

"Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" (Sigmund Freud). Make the case for or against a psychoanalytic reading of any of the plays you have studied on this course.

Whether Freud actually uttered the above statement is open to question. Nevertheless, its humorous simplicity has made it both a popular and well-known quote associated with the founder of psychoanalysis. What happens, then, if we take this statement and apply it to the works of Shakespeare? In particular, in his plays, *when* is a cigar just a cigar and not something else? Might there be a pattern or code which tells us when to search for subtext, latent meaning, symbolism and so forth?

Before we do this, a pause for consideration. The quotation would not make much sense to a six-year old because *what else* could a cigar be other than a cigar? It makes sense to us because we are schooled in elementary Freud: a cigar is a phallic-shaped object which we put into our mouths and suck on. Even this is somewhat underwhelming until we associate it with orality, sexuality, and the unconscious – in other words, with the abstract language of psychoanalysis. Then it becomes *explanation* rather than visual similarity or, better, it explains human motivation at an ultimate, primordial level. There is an obvious link here to the dramatic action of a stage play which is about the portrayal of deep motivation compared to, say, a Bond film which is mainly action with just-about-adequate motivation.

Freud's statement implies that, at times, a cigar is *not* just a cigar, but a signifier to another, latent meaning. If this is the case, we must take the surface, manifest meaning of Shakespeare's words and use them to uncover hidden depths – of character motivation, symbolic meaning, repressed desires and, perhaps, Shakespeare's own unconscious. So unlike in the short stories of, say, M.R James or Hans Christian Anderson where a ghost is just a ghost, a ghost in Shakespeare as, say, guilt-projection, is somehow *more* than just a ghost; not so much scary in itself as scary in what it reveals about the ghost-seer. The Freudian school of thought claims that the human psyche does not alter drastically throughout the ages. A boy living in Elizabethan times is just as prone to the Oedipus complex as one living today. Because Freud's theories are concerned with fundamental attributes of human nature, we are eligible to analyse without overburdening ourselves with historical fact and cultural study. However, by looking at these plays in relative isolation from their place and setting, do we not lose a wealth of the meaning they could generate? We must also be sensitive to what Shakespeare would have been likely to include. Would he, for instance, have intended for Iago to be read as a latent homosexual, or would he have been appalled by the suggestion that this antagonist was more than just an evil spin-doctor? Is it legitimate or useful for us to impose our modern interpretations on a text? And, if so, legitimate or useful by which criteria?

La Rochefoucauld wrote that “Our actions are like set rhymes: anyone can fit them in to mean what he likes”.¹ If we try hard enough we can mould almost any reading and approach to ‘fit’ Shakespeare, so the question needs to be recast slightly and a sub-question asked: if arguing pro and/or contra a psychoanalytic reading of a play one needs to first ask what is such a reading *for*? Does it block other, more profitable interpretations? Such questions cannot – and should not, for the purpose of this essay – be answered in a general fashion. Specificity and close-reading are necessary and the present essay is an attempt to achieve this via a psychoanalytic reading of three tragedies – *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* – in order to evaluate whether such a reading can or should be used in reference to Shakespeare, and to what purpose.

Hamlet is perhaps the most obvious place to begin because this text influenced Freud into formulating his theory of the Oedipus Complex. “Not I, but the poets, discovered the unconscious”, Freud confessed.² Freud argued that Hamlet is a universal everyman, his repressed desire being ‘one of those that are similarly repressed in all of us, the repression of which belongs to an early stage of our development’.³ Freud wrote that he believed Hamlet’s neurosis and inaction to stem from his unconscious knowledge that Claudius had realised Hamlet’s own Oedipal desires, namely the taboos of patricide and incest.⁴ The possibility of this happening is, according to Freud, applicable to us all, making the play both popular and cathartic: ‘His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father’.⁵ Freud saw the Oedipal reading of *Hamlet* as a given; nowhere in the text is it explicitly invited, but then ‘we only learn of its existence from its inhibiting consequences’.⁶ Anyone who disagreed with this reading could, usefully, be accused of ‘infantile repression’ themselves.⁷ ‘Like Oedipus’, Freud wrote, ‘we live in ignorance of these wishes, repugnant to morality, which have been forced upon us by Nature, and after their revelation we may all of us well seek to close our eyes to the scenes of our childhood’.⁸ Freud is confident that he is able to analyse Hamlet as he would a patient, asserting ‘I have translated into

¹ La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1967) p. 82.

² What Freud is reported to have said on his seventieth birthday. [Holland, Norman N., “Freud on Shakespeare”, *PMLA (Modern Language Association)*, 1960] p. 165. JSTOR 29.01.09.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/460328?&Search=yes&term=freud&term=othello&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdobasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dothello%2Bfreud%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DAll%2BDisciplines&item=6&ttl=917&returnArticleService=showArticle>>.

³ Freud, Sigmund, “Psychopathic Characters on the Stage”, *The Tulane Drama Review*, trans. Henry Alden Bunker ([The MIT Press](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1124852?seq=4), 1960) p. 147. JSTOR, (26.01.09). <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1124852?seq=4>>.

⁴ Freud, Sigmund, “Letter of Freud to Fleiss - The Discovery of Oedipus Complex, October 15, 1897” (08.02.09). <http://www.freudfile.org/psychoanalysis/arcvhive_4.html>.

⁵ Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd, 1958) vol. 4, p. 262.

⁶ Ibid: 366.

⁷ Ibid: 60.

