

PAMÉSSOU WALLA

Human Nature and the Tragic Vision in
Three Plays by William Shakespeare:
*A Psychoanalytic Reassessment of
Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello*

GALDA VERLAG

HUMAN NATURE
AND THE TRAGIC
VISION IN THREE
PLAYS BY WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE:

*A Psychoanalytic Reassessment
of Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello*

PAMÉSSOU WALLA

HUMAN NATURE
AND THE TRAGIC
VISION IN THREE
PLAYS BY WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE:

*A Psychoanalytic Reassessment
of Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello*

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

© 2018 Galda Verlag, Glienicke

Neither this book nor any part may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, micro-filming, and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher. Direct all inquiries to Galda Verlag, Franz-Schubert-Str. 61, 16548 Glienicke, Germany.

ISBN 978-3-96203-045-2 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-96203-046-9 (Ebook)

Originally presented as the author's doctoral thesis: University of Lomé, 2011.

Dedicated to:

Almighty God, the source of knowledge and wisdom.

Behaviouristic and perfectionistic literary researchers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been achieved without the help and support of many people. As a matter of fact, many people have contributed in one way or another to the realization of this book. So, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of each and everyone whose assistance to me has made this research work possible. To be sure, I am fully aware that I cannot reach individually all the people who have been helpful throughout the time I have spent on my education from primary school to university level; I therefore pay homage to some special people the Mighty God has inspired to train and support me up to this level.

First of all, I pay homage to William Shakespeare's dramatic genius without which this book would not have a fertile background to sprout from.

In the same vein, I sincerely thank the publisher of this book, Galda Verlag and all his partners in Germany and Asia without whose toil and labour this book would not be available on bookshelves for the readership.

Besides, I am very grateful to Professor Komla Messan Nubukpo, the current Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the university of Lomé for his committment to the achievement of this book.

Next, I would like to extend my humble greetings and heartfelt thanks to Professor Mamadou Kandji of Senegal for editing and reshaffling the draft of this book to make it better.

I am also indebted to all the lecturers of the English Department of the University of Lomé, especially the Associate Professor Ataféï Pewissi for the tremendous role he has played for the achiement of this book.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank Professor Taofiki Koumapkaï of Bénin and the Associate Professor Daniel René Akendengué of Gabon for their reading and contributions to this book. Their pertinent remarks and rich contributions have been of great help to me for the improvement of this book.

CONTENTS

<i>Dedication</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xiii</i>

1 SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC VISION

1-1: The Tragic Hero in General.....	5
1-2 :The Tragic Story.....	6
1-3: Shakespeare's Tragic Plot and the Lineaments of Heroes.....	10

2 WOMEN AS MEDIATORS IN THE TRAGIC PLOT

2-1: Lady Macbeth: A Strong-willed Woman.....	35
2-2: Gertrude and Women's Frailty.....	42
2-3: Womanhood in a Patriarchal Society	47
2-4: Emilia: A Spokeswoman	57

3 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN EVIL

3-1: Psychoanalytic Archaeology of Evil in <i>Macbeth</i>	66
3-2: The Satire of Evil in <i>Othello</i>	72
3-3: <i>Hamlet</i> : Responsibility and Transgression of Social Norms	79
3-4: Racist Biases in <i>Othello</i>	86

4 THE AESTHETICS OF GOOD HUMAN NATURE

4-1: Aesthetics of Good Nature: Dramatic Representations.....	100
4-2: Rhetoric of Interpretations: Signs, Signifiers and Significations	104
4-3: Mental Dispositions: Hamlet's Complex Character.....	107

5 ASSESSING POETIC JUSTICE IN SHAKESPEARE'S ART

5-1: <i>Dramatis Personae</i> 's Action and Judgement.....	116
5-2: The Sense of Individual Justice	119
5-3: Poetic Justice in Shakespeare's Tragic Art.....	129
5-4: Human Justice: A Dramatic Challenge.....	136

6 SYMBOLIC ACTION AND DRAMATIC EXPRESSION

6-1: The Psychoanalysis of Evil.....	146
6-2: Form, Structure and Drama.....	154

7 PSYCHOANALYTIC MEANING OF DEATH

7-1: Thanatopsis: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Death.....	171
7-2: Thanatology and the Tragic Vision	178
7-3: Thanatos and Pathos as Dramatic Tools.....	180

8 IMAGERY, SYMBOLISM AND STAGING

8-1: Language, Staging and Style.....	191
8-2: A Mixture of the Tragic and the Comic.....	209
8-3: The Rhetoric of Revelation: Signs and Dramatic Codes of the Handkerchief.....	213
8-4: Prologues, Epilogues and Soliloquies: Three Dramatic Tools....	227

9 MIRRORING HUMAN VICES, FOIBLES AND FOLLIES

9-1: Shakespeare's Tragic Ideology	238
9-2: The Satirical Spectrum	245

Conclusion	261
------------------	-----

Bibliography	270
--------------------	-----

Index of Authors.....	277
-----------------------	-----

Index of Terms	281
----------------------	-----

INTRODUCTION

Human nature is the total sum of the ways in which people behave, which is part of their character and personality. According to online Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, human nature is the concept that there is a set of inherent distinguishing characteristics, including ways of thinking, feeling and acting, which humans tend to have.

