

# **FREUD, SHAKESPEARE'S APPRENTICE? AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SHAKESPEARE'S "MACBETH" AND FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY**

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**FREUD, SHAKESPEARE'S APPRENTICE? AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SHAKESPEARE'S "MACBETH" AND FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY**

***Freud, um aprendiz de shakespeare? Uma análise da interação entre a obra "macbeth" de shakespeare e a teoria psicanalítica freudiana***

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the psychological and psychoanalytic characteristics of the protagonists Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in William Shakespeare's play "*Macbeth*", with the aim of connecting Shakespeare's literary work to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Through a qualitative analysis, it is based on Freud's biographical data and the interpretations of renowned literary critics such as Harold Bloom and the philosopher Hegel. Two versions of the play are examined: a prose adaptation by Júlio Emílio Braz (2021) and a theatrical version adapted by Rafael Raffaelli (2008). The results show an affinity between Freud and Shakespeare, highlighting the author's lasting influence on Freud's perspective on human nature.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare; Freud; Psychoanalysis; Psychology; Macbeth.

**Resumo:** O presente artigo investiga as características psicológicas e psicanalíticas dos protagonistas Macbeth e Lady Macbeth na peça "*Macbeth*" de William Shakespeare, com o propósito de conectar a obra literária de Shakespeare à teoria psicanalítica de Sigmund Freud. Através de uma análise qualitativa, fundamenta-se nos dados biográficos de Freud e nas interpretações de renomados críticos literários, como Harold Bloom e o filósofo Hegel. São examinadas duas versões da peça: uma adaptação em prosa por Júlio Emílio Braz (2021) e uma versão teatral adaptada por Rafael Raffaelli (2008). Os resultados evidenciam uma afinidade entre Freud e Shakespeare, destacando a influência duradoura do autor na perspectiva de Freud acerca da natureza humana.

**Palavras-Chave:** Shakespeare; Freud; Psicanálise; Psicologia; Macbeth.

## INTRODUCTION

In this article, we will examine William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and explore its influence on psychoanalysis, investigating how the play served as a valuable source of inspiration for the development of Freudian theory and clinical practice. To achieve this, we will begin with an in-depth and hypothetical analysis of Shakespeare's characters, establishing a close relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. We will analyze the plot in two versions: the prose adaptation by Júlio Emílio Braz (2021) and the theatrical text adapted by Rafael Raffaelli (2008b).

Interpreting Shakespeare is, to say the least, a challenging task. Due to his genius, the playwright offers a profound exploration of the human condition. As a result, he is continuously studied, interpreted, and revisited by philosophers, critics, and scholars interested in understanding art and the essence of humanity. That said, presenting something innovative about Shakespeare can be difficult, given the vast body of existing studies on his works, making it easy to fall into the trap of repeating ideas already explored by multiple authors. However, one of the objectives of this study is to go beyond conventional approaches by establishing a direct connection between certain Freudian theories and a specific Shakespearean work, offering an analysis that links *Macbeth* to traditional psychoanalysis.

Firstly, in the section "Freud and Shakespearean Literature," we will explore Freud's relationship with Shakespeare's works, supporting our discussion with comments from Freud himself and other relevant scholars. Subsequently, we will analyze the play's central couple. This theme will be divided into two complementary parts: the first, *Psychological Conflicts in Macbeth: Morality and Ambition*, will deconstruct the protagonist, examining his intrinsic struggles, including the most unsettling and socially unacceptable aspects of his character. The second part, *Lady Macbeth: Exploring Sexuality and Madness*, will delve into Lady Macbeth—an enigmatic figure whom Freud analyzed but without reaching a definitive conclusion. By exploring the characteristics of this tragic couple, we will consider the destructive potential of unrestrained ambition and the corrosive effects of unresolved guilt on the human psyche.