⁸ Ibid: 365.

conscious terms what was bound to remain unconscious in Hamlet's mind', which is, of course, really Shakespeare's mind.⁹

So was Shakespeare aware, consciously or not, of psychoanalytic phenomena which Freud has read into his work? Undoubtedly so, according to Ernest Jones, who argues that writers often make profound psychological insights without necessarily intending to.¹⁰ He claims *Hamlet* 'expresses the core of Shakespeare's philosophy and outlook on life as no other work of his does'.¹¹ What has attracted the most critical attention is Hamlet's famous 'delay', his inability to seek immediate revenge on Claudius. For Freud, Hamlet is 'able to do anything – except take vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his childhood realised'.¹² Invoking psychoanalytic theory, Janet Adelman suggests that this delay is the result of Hamlet's idealisation of the memory of his father, which causes him to identify with the more human, more accessible Claudius. He says of his uncle that he is 'no more like my father / Than I to Hercules' (1.2.152-3)¹³ thus aligning himself with him.¹⁴

But let us return to Ernest Jones' confident assertion about Shakespeare's incorporation of psychoanalytic phenomena into drama. According to Jones, Shakespeare does not go in for allegory, but rather observes human behaviour 'without any reference to the past or future evolution of motive'.¹⁵ While the Goethe school of thought argues that Hamlet's indecisiveness is the result of his tendency to analyse everything excessively, Hamlet is capable of decisive action: he murders Polonius and Claudius, brings about the deaths of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, jumps into Ophelia's grave, fights with Laertes and so on. He is not the Romantic, thinking, simpering Werther-like figure who retreats from society but 'a strong man tortured by some mysterious inhibition'.¹⁶ Given this proactive behaviour and the lack of any significant external obstacles to killing Claudius, Jones, like Freud¹⁷, concludes that there must be another, interior reason for Hamlet's hesitancy and, of course, it is precisely interior rationality which is both the territory of psychoanalysis and the ultimate explanatory

⁹ Ibid: 367.

¹⁰ Jones, Ernest, "The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery: A Study in Motive", *The American Journal of Psychology* ([University of Illinois Press](#), 1910) JSTOR, 27.01.09.

[<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1412950?&Search=yes&term=jones&term=hamlet&term=ernest&term=Oedipus&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3Fquery%3Dernest%2Bjones%2Bhamlet%2Band%2BOedipus%26gw%3Djtx%26prq%3Dnicholas%2Bray%2Bhamlet%2BAND%2Bhamlet%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25%26wc%3Don&item=2&ttl=422&returnArticleService=showArticle>](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1412950?&Search=yes&term=jones&term=hamlet&term=ernest&term=Oedipus&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3Fquery%3Dernest%2Bjones%2Bhamlet%2Band%2BOedipus%26gw%3Djtx%26prq%3Dnicholas%2Bray%2Bhamlet%2BAND%2Bhamlet%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25%26wc%3Don&item=2&ttl=422&returnArticleService=showArticle).

¹¹ Jones, 1910: 74.

¹² Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 367.

¹³ Shakespeare, William, *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: RSC, 2007). All further Shakespeare references will be from this edition.

¹⁴ Adelman, Janet, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays*, Hamlet to The Tempest (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 13.

¹⁵ Jones, 1910: 75.

¹⁶ Jones, 1910: 78.

¹⁷ Freud wrote that 'The plot of the drama shows us...that Hamlet is far from being represented as a person incapable of taking any action'. (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 367).

layer of human motivation.¹⁸ ‘The heart has its reasons which are quite unknown to the head’ as another near-contemporary of Shakespeare’s (and anticipator of the unconscious) put it.¹⁹ What, then, might be unknown to Hamlet and why?

Freud suggests that we repress what is socially unacceptable for us to consciously acknowledge and express. It is doubtful that Hamlet would ever need to conceal ethical concerns about murder from himself, suggesting that there are less palatable motivations at work, such as his desire for his mother. Having desired his mother as a child, and viewed his father as a rival to her affections whom he wished dead, Hamlet would have had to repress these Oedipal emotions in order to progress into adulthood. However, having someone ‘realise’ his repressed desires for him – made worse by the fact this ‘someone’ is, in fact, a member of his own family – threatens to make his own incestuous desires consciously apparent to him if he acts to punish in others what he once wished to do himself.²⁰ The result of this is that Hamlet’s feelings towards his uncle are decidedly ambiguous, ‘the jealous detestation of one evil-doer towards his successful fellow’.²¹ The Ghost, Hamlet’s deceased father who urges him to seek revenge, can be seen as a projection of Hamlet’s guilty feelings, his unconscious knowledge that he himself once wanted his father dead too.

Such a reading is brought out in Lawrence Olivier’s film of *Hamlet* where the incestuous desire between Gertrude and Hamlet is rendered explicit; the ‘closet scene’ is particularly intense, with many longing looks and kisses. Yet the same scene in Kenneth Branagh’s film presents Hamlet as simply angry and amazed that his mother could transfer her affections from someone as god-like as the father to someone so lowly, to descend from the ‘fair mountain’ to feed on ‘this moor’. Twice he asks her ‘Have you eyes?’ before his exasperated ‘Oh shame! Where is thy blush?’ (3.4.72-80).

Jacques Lacan also believes there to be an Oedipal dimension to *Hamlet*, but he reaches this conclusion by looking at the language used in the play rather than concentrating specifically on the characters and the writer, as Freud does.²² When a child learns the symbolic order of language, or the Law of the Father, it must separate itself from its mother. This is equivalent to the Oedipus complex: the child henceforth unconsciously desires to return to a pre-linguistic state of symbiotic oneness with

¹⁸‘We are beginning to see man not as the smooth, self-acting agent he pretends to be, but as he really is, a creature only dimly conscious of the various influences that mould his thought and action, and blindly resisting with all the means at his command the forces that are making for a higher and fuller consciousness’ [Jones, Ernest, “Rationalisation in Every Day Life”, *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* (1908) vol. 3, p. 168].

¹⁹ Pascal, Blaise, quoted in J.M & M.J. Cohen, *The Penguin Dictionary of Quotations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963) p. 278.

²⁰ He cannot wholeheartedly condemn his uncle for ‘the more vigorously he denounced his uncle the more powerfully does he stimulate to activity his own unconscious and “repressed” complexes’ (Jones, 101).

²¹ Jones, 1910: 100.

