weep," he says, "[…] To weep is to make less the depth of grief: / Tears then for babes; blows and revenge for me" (II. i. 75-84). Later on, when confronting Clifford for having killed his brother, he demands that justice be done and addresses him as "that cruel child-killer" (II. ii. 115), which could indeed be taken as an act of grieving love towards his deceased family members. However, his words, far from springing sincerely out of his heart, carve the mask behind which he conceals his genuine and wicked objective, which he proclaims in the following lines:

> DUKE OF GLOUCESTER:
> Torment myself to catch the English crown:
> And from that torment I will free myself,
> Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.
> Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
> And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart,
> And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
> And frame my face to all occasions.
> […] Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
> Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down.
> (*King Henry VI part 3,* III. ii. 179-185, 194-195)

It is now an adequate moment to recover Stone's words on psychopaths and restate that, in general terms, "[psychopaths] paint a picture of extreme egocentricity, or 'narcissism,' with ruthless disregard for the rights and feelings of others" (2017: 45-46). In the passage above, Richard portrays clear psychopathic traits in describing what he intends to do to seize the crown. Not only does he admit that he is prepared to clear his way to the throne with his "bloody axe" (III. ii. 181), but he openly declares the malignant way in which he aims at doing it: concealing his macabre true self by assuming a fabricated personality to deceit everyone around him. In Act V, Scene V, he puts his plan into action by committing his first recorded murder. Together with his brothers Edward —now King Edward IV— and Clarence, he stabs King Henry VI's son, Prince Edward, to death. Ironically enough, Prince Edward is aged seventeen when he dies, the same age as Richard's brother when he is killed by Clifford. Richard now does not seem to show any complications in murdering a helpless "child." His second victim is none other than King Henry VI himself who, now overthrown, awaits his fate in the Tower of London. Once again, he stabs Henry to death in cold blood, showing an evident lack of empathy and compassion towards a defenceless man. Not only that, but once he is already dead, he stabs him again whilst

uttering the words "I, that have neither pity, love, nor fear" (V. vi. 67), confirming an evident pattern of psychopathic and sadistic personality disorder. Ultimately, Richard declares that, now that Henry and his son are dead, and, therefore, the House of Lancaster has no further claim to the throne, his brothers Clarence and Edward, as well as any other who comes in between himself and the crown, also have to run the same fate ("King Henry and the prince his son are gone: / Clarence, thy turn is next, and then the rest, / Counting myself but bad till I be best" (V. vi. 89-91)). With this, Richard's role in *King Henry VI part 3* comes to an end and he sets the grounds for his plot in the subsequent play *King Richard III*.

> DUKE OF GLOUCESTER:
> […] 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.
> (*King Richard III,* I. i. 27-30)

In what are probably some of Shakespeare's best-known lines in an opening scene, Richard openly admits his evil nature to himself and the audience and accepts his villainy as part of his being ("I am subtle, false and treacherous" (I. i. 35)), which is power-hungry and will stop at nothing to reach what his heart most desires: sovereignty. Right at the beginning, Richard tells the audience that he has set in motion a scheme to end with his brother Clarence's life. King Edward IV happens to be very ill and his death is apparently irremediable. However, it is paramount for Richard that Clarence's death arrives before Edward's, for, in that way, he would be one step closer to the throne. He spreads a libel according to which a man whose name starts with the letter 'G' is going to be the murderer of Edward's sons. Through indirect proceedings, Richard convinces a sickly Edward that Clarence, whose first name is George, is the man of which the prophecy speaks, and, consequently, the King commands that he be imprisoned in the Tower. Later on, Richard sends two hired murderers to the Tower to kill Clarence, and so he is now third in the line of succession, with just Edward's two young sons ahead of him. King Edward, who had determined to execute his brother, retracts from his decision and sends a letter to pardon him. However, Richard intercepts it and later on accuses King Edward of having executed his own brother on no solid grounds, which only heightens Edward's illness and soon dies. Richard is then made Lord Protector of the realm, the highest charge in England

until Edward's eldest son comes of age. It is in that moment when he commits his most monstrous crime to date; he imprisons his nephews in the Tower and sends murderers to kill them. After that, he is anointed King Richard III.

This has been a mere compilation of some of Richard's crimes, which extend to more murders and evil schemes, but, for the purpose of this analysis, the ones accounted in the previous lines are useful enough to be able to draw some concluding remarks with regard to the pathology he may impersonate. As a recapitulation, throughout *King Henry VI part 3* and *King Richard III*, he is directly or indirectly responsible for a total of eleven deaths, many of which are his kinfolks (brothers, nephews and wife). In the light of Stone's comments on psychopathology, and as observed in his asides and monologues, Richard portrays an evident psychopathic and sadistic personality, showing a total lack of empathy and self-control. He is completely consciously aware of the consequences that his actions will bring about to his victims —most of which result in death—, to which he exhibits no trace of shame, guilt or remorse[4], and, since all his actions are part of an evil plan, they entail malice aforethought. Following Stone's observations, Richard assumes all the following personality items: extreme egocentricity, glib speech, superficial charm, grandiosity, manipulativeness, pathological lying and callousness. Therefore, taking both his personality and actions into account, it can be agreed that Richard III meets each and every requirement that Stone puts forward to be able to consider him and his actions utterly evil. Consequently, sufficient proof has been gathered to be able to finally classify him into one of Stone's slots in his 'scale of evil.' Considering that his murder spree is entirely instrumental, Richard III can therefore be considered as a "fully psychopathic killer of people 'in the way,'" and, therefore, he can be placed in category 11. Stone argues that the persons fulfilling the specific characteristics of this category tend to show "signs of conduct disorder or marked antisocial behaviours consistently from age eight or nine all the way through adolescence and beyond" (2017: 132), a great proportion of whom derive in full-blown psychopathy. Hence, the following section shall explore whether this tendency applies to Richard and whether the origins of his apparent psychopathy can be identified and properly understood by means of a psychoanalytic reading of the character.