Then the question of what causes these distinguishing characteristics of humanity and how fixed human nature is, has important implications in ethics, psychology, politics, theology, etc... because they are seen as providing standards or norms that humans can use when judging how best to live. The complex implications of such discussion are often themes which are dealt with in art and literature.

However the concept of human nature has been the subject of much misunderstanding. Since the mid-19th century, the concept of human nature has been called into question by thinkers such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre, and a number of structuralists and postmodernists. It is often believed that Karl Marx has denied that there is any human nature, saying that human beings are simply a blank slate, whose character will depend wholly upon their socialization and experience. So, for Karl Marx, human beings are only influenced, their behaviour is strictly determined by their environments. Marx's understanding of human nature has played a role in his critique of capitalism with the belief that a better society can be possible.

Again, the existence of an invariable human nature is a subject of much historical debate that continues into modern times. Darwin, for instance, has given a widely accepted scientific argument that human beings and other animal species have no truly fixed nature, at least in the long term. He thinks and J. J. Rousseau agrees that even within one lifetime, man is subjected to

malleability and versatility. It is then hard to talk of a fixed human nature. Nevertheless, Rousseau believes that man is born good, his corruption comes as a result of the influence from a bad society, while Thomas Hobbes believes that in the state of nature, man is warlike to his fellow man.

For the Protestant doctrine of original sin, human beings are inherently corrupt creatures stained by the sin of Adam, and can only reach moral perfection through the redemption by the morally perfect Son of God.

Scientific perspectives such as behaviourism, determinism, and the chemical model within modern psychiatry and psychology, are neutral regarding human nature. They can offer to explain the origins and the underlying mechanisms, demonstrating capacities for change and diversity which arguably violate the concept of a fixed human nature.

The study of human nature enables us to develop a critical mind so as not to fall in the traps of human follies and foibles.

As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, it studies the mind and how it influences human behaviour. In fact, the mind rather than the nervous system is the headquarters of human behaviour. The nervous system coordinates all the bodily movements. Likewise, the mind dictates, manages, and controls human behaviour. We think before we act, therefore psychoanalysts find it necessary to study the mental processes governing human behaviour.

On their side, anthropologists study the human race, especially its origins, development, customs and beliefs. To understand human beings, it is worth knowing their race, their origin, their beliefs, customary practices and the way they have evolved through time and space, which is their history.

One may wonder why I have chosen to study human nature, especially in Shakespeare's tragedies. It will be therefore quite important to justify my choice.

In fact, there are many English writers, poets and dramatists who could have served this academic purpose, yet I have chosen to work on William Shakespeare for many personal reasons which need to be clarified. As a matter of fact, William Shakespeare has written about thirty-seven plays including historical plays, comedies and tragedies. However, I am only interested in tragedies, again for many reasons. Above all, why have I chosen drama instead of other literary genres?

First of all, my choice of a dramatic genre lies in the fact that drama is literature that walks and talks before our eyes just as human beings would do in real life. Drama is a literary genre that brings the imagination closer to

real life situations. Though drama, like all other literary genres, is a product of fiction and imagination, it is more vivid, more appealing and more revelatory of human follies and foibles. On these grounds, Marjorie Boulton argues:

There is an enormous difference between a play and any other form of literature. A play is not really a piece of literature for reading. A true play is three-dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes. It is not intended that the eye shall perceive marks on paper and the imagination turn them into sights, sounds and actions; the text of the play is meant to be translated into sights, sounds and actions which occur literally and physically on a stage. Though in fact plays are often read in silence, if we are to study drama at all intelligently we must always keep this in mind.¹

The author of this quotation seems to suggest that though drama is a product of fiction and imagination as are other forms of literature, it is easier to relate it to real life situations than other literary forms would do. Because drama is written in a dialogue form it becomes a more exciting and memorable experience than the reading of a novel or a poem for instance.

Drama is more suitable as it offers us to see and to hear what the dramatis personae are doing, which gives us a lot of insights into human psyche and behaviour.

It is worth highlighting here the fact that, there are at least tragic, historical and comic facets to Shakespeare's genius. His tragedies offer us more room for the discussion of human nature. Human nature, as a rule, is entirely embedded in tragedies. Tragedies deal with the strengths and especially the weaknesses or flaws in human beings. According to John Greene, tragedies embrace all the flaws of human beings. Greene is of the view that:

The matter of tragedies is haughtiness, arrogance, ambition, pride, injury, anger, wrath, envy, hatred, contention, war, murder, cruelty, rapine, incest, ravings, depredations, piracies, spoils, robberies, rebellions, treasons, killing, hewing, stabbing, dagger-drawing, fighting, butchery, treachery, villainy, etc. and all kinds of heroic evils whatever.²

1 Marjorie Boulton. *The Anatomy of Drama*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954, p. 3.

2 Quoted by Edward Hubler, ed. *William Shakespeare's Four Great Tragedies*. New York: The New American Library, 1982, p. VII.