²² Sometimes it takes a modern re-reading of a Shakespearean text in order to bring out a latent Oedipal complex. For example, Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* is a reworking of King Lear which turns the power struggles between a father and his daughters into a story about incestuous sexual abuse. Lear famously disowns his third and favourite daughter, Cordelia, because she refuses to publicly profess how much she loves him, instead maintaining that ‘I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less’ (1.1.84-5). Smiley has read this as her way of refusing to show her father a love which goes beyond that which a daughter should show her father. In Smiley’s version of the story, the remaining two daughters do not have the means to refuse their father’s (sexual) demands.

the mother. Lacan argues that this unconscious desire manifests itself in distorted forms of language. He notes that Hamlet's engagement in 'constant punning, word play, double entendre – to play on ambiguity' lends 'Shakespeare's theatre a style, a colour, that is the basis of its psychological dimension'.²³ Hamlet's constant dissimulation of the signified - 'You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife' (3.4.18), 'Forgive me this my virtue' and 'I must be cruel, only to be kind' (3.4.157-177) - conceals the true meaning of his words, and reveal latent desire for the mother.

Of course, one could argue that *Hamlet* is a simple revenge tragedy. However, such a reading fails to take into account Hamlet's preoccupation with his mother's betrayal. She functions as a 'screen for Hamlet's fantasies about her' rather than 'a fully developed character in her own right'.²⁴ Hamlet's discovery of Claudius when he is on his way to his mother's closet 'feels to us more like an interruption of a more fundamental purpose', namely to be with the mother in a place of intimacy.²⁵ Hamlet's tendency to guess at his mother's sexual exploits – 'honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty' (3.4.93-4) – does suggest a perverse pleasure from imagining it. He is as attracted to Gertrude's 'markedly sensual nature'²⁶ as she is to him, something Claudius notices: 'The queen his mother / Lives almost by his looks' (4.6.13-4).²⁷

Perhaps Shakespeare did not intend such a reading but, on a psychoanalytic interpretation, he too would have had unconscious desires and motivations. A play *about* unconscious motivation would therefore have been written *with* unconscious motivation and would, in this sense, be truly reflexive.²⁸ As Joseph Zornado argues, 'all literary production is a reproduction of the author's experiences... This is almost always an unconscious process'.²⁹ Thomas Kyd's *Hamlet* was around in the decade before Shakespeare's play was published and no doubt influenced his decision to write it.³⁰ In addition to this, personal issues led to his interest in a story predominantly concerned with father-son relationships. Freud believed that the tragic events in Shakespeare's life - the deaths of his son, Hamnet, and his father - led to an unconscious fulfilment of his repressed Oedipal wishes and that the

²³ Lacan, Jacques, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (London: Tavistock, 1977) p. 11. Hamlet's first line of the play – 'A little more than kin and less than kind' (1.2.64) – puns on his relationship with Claudius, who is now both his uncle and stepfather, yet falls short in both roles. Hamlet knows the power of language and uses it to ridicule others, such as his reply to Polonius over what he is reading - 'Words, words, words' (2.2.197) - and his reply to Claudius over where to find Polonius: look in heaven first and 'If your messenger find him not there, seek him i'th'other place yourself', in other words, 'go to hell' (4.2.32-3). His bawdy exchange with Ophelia in the play scene is innuendo filled (3.2.93-105).

²⁴ Ibid: 34.

²⁵ Ibid: 31.

²⁶ Zornado, Joseph L., *Inventing the Child: Culture, Ideology, and the Story of Childhood* (London: Garland Publishing, 2001) p. 98.

²⁷ If there is an incestuous element to their relationship, it is fitting that Hamlet chooses for his lover the diametrically opposite Ophelia, the result, perhaps, of a 'half-conscious desire to play her off against his mother, just as a disappointed and piqued lover is so often thrown into the arms of a more willing rival'. Zornado claims Hamlet spends the play 'unconsciously pursuing his mother in a confused and desperate attempt to possess and dispossess himself of his desire for the sexualised, idealised love object the mother represents' (Ibid: 41).

²⁸ 'The play is the form in which his feeling finds its spontaneous expression, without any inquiry being possible on his part as to the essential nature or source of that feeling' (Jones, 1910: 102-3)

²⁹ Zornado, 2001: 43.

³⁰ This play is now lost, however. (Jones, 1910: 103).

guilt and latent conflicts which would arise from such an occurrence are reflected in the play.³¹ Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that Shakespeare was as knowledgeable about aspects of the psyche as Freud, Lacan, and other theorists. He certainly employed techniques later used by Freud in the composition of his stories, such as the method of ‘decomposition’³² to split the figure of the father in the original story into two figures: one idealised (Old Hamlet), one demonised (Claudius). This allows for Hamlet’s hatred to be channelled in one direction as well as opening up a psychological dimension to play since the son avenges rather than murders his father, indicating a repression in the story in its very conception.³³ This idea of splitting the self can be seen in Hamlet also, for he is essentially role-playing throughout, feigning madness to conceal his plans for revenge, making his actions – and inactions – apparent to us on both a manifest and, perhaps more interestingly, on a latent level.

However, there are other readings of Hamlet’s delay, made without recourse to psychoanalytic theory. For example, Kott and Taborski see Hamlet’s hesitation as not just a dramatic convention for creating suspense, but also as the result of his situation: his lack of rights and dependency upon the current king.³⁴ Thus history and social forces determine a character’s fate, rather than their own actions; Denmark had changed from a stable feudal place to an unsettled one, the death of Old Hamlet marking a new, uncertain order of things. But history, events and social forces do not really determine anything; they only provide the *context* in which a character might first define and then respond, or not respond, to them. A state in flux is more likely to impinge upon a character’s behaviour if they are themselves in a state of flux and even more so if, like Hamlet, they are at war with themselves. Of course there were weighty cultural and metaphysical considerations around at the time. Protestantism made individuals more accountable for the state of their souls, scientific discoveries proved man was not at the centre of the cosmos, greater social mobility rendered birth less important.³⁵ But they would not have affected everyone in the same way, or indeed at all, and this is where a psychological reading helps us to not only understand and appreciate different reactions to the same uncertainties, but to engage and augment our empathy so that we ourselves share the inner turbulence of a Hamlet or an Othello or a Lady Macbeth rather than just gawp at it.