It is worth noting that, despite belonging to different historical periods and disciplinary fields, Shakespeare and Freud share a certain correspondence and complementarity in their understanding of human nature. In this regard, correlating Shakespeare with Freud enhances our insight into human character, uncovering even more fascinating nuances that an

interdisciplinary approach can reveal. This, in turn, fosters a meaningful connection between past and present, underscoring the timelessness of these authors and their continued relevance.

According to Harold Bloom (2010), a major scholar of classical literature, in his book *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, William Shakespeare is at the core of the literary canon, meaning that he is a fundamental figure in the study of literature. Bloom argues that Shakespeare crafted some of the greatest classics in history and explored the human interior (the unconscious) long before Freud, thus influencing future generations of artists.

For this reason, cultural productions after Shakespeare have frequently drawn upon his works and characters. This phenomenon is evident in contemporary productions such as the film *10 Things I Hate About You*, directed by Gil Junger, and the Brazilian telenovela *O Cravo e a Rosa*, written by Walcyr Carrasco—both of which are inspired by Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (Carvalho, 2015).

Furthermore, a significant connection can be established between Shakespeare and Freudian psychoanalysis. In the tragedy *Macbeth*, which explores the duality of metaphysical forces (operating beyond the physical realm), Freud (1974) used the play to discuss the concept of the "ruin of success." This term refers to the anguish and frustration experienced by individuals who, upon fulfilling their greatest desires, are confronted with an overwhelming sense of guilt—an idea exemplified by Lady Macbeth (Moraes Godoy, 2015).

Thus, by investigating Shakespeare's impact on psychoanalysis, this study posits that the playwright's works served as a reference and source of inspiration for Freud, deepening his understanding of the human mind and shaping his clinical practice. This specific approach seeks to explore a connection that has not yet been extensively discussed in existing literature, establishing a direct link between the tragic elements of *Macbeth* and fundamental psychoanalytic concepts.

According to Freud (2015), a literary writer occupies an intellectually superior position compared to ordinary individuals, including scientists and psychoanalysts, due to their ability to access sources of insight that remain unavailable to most, demonstrating a profound understanding of human spirituality. However, the question that arises is: How did Shakespeare's works—particularly *Macbeth*—manifest in psychoanalysis, contributing to the development and comprehension of complex psychoanalytic concepts? This is the guiding question of this research, demanding a thorough evaluation of the subject.

By examining the intersections between literature and metapsychology, we hope to uncover new perspectives on the intricacies of the human condition, fostering an interdisciplinary dialogue that benefits both fields.

## **FREUD AND SHAKESPEAREAN LITERATURE**

It is impossible to discuss literature without turning to William Shakespeare, just as it is impossible to explore psychoanalysis without evoking Sigmund Freud. Shakespearean tragedies such as *"Hamlet"* and *"Macbeth"* are full of timeless metaphors that allow for the most varied interpretations of the human being in its entirety, announcing the author's originality and justifying why Freud was inspired by the works of the great English poet and playwright.

The interface between literature and psychoanalysis focuses on the inner decomposition of Shakespeare's enigmatic characters. This is revealed in the ambiguity of the feelings experienced by the protagonists and supporting characters, as well as in the influence of thoughts, however deteriorated, on the subject's behavior. In congruence with Freud's considerations, the assertion that thought functions as a rehearsal prior to action is presented succinctly. This concept, which outlines the author's understanding of the cognitive process, is widely explored in various works, one of which is *"The Self and the Id"*. In this specific work, Freud develops thought as the psychic counterpart of action, aligning it with the displacements of psychic energy aimed at the motor discharge of excitation (Freud, 2011).

The play *"Macbeth"* portrays the story of a Scottish general, Macbeth, who, after his victory on the battlefield, returns to medieval Scotland, but during his journey is interrupted and, together with his war companion Banquo, comes across a trio of witches who prophesy his future claiming that the protagonist will receive a new title and will be the next king of Scotland. As a result, the tragedy *"Macbeth"* is centered on the sorcery of the three witches and the influence of human desire on the actions of the main couple, as well as the terrible consequences that the pursuit of this desire can have. For this reason, Shakespearean literature operates as a "psychology of morality", helping us to understand the various psychological factors that influence behavior according to the moral standards that an individual considers to be right or wrong.