[4] By the end of *King Richard III*, in Act V, Scene III, Richard does show some signs of guilt, remorse and fear. This has led to multiple interpretations, some of which shall be explored later on in this analysis. However, due to the fact that during almost the entirety of both plays, when he carries out his evil actions, he does not exhibit any trace of such feelings, they will not be taken into account when drawing conclusions regarding his psychopathy.

A Psychoanalytic Reading of Richard III

Now that enough evidence has been provided to consider Richard a psychopath within Shakespeare's dramatic universe, it is time to discern the reasons that could lurk behind his evil actions and which, hence, could contribute to creating the particular 'character effect' for this figure. In *Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work* (1916), Freud declares that, when carrying out a psychoanalytic treatment of a neurotic, the interest should by no means be directed in the first instance to the patient's character, but rather in "what the symptoms mean, what instinctual impulses are concealed behind them and are satisfied by them, and what course was followed by the mysterious path that has led from the instinctual wishes to the symptoms" (1916: 310). Let us, then, dive into Richard's mind through the 'symptoms' and 'impulses' acknowledged in Shakespeare's text and, in this way, it will be possible to analyse the complexities of his constructed psyche. Besides Freud, studies by Wolfgang Clemen (1957), Stephen Greenblatt (2004), Aisling Hearns (2011) and Lacan (2008) will be especially significant for this reading.

In his essay "Of Deformity" (1612), Francis Bacon offers precious insight on the early-seventeenth century view regarding the effects that deformity could bring to the individual. He defends that "deformed persons are commonly even with nature, for as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature, being for the most part void of natural affection" (in Whately, 2017: 161). In the opening soliloquy to *King Richard III*, Richard confides to the audience his own feelings regarding his deformity, which he describes as follows:

> DUKE OF GLOUCESTER:
> But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
> […] I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deform'd, unfinisht, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;
> Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
> Have no delight to pass away the time,
> Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
> And descant on mine own deformity.
> (*King Richard III,* I. i. 14, 18-27)

Freud argues that, through this speech, and despite the obviously atrocious nature of Richard's actions, Shakespeare wants to awake in the reader a fellow-feeling of sympathy for the character, which can only be based on their understanding of his emotions. Therefore, Richard's words could be read like "nature has done me a grievous wrong in denying me the beauty of form which wins human love. Life owes me reparation for this. […] I may do wrong myself, since wrong has been done to me" (Freud, 1916: 312). Freud defends that, once this assumption is accepted, every reader can, to some extent, identify with Richard's suffering, as everyone has some reason to reproach Nature and/or our destiny for congenital and infantile disadvantages (1916: 312). Such interpretation has driven other critics to re-read it from different angles. Clemen, for instance, argues that, since Richard's deformed body deprives him of the enjoyment of love and forces him to seek compensation in his villainous undertakings, his twisted body alone should be held responsible for his criminal behaviour (1957: 6). Clemen thus accepts him as a redeemable character who has been brought to the world to irremediably suffer the misfortunes that Nature has attached to his deformed body. On the other hand, in *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (2004), Greenblatt does not accept such an assumption, and uses the following scene to ground his argument:

> RICHARD III:
> O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
> […] What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
> Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
> Then fly! What, from myself? Great reason why:
> Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
> Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
> That I myself have done unto myself?
> O, no! Alas, I rather hate myself
> For hateful deeds committed by myself.
> I am a villain. Yet I lie. I am not.
> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain.
> Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;
> Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;
> All several sins, all used in each degree,

> Throng to the bar, crying all, "Guilty! guilty!"
> I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
> And if I die no soul will pity me.
> And wherefore should they, since that I myself
> Find in myself no pity to myself?
> (*King Richard III,* V. iii. 181, 184-204)

According to Greenblatt, Richard's feelings of remorse and guilt are not of an honest nature, and he asserts that his "unwonted pricks of conscience" appear to be nothing else but "schematic and mechanical" (2004: 56). Nevertheless, Hearns entirely differs with Greenblatt's interpretation of the scene and defends that Shakespeare's specific use of language in these lines imbues a deep sentiment of truth to what is being said[5]. What seems to be indisputable is that these feelings spring directly from a dream, when Richard's defence mechanisms are dormant and cannot shield him from being hunted by the sudden realisation of his evil deeds.