³¹ McCartney, Anna, “Psychoanalytic Literary Theory”, *Introducing Literary Studies*, ed. Richard Bradford (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996) p. 597. Additionally, *Macbeth*, written around the same time, is also concerned with the issue of childlessness [Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 368.]

³² This is a Freudian term, usually used to describe the process which occurs when one is asleep and imagines the various attributes of one person (‘x’) appearing in the figures of many people. Upon waking, the conscious mind will be protected from the knowledge that ‘x’ was dreamt about.

³³ Jones, 1910: 106.

³⁴ Kott, Jan; Taborski, Boleslaw, “Hamlet and Orestes”, *PMLA* (Modern Language Association, 1967) p. 308. JSTOR, 10.02.09. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/460759?seq=6&Search=yes&term=jan&term=hamlet&term=kott&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Djan%2Bkott%2Bhamlet%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DAll%2BDisciplines&item=2&tI=362&returnArticleService=showArticle&resultsServiceName=doBasicResultsFromArticle>>.

³⁵ Gibson, Rex, *Shakespearean and Jacobean Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 49.

The point I am attempting to make is that if a cigar were just a cigar, and a play just a play then things risk becoming dangerously dull. We all look for motivation in drama; where it is superficial or absent we cease to care about the characters and our interest wanes. We want to be emotionally engaged so that we can think and talk about what we have seen and, for this to be possible, the play needs to represent meaning on both a visible and a hidden level. That is, it needs to represent what is *not* said, who is *not* present, pauses, glances, tones, characters *not* talking about the things which most concern them – in a word, latency.

Many critics acknowledge the role of a psychoanalytic reading in exploring latency when it comes to *Othello*, a play which, as Elias Schwartz has suggested, conveys ‘a sense of intentions not quite realised’ because of the two different styles at work in it.³⁶ While on the one hand we get the impression of Othello as a confident man with beautiful rhetoric, who claims in the face of adversity that ‘My parts, my title and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly’ (1.2.34), there is also, on the other, a ‘self-deluding, child-like egotism’ to him.³⁷ These aspects of his character seem best explained with reference to the manifest and latent content of his character. As is typical with Shakespearean characters, Othello is a rounded, accessible character, an Everyman of sorts.³⁸ While Othello’s situation is unique to his story, ‘all men have in them the seeds of passion, the ineradicable egotism, the proneness to self-doubt that we find in Othello... [these traits] exist universally, in the best as in the worst of men’.³⁹ If Schwartz is correct, then the case for a psychoanalytic reading of the play is strengthened to the extent that it deals with universal human attributes not exclusive to time or place. Indeed, noting Shakespeare’s vision in the play of the self-destructive nature of both love and life, Schwartz asks rhetorically: ‘does not Shakespeare anticipate Freud in this?’⁴⁰

Like Schwartz, Robert Rogers, believes that a psychoanalytic reading of this play is essential.⁴¹ Drama, he argues, must be looked at ‘in human as well as artistic terms’ because, as Frank Rand’s statement tells us, ‘if the play is to be anything more than a parable, we must feel that it represents conflict between, *and within*, actual human beings’.⁴² Thus we must look at the conflict between

³⁶ Schwartz, Elias, “Stylistic ‘Impurity’ and the Meaning of *Othello*, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* (Rice University, 1970), p. 297. JSTOR, 09.02.09. <

[>](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4499197&Search=yes&term=psychology&term=othello&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dothello%2Bpsychology%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DAll%2BDisciplines&item=2&ttl=1777&returnArticleService=showArticle)

³⁷ Ibid: 298.

³⁸ Because, according to Schwartz, ‘every man has in him the very tendencies and passions that are uncovered in the barbaric, strange and exotic Moor’ (ibid: 301).

³⁹ Ibid: 302.

⁴⁰ Ibid: 313.

⁴¹ Rogers, Robert, “Endopsychic Drama in *Othello*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Folger Shakespeare Library, 1969) p. 206. JSTOR, 09.02.09. <
[>](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2869005?seq=2&Search=yes&term=psychology&term=othello&list=hide&searchUri=%2Fact ion%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dothello%2Bpsychology%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DAll%2BDisciplines%26resultsSe rviceName%3DdoBasicResultsFromArticle&item=6&ttl=1777&returnArticleService=showArticle)

⁴² Rand, Frank Prentice, “The Over Garrulous Iago”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Folger Shakespeare Library, 1950) p. 157, my italics. JSTOR, 09.03.09. <

[>](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2866423?&Search=yes&term=frank&term=rand&term=iago&list=hide&searchUri=%2Factio)

Othello and Iago as a dramatic representation of what is essentially an internal, ‘endopsychic conflict’.⁴³ With regard to Iago, the fact that he gives numerous reasons for his actions have led critics to conclude that, just like Hamlet, he is concealing his true motives from himself. The real reason for Iago’s malevolence, according to Rogers, is that ‘he is a paranoid personality suffering from repressed homosexuality who unknowingly regards Desdemona as a rival for the love of Othello’.⁴⁴ This reading explains why Iago drives Othello away from his wife into a kind of marriage with himself: Othello tells Iago, who has, ‘For too much loving you’, told him the supposed truth about Desdemona, ‘I am bound to thee forever’ (3.3.238-9). Their following exchange has overtones of a wedding ceremony:

Othello: ...Now art thou my lieutenant.

Iago: I am your own for ever.

(3.4.527-8)

Although Iago has a wife of whom he claims to be jealous,⁴⁵ this jealousy can be explained in Freudian terms as a defence mechanism against his conscious recognition of any homosexual feelings. His feelings of jealousy are then projected onto Othello, making *him* the one who has an unfaithful wife to fear.