In other words, tragedies offer us a lot of evil matters about human behaviour. We can easily depend on tragedies to depict the various moves and possibilities lying in wait in human psyche. The list above is about thirty human escapades, mania and mannerisms.

Etymologically, tragedy originates from the Greek word *tragōidia*. This word is coined from two other roots: *tragos* = he-goat and *aeidein* = to sing. Logically, tragedy means he-goat's song. It is based on human suffering that offers its audience pleasure. Scholars suspect that tragedy may be traced to a time when a goat was either the prize in a competition of a choral dancing or was the ceremony during which a chorus danced prior to the animal ritual's sacrifice in celebration of grape harvest.

While most cultures have developed forms that provoke this paradoxical response, tragedy refers to a specific tradition of drama that has played a unique and important role historically in the self-definition of Western civilization. This tradition has been multiple and discontinuous, yet the term has often been used to evoke a powerful effect of cultural identity and historical continuity: the Greeks and the Elizabethans in one cultural form, Hellenes and Christians in a common activity as Raymond Williams put it in his book *Modern Tragedy* (1966).

In this spectrum, the Greek works of Aeschylus (C. 525 - C. 456 BC.), Sophocles (C. 496 – 406 BC.), Euripides (C. 480 - 406 BC.), Aristotle (C. 384 – 322 BC.), Aristophanes (C. 450 - 385 BC.) and Seneca (C. 4 BC.-65 A.D.) are articulated in Shakespeare's tragedies which they permeate deeply.

According to G. Wilson Knight, the behavioural human mysteries are demystified in tragedy: "*in tragedy the human enigma is expressed, and somehow left as an enigma without inducing in us any final sense of disquiet.*"³

As a matter of fact, there is nothing like mystery about human nature when we approach tragedies with psychological tools of analysis for instance.

John Folio defines tragedy as follows:

Tragedy or mournful play being a lofty kind of poetry and representing personages of great state and matter of much trouble, a great broil or stir: it beginneth prosperously and endeth unfortunately or sometimes doubtfully, and is contrary to comedy.⁴

3 Wilson G. Knight. *Shakespeare and Religion- Essays of Forty Years*. New York: Simon and Schuster Rockefeller Centre, 1967, p. 223.

4 Quoted by Edward Hubler, ed. *Op. Cit.*, p. VI.

According to this definition, tragedy is characterized by two important moments, the prosperous one and the unfortunate one. The prosperous moment is the time when we witness characters' virtues and goodness, while the unfortunate moment puts us face to face with all the horrors of human nature. The tragic hero starts the course of his life prosperously because of his virtues, but he ends his journey through life sorrowfully because he grows wicked by the end of his lifetime. Thus tragedies can offer us a better ground for searching and delineating the ups and downs of human thoughts and actions.

I have chosen to write on Shakespeare's tragedies rather than his comedies for the following motivations. Shakespeare as is the case of many other writers of comedies often comes very close to the **commedia dell'arte** convention, at the core of which is a Harlequin figure. The main role of this figure in comedy is to divide himself into two characters who hold a dialogue with each other. In some cases the Harlequin figure dresses himself like a woman, who becomes mute. This dimension of Shakespeare's works is very interesting and shows his insight into romance with the twin motif sometimes coupled with the confusion of identities as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the two heroes are not twins but undergo a confusion of identities.

Compared to tragedies, comedies and historical plays are more restricted to the whims of love and the *peripeteia* of kingship.

It is my contention that tragedies are more apt to expose the potentialities and the hidden possibilities inherent in human nature, since tragedies emphasize both the greatness and the meanness of human character and personality. The subject matter of tragedies is shared between the conflicting ambivalence of good and evil. Brooks and Heilman argue: "*tragedy grows out of the nature of man, out of the conflict of good and evil in which he is always engaged.*"⁵ The quotation above informs us that tragedies delineate the good and the bad aspects of human nature. According to these former critics, tragedy is not popular, it is the form which makes man face the most serious issues instead of shunning them; man is brought face to face with himself, with his psychological mannerisms dictating his behaviour.

In a paper entitled "Shakespeare's Tragic Villain", Wayne Booth, writes: "*The wickedness is mitigated by comedy, so that the serious conflict between sympathy and moral judgement is diminished.*"⁶ Through this statement, Booth

5 Cleanth Brooks and Robert B. Heilman. *Understanding Drama - Twelve Plays*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1945, Glossary p. 46.