Another extremely important point explored in *"Macbeth"*, and consequently by Freud, is the manifestation of the unconscious through dreams. In psychoanalytic analysis, Freud (2019) in *"The Interpretation of Dreams"* places the oneiric character of dreams at the center,

since at this moment the ego's defenses are reduced and, on the other hand, the unconscious parts of the psychic apparatus are able to express themselves more clearly. In *"Macbeth"*, Shakespeare (2008b) illustrates this theory by describing characters who are afraid to eat their meal and go to sleep disturbed by the terrible dreams that haunt them throughout the night; they consider it preferable to be among the dead than to experience the dream world. That said, Macbeth recognizes the consequences of his bloodthirsty deeds in his nocturnal life, since his recriminatory thoughts manifest themselves when he falls asleep. Parallel to this, Freud (2019) stated that the dream is the most valuable way to find unconscious contents and further suggests that "the dream is the (disguised) realization of a (suppressed, repressed) desire" (p. 145).

Furthermore, in order to understand the relevance of Shakespeare for Freud, it is necessary to turn to the biographical data of the remarkable psychoanalyst and to the analyses of renowned literary critics regarding the influence of the arts on Freud's intellectual productions. The existence of the confinement of dramaturgies with Freud is evidenced in the passage of the text *"Michelangelo's Moses"* by Freud himself (Seeger; Sousa, 2013):

[...] Nevertheless, works of art have a powerful effect on me, especially literature and sculpture and, less frequently, painting. This has already led me to spend a long time contemplating them, trying to understand them in my own way, that is, to explain to myself what their effect is due to (Freud, 1987, p. 253).

In agreement with the above fragment, Freud places two artistic areas in a privileged position: literature and sculpture, so the former, as the focus of this article, is strongly linked to William Shakespeare and allows us to idealize the importance of the psychoanalyst's readings during the construction and consolidation of his theory.

In the book *"The Western Canon: Books and the School of Time"*, by American literature professor Harold Bloom (2010), works considered essential for the cultural formation of man are studied and it is explained that the term canon was initially conceived as a kind of memory of literature, storing literary heritage. However, from today's perspective, Bloom's understanding of canon refers to a struggle for the survival of texts, in other words, the search for their non-forgetfulness (Moreira, 2003).

Throughout his career, Freud often used the works of his favorite authors, Goethe and Shakespeare, to quote characters and illustrate his ideas. He believed that great writers used their characters to give voice to unconscious desires, which he saw reflected especially in the works of these two writers (Freitas, 2001). In this logic, through the power conferred on

Shakespeare over several years, Bloom (2010) consistently maintained that Freud is, in essence, Shakespeare's prose. Freud's understanding of human psychology is shaped, whether consciously or unconsciously, by his reading of the plays, since the founder of psychoanalysis read Shakespeare in English throughout his life and recognized him as the greatest of writers.

If that wasn't enough, Professor Bloom (2010) also emphasizes that William Shakespeare had become a "hidden authority" in Freudian works. As such, Freud saw in Shakespearean tragedies and comedies a representation of human drives, Oedipal complexes, unconscious conflicts and the dual nature of the human being. Therefore, based on Bloom's statement and what has been presented so far, it cannot be denied that Freud read and relied on Shakespeare's classic literature to develop, expand or illustrate some of his psychoanalytic concepts.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS IN MACBETH: MORALITY AND AMBITION**

Shakespeare was considered an explorer of the "second consciousness", which refers to the domain of the unconscious, the main object of study of psychoanalysis, and presented the multifaceted thoughts of the human being (Bloom, 2010). As Belanger (2007), author of *"The Encyclopedia of Nightmares: The Interpretation of Your Darkest Dreams"*, points out: "Shakespeare delved deeply and precisely into the human unconscious, because he knew about the influence of emotions such as fear and guilt on dreams and nightmares." (p. 239).