Just as Iago projects feelings onto Othello, so it has been argued that Iago is, in part, ‘a projection of Othello’s egotism’.⁴⁶ Rogers goes on to say that in fact the men are two sides of the same coin: ‘doubles or decomposed parts of a single self’.⁴⁷ Rather than creating a composite, complex character, Shakespeare has split what could have been one man into two, most likely for theatrical purposes (endless dramatic monologues and introspection simply do not make for a good play), just as there is a splitting of the father figures in *Hamlet* and *Henry IV*. The doubling in *Othello* has been noted by other characters in literature. Stephen Dedalus in Joyce’s *Ulysses* says that Othello’s ‘unremitting intellect is the hornmad Iago ceaselessly willing that the moor in him shall suffer’.⁴⁸ Indeed, Othello seems plagued with a self-doubt which does not always seem to be fed to him by Iago, citing his age, coarseness and blackness as reasons for Desdemona to stray.⁴⁹ That Iago succeeds in making Othello think his wife unfaithful – Othello, who claims ‘I’ll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove’ (3.3.213)

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⁴³ Rogers, 1969: 206.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ He rather unconvincingly claims he suspects his wife, Emilia, to have been unfaithful to him with both Othello and Cassio.

⁴⁶ Schwartz, 1970: 297.

⁴⁷ Rogers, 1969: 207.

⁴⁸ Joyce, James, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1934) p. 210.

⁴⁹ I am referring to Othello’s speech: ‘...Haply, for I am black / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have, or for I am declines / Into the vale of years.../ She’s gone’ (3.3.293-7).

and asks for ‘ocular proof’ (3.3.398) – on the ‘evidence’ of a dream and a handkerchief seems absurd unless we consider that Iago is voicing concerns which already resonate on some level of Othello’s consciousness. As J.I.M. Stewart said, ‘Othello is the human soul as it strives to be, and Iago is that which corrodes and subverts it from within’.⁵⁰

If Othello and Iago are doubles of each other, does this not rule out a homosexual reading of their relationship? Not according to Feldman who argues that it is entirely possible for Iago to feel ‘unconscious lust’ for Othello as well as to double him.⁵¹ Othello even notices that Iago ‘echo’st me, / As if there were some monster in thy thought / Too hideous to be shown’ (3.3.121-3), a monster which he has created from his own active imagination. Iago also echoes Othello’s action of murdering his wife, just as Othello’s language becomes more vulgar and animalistic, echoing Iago’s, when he thinks his wife unfaithful (3.3). When Othello, about to kill himself, asks Iago why he has ‘ensnared my soul and body’, Iago’s answer is elusive: ‘Demand me nothing: what you know, you know: / From this time forth I never will speak a word’ (5.2.341-2). The reason for this is, of course, because the darker side of Othello, Iago, is also about to ‘die’ when the Moor commits suicide.

As well as a ‘homosexual reading’ of Iago’s attitude towards Othello, his attitude towards Cassio is also interesting. Rogers notes that he articulates an ‘anal fantasy’ when he watched Cassio kiss the ladies’ fingers, with the observation: ‘Would they were clyster pipes for your sake!’ (2.1.180-1). Iago’s account of Cassio’s supposed sexual ‘dream’ about Desdemona is certainly suggestive of a homosexual fantasy on Iago’s part (3.3.456-68). This is coupled with his general cynicism and misogyny which Rogers sees as having ‘psychological roots’ of ‘a defence against anxiety’. He goes on to say that ‘his behaviour reflects that of a paranoid personality whose repressed homosexual tendencies have erupted under stress in the form of delusions of persecution and jealousy’.⁵² His jealousy of Cassio is evident: ‘He hath a daily beauty in his life / That makes me ugly’ (5.1.19-20) and ‘is handsome, young’ (2.1.242).

It has been argued that Cassio, too, is a double of Othello. For Cassio is his wooing partner, his ‘second’ or lieutenant, the one who Othello says ‘had twinned with me’ (2.3.195). They also share a binary view of women, which leads Rogers to hypothesise a problematic Oedipal stage in Othello’s childhood.⁵³ According to Freudian theory, when a boy sexually desires his mother he counters his incestuous longing by denying that she herself is a sexual being. Once he has passed beyond this stage of development, he finds a substitute for the mother in marriage and ceases to view women in such a binary fashion. However, if a ‘fixation’ occurs during this process, then a normal, balanced view of women will never be achieved and the boy will continue to view them as either virgins or whores. He may also become homosexual due to the fear, generated by the father, of castration in the Oedipal

⁵⁰ Stewart, J.I.M., *Character and Motive in Shakespeare* (London: Longmans, 1950) p. 108.

⁵¹ Quoted in Rogers, p. 208.

⁵² Rogers, 1969: 212.

⁵³ Ibid: 312.

stage. Although no mothers are directly present in the play, Othello gives us the story of his mother when he provides the history of the handkerchief he gave to Desdemona. This places her in the position of ‘a surrogate of Othello’s mother’; he clearly wishes his wife to be like her.⁵⁴ Conflict with the father (figure), another feature of the Oedipus complex can be seen in Othello’s relationship with Brabantio, whom he defied in marrying Desdemona, thus fulfilling the Oedipal fantasy of defying the father to sleep with the (surrogate) mother. André Green argues that by rejecting his ancestor’s law and marrying a girl outside of his own country, Othello has transgressed in an incestuous way: ‘It is because this rejection involves reversal that it is transgression. It is as if in binding himself in love to the image furthest removed from his mother...it is still his mother that he finds. Unknown to himself he commits incest, inside out’.⁵⁵

To unite all the doubling we see in *Othello* we can see that the three men united together all form one composite figure, split into: the Normal Othello (Othello as we see him at the beginning; confident, calm, collected); the Romantic Othello (Cassio: a sensitive idealist who tends to view women in black and white terms) and the Psychotic Othello (Iago: perverted, jealous and murderous).⁵⁶ There is a clear link here to the Freudian theory of doubling, whereby a boy overcomes his Oedipus complex by identifying with his father and internalising the paternal, authorial rule.⁵⁷ This precipitates the doubling of the ego into the ego plus the superego (the morality principle). According to Laplanche, it is ‘the great organisational forces, the complexes: the Oedipus, castration’ which progressively absorb the chaotic, uncivilised strivings of the id.⁵⁸ Yet Othello does not seem to have completed this crucial stage in his development which is why he is at the mercy of a character who personifies the workings of the id, namely Iago.