6 Wayne Booth. "Shakespeare's Tragic Villain". In Lerner Laurence, ed. *Shakespeare's Tragedies - An Anthology of Modern Criticism*. London: Penguin Books, 1963, p. 180.

suggests that comedies do not offer us much room for studying the wicked side of human behaviour for moral perspectives. Comedies are limited to the comic, funny, jocular and ludicrous side of human nature, they do not attack the serious and tragic aspects of human nature like tragedies would do. Booth also rightly thinks that tragic vision is structured on the basis of a parallel progression from great goodness to great wickedness. That is why he argues:

Macbeth is a man whose progressive external misfortunes seem to produce, and at the same time seem to be produced by, the parallel progression from great goodness to great wickedness... We of course lament the fall of a great man from **happiness** to **misery**, as in classical tragedy.⁷ (my emphasis)

This viewpoint supports the fact that tragedy is double-sided, that it unveils the good and the bad sides of human behaviour which are represented by *happiness* and *misery*. A good human behaviour implies a good human nature, and a good human nature implies happiness and prosperity. However, a bad human behaviour is synonymous with a bad human nature which leads eventually to misery and untold sufferings.

The French woman writer Madame de Staël wrote: "*Shakespeare's histories are inferior to his tragedies. An English audience demanded alternate comic and tragic scenes.*"⁸ This statement gives us the impression that, again historical plays are very limited as compared to tragedies. Shakespeare's audiences used to have a preference for comedies and tragedies because histories were less entertaining, interesting and exciting.

Indeed, the overall picture of all the great English playwrights leads me inevitably to choose William Shakespeare for this study. Indeed, he is known by many critics as seen above, as a great painter of human nature. According to many critics, Shakespeare is a gifted painter of human nature.

According to the French writer Alphonse de Lamartine, Shakespeare has a special genius for the delineation of human heart. In support of this claim, he wrote:

But pity lies at the source of genius... To dissect his works would be to dissect the human heart, of which he is the greatest painter.

⁷ Ibid., p.184.

⁸ Quoted by Augustus Rall. *A History of Shakespearian Criticism*. Vol I. New York: The Humanities Press, 1959, p. 204.

Virtue, crime, passion, vice, absurdity, greatness, smallness: he is master of all. His fingers are set upon the whole keyboard of human nature. After playing upon human nature like an instrument he drew thence a wonderful philosophy that makes him, already Molière's equal, the equal of Pascal.⁹

This opinion testifies to the fact that Shakespeare has a sound approach to the human heart and actions. His literary works, especially his tragedies thoroughly display the human heart and actions in all their complexities. Indeed Shakespeare's tragedies give his audience an easy access to the human heart.

As for William Hazlitt, he argues about Shakespeare:

In painting the struggle in *Othello*, in raising passion to its height from the smallest beginnings, Shakespeare unfolds the strength and weakness of our nature; and in uniting sublimity of thought with anguish of keenest woe, shows the mastery of his genius and his power over the human heart.¹⁰

The statement here above suggests the meaning that Shakespeare has the mastery of painting the nooks and corners of human psyche; he has a powerful control of the human heart which determines the human character and personality.

Still addressing Shakespeare's power and genius in appreciating human nature, the English critic Hazlitt furthermore states:

Shakespeare is the most universal genius that ever lived; he sees equally into the world of imagination and reality: and overall presides the same truth of character and nature, and the same spirit of humanity. His ideal beings are as true as real, as consistent with themselves, and speak a special language.¹¹

This quotation is about Shakespeare's power to reconcile the imagination and reality, his truths about human nature are undeniable and compellingly

⁹ Ibid. pp. 464-465.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹ Quoted by Augustus Rall, op. cit., p. 149.

real despite the fact that they appear as the result of his creative imagination. Still in line with my stance, the French critic Paul DuPont states:

Shakespeare's name is a symbol of greatness..., a storm centre in European literature. It affects us least to read his plays or see them represented to remember his words: all that he has uttered lives in us. No poet since Homer has so graven in our souls indestructible impressions; and he alone, since Homer, has created a world peopled with his own creations.¹²

The foregoing citation underlines the fact that Shakespeare's words and utterances about human character are memorable. Shakespeare's language, stage properties and diction always remind his audience of what human mind and character look like. To read Shakespeare is to understand what it means to be human beings: men and women, parents and children, husbands and wives, whites and blacks.

Indeed Shakespeare's artistry is quite remarkable about the handling and the reading of man at any time and in any place. Wilson Knight puts it that:

The artistic result appeals to us all, whatever our period, for it becomes under Shakespeare's handling a reading of man at any time or place baffled by destiny. Therein lies the universality of Shakespeare.¹³

As a matter of fact, Shakespeare is universal, placeless and timeless as far as the reading of man is concerned. About Shakespeare's relevance to all times and places, David Nichol Smith would argue:

At no time since his death has Shakespeare not been placed upon a pinnacle by himself as the greatest of all the English writers. But each age has his own point of view, its own special interests, its characteristic method of treatment; and no age can never say the last word on anything that is a living and life-giving force. Say the last word on Shakespeare and Shakespeare is dead. There can never be finality in the criticism of a great author. All the best

¹² Ibid., p. 215.