A possible explanation regarding Richard's relation with guilt could be provided by using both Freudian and Lacanian theory. It could be argued that Richard's seemingly lack of guilt throughout the entirety of both plays (besides the aforementioned scene) is ironically due to somewhat of an unconscious guilt dwelling in his mind. This feeling would thus be directly associated with the very guilt he has always felt by reason of his deformity. To understand such assumption, and, consequently, his neurosis, it is necessary to start by reflecting upon the object of his desire. According to Lacan, "desire is always what is inscribed as a repercussion of the articulation of language at the level of the Other" (2008: 38). In his "I am determined to prove a villain" (*Richard III,* I. i. 29), Richard is rejecting the possibility of being considered evil by nature and demonstrates his conscious determination to *become* a villain. In other words, he is speaking of his desire. His incapacity to engage in relations of love and/or joy with other human beings leads him to embrace villainy as a suitable occupation of his time, and, as Hearns argues, pushes him to "set in motion a chain of desires, which he wishes to meet, but which never

[5] In Hearns' words, "Shakespeare only introduces an eleventh syllable/beat into a line of verse when it is emotionally relevant. In this particular soliloquy, we can count nine feminine endings. This is quite a large number for any character, especially one who has been portrayed as a stoic psychopath. The lines in which we find these feminine endings are quite revealing in terms of the topic of guilt and remorse. "O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!" In this line, we see that vowel sounds are prominent, meaning that the character is being emotionally open. It also has a feminine ending, deeming it to be wrought with true emotion" (2011, Nov. 30).

truly satisfy" (2011, Nov. 30). But what is the original cause of this fervent desire? Both Freudian and Lacanian theories converge in that the lack of motherly love in Richard's childhood is precisely what propelled, in the first instance, the concatenation of all the fatal events in his adult life.

> DUCHESS OF YORK:
> A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
> Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
> Thy school-days frightful, desp'rate, wild, and furious;
> Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
> Thy age confirm'd, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody.
> (*Richard III,* IV. iv. 169-173).

Whilst in the mirror stage, Richard never experienced his mother's love (or desire), since his twisted body abhorred her and prevented her from taking any interest in him. Her desire thereby remained with Richard's father and, by denying it to Richard, she blocked his entrance to the Symbolic order and made him thus unable to become his own self, provoking his neurosis. Once he enters adulthood, he is unconsciously forced to regress to an Oedipal situation wherein he sees the utter necessity to assume his father's place to finally have access to the loving admiration in his mother's gaze, of which he was so cruelly deprived in childhood. Consequently, here lays the initial obsession that compels him to fulfil his utmost desire: he has to substitute the king's identity in order to become his own true self. And, to do that, he has to seize the throne.

Now that a possible origin of his psychopathology has been identified, another question immediately arises: Richard is thirty-two when he dies, so why did he not set his evil schemes in motion before? A possible answer is that Richard conceived himself as a useful tool during war. He previously identified himself as a valid warrior as a result of his experience in the battlefield against his rivals of York. During this period, his unconscious drives to resolve his childhood fixation were kept at bay inside his occupied mind. However, once the Wars of the Roses come to an end and peace is restored, Richard's defence mechanisms are deactivated and he is propelled back to his infancy — feeling useless, twisted and rejected. It is in this very moment when he consciously resolves to become the villain people perceive him as, and starts to crave the crown. As a final remark, it is also worth mentioning that his early introduction to warcraft endowed

him with the "adequate" mindset that he needed to later on carry out his atrocious deeds. As Elrich argues:

> Richard's manhood was formed in the Wars of the Roses, which provided him unceasing habituation to ambition, wrath, envy, pride and hatred, the more passionate sins. His age confirmed such bad habits, making him, significantly, "kind in hatred." By the end of *Richard III,* […] hatred has become intrinsic to his essence (1984: 38).

It could be claimed, thus, that Richard's attraction towards evil could be understood as both a consequence of his early and intense experience with war and the reaction towards a midlife crisis, when his life ceases to make sense.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, after introducing the cultural and historical bases of Richard III within Shakespeare's drama, this chapter has explored the hidden reasons behind this character's evil actions. First, this chapter has used Stone's conception of 'evil' to critically approach the construction of the villain from a modern approach and, after considering him a psychopath proper, it has consequently placed him inside category 11 in the scholar's "scale of evil." Then, once evidence found in the source texts have been presented, psychoanalytic theory has been used to decipher the intricacies of his fictional mind. As it has been argued, a post-traumatic effect on his midlife might partly account for his actions. Richard's lack of an affective life is deeply (or only) felt by him once peace is restored and his military/political functions are diminished or disappear. All in all, through Richard III's complex characterization Shakespeare demonstrates that, if the right circumstances are met, human beings are capable of perpetrating the cruellest of crimes and embracing evil and hatred as their sole life motive. Following Richard's example, if love is denied, or a person is deprived of the most essential forms of affection, especially early in their lives, s/he might be inclined to trespass all boundaries just to feel valued.