Although such a psychoanalytic reading can grant us many insights into *Othello*, they do not alone provide a full reading of the play. The Elizabethans had their own ideas about mental breakdowns and their consequences. From medieval theology they had inherited the notion of a hierarchical chain of being, in which everything had its rightful place. Reason was believed to be what kept man above the level of beast, so if a man lost his reason and allowed himself to be guided by his passions then he was no better than an animal. In the case of *Othello*, we could say that tragedy arises when the natural order of things is subverted by a devilish figure, and ‘Chaos is come again’ (3.3.102). With this in mind, we may postulate that it is Iago’s racism which makes him wish to make the Moor lose his reason and become ‘led by th’nose / As asses are’ (1.3.290-1). He clearly views Othello as sub-human

⁵⁴ Ibid: 313.

⁵⁵ Green, André, *The Tragic Effect: The Oedipus Complex in Tragedy*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 264. This argument has clear echoes of Zornado’s explanation for why Hamlet chose to be with Ophelia, who is also diametrically opposed to his mother.

⁵⁶ Rogers, 1969: 213.

⁵⁷ Freud, Sigmund, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey, ed. Angela Richards (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984) vol. 11, p. 377.

⁵⁸ Laplanche, Jean, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976) p. 52.

from the beginning, referring to him as a ‘Barbary horse’ (1.1.119) and ‘an old black ram’ (1.1.92). And Iago certainly achieves his aim because by the end of the play Othello has been reduced to the worst kind of stereotype: with his rolling eyes (5.2.42) and body shaking with ‘bloody passion’ (5.2.49) he terrifies Desdemona before murdering her.

The murder of Desdemona, undoubtedly the most shocking aspect of the play might, of course, also be looked at from perspectives other than the psychoanalytic one. While to a modern audience Othello’s jealousy is certainly excessive and frightening in its violence, an Elizabethan audience would have been more sensitive to the strict demands of chastity placed upon women at the time, and to the rage which could result from a man being cuckolded. In patrilineal Elizabethan society, a woman’s chastity was of paramount importance; illegitimate children threatened the structure of society and were the cause of inheritance and sibling disputes (as we see in the case of Edmund in *King Lear*). So Othello’s reputation, as well as his mental wellbeing, would depend upon the behaviour of his wife.⁵⁹ With this in mind, the level of his anguish when he suspects her of infidelity is perhaps more understandable. This might be thought of as a distinctively sociological type of motivational explanation in terms of prevailing cultural meanings and expectations about female fidelity, male pride, and murderous revenge.⁶⁰

A sociological perspective may also feature when the function of Iago in the play is under scrutiny. Is he really a double of Othello who sexually desires him? Jonathan Dollimore, for example, argues that characters are social constructions of their times, in which case Iago is little more than a pawn of social discontent and ideological discourse.⁶¹ Or we could see Iago as a straightforward Machiavellian character inherited from older morality plays, which tended to depict characters as simple representatives of either good or evil. His refusal to explain his actions could just be the mark of a perfect villain, inexplicable and infuriating to the end. The problem with such a social constructionist reading is that it renders characters one-dimensional and, although undoubtedly some characters of fiction are indeed just that, we may ask whether Shakespeare’s would have such lasting power if they were nothing other than cogs in the machinery of a play. We would not get the slow unveiling of a character over the course of the action, the element of revelation which may shock and surprise us –

⁵⁹ As Mark Breitenberg wrote, the early modern England patriarchal economy ‘constructs masculine identity as dependent on the coercive and symbolic regulation of women’s sexuality’. “Anxious Masculinity: Sexual Jealousy in Early Modern England”, *Feminist Studies* (Feminist Studies, Inc., 1993) p. 377. JSTOR, 09.02.09.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178375?&Search=yes&term=hierarchical&term=chain&term=othello&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dothello%2Bhierarchical%2Bchain%2Bbeing%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DAll%2BDisciplines&item=2&ttl=49&returnArticleService=showArticle>>

⁶⁰ But are these meanings and expectations not still prevalent today, and with undiminished strength? Do we not learn, every few weeks or so of yet another wife or partner or her children injured or killed because of their suspect chastity? We ostensibly live in more sexually liberated times, and yet Othello’s jealousy and its fatal trajectory appears no different from that of many contemporary men. Sexual jealousy features in the Bible and appears to condone a serious response to female transgression. The implication that sexual jealousy is archetypal, inscribed in the male psyche, seems hard to resist; the social has its root in the psychoanalytic.

⁶¹ Dollimore, Jonathan, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).

though never in such a way as to destroy the consistency and therefore believability of that character – so that we understand and empathise, identify with or distance ourselves from character-action. What underwrites this ultimate consistency of character is arguably *unconscious* motivation and that is why it is hidden at first and only emerges gradually and in response to appropriate stimuli.

However, one critic has argued that all attempts at understanding and discussing characterisation in Shakespeare are missing the point. L.C. Knights suggests that ‘a Shakespeare play is a dramatic poem’ and as such ‘to stress in the conventional way character or plot or any of the other abstractions that can be made, is to impoverish the total response’.⁶² The words on the page should be examined for their poetry and their contribution to the work as a linguistic whole; to abstract certain words and phrases in order to attempt a character study shows ‘an inability to appreciate the Elizabethan idiom and a consequent inability to discuss Shakespeare’s plays as poetry’.⁶³ Well, possibly, but the words of a play script are just a blueprint for performance, and can appear flat, dead and profoundly unpoetic until the moment of delivery.⁶⁴ To examine them for their poetry is perhaps to perform the mother of all abstractions, and to suggest that a play is a poem seems like an identity too far.