¹³ Wilson G. Knight. Op. cit., p. 225

criticism of the present day, all the best criticism that has ever been written, cannot reveal all the secrets of him who is the supreme spokesman of human experience... We may add to the stock of knowledge about Shakespeare. We may throw light on dark places. But Shakespeare, all that is vital in him, remains a munificent patrimony for each new generation to enjoy as it wills.¹⁴

This opinion by a well-informed scholar highlights the topicality and the relevance of studying Shakespeare without any consideration of age, time and place. For centuries, generations over generations have been studying Shakespeare, who is and will always be topical. His works remain a generous legacy to whatever generation showing interest in him. There is still room for younger generations for studying Shakespeare.

So far, no critic has questioned Shakespeare's truths to human nature. Lyttelton writes in this vein:

No author had ever so copious, so bold, so creative an imagination, with so perfect a knowledge of the passions, the humours and the sentiments of mankind. He painted all characters, from kings down to the peasants, with equal truth and equal force. If human nature were destroyed, and no monument were left of it except his works, other beings might know what man was from those writings.¹⁵

This observation equally lends credence to the claim that Shakespeare's works constitute a dissection of human nature which this dissertation would appreciate.

In western tradition and imagology it is widely believed that woman is a mystery and that woman is deeply rooted in maternal ambivalence. We can better understand the itinerary of the hero who experiences a lot of psychological crises which give form to the reactivation of this maternal power and imago. Western tragedy in general and Shakespeare's tragedies in particular, as far as this study is concerned, dramatize such a conflict of woman in a patriarchal order by reflecting this maternal ambivalence through the dramatization of a tension, usually in a domestic environment.

14 David Nichol Smith. *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928, pp. 1-2.

15 Ibid., pp. XXXIII-XXXIV.

The three tragedies: Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello under study can be read as domestic tragedies as they reflect a tension between husband and wife, uncle and nephew, or incestuous relations, the definition of the mother. In these tragedies, human nature is revealed at its best through the confrontation of male characters with womanhood and the subjection of the latter.

As Jacques Lacan put it: *“psychoanalysis is located with the global patterning of structuralism as revealed by the map of the psyche: the unconscious structure is composed of the id, the ego, the superego, if we refer to Freudian typology.”*¹⁶

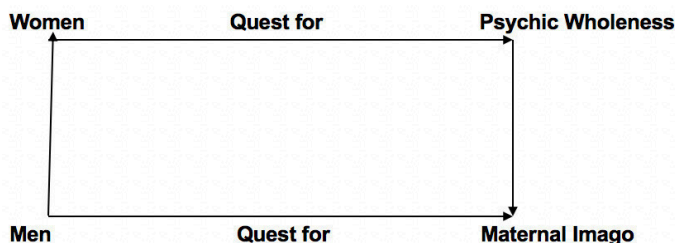
Lacan sees in symbols and language, two main structures of the psychoanalytical field.

Indeed, it is possible to postulate a thematic continuity between the psychological theories of Carl Gustav Jung, and the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Lacan has on several occasions, reiterated indebtedness to Freud just as Freud did to Jung. For example, if one can hoist Hamlet's persona's experience and daydreaming to the archetypal view of Jung, Lacan just as Freud never loses an opportunity to re-examine critically Freud's conception of widowhood, and to develop further Freud's conclusions on the relationship between widowhood and psychosis as structural components of the psyche.

The three plays under scrutiny are overdetermined works which reflect psychic commotion and endopsychic problems. Each of them addresses differently and at times overlappingly claims and questions a different part of the human psyche of the tragic hero. But, one could find, and even postulate a common denominator which is the interplay of the ego with instinctual drives and the tragic hero's mobilization of all his mental energies in order to try, but only to try, to come to terms with forces mightier than himself. Hence their human touch.

Along these lines, each of them shares with *Oedipus the King* the mark of being a drama of fate. It is this perspective which emphasizes their perennial values and purport and their permanence as they emphasize also human failings, and man's foibles and follies, in a word hubris. That is what Sigmund Freud had understood when he read in the curse of Oedipus, and in the latter's incapacity to escape his fate, the ritual archetype of all human life, the lives of ordinary men and women that we are. All these plays address man's innermost thoughts and feelings and help the latter purge his person. They are dramas about man's struggle with his limited nature, as they are plays about the enlightenment of human transgression.

To sum up, the problematic of this work can be illustrated with the following chart.



Women are stronger than men from a psychological point of view; at least, this is true of the three plays under study. Lady Macbeth is in total control of Macbeth who is nourished with the milk of human kindness.

The three Weird Sisters are agents of fate and womanhood. They are in absolute control of the future of characters and the outcome of the tragic plot in *Macbeth*. Gertrude is ever present as a strong character. When in Act III, scene 1, Hamlet is trying to share his vision of his father's Ghost, she says she does not see anything wrong at all, and she accuses Hamlet of his overheated imagination.