Chapter Three

M A C B E T H

Introduction

It has been widely accepted that *Macbeth* is arguably Shakespeare's darkest play (Green, 2012: 69). Indeed, "there is no sunshine in *Macbeth*" (Huggett, 1981: 134). In this play, Shakespeare offers his most profound and mature treatment of evil and manages to craft a narrative with a highly disquieting aura of unending discomfort and decay. The story chronicles a man and his lady's slow descent into madness, relating their steady transitioning from honourable nobles to malicious and ruthless villains. Critics have agreed that Macbeth stands as the perfect embodiment of the disintegration of the individual under the influence of evil (Islam, 2011: 186) whose eventual downfall is brought about by his choosing darkness upon light. The themes around which the whole plot revolve are those of fear, guilt and thirst for power. While it is true that ambition is undoubtedly the passion that leads the protagonist's actions, the manifestations of fear and guilt in Macbeth are at the very core of the play. Images of bleakness, blood and chaos are recurrent so as to frame the ultimate condition from which these images originate, that is, again, fear. Despite the fact that any effort to "solve" *Macbeth* once and for all is in vain, for the play denies both light and enlightenment (Green, 2012: 71), and, "like all great tragedies, it asks questions rather than gives answers" (Rosenberg, 1978: 658), the present chapter is going to analyse Macbeth's evil actions in order to better understand their nature and try to shed light upon the astounding complexity of one of Shakespeare's most ambiguous plays and its eponymous main character.

Exploring Evil in Macbeth

Parsram Singh ventures that "the character Macbeth comes closer to absolute evil than any other evil character in Shakespeare" (1978: 112). Albeit it might come across as a rather blunt assumption, his words are indeed worth examining. Singh defends that other Shakespearean villains such as Richard III, Edmund, Goneril, Regan or Iago himself, portray an extremely wicked personality and their actions are beyond redemption (Singh, 1978: 112). However, even though there is no possible justification for their evil deeds, they manage to somehow awake a feeling of sympathy in the audience. Macbeth, on the other hand, is seemingly moved by no other reason than personal ambition and self-satisfaction. Let us, then, explore whether such a solid statement can be supported or, on the contrary, has to be refuted.

As the play opens, Macbeth is presented as a war hero, whose brave and noble deeds have saved Scotland from the Irish threat. He is addressed by King Duncan as his "valiant cousin" and "worthy gentleman" (I. ii. 24) and is, thus, initially taken by everyone as a most respectable man. Nevertheless, dwelling in his heart there is the seed of a fervent ambition and lust for power, which blossoms when watered by a half-fulfilled prophecy cast by "three weird sisters" promising him the Scottish crown. This simple idea manages to germinate in his mind and starts to corrupt his bond with nature and human goodness. After communicating his wife, Lady Macbeth, the prospects that future has in store for them, her ferocious ambition couples with his and she urges him to carry out his duty: to kill King Duncan and attain the throne. In the first instance, Macbeth certainly envisages the possibility of seizing the crown, since, under the laws of Scotland, he could very well be chosen to succeed Duncan if the right circumstances were to meet. However, he initially lacks the strength of purpose required to commit regicide and is willing to patiently wait: "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me, / Without my stir" (I. iii. 143-144). In Act I, Scene VII, when he meditates upon murdering Duncan, he shows his full awareness of the consequences that his actions might entail, acknowledging that his crime would undoubtedly be met with God's "even-handed justice" (I. vii. 10), who "commends th'ingredients of our poison'd chalice" (I. vii. 11). Despite his efforts to repress his villainous intentions, his exceeding ambition, representing the evil inhabiting in him, defeats his moral feelings and eventually leads him to commit himself to the course of evil. Shakespeare (as Christopher Marlowe in his *Dr Faustus*, for instance)

makes use of the "battle of sprits" from the classical *Psychomachia* to represent the inner battle between good and evil taking place inside Macbeth's mind. Macbeth realises that perpetrating the crime instantly detaches him from God, as he is not able to utter the word "Amen" (II. ii. 34) immediately after murdering Duncan. He is soon invaded by a deep feeling of remorse and asserts that he shall never be allowed to sleep again, for sleeping is solely reserved for the "innocent," (II. ii. 43) and he has murdered a defenceless man in his sleep. Murdering the king, thus, sounds the starting shot for his slow yet steady descent into a state of total despair, weakening his link with humanity up to a point where returning is no longer a viable option. In his own words:

> MACBETH:
> […] I am in blood
> Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er.
> (*Macbeth*, III. iv. 136-138)

Later on, Macbeth is propelled to continue with his murder spree and intends to assassinate Banquo and his son, for the prophecy that made him king, placed upon his head "a fruitless crown" (III. i. 60) that would deprive him of bearing regal progeny. On the contrary, it assured that those who would, at some point, rule the kingdom would be of Banquo's offspring. Macbeth —now made King— sends two murderers to carry out the bloody enterprise but fail at fulfilling it entirely; albeit Banquo succumbs, his son manages to escape death in time.