That said, psychoanalytic interpretation can in fact *only proceed by abstraction*, but here this would be abstraction from total performance rather than from just close textual reading and concerned with character motivation and causality - notions which have a certain ‘edge’ to them perhaps lacking in poetic discourse. For example in *Macbeth*, the final play under consideration here, what compels the main protagonist to destroy not only several others but himself also? Is he simply ruthlessly ambitious? Manipulated by his wife? A victim of competitive feudalism? The better to respond to it in the context of a broader query about the value of psychoanalysis, we might reframe this motivational query as follows: is Macbeth’s downfall caused by metaphysical, social or personal factors?

If we argue that metaphysical factors are to blame, then we are saying that tragedy is caused by events which lie outside human control and can be summed up as ‘fate’. For example, the connection between the witches and Macbeth is set up in the first scene; they declare oxymoronically that ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’ (1.1.12) and his first words are ‘So foul and fair a day I have not seen’ (1.3.39). This either suggests their magical power over him and ability to infect his language and therefore his thoughts, or it could be Shakespeare’s way of indicating their psychological similarities. There are undoubtedly metaphysical elements to this play, most likely designed to engage King James who was greatly interested in the occult and witchcraft.⁶⁵ So any attempt to present *Macbeth* solely in psychological terms would be to misrepresent Shakespeare’s probable conceptions and intentions. In

⁶² Knights, L.C., *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth? An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism* (Cambridge: The Minority Press, 1933) p. 7-8.

⁶³ Ibid: 22.

⁶⁴ Because the Elizabethan stage was fairly bare and there was a lack of visual stimuli, the audience would have had to focus more on delivery - the language of the play - than on the spectacle. The culture was still an oral one, so that audiences were adept at following poetical speech.

⁶⁵ Gibson, Rex, *Shakespearean and Jacobean Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 38.

some instances, a supernatural aspect is an essential partner to the script, such as when Lady Macbeth calls up dark forces to guide her (1.5.36-52). If this were to be performed without any kind of special effects, the theatricality the scene demands would not be brought out.

What of social and psychological factors? A notion of evil may work to deflect political factors such as the oppressive, militaristic rule in Scotland. Other factors may be present merely to flatter King James, such as the divine right of kings, the character of Banquo⁶⁶, the mention of the gunpowder plot and so on. However, the play also contains three scenes which seem to demand a psychological reading. These scenes feature visual manifestations of unconscious motivations at work in the psyche: in 2.1, Macbeth sees a dagger leading him on to murder Duncan, in 3.4 Banquo's ghost appears to him, and in 5.1 Lady Macbeth imagines there to be spots of blood on her hands. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the dagger Macbeth sees is a visual manifestation of a compulsion to act, Banquo's ghost is a manifestation of Macbeth's guilt and the spots of blood are manifest symbols of guilt. Whether Banquo's ghost actually appears or not is a production decision: if there is no ghost we deduce that Macbeth is mentally unstable and a psychological reading is needed but, if there is one, the supernatural aspects of the play are elevated and there is far less need for Freudian analysis. We can be sure of the unlikelihood of any production showing blood stains on Lady Macbeth's hands as the psychological impact of this scene is indicated in the verse. While most of the play is written in steady blank verse, in this scene the hand-washing Lady Macbeth speaks in irregular, choppy prose, reflecting her diminishing grasp on reality, just as Othello's mental instability is reflected in his linguistic breakdown. The doctor present in the scene is unable to assist because there is nothing physiologically wrong with her – only psychologically. Freud attributed continual, obsessive hand-washing to a patient's fear of sexuality and a lack of moral purity.⁶⁷

While it is tempting to look at some themes of the play - ambition, hierarchy, the supernatural - from a psychoanalytic perspective, we must also take into account the connotations such terms would have had for an Elizabethan audience. Elizabethans saw ambition, for example, as a threat to hierarchy associating it with Satan's rebellion against God, as well as being one of the human motivations which resulted in the Fall.⁶⁸ So what seems to originate in Macbeth's psyche actually has greater implications for society as a whole. In this case at least the mental and the social are inseparable.

If we look at the play with such cultural knowledge in mind, it becomes apparent that Macbeth knows that the implications of his regicidal actions extend beyond himself. And this, interestingly, leads us back to psychoanalysis for we must deduce that Macbeth is driven by a narcissistic

⁶⁶ Whom King James believed himself to be descended from (*ibid*).

⁶⁷ Holland, 1960: 170.

⁶⁸ Kirsch, Arthur, "Macbeth's Suicide", *ELH* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) p. 270. JSTOR, 04.03.09. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872946?seq=2&Search=yes&term=macbeth&term=psychoanalysis&term=freud&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dfreud%2Bpsychoanalysis%2Bmacbeth%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DAll%2BDisciplines&item=2&ttl=379&returnArticleService=showArticle&resultsServiceName=doBasicResultsFromArticle>>.

compulsion which is ultimately self-destructive. Arthur Kirsch argues that ‘the act of parricide (and to some extent the fantasises of it as well) is, like the denial of God, a negation of the source of one’s being’.⁶⁹ When Duncan’s body is discovered and Donalbain asks ‘What is amiss?’, Macbeth’s reply seems to apply more to himself than anyone else present: ‘You are, and do not know’t: / The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood / Is stopped, the very source of it stopped’ (2.3.99-101). Clearly Macbeth cannot shake his belief in the divine chain of being; by murdering Duncan he has disturbed the God-given order of things and condemned himself. He knows on some level that he is simply not up to playing the part of king, which is why his ‘borrow’d robes’ and title (1.3.114) begin to ‘Hang loose about him, like a giant’s robe / Upon a dwarfish thief’ (5.2.24-25). He has killed the father figure only to discover that he cannot perform the father’s duties, and does not even seem to enjoy being a monarch. Lady Macbeth, too, identifies Duncan as a paternal figure, telling Macbeth that the king’s sleeping form ‘resembled / My father’ (2.1.12-3). By helping to murder him she has, in part, fulfilled an Oedipal desire which, according to Freud, precipitates the onset of madness.