Ophelia has been accused by many critics of sexual freedom referring to her "crime" Ophelia's song clearly shows the loss of virginity which she exposes.

Desdemona's angelic character is structured around psychological balance, constancy, stability and innocence. The male characters Macbeth, Othello, and Hamlet so as to mention a few, have suffered psychological trauma until death, they are under a full control of women.

The main critical theory I want to use, is psychoanalytic criticism.

With reference to the *Dictionary of Concepts and Literary Criticism and Theory*, psychological criticism is a literary theory which uses psychological or psychoanalytic theory to explain one or more of the following:

The general processes of literary creativity; the origin of literary work in individual author's mind; the thoughts and actions of a character in a literary work; the structure of a literary work, or readers' responses.¹⁷

17 Wendell V. Harris. *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*. New York, Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1982, p. 305.

Indeed the psychological literary criticism will be a tool for me in the exploration of the psychic drives and processes that motivate characters' actions in the plays for the progress of the tragic plot. We entirely agree with the Freudian theory that there are unconscious mental processes, and there must be recognition of the theory of resistance and repression.

Psychological criticism can be included into Freudian, Jungian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and psycho-criticism which treat in a given work of art, recurring metaphors, words and symbols which need to be interpreted as "métaphores obsédantes" surging from the depth of the writer's psyche. Indeed, in literary creativity, the appeal of the psyche is prior to any literary form taken by the final work of art.

Carl Gustav Jung has studied the notion of schizophrenia when he was an assistant for nine years in a mental hospital in Zurich (1900-1909) before he broke with Freud in 1913. Freud was oriented towards neurosis and Jung towards psychosis. Melanie Klein made more breakthroughs in the 1920s through important studies on children. She belongs to the British school of psychoanalysis which impacted upon the studies conducted by O. W. Winnicott's discourses on schizoid children.

Klein put the stress on the aggressive nature of the baby's relation towards its mother's body and rejected Freud's insistence on fantasies. She resorted to the analysis of specific works of art to substantiate her discoveries on depression, death instinct. Central to her aesthetics is the metaphor of "reflection" of schizophrenia in works of art. Works of art in her aesthetics are reflections of infantile fantasies.

Discussing the biographical elements of the painter Ruth Kjar, she shows how the painter's artistic career was triggered by the removal of a decorative picture from the wall of his bedroom which caused in him anxiety and depression through the empty space left on the wall: "*This feeling of depression lasted until the blank space on the wall was replaced by the picture of a naked negress.*"¹⁸

It seems appropriate to retain in Klein's psychoanalytical aesthetics the importance of aggressiveness as derived from depressive experience and of the lost object which must be recovered. She suggests that any loss will reactivate the feeling of mourning through a painful symbolic experience. The theory of separation, quest and recovery is then the backbone of Klein's

18 Quoted by Tony Pinkney. *Women in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot, A Psycho-analytical Approach*. London: Macmillan, 1904, p.10.

psychoanalytical aesthetics as shown in the substitution of a lost picture by the representation of a Negress. One final observation here, at this stage of my analysis, is how the representation of Negro images participates to imaginative and artistic works of art.

The methodological approach proposed in this essay is based upon three orientations. The first one works on the basis of the selection of themes and contents' analysis drawn from the three plays under scrutiny. The second direction very much related to the first one proposes semantic discussion as well as the exploitation of psychoanalysis in order to highlight the behavioural orientations and motivations of the tragic heroes. This presupposes that the reader accepts that within the structure of the play are inscribed imaginative processes at work. The dialogue approach will enable us to move from one of these texts to the next so as to follow an argumentation and bring a relativist discussion of the themes and structure. We are well aware that a good deal of research has already been conducted on the psychoanalytic approach to Shakespeare.

But most of these studies are geared to the analysis of single works. Cases in point are *Hamlet* and *Oedipus* by Ernest Jones, Ruhard Flatter's *Hamlet's Father*, Norman Holland's *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (1976). Though comprehensive their analysis is mainly oriented towards Freudianism, and W.I.D. Scott's *Shakespeare's Melancholies* which about 50 years old is oriented towards melancholia as its title suggests.

Most of these studies, though very stimulating in themselves, sometimes lack critical structural model, and most of them restrict their analyses to the study of Hamlet and why this character keeps on procrastinating the killing of his uncle.

A recent work which acutely sharpened my reflexion is Pierre Bayard's *Enquête sur Hamlet* (1990) which, to a large extent, stimulated my approach. I tried to extend some of his conclusions on Hamlet to the two other plays. At the same time I propose, whenever appropriate, a Negro African reading of some aspects of the plays in the hope that, the supernatural in the three plays under my study and in others by Shakespeare, notably *The Tempest* will be the subjects of a more exhaustive Negro African interpretations.

In narrative or dramatic art there is much wish-fulfilment. This is due to the fact that the wishes underlying many stories escape the narrator's control. Popular fiction fulfils erotic or ambitious desires and flatters the writer's and the reader's ego. The experience of the artist is an attempt to reconcile conflicting impulses which lie in his mind confused, conflicting and mingled.