> MACBETH:
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
> In the affliction of these terrible dreams
> That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstasy.
> (*Macbeth*, III. ii. 18-23)

In these lines, Macbeth clearly expresses the profound feeling of remorse he harbours as a consequence of his devilish acts. However, no apparent trace of repentance is evidently delivered. The source of his fear does not seem to lie on the repulsion that the evil nature of the crimes *per se* arise in him, but rather it seems to spring from the idea that there are still loose threads that could compromise his wicked venture. When the play commences,

evil approaches Macbeth unsought in the form of the three witches; now, as the play advances to its conclusion, it is Macbeth who seeks the witches in an exercise of embracing evil willingly and without fear. He has reached the apex of his madness and is now devoid of all connection with his natural conscience. Amongst other indications, the witches warn him to beware of Macduff, who has fled to England in the pursuit of the English king's alliance to overthrow him. In hearing this news, a maddened Macbeth commands that Lady Macduff and her children be murdered, for a little more blood would make no difference in his already tainted hands: "direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts / Cannot once start me" (V. v. 14-15). Finally, right before reaching his end in his last battle after having given himself in completely to his innermost evil drives, he comes to the crushing realization that no life experience could provide him with the glory he once craved nor could he in any way be able to make peace with himself or with the world. Nothing remains inside his damaged brain but the utter desperation of his speech:

> MACBETH:
> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.
> (*Macbeth*, V. v. 26-30)

After having provided an account of the mortal crimes that Macbeth perpetrates in the play, now it is time to expand on their nature and reflect upon the kind of personality he portrays in order to classify him in one of Stone's "scale of evil" categories. Taking into account that Lady Macduff's exact number of children is never provided, he is to be held directly or indirectly responsible for a minimum of five deaths —including regicide and pedicide— and another attempted homicide. Unlike Richard III, Macbeth does not show the same clear pattern of behaviour throughout the whole play, but rather his personality undergoes a process of significant change as the plot advances. It must be noted that the extreme ambiguity found between the character's decisions and the emotions he expresses makes it very arduous to draw any solid conclusions regarding the possible psychopathology he could represent. When referring to real-life situations, Dr Stone himself asserts that Canadian psychologist Robert Hare's "Psychopathy

Checklist"[6] (Hare, 1991) is of great use to assess whether the criminal shows full-blown psychopathy or simply presents some psychopathic traits (2017: 46). In his study, Hare observes that two different factors must be considered: one for personality (which he calls "Factor-I Traits"[7]), and another for behaviour (the so-called "Factor-II Traits"[8]) (Stone, 2017: 116). Out of the eight "Factor-I traits" that Hare envisages, it could be argued that Macbeth only fulfils three of them, namely, glibness and/or superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth and lack of empathy or compassion. While it is true that he shows remorse and accepts responsibility for his actions throughout almost the entirety of the play ("Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red (II. ii. 62-65)), he does not present any trace of empathy or compassion that could restrain him from murdering his victims. With regard to Hare's "Factor-II Traits," Macbeth engages in a parasitic lifestyle which leads him to his personal doom, he displays poor behavioural control, he only craves for short-term pleasures, and he presents clear irresponsibility and impulsivity in his actions. For instance, it has been seen how his first two murders, King Duncan and Banquo's, entail premeditation and, therefore, malice aforethought, whereas those of Lady Macduff and her children are a product of an impulsive drive born of an impetuous, hot-headed reaction. The following lines are proof of it:

> MACBETH:
> […] from this moment
> The very firstlings of my heart shall be
> The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
> To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:
> The castle of Macduff I will surprise;
> Seize upon Fife, give to the edge o'th'sword
> His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
> That trace him in his line.
>
> (*Macbeth*, IV. i. 47-54)

[6] For the sake of clarity and conciseness, this analysis is going to solely focus on the main aspects of Hare's Psychopathy Checklist.
[7] "Factor-I Traits" include: (1) glibness and/or superficial charm, (2) grandiose sense of self-worth, (3) pathological lying, (4) conning or manipulativeness, (5) lack of remorse or sense of guilt, (6) shallow affect (shallowness of emotional display), (7) callousness, lack of empathy and compassion, and (8) failure to accept responsibility for one's actions (Stone, 2017: 117).
[8] "Factor-II Traits" include: (1) parasitic lifestyle, (2) poor behavioural controls, (3) lack of realistic long-term goals, (4) impulsivity, (5) irresponsibility, (6) juvenile delinquency, (7) early behavioural problems, and (8) need for stimulation, boredom (Stone, 2017: 117).

Regarding juvenile delinquency and early behavioural problems, the source text does not provide enough information to reach any solid conclusion. Therefore, Macbeth seemingly meets five out of the eight possible qualities that Hare puts forward concerning behaviour. After applying Hare's formula[9], Macbeth approximately receives a total of 16 points out of the 40 possible, and of the 30 needed to be considered a full-blown psychopath (Stone, 2017: 46). Hence, while he does show some psychopathic traits, he is *not* to be considered a psychopath proper. Indeed, it is very difficult a task to place him in one specific slot in the "scale of evil" since he partially meets some traits in more than one category and does not seem to meet all the traits in any. Since it has been established that he does not present solid psychopathy, all categories above 15 (15 included) are immediately discarded. Part of his violence is born of an ungovernable drive referred to as "impulsive" or "reactive" (Stone, 2017: 86), which is a clear trait of category 6. However, criminals in this category do not normally present clear psychopathic traits. Category 10, on the other hand, seems to be the one to which Macbeth's actions and personality fit the best, as it encompasses "killers of people "in the way" with extreme egocentricity" (Stone, 2017: 46), portraying some psychopathic traits yet not in a full-blown condition. A key comment that can be determining to reach a conclusion is found in Chapter 3: "Other Crimes of Impulse" (Stone, 2017: 85), where Stone dedicates a specific section to exploring 'familicide.' In his words:

> The murder of an entire family is more often a crime of impulse than of long premeditation; the motive will likely be a smouldering anger at one key member of the family that ignites into violence over some "last straw." Sometimes, the motive is to protect the perpetrator from some deep humiliation (2017: 90).