Continuing the motif of parenting, Lady Macbeth is, initially at least, the diabolically maternal figure who instructs the Macbeth to use a dagger (a phallic symbol) to usurp the paternal king. She complains he is ‘too full o’th’ milk of human kindness’ to commit such a deed, equating maternal influence with weakness (1.5.12) and resisting all such motherly instincts herself.⁷⁰ We may postulate that she has not sublimated her penis envy into wanting a baby; instead she wants power in a manifest way, and this is problematic. Images of violence, unnaturalness and childlessness⁷¹ plague their marriage, the scene where Lady Macbeth calls up spirits to ‘unsex me here’ being one of the most striking in the play (1.5.39). Children are not merely absent in this play, but of great importance. The witches prophesise that Banquo’s children will receive the crown and Macbeth is frustrated by his lack of legacy, exclaiming to his wife that she should ‘Bring forth men-children only, / For thy undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males’, an apparent compliment on her masculine strength, but also an indication of his latent anxieties (1.7.79-81). Freud believed the childlessness of the Macbeths to be an example of ‘poetic justice’ as well as the cause of Lady Macbeth’s mental breakdown.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid: 280.

⁷⁰ She tells Macbeth: ‘I have given suck, and know / How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me: / I would, while it was smiling in my face, / Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums, / And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn’ (1.7.58-62).

⁷¹ The theme of childlessness can, of course, be linked to Shakespeare’s own experience of losing his son, Hamnet. Freud was particularly interested in an author’s biography around the time of their writing, because he believed that events which happened in their lifetime could work to reactivate repressed infantile desires, and these desires would be unconsciously written about in the author’s literary works. Hence the death of the father in *Hamlet*, after John Shakespeare’s death, and the theme of childlessness in *Macbeth*.

⁷² Her mental breakdown is ‘a reaction to her childlessness, by which she is convinced of her impotence against the decrees of nature, and at the same time admonished that she has only herself to blame if her crime has been barren of the better part of its desired results’. [Freud, qtd in Holland, 1960: 170].

Macbeth's behaviour also indicates that *he* did not receive sufficient maternal nourishment⁷³ and his need for it drives him regressively backwards, illustrating, perhaps, Freud's notion of the death drive. It is Macbeth's nemesis, Macduff, who is 'not born of woman' (5.3.4) and therefore lacks this fatal regressive drive. Freud argued that because 'the experience of birth has probably left behind in us the expression of affect which we call anxiety, Macduff...who was not born of woman but ripped from her womb, was for that reason unacquainted with anxiety'.⁷⁴ This places Macduff in a superior position to the Macbeths, who are psychologically dependent upon each other or 'disunited parts of a single psychical individuality'.⁷⁵ As Macbeth's willpower grows, Lady Macbeth's decreases: 'She is incarnate remorse after the deed, he incarnate defiance – together they exhaust the possibilities of reaction to the crime'.⁷⁶ Once she has died, Macbeth has no more will to live himself.⁷⁷

A psychoanalytic reading of Shakespeare has, of course, obvious weaknesses: the irrefutable nature of psychoanalytic theories, the way they neglect historical and cultural factors, the manner in which they tend to impose meaning onto a text rather than gleaning meaning from it. But texts do not speak for themselves, only to the questions that are put to them. Had I approached Shakespeare's work from, say, a particular political or feminist perspective, this would naturally have been a very different argument. But then, would either perspective really have been suitable for the understanding of tragedy in drama? Would a sociological or an historical perspective? Possibly yes to all, and possibly on the basis of a similar vocabulary of motives - love, anger, hate, fantasy and dreams - appropriate to the analysis of tragedy. Freudian psychoanalytic theory attempts to delve *beneath* such a vocabulary but of course, in so doing, produces its own metaphorical one reminding us, along with the essay title, that it is but a reading, one of several possible, and therefore ultimately unprivileged.⁷⁸

⁷³ Kirsch believes the stunted, or prevented, development of the children/characters in this play is at the root of the tragedy because 'Psychoanalysts trace the deepest forms of despair to the deprivation of maternal nourishment, and there is certainly an insatiable hunger in Macbeth's need for more and more' (Kirsch, 1984: 291).

⁷⁴ Freud, qtd in Holland, 1960: 170.

⁷⁵ Freud, Sigmund, "Those Who are Wrecked by Success", *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953) p. 324. Similarly, A.B. Feldman who argues that Shakespeare 'frequently split his characters in two, converting them to separate *personae*, each of whom appears not altogether comprehensible until combined with the other. Macbeth and his Lady...presented the dramatic pole of such a schism' [Qtd in Rogers, 1969: 208].

⁷⁶ Freud, qtd in Holland, 1960: 170.

⁷⁷ An Elizabethan audience would have viewed their serial killings as evidence of the 'psychology of the hardened heart' whereby 'the sinner becomes so fortified and confirmed in the custom of sin that it becomes a habit, corrupting one's human faculties'. Hence Macbeth's declaration towards the end of his life: 'I am sick at heart.../ I have lived long enough' (5.3.22-4). [Cunningham, Dolores G. "Macbeth: The Tragedy of the Hardened Heart", *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Folger Shakespeare Library, 1963) p. 41. JSTOR, 05.03.09.

<[⁷⁸ It should be noted that while I have chosen to look specifically at Freudian psychoanalytic theories, other critics such as Lacan, and the French feminists Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva have equally valid and interesting theories about psychoanalysis, gender and discourse. Because I decided to concentrate more on characterisation than language and gender in this essay, I have not found their theories as applicable in this instance.](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2868135?seq=3&Search=yes&term=psychology&term=macbeths&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dmacbeths%2Bpsychology%26gw%3Dtx%26prq%3Dmacbeths%2Banalysis%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25%26wc%3Don%26resultsServiceName%3DdoBasicResultsFromArticle&item=7&ttl=427&returnArticleService=showArticle>].</p>
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