It is those confusions that the writer tries to order and give shape in a given work of art.

In so doing he offers satisfaction to the ego or superego and gratifies the reader's wish fulfilment. A work like *Hamlet* is primarily concerned with psychic offences, and prohibition. Macbeth primarily deals with transgression at its extreme limits, and both of them deal with punishment after the vindication has satisfied the rational perception of the audience as an unconscious response.

Indeed, we could almost surmise that Shakespeare did not want to let any offence escape unpunished. In the three plays under scrutiny, sanction is directly proportioned to the nature and size of the offence. Othello murders Desdemona and his crime becomes all the more unbearable and indeed immoral as he became aware that she was innocent. It is only in this light that his suicide is a necessity, in order to be a balance to his crime.

Macbeth has disturbed nature and even the rules of nature, and as a consequence unnatural events will follow: sleeplessness, sleepwalking, hallucinations, suicide of his wife, madness and eventually his own death.

Hamlet's death is connected to the previous actions and deeds in the play. In *Hamlet*, there is dissociation, a displacement of feelings which are separated from them than true sources. The image of the father which is central to Freudian psychoanalysis runs across the play. In this play the original father is split into three components: the Ghost, King Claudius and Polonius. And of course the violence is directed against Claudius who murdered Hamlet's father, and who possesses his mother. Polonius is a father figure against whom Hamlet holds rivalrous feelings. We can therefore understand the displacement of Hamlet's hatred onto Claudius and Polonius. The respect he had for his own father is displaced and transformed into hatred directed to Claudius and Polonius two depreciated father imagoes.

It is through displacement too that Hamlet fails to understand that another man should enjoy his mother. But that is the reason why we can understand Hamlet's resorting to coarse sexual allusions directed towards his mother, hinting at incestuous feelings. A critic may even find in his speech the position of a rejected suitor in a love competition triangle where you have Gertrude flanked by two lovers of different ages and personalities.

The intrusion of the Ghost in the Queen's chamber, the Ghost clad in his nightgown, will complete this triangle into a quadrangle with the dead father as the fourth element; but we still retain that the father was the original sexual

rival. It is also through displacement that we can see Hamlet being chided by the Ghost for delaying and procrastinating his actions, and his questionable attitude towards his mother. Hamlet's sense of guilt, uselessness, but above all his hypochondria is constantly reverberated in the play. It is as if he lacerates himself mercilessly and unmercifully: he behaves as if death is the only remedy to his predicament in the corrupt world.

The dumb-show, or play within a play is a complex fact. It embodies two interpretations.

Hamlet in the guise of Lucianus, the Player King's nephew leaves the impression that he could kill in order to rescue a throne and a Queen. But it is amorality to test Claudius and to set a moral trap hoping that he will fall in into it. But there is more: the spectator lends to identify, with respect and will undergo the internal conflicts which the hero lives by.

At times, characters say, or do many things without thinking of their implications and consequences on themselves, on people around them and on the society at large. Thus, it is up to the critics to interpret their behaviour, the words and actions they produce basing themselves upon mental processes. For instance, Macbeth ignores the fact that overambition is a mortal passion. He shows an excessive, inordinate ambition and before he realizes, he is caught up in the web of actions which entail consequences. Othello too, will not know that gullibility is a flaw, a weakness in character which can lead to tragic ends; he will therefore trust Iago blindly for his own destruction. As for Hamlet, he fails to understand that revenge is a kind of wild justice leading to the fall of man: "*revenge is not honour; and this too is vital to an understanding of Hamlet face to face with Laertes.*"¹⁹ Indeed, all tragic heroes suffer from intellectual blindness.

I intend to present my work in nine chapters.

In the course of the first chapter titled Shakespeare's Tragic Vision, I aim to spell out the lineaments of Shakespeare's tragedies. For instance, I intend to study the characteristic features and importance of the tragic heroes in Shakespeare's tragic art. In this process we will show how the tragic hero contributes to unfolding the tragic story. In fact, tragic heroes are, as a rule, fundamental to tragedies, without them we cannot talk of tragedies.

Tragic heroes are exceptional characters characterized by tragic flaws. Despite their tragic flaws, they are not common men; they are elevated so high so that when the fall shows up in the end, there must be emotional sensations

19 John Lawlor. *The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1960, p. 48.

of **bathos** and **pathos**. Tragic flaws are equally important because without them tragedies will not have fatal ends and there won't be emotional release or **catharsis**. It is worth noting that we cannot imagine a tragedy without a fatal end. The tragic flaws lead tragic heroes to commit mortal sins which inevitably cause them their lives emphasizing the foibles and follies of human nature. The tragic hero's actions lead him to his own ruin, fall or destruction making him responsible for his own plight. Thus, the first chapter prepares ground for our psychological interpretation of the representation of human nature in Shakespeare's tragedies.