Stone then proceeds to discuss the case of a man who carried out such a crime and places him in category 10. Therefore, since Stone establishes that this category also considers crimes of impulse as part of the equation, this study shall follow Stone's example and will also opt for placing Macbeth in category 10 on the "scale of evil."

[9] "The items are scored either a 0 (definitely not present) or 2 (definitely present) unless there is not enough information or inconsistent information is present to score the item, in which case it is scored a 1" (Brazil & Forth, 2016: 1).

A Psychoanalytic Reading of Macbeth

Having considered Macbeth's evil acts in the light of Stone's classification, this section examines the possible reasons for his transformation into one of Shakespeare's most famous villains. Due to the utmost complexity of the character's constructed psyche and the rapid progression of the plot's action, which turns a man "too full o' th' milk of human kindness" (I. v. 17) into a bloodthirsty tyrant, Freud considers that, when trying to find the original cause which managed to break a character who seemed to be "forged from the toughest metal," it is "impossible to come to any conclusion" (1916: 317). However, such an assumption did not prevent him nor numerous critics from attempting to offer possible reasoning behind the character's actions. Apart from Freudian and Lacanian approaches to Macbeth's constructed psyche, the present analysis shall also consider studies by Derek Russell Davis (1982), Janis Krohn (2012), Simon O. Lesser (1977) and Kenneth A. Novikoff (2013) in an attempt to come as close as possible to a tangible conclusion as regards the character's intrinsic personality.

In his essay "Hurt Minds" (1982), Davis asserts that the conclusion of the war brings Macbeth to a crisis very similar to the "demobilization crises" (1982: 211) that afflicted thousands of men returning home after the Second World War. Davis defends that Macbeth, like those military men who had achieved a senior rank in WWII, "persisted in a faulty appraisal of [himself] and [his] circumstances and sought in civilian life a position giving [him] as much authority, or more, as [he] had enjoyed in the services" (1982: 212). Because of this condition of mind, he is highly susceptible to what the witches prophesise, especially "[he who] shalt be King hereafter!" (I. iii. 50). Such a fated future awakes in him a fervent desire to see it fulfilled. Several scholars (Bachmann, 2012; Kirsch, 2013; Muslin, 2012) have considered Freud's Oedipal dilemma to be the driving force that prompted Macbeth's initial murder. In "Addressing the Oedipal Dilemma in *Macbeth*" (2012), Krohn asserts that Lady Macbeth is the ultimate responsible for King Duncan's death. She argues that Lady Macbeth forces her husband into an oedipal relationship in which she performs the role of the seductive oedipal mother. Macbeth, on the other hand, assumes the role of the Oedipus figure, "surrendering to his oedipal fantasies of killing his symbolic father figure, King Duncan, in order to prove his masculinity to Lady Macbeth" (2012: 334) and, thus, have access to her exclusive love. Indeed, Lady Macbeth urges him to "be a man" (I. vii. 51) and carry out

his duty, to which Krohn observes that, "if the oedipal mother is removed, there is no temptation to kill the father" (2012: 334).

Differently to Krohn's vision, Novikoff (2013) accepts that Lady Macbeth plays a crucial part in Macbeth's downfall but refuses to place the entire blame on her, claiming that such an assumption would be "an overly generalized and incomplete reading of what initially prompts Macbeth's desire to become king" (2013: 8). When approaching the theme of 'desire' in Macbeth, Novikoff claims, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory provides us with invaluable insight as of why he ultimately decides to murder the king (2013: 9). In *Écrits* (2006), Lacan states that language creates desire, which is at the same time mediated through language (2006: 100). This desire relies primarily on lack, which incites desire (2006: 184). In other words, language generates in the individual a feeling of lack, and this lack propels the individual to feel desire for what s/he lacks. The precise moment in which Macbeth acquires his desire to become king remains a contested issue. On the one hand, it has been held that Macbeth had considered the possibility of becoming king prior to his encounter with the witches. A Lacanian interpretation of the scene, however, would lead us to think quite the contrary: through language, the witches create, in that very moment, his desire to become king. Shakespeare initially presents Macbeth as a faithful servant who is willing to die for his king. According to Novikoff, "he is represented as outside the Symbolic order because he uses his sword as his primary form of communication" (2013: 12). It is precisely when he encounters the witches that he is introduced into the Symbolic order through language, since their prophecy creates a lack in him, which propels his desire to become king (2013: 16). The possibility of kingship makes his desire turn into obsession, and that obsession mutates into an uncontrollable temptation that ultimately drives him to willingly commit regicide. As Carol Tufts defends, "Shakespeare [...] grants human responsibility in the choices made by a free will —the witches' prophecy, after all, is subject to interpretation: it only tells Macbeth that he will be king, not that he must murder Duncan" (1998: 174).