The analysis of the tragedy *"Macbeth"* begins with an attempt to understand the intimate struggle between duty and desire in the protagonist's dark mind. In order to investigate the character's interior, it is necessary to consider different aspects, such as environmental and socio-political, which culminate in the construction of the subject's personality. In view of this, literary critics, such as Bakhtin, will analyze the work:

When we analyze Shakespeare's tragedies, we also observe the successive transformation of the whole of reality - which acts on his characters - into the semantic context of the acts, thoughts and experiences of these characters: we either check the words directly (words of the sorceresses, the father's ghost, etc.) or events and circumstances, translated into the language of the potential discourse that interprets (Bakhtin, 2003, p. 404).

First of all, *"Macbeth"* establishes an atmosphere of horror that will persist and correspond to the confrontations that proliferate throughout the play. Right at the beginning of



the play, three women with "detestable" appearances appear and the environment described, through a rich vocabulary, contributes to a perception of the Gothic style, such as: the oppressive fog, the lack of light, the large defoliated trees and the cold climate, producing a sense of fear and suffocation for the reader (Polidório, 2000). Furthermore, the appearance of these three mysterious figures functions figuratively as a projection of unconscious desires. On this assumption, Hegel (2005), with whom we agree, pointed out that the witches in the play "*Macbeth*" are described as having strange powers that predict the fate of the main character. However, both these predictions and the witches symbolize, in the psychoanalytic sense, what has been repressed, so they are nothing more than unconscious desires that have been materialized and externally imposed on the protagonist.

It's worth pointing out that the atmosphere of tension is present in the play from the very beginning, as the betrayals, revolts and conspiracies against Duncan, the current king of Scotland, are recounted. Furthermore, the account of a Scotland bathed in blood due to civil war and invasion attempts reinforces the realization of Macbeth's criminal fate. It is in this atmosphere of instability and apprehension that the witches appear in the play, suggesting the possibility of betrayal on the part of Macbeth, who until then had been characterized by his most honourable qualities as a warrior and loyal subject.

However, since the predictions of the mysterious witches, Macbeth has felt suspicious, confused and even skeptical. His restlessness, resulting from the premonition of the three figures a short while ago, has taken hold of his mind, as he was already dazzled by the promising future that awaited him. At that moment, a bold question arose: Had Macbeth ever wanted the crown in the past?

The hypothesis that the supernatural beings awakened a repressed instinctual representation within Macbeth's unconscious is examined and validated by the German philosopher Hegel (2005), cited above. Hegel asserts that Macbeth had likely already envisioned a future in which he would become king, but this thought remained unconscious, merely awaiting a stimulus to activate his desire and bring it into awareness.

In this context, the interpretation that the witches symbolically function as a mirror reflecting Macbeth's repressed ambition is reinforced when Lady Macbeth, in persuading her husband to proceed with the plan to murder King Duncan, reminds him of an old promise: "[...] And I would make your brains leap out, if you had sworn to do so, / As you have sworn to that." (Shakespeare, 2008b, Act I, Scene VII, p. 30).



We can see that Lady Macbeth shows greater firmness in committing the murder when we compare her with her husband, who hesitates on several occasions. However, in order to understand the forces that impede and simultaneously facilitate Macbeth's attitudes towards murdering the king, it is essential to turn to the concept of the "Oedipus Complex", created by Freud. In this respect, there are ambivalent feelings, such as rivalry and tenderness, in the relationship between a son and his father, who is considered responsible for the impossibility of the son's unconscious realization of having his mother fully present, a desire for possession. In an omnipotent way, the father, an idealized and envied figure, thus becomes an object of conspiracy for the one who wishes to take his place, his own son. Similarly, Freud believes that the feeling of hatred towards the father figure is a collective symptom of primitive societies, with the figure of the father in the family corresponding to that of priests and kings in society. As Freud proposes, dark desires produce feelings of repulsion and, consequently, establish a paradox with the envied figure, with whom one does not know how to act (Freud, 2019).