The second chapter based on Women as Mediators in the tragic Plot, insists on gender biases in Shakespeare's tragedies. In this chapter, I aim to examine female stereotypes, women's nature, and the excesses of patriarchal norms. Men are tempted to believe that they are better than women. Men are believed to be perfect individuals whereas women are known to be of imperfect character and personality. This chapter, in fact, shows how men are said to be manipulated into evil by women in these domestic tragedies under analysis, women who become therefore, mediators in man's search for psychic wholeness.

There is a great similarity between Macbeth as an individual and the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. It is believed that Adam was reluctant about disobeying God; he refused all the advances of the Devil in order not to sin against Him. Likewise Shakespeare or rather Shakespeare's critics believe that Macbeth was hesitating about carrying out the evil plans the witches inoculate in him. Yet Adam as well as Macbeth has ended badly, sorrowfully and miserably just because women were by their sides. People believe that, Eve, Adam's wife easily yielded to temptation leading Adam to fall as a result. Similarly, Lady Macbeth is said to have manipulated Macbeth, her husband by goading him and making him a merciless butcher not of animals but of his fellow men.

Consequently, the analysis of *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Hamlet* here, will talk about women's responsibility in evil doing, their frailty and weak nature. I am exploring women's responsibility in the tarnished, defiled image of Macbeth, Othello and Hamlet as the tragic heroes in a domestic environment. This role of a tempter assigned to female characters has something to do with gender biases, gender stereotypes about women's behaviour. Sadowski relates this attitude of men painting women wicked to patriarchal norms which become a strong genetic disposition in men.

Women are considered to be weaker and frailer in character all over the world. Thus, it will not be astonishing to hear Shakespeare say: "frailty thy name is woman!" *Hamlet* (I, ii, 152). It sounds as if frailty is limited to the female gender alone. Men are said to be of stronger and better character or behaviour. Apostle Peter in the Bible paints women as weaker vessels, he writes: "*likewise husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as **the weaker vessel**...*" 1Peter 3: 7(my emphasis)

Shakespeare creates Lady Macbeth with powerful skills of persuasion; she is a good motivator, evil instigator, fearless, too daring a woman for the Machiavellian role Shakespeare assigns to her. Her husband becomes a puppet in the grip of her mighty hands, she controls him wholly: body, soul, and mind. Macbeth cannot escape her powerful control; thus, he is said to be sold to evil by his wife.

I think Shakespeare, giving a full control of Macbeth's behaviour to his wife is not doing it in vain; he wants to show woman's frailty, woman's loose morals. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, is a satire of women's nature and stature, an attack on women's vices. Lamartine backs this stand of mine when he declares:

All the great crimes in Shakespeare are inspired by perverted women; man executes but does not conceive. The hand of woman approaches crime more easily than the hand of man approaches his victim. This power for wickedness is in woman's ardent imagination: Lady Macbeth.²⁰

I believe the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine is not wrong when he makes this statement about how Shakespeare depicts women as engineers of evil. *Macbeth* delineates human nature, and the ambivalence of female characters, and female strong personality in engineering evil.

Is he right creating frail women, amoral women above excuse and forgiveness? This question is likely to enrich the problematic.

The third chapter The Psychology of Human evil, will be concerned with the realistic depiction of human instinctual drives and psychic recesses in Shakespeare's tragedies. In his tragedies, Shakespeare stages both men and women acting their ambivalent nature, showing and displaying all the horrors of human nature.

The fourth chapter looks at the aesthetics of a good human nature. This

20 Quoted by Susan Bassnett. *Shakespeare The Elizabethan Plays*. London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1993, p. 465.

chapter underlines Shakespeare's optimism about human nature. Human nature is not perfect but it can be improved.

Chapter V discusses Shakespeare's representation of justice in his tragic art. Tragic heroes and other characters always account for all their behaviour before their own conscience which sits as a judge within them. Basically, this chapter assesses poetic justice in the three plays under scrutiny.

Chapter VI is concerned with the Symbolic Action and dramatic expression in the three plays under consideration. The chapter focuses on their specific main themes and structure. Indeed, the structure contributes to developing themes and contents. The structure shapes the content. Tragedies are structured in order to reflect their tragic matters. Both the structure and themes purport to delineating human nature.

Chapter VII addresses the dramatic and symbolic meanings of death in Shakespeare's tragedies. Death is part and parcel of the tragic world; death is at the core of the tragic vision. The concept of death has many implications and significations.

In chapter VIII, I consider Shakespeare's use of symbolism, imagery and stage properties as dramatic tools to get his tragic message across. I examine the various techniques and methods Shakespeare employs in order to convey his message about human nature in his tragic art. Shakespeare is believed to be a master of many styles which allow him to control his tragic plot.

The final chapter, chapter IX depicts how Shakespeare mirrors Human vices, foibles and follies for moral perspectives. It uncovers Shakespeare's ambition and ideology behind his tragic art. It delineates Shakespeare's didactic vision about human nature.