Now that possible reasoning behind King Duncan's murder has been provided, it is necessary to go back to Freudian theory to explore what could have possibly led Macbeth to assassinate Banquo and Macduff's family. Throughout the whole play, the battle between the id, the ego and the superego in Macbeth is more than palpable. In "Macbeth: Drama and Dream" (1977), Lesser defends that Macbeth's ego is so crippled by the severe

impositions of the superego that, in consequence, it causes him to behave obsessively and impulsively (1977: 221). His unceasing sense of guilt confronts the superego with the wild impulses of the id, rendering the ego utterly incapable of mediating between them. Therefore, this non-existent mediation from the ego bestows Macbeth the ability to murder and experience deep remorse at the same time. But what is it that thrusts him to continue with his murder spree? Freud contends that the following words uttered by Macduff at the height of the tragedy are key to provide a possible answer to that question:

> MACDUFF:
> He has no children.
> (*Macbeth,* IV, iii. 215)

Freud proposes that "if one surveys the whole play from the summit marked by these words of Macduff's, one sees that it is sown with references to the father-children relation" (1916: 318). Indeed, as already discussed, the murder of King Duncan could be seen as little else than parricide; in Banquo's case, Macbeth kills the father while the son escapes him; and in Macduff's, he kills the children because the father has fled from him (1916: 318). Macbeth's initial desire is fulfilled when he manages to sit on the Scottish throne, but his coronation creates in him a new desire: maintaining the crown. The witches did not prophesise that his children would inherit the title, but Banquo's. Therefore, his ambition is not satiated when he attains the throne, for he desires to found a dynasty (Freud, 1916: 317). His childlessness, Freud argues, could be at the very core of the whole question (1916: 317). In act I, Scene VII, Macbeth clearly expresses his need to bear children of his own that could succeed him ("Bring forth men-children only; / For thy undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males." (70-72)). However, Lady Macbeth is convinced that she suffered the unsexing she had demanded of the spirits of murder ("Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty" (I. v. 39-42)), and, therefore, cannot give him children. As Freud sees it, Macbeth's childlessness and Lady Macbeth's barrenness are the punishment for the crimes they perpetrated "against the sanctity of generation" (1916: 318). It could be that Macbeth's lack of heirs is precisely what leads him to willingly surrender to the jaws of evil and continue with his killings in a desperate attempt to maintain the crown. As the play advances, Macbeth's insatiable obsession degrades his bond with humanity and ultimately transforms him into a delusional, paranoiac and maddened wreck of a man, whose ardent guilt and constant knowledge that

he is doing wrong accounts for his misery, petulance, wrath, and desperate and suicidal end (Parker, 2006: 21).

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a close reading of Macbeth's portrayal of evil and has analysed the possible motivations that propelled him to reject his bond with humanity and accept evil as his path. Stone and Hare's theories have led to consider him a murderer of people "in the way," portraying extreme egocentricity and some psychopathic traits, yet not in a full-blown condition (Stone, 2017: 46), for which he has been placed in category 10 in Stone's "scale of evil." In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare revisits the medieval tradition to explore the very essence of evil, asserting that evil is latent in the very human nature, coexisting alongside goodness. In this play, however, Shakespeare puts the emphasis on the freedom of the individual as opposed to men's relationship with God (as typical in medieval plays), a significant change that makes him a modern author and an emblem of the Renaissance. As it has been argued, Macbeth's possible affliction by the so-called "demobilization crisis" after the end of the war makes him highly susceptible to the call of evil. Alongside that particular condition of mind, his intrinsic lust for power urges him to undertake a one-way journey from which he will not be able to return. Through the highly ambiguous characterisation of the protagonist and the complexity of the plot itself, *Macbeth* compels us to face the excruciating fact that evil is, indeed, a mystery. The entire play, like a descent into hell, is a daring invitation to dive into a corrupted mind in which we fear to see ourselves reflected. The tragedy of Macbeth urges us to reflect upon the harrowing fact that evil can devour even the morally toughest and most honourable of minds in a short period of time. And, most disturbing of all, it forces us to face the darkest side of the person in the mirror.