Given what has been revealed above, there is a close relationship between King Duncan and Macbeth, a relationship similar to that of a father with his son. Thus, the king analogically reincarnates the figure of Macbeth's father, as the protagonist wishes to usurp the crown. But initially, when he imagines the consequences of his boldness, he fears and represses the idea of murder. As the tragedy unfolds, he is no longer sure how to behave.

Later, Macbeth, together with his wife, Lady Macbeth, hatches another plan, but now with a new victim: Banquo, since the new king (Macbeth) couldn't feel constantly threatened about losing his newly won crown, since the sorceresses who predict the throne for Macbeth have also stated that Banquo would not be king, but the father of kings, that is, his descendants will one day reign. It's interesting to note the role of Banquo in the protagonist's life because he seems to be the prototype of a moral compass: just the sight of him reminds Macbeth of his most heinous atrocities. Furthermore, even though he is an eyewitness to the appearance of the trio of supernatural creatures, and perhaps even suspects Macbeth's innocence in relation to Duncan's murder, at no point does Banquo accuse his former general. On the other hand, there is a very different role assigned to Lady Macbeth, as the woman pushes her husband to do as she pleases, without measuring the consequences.

In view of this, we propose relating Banquo and Lady Macbeth to elements of the second Freudian topic or structural theory, which understands that the human mind is made up of three structures that coexist and interact with each other for the proper functioning of the psychic

apparatus: id, ego and superego. According to Freud (2011), the id corresponds to the unconscious instance related to drives. The superego refers to family and cultural ideas, moral norms and values. And finally, the ego is a conscious and unconscious structure whose function is to perceive and seek a balance between the demands of the id and the superego. Consequently, "The I represents what can be called reason and circumspection, as opposed to the Id, which contains the passions" (Freud, 2011, p. 31).

In this way, it is plausible to link Banquo to the psychic instance of the superego, due to the hero's morally exemplary conduct, and that even after being murdered, the character appears in a ghostly way only to Macbeth, disturbing him. Lawrence (2008a), in the notes to verses 36-37 of his translation of *"Hamlet"*, suggests that although conscience in the sense of the common sense of duty and morality (or rather, conscience as a kind of punitive mechanism) does not appear to exist in Macbeth, it "appears in the form of involuntary delirium, a true irruption of the 'superego' (for example, with the vision of Banquo's ghost)" (p. 80-83).

Finally, Banquo's death can be seen as a double crime, representing both a concrete action and a symbolic reflection of what happens inside Macbeth. The protagonist not only aims to eliminate his fellow soldier, but also the very thing that prevents him from committing atrocities: his own superego. Hegel (1974) supports this interpretation by stating that Macbeth needs to eliminate his conscience, personified by Banquo, which results in yet another murder in the plot. Thus, Macbeth is revealed as an impulsive and uncontrolled individual, driven by his desires: a tyrannical and demonic king, the consequence of an imbalance in the structure of his psychic apparatus.

Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, represents the id, since she is initially unattainable due to society's moral and ethical issues and has a single purpose: to be and remain Queen of Scotland. However, Lady Macbeth is an extremely complex, influential and obstinate character, so profound and significant that the founder of psychoanalysis (Freud) worked hard to decipher her feminine nature, which should not be hastily reduced to a single psychic representation.

## **LADY MACBETH: EXPLORING SEXUALITY AND MADNESS**

One of the most unforgettable scenes takes place when Lady Macbeth invokes evil spirits so that these beings can prevent her fragile feminine nature, her kindness and human sensitivity, from interfering with the achievement of her greatest purpose: to encourage her

husband to commit the murder of the King of Scotland, so that the couple could occupy the position of royalty. In view of this, with a desire to lose her fragility, her vacillations and her tremors, Lady Macbeth turned to the entities of evil, which destroy her sexuality so that she can really act in an unyielding way, without any tremors that could reach her conscience:

[...] To my domains. Come spirits  
Who instill murderous thoughts, remove me,  
Cover me from head to toe  
With the most horrible cruelty! Spike my blood,  
Prevent access and passage to compassion,  
So that no natural remorse  
Remove my intention not to agree  
With its consequences [...]  
(Shakespeare, 2008b, Act I, Scene V, p. 24)

Thus, at the crucial point of the play, coordinating the preparation for the murder of King Duncan, Lady Macbeth takes it upon herself to ensure that all the gentlemen accompanying the king succumb to drunkenness and sleep, through the drugs inserted in their drinks, so that they only wake up when they are at the scene of the crime and covered in blood just like their own daggers, blaming the other subjects (Shakespeare, 2021). Based on this, Freud (1996) points out his considerations about this intrepid woman. According to the neurologist, there is initially no hesitation, internal conflict or any effort on the part of the character in question, except to overcome the scruples of her greedy, albeit pious, husband. The co-protagonist is willing to sacrifice even her femininity for the sake of her murderous goal, without considering the crucial function that this femininity will play later, when there is a need to preserve the intention of her desire, obtained through crime.

In most of the scenes, the reader is led to believe that Lady Macbeth has only courage and control in her soul; there is no room for remorse or sentimentality. However, when she mentions Duncan's resemblance to her father shortly before the crime against the king, the appearance of the superego, related to morality, which until recently seemed non-existent, becomes visible, as Lady Macbeth expresses herself, for the first time, confused. With this lapse in moral awareness, such eloquent anguish accumulates and is later manifested through a behavioral symptom: sleepwalking.

Once the plan had been carried out, Macbeth returned to his companion soiled with blood and perplexed at himself. On the other hand, Lady Macbeth, realizing the man's fear and that he hadn't faked the crime scene to blame the king's servants, decided to handle the situation with perfect self-control: "What weak determination! / Give me the daggers. [...] If the blood

still flow, / I'll cover the servants' faces with it, / that their guilt may be seen" (Shakespeare, 2008b, Act II, Scene II, p. 37-38). While Macbeth sees his wife's posture as a sign of virility, she in turn admits to being afraid, but does not ignore her husband's mistake in letting his feelings get in the way of the couple's goal in the following dialogue.

We have said that, as Freud (1996) suggested, there was an alternation from the moment Lady Macbeth gave Macbeth her unshakeable strength, which signifies an aspect of the couple's completeness, since Shakespeare created two characters who are contrasts and complements to each other. Thus, it is Macbeth who has King Duncan's blood on his hands, while it is Lady Macbeth who cleans his hands repeatedly. While Macbeth suffers from insomnia, Lady Macbeth suffers from sleepwalking. When it is Macbeth who hallucinates when he believes he sees Banquo's spirit, it is Lady Macbeth who goes mad, so in the play, the characters who form the couple are always "composing a duo that completes itself to form a unity" (Gondar, 2017, p. 55).

According to Freud (1996), Ludwig Jekels carried out a study on William Shakespeare, in which he suggested the existence of a specific technique of the poet that could be applied to the work *"Macbeth"*. Jekels defends the idea that Shakespeare often divides a type of character into two fractions, which, when analyzed individually, are not fully comprehensible, and it is necessary to bring them together to obtain a full understanding. In this sense, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are cited as examples of this technique employed by the Englishman. That said, it would be wrong to consider Lady Macbeth as an independent character and try to understand her transformation without taking into account the presence of her husband, Macbeth, as a complement. According to Jekels, both characters explore all the possibilities of reacting to the crime, representing two distinct parts of the same psychic entity, which suggests the possibility that they were inspired by a single model.