Conclusion

Returning from Hell

This dissertation has explored the representation of evil in Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre through the particular study of two of his most emblematic villains, namely, Richard III and Macbeth. As observed in the first part of the dissertation, the themes of madness and evil constitute very broad subjects. For this reason, I have tried to address them by focusing solely on the aspects that are central to the main objective of this dissertation, namely, to better comprehend Shakespeare's construction of evil. Exploring madness, being the general theme through which I have explored evil, has been of great use since it is part of the "cultural reading" of evil within the Renaissance context, and it underlines the notion of "insanity" and "pathology" form a modern perspective. In this respect, I have tried to discern the Elizabethan conception of the human being as well as the perception of 'order' that prevailed in Shakespeare's time, in an attempt to comprehend the concept of madness that might have influenced the playwright in the creation of his villain characters. The literature review of this topic has provided the grounds upon which the rest of the study stands. Most importantly, it has allowed me to arrive at the conclusion that if madness is one the recurring themes in Elizabethan drama, it is chiefly because it offered dramatists the possibility to explore uncharted territories of their characters' fictional minds. On this matter, Shakespeare undoubtedly stands as one of the main representatives of such practice. As part of the historical and cultural examination of the Elizabethan notion of evil, an exploration of the archetype of the villain has been of great value to establish the sources from which Shakespeare drew to construct some of his most important characters. In this regard, Spivack's comments on the relation between the

villain and the medieval Vice lie at the very core of all consideration of evil in Shakespeare's plays. At the same time, this has led to accepting that the evil that the Vice epitomised indeed established the foundations upon which Shakespeare later on constructed his own villains, albeit in a more humanised fashion.

Amongst the different approaches that are employed to analyse Shakespeare from a present-day perspective, it has been demonstrated how psychoanalytic theory proves to be an invaluable resource for the consideration of evil in his work. Not only does the psychoanalytic approach provide the possibility to elucidate the intricacies of the characters' constructed psyche, but it also allows us to try to understand the unconscious drives that propel highly complex characters to take up evil and villainy as their life motive. In order to gain insight into the roots and bases of psychoanalysis, I have examined two of the main psychoanalytic theories devised by arguably the two most influential psychiatrists on the subject, namely, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Moreover, I have compiled some of the psychoanalytic literature that has been carried out on Shakespeare's works throughout the past fifty years. I have found that this combination of theories and different approaches has been vitally useful when it comes to answering the research questions that this dissertation proposed. As noted in the introduction, it would have been too difficult an endeavour to provide deep insight into the characters' fictional minds had it not been for the juxtaposition of said pre-existing studies. Likewise, with that objective in mind, it has been of equal importance to consider Dr Michael H. Stone's modern approach to interpreting evil as a key element to the equation. As has been observed, Stone's departing axiom that evil is not inherent to the human mind, but is rather created throughout the course of one's life, has offered the possibility to provide, by means of a psychoanalytic reading, possible explanations behind the evil doings of our studied villains. Indeed, Stone's observations on the nature of evil have allowed me to see Richard's and Macbeth's "villain characterisations" as differently constructed, as they correspond with different categories within his classification. Moreover, they have led to accept and, consequently, explore Richard III's psychopathologies by means of (a) his portrayal of serious personality disorders and (b) his evil scheming resulting in the death of many. On the other hand, the same analytical process alongside Robert Hare's comments on psychopathy has made it safe to assert that Macbeth, contrary to expectations, does not present a marked psychopathic behaviour, albeit he does engage in some psychopathic conducts.

At this stage, if we have learned something from the representation of evil of our studied characters is that Shakespeare's villains, more often than not, also constituted his most alluring and fascinating creations. As a character creation, Richard demonstrates that a great and entertaining villain must be multitalented and multifaceted. He is the most eloquent speaker, the greatest actor and the most vicious murderer. Moreover, his manipulative skills extend all the way to the audience by making them accomplice to his actions. At this point, even though psychoanalysis has offered significant insight into the possible motivations for the character's actions, considering whether or not he is a redeemable figure should be entirely reserved to personal judgement. On the other hand, Macbeth shows how the hero of the day can turn into a sinful criminal, and surprisingly quickly, simply if enough persuasion is deposited inside a covetous mind (considering the witches' role in the play). With it, Shakespeare warns us of the dangers that playing with the forbidden entail and shows us how easily moral boundaries can be trespassed. Every light casts its shadow, every day leads to night and, opposite to every hero, there has to be the villain. In cases like Macbeth's, however, it is sometimes the hero who has to assume the role of the villain, too. In the end, perhaps Macbeth provides the most precious lesson of all: no matter how hard we try, all our efforts invested in trying to classify villainy into concrete classes might turn out to be ultimately futile, especially because evil can surprise us by emerging from the least expected of sources: our own selves.

Nevertheless, I consider that it is the process of trying to understand these characters' sense of villainy what moves us towards our end. We might not come up with any definite conclusion, but we most definitely close the subject having gained priceless insight into the nature of the human mind as interpreted by Shakespeare. In itself, the present study has hopefully contributed to achieving this ultimate end. Finally, allow me to finish with a brief remark on Shakespeare's figure. From all that has been discussed throughout this dissertation, I hope it has become clear that all conclusions reached through a study of Shakespearean character creations will necessarily lead to a better understanding of the human mind. Indeed, Shakespeare's profound understanding of the human nature allowed him to transcend the barriers of his own time, making him arguably one of the greatest writers that ever existed. The dilemmas that he so carefully investigated in his plays continue to appeal to us because we continue to identify with them and learn from them. As his coetaneous author Ben Jonson very rightly proclaimed:

"He was not of an age, but for all time." It is probably because of this that I would like to undertake further research on the fascinating evil nature of other villains in and outside the Shakespearean universe in the future.

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