The psychological depth of Lady Macbeth's character is perceived through her insomnia, which will function throughout the play as a symbolic element of the fading of the couple's psychic health and, at the same time, the collapse of Macbeth's reign. Thus, by plunging the dagger repeatedly into the sleeping king's chest, Macbeth has not only killed King Duncan, but also compromised his sleep. In other words, by violating the king's body, Macbeth eliminates the serenity of the psyche from his own nature and that of his confidant, which is replaced by the disturbances awakened by the crime. For this reason, in the essay *"On Conscience"*, the thinker Montaigne (1987) expresses an observation about sleepwalking: "This

is also the case with those who indulge in vice, who engender a displeasure that torments their conscience, in wakefulness as in sleep "many guilty people reveal, during sleep or the delirium of fever, crimes that have long been hidden. " (II, V, p. 122).

It is undeniable that, after the criminal act, the couple's relationship is shaken, as Macbeth now has such expressive strength and determination, and consequently autonomy, that he no longer needs his wife's support. She is no longer wanted, even sexually, to the point of being removed from the story. Thus, the madness, which reaches its peak in the last pages of the play, sown in Lady Macbeth's mind, is not only caused by the guilt arising from the murder, but also by the accumulation of sexual energy, since in the case of hysteria "sexual energy was prevented from expanding through its natural outlet and then flowed to other organs, becoming restricted or contained at certain points and manifesting itself through various symptoms" (Zimerman, 2007, p. 23).

Therefore, Lady Macbeth, who, at the beginning of the play, can be interpreted as an unshakable, unsubmitive and passive woman, despite being devoted and faithful to her husband and incredibly fearless, so much so that the character confesses that she would crush a baby's skull without blinking if she had committed herself to that cause (Shakespeare, 2008b), is later contradicted by another qualitatively different personality. We see Lady Macbeth succumbing to madness, and, due to the long gap between her and her presence in the play, we are surprised to see a sick woman suffering from the evils of the psyche.

It should be emphasized that hysteria (hysterical neurosis), for Freud (2016), lies in some external factor, because the subject is healthy "as long as his love need was being satisfied by a real object in the outside world, he becomes neurotic when this object is taken away from him" (p. 71). Similarly, Lady Macbeth, while she had Macbeth's presence and was able to persuade him, knowing her husband's deepest desires and fears, was healthy. But after the break-up of this typical couple relationship, Lady Macbeth begins to live in constant turmoil. This, coupled with the "return of the repressed", i.e. guilt and the vivid memory of the murder of King Duncan and Banquo, which can no longer be ignored, results in delusional episodes.

This distancing of the couple is quite evident after Macbeth invites his subjects to celebrate in his palace in front of an abundant banquet and proclaims: "[...] Let every man be master of his time/ Until seven o'clock. That the guests/ May be better received, we will keep/ Alone till the feast. / Till then, God be with you. " (Shakespeare, 2008b, Act III, Scene I, p. 51). In this passage, Macbeth, already crowned, decrees that everyone must leave, excluding no one,

not even his companion. In other words, after being officially recognized as the new king of Scotland, Macbeth no longer needed his partner.

Paradoxically, the couple's relationship in the first scene of the book accentuates characteristics of confidentiality and even motherhood, as Lady Macbeth, in certain passages, functions in a similar way to the behavior of a mother teaching her child something: "[...] Your face, my Chief, is a book where men/ Can read sinister purposes. To deceive them/ Look like them: be kind in your eyes, / With your hands, in your speech. It resembles the innocent flower, / Under which the serpent hides [...]" (Shakespeare, 2008b, Act I, Scene V, p. 25). Based on the fragment quoted, we see that Lady Macbeth is advising her husband how he should behave in order to get what he wants: Macbeth must hide his true intentions, conceal his perversity and his most forbidden desires.

We still need to explore one of the justifications suggested by Freud (1996) to explain Lady Macbeth's madness. The Austrian psychiatrist states that the female character's illness could be understood as a reaction to her infertility, leading her to realize her impotence in the face of the laws of nature. At the same time confronting her with the awareness that it was because of her own failure that her crime was deprived of the best results.

Even though there is a possible reason for the character's drastic transformation, from unshakeable to suffering from the evils of the psyche, the question of what really caused Lady Macbeth's madness seems unattainable even for Freud, as can be seen in the different explanations put forward by the psychoanalyst for the case.

In this logic, Lady Macbeth suffers for not being able to have children, while her spouse demands that there be an heir to take over her throne. From now on, the queen's sterility is centralized as a clarification of her cruelty and as the main reason why the Macbeth couple's wishes are not absolutely fulfilled, given that without children to form a dynasty, the characters' reign would only last a short time

However, Freud recognizes that the reason for Lady Macbeth's illness cannot be determined, only hypothesized. The pioneer of psychoanalysis questions whether the disillusionment represented by the *fait accompli* was the only aspect responsible for the transformation of an originally docile and feminine nature in Lady Macbeth. He also wonders if there is evidence of a deeper motivation that would make this fall understandable in human terms (Freud, 1996).



What we see in the story at first is the dilemma between morality and ambition in Macbeth, then Lady Macbeth's madness and the destruction of both, death, making sense of the work's classification as a tragedy. However, Shakespeare described another conflict, in addition to the one explored in the protagonist Macbeth, an internal conflict in Lady Macbeth's psyche, which provides support for the term "ruin of success", used in Freud's *"The Ruined by Success"* (1974), which clearly illustrates the development of Lady Macbeth's madness. According to Morais Godoy (2015), the "ruin of success": "This is a relatively common pathology. It affects those who become distressed and depressed at the very moment when they achieve what they have dreamed of and fought so hard for" (p. 12), so this expression consists of the achievement of what the subject longs for, as well as the impasse that presents itself for the enjoyment of this desire.

If we look at the relationship between sexuality and madness, we can see that Shakespeare was able to articulate very well the evolution of the levels of disturbance in the character's soul, implementing the hysterical signs and symptoms in Lady Macbeth's consciousness, with their peak in Act V, as mentioned above. Then Lady Macbeth, in her palace, begins to receive care from a doctor, who points out that the queen needed a clergyman more than a doctor, since her illness belonged to the soul and only a confession could cure her.

According to Freud (2010), it is possible to see great surprise, and even confusion, on the part of the doctor when he discovers that, in certain cases, people fall ill soon after the fulfillment of a deep-rooted desire that has been nurtured for a long time. This situation can be interpreted as a kind of inability to bear one's own happiness, since the causal relationship between success and illness cannot be questioned. Therefore, at this point, Lady Macbeth hallucinated: seeing her hands stained with blood, no matter how much she cleaned, she claimed to have a cursed bloodstain on her body. In other words, the feeling of guilt had overwhelmed the woman, leading her to a tragic end: suicide.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, this article aimed to examine and understand Shakespeare's literature, exploring its significance in the field of psychoanalysis, particularly in the writings of Sigmund Freud. Through Macbeth, we observe Shakespeare's exceptional ability to delve into the



deepest, most complex, and often darkest aspects of the human psyche, as reflected in the behavior of his multifaceted characters. Thus, Shakespeare's works, due to their uniqueness, played a fundamental role in the development of Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Through his tragedies and comedies, Shakespeare portrayed universal themes—such as greed and sexuality—that continue to resonate in contemporary times.

A reading of Freudian studies reveals that literature, like other forms of art, served as a valuable source of inspiration and insight into the workings of the human mind. Freud elevated Shakespearean literature to a new dimension by systematically investigating themes such as morality and desire within his works. By referencing Shakespeare multiple times throughout his writings, Freud attested to the timelessness and richness of the playwright's works, which transcend their literary origins and influence other intellectual fields.

Returning to the question posed in the introduction and title of this article: Can it be indisputably stated that Freud was a genius apprentice of Shakespeare? The answer oscillates between "yes" and "no." "Yes," because the influence of Shakespearean literature on Freudian psychoanalysis is undeniable. And "no," because adopting a reductionist perspective and proclaiming Shakespeare as Freud's direct master in psychoanalysis would oversimplify the complexity and immeasurable contributions of both authors.

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